

# English Literature

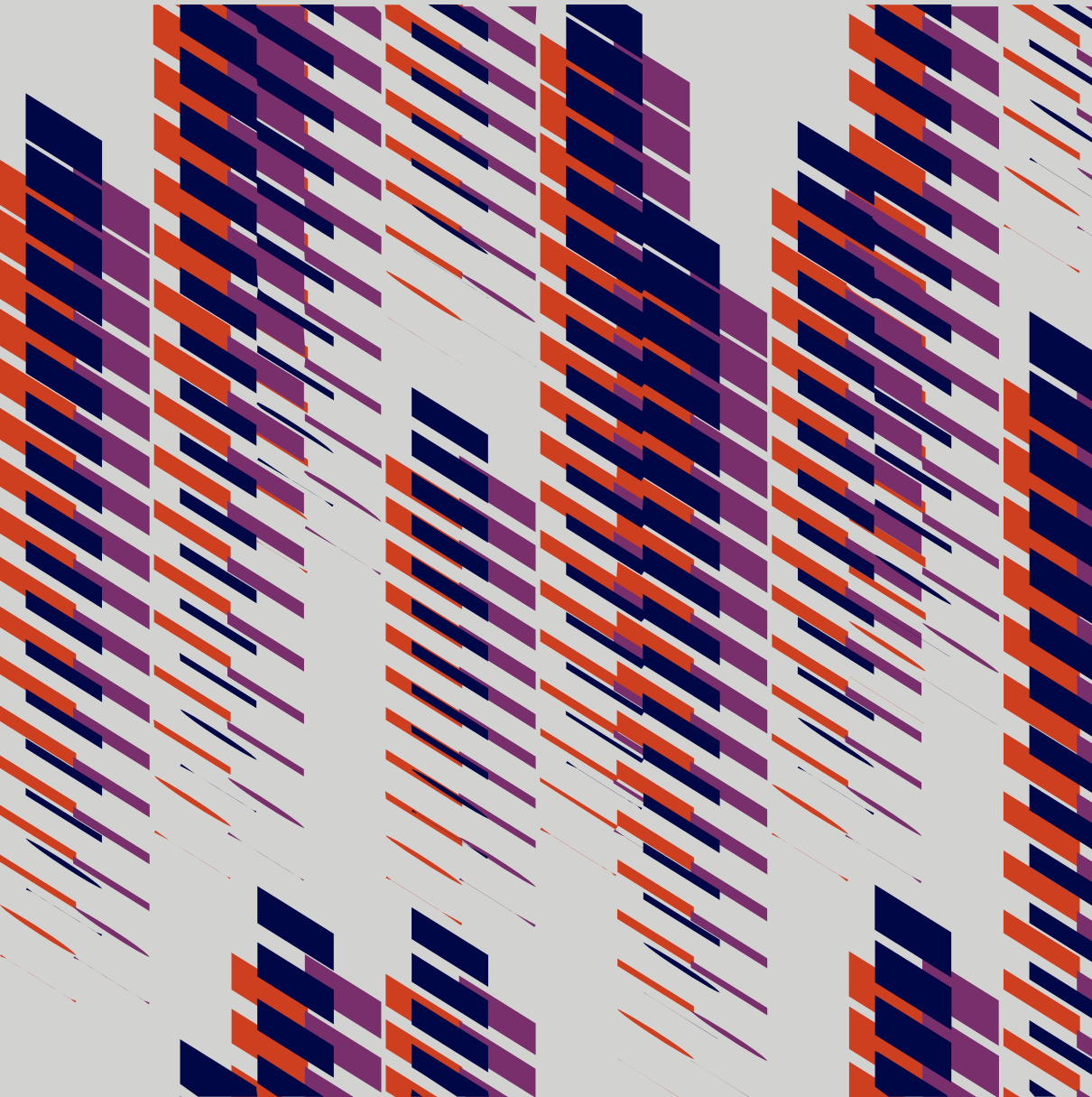
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# **English Literature**

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# English Literature

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# **Passions, Emotions and Cognition in the Long Eighteenth-Century Literature in England**

Edited by  
Flavio Gregori



# Aesthetic Cognition

## Feeling the Emotions of Others

Michael McKeon  
(Rutgers University, New Brunswick, USA)

**Abstract** How did eighteenth-century British authors encounter, and respond to, this question: are we able to feel the emotions of other people? How did the dominance of empirical epistemology shape their responses? During this period, the ideas of the aesthetic, and then realism, were developed on the explicit model of scientific or experimental knowledge by Dryden, Addison, Fielding, and Johnson. The key to this analogy was the notion that both kinds of knowledge are virtual products of mental operations that abstract from the actual sense impressions that are, for empiricism, the foundation of all knowledge. The major difference between the scientific understanding and the aesthetic and realist imagination lies in the degree of distance each takes from the senses. The distance taken by the imagination is comparatively moderate, as can be seen in the fact that the virtual images that are its product still reflect the appearance of the actual nature from which they are abstracted. The distance taken by scientific understanding is far greater, producing not recognisable images of nature but fully abstracted concepts or numbers. Our knowledge of what other people feel comes not from any sensible connection we have to them, but from our imagination of what we might feel were we in the same circumstances as they are. This is especially evident in the response we have to artistic representations of others. But our imaginations mediate between us and others in all knowledge we have of the mental states of others; and although concepts are not produced by this knowledge, it is nonetheless a cognitive operation.

**Summary** 1 Scientific Method. – 2 Dramatic Method: The Two Unities. – 3 Dramatic Method: The Aesthetic. – 4.1 Narrative Method: The Claim to Historicity. – 4.2 Narrative Method: Realism. – 5 Coda.

**Keywords** Cognition. Understanding. Imagination. Actual. Virtual.

The aim of this essay is to describe how eighteenth-century British authors encountered, and responded to, the following question: are we able to feel the emotions of other people? This question, like many others, became explicit in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries under the influence of the emergence and authority of the new philosophy's empirical epistemology. In the past (to generalise), our access to the feelings of others was tacitly assumed to be entailed in being human. Adam Smith's celebrated answer to this question on the first page of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) makes clear the nature of the problem that had been created by the influence of empirical epistemology:



As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. (Raphael, Macfie 1982, 9)

According to empirical epistemology, all knowledge is a function of experience, which is to say of our sense impressions. We have no immediate knowledge of others because we do not share their bodies. Our empirical knowledge of others – in this case our sympathy with them – is based on our powers of imagination, by which, at one remove from their experience, we compare what they must feel and what we would feel were we under the same sensible conditions.

By mid-century, Smith's recourse to the imagination as a faculty of knowledge had become the established means of describing the operation of what contemporaries called 'moral knowledge', our cognition of human subjects, as distinct from 'natural knowledge', the cognition of nonhuman objects. This distinction and its terminology became explicit when attempts were made to transfer the procedures of scientific method, which had proved so tantalising in its promise, from the acquisition of natural knowledge to that moral knowledge. I will return to this moment. But I will begin with a prior moment, when the cognition of human subjects was first confronted by the new standards of empirical epistemology. The context in which this problem emerged was that of drama and its reception, and it was the ground from which grew the answer to the question with which I began: how are we able to feel the emotions of other people? This is also how the ideas of the aesthetic, and then realism, came to be formulated, long before those terms themselves were invented.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Scientific Method

In John Dryden's dialogic essay *Of Dramatic Poesy* (1667), the debate begins with a powerful panegyric to the new philosophy as superior to both ancient science and modern poetry. In the words of one of the speakers, Crites,

Is it not evident in these last hundred years (when the study of philosophy has been the business of all the virtuosi in Christendom) that

<sup>1</sup> The aesthetic is the general category. 'Realism', a sub-category of the aesthetic, was formulated in order to specify the ideas entailed in the aesthetic to what had by then emerged as the dominant modern form of narrative, the novel.

almost a new nature has been revealed to us? that more errors of the school have been detected, more useful experiments in philosophy have been made, more noble secrets in optics, medicine, anatomy, astronomy discovered, than in all those credulous and dotting ages from Aristotle to us? so true it is, that nothing spreads more fast than science, when rightly and generally cultivated. (Watson 1962, 26)

In 1765, Samuel Johnson explicitly endorsed a quantitative measure by which to judge the value of a literary author, testifying to the extraordinary prestige that the model of scientific cognition had attained over the past century: “To works [...] of which the excellence is not absolute and definite, but gradual and comparative; to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but appealing wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem” (Sherbo 1968, 59). Midway between these two literary-critical milestones, Joseph Addison added his own critical milestone in 1712 by setting out to understand if the arts, and particularly literature, can be said to afford us knowledge, and if so how that knowledge might be described. His procedure was to incorporate the model of scientific cognition within his analysis by explicitly comparing what he called the pleasures of the imagination with the pleasures of the understanding.

The comparison was challenging. The new philosophy required a standard of empirical demonstrability that dictated an inductive method of inquiry that, in the words of Francis Bacon (*The new Organon*, 1620), “derives axioms from the senses and particulars, rising by a gradual and unbroken ascent, [...] opening and laying out [...] a road for the human understanding direct from the sense, by a course of experiment orderly conducted and well built up”. Bacon describes the “gradual and unbroken ascent” of inductive progress: “[W]hat is founded on nature grows and increases; while what is founded on opinion varies but increases not”. Therefore scientific knowledge is “continually thriving and growing” (Ellis, Spedding 1905, 261, 280 and 274: Aphorisms nn. 19, 82 and 77). The *Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns* that preoccupied the latter half of the seventeenth century also entailed a quarrel of scientific and poetic cognition. Proponents of the new philosophy focused their attention on formulating the rudiments of experimental method, which could not function in the case of poetry because of its basic difference from scientific knowledge. In the words of Bernard le Bovier Fontenelle in 1688: “if the moderns are able to improve continually on the ancients, the fields in which they are working must be of a kind that allows progress”. Eloquence and poetry, he continues, “depend for their effect primarily on the liveliness of the

imagination”, which “has no need of a long sequence of experiments”.<sup>2</sup> But science “depend[s] upon precision of thought which improves with extreme slowness, and is always improving”<sup>3</sup> (Elledge-Schier 1970, 362).

In 1667, Thomas Sprat wrote of the members of the Royal Society: “Those, to whom the Conduct of the *Experiment* is committed, [...] after they have perform’d the *Trial*, [...] bring all the *History* of its *Process* back again to the Test. Then comes in the second great Work of the *Assembly*; which is to *judge* and *resolve* upon the Matter of *Fact*” (Sprat 1667, 99). Echoing Bacon’s personification of nature in *New Organon*, Sprat continues: “In this part of their Employment, they us’d to take an exact View of the Repetition of the whole Course of the *Experiment*; here they observ’d all the *Chances*, and the *Regularities* of the Proceeding; what *Nature* does willingly, what constrain’d; what with its own Power, what by the succours of Art” (99). The personification of nature aims to express the central function of experiment, the separation of artificial variables from the natural constant. This requires the repetition of experiments under varying conditions of time, place and personnel. According to Robert Hooke, master experimentalist of the Royal Society, “it were very desirable that both Observations and Experiments should be divers times repeated, and that at several Seasons and with several Circumstances, both of the Mind and Persons, Times, Place, Instruments and Materials” (Waller 1705, 61-2). These are the “ways by which Nature may be trac’d, by which we may be able to find out the material Efficient and Instrumental Causes of divers Effects, not too far removed beyond the reach of our Senses” (61-2). And, as William Wotton emphasised, controlling for variables also required the precision of quantitative measure rather than qualitative distinctions: “*Mathematical* and *Physical Sciences* [...] are Things which have no Dependence upon the Opinions of Men for their Truth; they will admit of fixed and undisputed *Mediums* of Comparison and Judgment: [...] [I]t may be always debated, who have been the best Orators, or who the best Poets; yet it cannot always be a Matter of Controversie, who have been the best *Geometers, Arithmeticians, Astronomers, Musicians, Anatomists, Chymists, Botanists*, or the like [...] The Thing contended for [...] is, the *Knowledge of Nature* [...] In order to this, it will be necessary, (1.) To find out all the several Affections and Properties of Quantity, abstractedly considered; [...] (2.) To collect great Numbers of Observations, and

2 Translated by Hughes as “experiences.” In French *expérience* means both experience and experiment; Fontenelle appears to refer to the latter.

3 “[A]fin que les modernes puissent toujours enchérir sur les anciens, il faut que les choses soient d’une espèce à le permettre. L’éloquence et la poésie [...] dépendent principalement de la vivacité de l’imagination; [...] et la vivacité de l’imagination n’a pas besoin d’une longue suite d’expériences [...] Mais [les sciences] dépendent de la justesse du raisonnement, qui se perfectionne avec une extrême lenteur, et se perfectionne toujours”.

to make a vast Variety of Experiments upon all sorts of Natural Bodies". Mathematicians make "every Conclusion depend upon such a Chain of Premises already proved, that if one link were broke, the whole Chain fell in Pieces" (Wotton 1694, 78-9 and 340).

## 2 Dramatic Method: The Two Unities

Continuous progress; quantification; experiment; repetition; controlling for variables. These essential features of scientific cognition had no apparent methodological equivalents in artistic cognition. Could the imaginative arts even be said to be a mode of knowledge? More optimistically, was there a general principle underlying and justifying experimental method that might be put into practice by other means? Addison does not ask this question in so many words. But in aligning and comparing the poetic imagination and scientific understanding, he recurs to the basic premise, and paradox, of Baconian theory: first, the knowledge of nature must proceed through sense experience; second, the knowledge of nature must be abstracted, distanced, and generalised from the multiple and variable circumstances of time, place and person under which it is impressed upon the senses. In dramatic theory, one means of emulating the success of science was ready to hand in the neoclassical dogma of the three unities – not in the doctrine itself but in its refutation, which in turn generated a positive insight into the power of abstraction from sense experience peculiar to the arts.

English drama was thought by some to be inferior both to ancient and to modern French drama because it failed to observe the two unities of time and place.<sup>4</sup> Dryden accepts the challenge in *Of Dramatic Poesy*. In the view of Crites, English drama is formally flawed because it tends not to maintain the rule that the amount of time and the extent of space undertaken to perform a given play are quantitatively speaking "as near as can be" to the duration and the dimensions that are represented within that play (Watson 1962, 28). It is not clear whether the literalism of this rule owes to the influence of French critical dogmatism, to the new philosophy's perceived threat to the epistemological vulnerability of theatrical illusionism, or to some mixture of causes. In Dryden's essay, it is clear that the danger of forgoing the two unities is the loss of credibility. If the dramatic representation is to be credible to its spectators, their theatrical experience must be as close as possible to that of the characters: representation aspires to spatio-temporal presence.

Dryden's response to this rule is that it misconceives the nature of artistic representation and the kind of belief it requires: "For what is more

4 Aristotle's third unity, that of action, was uncontroversial; most commentators recognised that it was important and that Aristotle had affirmed it.

ridiculous,” says another speaker, Lisideius, “than to represent an army with a drum and five men behind it, all which the hero of the other side is to drive in before him; or to see a duel fought, and one slain with two or three thrusts of the foils, which we know are so blunted that we might give a man an hour to kill another in good earnest with them[?]” (Watson 1962, 51) In replying to Lisideius, Neander acutely addresses this more general level of the argument: “For why may not our imagination as well suffer itself to be deluded with the probability of it as with any other thing in the play? For my part, I can with as great ease persuade myself that the blows which are struck are given in good earnest, as I can that they who strike them are kings or princes, or those persons which they represent” (62). In other words, artistic representation calls for a species of belief in what imitates empirical actuality but is manifestly not, in those immediate terms, actual. In fact its credibility depends not on the illusion of spatio-temporal presence but on something like its opposite.

In the eighteenth century, Dryden’s justification of dramatic belief is followed most famously by Addison, Burke and Johnson, and the equivalent justification of narrative belief by Fielding and Sterne. Most of these arguments are made in reference to the standard of scientific cognition – and even, in the case of the latter two, in more or less explicit refutation of the dramatic doctrine of the two unities. But only Addison is inspired to explicitly compare the artistic or ‘aesthetic’ imagination with scientific understanding, and he thereby enables us to recognise the aesthetic mode of dependence on, and abstraction from, the senses that is analogous to, but distinct from, the experimental mode developed by the new philosophy. This suggests two aspects of their proximity. First, the imagination and the understanding are not fundamentally different operations, but occupy different positions on the same continuum. Second, the imagination and the understanding are comparable in their capacity to produce pleasure. The reciprocal implication is that if the operations of the understanding are pleasurable, the operations of the imagination are cognitive. By this means the aesthetic imagination becomes intelligible as a kind of knowledge.

### 3 Dramatic Method: The Aesthetic

In *Spectator* no. 411 (21 June 1712), Addison writes: “[t]he Pleasures of the Imagination, taken in their full Extent, are not so gross as those of Sense, nor so refined as those of the Understanding”. That is, the imagination mediates between the senses and the understanding, and its pleasures are less “refined” or detached than those of the understanding because its distance from the senses is not as extreme. The fully abstracted pleasures of the understanding, Addison writes, are finally “more preferable” than those of the imagination “because they are founded on some new Knowl-

edge or Improvement in the Mind of Man”, reasons that recall the norms of demonstrable truth and incremental progress emphasised by Bacon and his followers. But although less refined because more embedded in the realm of the senses, the pleasures of the imagination have their own proper virtues: they are “as great and as transporting as the other. A beautiful Prospect delights the Soul, as much as a Demonstration”. Such views “are more obvious, and more easie to be acquired” and “do not require such a Bent of Thought as is necessary to our more serious Employments”, which demand “too violent a Labour of the Brain” (Bond 1965, 537-9).<sup>5</sup> From this account we might extrapolate the contrasting forms in which the respective products of the two faculties are expressed. Whereas the imagination produces images that provide a virtual resemblance of the actual object, the greater intensity of the refining process through which the understanding puts its object is evident in the greater abstraction of its end-product, concepts or numbers.

According to Addison, however, the imaginative refining process has its own intensity. Over the course of his *Spectator* papers on the pleasures of the imagination, Addison describes the most extended conditions of refinement or detachment from the spatio-temporal presence of the senses of which the imagination is capable. This entails four degrees of detachment: vision detached from the other senses; the virtual imagination detached from actual sight; the representational from the visual imagination; and literate description from the other media of representation.<sup>6</sup> The key to the superiority of the reading experience over other modes of representation lies not only in its greater refinement of sense impressions, but also in the self-conscious activity of comparison that the distance afforded by reading enables. As Addison writes in nos. 416 and 418 (June 27, 30, 1712), this is “a new Principle of Pleasure, which is nothing else but the Action of the Mind, which *compares* the Ideas that arise from Words, with the Ideas that arise from the Objects themselves” (Bond 1965, 566-7; Addison’s italics). This new principle of pleasure, entailed in the comparison of ideas created by different media, is cognitive. It offers an opportunity to advance from a singular view of the world – one produced either by the ideas of it that derive from our sense perceptions or by the ideas of it that derive from the virtuality of descriptive language – to a comparative view of their simultaneity. Indeed, it is the detachment enabled by literate description that opens up a distance, and thereby posits a difference, between description and perception. One effect of this is a

5 Addison appears to have borrowed from Glanvill (Glanvill 1665, b2v-3r) and Sprat (Sprat 1667, 344) the contrast between the pleasures of the senses and those “innocent Pleasures” such “as a wise Man would not blush to take”, but to have transferred them from the understanding (that is, experiment) to the imagination (Bond 1965, 539).

6 I give a fuller account of this analysis in McKeon 2005, 366-8.

reflexive dialectic between the immediacy of the words on the page and a sense of their mediating function.

By juxtaposing the imagination and the understanding in this way Addison goes some distance toward meeting the challenge to the arts posed by the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns and its incipient separation out of the arts and the sciences. The challenge is met by theorising the imagination as an aesthetic and therefore an empirical faculty, based in sense experience but abstracted from it in a fashion both like and unlike the abstraction peculiar to the understanding. Like the understanding, the imagination is produced by sense impressions. Unlike the understanding, its detachment from the senses stops, as it were, halfway, producing an epistemological effect of reflexivity that has less cognitive power, but, because of its relative proximity to the senses, a greater representational force.

Addison's analysis allows him to restate Neander's defense of drama in a more positive register. Not only is a close approximation to actual time and place unneeded to maintain the belief of the dramatic spectator; it is detrimental to the kind of knowledge that is appropriate to drama. The emotions that are raised by the imagination are very different from the passions that are embedded in immediately sensible experience. The imaginative mediation of sense experience possesses its own system of refinement that filters out the brute materiality of the senses and purifies their emotional heft. Like Dryden, Addison demonstrates this in the case of drama, which seeks not to reflect time and place, but to control for them. The dramatic imagination abstracts far enough from the naturalness of sense impressions to exceed the illusion of nature's concrete presence that is sought by the naïve empiricism of the two unities, but not so far as to sacrifice, as scientific experiment does, nature's figural image.

This analysis explains why the debate over the kind of belief we invest in drama is so important, why Addison prefers the secondary or representational pleasures of the imagination to its primary or empirical pleasures, and why he prefers the experience of reading a play to that of watching its performance. In both cases, the superior pleasure that is enabled by taking a comparatively greater distance on nature is afforded by the doubled state of mind entailed in aesthetic cognition and its comparison of the sensible object and the imaginative image. In other words, the greatest pleasure of the imagination depends not just on the fact of artistic representation but on our consciousness of that fact, which grounds our reflexive awareness of both the artistic representation and the sensible object it evokes.

### 3.1 Narrative Method: The Claim to Historicity

So the germ of aesthetic cognition and its answer to the question of how, under the aegis of empirical epistemology, we can feel the emotions of others, can be found in debates about dramatic credibility. Aesthetic reflexivity, what Addison calls a “new principle of pleasure”, is crucial to the second stage of narrative as well as to dramatic development, and defines the epistemology of the new novel genre. As the aesthetic evolution of drama begins in rejecting the naïve empiricism of the two unities, so the aesthetic evolution of narrative begins with the rejection of the naïve empirical claim to historicity. The claim to historicity amounts to the pretence that the fictional characters and events one reads about have an actual existence – in its own way asserting, like the dramatic doctrine of the two unities, the transparency and immediacy of the experience that narrative narrates. By the same token, what replaces the narrative claim to historicity is, as in the dramatic aesthetic, the recognition that the greatest pleasure results from an experience not of immediacy but of mediacy, a detachment from the presence and pleasures of the senses sufficient to foreground and compare the difference between them and the pleasures of representation. This experience of difference is the precondition for the reader’s experience of engagement with what is represented, in particular for the psychological identification with characters, which depends on the recognition of their difference from ourselves. And the experience of difference is created by the self-conscious reference, on the level of narrative content, to the formal method and framework that are responsible for the version of reality we read.

### 3.2 Narrative Method: Realism

What Dryden and Addison achieve for the dramatic aesthetic is paralleled by Henry Fielding’s achievement for narrative realism. The parallel is deepened by our sense that Fielding has modelled his liberation of narrative from the demands of the claim to historicity on the precedent of drama and its liberation from the demands of the two unities. In the “Matter Prefatory in Praise of *Biography*” at the beginning of Book III of his *Joseph Andrews* (1742), Fielding distinguishes between a trivial and a profound understanding of history. Most historians, he writes, are so preoccupied with getting right – by quantitative measure, if possible – the empirical facts of time and place that they may as well be called ‘Chorographers’ and ‘Topographers’. Fielding sees himself as a ‘Biographer’ because he is concerned instead with the faithful representation of what Aristotle calls the unity of action and Fielding calls “the Actions and Characters of Men”. He gives the term ‘fact’ a twist by applying it to this purely qualitative



component of historical narration: “the Facts we deliver may be relied on, tho’ we often mistake the Age and Country wherein they happened” (Brooks-Davies, Keymer 1999, 162).

But as in scientific experiment, empirical quantification – of little importance in assessing an individual datum of experience – becomes crucial in the process of abstraction that for Fielding is the means by which character is best represented: “I question not but several of my Readers will know the Lawyer in the Stage-Coach, the Moment they hear his Voice. [...] I describe not Men, but Manners; not an Individual, but a Species. Perhaps it will be answered, Are not the Characters then taken from Life? To which I answer in the Affirmative; nay, I believe I might aver, that I have writ little more than I have seen. The Lawyer is not only alive, but hath been so these 4000 Years” (Brooks-Davies, Keymer 1999, 164-6). By proclaiming that he has represented not an individual but a species – a generalised composite of many individuals – Fielding not only rejects the naïve claim to historicity (which is no better than basing his representation on a single sense impression), but also replaces that claim by the implication that his abstracted lawyer, divested of extraneous variables, represents a characterological constant: the general type of the lawyer species.

So Book III, chapter I of *Joseph Andrews* exemplifies the self-conscious engagement in reflexive reference that enables the reader’s detachment from the representation, and thereby the pleasure available to her in comparing the actual lawyers she has known with Fielding’s virtual lawyer. But it is only the most explicit and extended of the novel’s frequent narratorial intrusions into the text, which, by drawing attention to its process of representation in the very act of doing it, ensure that the conditions for this pleasure are continuously available to the reader of *Joseph Andrews*. Not long after this chapter, Fielding’s narrator tacitly invites the reader to anticipate the climax of the plot by deploying some of the most familiar conventions of family romance – baby-stealing gypsies, the tell-tale birthmark – then begins his narration of the following day by personifying morning as a “beautiful young Lady” who “rose from her Bed [...] with a Countenance blooming with fresh Youth and Sprightliness, like Miss \_\_\_\_\_” – at which point a note directs us to the bottom of the page, where we read: “*Whoever the Reader pleases*” (Brooks-Davies, Keymer 1999, 196). Elsewhere I have described the novelistic replacement of the claim to historicity by realism as preserving but reconceiving the crucial quality of particularity, its concreteness, by abstracting it from the variable of actuality. This reconception is fundamental not only to the emergence of the novel but also to a number of other cultural developments: the affirmation of satire over libel; the ingenious construction of the law of obscene libel; debates on the two unities; and the theorisation of discursive pedagogy (McKeon 2005, 108-9, and 292; see also 95-9; 313-16; 368-76; 451-4, 479-80, 493-4).

I have awarded to Fielding the honour of first having formulated the theory of aesthetic or realist cognition. But what about *Pamela*? In the second edition (published only three months after the first), Richardson's revised paratexts show his ambivalence about the utility of having claimed historicity in the first edition (Keymer, Wakely 2001, 3-4, and 506-7). Yet we can already sense his scepticism about the naïve empiricism of the claim to historicity even before he compromises his role as Pamela's editor in this fashion. Up to and beyond her abduction to his Lincolnshire estate, Mr. B continues to see Pamela as a romancer – that is, as at best deluded and at worst a liar – because he has been judging her letters against not only his own self-interest but also his conviction of what has actually transpired (Keymer, Wakely 2001, 32, 69, and 93). But after spying on Pamela's artless sorting of her clothing into three bundles, Mr. B reports to her that “tho' I am not pleased with all you said [...] yet you have mov'd me more to admire you than before” – so much so that his feelings now make him, “as I tell you, love you to Extravagance”. This broaches the peculiar pleasure of the doubled state of aesthetic cognition, which compares the actuality of what he has perceived to the virtuality of his emotion-infused perspective, which Mr. B is aware has something to do with the fact that he is “quite overcome with your charming manner of Writing” (Keymer, Wakely 2001, 84). Experiencing the authenticity of Pamela's self-representation in his detached role as her reader, Mr. B discovers the grounds for his sympathetic identification with her.

The consummation of Mr. B's powers of aesthetic cognition comes later, after his desire for sexual intercourse with Pamela has been displaced by his desire for discursive intercourse with her – a displacement marked by Mrs. Jewkes' memorable demand that he stop “dilly-dallying” (Keymer, Wakely 2001, 203). Once he is able to read the third parcel of Pamela's writing – closely linked to her clothing by parallel parcelization and by the fact that she must “all undress me in a manner to untack them” – Mr. B experiences a profound conjunction of empirically actual and emotionally virtual perspectives. Pamela already has protested against his need to read her account of matters that he himself has just witnessed, assuming that it is her empirical accuracy that is at issue: “[A]ll that they contain you know, as well as I”, she says, “But I don't know, said he, the light you put Things in”. In what feels like a parody of maintaining the two unities, Mr. B. proceeds to read Pamela's account of her close encounter with suicide at the same time that he slowly walks along the path of her description, pausing at each stage to experience the overlay of physical actuality by virtual narration: “Why this, said he, my Girl, is a very moving Tale. [...] And when he came to my Reasonings, about throwing myself into the Water, he said, Walk gently before; and seem'd so moved, that he turn'd away his Face from me. [...] O my dear Girl! You have touch'd me sensibly with your mournful Relation, and your sweet Reflections upon it” (235, and 239-41).

In the paratexts to the second edition of *Pamela*, Richardson includes an account of a seven-year-old boy's response to hearing read aloud these same passages that Mr. B reads as he traverses the physical setting to which they refer. They have a remarkable affective 'Power' over the boy, from whom is heard "a Succession of heart-heaving Sobs; [...] his little Sides swell'd, as if they wou'd burst, [... and] his Eyes were quite lost, in his Tears". He "is perhaps the youngest of *Pamela's Converts*" (Keymer, Wakely 2001, 515). Here the physical actuality with which emotional response to Pamela's story is correlated is not the narrated setting but the responsive body, a somatic medium that may elevate psychological identification to its highest pitch.

For the reformed Mr. B, the content of Pamela's writings is no longer limited to the representation of what happened that may be factually false; it also contains the emotional truth of its formal representation, how it happened from Pamela's perspective. And Mr. B's sympathetic mode of reading provides us actual readers with a model for the aesthetic approach we too might bring to the putatively factual narrative we are reading. A century later, 'realism' came to designate the specifically narrative mode of the aesthetic, and what it designates is not 'the real' but something we are pleased to read as though it were real, a story that is not history but comparable to history, faithful not to this or that actuality but to the abstracted virtuality of the kinds of experience we tend to have. At this level, it is of no consequence if Mr. B or Pamela ever had a real existence. And in this sense, novels are experiments that capture the concrete experience of the senses not by reproducing it in all its actual particularity but by controlling for the variables of time, place, and persons so as to reveal, as Hooke phrased it about laboratory experiments, "the ways by which Nature may be trac'd, [...] not too far removed beyond the reach of our Senses" (quoted above).

In *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767), Laurence Sterne picks up Fielding's realist reflexivity and runs with it so far as totally to subsume the pleasures of the senses within those of the imagination and content within form - or so it might seem. It is probably more accurate to say that Sterne adapts representational reflexivity to the genre of the novel even more intricately and rigorously than Fielding does. And like Fielding, Sterne evinces an inclusive idea of the aesthetic by explicitly alluding to the dramatic controversies over the two unities. So when Tristram supposes the reader will accuse him of violating "the unity [...] of time" we are made to understand that Sterne's choice to perform in narrative not drama transforms the disparity between the actual, empirical time of representation and the virtual time that is represented (Anderson 1980, 74). For, on the one hand, the time taken to represent *Tristram Shandy* is an indeterminate interplay of two temporalities, the period of writing and the period of reading. On the other, Tristram works so hard to represent this interplay with accuracy

and precision that it becomes the major portion of the representation itself, reflexively and exhaustively thematizing form as content and leaving no room for half of what Sterne's title-page announces will be the substance of this novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

As a matter of fact, we do get Sterne's 'Life' as well as his 'Opinions'. But the content or plot of *Tristram Shandy* is so implicated within its formal mode of narration that it takes some work on our part to see that Sterne's form, which might be described as enacting the failure of the narrative line, is coextensive with his story, the failure of the Shandy family line to reproduce itself owing to Tristram's overdetermined infertility, a story whose implacable narration also is responsible for the non-linear infertility of Sterne's form. But on another level, *Tristram Shandy* is formally more fertile than any novel had been, because in attending to the mental activity of its narrator and its putative readers it represents in unprecedentedly comprehensive terms its own process of representation. The mental activity we experience in coming to terms with this mode of narration is nothing if not cognitive, and the emotions it produces in us are as startlingly powerful as are those exchanged by Walter and Uncle Toby in their wordless reciprocity of good feeling.

We may be tempted to take Sterne's strategy as strictly negative, a parody of empiricism that reduces it to absurdity. But Sterne no less than Fielding is clearing the ground for a positive view of novelistic realism. As a matter of fact, he is a Lockean empiricist not only in jest but also in earnest, as he claims at one point to his reader: "Pray, Sir, in all the reading which you have ever read, did you ever read such a book as *Locke's Essay upon the Human Understanding*? [...] It is a history.--A history! of who? what? where? when? Don't hurry yourself.--It is a history-book, Sir, [...] of what passes in a man's own mind" (Anderson 1980, 61). Scepticism, the motor of empiricism, validates the trajectory of Tristram's inquiry downward and inward, into the mental interiority that is the next frontier of reflexive narration.

#### 4 Coda

Earlier in this essay I anticipated the moment when philosophers formally undertook the challenge of applying the procedures of knowing objects to the project of knowing human subjects. In the second sentence of his *Essay* (1689), Locke announces his ambition in the terms of Tristram's inquiry: "The Understanding, like the Eye, whilst it makes us see, and perceive all other Things, takes no notice of it self: And it requires Art and Pains to set it at a distance, and make it its own Object" (Nidditch, 1979, I, 1, §1, 43). Locke is in no doubt regarding the difficulty of his enterprise, in which the cardinal principle of understanding, the division of the subject from the

object of knowledge, would seem to come up against the reflexive interplay entailed in making the understanding 'its own Object'. Two decades before *Tristram Shandy* begins to be published, Hume takes up Locke's problem with a good deal more skepticism about the ultimate viability of the project.

On its title-page, Hume announces that his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) is "[a]n attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects". But in its Introduction he warns that "[m]oral philosophy has, indeed, this peculiar disadvantage, which is not found in natural, that in collecting its experiments, it cannot make them purposely, with premeditation" because "'tis evident this reflection and premeditation would so disturb the operation of my natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phaenomenon" (Selby-Bigge, Nidditch 1978, XI and XVIII-XIX). In the empiricism of philosophical inquiry, reflexivity is a problem because it threatens to compromise the full degree of distance required by the understanding to disembody the nature of the thing itself, in this case the human mind and its operations, as an abstract concept. In the empiricism of the aesthetic, however, reflexivity marks the crucially lesser distance that the imagination takes on its object, signifying that what is being represented is not only the constancy and invariability of the mental operations by which we seek to know that object, but also, as abstract figuration rather than full abstraction, the formal process of its representation. In the aesthetic, the arts discover a mode of experiment, peculiarly their own, whose aim is an empirical removal from sensible actuality to imaginative virtuality that bears with it the evidence of that removal.

However, Hume pursues so relentlessly the problem he has uncovered in the experimentalism of moral philosophy that it infects the experimentalism of natural philosophy as well. There is no empirical basis, he finds, for our knowledge of the world that lies beyond us. What we take to be the constancy of the natural object once experiment has abstracted away all variables is really the constancy and invariability of the mental operations by which we seek to know that object. Hume famously compares our empirical experience of external objects to the experience of a dramatic spectator: "The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations" (Selby-Bigge, Nidditch 1978, I, pt. 4, sec. VI, 255). The difference is that in empirical experience we never leave the theatre because there is no outside that is accessible to this inside. Addison's distinction between the work of the understanding and that of the imagination disappears. The proper term for all empirical knowledge, Hume asserts, is not understanding but imagination: "Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible: Let us chace our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those percep-

tions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass. This is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd" (Selby-Bigge, Nidditch 1978, I, pt. 2, sec. VI, 67-8). Elsewhere Hume paraphrases 'the understanding' as "the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" (Selby-Bigge, Nidditch 1978, I, pt. 4, sec. VII, 267). Knowledge is a reflexive act of self-knowledge. Where previous authors have tried to vindicate the arts as an aesthetic, hence empirical way of knowing, Hume radically reverses the process of accommodation by finding that all empirical knowledge is an act of the imagination.

This is not, of course, where Hume leaves his own practice as a moral philosopher, nor does natural philosophy – science – find itself painted into Hume's radically sceptical corner. If anything, Hume's stringent logic in the first book of his *Treatise* may have drawn attention to the need to understand more precisely the difference, in degree of distance from the realm of sense experience, that distinguishes scientific from aesthetic experimentalism. And although posterity will become fascinated by the notion of realism, the proximity of scientific and aesthetic cognition, so fruitful over the course of the eighteenth century, will begin to dissolve thereafter and be replaced by the modern conviction in the conceptual division of knowledge that was a mere byproduct of the temporal Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns.

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## The Actor, the Mirror, the Soul and the Sylph Finding the Passions

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**Abstract** The ‘unnatural’ mixed emotions of Chimène, heroine of Pierre Corneille’s *Le Cid* (1636), almost destroyed the dramatist. The 17th century brought strong new attempts to create a taxonomy of clearly defined and acceptably knowable ‘passions’. Stimulated by Descartes, Charles Le Brun produced his famous graphic representations of individual emotions as physically expressed in the face. Such catalogues of emotions attracted English theorists of acting, such as Aaron Hill whose *Art of Acting* interested Samuel Richardson. A standard feat of English poets from Dryden to Gray and Collins is to run through the passions, briefly exhibiting the activities and nature of the distinctive emotions. That the passions could be so well noted and imitated produced new problems, rendering representation of the passions doubtful, chicanery lacking in soul, as the acting of Garrick seemed to Diderot. New interest in mixed emotions and more fluid affections turned against the single passion and the encyclopedic list. Literary works moved towards a more dynamic and changeable account of emotional states and possibilities. Innovative large mirrors brought the self more literally to the eye, stimulating reflection on variability; we glimpse the possibility of future emotions and affective states not yet known. Mixed emotions and half shades become more engrossing than grand passions. Pope’s Sylphs, rooted in Paracelsian fiction, proffer new versions of both self and emotions, or emotional states. The mirror becomes not a diagnostic instrument detecting moral defect, but, as in Richardson’s novels, an opening to a possible future self.

**Summary** 1 Theatre and Painting: The Actor’s Face. – 2 Mimesis and Its Threat to Soul. – 3 Passionate Catalogues of the Poets. – 4 Self-Reflection, Mixed Emotions: The Mirror. – 5 Magical Transience and the Fairy-Tale. – 6 Sylphs.

**Keywords** Passions. Seventeenth-century theatre. Acting. Eighteenth-century poetry. Representation of the soul.

One of the noticeable things about the very noticeable seventeenth century is an ambitious endeavour to comprehend and categorise human emotion. Drama and religion have long stimulated our interest in feeling and the representation of feelings. Theatre is a site of innovation and inquiry. Athenian theatre gives rise to the first great work of literary theory – Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Aristotle makes a move so enormous that it becomes invisible; he uncouples Greek theatre – and theatrical works – from religion. You would not know by reading his text alone that the plays function in a religious celebration dedicated to a god. ‘What has this to do with Dionysus?’ Aristotle



studies human relationships and reactions as recorded in satisfying structures and strong poetic language. We are free to consider human emotions in themselves – if we can figure out those ‘selves.’ In Aristotle’s eyes, the most important emotions are not those of the character, but emotions genuinely experienced by the audience. The audience is ultimately to feel – preferably in unison – Pity and Fear.

Narrative fiction lacks the social simultaneity that theatrical fiction supplies. In the presence of our own allied emotional potential, we attend to ‘characters’ pressed by peculiar urgencies. Oedipus said things he did not intend to say. This man of mystery is the reverse of mysterious. Inglorious areas of uncomfortable normality are noticeable in his quick resentment, his flashes into hot temper. Proceeding through a repertoire at speed makes him appear complex, even before he is fully entitled to be called so. It is always freshly surprising to realise that Athenian theatre was a matter of *masks*, because the dramatists are so good at tracing nuances. But the characters wear masks to themselves.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Theatre and Painting: The Actor’s Face

In the theatre of the Early Modern/Modern world, the ‘unmasked’ face must present itself and do a good deal of the work. The French were pioneers in theory of emotion, so I will begin with French discoveries. The advance of theatre in France in the seventeenth century called for a fresh understanding of what exactly was being represented. The great plastic art of oil painting assumed a fresh theoretical role in describing and categorising the emotions. The work of Charles Le Brun, court painter to Louis XIV, is of singular importance. Le Brun’s ideas are influenced by René Descartes’ *Les Passions de l’Âme* (1649). Descartes attempted to supply

1 During the last 35 years or so major work on the passions and emotions has turned towards discussions of ‘sensibility’. Barker-Benfield (1992) offered a basis of definition and historical considerations. Interesting works relating feelings and literary expression followed hard upon, such as Barbara M. Benedict (1994) and Adela Pinch (1996). The collection edited by Stephen Gaukroger [1998] (2014) presents a wide field with a philosophic emphasis. Gaukroger’s own *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility. Science and the Shaping of Modernity* (2010) offers a new view of the cultural drama in which the fixed and stolid physical (the sense-informing world) is replaced or surpassed by that which is more flexible and less simply grounded: “affective states come to underpin cognitive ones” (409). The brain, however, retorts with fresh claims for the physical. Daniel M. Gross (2006) gives us a larger *panopticon* in which to play with feeling. Tobias Menely (2015) returns us to the claim of the human and other animals. In the conflict between the sensible real and the interpretive sensibility in supplying our understanding of emotion, I am most interested in the pull of the flickering representation of what is momentary if intense, and – whether cognitive or affective – subject to transience. Mixture, transience and uncertainty must apply to what we call the Brain (instead of the Mind) as well as to what we once called ‘the Heart.’

taxonomy, to make the passions 'known knowns.' He lists six emotions: Wonder, Love, Hatred, Desire, Joy, and Sadness (the 2015 film *Inside Out* brings the number down to five). Le Brun treated the King and a select audience to a discourse upon expression. He then produced a printed work with ingenious engravings depicting the individual passions. These figures offer keys to both the person and the moment:

Passion is a Motion of the soul, residing in the Sensitive Part thereof, which makes it pursue that which the Soul thinks for its good, or avoid that which it thinks hurtful to it: And for the most part, whatsoever causes Passion in the Soul, makes some Action in the Body. Being true then, that the greatest part of the Passions of the Soul produce Bodily Actions; it is necessary that we should know what those Actions of the Body are, which express the Passions, and what Action is. (Le Brun 1701, 3)

The body is forced into the employment of the soul, providing constant physical expression. More immediately, everything (as Descartes said) comes from the Brain:

But if it be true, that we have one part where the Soul more immediately exercises its Functions: and that this part is the Brain; we may also say, that the Face is the part where it more particularly makes appear what it feels. And as we have said, that the Gland in the middle of the Brain, is the place where the Soul receives the Images of the Passions; so the Eye-brow is the part of the Face where the Passions are best distinguished. (13)

Le Brun visually emphasises the role of the eye-brows and the muscles that work them; see his illustrations of "Scorn" and "Hatred" (fig. 8 in Le Brun's text) and "Terror" (fig. 20). From the invisible Soul and the more physical but yet invisible Gland in the Brain, we come to the satisfactory physical play of the Face. Here is the incarnate emotion. The term 'passion' emphasises the person being played upon, but the emotions playing over a face become active entities in themselves. Emotion develops a map, the body is a landscape as literal and metaphorical as the geography of Madeline de Scudéry's *Carte du Tendre*.

Actors and those who theorise about acting can both show and tell how a person *should* look and move in the grip of a strong emotion. *Love* and *Anger* - in their variants - are particularly useful, and also entertaining to broadcast and behold. The endeavour of Reason to restrain feeling can be dramatically and graphically described with the aid of the faithful

body.<sup>2</sup> Sensibility can be read, even if perusal is dangerous to peruse. Alert awareness of another's sensibility assures us that we are never dealing with the entirely unknown; rage and grief and disdain have their identifying marks – like dangerous and delightful animals.

Richardson's friend Aaron Hill, the dramatist, pays tribute to Le Brun in *The Art of Acting. Deriving RULES from a NEW PRINCIPLE, for Touching the PASSIONS in a Natural Manner* (1746). Hill describes this work on the title page as "An ESSAY of General Use... *But Adapted, in Particular, to the STAGE: with View To quicken the Delight of Audiences, And form a Judgment of the ACTORS, in their Good, or Bad, Performances*" (Hill 1746). Hill seems to be educating theatre critics rather than actors, but this may be the result of tact in finding an audience. Hill's approach, taking off from Le Brun, is fundamentally physical. See what the body can do with its mechanism and parts under the influence of an emotion! Although Cicero told us that every passion marks the face, Hill's new system discovers "*that the FACE forms the PASSIONS*" ("Dedication to the Earl of Chesterfield", Hill 1746, IV). Catch "the peculiar LOOK, adapted to each Passion" (IV). Ascertain the basic unconscious movements of the face in a certain feeling-state. Become an acute observer; make these unconscious motions conscious in yourself. You can read others and, if necessary, deceive them. Get your own face right and the other muscles will follow:

From the Optic Nerves, by a direct, and necessary *Continuity*, the Muscles of the *Face* and *Neck* (as holding actual *Contact* with those visual ones) must take their Bias *from* them; and, so doing, must extend the Disposition to those stronger Muscles, which sustain the *Breast*; and *Heart*. (V)

Descartes' emphasis on the machinery of the animal comes into its own with the *machinery* of the human face and body. In his "Dedication" to Lord Chesterfield Hill emphasises the body as mechanism:

what we commonly call AIR, in bodily Department, (whether in the refin'd, and elegant, or coarse, uncultivated, Habits) is no other than a mere Effect of fibrous *Mechanism*: – a taught, or natural, Configuration, of impulsive, or remissive, *Sinews*. (V)

2 I have heard a lecture describing how the tragic actor in seventeenth-century France should indicate his emotions of attraction and repulsion. The central exhibited contest is between *Feelings* and *Reason*. If you passion inclines towards the other speaker, you incline your *poitrine*, or *Cœur*, but tilt your head away. If your head agrees with the other's discourse but your heart protests, then you incline your *tête* towards the speaker, but turn your *poitrine* away.

If your “fibrous Mechanism” can be taught refinement, then surely nowadays a Bourgeois Gentleman could learn to pass muster. Any actor can learn to – convincingly – assume grief, rage and love as well as noble deportment. Here is a return of the *bête-machine* with a vengeance! The body is a machine for living that can be trained and attuned to emotional expression. Emotions are not ‘in’ the person but in the body. Emotion is real only when incarnate in the body – at which point it may cease to become ‘real’ passion and become something else. The intelligible map is coded deliberately and readily subjected to decoding.

A few special problems confront portrait painters and actors of the eighteenth century: subjects of portraits were not to lose status. Important rules governed upper-class expression of emotion. Smiling is the duty of the lower orders; when not the loutish grin, the smile signals the extracted politeness of servants, who are obsequious and attentive. It is also difficult to represent, since (unlike a photograph) the formal portrait requires multiple sittings over different days. The artist who painted Mr. Darcy could evidently achieve it, although the hovering smile may be painted in by Elizabeth the viewer. Grief, like smiling, should not be public. In England for a couple of centuries ladies were not permitted to attend funerals, presumably lest they cry and ‘make a scene’. Funerals of the upper classes were all-male affairs. Feudal inheritance and the legacy of Stoicism valued the immovability of high persons. Betrayal of emotion shows a looseness of soul suitable only to the lower orders. A good portrait ought to hint at a noble self-discipline that would always subdue urges to yield to passion. A capacity for *gravitas* especially in a crisis rendered an aristocrat the more charming and the more reliable (perhaps Richardson in portraying *Grandison* – just before the accession of George III – is endeavouring to restore rather than merely reflect this reality). This set of behaviours and ideals obviously conflicts with our current TV-addicted desire for emotional display – a conflict captured in the film *The Queen* (2006). TV is hungry for sensibility – or for mockery.

Eighteenth-century portraiture also had to find how to present rational and successful ruling-class persons in an interesting way. However self-controlled, the person portrayed should exhibit awareness of a current context, invoking the bigger world of dynamic expression rather than self-involvement. It can be argued, however, that sedate self-satisfaction is one of the primary emotions expressed in eighteenth-century portraiture; see, for example, Gainsborough’s *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*. One method of making members of the upper classes look less stern or insipid is to turn sitters into actors of a kind – a popular device well before Sir Joshua Reynolds made this a standard vocabulary of entertaining portraiture. Alexander Pope early notes this pictorial development of fashionable role-playing:

Whether the Charmer sinner it, or saint it,  
When Folly grows romantic, we must paint it.  
(Pope 1735, 6)

Perpetual cos-play might open an avenue admitting feeling. There are even quicker ways to access the emotional self, as Pope also notes of the induced variability of a modern lady:

Or her who in sweet Vicissitude appears  
Of Mirth and Opium, Ratafie and Tears.  
(10)

A decade later, far from regarding his own era as given to fitful and wilfully stimulated emotional display, Aaron Hill seems determined to regard the 1740s as emotionally stultified, almost irremediably arid. He generously gives credit to himself for loosening the passions in his era, setting them free among the English public with the noble aid of those emotional auxiliaries, the acting profession:

The Time shall come – (nor far the destin'd Day!)  
When Soul-touch'd Actors shall do more, than PLAY:  
When Passions flaming, from th'assisted Stage,  
Shall to taught Creatures fire a feeling Age!  
Tides of strong *Sentiment* sublimely roll,  
Deep'ning the dry Disgraces of the Soul;  
Pity, Fear, Sorrow, wash'd from Folly's Foam,  
Knock at Man's Breast, and find his Heart at Home.  
(Hill 1746, 8)

But can we truly be helped by actors? They might be held to complicate the problem. Do not they lead us to question the reality of the passions themselves?

## 2 Mimesis and Its Threat to Soul

Advice offered openly to actors contradicts our desire that the actors should express the truth of inner being, not make use of a bag of tricks. And yet, that is essentially the actor's job. Denis Diderot (himself a writer of plays and man of the theatre) expresses the complexity of the calling of the actor. An actor can express passions perfectly *because* he or she does *not* feel them. We can find certain distaste for what can be done perfectly in Diderot's essay *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (The Paradox of the Actor).

Diderot describes what he observed when the celebrated English actor David Garrick, a consummate professional, went through his routine of changes of emotion as a kind of parlour trick for friends in France:

What I am about to tell you, I've seen for myself.

Garrick passes his head between the two leaves of a door, and, in an interval of four or five seconds, his face passes successively from mad joy to moderated joy, from this joy to tranquillity, from tranquillity to surprise, from surprise to astonishment, from astonishment to sadness, from sadness to despondency, from despondency to fright, from fright to horror, from horror to despair, and he then rises back through each degree to the state from which he descended. Was his soul able to experience all these sensations and to execute, in concert with his face, this sort of game? I don't believe it at all, and neither do you. If you were to ask of this celebrated man to render the scene of the Little Fellow Pastrycook, he would play it for you; if you were to ask him suddenly for the scene from Hamlet, he would play it for you, equally ready to lament the fall of his little pastries and to follow the track of a dagger through the air.<sup>3</sup>

Diderot is fascinated by – and appalled at – the consummate ability to objectify the human world. The actor constructs a phantom 'self.' Through this phantom-face accurately observed emotions are taught to run. Garrick is thus able to seize upon his model to render satisfactorily – and at once – any emotion demanded.

*Mimesis* incarnate! A triumph of observation! Yes. But this is a kind of mechanization of the soul. If we know that the emotions are and can name, imitate and typify them – then do we really know emotion at all? The actor can be termed a great genius, Diderot admits. He or she can help us to understand the emotions. Yet this understanding is achieved by dint of transgressing nature and playing with the passions – even nullifying them. It is all a game of the eyebrows – or the pineal gland.

3 “Ce que je vais vous raconter, je l'ai vu. Garrick passe sa tête entre les deux battants d'une porte, et, dans l'intervalle de quart à cinq secondes, son visage passe successivement de la joie folle à la joie modérée, de cette joie à la tranquillité, de la tranquillité à la surprise, de la surprise à l'étonnement, de l'étonnement à la tristesse, de la tristesse à l'abattement, de l'abattement à l'effroi, de l'effroi à l'horreur, de l'horreur au désespoir, et remonte de ce dernier degré à celui d'où il était descendu. Est-ce que son âme a pu éprouver toutes ces sensations et exécuter, de concert avec son visage, cette espèce de gamme? Je n'en crois rien, ni vous non plus. Si vous lui demandiez à cet homme célèbre...la scène du Petit Garçon pâtissier, il vous la jouait; si vous lui demandiez toute de suite la scène d'Hamlet, il vous la jouait, également prêt à pleurer la chute de ses petit pâtés et à suivre dans l'air le chemin d'un poignard (Diderot 1967, 146; Author's translation). Posthumously published, Diderot's *Paradoxe* was based on a sketch on Garrick sent by Diderot to Grimm in 1769, printed in *Correspondence* between the two authors in 1770. Diderot may have confused a scene in *Hamlet* with a celebrated scene in *Macbeth*.

The pure emotions, as we may call them, become more distinct, more identifiable in an ongoing taxonomy of the passions. As they are more categorised and distinguished, the passions oddly become less attractive. As we move from the late seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth century we can, I believe, discern an increasing interest in mixed emotions as against sharp definitions of any single passions. The developing interest in mixture counteracts a defensive desire for clarity and public morality in the theatre (and other imitative arts). Rulers wish – or ought to wish – that artistic display be limited to clear and approved emotions. The arc of the plot should bend always towards justice by the end of Act V.

In 1636 Corneille's *Le Cid* shocked France in displaying Chimène, the heroine tormented by her continuing love for Rodrigue, even when her lover has been forced by the rules of honour to kill her father. In an orgy of disapproval, Corneille's reputation suffered – and the Académie Française was born as a censoring mechanism. Emotions and the Media are closely connected. Media sometimes turn against certain emotions. Chimène's emotion is against Nature and thus forbidden – forbidden *because* unnatural. No young lady could love the murderer of her father. Filial duty must not only surpass all other claims of duty, but also govern desire itself. Formally, Chimène governs her desire. She actually does the 'right' thing in asking the monarch for revenge upon her father's killer. Yet she still loves Rodrigue. Passion's power, the energy of inner disobedience, was publicly apprehended as degrading and horrifying. Religion and Nature demand that obedience to the father must entail total emotional assent. That 'unnatural' characters should *not* be exhibited becomes a kind of Enlightenment tenet – one of the many instances when the 'Enlightenment' fights itself. But in the long run such a tenet leads to further questioning of the 'natural.'

It proved impossible to eliminate 'sick' or perverse emotional states from the repertoire. Jansenism, like some forms of English Puritanism, emphasized the evil in the human heart, thus providing a stimulus to the investigation of *mixture*. The categorization of emotions then becomes – ironically – freshly interesting, as in Pascal and Racine. Our best impulses, most noble emotions, are likely to be corrupt and deceitful. The claims of *Reason* demanded some *wholesome* emotions, but where are these to be found? Is *Reason* itself so fallen in us that all our emotions impure? Rochefoucault asserts that in the sufferings of our best friends there is something that does not altogether displease us. Before the end of the century that once repudiated Corneille's important play, we learned to like mixed and defective personages like the anti-hero 'hero' of Molière's *Le Misanthrope* (1666).

### 3 Passionate Catalogues of the Poets

Cataloguing the passions in order became an important poetic device. Seventeenth-century lists of the passions become steadily amplified, like a kind of periodic table. A number of important English poetic works run through the passions. A major example is Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* (1697); here mobility of passions within the labile soul is tied to Music. In England, effective catalogues continue to multiply, clustering in the mid-eighteenth century. Thomson's review of the Passions comes early in his first version of *Spring* (1728; final version 1746). In *Spring* he laments the loss of a golden age of concord to a hectic age of passions:

the Passions all  
Have burst their Bounds; and Reason half extinct,  
Or impotent, or else approving, sees  
The foul Disorder  
(Thomson 1728, 18-19; Fairer, Gerrard 2015, 263)

Thomson admits the existence of "a thousand mix'd Emotions", but *mixed* emotions are strongly negative; they storm the mind and almost nullify moral cognition (Fairer, Gerrard 2015, 263).

One might wonder how, in the 1740s, Aaron Hill could lament a heartless age lacking in passion whereas twenty years earlier James Thomson presents a disordered and emotionally overwhelmed Britain. Thomas Gray's *An Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* (written 1742, published 1747) offers a certain agreement with Thomson – but also a reversal. Gray's *Ode* is particularly moving because the passions are portrayed as a dire destiny, unshunnable. The little boys at present know the pleasures of the body in play, their joy in free movement. The children do not even have to feel hope; they live joyfully in the moment, certain of themselves. Joy and certainty will perish as the unwitting "little Victims" are fated to experience the "Fury Passions", the "Vulturs [*sic*] of the mind". They are doomed to experience.

Disdainful Anger, Pallid Fear,  
And Shame that skulks behind...  
And Envy wan, and faded Care,  
Grim-visag'd comfortless Despair,  
And Sorrow's piercing Dart.  
(Gray 1747, 6; Fairer-Gerrard 2015, 415-17)

Gray's primary effect lies in his reversal of the conventional belief that the child is unformed and passionate. Tradition alleged that the child must be firmly disciplined. It needs to be taught to restrain its incoherent



wilful passion and to exercise virtue; only thus can it advance to the age of Reason. In Gray's poem, however, traditional morality is reversed. The child is innocent and happy. The adult will know the self to be increasingly a prey to gnawing and unhealthy feelings (hard to believe, however, that Fear, Anger and Shame have played no part in your life before age twelve). Gray's stance on the passions defies all Stoic teaching and most traditions of education – although he will be somewhat in tune with Rousseau, and although Rousseau – in *Emile*, thought he knew how to rescue the boy from the dismal state through self-reliance and avoidance of complications.

In Gray's world, the grown-up person will fall into irritable and/or depressive states of being. Childhood becomes a sacred space secured briefly from the Passions. These are entirely negative: all killers, even “pineing [sic] Love”. The Passions are like fairy-tale ogres, bending in baleful anticipation over the ignorant and unconscious children. Thomson's golden age of concord, never to be recaptured, is here translated as sunny childhood. The modern state of life is equated with a grim adulthood.

La Rochefoucault's disquieting observation on our 'sick' emotions – “Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons quelque chose, qui nous ne deplaist pas” – serves as epigraph to Swift's biting *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* (1731; publ. 1739). This poem is a parodic but all-too-truthful run through the passions:

Self-love, Ambition, Envy, Pride,  
Their Empire in our Hearts divide.

Swift calls our bluff in choosing not the grand or impressively intense passions – no hurricanes of lust or raging revenge. He picks up ordinary shameful emotions, internal manifestations that we really *do* want to keep hidden – self-doubt, shame at humiliation, envy, petty rivalry. Unwearying common emotions constantly result from a pathetic egotism. Swift is especially biting on easily discovered resentment at another's success:

To all my foes, dear Fortune, send  
Thy Gifts, but never to my Friend:  
I tamely can endure the first,  
But, this with Envy makes me burst.  
(Fairer, Gerrard 2015, 101-2)

In William Collins's *The Passions. An Ode for Music* (1750), the Passions themselves are too restless and irritable to be passive topics of an Ode. On first hearing Music, they refuse to contain themselves. They wrench the lyre from “Music, heavenly maid”. The Passions then hold a sort of recording session of different performers, going from Fear to Anger to “wan Despair” to Hope. “Then Revenge impatient rose”. Revenge is *not* to be

overcome by the “soul-subduing voice” of Pity (Fairer, Gerrard 2015, 446-8). The Passions themselves become the active performers, not mediated through artist or actor – nor through any Art of Acting.

But suppose there are no set categories? No clear list of Passions? As we move further into the eighteenth century we notice that the fictional characters in plays and novels themselves become ever more deeply immersed in untangling their own feelings. Audiences and readers can be less certain where their loyalties lie, or what must be the right answer. The big blow-out, the festival of passion, comes in Racine’s *Phèdre* (1677). But Moliere’s plays give more space than of yore to *uncertainty* regarding emotions. Alceste’s ardour for sincerity marks the birth of a modern value. ‘Sincerity’ has become secularised. Yet we can see in Alceste’s sincerity an obstinate self-love muddled with confused noble ideals and earnest self-deception. For Alceste’s emotional state there is no exact vocabulary. This flawed hero reacts to himself all the time; he consents to no defining consensus.

#### 4 Self-Reflection, Mixed Emotions: The Mirror

Alceste is the herald of multiple eighteenth-century characters who might be called the ‘Pioneers of the Emotions’. They refuse to accept absolute definitions or recipes regarding the Passions. They are headed for collision with social values. Social engineering is all in favour of ‘regulating’ the Passions. If we learn to ‘regulate’, so the theory goes, we shall then be able to create a reasonable society. Acknowledgement of ‘Mixed Emotions’ can impede this project. A vocabulary of clear words identifying clearly delineated passions would be much more helpful. Passion should move at the command of Reason. Samuel Johnson claimed Richardson taught us and Passions how to do this. Yet Richardson himself is a pioneer of deregulation and questioning. Of the gang seeking ‘Mixed Emotions’ he is a chief.

Eighteenth-century literature is most interesting at the points at which it recognises the confusions and even impracticability of regulating Passions – or of defining Reason. ‘Sensibility’ gives greater status to the physical-physiological body and its nuances – including self-invited ‘Vicissitudes.’ Sensibility opens space for escapism, drugs and self-stimulus – Opium, Ratafia and Tears. A living person cannot truly be ‘insensible’ – i.e. unconscious. A chaos of multiple stimuli impinge upon and even form ‘Self,’ which compulsively vibrates. The Self soon becomes one of the stimuli impinging on and altering the Self. I just said of Alceste that he consents to no consensus, but reacts to himself all the time. With the rise of the Mirror such reaction becomes common. And the Self becomes more readily a community of its own.

We have not paid enough attention to the role of the Mirror in the Early Modern era in relation to our concept of the Self. The ancients had mirrors, but their hand-held metal looking glasses offered inferior images. In antiquity, the image of the mirror most often showed you a character associated with vanity. In the Renaissance, mirrors become disciplinary; they convey public warning and rebuke: *A Mirror for Magistrates*. You look into a mirror to find out what is *wrong* with you. Changes in the technology of the mirror, however, apparently alter – and alter radically – the use of the image. The Venetians began a new era of important glass and mirroring. France, after shanghaiing the glassmakers of Murano to instruct them, created ever larger mirrors – hence the ‘cheval glass’. By the 1680s or 1690s one might look at oneself from head to toe (or nearly; see DeJean 2005, ch. 9 and pages 180-200). This unexpected ability to see the Self, in an unprecedented ‘Selfie,’ renders ‘Self’ fabulous. Both fantastic and accessible, the instant self is a reservoir of a new sort of future that can enter into the present. In Perrault’s *Contes*, both in his verse fairy tale *Peau d’Âne* (*Donkey-Skin*) and his short prose tale *Cendrillon*, a heroine suffers deprivation and official ugliness. Her own beauty is a psychic luxury – fully knowable to herself on account of the magic of the Mirror. *Cendrillon* emphasises the luxurious pleasure of the long looking-glasses. At first the heroine is deprived of this modern artefact. The one big mirror at home is first monopolised by the stepsisters: “elles étaient toujours devant leur miroir” (Perrault 2002, 166).<sup>4</sup> In Perrault’s verse fable *Peau d’Âne* (*Donkey-Skin*), the heroine, on the run from her incestuous father, is disguised in an ugly donkey skin. She becomes a grimy menial in a farmer’s kitchen. But alone, on a Sunday, she goes to her room, has a wash and then wears one of the magnificent dresses her fairy godmother created for her:

Devant son grand miroir, contente et satisfaite,  
De la lune tantôt la robe elle mettait,  
Tantôt celle où le feu de soleil éclatait.  
(Perrault 2002, 84)<sup>5</sup>

In *Pamela* Richardson adopts this situation, and spins it round. Pamela in her own room takes pleasure in looking at herself in the mirror, *contente et satisfaite*. Dressed not in elegant luxury but in her chosen peasant garb, she defends herself against somebody else’s definition, luxuriating in independent self-approval. Pamela’s enthusiastic liking for her own image is the mental act of a rebel, deeply hostile to conventional imposed morali-

4 “They were constantly in front of their mirror” (Author’s translation).

5 “Before her great mirror, happy and satisfied, | She put on sometimes the dress of the Moon, | Sometimes the one where the fire of the sun shone” (Author’s translation).

ties. The mirror is no longer a reflection of rebuke and social expectations. It attaches itself to the flow of time, to variety and choice.

Looking in the mirror, or being aware of mirroring, multiplies and refines the 'original' emotion. And looking at the emotion, looking at one's own mobile face, changes the context. Self knows itself - with its personal transience of sensations and feelings - as existing and observable in the world. The actor-viewer catches what is going on, as in a short 'Self-Movie' in which the feelings are reflected upon and become modified, admired, even added to: 'My heart is broken. How do I look now my heart is broken?' The eighteenth-century emotion becomes less identifiable, more variable. It counters the contemporary morality that asks us to fix a Passion - any Passion - as discrete, separate, identifiable and corrigible. You do not have to wait for actors to instruct you how to look and how to feel. With a mirror, we all become actors. 'Interiority' comes off as surface. What the Actor began the Mirror continues, diving down into the depths of private life, even the life of inferior classes. Pamela and 'Donkey-skin' dive into the glassy changing depths of their multiple selves. The Mirror can create or amplify interest in various powers of self-representation. Individuality gains in control - along with more, and bigger, mirrors. Mirrors are fairy-tale things. Rather than enforcing a fable of stability, they offer the possibility of change and play. Oddly, they authorise the exploration and voicing of hitherto unknown feelings or feeling-mixtures.

In the first volume of *Clarissa*, Anna Howe teases Clarissa to admit she is in Love. Clarissa resists that definition: "this man - this Lovelace - is a man that might be liked well enough, if he bore such a character as Mr. Hickman bears... And further still I will acknowledge, that I believe it possible that one might be driven, by violent measures, step by step, as it were, into something that might be called - I don't know what to call it. *A conditional kind of liking, or so*" (Richardson 2000, vol. 1, Letter xxviii, 183). Anna mocks as 'Prudery' Clarissa's "*conditional kind of liking!*" (Letter xxxvii, 254). In Clarissa's expression Anna sees mere an evasion of the straightforward or conventional term. But the straightforward description is a cliché. Clarissa sees a considerable space between conventionally 'being in Love' and the kind of cautious and insecure partial attraction she is currently almost experiencing. In most respects Lovelace is a much more conventional describer of emotions than Clarissa, even though - or perhaps because - his emotions and the emotions of others are playthings. Lovelace is always the actor - or almost always. At a few moments he cannot sustain his role and admits of an unauthorised feeling. That, too, is desired by him - these moments are almost always planned traps for himself. Such moments of slippage are desirable precisely because the disconcerting sensation interrupts monotony; it permits the designer to feel that he is still spontaneous and unrehearsed.

Samuel Richardson presumably had learned something of the passions by the time he wrote *Pamela*. That was several years before he printed Aaron Hill's book on *The Art of Acting* in 1746. As he explains to Hill, he read it attentively:

Last Sunday I attempted to read it not as a Printer; and was not aware that I should be so mechanically, as I may truly say, affected by it: I endeavored to follow you in your [wonderful] Descriptions of the Force of Acting, in the Passion of Joy, Sorrow, Fear, Anger, & c. And my whole Frame, so nervously affected before, was shaken by it: I found, in short, such Tremors, such Startings that I was unable to go thro' it; and must reserve the Attempting it again, till your *Oak Tincture* ... has fortify'd the too relaxed, unmuscl'd Muscles, and braced those unbraced Nerves. (Richardson to Aaron Hill, 29 October 1746. Quoted in Carroll 1964, 74-5)

In attempting to 'run through the Passions' Richardson becomes physically and facially exhausted. His nerves - presumably in both old and new senses, his 'fibrous *Mechanism*' - become 'unbraced'. His whole frame is 'shaken'. The body in the Passions is commanded into strenuous labour. Insights gleaned from this rather frightening encounter with the Art of Acting, and with running through the Passions, presumably afforded the novelist new insight. His descriptions of Lovelace's play with grand (if often pseudo- or partially pseudo-grand) passions acknowledge the amount of effort demanded by Lovelace's distinctive acting. Richardson understands the actor's strenuous command of body and eye. Robert Lovelace's various impersonations of feeling are genuinely very taxing to him - not least because he does not want *entirely* to relinquish some delicious claim to the reality of the emotion, somewhere in depths far below.

In *Sir Charles Grandison*, Sir Hargrave Pollexfen is the conventional vain man, forever paying "his respects to himself at every looking glass" (Richardson 1754, vol. 1, Letter xi, 57). More interesting is the authorial epistolary Harriet Byron, for whom a mirror becomes an accessory to social thought. Harriet recasts herself as others with the help of a mirror - an important ancillary. In describing the pedant Mr. Walden who "made... so many different mouths of contempt," Harriet goes further:

I have been making mouths in the glass for several minutes, to try to recover some of Mr. Walden's, in order to describe them to you, Lucy. (Letter xi, 58)

Later, Harriet records how offended she was when the mannish and laughing Miss Barnevelt addressed her in very free and condescending expressions:

Just here, Lucy, I laid down my pen, and stept to the glass, to see whether I could not please myself with a wise frown or two; at least with a solemnity of countenance, that, occasionally, I might dash with it my childishness of look; which certainly encouraged this freedom of Miss Barnevelt. (Richardson 1754, vol. 1, Letter xiii, 75-6)

Harriet Byron takes herself as that 'Other' whom she observes, endeavouring to remodel her countenance and make a different impact. She fears he looks too eager, cheerful and babyish, but cannot manage a solemnity of countenance that comes up to her standard. In this odd exercise Harriet becomes an object of her own sympathy, while also trying to see herself as the object of somebody else's gaze. How does the older (and presumably lesbian) Miss Barnevelt see her? Can Harriet enact another self? The mirror is asked to mirror what is *not yet there*. She *will* be somebody else, somebody serious. This strange way of looking into the glass exhibits a different use of the mirror from that flourished in standard strictures on vanity. The mirror offers a fantastic space for future selves, and future feelings.

Where is the Soul in all this? Are we not getting into a series of costumes, a sequence of shells? Diderot worries about an absence of individual Soul – however defined, whether as moral responsibility or as essence of the personal. Soul is absent during an actor's efficient play of passions. So, then, can one take a holiday from the Soul? If one becomes like Garrick playing his face through a French door, then what is left? The Soul simply cannot be identified with the body's passions – that list of names, that sequence of communicative grimaces. The eighteenth century wants to find out where the Soul is – even if the writer is not party to a religious program. The Passions might be recognised as afflictions of the Soul. Or are the Passions a kind of alphabet that we learn on the way to a moral language? Adventurers in the Passions are likely to move close to the boundary where the Soul *cannot* say it knows itself. Yet, if there is no Soul behind the play of personality, what then? Without a Soul, the emotions are, or can become, brilliant fakes. Marcasites, not diamonds.

## 5 Magical Transience and the Fairy-Tale

There is a magical quality to emotions. In the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries we notice the dominance and adaptability of two elastic literary forms: fable and fairy tale. Fable indicates social and moral stability. Fables are mostly bad news. Nature asserts herself once more. The wolf *is* just going to attack that lamb. Fairy tale backs experimentation and the unknown. Formally, fairy tales throw spanners into works. 'Fairy-Tale' is often employed as a disparaging adjective denouncing wish-fulfillment. But in 'fairy tales' affairs can take shockingly negative turns. Prolonged

negative feeling states – e.g. of depression and estrangement – are frequently described, as in Mme D’Aulnoy’s *Le Oiseau Bleu* (*The Blue Bird*, 1697). Changes are undergone without the full intent, or consent – or even full consciousness – of the thinking mind. Alteration includes severe shifts in wishes and orientation. In D’Aulnoy’s *La Chatte Blanche* (*The White Cat*, 1698) unconscious change is reflected in the conduct of the narrative itself. The reader insensibly drops interest in the contest between the three sons. A new story breaks through, becoming the main feature once we acknowledge the Prince’s unorthodox and altered state of being as he falls in love with the White Cat.

In England the fairy tales have a great vogue from Perrault’s time onward. They become a permanent part of English literature. So too did the *Mille et Une Nuits*, translated from the French early in the eighteenth century. In the fairy tales ideas of personality and character mutate: ‘Soul’ seem mutable and variable, while emotions mutate into mysteries. Why does the beautiful young woman beat the lovely black dogs so harshly every night? Representation of the ‘emotional self’ becomes reorientation of altered states. Characters are often non-human or humanoid – as animals, fairies and ghosts. They are emerging from the past or beckoning from the future. Shakespeare’s fairies and ghosts resume or increase their appeal. Considerations of emotions become less encyclopedic taxonomy of identifiable passions than a recording of intense *transience*. The growing emphasis on transience was emphatically signalled in England’s Restoration era, as in Dryden’s *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1673):

Why should a foolish Marriage Vow  
Which long ago was made,  
Oblige us to each other now  
When Passion is decay’d?  
 (“Song”, sung by characters Doralice and Beliza to lute music,  
opening of first scene in *Marriage A-la-Mode*; Dryden 1677, 1)

The livelong minute is ‘all that heaven allows’: so says Rochester, to whom Dryden’s play was dedicated. We cannot be ‘true’ to somebody else because we cannot be ‘true’ to ourselves. We are always changing. In this ‘magical’ environment it is possible to evade the old ‘Periodic Table’ of the Passions. We are free to find new mediums or images for emotions no longer fully defined.

## 6 Sylphs

New characters arrive on the psychic landscape. For a fine example, let us take Pope’s Sylphs. Since the sixteenth century all Sylphs derive more or

less directly from Paracelsus' essay *De Nymphis*, which might be considered a recording of folklore or a hidden psychological (or even scientific) allegory. Paracelsus' account is cited in *Le Comte de Gabalis* (1670), a playful gay trifle significantly referred to by Pope in introducing *The Rape of the Lock*. In a turn of genius the poet, revising his poem of 1712 in 1714, brought in the celebrated 'machinery', with direct reference to *Le Comte de Gabalis* and Rosicrucians. What are Pope's Sylphs? Essentially they derive from two basic images of a 'self':

- a. A sylph is a beautiful and competent fairy being devoid of soul. A sylph will get a soul if he or she or copulates with a mortal of the opposite sex who has one.
- b. A sylph is a post-death person. The soul - as in Ficino and Henry More - finds after death its truer, freer body, i.e. its 'airy Vehicle'.

In one view, Sylphs are emotion-free. In another interpretation, they are in constant longing for the one thing that they (like paintings and actors in roles) must lack - a soul. Ariel has bad luck. If at first this guardian Sylph seems to be getting on with Belinda, an earthly Lover lurking in her heart means his chance for a soul - at least in relation to this human lady - is blown. On the other hand, airy Sylphs crowding boudoir and boat, at home at the card table, are the lightest aspects of Self, of inconsequential personality. Having got over death they have nothing to fear. They are free to roam and sparkle - little diamond chips of personality, emotions without consequence. Movement and Variety express what they are, though they are nothing without the sustaining Light. See Pope's *tour de force* of description: the 'lucid Squadrons' flying about the boat and over the water in the sunshine:

Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,  
Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light.  
Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,  
Thin glitt'ring Textures of the filmy Dew;  
Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,  
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,  
While ev'ry Beam new transient Colours flings,  
Colours that change whene'er they wave their Wings.  
(Canto 2, ll. 61-8; Pope 1963, 224)

Here is a world rendered iridescent and insubstantial, yet full of motion. All is new transience. Nothing is sufficiently stable to be categorised. In this amazing iridescent poem, these 'Mini-Me's' are Self with the lightest of touch. Living in the moment, almost dissolving into light, and constantly regrouping, Sylphs are in a uniquely blessed condition. They bear no full emotions because they will not stay still long enough. Suggestions of emo-



tions are flicker through the multitude, as if they were personalised electrons. They reflect Belinda, in turn reflected in her Mirror, who is herself an assembly of personae and emotions. In glittering changeability the Sylphs suggest ever-changeable emotional life. Sylphs are able to explore carnality without Gravity. They are Levity.

Here we behold the magical quality of emotions expressed in beings that seem free from the pain of passions. Pope's Sylphs are in a sense ghosts of feelings. In another light – and everything is presented in changeable lights – they are *essence* of emotion. Here we find emotion's multitudinous fleeting phases, its affective momentary coloration. What in aforesaid we identify as 'a Passion' is crass – there remains the escaped airy essence, the fleeting fragrance of a feeling itself. Sylphs represent potential – emotions that we have not yet been able to pin down or catalogue and name. These sprites airily inform us that there are feeling-states not yet identified.

As we pass through the experience that is the poem, gender, like passion, becomes increasingly difficult to define. Sylphs seem perfectly 'feminine' – all *anima* is feminine. Yet they express gender difference and can sustain both masculine and feminine role-play (if Sylphs may take on a human mate in order to achieve a soul, then Ariel is the defeated hero of Pope's poem, which could change our reading of the ending). Alexander Pope has brought into Paracelsus a complementary idea of the airy beings, drawing on the neo-Platonists, particularly Henry More's poems on immortality of the soul. Pope is also adapting Emperor Hadrian's address to his own Soul as beloved diminutive: *animula vagula blandula*.<sup>6</sup> *The Rape of the Lock* has, oddly, some of the makings of a 'Gothic' work. After all, half the population of the narrative is in a post-death state. The sylphs can be read as cheerful ghosts, in whom only the social preoccupations (fashions, cards) survive. Now great passions have lost weight; all emotions, subsumed, are to be played with.

Passions and Emotions, like Personality, here become *qualia*, qualities, like colour or mobility. Nouns, as it were, become adjectives. This is in itself a Rosicrucian or Cabalistic trick. The Sylphs are chips or fragments of human personality, free of the social bondage. Gender becomes increasingly unnecessary, and emotions almost impossible to pin down – save in the crassest of the human characters. Sylphs express emotional states as mood, without being fastened to emotion. They do not seem – unlike the still incarnate human characters – doomed to Spleen. Our old term Passion suggests being operated on from the outside. Sylphs need yield to no such

6 Around the time of composition of early versions of *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope was writing new verse translations of Emperor Hadrian's address to his own soul. Pope does not treat this poem as trifling; he argues that Hadrian's use of diminutives reflects the language of erotic love. The man feels affection for this departing soul, which is feminised. Like the sylphs, Hadrian becomes multitudes. See Ault 1967.

pressures. Emotion becomes something like fragrance. Sylphs resemble Soul without the heaviness of sin or judgment. Living in Levity instead of downright Gravity. Pope's Sylphs are a challenge to all that we think we are talking about in terms of person, soul, Lockean identity, or categories like 'Passions'.

Given different concepts of person or personality, Pope reminds that we would not have the same 'Passions'. The catalogues of passions run through by the poets certainly have their grim or negative side. Might we learn to do without them? Sylphs caught on – there are a number of sylphs in eighteenth-century literature, including the novel by the Duchess of Devonshire, *The Sylph* (1779). The person described by that name, a guardian and lover, is a personality type that does not yet exist. Sylphs are post-death, and also pre-rebirth. They represent possibilities of being in the future – possibilities on their way, if not here yet. There are future feelings we do not even have names for.

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## The Rhetoric of Passions in John Tillotson's *Sermons*

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**Abstract** As the leading member of the Latitudinarian movement, scholars have often referred to John Tillotson as the father of the reform of ecclesiastical oratory that took place in the second half of the seventeenth century. His influence as a prose writer continued in the eighteenth century and his writings were appreciated by religious and lay critics. Although his style has been often described as 'impassionate', sober and reiterative, this article shows how he adapted his style to conquer the hearts of the congregation by exploiting two passions, self-love and fear, which are impossible to eradicate in Man.

**Keywords** Tillotson. Sermons. Passions. Latitudinarianism. Eighteenth-century Rhetoric.

Public oratory in the long eighteenth century was one of the most dominant mediums for popular communication (Goring 2005, 31). Sermons had "firm and conscious ties with secular society" (Downey 1969, 10): apart from delivering the Christian message, they were also exploited to spread the Church of England's policy and to promote the reformation of manners. Sermons took on a pragmatic view of Man based on the concrete possibility of refining moral conduct via education, setting edifying examples while stressing the role of religion in building Man's happiness. To this purpose, Latitudinarian divines advocated a more simple, accessible style that could inform and instruct the parishioners in order to mould a society based on passive obedience, charity and morality. In his treatise *A Friendly Debate Between a Conformist and a Nonconformist*, published in 1669, the Latitudinarian Simon Patrick (1626-1707) provides a clarifying description of the new sermon style and of its aims:

I have been taught, that there are only two ways to come at the Affections. One by the Senses and Imagination: [...] The other is by the Reason and Judgement; Now I believe your Affections are moved in the first way very often; by melting Tones, pretty Similitudes... And the Truth is, you are like to be moved very seldom in our Churches by these means. For the better sort of Hearers are now out of love with these things; nor do they think there is any power either in a puling or whining, or in a roaring and tearing Voice. But if you can be moved by such strength of

Reason as can conquer the Judgment, and so pass to demand submission from the Affections, you may find Power enough, I think, in our Pulpits. (Patrick 1669, 15-16 quoted in Morrissey 2002, 703)

Patrick's cry for a polished style and unaffected delivery mirrored the necessity for prose writing that explained Man's 'whole duty' in a clear, understandable way, accessible to all subjects. Distancing themselves from the overelaborated metaphysical sermons, the Latitudinarians crafted a more democratic form of discourse (Goring 2005, 39) to contrast a growing disregard for morality, react against 'spiritual' preaching and combine human interest with an increasing desire of independence from providence. They were indeed aware of the limits imposed on knowledge by "inference from the will (whether faculty or function) through interests, passions and appetites" (Griffin 1992, 67), and for this reason they meant to instruct while delivering urgent messages which could "sway the mind and subdue the will" (Mitchell 1962, 93, 109). They knew how to exploit the passions to secure reasonable assent to religion.

The tripartite sermon introduced by John Wilkins (1614-1672) in his compendium *Ecclesiastes* combined the appeal to both reason and passions in sermon writing. As a member of the Royal Society and one of the most assiduous promoters of the 'plain style' sermon, Wilkins believed that the purpose of preaching is "to inform or to persuade". He therefore advised divines to open their discourse with an explication followed by confirmation and to end it with an application. Explication and confirmation serve to "satisfie mens judgments and consciences" so they have to be methodical and well-studied because they appeal to the rational faculties. The last part of the sermon, the application, is addressed directly to "eager and vehement affections" (Wilkins 1675, *Ecclesiastes* quoted in Rivers 2005, 51), the gate through which the preacher can win the audience's hearts. Being a specifically Latitudinarian device in the sermon (Lessenich 1972, 115), the application answered their necessity of increasing Man's practical morality (111). Application is often announced in the partition and it is marked by a direct appeal to the audience. In it, the preacher can deliberately employ all those rhetorical expedients which are meant to raise the audience's attention: metaphors, comparisons, exclamations and climax (117), thus applying the "sublime and pathetic style" that has the power to conquer the hearts (Rollin quoted in Lessenich 1972, 119). Confirmation and application together fulfil the purpose of the sermon, i.e. to lead Man into action by getting to the understanding in conquering and subduing the passions through reasonable judgment.

This article seeks to show how the reintroduction of the distinction between persuasion by reason and persuasion by passions commonly made in secular rhetoric (Morrissey 2002, 703) eventually brought to light the necessity of analysing passions and of rhetorically exploiting them in re-

ligious writings to encourage practical moral reformation based on reasonable assent. The sermons of Archbishop John Tillotson (1630-1694), a divine appreciated for his calmness and sobriety, are taken here as a case-study to prove that sermons provided a definition of passions and an analysis of their effects; they set a prescription to subdue and control them but also exploit them to make the audience actively participate in society.

Perfecting the rationalising potential of the tripartite sermon, Tillotson eventually “set a Pattern to Himself” (Burnet quoted in Mitchell 1962, 334): his style embodied “the earnestness of the Puritans with the rational element of the Cambridge Platonists” (Mitchell 1962, 336-7) and it gained him the reputation of being “the best polemical divine [this day] in England” (Bowden 2010, 66). His fame was declared by his preaching in a ‘plain and edifying way’ particularly appreciated by his educated, metropolitan congregations. His sentences were “short and clear”, and the “thread plain and distinct” (Burnet 1694, 12-14) with the purpose of making religion “an integral part of everyday life” (Simon 1967, 282-3). Tillotson’s sermons might appear rather encyclopedic and scientific in their approach to religion to modern readers: each topic is listed in the partition, and it is usually developed into numbered divisions which allow the reader to “knowingly follow where he [the preacher] led” (deSilva 2006, 387). Though Tillotson was often accused of writing ‘moral essays’ rather than sermons, the clear, reiterative structure he used and the implicit simplicity in his explanation of the mysteries of religion were employed to the sole purpose of eliciting from his congregations “a moral certainty in the principles of Christianity” (Bowden 2010, 68). Indeed, in the funeral sermon written to commemorate Tillotson’s eternal rest, Bishop Gilbert Burnet reminded the audience that his purpose in preaching was

the reforming of Mens Natures, and governing their Actions, the restraining of their Appetites, and Passions, the softening of their Tempers, and sweetening their Humours, the composing of their Affections, and the raising their minds above the Interests and Follies of this present World. (Burnet 1694, 30-2)

Like most of the Latitudinarians, Tillotson believed that the “rational part of the soul”, which produces “full conviction, deliberate choice, and firm resolution”, should completely govern the “sensitive” part, including the “fancy and appetite”, which operated by “some hidden *impetus* and transport of desire after a thing” (Griffin 1992, 70). Although Tillotson considered the mind of Man as “the great miracle of the world” and “the contrivance of it an eminent instance of GOD’s wisdom” (Tillotson, vol. 8, 3417,

Sermon 137), he also conceded its imperfection and short-sightedness<sup>1</sup> and acknowledged the trouble caused by the Man's "stiff and stubborn wills" (vol. 6, 1572, Sermon 98). The wills are responsible for making assent to religious precepts "easy or difficult" (vol. 7, 2231-2, Sermon 128) and Man is unaware of the liberty and power they have.<sup>2</sup> Discussions on the unpredictability of the wills are expanded in the sermons concerning covetousness, "a disease of the mind, and an unnatural thirst, which is inflamed by that which should quench it" (vol. 6, 1461-2, Sermon 91). Here the power of the wills over reason is testified because Man chooses to be driven away by inordinate desires, and completely forgets his duty to himself and, which is even more dangerous, to others:

Men resist the doctrine of the holy scriptures; not because they have sufficient reason to doubt of their divine authority; but because they are unwilling to be govern'd by them, and to conform their lives to the laws and precepts of that holy book: for the wills of men have a great influence upon their understandings. (Vol. 7, 2231-2, Sermon 128)

With humours and inclinations on their sides, the wills govern the capacity to rationally detect and accept the advantages of religion to happiness. They lead to sin which is 'a thing of so stupefying a nature as to make men insensible of their danger, although it be so near, and so terrible' (vol. 1, 247, Sermon 10). If, therefore, the passions control the wills and "the eloquence of reason" (Mitchell 1962, 336), cognition is restricted to individual needs and interests and Man neither becomes aware of his dependence upon God nor improves his moral standards to participate in the advance of society. Taken as a whole, Tillotson's intentions were therefore preeminently practical. He instructed congregations and reading public about the passions while exploiting them to bring about the reformation of manners he so strongly advocated for.

Tillotson's willingness to ensure active conversation and engagement in the public can be definitely uncovered in the use of the passions. He draws on fear and self-love, "the two great principles of religion" (Tillotson, vol. 1, 2, Sermon 1), to engage people's hearts and feelings. Scripture itself asserts the need of these drives to be led to virtue because "the most powerful arguments, that GOD ever used, to persuade Men to any thing, are

1 "Our best reason is but very short and imperfect: but since it is no better, we must make use of it as it is, and make the best of it" (Tillotson, 4: 834, Sermon 56).

2 "There are many things likewise in our selves, which no man is able in any measure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: as the vital union of body and soul [...]. The like may be said of the operations of our several faculties of sense and imagination, of memory and reason, and especially of the liberty of our wills" (Tillotson, 3: 376, Sermon 48).

the promise of eternal happiness, and the terror of everlasting torments” (vol. 5, 1022-3, Sermon 66).

Fear is the gate through which “religion usually makes it’s first entrance”. It is described as “a passion that is most deeply rooted in our natures, and flows immediately from that principle of self-preservation which GOD hath planted in every man” (vol. 1, 5, Sermon 1). A persuasive divine knows that “fear ariseth from within, from the nature of man which is apt to imagine dreadful things” (vol. 1, 35, Sermon 1), and that it helps to “shake off [man’s] sloth and security” (vol. 2, 441, Sermon 34). Man is portrayed as living “in the fearful apprehensions of an invisible judge” (vol. 1, 48, Sermon 1): displeasure of God is stronger than “desire, love and hope” (vol. 1, 5, Sermon 1) as Man has lost his impressions of a paradisiacal past but not the sensation of pain and misery:

There is no passion in the heart of man more infinite than our fear, it troubles us with jealousy and suspicion of the utmost that may happen; but when we have extended our fears to the utmost, the power of GOD’s wrath reacheth farther. (Vol. 8, 3702, Sermon 152)

When Tillotson depicts the passions, he ensures that the fearful prospect he delineates encouragingly threatens his audience to consider their mischief. He either rephrases some biblical metaphors or depicts other menacing pictures related to the field of physiology and warfare. Moreover, the tone is harsh and the scenario the audience can easily envision is rather calamitous. A passionate Man is like a troubled sea:<sup>3</sup>

Nothing is more turbulent and unquiet than the spirit of a wicked man; it is like the sea, when it roars and rages through the strength of contrary winds; it is the scene of furious lusts, and wild passions, which as they are contrary to holiness, so they maintain perpetual contests and feuds among themselves. (Vol. 8, 3522, Sermon 142)

The operations of the passions are often associated with blindness and physical impairment. Bodily reactions are immediately visible: Man becomes “very hot and impatient” and feels he is in “a very unnatural and uneasy state” (vol. 3, 91-2, Sermon 38). Man’s “degeneracy and weakness” (vol. 2, 277-8, Sermon 28) become an incurable disease when the “inferior faculties, our sensitive appetite and passions are broke loose and have got head of our reason” (vol. 2, 274, Sermon 28). Once conquered by its lusts, the mind of Man is “almost as hard to be rectified as it is to recover a body

<sup>3</sup> Tillotson often portrays the passions as a troubled sea drawing inspiration from Isaiah 57:20. Cf. vol. 2, 118, Sermon 23; vol. 1, 283 and 293, Sermon 12; vol. 1, 115, Sermon 4; vol. 3, 179, Sermon 41.



bowed down with age to it's first streightness" (vol. 1, 243, Sermon 10). Tillotson claims that "fleshly lusts [...] pollute and defile, [...] quench and extinguish" (vol. 5, 1069, Sermon 69) Man's divine part and he compares the "clouds and mists" which impede sight to "the lusts and corruptions of men [are] to the understanding", as they "hinder it to a clear perception of heavenly things" (vol. 6, 1391, Sermon 87).<sup>4</sup> Their effects, too, allude to mental disorder and physical suffering:

Sensual pleasures soon die and vanish; but that is not the worst of them, they leave a sting behind them; and when the pleasure is gone, nothing remains but guilt, and trouble, and repentance. (Vol. 9, 3792, Sermon 158)

Passions are assimilated to the worst political catastrophe ever, as "cross and perverse inclinations from within", like "a tyrant at home, and always ready at hand to domineer over [Man]" vol. 2, 276 and 285, Sermon 28). When carried out by his lusts, Man becomes like a horse "that has no understanding; yea in this more brutish than the beast, that he rusheth into the battel without any consideration of death or danger, and destroys himself without a syllogism" (vol. 1, 390, Sermon 16). These threatening images suggest the necessity of obedience to God to ensure guidance and help in time of distress. If read on a broad, national level, they remind the audience of the political necessity of having an upright leader to govern the reign. If the country is crawling with "undutiful children, slothful and unfaithful servants, scandalous members of the church" who are "unprofitable to the commonwealth, disobedient to governors both ecclesiastical and civil; and in a word burthens of the earth, and so many plagues of human society" (vol. 3, 436, Sermon 50), it is because education is defective and ignorance is spreading. The lack of proper religious teachings generates "new and wild opinions, a factitious and uncharitable spirit, a furious and boisterous zeal" (vol. 4, 487, Sermon 52) and increases Man's degeneracy:

great part of us are degenerated into beasts and devils, wallowing in abominable and filthy lusts, indulging ourselves in those devilish passions of malice and hatred, of strife and discord, or revenge and cruelty,

4 'Only religion can purify man's mind by "quenching the fire of lust and suppressing the fumes and vapours of it, and by scattering the clouds and mists of passions" (vol. 1, 111-12, Sermon 4). "Therefore it concerns us to put on meekness, and humility, and modesty, that we may be able to judge impartially of things, and our minds be preserved free and indifferent to receive the truths of GOD, when they are offer'd to us: otherwise self-conceit and passion will so blind our minds, and bias our judgements, that we shall be unable to discern, and unwilling to entertain the plainest and most evident truths" (vol. 7, 1972-3, Sermon 117).

of sedition and disturbance of the publick peace to that degree, as if the grace of GOD had never appeared to us to teach us the contrary. (Vol. 6, 1579-80, Sermon 98)

Being often associated with the description of future punishments, fear is therefore employed to stress the role of religion as the sole guarantee of social order, a pleasurable life and of eternal happiness. When the misguided Man departs from religion, all he can enjoy is loss of pleasure, confusion and horror:

Without religion the life of man is a wild, and fluttering, and inconsistent thing, without any certain scope or design. The vicious man lives at random, and acts by chance: for he that walks by no rule can carry on no settled and steady design. [...] They hurry from one vanity and folly to another; and plunge themselves into drink, not to quench their thirst, but their guilt; wretched and inconsiderate man! (Vol. 2, 292, Sermon 28)

Recalling the dangers and calamities that befall the prodigal son once he decides to leave his father, Tillotson provides a visual description of the horrors of hell and damnation: once Man has passed away and the pain in his body has finished, his soul will suffer atrociously to eternity. The exact description of the torments of hell while claiming the impossibility of describing its monstrosity makes the picture even more effective to the amazed minds of his parishioners:

Could I represent to you the horror of that dismal prison, into which wicked and impure souls are to be thrust, and the misery they must there endure, without the least spark of comfort, or glimmering of hope, how they wail and grone under the intolerable wrath of GOD, the insolent scorn and cruelty of devils, the severe sashes and stings, the raging anguish and horrible despair of their own minds, without intermission, without pity, without hope of ever seeing an end of that misery, which yet is unsupportable for one moment; could I represent these things to you according to the terror of them, what effect must they have upon us? (Vol. 7, 1854, Sermon 112)

While threatening the audience's imagination in this way, Tillotson reminds them that "the interest of our everlasting happiness should lie near our hearts" (vol. 1, 309, Sermon 13). It is happiness, indeed, that he takes as the criterion to judge one's actions and present situation:

Art thou sure thou art in the right? thou art a happy man, and hast reason to be pleased: What cause then, what need is there of being angry?

Hath a man reason on his side? what would he have more? Why then does he fly into a passion? (Vol. 3, 92, Sermon 38)

Tillotson, therefore, plays upon their self-love that governs Man's search after happiness as it generates "a natural dread and horror of everything that can destroy [his] being" (vol. 1, 4, Sermon 1). Man should meditate upon the truth of divine promises to fight vicious inclinations by opposing "to the present temptations of sense the great and endless happiness and misery of the other world" (vol. 5, 994, Sermon 64). In trying to subdue the audience's self-love, Tillotson's tone is mellifluous, and the images he represents to their minds are joyful and alluring, as he seeks to convince them of the advantages of a religious life. When self-love is subdued to reason, Man understands that the most profitable way to attain eternal happiness is by securing honest and charitable behaviour in this life, thus making morality the hinge on which religion turns. Tillotson insists on the pleasure derived from living a satisfactory life in which people are able to meet the requests of their passionate and spiritual sides. "Spurred on by the powerful incentives of eternal reward and punishment" (Scholtz 1998, 204), Latitudinarian morality is therefore unavoidably linked to self-interest. The benefits derived from morally upright conduct are health, peace of mind and liberty. The gospel can cure Man's inadequacy as it "would raise us to the perfection of all virtue and goodness, [...] to relieve the infirmities and weakness of human nature" (vol. 6, 1578, Sermon 98). Moreover, Man can be blessed with a holy state which is "the essential and principal ingredient of happiness", "a state of peace and happiness, the very frame and temper of happiness" (vol. 7, 3519, Sermon 142). When Man becomes his best companion, if he is at ease with the world and in peace with his own conscience and with his Creator, he lives "a continuous feast" (vol. 3, 98, Sermon 38).

As Man is too easily tempted by "the allurements of the world and sensual pleasures" and he is carried away by his own "heart's lusts" (vol. 7, 1903-4; 1911): the only means he has to contrast these pretences is by being educated in a Christian environment. This principle can be applied particularly to children: as human beings are "naturally inclined to evil", neglecting children's education results in their habituation to "sin and vice" whose effects extend to "the publick, and to posterity" (vol. 4, 514-15, Sermon 53). Fear is once more used by Tillotson to report the cry of a neglected child on the day of judgement:

Had you been as careful to teach me the good knowledge of the LORD, [...] to instruct me in my duty, I had not now stood trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal doom which is just ready to be pass'd upon me. Cursed be the man that begat me, and the paps that gave me

suck. It is to you that I must in a great measure owe my everlasting undoing. (Tillotson, vol. 4, 518, Sermon 53)

When confronting his congregation, Tillotson acts like the model father he describes in his sermons on education: following what seems a scientific methodical analysis, he encourages them to observe, identify and check their passions and appetites. This idea implies a participating effort on Man's side, a proneness to self-analysis and the consequent necessity of active participation in social life, while perfection to the divine law is not wholly required, mitigated by a sincere obedience to it according to one's capacity, as the covenant of leniency claims:

By the happiness of a good education, and the merciful providence of GOD, a great part of many mens virtue consists in their ignorance of vice, and their being kept out of the way of great and dangerous temptations; rather in the good customs they have been bred up to, than in the deliberate choice of their wills; and rather in the happy preventions of evil, than in their resolute constancy in that which is good. (Vol. 1, 380, Sermon 16)

This method seems to work so well that Tillotson can affirm that even those tempers that are next to desperate are "not utterly intractable to the grace of GOD and to the religious care of Parents" (vol. 4, 502, Sermon 53).

To conclude, we might assert that human depravity is the only motive to employ self-love and stir fear in sermons, as the power of passions cannot be defeated just by reasonable lucidity. Tillotson had to give these concessions to frail human nature to the sole purpose of promoting reformation, and this defeat proved the absolute necessity of including passionate appeals in sermons to make them effective. He justifies the use of these drives because he acknowledges their interdependence: "Religion [...] directs men to their duty by the shortest and plainest precepts of a good life; it persuades men to the obedience of these precepts, by the promise of eternal happiness, and the threatenings of eternal misery in case of obstinate disobedience; it offers us the assistance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, to help our weakness" (vol. 7, 2012, Sermon 119).

Taking into consideration the mutable and inconsistent nature of Man and of his thoughts, as well as that of the world, the only thing a wise divine can do is to act like the Holy Spirit that leads Man to virtue "by opening our heart to let in the light of divine truth upon our minds, by representing to us the advantage of such arguments and considerations as are apt to persuade us to embrace it, and yield to it; by secret and gentle reprehensions softening our hard heart, and bending our stiff and stubborn wills to a compliance with the will of GOD, and our duty" (vol. 6, 1572, Sermon 98).

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# Scriblerian Cognition Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot and Self-Knowledge

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**Abstract** Members of the Scriblerus club were sceptical about the power of reason and about fashionable get-knowledgeable-quick schemes. For Swift in particular, scientific projectors were motivated more by the passion of pride than by a desire for truth. But some members of the group expressed a different attitude in their non-satirical works. Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot reflected on knowledge – especially self-knowledge – and found a positive role for the passions. Arbuthnot’s poem *Know Thyself* explicitly addresses the relationship between the bodily, affective self and knowledge. Both Arbuthnot in his poem and Pope in his *Essay on Man* employ the image of a maze to symbolise the difficulty of understanding human nature. This essay will consider how Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, addresses questions raised by Arbuthnot and Swift about the relations between the passions and cognition. In particular it will consider which takes priority – passion or reason – in the process that leads to knowledge. The notions of process and progress are also at issue in Pope’s account of the development of the arts and sciences. The essay will also analyse the tension between the maze and the plan – the experience of confusion versus the knowledge of a structure. I will suggest that the apparent scepticism about knowledge that Pope evokes in his rhetorical question at the start of the *Essay* is partly worked out or circumvented through the use of structural devices that attempt to arrive at certainty. The prose arguments, concluding statements and maxims suggest that the *Essay* arrives at a truth that was already known.

**Summary** 1 The Maze and the Plan. – 2 “And Hence Let Reason Late Instruct Mankind”: Order, Temporality and Knowledge. – 3 “In Vain Thy Reason Finer Webs Shall Draw”: the Question of Scepticism. – 4 “Know then This Truth”: Signs of Certainty in the *Essay*. – 5 The End.

**Keywords** Scriblerus Club. Pope. Swift. Arbuthnot. Scepticism.

## 1 The Maze and the Plan

We know that the Scriblerians were highly sceptical about knowledge and reason and were especially critical about currently fashionable schemes. Jonathan Swift was particularly sceptical about attempts to find a short-cut to knowledge. When Gulliver visits the Grand Academy of Lagado, he reports:

The first Man I saw was of a meagre Aspect, with sooty Hands and Face, his Hair and Beard long, ragged, and singed in several Places. His Clothes, Shirt, and Skin, were all of the same Colour. He had been Eight Years upon



a Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers, which were to be put into Vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the Air in raw inclement Summers. He told me, he did not doubt in Eight Years more, that he should be able to supply the Governor's Gardens with Sun-shine, at a reasonable Rate: but he complained that his Stock was low, and entreated me to give him something as an Encouragement to Ingenuity, especially since this had been a very dear Season for Cucumbers. (Swift 2012, III, v, 259-60)

By making the academy resemble Bedlam, Swift suggests that scientific projectors are motivated by the passions of self-love, pride, and greed which over-power reason and lead to madness. Gulliver describes the academy in affectless prose, suggesting that he is not as horrified as perhaps he should be. His uncritical acceptance of the folly of the projectors is also the target of Swift's satire.

But some members of the group expressed a different attitude in their non-satirical works. Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot reflected on knowledge – especially self-knowledge – and found a positive role for the passions. Arbuthnot's poem *Know Thyself* explicitly addresses the relationship between the bodily, affective self and knowledge. He begins by asking some of the key questions that agitated the Enlightenment (and thinkers in all ages):

What am I? how produc'd? and for what End?  
Whence drew I Being? to what Period tend?  
Am I th'abandon'd Orphan of blind Chance,  
Drop'd by wild Atoms, in disorder'd Dance?  
Or from an endless Chain of Causes wrought,  
And of unthinking Substance, born with Thought?  
By Motion which began without a Cause,  
Supremely wise, without Design, or Laws.  
Am I but what I seem, mere Flesh and Blood;  
A branching Channel, with a mazy Flood?  
(Arbuthnot 1734, ll. 1-10)<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of his poetic exploration of self-knowledge, thoughts of atomism and materialism make Arbuthnot feel lost. Similarly, Pope's *Essay on Man* opens with a vision of a maze:

Awake! my St. John! leave all meaner things  
To low ambition and the pride of Kings.  
Let us (since Life can little more supply

1 For a discussion of this poem, its indebtedness to Pascal, and Pope's possible revisions, see Beattie 1935, 376-82.

Than just to look about us and to die)  
Expatiate free o'er all this scene of Man:  
A mighty maze! but not without a plan.  
(Pope 2016, I, ll. 1-8)

After this initially leisurely rambling rumination, Pope poses his key questions about the source of knowledge and the relations between (implicitly rational) knowledge and (implicitly bodily) self:

Say first, of God above, or Man below,  
What can we reason, but from what we know?  
(ll. 17-18)

Knowledge begins in self-knowledge. The natural philosopher might argue that man in his earthly aspect is the measure of all and the basis of reason; the moralist and satirist might maintain that unless man knows his limitations, he knows nothing. This essay will consider how Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, addresses questions raised by Arbuthnot and Swift about the relations between the passions and cognition. In particular it will consider which takes priority – passion or reason – in the process that leads to knowledge. It will also analyse the tension between the maze and the plan – the experience of confusion versus the knowledge of a structure. I will suggest that the apparent uncertainty about knowledge that Pope evokes in his rhetorical question at the start of the *Essay* is partly worked out or circumvented through the use of structural devices that attempt to arrive at certainty.

The maze is frequently used as a metaphor for mental confusion and philosophical labyrinths in poetry of the long eighteenth century. Thus, Milton's devils reason

Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,  
Fixed Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge absolute,  
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.  
(Milton 1970, 115-6, II, ll. 559-61)<sup>2</sup>

Samuel Johnson quotes Milton in his Review of Soame Jenyns' *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*:

The author has, indeed, engaged in a disquisition, in which we need not wonder if he fails, in the solution of questions on which philosophers

2 For similar images of mental mazes and labyrinths, see Brad Pasanek's on-line database: *The Mind is a Metaphor*: <http://metaphors.iath.virginia.edu/metaphors> (2018-03-22). Milton also refers to mazes and labyrinths in *Paradise Lost*, IV, l. 239; V, ll. 620-4, IX, l. 499, X, l. 830.

have employed their abilities from the earliest times.

“And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.”

He denies, that man was created *perfect*, because the system requires subordination. (Johnson 2005, 399)<sup>3</sup>

While seeming to absolve Jenyns of blame for failing to solve problems that had confounded philosophers for ages, Johnson hints at a deeper criticism by implicitly comparing Jenyns’ speculations to those of Milton’s devils. The particular relevance of Johnson’s criticism here is that Johnson considered Jenyns’ *Free Enquiry* “little more than a paraphrase of Pope’s epistles, or, yet less than a paraphrase, a mere translation of poetry into prose” (399). Thinkers of such different stripes as Johnson and Voltaire, and more recent critics such as Laura Brown (1985), have objected to the arguments maintained in Pope’s *Essay*.<sup>4</sup> One of the key points of contention is the way the theory of the Great Chain of Being naturalises social inequality and subordination. This is not the place for a full examination of the ethical and political problems raised by Pope’s *Essay*, but it is worth noting the questions Johnson raises about the implicit connections between the Chain of Being, social hierarchy and degrees of knowledge. He asks just how big is “the portion of ignorance necessary to make the condition of the lower classes of mankind safe to the publick, and tolerable to themselves”? (Johnson 2005, 408). Precisely what “degree of knowledge” will enable them to fit comfortably in the providential scale or subordination? He opines: “I believe it may be sometimes found, that a *little learning is*, to a poor man, a *dangerous thing*” (409). Here, and later in his Review, Johnson turns Pope against himself, quoting his *Essay on Criticism* against his *Essay on Man*.<sup>5</sup>

Johnson identified damaging inconsistencies in Jenyns’ *Free Enquiry* which he implies apply equally to Pope’s *Essay*. He declared that although he does not mean “to reproach this author for not knowing what is equally hidden from learning and from ignorance”, Jenyns “has told us of the benefits of evil, which no man feels, and relations between distant parts of the universe, which he cannot himself conceive” (Johnson 2005, 418). Just

3 Johnson’s review of Jenyns’ *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (1756) was first published in *The Literary Magazine, or, Universal Review*, XIII-XIV (1757).

4 For Voltaire’s discussion of Pope with Rousseau and marginal comments on the *Essay* in his copy of Pope’s Works 1735, see Pope 2016, cii-iii, 10-11, 13, 15, 18, 21, 23.

5 “Surely, a man who seems not completely master of his own opinion, should have spoken more cautiously of omnipotence, nor have presumed to say what it could perform, or what it could prevent. I am in doubt, whether those, who stand highest in *the scale of being*, speak thus confidently of the dispensations of their maker: ‘For fools rush in, where angels fear to tread’” (Johnson 2005, 414). In his *Essay on Man*, Pope calls his readers or man in general ‘fool’ on at least six occasions.

as Jenyns claims for himself degrees of knowledge which are not only not available to the lower orders, but are not humanly possible, Pope seems to privilege himself with a God's eye point of view. He suggests that while 'man' is lost in the maze, he and Bolingbroke are in possession of a map. The suggestion that he can rise above the scene to comprehend the relationships between the passions and cognition might open him to accusations that, like Swift's projectors, his mind is clouded by the passion of pride.

Readers have long recognised other contradictions within the *Essay on Man*. One of the most notable is that the argument made in Epistle I that man cannot see God's plan conflicts with the advice offered in Epistle IV that happiness lies in submitting to God's plan. In his richly annotated and critically nimble edition of *An Essay on Man*, Tom Jones acknowledges the inconsistency between the teachings of Pope's first and last Epistles and argues that "The tension is not to be resolved – it is to be recognized as one of the truths of the vision of the fourth Epistle that it was arrived at by means of the first, and that the first lives on as an antagonist even as the more systematic vision is expounded" (Pope 2016, xxiv) Furthermore, Jones encourages us to see Pope as constantly shifting philosophical perspectives throughout the poem:

There is an important temporal quality to inquisitive or essayistic writing of the kind Pope attempts in the *Essay*. It was a commonplace of the poetry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the world changes, that therefore what was the case might not be so any longer, and so some (empirical) truths are temporally successive. Two contradictory statements can both be true of the world, in two or more of its successive states. (xxiii)

One of the most important sources for Pope is, as Maynard Mack also acknowledged, Montaigne's 'essayism' (Pope 1950; Mack 1985, 82-6). Before I turn to consider in what ways and to what extent Pope also adopts Montaigne's scepticism about reason and human knowledge, I want to examine the temporal quality Jones identifies by considering the relationship between passion and cognition in terms of succession. In what way is temporal order of the operation of passion and cognition related to larger questions of order in the *Essay on Man*?

## 2 “And Hence Let Reason Late Instruct Mankind”: Order, Temporality and Knowledge

The relations between reason and the passions underpinned some of the ethical and epistemological questions that animated discussion for much of the Enlightenment. Does virtue lie in following or suppressing the passions? What part do reason and the passions play in arriving at knowledge? (Knowledge being the destination of the cognitive processes). Pope assumes that human nature is binary; it is motivated by both reason and passion, which are engaged in “elemental strife” (Pope 2016, 18, I, l. 169). At times he seems to endorse the traditional teaching of the Church that the passions are dangerous and must be suppressed by reason if man wants to live a virtuous life or even to achieve anything. One key issue in the relation of emotion to cognition or passion to reason is the issue of priority. Which comes first: thought or feeling? What Pope is suggesting about the temporal dimension on both the micro and macro levels is complex and hard to untangle. On the one hand, the poem argues that reason achieves something that is then destroyed by passion: “What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone” (Pope 2016, 33, II, l. 43). It is almost as if Reason, Penelope like, weaves her tapestry by day but her Passion for her missing Ulysses causes her to destroy it each night. On the other, he argues at some length in Epistle II that passion acts before reason is engaged. That seems to be the burden of the lines that open the second section of his second Epistle: “Two Principles in human nature reign; | Self-Love to urge, and Reason, to restrain” (34, II, ll. 53-4). The argument rocks from passion to reason repeatedly: “Self-love, the spring of motion, acts the soul; | Reason’s comparing balance rules the whole” (34-5, II, ll. 59-60); “Self-love still stronger, as its objects nigh; | Reason’s at distance, and in prospect lie” (35, II, ll. 71-2); the “rising tempest” of Passion “puts in act the soul”; Passion is the “Gale,” while Reason is the “Card” or compass that provides direction (37, II, ll. 105-8). Putting Passion first might make it seem more important because it has priority. However, by putting Reason in second place, making it act as a check to Passion means that it actually dominates. It is “The God within the mind” (44, II, l. 204) who is both first and last.

While Epistle II treats of the relationship between Reason and Passion in the life of the individual, Epistle III considers the relationship between Reason and Passion in the life of the species. Or rather, it compares Reason and Instinct; we might ask whether Pope considers them to be equivalent. Structurally, Passion and Instinct occupy the same position in relation to Reason, and they are similar in modes of operation: in Epistle III, Reason is sluggishly slow to engage, whereas Instinct readily volunteers (57, III, ll. 85-8). The passions are instincts – innate, natural and a necessary part of human action, including moral activity, according to Pope – and they

should not be repressed. Moreover, Pope goes on to suggest, they are vital to knowledge. When he comes on to discuss the development of knowledge (the sciences) he employs temporal markers (“then” occurs more times in this Epistle than in any of the others) and implies a sequence of events. Yet he does not seem to me consistently to describe development. In a passage which combines allusions to the classical golden age with echoes of Locke’s *Two Treatises on Government*, Pope declares:

The state of Nature was the reign of God:  
Self-love and Social at her birth began,  
Union the bond of all things, and of Man.  
Pride then was not; nor Arts, that Pride to aid.  
(61, III, ll. 148-51)

So not all passions were present in the state of nature – pride he claims, emerged later, and it emerged with the growth of knowledge – what he calls here “Arts”. He implies a temporal sequence when he refers to “the [morally inferior] man of times to come” (61, III, l. 161) and when he describes the emergence of increasingly tyrannical and superstitious political systems in section VI and in the restoration of the natural system by superior beings:

’Twas then, the studious head or gen’rous mind,  
Follow’r of God or friend of human-kind,  
Poet or Patriot, rose but to restore  
The Faith and Moral, Nature gave before.  
(69, III, ll. 283-6)

This statement is further complicated since, while it ostensibly describes an action in the past, it is probably designed to encourage the studious, generous, etc. to action in the future, an action perhaps to be led by the Patriot Bolingbroke and Poet Pope.

If we apply pressure to Pope’s account of the growth of human knowledge in Epistle III, section V it emerges that this narrative of change is in tension with the idea of the divinely implanted duo of passions and reason. In a key passage in the third Epistle, Pope presents a conjectural account of the rise of knowledge, but in a form that I think encapsulates a problem thinkers then and now have grappled with: how to square epistemology with the history of science. That is, if you maintain that the structure of knowledge is embodied in the structure of the mind/body dyad, and that this original structure survives intact in modern man, how do you reconcile it with the recognition that man has evolved and knowledge has developed over time? In a way, it is a version of the nature-nurture debate. The architects of the great French *Encyclopédie* encountered this conundrum. Denis

Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert employed the old diagrammatic representation of knowledge in the form of a tree to symbolise the structure of knowledge. Robert Darnton describes how they adapted Francis Bacon's division of knowledge into branches deriving not from the objects of knowledge but from the faculties of the mind: memory, the source of historical knowledge (including natural history); imagination, the source of the arts (referred to as "poetry"); and reason (for them the principle faculty), the source of philosophy comprising divine, natural and human philosophy (Darnton 1984, 198-201; d'Alembert 1995, 50-1; cf. Yeo 2001, 27-32). Onto this implicitly static Baconian structure of mental faculties, they grafted the Lockean epistemology of sensation and reflection. Thus, not only is knowledge rooted in physical feeling, it has a temporal dimension because mental reflection comes after sensation to grow knowledge. Moreover, in his *Discourse préliminaire* to the *Encyclopédie* (1751), after mapping out a logical model of knowledge, d'Alembert sketched a hypothetical history of human knowledge that resembles Pope's in several respects. Like Pope, d'Alembert derives both science and ethics from epistemology; he stresses the importance of instinct and describes the successive invention of sciences such as physics, agriculture and geometry as need arose and reflection on experience made possible (d'Alembert 1995, 8-45). After his analysis of the deep structures of knowledge (in mental faculties) and his long view (of the history of knowledge), d'Alembert argued that it was possible to master the three-dimensional field by means of an encyclopaedic arrangement of knowledge which

consists of collecting knowledge into the smallest area possible and of placing the philosopher at a vantage point, so to speak, high above this vast labyrinth, whence he can perceive the principle sciences and the arts simultaneously. From there... he can discern the general branches of human knowledge, the points that separate or unite them; and sometimes he can even glimpse the secrets that relate them to one another. It is a kind of world map which is to show the principal countries, their position and their mutual dependence, the road that leads directly from one to another. This road is often cut by a thousand obstacles. (d'Alembert 1995, 47)

This image of the labyrinth and map resembles that of the maze and plan with which Pope opens the *Essay on Man*. At this point in the poem, Pope does not yet position himself high above the field of knowledge. Rather, while he explores the "heights", they are "giddy" rather than stable and he also operates at ground level, beating "this ample field" trying to discover what it conceals. Moreover, his tree of knowledge does not resemble the intellectual schema of the *encyclopédistes*, rather it recalls the Biblical tree of forbidden knowledge. Against Pope's description of the "Garden, tempting with forbidden fruit," Voltaire wrote in his copy of Pope's *Works*: "mais,

mon cher pope, | si c'est un fruit deffendu, tu ny dois donc pas toucher" (Pope 2016, 7, I, l. 8, fn.) However, by the third Epistle, Pope seems to have constructed for himself a vantage point from which "he can perceive the principle sciences and the arts simultaneously." Yet Pope's response to the problem of the relation between the innate and the acquired differs from that of the *encyclopédistes*. It is not just that he is less systematic or less radical, he is also less optimistic about the triumph of reason and the progress of knowledge. In several respects, his model is the inverse of that of the *philosophes*. D'Alembert moves through philosophical history to a logical model, enabling him to combine the genealogical order of the growth of branches of knowledge with the epistemological structure of the operation of the mind under the rubric of encyclopaedic order (Darnton 1984, 205; d'Alembert 1995, 46-7). He also insisted on the triumph of civilisation and the importance of men of letters and *philosophes*. Pope's approach is almost the inverse of this model.

Pope argues at length in Epistle III that human knowledge is derived from Nature. But where d'Alembert derives knowledge from an abstraction - "the nature of the thinking principle within us" (8) - Pope derives the history of knowledge from natural history in a beguilingly sensuous passage of intensely patterned verse:

See him from Nature rising slow to Art!  
To copy Instinct then was Reason's part;  
Thus then to Man the voice of Nature spake---  
"Go, from the Creatures thy instructions take:  
"Learn from the birds what food the thickets yield;  
"Learn from the beasts the physic of the field;  
"Thy arts of building from the bee receive;  
"Learn of the mole to plow, the worm to weave;  
"Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,  
"Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale."  
(Pope 2016, 62-3, III, ll. 169-78)

Enacting the kind of interchange that he claims occurred in an imagined state of nature, Pope turns creatures into farmers, doctors, architects, weavers and sailors so that they can teach their arts to man. Mini-beasts can even instruct man in the arts of politics and law; "The Ant's republic" warns of the dangers of communism while "the realm of Bees" models the wise monarchy (III, ll. 183-90). However, the mole does not actively teach man to plough nor the nautilus to sail; Pope is not depicting talking animals; rather, it is Nature that speaks. Actually, the mechanism of this knowledge transfer is more complex. Although "the voice of Nature" seems to be an external authority instructing man, Nature here is synonymous with Instinct, thus it is an aspect of the human, as is Reason. Reason is ul-



timately the active principle, for “To copy Instinct then was Reason’s part”. The passage seems to sketch a narrative of development. Pope implies that man existed in a state of ignorance and then he gradually acquired art: “See him from Nature rising slow to Art!” (62, III, l. 169). The arts that nature tells man to learn follow a traditional order based on need: nutrition, medicine, architecture, farming, the manufacture of clothing, navigation, social organisation, politics, etc. There is an implied sequence in which Instinct precedes Reason: “And hence let Reason late instruct Mankind” (63, III, l. 180). However, any temporal dimension collapses in the couplet which closes this chain of ideas and opens the next section:

Great Nature spoke; observant Men obey’d;  
Cities were built, Societies were made  
(64, III, ll. 199-200).

While the shift to the past tense implies that the observant men existed in an earlier era from the reader, the caesural comma implies that cities and societies were constructed at the same time as each other and as the arts and sciences. Moreover, Nature does not say “learn this, then learn that and then learn this other thing”. Everything is to be learned at once, and once learned, instantly put into effect. *An Essay on Man* is not a narrative poem. Unlike its great predecessor in the poetry of theodicy, *Paradise Lost*, it avoids Biblical history as well as eschewing Revelation, nor does it survey the development of knowledge from the Ancients to the Moderns. What it seems to do rather is derive human knowledge from natural history and ‘history’ in this usage means a systematic rather than a chronological study.

### 3 “In Vain Thy Reason Finer Webs Shall Draw”: the Question of Scepticism

Scholars have noticed that Pope shares his regard for the natural abilities of animals with Montaigne. Maynard Mack acknowledged Montaigne’s ‘essayism’ as a key influence (Pope 1950; Mack 1985, 82-6). Mack and Jones identify numerous parallels between Epistle III and Montaigne’s “Apology for Raimond Sebonde,” which Pope read in Charles Cotton’s translation (1685-1986). In particular, they see Montaigne behind Pope’s rebuttal of proud man’s assumption that animals were created for his convenience: “While Man exclaims, ‘See all things for my use!’ | ‘See man for mine!’ replies a pamper’d goose” (III, ll. 45-6; cf. Montaigne 1685-1686, II, 218, 348-

9).<sup>6</sup> Fred Parker also notes parallels between the “attack on anthropocentrism pursued in the first Epistle,” and the “account of instinct in the third” and Montaigne’s “Raimond Sebonde.” For Parker, these parallels support a larger claim that Pope is a sceptical thinker who embraced “the fluidity of mental process” (Parker 2003, 6). One of Parker’s most striking claims is that Pope’s maxim “Whatever IS, is RIGHT” (I, l. 294, cf. IV, l. 394) is not so much “a reasonable consequence of what he supposedly already proved,” as Bolingbroke called it (Parker 2003, 30 quoting Bolingbroke 1754, IV, 258 fn.) but rather “an experience, not an inference – that his scepticism delivers”, or even an “intuition” rather than a logical deduction (31, 44).

Montaigne was one of Pope’s favourite authors (Mack 1985, 82) and Pope is certainly critical of the pride man takes in his knowledge, a knowledge that he argues derives from animals’ natural instincts:

“Yet go! and thus o’er all the creatures sway,  
 “Thus let the wiser make the rest obey,  
 “And for those Arts meer Instinct could afford,  
 “Be crown’d as Monarchs, or as Gods ador’d”.  
 (Pope 2016, 63, III, ll. 195-8)

This scepticism might derive from Montaigne, but neither Mack nor Jones cite him as a major source for the history of science passage I discuss above or for this sarcastic rebuke of those proud of human reason which rounds off this section. Jones also argues that Pope “does not go as far as Montaigne in asserting the superiority of the passions over reason” (Pope 2016, lxvi). Moreover, Parker’s conclusion that *An Essay on Man* is a profoundly sceptical work (rather than one that includes sceptical passages) is arrived at by discounting a quarter of the poem and all of the accompanying prose. The whole of Epistle IV is dismissed in a footnote because in it, “Pope loses the sceptical thread. The Epistle abandons the central emphasis on the inadequacies of reason, lacks any equivalent to passion or instinct as a strong disposing natural force, and struggles to find arguments that support “whatever is, is right” (Parker 2003, 56 fn. 73). Similarly, Parker discounts the last third of Pope’s *Epistle to Cobham: Of the Knowledge of Characters of Men* – a poem related thematically and structurally to *An Essay on Man*. Both poems discuss the theory of the ruling passion and were supposed to form part of Pope’s projected “Opus

6 Mack identifies Montaigne as a source or parallel for Pope 1950, III, ll. 49-52, 57-66, 91-2, 101-2, 151-60, 167-8, 169 ff., 183, 189-90. Jones cites Montaigne less frequently; see Pope 2016, III, ll. 27-46, 89-98, 172. They both cite numerous additional parallels for the ideas Pope expresses in these passages. Although Pope denies that animals are made for man’s use at III, ll. 43-8, describing them as models for his knowledge in III, ll. 169-98 might contradict that claim.

Magnus", as he called it in a 1734 letter to Swift. This series of "Ethical Epistles" was supposed, according to Reuben Brower, to "have treated almost every conceivable aspect of human life", but only the *Essay on Man* and four *Moral Essays* were completed (Brower 1959, 241, quoted in Leranbaum 1977, 1). According to Parker, "the ruling passion is only the secondary subject of this *Epistle*; its main subject is scepticism, and the first two-thirds of the *Epistle* constitute the most sustained expression of radical scepticism in all of Pope" (Parker 2003, 32). So, in this reading, Pope in his serious moral-philosophical works is as sceptical about the power of human reason to arrive at knowledge as is Swift in his satires.

#### 4 "Know then This Truth": Signs of Certainty in the *Essay*

There are times in his *Essay on Man* in which Pope does sound sceptical and even satirical about the relationship between the passions and cognition, addressing his readers as fools on several occasions. He places man in a very uncomfortable position on the "isthmus of a middle state" at the opening of *Epistle II*. There is a kind of tragic slapstick to the way that Pope's Man falls between the two stools of Mind and Body and ends up as "The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!" (Pope 2016, 29, II, ll. 3-18). In *Epistle IV*, Man's attempts to rise make him God's laughing-stock: "Heav'n still with laughter the vain toil surveys, | And buries madmen in the heaps they raise" (79, IV ll. 75-6). Yet, I suggest that this attitude is offset by signs of confidence and certainty that are not only scattered through the four *Epistles* but built into the structure of the *Essay* as a whole. The overall plan of the *Essay* is seen most clearly in his prose arguments (a dimension of the poem Parker overlooks). There is a set of topics, or rather frames in which Pope considers man: the *Epistles* consider the nature and state of man with respect to the universe, himself as an individual, society and finally happiness. The use of the terms "Design" and "Argument" for his prose outlines perhaps suggest the extent to which Pope hoped his *Epistles* would be as much Treatise as *Essay*. "Argument" can, of course, just mean the theme or a summary of the subject matter of a book. Yet, when Pope sets out a series of numbered propositions that indicate his line of reasoning, it also means "a connected series of statements intended to establish a position" (*OED*, s.v. "argument", 4). Moreover, he indicates some of the conclusions to be arrived at: "*The consequence of all, the absolute submission due to Providence, both as to our present and future state;*" "*That however, the Ends of Providence and general Good are answered in our Passions and Imperfections*" (Pope 2016, 5-6, I.x; 28, II.vi. Italics as in original). The sense of an orderly progress towards increasing knowledge is underscored by the way Pope uses the end of each *Epistle* to conclude the argument on that topic with an epigrammatic statement. The rightness

of the arguments of the second and third Epistles is underscored by the invocation of divine authority:

Ev'n mean Self-love becomes, by force divine,  
The scale to measure others wants by thine.  
See! and confess, one comfort still must rise,  
'Tis this, Tho' Man's a fool, yet GOD IS WISE.  
(49-50, II, ll. 291-4)

Epistle III similarly ends with God, though the tone is less aggressive in this image of charity and mutual support:

Thus God and Nature link'd the gen'ral frame,  
And bade Self-love and Social be the same.  
(72, III, ll. 317-8)

We might also see these concluding apothegms as themselves being structured into a larger argument by the particular formation of the conclusions of the first and last Epistles. The first Epistle ends with the memorable dictum that perhaps Pope hopes to be taken as axiomatic: "Whatever IS, is RIGHT." This contentious claim is lent a sense of inevitability by the rhetorical pattern that leads up to it:

All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;  
All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;  
All Discord, Harmony, not understood;  
All partial Evil, universal Good:  
And spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,  
One truth is clear, "Whatever IS, is RIGHT".  
(26-7, I, ll. 289-95)

The repetition of "All" imparts a sense of orchestral magnificence and indisputable finality (like the kettle drums appearing at the end of a symphony). The excitement in the verse could provoke a passionate response in the reader that would carry the rational argument to the heart. Epistle IV gains the sense of a conclusion by returning to the social relationship with which the poem began and then revisiting the end of each of the Epistles in turn:

Shall then this verse to future age pretend  
Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?  
That urg'd by thee, I turn'd the tuneful art  
From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart;  
For Wit's false mirror held up Nature's light;

Shew'd erring Pride, WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT;  
 That REASON, PASSION, answer one great aim;  
 That true SELF-LOVE and SOCIAL are the same;  
 That VIRTUE only makes our Bliss below;  
 And all our Knowledge is, OURSELVES TO KNOW.  
 (97-8, IV, ll. 389-99)

The repetition of the lessons enforced at the end of the previous Epistles suggests that they have passed firmly into knowledge and the avowal that Pope learnt them from Bolingbroke enacts the social relationship which Pope argues is crucial to both virtue and knowledge. What were presented as contradictions and oppositions earlier are now harmonised into one complementary system (“That Reason, Passion, answer one great Aim; | That true Self-love and Social are the same”). Rather than being set against each other, reason and passion now look like equals because of the syntax and punctuation of the line. Pope’s only question now is whether or not his verse will be equal to the task of demonstrating these truths to future ages.

Although Parker dismisses Epistle IV altogether (Parker 2003, 41, fnn. 72-3), I suggest that, by drawing things together, it arrives at a conclusion. While Pope’s solutions to the problem of the relations between reason and passion may not fully convince, it seems to me that he does present them as a solution. Similarly, his *Epistle to Cobham* raises a question: how can we really know the characters of men? He provides the answer: by identifying their ruling passions, we can know men’s true characters. Pope first identifies man as unknowable, both because the “Quick whirls, and shifting eddies, of our minds” (Pope 1951, 17, l. 24 [30]) make us too difficult to see and because our own subjective characters make us ineffective observers: “All manners take a tincture from our own” (l. 33). But instead of throwing up his hands, he presents the ruling passion as the clue which “unravels all the rest” (30, l. 178). It is the clue also in Epistle II of the *Essay on Man* and the two poems were closely linked. The *Epistle to Cobham* was published eight days before the final Epistle of the *Essay* and both were part of the projected larger schematic work which would compose his ethic scheme.

## 5 The End

In a way, the problem with Pope’s *Essay* is that it is not sceptical enough. It is too certain about its own ‘plan’ of the relationship between the passions and reason fully to embody the ‘maze’ of human understanding. It is not just that, as Jones argues, Pope “does not go as far as Montaigne in asserting the superiority of the passions over reason” (Pope 2016, lxvi), but it is also that the central trope of the poem – the Great Chain of Be-

ing – presents an image of fixity and imparts a hierarchical structure to the whole poem. Pope seems, despite his differences from the *philosophes* to imagine himself at “a vantage point, so to speak, high above this vast labyrinth” like d’Alembert’s encyclopaedist. From this vantage point, he informs the reader of the ‘secrets’ he has discerned in the form of oracular pronouncements and commands. He frequently resorts to the imperative:

Know thy own point...  
(26, I, l. 283)

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan...  
(28, II, l. 1)

Know, Nature’s children all divide her care...  
(54, III, l. 43)

Know, all enjoy that pow’r which suits them best...  
(57, III, l. 80)

Know, all the good that individuals find...  
(80, IV, l. 77)

Know then this truth (enough for Man to know)...  
(94, IV, l. 309)

The issue here is not just one of tone, but also the rhetoric implies a conception of knowledge as something that can be achieved in an instant. The command “Know” shortcuts the cognitive process. In his third Epistle, the history of knowledge is reduced to a single utterance: “Learn,” says Nature and knowledge is achieved in one go (62-3, III, ll. 172-7). Time is telescoped by this use of imperative. While Pope is not attempting to achieve the kinds of short cuts to knowledge that Swift’s projectors aim at in their vain experiments, the mutually constituting interchanges between passions and cognition do not take place. In these passages of didactic rhetoric, it is not for the reader to discover things himself, but for the poet to tell him.

The *Essay* concludes: “And all our knowledge is, OURSELVES TO KNOW”. Arbuthnot uses the Delphic maxim as his title: “Know Thyself”. The structure and the theory of knowledge implied in Arbuthnot’s poem and in Pope’s are quite different. Where Pope presents a four-part abstract argument, Arbuthnot traces his changing thoughts and his increasing mood of renunciation of himself and the world. He begins with urgent questioning: “What am I? how produc’d? and for what end?” (Arbuthnot 1743, 1, l. 1), then rejects the answers other people give him about whether he should

aspire to the divine or descend to his animal appetites: "Between those wide Extremes the length is such, | I find I know too little or too much" (5, ll. 79-80). He finds the way out of his painful dilemma is to pray and God sends enlightenment in the form of his "sacred page" (revealed religion) (l. 102). This dying physician learns to reconcile himself to his dual material and spiritual nature by learning to cultivate the right passions. In his last line he instructs himself: "Regain by Meekness what you lost by Pride" (10, l. 137), thus ending on a note of Christian resignation. Arbuthnot's explicit message echoes that of Swift's satires: from a Christian perspective, the passion of pride is a sin; Swift deems it to be the source of the God-challenging reasoning of the new science. Moreover, Swift, whose humiliating comparisons between man and beasts in Gulliver's "Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms" might also owe something to Montaigne's scepticism about human reason, does not spare his narrator. Even though he has repeatedly witnessed misplaced pride, Gulliver declares at the end of his *Travels*, "I am not a little pleased that this Work of mine can possibly meet with no Censurers... I write for the noblest End, to inform and instruct Mankind, over whom I may, without Breach of Modesty, pretend to some Superiority" (Swift 2012, 438). Unusually, Pope does not employ much self-implicating irony in his *Essay*. Figuratively, he accords himself a God's eye point of view from which he can see the plan of the mighty maze and that contracts the growth of knowledge into a single point of time in the creation of the world. Yet, crucially, that position of knowledge does not result from the *philosophes'* confidence in the power of reason, rather it too emerges from faith. His is a fideistic scepticism that is at the service of discovering a truth that is already established.

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## ***The Hurry and Uproar of Their Passions*** Images of the Early 18th-Century Whig

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**Abstract** The period between the Glorious Revolution and the end of Queen Anne's reign was a time of fierce antagonism between the political parties. This rivalry defined the political situation in early eighteenth century Britain and laid the foundation for the development of the ministerial machine of propaganda aimed at discrediting opponents and justifying the policies of the government. Methodically developed, the system was well applied during Oxford's Ministry (1710-14). The establishment of a ministerial newspaper – *The Examiner* – played a significant role in solidifying public opinion behind the transfer of power to the Tories. Remaining a 'right-wing' organ, it became a sharp edge of anti-whig propaganda. The main objective of this article is to analyse the rhetoric of passions, one of the literary tools used in *The Examiner* to build up a negative image of Whigs. This image, created on the pages of *The Examiner*, represents an element of a wider vision depicting passionate Whigs and reasonable Tories.


**Keywords** Propaganda. Tory. Whig. The Examiner. Passions.

The well acknowledged categorisation of the eighteenth century as an Age of Reason, though capturing some of its dominant cultural characteristics, tends to greatly underestimate the role of passions and affections. As a matter of fact, the eighteenth century, after a hundred years of political and philosophical debate, is precisely the period in which the discourse of passions reaches its height. Thomas Dixon, in his study *From Passions to Emotions. The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category*, refers to Pope's *Essay on Man* to summarise the eighteenth century's treatment of passions and indicate its important characteristics, namely "the desire to find a middle position between a frosty Stoicism and overheated enthusiasm; the need to moderate passion with reason; and the appeal both to God and nature as efficient psychological agencies" (2003, 63). The aspect of imposing control over passions has been the subject of philosophical thought since antiquity. During the early eighteenth century, not only did writers draw on the knowledge of ancient thinkers, but they obviously reflected the philosophical inheritance of the previous century. The influence of Descartes, Locke and Bacon shaped the eighteenth century, increasing the understanding that there should be a place for emotions in human life. For example, De Carro and Maraffa, juxtaposing the Cartesian and Baconian views on emotions, state that "according to Descartes, rational

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consciousness can fail only because of the influence of emotional and affective motions that originate from the opacity of the bodily machine” (2014, 562). Bacon accordingly exemplified the ways that passions can affect reason:

The human understanding is no dry light, but receives an infusion from the will and affections; whence proceed sciences which may be called ‘sciences as one would’. For what a man had rather were true he more readily believes. Therefore he rejects difficult things for impatience of research; sober things, because they narrow hope; the deeper things of nature from superstition, the light of experience from arrogance and pride, lest his mind should seem to be occupied with things mean and transitory; things not commonly believed, out of deference to the opinions of the vulgar. Numberless, in short, are the ways, and sometimes imperceptible, in which the affections colour and infect the understanding. (Spedding et al. 1858, 57)

Thus the seventeenth century philosophical inheritance regarded passions as “an overbearing and inescapable element of human nature, liable to disrupt any civilised order, philosophy included unless they were tamed” (James 1997, 1). The fact that by the early eighteenth century the mind was identified as the true source of the passions, rather than being located in other organs of the body,<sup>1</sup> signified the necessity of imposing greater control over them.<sup>2</sup> Such approaches were further developed throughout the following century and, as Aleksandra Hultquist broadly indicates: “perhaps more than any other era, the eighteenth century was embroiled in trying to best understand how the passions created public systems, such as governmental structures, and how controlling those passions would lead to a harmonised society” (2016, 88).

In order that semantic confusion should not obscure the concept of passions during the eighteenth century, it became a subject of scientific research; an enquiry and debate which concluded that passions should not be equated with emotions (Dixon 2003; Diller 2012). Passions included concepts such as love, anger and melancholy, which nowadays are primarily understood as emotions. Equally, other so-called passions such as curiosity, revenge or avarice are not treated as emotions in our post-twentieth century world.<sup>3</sup>

1 Hobbes, for instance, located passions in the heart (Molesworth 1840, 34).

2 Some critics claim that the eighteenth century view on passions indicated their greater value or that they were not considered obstacles to reason (Reddy 2001, 216; Denby 1994, 240; Dixon 2003, 66).

3 For the transition from differentiated typologies including passions, affections, appetites or sentiments into one over-arching psychological category of emotions, see Dixon 2003.

Bacon's views on the relations between passions and reason differed little from the commonly expressed opinions of his contemporaries (James 1997) and the control of human desires (passions) formed an integral part of his philosophical programme (Gigliani 2016, 6). For example, it is Bacon's views that they are most consistently represented in *The Examiner*.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, this article sets out to trace the evolving rhetoric of passions deployed in this well-known essay periodical as a technique set on discrediting political opponents.

The impact of the Glorious Revolution was reflected in the increasingly clear division in Parliament between two parties. Though at the beginning of the eighteenth century this two-party system was not yet fully visible on an ideological level, nevertheless, the Whigs and Tories were becoming the two most politically influential factions. This rivalry defined the political situation during this period in British history and laid the foundation for the development of the ministerial machine of propaganda aimed at discrediting opponents and justifying the policies of the government. At the same time, the rapid growth of the press resulted in the development of the printing industry. The editing and publication of the newspapers was carried out by the printers who usually also printed books and pamphlets. Therefore they were very often driven by political interests. The issues raised by the authors of the periodicals most often concerned domestic and foreign news, but in some cases they also offered commentaries on political, economic and moral topics. Over the course of time some of the newspapers were established in the form of so-called essay periodicals.

Essay writing is considered to be one of the most important achievements of the eighteenth century. Defined as the intermediary between Elizabethan drama and the novel,<sup>5</sup> essay periodicals emerged as a direct response of the publishing market to the rising demands of the newly established middle class. Periodical essays seem to reflect brutal reality more than any other genre. They help to create a picture of society and define its reaction towards the policy of the state, economy and often less serious matters such as manners or fashion. In terms of the prevailing topics discussed, the essay periodicals can be divided into two main categories: political and non-political – the difference obviously lying in

4 See *The Examiner*, III, no. 19; II, no. 46; II, no. 10; V, no. 26. Owing to erroneous numbering in the six-volume edition of *The Examiner*, reference to volume and number will be given instead of date.

5 Such an evolutionary scheme was briefly traced by George Marr who associated the decline of the Elizabethan drama with the emergence of the periodical essay and draws attention to their influence on the first novels (1970, 36). Later theories of the rise of the novel summed up by Lennard Davis include the osmotic and convergence models that he enriched by defining them as an "ensemble of written texts that constitute the novel" (1996, 7). All these models acknowledge essays as constitutive elements underlying the emergence of the novel.

their editorial attitude toward politics. For example, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, considered the first real literary magazines of their kind, were mostly devoted to contemporary social life. Their authors, Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, who both entered the literary canon and are regarded as prominent essay writers, only occasionally refer to the current political situation. The sponsored press on the other hand was adopted by the government to serve its propaganda purposes; politics, therefore was a topic that the governmentally subsidised papers were fully devoted to. Jeremy Black points out the specific character of the early political press:

Political opinion and information was not a specialised function of the press, particularly in the case of domestic news. Opinion rather than events dominated the political news of those newspapers that specialised in politics. Instead of 'in depth reporting' there were discursive essays on general, particularly ideological themes. (1987, 145)

The general classification of periodicals in terms of political content is fairly clear, but such categorisations often ignore the fact that they were subsidised by the political elites and therefore less original and offering less from the literary perspective (Marr 1970, 46-51; Powell 2012, 12), with some of the titles considered even of "ancillary status" (Osell 2002, 165).

Political periodicals, though targeted at different audiences, had a two-fold task: to project government policy and at the same time remain attractive to the readership. Consequently, the rivalry with the newly established *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* was not easy. The latter, targeting a mostly female readership, tackled issues concerning the everyday life of the newly emerged middle class and with such attractive domestic and class-related topics the fame and popularity of the two periodicals soon increased. The content of political newspapers by definition concerned state affairs and targeted a rather different audience consisting mostly of educated men and, as a consequence, not always offering equally amusing and interesting themes.

One such political essay periodical was *The Examiner*,<sup>6</sup> established in 1710 during Robert Harley's ministry.<sup>7</sup> Harley, installed as the Chancellor of Exchequer, tried to create a new ministry that would charter a moderate course between the extreme political right and left. Such a policy faced opposition from the members of the Tory group gathered in the October

6 Further references to the paper will be made either to the magazine (*The Examiner*) or to its persona (the Examiner).

7 During the Tory government (1710-1714) Harley hold the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer (1710-1711) and later served as Lord High Treasurer (1711-1714).

Club.<sup>8</sup> Harley's political position became particularly uneasy when this group of Tory backbenchers, whose position was strong enough to determine the party's policy, took Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke as their potential leader. One of the reasons for their dissatisfaction with Harley's approach was the perceived failure to remove Whig or moderate politicians from the administration.<sup>9</sup>

Sheila Biddle sums up the situation when stating that "Harley's moderate scheme clearly could not satisfy them. Bolingbroke was their champion, and he shared their belief that Harley's policy barred the entrance to a safe Tory world" (1975, 9). Both politicians tried to use the press to force through their political objectives. The machine of ministerial propaganda was methodically developed throughout the last decades of the seventeenth century and it was during Oxford's Ministry that it became most effectively applied (Downie 1979; Patterson 1974). The then establishment of a ministerial newspaper (*The Examiner*) played a significant role in gathering support for the transfer of power to the Tories.

*The Examiner*, which was in print from 3 August 1710 till 26 July 1714 (Hope 1865, 19-21) and later continued till 1716 (Allen 1947, 162), remained a 'right-wing' organ and a cutting edge of anti-Whig propaganda. The editors of the periodical included Bolingbroke, William King, Jonathan Swift, Mary Delarivier Manley, William Oldisworth and Joseph Browne. Little is known about the origins of the paper and scholars have put forward theories concerning its original function either as an organ "specifically designed both to justify past actions and indicate future ministerial policy" (Lock 1983, 28) or as a paper representing not Oxford's projected moderate administration but St. John's supporters (Patterson 1974, 154).

Though the details of the inauguration of *The Examiner* are rather obscure, its later fate was undoubtedly linked with Harley and Bolingbroke's rivalry, especially during the second half of Harley's administration. Being the secretary of state, Bolingbroke was responsible for all the tasks relating to the press. Not only did he start the paper but he also defined the themes that were to be discussed in its pages. These themes had been included in his "Letter to *The Examiner*" which was a bitter critique of the previous ministry's policy. This was not only directed against Harley's plan of creating a moderate Cabinet, but also reflected Bolingbroke's High Tory

8 Geoffrey Holmes refers to early eighteenth-century club society as one of the factors, along with discussions at the coffee-houses and dinner tables, that "reflected political schism within the nation" (1987, 21). The October Club, founded in the Winter 1710-1711, was formed by Tory backbenchers representing the most extreme opinion in the party.

9 In the address presented to the Queen on 1 June 1711, the members of the October Club stated their discontent openly, accusing the former government of abuses and mismanagement and the present administration of "its equivocation and its favour toward the Whigs as enemies of Church and country" (Holmes 1987, 343).

radicalism in hoping to sweep the Whigs out of the Ministry. In publishing the "Letter" he "hoped to cut Harley's line of retreat to the Whigs when the Tory character of the new regime became clear" (Downie 1979, 270).

It was fairly obvious to Harley that the fiery propaganda disseminated by *The Examiner* during the election in October 1710 would all but end his objectives of creating a balanced Parliament. In this situation Harley had to find a writer who would be willing to put his moderate approach and policy into print. Swift appeared to be the ideal writer to fulfil the task. However, the conflict between Harley and Bolingbroke over political matters was further reflected in the varied tone and increasingly radical views represented in the periodical, which

under Swift's auspices can be seen to have swung from this exalted position of disinterested patriot to a High Flying tory standpoint in the course of the first six months of 1711 as he [Swift] fell under the spell of the secretary and forgot the dictums of the moderate head of the ministry. (Downie 1979, 278)

Swift's voluntary departure from the paper has been questioned (Herman 2003, 133; Downie 1979, 137), although he himself gave an impression of his willingness to stop writing for the magazine when he announced that he "laid it [*The Examiner*] down on purpose to confound guessers" (Scott 1814, 396). Nevertheless, Harley's political situation and his increasing problems with the ever-growing power of the Tory opposition gathered in the October Club may have influenced his decision to change *The Examiner's* editor. Swift, whose views had radicalised during his editorship (probably under the influence of St. John), might simply have been replaced by someone more moderate.

The character of *The Examiner*, as a ministerial essay periodical, determined its content, which was mostly aimed at discussing and supporting the current government's aims and policies. Nevertheless, a good deal of space was still devoted to raising philosophical questions from which the concept of the passions was not excluded. One recent critic went as far as to claim that "the debate about the proper relationship of reason with the passions, sentiments and affections was one of the characteristics concerns of eighteenth-century thought" (Dixon 2003, 72). *The Examiner's* discourse upon passions is a good case in point.

Machiavelli and Bacon, two thinkers mentioned in *The Examiner*, undoubtedly influenced its philosophical approach. The reference to Baconian philosophy<sup>10</sup> is clearly visible in the essay on *Natural and Political*

<sup>10</sup> It is visible in the terminology, e.g. the use of notions of *Sympathy* and *Antipathy* (III, no. 19), though there is no direct reference to Bacon.

*Genius* (III, no. 49), a division reflecting Bacon's definitions of natural and political philosophy. The Examiner elaborates on "Publick Genius", the feature of "every Nation, whose Government is of any long standing, and the People preserved Pure and Unmixe'd in their Race to a tolerable degree". And in doing so it makes a further distinction between the 'Natural' and 'Political', with the former clearly identified with the so-called passions:

The natural genius of a People arises chiefly from Soil and Clime of their Country, from their Diet Diversions and those hereditary Tinctures, which are entail'd upon their Race, and run down in the same Channel with their Blood: This shews it self in their Passions, Appetites, Pleasures and Inclinations. (*The Examiner*, III, no. 49)

It is possible that the piece is directly drawing on an essay in the *Spectator* (no. 160), in which Addison delineates two possible types of genius, the "great natural Genius's that were never disciplined and broken by the Rules of Art," and the "Great Genius's [...] that have formed themselves by Rules, and submitted their Greatness of their natural Talents to the Corrections and Restraints of Art". The are the exact parallel of *The Examiner's* 'Natural and Political Genius', respectively.

Machiavellian thought as a synonym of "an instrumental and opportunistic view of rationality", which has been recently traced in Bacon's works (Gigliani 2016), is reflected in the Examiner's statement subordinating 'Natural Genius' to that of the political mind:

The Wise Men and Patriots of all Ages, who have distinguish'd themselves [...] by their Care of the Publick, and Love of Society, and merited the Applause and Thanks of Posterity, by the Planting and Modelling, or the saving and securing of States and Communities, always took their Measures from the Right Observation of the Natural Genius of People, to direct and qualifie the Political, and by humouring the one, to advance and enoble the other. (*The Examiner*, III, no. 49)

This passage mirrors the Examiner's view on the necessity to control the passions of 'Natural Genius' via 'Political Genius' which is remarkably directed by reason and taught by experience stemming from long and careful observation.

The Examiner's conformity to the general opinion that the so-called passions are the source for "blindness [...] cast over the Understanding" (I, no. 20) is further developed and elaborated in III, no. 19, which discusses "the mutual Entercourse between the Conscience and the Passions" and "the Mischiefs that may follow from such a Dependence". Ideas and elements consistent with the philosophical division of the passions as represented in Plato's chariot allegory constitutes a point of reference in



further deliberations upon the effects of the rhetoric of emotional appeal. Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* is evoked on several occasions to indicate the biased nature of human inclination, which "Passion Philosophy and [...] Romances" strengthen by dividing "every thing into Love and Fighting". Establishing a kind of diagnosis of contemporary society, the Examiner reveals the declining weight of reason on the one hand and the growth in prejudice on the other, and thus concludes that

Men now begin to sort their Principles by their Inclinations, without any regard to Truth, or enquiring into the Nature of Things. They affirm and deny for no other Reason in the World but that they may be said to Vote with their Friends and to Contradict their Enemies. (III, no. 19)

Upsetting the balance that should be maintained by 'the use of reason' results, as in the case of Plato's chariot allegory, in a situation where "Good and Evil seem to be regarded no otherwise than as two indifferent Things". Consequently, people diverge from the path that leads to truth when "Reason is no longer our Guide, but we follow Faces and Complexions and chuse our Principles by Sympathy and Antipathy". Moreover, discussion loses its purpose when "the Question is not *Is it true? Is it useful? Is it necessary to the Welfare of the State?*" and, instead, "we ask, *Who said it? Who proposed it?*" (III, no. 19). The initial aura of The Examiner's impartiality seems to fade away with the course of time, and the sting of criticism towards the Whigs increasingly sharpens when the balance of power changes under the influence of the Harley-Bolingbroke rivalry, in favour of the latter.

The rhetoric of passions denoted in *The Examiner* refers to three aspects of anti-Whig propaganda: shaping the image of an impassioned Whig, exposing party tactics of enslavement towards its followers and revealing the harmful use of *pathos* aimed at gaining control through the stirring of passions. Using Bacon's philosophical language, the Examiner claims that "[t]he Whigs of all Men breathing are the greatest Slaves to Sympathy and Antipathy" (III, no. 19).

The rhetoric of passions seemed to fluctuate considerably with the appearance of important elements of government policy and the need of support against Whig criticism. Such was the case during the war with France. For example, the handing over the Spanish crown to the Habsburgs was one of the aspects of Whig government policy before 1710 that was strongly criticised by the opposition. The Tories' desire to pursue peace was an altogether appealing sentiment and after their landslide victory in October 1710, the prevalent propaganda was aimed at grounding the validity of a pro-peace policy. *The Examiner* II, no. 22 powerfully depicted the state of near madness the Whigs were being brought to by the debate over peace:

Talk of Peace, and they appear like those miserable Wretches vex'd with an incurable Lunacy, who fall into fresh Ravings and strange Distractions, at the least hint of what occasion'd their Distemper. If Peace be but mention'd in our Coffee-houses [...] they Goggle, Foam, Rave, Cry.

The theme is further reiterated in one of the letters to the paper, in which a reference to Juvenal's satires opens the passage depicting the subject of peace as the source for the Whigs' inexhaustible flow of Passions: "Hinc Irae et Lacrymae; from this Fountain flow the Resentments and Rancour, which the Leaders of that Faction so liberally bestow on our Peace-Makers" (II, no. 25).

An interesting aspect of the rhetorical techniques characterising the Examiner's discourse is the use of a specific vocabulary aimed at drawing an alarming as well as comic image of its political rivals. The analysis shows that the most often repeated adjectives refer to two principal characteristics, namely Whig as 'liar' and as 'rabble-rouser' (Lein 1977). This latter strain is further sustained by repeatedly identifying Whigs with noise, movement and rage. Emotionally charged words such as: Clamorous, Hurry, Whine, Fretfulness, Poignancy, Rage, Franticness, Anger, Tears or Cry indicate a broad spectrum of irrational behaviour: from wailing, through agitation and fury up to madness. Whigs, as well as writers publishing in their support, are consistently presented as "Inflamers" and "Make-bates",<sup>11</sup> with "Mouth so deep and Open so wide, that the Art of Whispering is become perfectly useless" (VI, no. 12), as men who "had lost their Senses" and whose "Fury is little abated" (II, no. 36).

Often heavily symbolic visions, stories or tales forming a part of a wide range of literary tools are used in the essay periodicals to make their content more attractive to readers. In the case of *The Examiner*, these devices served as clever and powerful instruments for creating anti-Whig propaganda. A good example of this is the story of the Sharpers where the Whigs are not only compared to Papists but again depicted as somebody whose "rage [...] burst into all the artful Extravagances of personated Madness". His "Noise is much louder [...] Oaths deeper, and [...] Menaces more bloody than usual" (III, no. 4).

Reminding his readers of the fact that the Whig Party "for eight years together, had Sacrificed and Betray'd their Native country to a Foreign Interest", the Examiner, while describing the party's reaction to this unfinished plan, strengthened the emotional aspect by introducing a potent animal image:

<sup>11</sup> Both terms are an allusion to Whigs' use of pathos (which is described in more detail later in the article). The comparison between passions and flames is frequently used in *The Examiner*, denoting the devastating nature of the passions (see III no. 19; IV, no. 32; V, no.47).

again that Engine being wrested out of their Hands and Themselves happening to be found out, and stripped of their Power, just as their grand Project was ripe for Execution; They at Home and their Accomplices abroad are as enraged and mad, as a wild Beast who has his Prey taken from between his Paws, the very Moment he is going to devour it. (II, no. 40)

The demonized Party is presented as being riven with mere animal instinct rather than human passions.

The Examiner extends this idea by indirectly associating madness and fury with irrationality. Blinded by passions, the Whigs are depicted as madmen unable to adhere to the rules of fair discussion, an indispensable element of political activity. This idea sows doubt as to the Whigs' reliability as politicians. Whiggish mastery in the use of *argumentum ad personam* is presented by the Examiner as

magick of Antipathy, the Moment a Man happens to have the Name of Tory affix'd to him, he is immediately stript of his Honour, Conscience, Profession, Oaths, Religion, Understanding, Estate, and Self-preservation; has a New Church, a new King, a new God put upon him. (III, no. 19)

The Examiner ironically concludes that "after all these Out-rages and Indignities, the good-natur'd Persecutors call themselves Men of Temper and Moderation". While such a description often appears in the course of the paper's publication, the particular elements are built up with vocabulary which specifically refers to noise, movement and negative passions - the whole resulting in the image of a bad-tempered individual unable to control their passions, and certainly not exhibiting the proper behaviour for an acting politician.

Here we see the beginning of a multi-faceted criticism of the Whigs' rhetoric of emotional appeal, which at the same time attempts to expose their supporters as nothing more than victims of "the arbitrary Dominion and Force of Party". This particular tactic is part of the wider discourse aimed at emphasising distinction between the party and its followers. In one particularly fascinating essay in *The Examiner* VI, no. 10, a demonized image of the Whig party enslaving its own followers is carefully and brutally created. Using illustrative language the description reveals the process of "carving out the Person very Anatomically". It symbolises the party's control not only over their followers' minds but also over their bodies.

The roots of such a complete indoctrination are identified with the authoritative power of the party whose

Fury and Demon may indeed keep entire Possession of the Passions, by being able to find constant Employment for them; and by allowing them

to run riot, and fly out into the most unwarrantable Excesses [...] may indeed make an entire Conquest of the Appetites, and tie every one of them fast to her Interests; not by curbing an subduing them, but by giving them a loose, and gratifying all their most unlawful and inordinate Desires, when she has Power and stands upon the Pinnacle [...]; or when she is fallen, herself, by promise to regain Paradise for them, and by raising their Expectations far above all probability or even possibility of Enjoyment. (*The Examiner*, VI, no. 10)

This kind of treatment transforms party followers into the zealous victims of party policy: “whatever Power can far command the Passions and Appetites, must have no small Influence upon Understanding”.

The tactics of separating passively obedient Whig supporters from the party itself is reflected in the Examiner’s attempt to explain and justify their zeal, and thus place all the blame for such stirred passions on the party itself:

Reason can never bear up with such a Load of Corruptions continually oppressing it; and Conscience is in no small danger of being deprived of all Force and Vigour, all endeavours even for its own Preservation, when there are so many Delusions to amuse, so many Mistakes to mislead, so many Temptations to blind, and so many strong Habits to fear and harden it. (VI, no. 10)

According to the Examiner, however, such a policy had a beneficial effect on the Whigs’ political opponents, simply because it “perfectly exclude[d] their best and ablest Heads: The Men of Thought and Temper, and Masters of their own Passions” removed and substituted by “noisy Creatures”, “bus-tling Fools” and “petulant Wittals” who were “made Slaves to the Passions of their Party” (VI, no. 10). That passage follows the above-mentioned tactics aimed at creating internal divisions within the Whig Party, and seems to be a message addressed to nobler members as well as an appeal to their reason as a source for detecting insidious party policy.

Whilst ‘Arbitrary Dominion and Force’ were established as the party’s instruments of ideological pressure on its supporters, it was the “pathetic writing” that the Examiner denoted as an attempt to influence others. *Pathos* as a mode of persuasion deriving from Aristotelian classification of the speaker’s appeal to the audience seemed to be well-known in the newspaper discourse of this particular period. In Jack Lynch’s *Guide* to eighteenth-century English vocabulary, the term ‘pathetic’ is defined as “evoking or arousing the emotions, especially the tender ones”.<sup>12</sup> There-

12 URL <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/C18Guide.pdf> (2017-06-12).

fore, the Examiner's reference to "pathetic writing" denotes the Whig rhetoric of emotional appeal. The line of anti-Whig propaganda included the accusation of ungrounded usage of "pathetic writing" that the Examiner metaphorically compared to relations between man and woman "when Men make Court to the Heart at the Expense of the Head, and Bribe the Passions to impose upon the Understanding" (VI, no. 11). According to another influential philosopher of the time, Nicolas Malebranche, affections could pass from person to person (James 1997, 172-3). Hultquist remarks that "because of this almost physical movement, they were remarkably hard to pin down, and caused a great deal of anxiety" (2016, 88). In the light of Malebranche's view, 'pathetic writing' appeared to be a dangerous mode of persuasion. What is more, the Examiner emphasises its defamatory character (II, no. 46) aimed at the unnecessary stirring of individual passions and "inflaming the Vulgar":

Their ill-using Us all manner of ways, both by Word and Deed, by Speaking, Writing and Acting [...] if we presume barely to take notice of That Usage, thou' without any Reflection, this is Heat and Passion. (*The Examiner*, II, no. 39)

The deviousness of such a method was made more noticeable by representing the Whig party's "secret and more artful Management" and by stressing its malicious intentions "in that other approv'd Method of corrupting the Political Genius of the Nation [...] and making use of the Humours, Passions and Appetites of our People" (II, no. 39). In such a state of mind the capacity for reasonable thinking is weakened and, consequently, "Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood, must lose their difference" (VI, no. 10). Such an insidious approach to the "Natural Genius of the Nation" brings about disastrous results because people who are blinded by passions seem to be unaware of their own deeds:

By a false Court to their Natural Genius [...] they strike a new Heat upon [peoples'] Passions, with a design to warp their Affections from the Government and by diverting or deluding their Humours and Appetites, make them serve to the Corruption of their best Principles [...] For a False Fear, or Ill-placed Affection [...] make Men Instruments for bringing about such Designs, as in cool Blood they would abhor. (III, no. 49)

Using figurative language the Examiner vividly portrays the effects of 'pathetic writing' on contemporary people who are apparently "so very Combustible, that a little Breath, a puff of Wind set us on Flame." The description is followed by a detailed process that reveals how "a few Vowels and Syllables serve to blow us up, and do the Work of Gunpowder" (*The Examiner*, III, no 19), ultimately preventing any form of debate:

The most violent Ravings and Excesses of Fury are to be roused and excited this way: As supposing you are talking of Government the word (Powers) does but just make the Blood circulate; if you go on and mention (Supreme) there is presently a gentle Commotion among the Animal Spirits; suppose you proceed and utter the Word (Monarchy) you will find the Fire begin to kindle: and after that, upon the first echo of the word (Prerogative) you may perceive some Smoke; till you pop out the Monosyllable (Right) and then the Man blazes; but if you offer to add to it (Hereditary) he is immediately all over in a Flame, and you must fly for fear of a Roasting. (III, no. 19)

The negative picture of the Whig that emerges from the Examiner's discourse is reinforced by juxtaposing it with the calmness and common sense of the Tory. The politeness expressed by simply addressing the Whigs as Gentlemen directs the readers' attention to the reasonable and noble tone of the Examiner's statements. What is more, the projected persona of the Examiner's 'impersonal' and 'impartial' character creates an image of objectivity and control over passions.<sup>13</sup>

One of the last issues of the *The Examiner* (before its temporary closure in July 1714) can be interpreted as a summary of the rhetoric of passions, where the irrationality of the Whigs' impassioned behaviour was presented as leading ultimately to their own self-destruction. Therefore, instead of attempting a lucid and logical debate, the Examiner suggests that it was more sensible to "wear them out with their own Heat and Violence, and to tire them... by letting them have their Heads" (VI, no. 12) as this would hinder them from making a reasonable and well-considered overview of the situation:

The Fury of the Faction will not suffer them to Contrive and Deliberate, or to lay a deep Scheme, that may grow and ripen by slow Degrees. Their Passion will not permit them to take or give Counsel; but precipitates and hurries them along, where others would tread softly and go step by step. (VI, no. 12)

What is more, such a conduct would be the source for their eventual discredit in the eyes of the people, because "their Rage leaves them without Disguise" and they appear as madmen who "Foam out their own Shame". In their fury "they shew their Enemies all their Strength, and all their Weakness; their Designs, and what they aim at" and

<sup>13</sup> See Ewald 1967 and Ehrenpreis 1983. However, those scholars refer only to the period when Swift was the editor of the paper. Recently the aspect of *The Examiner's* 'eidolon' during Oldisworth's editorship has been sketched by Kozak 2016.

like Liquor upon the Fret, they turn up their Bottom to open view, and bring their foulest Dregs to the outside and surface; where every By-stander may plainly see, of what filthy Ingredients they are composed, and thereupon form a Judgement, what Purgations and Refinements are necessary to be applied. (VI, no. 12)

The obscene depiction of the Whigs' outburst of passion does not resemble the reasonable tone adopted by the Examiner. However, in seeming recognition of Queen Anne's failing health, there is a growing awareness of the Tories' inevitable fate, a singular occurrence that finally forces *The Examiner* to abandon its previously toned-down language.

Transmitting indirect information to readers with the intent of influencing their political views seemed a wholly conscious practice. In the 24 April 1712 issue *The Examiner*, commenting on the invectives published by his adversaries against him, concluded that the dissemination of the defamatory opinion would eventually turn against its author:

Yet, with all their Invectives, they seem to be but little acquainted with the true Art of raising Contempt; the Delicacy and Difficulty lies in causing your Adversary to be despised by others, not in the ill-bred terms, and despising Airs you your self give him; at that rate, Contempt will much sooner return upon the Contemner's Head. (II, no. 21)

In the case of *The Examiner*, one of the elements of the "true Art of raising Contempt" was to systematically reveal the destructive effects of the passions and to make readers associate them with the Whigs. The rhetorical strategy adopted by the paper was that of the "gutta cavat lapidem": the image emerging from its four-year-long assault on the Whigs was that of the irrational man torn apart by passions that ultimately drive him to destabilize the country in an attempt to regain political power. Moreover, in *The Examiner's* opinion, the destructive force of passions was debasing both the members of the Whig party and its supporters. In fact, the Whigs' authority was being eroded by their tendency to appeal to the passions above all else, whose devastating consequence was the transference of their emotive and tyrannising methods onto their erstwhile followers.

The paper finally 'revealed' the whiggish use of 'pathetic writing' as the manipulative tool employed to achieve its objectives. This process of revelation was further reinforced by juxtaposing the impassioned Whig against the reasonable Tory. The interpretation of *The Examiner's* message may be two-fold in that a stable person acting with common sense and impartiality of judgement (a Tory) would almost certainly have appeared more reliable in the role of politician when compared to a noisy, unstable, choleric individual driven by negative passions (a Whig). The effect of this message was strengthened by the fact that *The Examiner* repeated it in

the many essays it contained, thus succeeding in building up an image of rabble-rousing Whigs ready to subvert the Nation's political life. Another interpretation might be connected with the general understanding of the passions in the early eighteenth century. Whigs represented the uncontrolled passionate element in the body of the state while the 'practical' Tory government was presented as the guarantor of control over the whiggish passions through the very act and process of reason, which would eventually lead to a harmonised society.

In the broadest sense the rhetoric of passions formed an essential part of *The Examiner's* discourse highlighting the need for reason to rule over man's emotive and emotional sides: an argument entirely consistent with the wider, philosophically grounded discussion of the age concerning the passions and their place in the cultural, social and political world.

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# Fears, Apprehensions and Conjectures Suspense in *Robinson Crusoe*

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**Abstract** The importance of *Robinson Crusoe* in the origins of the novel depends not only on its progressive plot and empirical style, but also on its pioneering narrative devices. Defoe's work is characterised, in particular, by a new approach to the creation of suspense, considered by narratologists as one of the universals of narrative. This approach is based on a consistent, highly diversified use of hypothetical thinking. Crusoe's emotionally charged previsions have the function of presenting possible plot developments, staging, and causing, the oscillation between fear and hope that is characteristic of suspense. Defoe's work with suspense shows that epistemological change, in particular the rise of the modern notion of probability, had relevant implications also at the level of narrative discourse.

**Summary** 1 Emotions, Cognition and Narrative. – 2 Desire and Probability. – 3 Crusoe's Hypotheses.

**Keywords** Robinson Crusoe. Suspense. Curiosity. Hypothetical thinking. Probability. Narrative. Epistemology.

## 1 Emotions, Cognition and Narrative

In the emergent novel, and most notably in *Robinson Crusoe*, emotions became tightly interwoven with cognition, itself more relevant and nuanced than in preexisting fictional genres. The emotional experience of private individuals became one with their perception and understanding of the world; it appeared to be a response to, and a condition for, empirical knowledge. Along with this dual focus on emotions and cognition went crucial transformations at the level of narrative discourse. The impact of *Robinson Crusoe* was to a large extent enabled by the narrative appeal of Crusoe's mental life. His exploration of the alien environment of the island is shown, for example, to spark powerful emotions – 'fears' and 'apprehensions' – and to inspire 'conjectures', hypothetical scenarios that orient his action and define his targets, stimulating interest and involvement.

In this essay, I will focus on Crusoe's hypotheses and their narrative uses. Crusoe's hypothetical thinking, I will argue, has the function of raising expectations, tensions, and inferences, which concern the past as well

as the future. It generates effects that an important branch of narratological discourse has identified as universals of fiction. Among these effects, I will concentrate, in particular, on suspense, whose deployment in *Robinson Crusoe* marks a sea-change in the history of fictional genres.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, however, I will also touch on curiosity (often interwoven with suspense), surprise, and on a state of suspension that can be associated – in eighteenth-century terms – with “wonder”.

Usually considered to be an oscillation between fear and hope, suspense is generally attributed to the narrative of actual events, of an impending danger that raises, in readers even more than in characters, emotionally-laden inferences. The workings of suspense need, however, to be historicised, especially if one sets out to understand novelistic realism, its aesthetic devices, and the ontology it implies (Pavel 1986; Doležel 1998). It is by now a commonplace that, both in theory and in practice, the evolution of realism between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries was inseparable from epistemological change and, concomitantly, from a growing interest in interiority and subjective perceptions, nourished by protestant introspection and the early modern interest in the workings of the mind. This new focus, and the cognitive and emotional structures that informed it, entailed, inevitably, new narrative devices, new tools to stimulate readers’ involvement. Crucial among these devices were the techniques for the creation of suspense, exemplified and to a large extent inaugurated by Defoe’s experiments in *Robinson Crusoe* (essential, from a broader angle, for the work of Richardson and, later, for that of Jane Austen, both masters of suspense).

In other words, fine-tuning the notion of suspense also implies concentrating on ‘culture’, namely on a new set of cognitive models that constituted new materials for narrative discourse. While narratology has highlighted that novelistic writing deploys models of cognition that circulate in contemporary culture, the practice of narrative analysis has not displayed a keen, widespread interest in how cultural change affects fictional devices.<sup>2</sup> However, a focus on context becomes essential if the object at hand is a ground-breaking work like *Robinson Crusoe*. Assessing the innovation and force of *Robinson Crusoe* requires, I will suggest, a combined investigation of narrative and its cultural fabric.

1 On suspense, see, in particular, Sternberg 1978, 1992, 2001, and 2003; and Vorderer, Wulff, Friedrichsen 1996. Sternberg also focuses on curiosity and surprise, the other ‘universals’ of fiction.

2 On cognition and experience, see Fludernik 1996. On contextualist narratology, which is a minor branch of narratology, see Chatman 1990; Sommer 2007; Nünning 2009.

## 2 Desire and Probability

Early modern cultural transformations provided pioneering writers of fiction with new ways of understanding, evaluating and describing experience, only some of which could be put to use in storytelling. It is useful to highlight, in the first place, that passions became more tightly knit to cognition. In Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, a marker, and a gauge, of epistemological and ethical change (all the more because Defoe's familiarity with Locke's philosophy is unquestionable) passions were regarded as corporeal fluids that influenced mental activity, and gained legitimacy also in the sphere of cognition. This shift is an important one, as it has relevant implications in the realms of politics and economy, laying the ground for the 'pursuit of happiness'. One passion, in particular, gained unprecedented latitude: desire. In Locke's model, desire is triggered by ideas derived from pleasant sensations, and can urge reason to remove causes of unhappiness (Armstrong, Tennenhouse 2006). Locke argues that

Nature [...] has put into man a desire of happiness, and an aversion to misery: these indeed are innate practical principles which (as practical principles ought) do continue constantly to operate and influence all our actions, without ceasing: these may be observed in all persons and all ages, steady and universal; but these are inclinations of the appetite to good, not impressions of truth on the understanding. (Woolhouse 1997, 76)

Focusing, in this case, on innate faculties, Locke defines a model of the mind whereby emotions and cognition are no longer at war. His interest is in the way human beings apprehend, understand and act in the world, namely in the fruitful interplay of reason and passions.

According to the *Essay*, the human being is not a split, dual entity: reason, propelled by desire, responds to 'misery', which represents a range of negative emotions. And reason can be used in many ways. Locke's view of human understanding includes a wide array of modes of cognition, some of which shed light on the narrative texture of Defoe's realism. In particular, Locke's *Essay* provides evidence of the increasing relevance of hypotheses. Locke has often been considered to be critical of hypothetical thinking, especially in relation to the atomistic theories of contemporary philosophers. Following on from seventeenth-century natural philosophers such as Hooke and Boyle, however, he is also aware of the role played by hypothesis in the understanding of the physical world, a section of his *Essay* being devoted to "the true use of hypotheses" (Woolhouse 1997, 572). On the one hand, his commitment to empirical evidence presupposes a keen awareness of the dangers inherent to hypothetical thinking, on the other, he is also aware of its utility, especially for our knowledge of

unobservable natural phenomena (Laudan 1981, 59-71). Crucial both to experimental science and to the understanding of subcorporeal – that is, subatomic – phenomena, hypotheses are, for Locke, indispensable, as long as they are informed by consistent analogies with verified experience.

Hypothetical thinking was not only part of a new, intrinsically ‘scientific’ frame of mind, it came to be a flexible, pervasive tool, whose dissemination went along with that of the modern notion of probability. Probability was no longer primarily based on the authority of the speaker, but on a subject’s ability to produce empirical evidence (Hacking 2006; Patey 1984). Despite its interest in matter of fact, empirical knowledge encouraged inferences, since it provided ways to test their validity, inviting explanations of the workings of nature and human societies. Historiography began, for example, to value probable inferences on the past, with a view to achieving a rational understanding of causes and effects. Hypotheses, of course, were liable to criticism, all the more since probability was also used rhetorically. It became part and parcel of what Michael McKeon (1987) has defined “naive empiricism”, a mode of presentation that was characteristic of the many genres – from travel accounts to works of fiction – that built their credibility by displaying empirical truthfulness.

In other words, probability entered the divided realm of public debate and ideological strife. In particular, it became crucial to the progressive conception of civil society that was then on the rise. Progress, made possible by reform proposals, could be imagined and pursued by advancing reasonable hypotheses on the future. Discourses on social change, tightly intertwined with plans for technical improvement, were intrinsically hypothetical, vulnerably poised between vision and project.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Daniel Defoe’s writings. Being invested in social and technical progress, Defoe was closely involved in these trends. In *An Essay upon Projects*, his description of how England may improve if his reforms were put in practice is fundamentally hypothetical. The *Essay* defines a set of experiments and vigorously shows their intended outcome. In devising plans for public improvement, Defoe makes extensive calculations and stresses the probable advantages of his projects, trying to persuade his audience of their effectiveness (one of its most frequently occurring verbs being, significantly, “might”). Being aware that his discourse is hypothetical, in his “Conclusions” Defoe also appears open to criticism, acknowledging – with a characteristic profession of disinterestedness – that he may in fact have been wrong on some points: “However, I do not willingly assert anything which I have not good grounds for. If I am mistaken, let him that finds the error inform the world better, and never trouble himself to animadvert upon this” (Defoe 1697, 335). Defoe’s use of hypothetical thinking is no less evident in his *General History of Discoveries and Improvements* (1727), which delineates a history of empirical science, with the same approach already used in the

first chapter of the *Essay*. Besides making probable inferences about the past, Defoe proposes plans for improvement and for the search for ‘useful knowledge’. As he remarks in the preface, these plans are hypothetical, but their success is highly probable:

In our accounts of Improvements and Discoverie, which are yet behind, and which Mankind have before them for the Incouragement of their Industry, we shall not amuse our Readers with remote and suggested Possibilities, or run them among dangerous and impracticable Projects [...] This would be to perplex our Readers with dark schemes and unintelligible Proposals, which have neither probability of Success to encourage the Attempt, or rational Foundation, to make them entertaining to the reader. (Defoe 1727, vi-vii)

### 3 Crusoe’s Hypotheses

That the realm of hypothetical thinking was rapidly expanding is confirmed by *Robinson Crusoe* (Molesworth 2010; Campe 2013). All fiction, however, focuses on experience – on “experientiality”, to use a successful category introduced by narratologist Monika Fludernik (1996). In Defoe’s novel, the sphere of cognition blends with that of emotion, in a manifold narrative experiment. But Defoe did not reject the past wholesale. The form and themes of *Robinson Crusoe* also draw from preexisting genres, informed by different approaches to temporality and agency (McKeon 1987).

The inconsistencies in Crusoe’s narrative serve, needless to say, a specific purpose. They articulate, and mitigate, a contradiction between traditional and modern ways of conceiving of the world and its workings. As a matter of fact, Crusoe’s hypothetical thinking comes to the fore gradually, as he departs from a more restrictive epistemological regime, one that implies the Christian cosmology of spiritual autobiography.<sup>3</sup> Crusoe’s father ‘foresees’ that his son’s decision to leave his family will result in tragedy and disaster. Retrospectively, Crusoe’s older self concedes that his father’s words were ‘prophetic’, and his young self too regards them as such at one point: “I look’d back upon my father’s Prophetick discourse to me” (Defoe 2007, 18). At the beginning of *Robinson Crusoe*, therefore, we are not yet in the domain of rational thinking: both the young and the old Crusoe – who seems, at this later stage, to endorse his father’s view – subscribe to a way of envisioning the future that is fundamentally teleological. Crusoe’s story seems set in the world of Christian ritualized

3 On Defoe and spiritual autobiography, see Starr 1965 and Hunter 1966. On Defoe and the supernatural, see Baine 1968 and Capoferro 2014.



history, where individual future can be predicted by means of typological parallels (Damrosch 1985, 190-1). Soon after leaving his family, the young Crusoe is threatened by a stern and vengeful providence, turning into an incarnation of the prodigal son.

In narrative terms, the function of these teleological overtones is already to generate suspense. By portending forces that will punish Crusoe for his forbidden acts and desires, they make us aware of impending risks. On the one hand, therefore, the narrative foreshadows possible developments, already showing its tendency to suggest previsions and thus arouse readers' expectations. On the other, it stages a traditional Christian temporality, refraining from narrative experimentation. Soon, however, Crusoe breaks free from Biblical parallels and an unexpected horizon of action dawns. This change ushers in different narrative devices. Facing new adventures, Crusoe feels no longer doomed. He demonstrates, on the contrary, a productive inclination to hypothetical thinking. He tends, in particular, to make plans on the basis of empirical-rational data. Planning is, of course, a key activity in many kinds of fictional character, ranging from epic heroes, who set sail towards their native island, to romance heroes, eager to save a damsel in distress. In novelistic realism, however, preparation, debate and self-debate are remarkably more developed and nuanced, along with the scrutiny of empirical information. After having been taken prisoner by the Moors, Crusoe contrives ways to escape and, before putting his life on the line, tries to probe the future:

Here I meditated nothing but my Escape; and what method I might take to effect it, but found no Way that had the least Probability in it: Nothing presented to make the Supposition of it rational; for I had no Body to communicate it to, that would embark with me; no fellow-slave, no *Englishman*, *Irishman*, or *Scotsman* there but my self; so that for two years, tho' I often pleased my self with the Imagination, yet I never had the least encouraging Prospect of putting it in Practice. (Defoe 2007, 18-19)

Wholly bent on the future, Crusoe shows a problem-solving mindset informed by Lockean epistemology. He appears intent in the production of scenarios and in the rational assessment of their validity, that is, their probability. In the passage above, his production of hypothesis is represented indirectly, by way of summary. Nevertheless, it defines his desire for action, not easily quenched, while also highlighting that escape will not be an easy accomplishment. In the ensuing section, Crusoe tries to fulfil his plans, all the more risky in light of his previous evaluations:

I got all things ready as he had directed, and waited the next Morning with the Boat, washed clean, her Antient and Pendants out, and everything to accommodate his Guests; when by and by my Patroon came on

board alone, and told me his Guests had put off going, upon some Business that fell out, and order'd me, with the Man and Boy, as usual, to go out with the Boat and catch them some Fish, for that his friends were to sup at his House, and commanded that as soon as I got some Fish I should bring it home to his House; all which I prepar'd to do.

This Moment my former Notions of Deliverance darted into my Thoughts, for now I found I was likely to have a little Ship at my command; and my Master being gone, I prepar'd to furnish my self, not for a fishing Business, but for a Voyage; though I knew not, neither did I so much as consider whither I should steer; for any where to get out of that Place was my Way. My first Contrivance was to make a Pretence to speak to this *Moor*, to get something for our Subsistence on board; for I told him we must not presume to eat of our Patroon's bread. (20)

In this episode, Crusoe's actions unfold in the time of adventure, in a regime in which facts matter more than thoughts, the grip of narrative arising from the proximity of danger. The focus, however, is also on Crusoe's mind. Finding himself in a situation that appears promising, he revises his previous evaluations: escape looks now possible. This realisation revamps narrative tension by figuring a goal to achieve and reminding us of impending threats, as Crusoe's "notions of deliverance" may never translate into actuality. Unable to plan everything out, Crusoe has to rely on improvised 'contrivances'. Most traditional heroes, of course, used to improvise, but they did not devote too much attention to the possibility of danger. Neither they nor the narrations that conveyed their story showed a similar penchant for hypothesis and rational planning. In *Robinson Crusoe*, conversely, the tendency, and at the same time the inability, to form exhaustive scenarios alert us to the unexpected.

Later on in the narrative, Crusoe's tendency to hypothetical thinking increases. After being shipwrecked, he finds himself in the wilderness, surrounded by a multitude of dangers. The alien nature of the island fires up his imagination and fears. It is at this stage that Crusoe's hypothetical mindset becomes fully evident, expressing itself in long previsions that convey his anxiety, seek to compensate for his ignorance of the surroundings, and, concomitantly, build narrative tension. Hypothetical thinking functions, in the first place, as a reminder of danger. Shortly after the shipwreck, in a memorable passage, Crusoe realises that survival is against all odds:

After I had solac'd my mind with the comfortable Part of my Condition, I began to look round me to see what kind of place I was in, and what was next to be done; and I soon found my Comforts abate, and that in a Word I had a dreadful Deliverance: For I was wet, had no Cloaths to shift me, nor any thing either to eat or drink to comfort me, neither did I see any Prospect before me, but that of perishing with hunger or be-

ing devour'd by wild Beasts; and that which was particularly afflicting to me, was, that I had no Weapon either to hunt and kill any creature for my Sustenance, or to defend my self against any other creature that might desire to kill me for theirs. In a word, I had nothing about me but a Knife, a Tobacco-pipe, and a little Tobacco in a Box; this was all my Provision, and this threw me into such terrible Agonies of Mind, that for a while I ran about like a Mad-man. Night coming upon me, I began with a heavy Heart to consider what would be my Lot if there were any ravenous Beasts in that country, seeing at night they always come abroad for their Prey. (41)

In this passage, danger is mediated by previsions, which are shot through with fear. Hypotheses express Crusoe's emotional state, the reminder of danger operating, as I will show extensively, not only on the strictly cognitive level. On the one hand, Crusoe's previsions define a set of 'probability rules', possibilities that expand the ontological underpinnings of his fictional world (Kukkonen 2014). On the other, they possess emotional resonance, appealing to our empathy. Thus they generate suspense. And suspense entails curiosity, because Crusoe's hypotheses are yet to be verified. In this case too, a mode of cognition associated with the new epistemology – the search for empirical evidence – is put to narrative use, while also retaining its epistemological and ideological significance.<sup>4</sup>

Danger is also mediated by a risk assessment that defines possible developments while simultaneously leaving latitude for action and further discovery. The oscillation between fear and desire that is a basic working of suspense depends, in other words, on a character's assessment of what is most probable, though not absolutely certain, both positive and negative outcomes still appearing possible.

This is not Defoe's invention, of course. However, in Defoe's work, and the tradition it contributed to shaping, the subjective apprehension of danger is more pervasive and grounded than in most pre-modern fiction. Danger becomes virtual: overtly and consistently, it exists by virtue of a character's cognition and emotions – in this case, hypothetical cognition – that are closely interwoven. Inevitably, therefore, suspense goes hand in hand with curiosity, the perception of danger being a sustained interrogation of a character's surroundings, whose truth-value has bearing on his welfare. Success depends on the ability to understand the world and carry out reliable risk assessments with hypotheses also expressing anxiety and lack of control. Robinson's effort for survival unfolds in a slew of minor episodes, in which the plans he makes – he decides, for instance,

4 Needless to say, surprise – the third universal of narrative – also plays a key role in *Robinson Crusoe* (Novak 2015, chap. 7).

to bake bread, grow corn and explore the island - also include an evaluation of risks that foregrounds the possibility of failure (Defoe 2007, 66, 93-4, 99, 133, 151).

Nowhere is this technique more evident than in the rightly famous section that centres on Crusoe's discovery of a footprint on the other side of the island and on the fears and conjectures that ensue. It is not a coincidence that this sequence has become emblematic of *Robinson Crusoe*, echoing in hundreds of other stories, especially adventure fiction, influenced by Defoe's work. Not only, in fact, does the footprint episode epitomise Crusoe's encounter with a hostile environment, it also epitomises Defoe's narrative style, highlighting the role of hypotheses as agents of suspense and curiosity, as well as surprise. Initially, Crusoe's response to the footprint is one of utter amazement - "I was exceedingly surpriz'd with the Print of a Man's naked Foot on the Shore, which was very plain to be seen in the Sand" (130) - that calls for an attempt to scan the surroundings and identify threats.

Immediately after the discovery, however, Crusoe's hypotheses constitute not so much attempts at explanation as harrowing visions of danger. He goes so far as to surmise that, given the absence of other humans, the footprint must have been left by the devil himself. Fear prevailing, hypothetical thinking is no longer governed by reason. Crusoe falls back to a supernaturalist model of understanding: a disempowering frame of mind, far more conservative than his providential interpretation of events, which is ultimately reconcilable with an empirical approach. In light of the fictional world of *Robinson Crusoe*, however, and of the thrust of the narrative, Crusoe's fear of the devil should not be regarded as a cause for hesitating over the nature of reality, as in apparition narratives and what we now call the fantastic. It represents, conversely, an event in his emotional life, because passions overrule cognition, and his ability for planning and action falters. Nevertheless, Crusoe's previsions still contribute to suspense, expressing fear and impending danger (see Gerrig 1996).

No longer oriented by desire, hypotheses convey a state of cognitive checkmate. This state, however, is soon overcome: Crusoe - and the readers - should be on the alert. Empirical reality demands new attention and hypotheses seem to regain hold on facts:

I presently concluded then, that it must be some more dangerous Creature, (*viz.*) that it must be some of the Savages of the main Land over-against me, who had wander's out to Sea in their Canoes [...] Then terrible Thoughts rack'd my imagination about their having found my Boat, and that there were people here. (Defoe 2007, 131-2)

Crusoe's return to balance goes along with a sharper focus on the future. Immediately after the discovery of the footprint his fear took centre stage,

overshadowing other concerns. Gradually, he enters a state of uncertainty, his emotions shifting from fear to anxiety. Some of his hypotheses, however, still appear groundless, not wholly consistent with the expectations the narrative has raised so far, and with the plot summary on the title page. He goes so far as to question the very presence of human beings: "In the middle of these Cogitations, Apprehensions, and Reflections, it came into my Thought one day, that all this may be a meer Chimera of my own; and that this Foot might be the print of my own Foot, when I came on shore from my Boat" (133-4). In this sequence, hypotheses generate suspense by way of both cognition and emotions. On the one hand, some of Crusoe's hypotheses have defined multiple possibilities. Moreover, his attempts, both grounded and groundless, to understand his predicament mark narrative progression, arousing our expectations. On the other hand, however, Crusoe's hypotheses also convey fear and bewilderment, contradicting and undermining his determination to understand his surroundings. Crusoe even attributes the footprint to himself, then discards the hypothesis, to find himself prey to new and fearful conjectures:

when I came to measure the Mark with my own Foot, I found my Foot not so large by a great deal; both these Things fill'm my Head with new Imaginations, and gave me the Vapours again, to the highest Degree; so that I shook with cold, like one in an Ague: And I went home again, fill'd with Belief that some Man or Men had been on Shore there; or, in short, that the Island was inhabited, and i might be surpris'd before I was awake; and what course to take for my security I knew not. (134)

These new hypotheses result in a year-long preparation of countermeasures, intermingled with bouts of fear.

Defoe further diversifies his suspense-generating techniques by turning Baconian descriptions of manual labour to a new use. Far from forestalling danger, Crusoe's precautions - he uses his gun sparingly, fortifies his home, finds a strategic position to shoot intruders, etc. - raise questions over their effectiveness. The establishment, through material preparation, of positive presuppositions (Crusoe will certainly manage to shoot intruders) is inseparable from that of negative ones (unexpectedly, intruders will come from another direction). Spurred by his previsions, Crusoe has shaped his world, defining a new level of narrative possibilities. But the future exceeds all precautions. The narrative maintains its emotional focus by emphasising that Crusoe's labour was a response to his "apprehensions", and that he lived "in the constant Snare of the Fear of Man" (138).

When, finally, savages do appear on Crusoe's island, his speculations become grounded in more specific assumptions, narrowing the scope of his anticipations - he has now something to observe - and informing new 'contrivances'. It is now the proximity of danger that enables suspense.

But the logical and emotional patterns of the footprint sequence persist. Crusoe continues to scan his surroundings, make hypotheses, sketch positive and negative possibilities, devise plans. And bouts of fear continue to impinge on his predictive ability.

This demonstrates, once more, Defoe's firm grasp on the fundamental workings of suspense, and his consistent use of a new narrative device. In order to be fully effective, suspense cannot depend only on cognition, on a simulation on rational-empirical thinking, but also on emotions, which are conveyed, in *Robinson Crusoe*, by irrational cognition. After spotting the savages, Crusoe falls prey to fears and nightmares:

The Perturbation of my Mind, during this fifteen or sixteen Months Interval, was very great; I slept unquiet, dream'd always frightful Dreams, and often started out of my Sleep in the night: In the Day great Troubles overwhelm'd my Mind, and in the night I dream'd often of killing the Savages. (156)

It is indicative of Defoe's talent as a narrator, however, that this train of thoughts is interrupted by an unexpected occurrence: "as I was reading the Bible, and taken up with very serious Thoughts about my present Condition, I was surpris'd with a Noise of a Gun as I thought fir'd at Sea" (of a different kind. His previsions have, therefore, laid the ground for this surprise, caused by the arrival of a ship, that complicates the power balance of the island, sparking new hypotheses, observations, strategies, possibilities. New conditions for suspense have established themselves. While Crusoe's focus is on the ship and its crew, it is obvious that its arrival and the conflict it seems to have carried can have long-ranging consequences. The ship enriches and diversifies the potential for change, adding new reasons to oscillate between hope and fear, suggesting new "notions of deliverance".

Drawing to a conclusion, I would like to broaden the category of suspense by focusing on one more use of hypothetical thinking in *Robinson Crusoe*, one that ventures into the domain of counterfactuality. Not only does Crusoe ask himself questions on what has happened, but also on what *could* have happened. Both his old and his younger self reflect on the fact that things might have been far worse. By means of counterfactual thinking, they highlight how, despite all, they have managed to survive:

I could not tell what Part of the World this might be, otherwise than that I knew it must be Part of America, and, as I concluded by all my Observations, must be near the Spanish Dominions, and perhaps was all inhabited by savages, where, if I had landed, I had been in a worse condition than I was now; and therefore I acquiesced in the dispositions of Providence. (93)

Counterfactuality conveys Crusoe's sense of danger and his wonder at having survived against all odds. It conveys his awareness that adventures such as those he experienced have, more often than not, unhappy outcomes. Crusoe often implies that his life has been special and on various occasions appears thankful to providence. In doing so, he echoes – and simultaneously tones down – the rhetoric of seventeenth-century literature of wonder, which showed the intervention of God in human affairs (Hunter 1990). Counterfactual thinking conveys a subdued suggestion of wonder. Remarking that, in spite of all, things have not been so bad means – given Crusoe's pious invocations – that there may be design in the world after all. As has often been noted, in *Robinson Crusoe* supernatural powers survive, if only as an interpretive possibility. Though intermittently, a providential pattern shimmers underneath an apparently random train of events, enabling a hesitation over the nature of reality that lends Crusoe's world an air of enchantment and loosens the constraints of everyday life. Moreover, Crusoe's world becomes more and more benevolent, compensating for the scepticism of the new epistemology. *Robinson Crusoe* takes us to a mutable world. At different points of the narrative, events seem governed by an angry and vengeful God, seem shaped by purely material forces – Crusoe's faith being not exactly steady – and, especially when Crusoe's lot improves, show signs of a good providence.

Much depends on one's interpretive angle. In light of Crusoe's final triumph and of the *Further Adventures*, *Robinson Crusoe* could be considered a providentialist work. Its overall meanings, however, cannot be subsumed by an overarching providential/teleological pattern. Crusoe's narrative unfolds in a perpetual oscillation, which makes providential intimations far more wonderful, and the logic of materialism far more threatening. The fear and hope that are distinctive of suspense concern, in other words, the very essence of the reality explored by Crusoe. Alternately, a vengeful god, chance and a benevolent god appear on stage, with each ontological regime evoking its opposite. Narrative expectations in *Robinson Crusoe* centre, therefore, both on the physical and on the metaphysical realms, suspense operating at different levels (this suggestion of wonder re-enacts, moreover, an age-old narrative ritual, highlighting that the story departs from the uneventfulness of everyday life).

That all this is achieved by using a mode of cognition associated with the new epistemology constitutes further evidence of Defoe's pioneering experimentation. Not only does *Robinson Crusoe* focus on an experience that is meant to resemble that of a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Englishman, it also makes a compelling story out of that experience. While, in the wake of Ian Watt (1957), realism has often been reduced to its ideological and epistemological content, it is also a narrative artefact. At the same time, however, narrative cannot be understood if it is not brought back to its context. The transformation of narrative techniques –most no-

tably the rise of the novel – cannot be understood if it is not historicised.

These assumptions raise questions of method, which, if not relevant to all strains of eighteenth-century studies, are certainly relevant for our understanding of literary genres as aesthetic constructs. What is, exactly, the relation between ‘culture’ – that is, models of cognition and of emotional experience – and ‘narrative’: does it presuppose an ‘aesthetic selection’ of relevant materials? Is this selection driven, to a certain extent, by pre-existing fictional and interpretive conventions? Does the relation between narrative and cultural materials in moments of transition follow recurrent patterns, or does each text, and each period, constitute a special case? And, last but not least, does the fictional rendering of cognition and emotions challenge, undermine and modify ‘culture’? These are only some of the questions that a historically aware study of emotions, cognition and narrative can raise, and that *Robinson Crusoe* poses with formidable strength.

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# “So Shall She Now the Softest CouLOURS Chuse | To Paint thy Fate & Shadow out thy Woes” Poetry and Emotion in the Abergavenny Scandal of 1729

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**Abstract** This article will explore the ways in which literary forms empower emotional response to public events, using as a case study the wide range of literary texts – published and circulated in manuscript – inspired by the notorious Abergavenny scandal of 1729. Lady Abergavenny’s beauty, adultery and death, followed by a trial in which her husband was awarded a staggering £10,000 in compensation, stimulated poetry, drama and opera, giving voice to desire, remorse, pity, despair and contempt. Drama and poetry intersect in their treatment of the scandal, and while poetry offers its writers and readers an opportunity to explore a single viewpoint, and to circulate it privately, drama re-imagines the causes and conversations, and exposes them to public judgment. The alternating prose and verse of opera thus offer us a self-contained sample of the uses of different literary genres in expressing emotion and presenting the social and moral debates provoked by the affair.

**Summary** 1 Responses to the Abergavenny Case in Manuscript Poetry. – 2 Poetic Interactions Between Manuscript and Print. – 3 The Case on Stage. – 4 The Uses of Genre in an Operatic Depiction of the Case: *Calista*.

**Keywords** Abergavenny. Scandal. Emotion. Genre. Poetry.

My discussion of the poetry generated by the Abergavenny scandal of 1729, in which Lord Abergavenny was awarded £10,000 in compensation for his wife’s adultery, centres on a private collection of manuscript verse, accumulated by Lady Anne Coventry, one of the daughters of the Duke of Beaumont, during her exceptionally long life (1673-1763), and now kept in the Muniment Room, Badminton House, Gloucestershire. The part of the collection containing the Abergavenny poems is distinguished by being addressed to Lady Anne directly, and without covering notes, as discrete commentary on the events to which they respond.<sup>1</sup> The poems are not exclusive, however, and, as I will show, participate in both manuscript and print circulation at the time. They also intersect with contemporary

1 All quotations from the collection are given in the footnotes.

drama: names, images and ideas cross and re-cross between the genres in revealing and provocative ways. That these poems, however, should end up in the possession of a widowed 56-year-old in self-imposed rural seclusion suggests the power of the situation, and the efficacy of poetry as a means of thinking about it.

## 1 Responses to the Abergavenny Case in Manuscript Poetry

The first poem on the subject to appear in the bundle is carefully written out on a folded piece of paper, making a sheet of 8" by 6".<sup>2</sup> The sheet is cut after the end of the poem. This excision is particularly frustrating given the debate about the authorship of the poem. It was first published in *The Odes of Charles Hanbury Williams, Knight* (1775; titled "On the Death of Lady Abergavenny, by a Lady"). Also the Digital Miscellanies Index attributes it to him. However, Tone Dagny Sundt Urstad in her unpublished thesis, *The Works of Charles Hanbury Williams, which Was Submitted at Cambridge in January 1987*, is utterly dismissive of the attribution (Urstad 1987). Her thesis, though thirty years old, remains the only current comprehensive discussion of Charles Hanbury Williams' work so far completed, which makes me inclined to accept her verdict. His Williams' age, however, remains a suggestive factor, even while it makes the pseudonym unlikely, as will be seen in my discussion of some of the other poems on the subject, which take a similarly sympathetic tone.

There is nothing in the poem itself, or its appearance in the correspondence of Lady Anne Coventry to suggest that it was not written, in fact, by a lady. Lady Anne was famously interested in female education, supporting and corresponding with Mary Astell (Perry 1986, 175). A notebook miscellany of copied and original poetry belonging to and written by a female servant in her own household has recently been discovered in the Fellows' Library of Winchester College (Quinault 2015). She may therefore have been particularly interested in a female perspective on the case.

The poem relates the Abergavenny story by working backwards from the tomb of the dead woman, insisting on her penitence, and coaxing the reader into sympathy. It begins "Ye Muses all and pitying Virgins come | And pour yor. Tears on poor Calista's Tomb'Tomb", suggesting that it could be a response to the longest and most famous Abergavenny poem, - "An Epistle from Calista to Altamont'Altamont", which was also sent to Lady Anne Coventry. The names of the husband and wife are taken from Nicholas Rowe's play, *The Fair Penitent* (1703), one of the many interesting interconnections between poetry and drama in this story, which suggests again

2 Muniment Room, Badminton House, Fm T/B 1/4/4.

the extent to which the case seems to have captured a particular moment in popular debate about the sexual and social responsibilities of the sexes.

In the poem, though, the most distinctive feature is the use of the “pitying Virgins” as chief mourners – an idea that not only appears nowhere else in the Abergavenny poems that I have found, but is actively different from their more worldly, experienced speakers. The identification of the poem’s voice with the virgins is emphasised later:

for her Woes my pitying Tears shall flow  
A worthless Gift, but all I can bestow:  
My pensive Muse her Sorrows still shall Mourn  
And Move Distress in Lovers yet unborn;  
Who while her hapless Story I relate,  
Shall learn to shun the snare & weep her Fate  
(Williams 1768, 31)

This suggests to me that this is a poet for whom marriage is the beginning, and partial cause, of the possibility of the ‘Crime’; as a matter of fact, the author says “Let none her Crime upbrayde | By Love and too much Gentleness betray’d”, and places the responsibility for her unhappiness and death firmly on the shoulders of the lover and, to some extent, the irrational jealousy and harshness of the husband:

forever may his Name be Curst  
Of spotted Villains be he ranked the first  
Who with a base Revenge & Malice fired  
Fiercer Jealousy in her stern Lord inspired  
In humane Wretch! Sure now thy woes begin  
And thou already hast thy Hell within,  
While pitying Heaven with Mercy sees her Fate  
And kindly takes Her to a happier State.  
(30)

The lover is in fact clearly compared to Satan, both in the adjective “spotted”, suggesting not only his sinful state, but also Shakespeare’s “spotted snakes with double tongue”, and even more explicitly, in the author’s employment of Milton’s description of Satan at the beginning of Book IV of *Paradise Lost*: “from the bottom stir | The Hell within him, for within him Hell | He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell | One step no more then from himself can fly | By change of place” (*Paradise Lost*, Book IV, ll. 19-23). The speaker compares those who condemn “Calista” – “ye Railers” – to those who wished to stone the adulteress in John, Chapter 8,

and her sympathy is with the sinner in human as well as religious terms: she calls her ‘the trembling Creature’, and interestingly gives a new turn to Christ’s forgiveness with the revealing word ‘freedom’:

With Majesty he rais’d his Awefull Head,  
And mildly to the trembling Creature Said  
Again thy Life, & ffreedom I restore,  
Now go thy way: & Look thou sin no more  
(Williams 1768, 30)

Once again, it is possible to read into the language the virgin’s dread of marriage as an unhappy and confining state which makes both sin and death more likely. Whether or not it is by a real lady, and not an assumed one – the use of “your sex” to describe the correct female response suggests both that it probably is was not written by a woman, and that the true author had not thought through the implications of his assumption of female gender – the conceit shows that this was a debate in which a female perspective was not only permitted, but seen as a distinct and separate contribution, enabling a different and more personal treatment of Lady Abergavenny’s situation.

There are other poems that are sympathetic to Lady Abergavenny’s case, of course, and it is interesting to compare their stance with the virginal pity of the Badminton House manuscript, Fm T/B 1/4/4 f.6, not least because it seems possible that two of them were written by young men at Oxford University, though the evidence is only circumstantial. One is preserved in the Grenville papers in the British Library.<sup>3</sup> This is also a bundle of miscellaneous literary material, the property in this case of George Grenville, and the poem is titled “‘Elegy on the Lady Ab-r-n-y’”. It is interesting that the innuendo of the name survives, even in a manuscript exchanged between friends, or at least acquaintances, where one would imagine the discretion unnecessary – but perhaps the conceit adds to the titillation.

The speaker’s focus in this poem is on Lady Abergavenny’s beauty, particularly by contrast with the faded prudes from whose “female Malice’ Malice” she has escaped through death:<sup>4</sup>

No prude reform’d by wrinkles & threescore  
Branding ye passion she inspires no more  
Does with malicious joy thy story tell

3 British Library Add MS 57836 f.76.

4 Compare to Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*: “Here stood *Ill-nature* like an *ancient Maid*, | Her wrinkled form in *Black and White* array’d; | With store of Pray’rs, for Mornings, Nights, and Noons, | Her Hand is fill’d; her Bosom with Lampons” (Canto IV, ll. 27-30).

And curse the Crime she better could conceal.  
(BL Add MS 57836 f.76; see also *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* 1769, 28)

While his superficial agenda is to pay a “sad tribute’tribute”, summoning the Muse to mourn the fate of one who has fallen “by Love”, lubriciousness is never far from the surface. He compares her to Dido, to Rosamond, Cleopatra and Monimia,<sup>5</sup> and the relish with which he imagines her adulterous acts is clearly visible both in his particular use of the Calista story – ‘No more Calista her Lothario name | Nor call on the dear cause of all her Pain’ – which seems to refer to the pleasures and pains of both sexual love and childbirth, and in his portrayal of the aged gossips who condemn her:

Such are the virtuous patterns of the town  
Who speak thy guilt but to disguise their own  
Friends to the vice tho desperate Foes to shame  
Pant for each night that every day they Blame.  
(28)

His use of ‘virtuous’ is reminiscent of the ‘virtuous gang’ of William Wycherley’s Restoration play *The Country Wife* (1665), those consummate sexual hypocrites.

This poem also, like the example at Badminton, refers to Lady Abergavenny’s name as having been ‘mangled’, but while the Badminton poem addresses the accusers directly, with an imperative – “But amongst those who mangle thus her Fame | how many Crimes, tho not their Fate: the Same | Henceforth forever cease her Name to tax. | nor with foul Calumny debase your Sex” – the Grenville text retreats again behind the sympathy of the “Muse”:

Still would the Muse at thy Loud Greifs Command  
[obscured by a drip: ?Faint?] is her Voice & tho unskill’d her Hand  
[drip: ?Som?] bare Reproach thy mangl’d name retrieve  
And: what she dares not justify Forgive.  
(28)

The poem seems aware of its own position here: Lady Abergavenny’s actions are not justifiable, but they are forgivable, particularly in someone so attractive. The final lines comment self-referentially on the artifice of

5 The last is the heroine of Thomas Otways’s tragedy, *The Orphan, or, The Unhappy Marriage* (1680), which will be discussed in ch. 4.



poetry (and perhaps, by association, make-up an idea harshly deployed in another re-writing of the story in *The Grub-street Journal*) and its ability to highlight what is beautiful in any situation, or face:

So shall she now the softest Coulours Chuse  
To paint thy fate & shadow out thy Woes  
Call [water drop again: ?you/it a?] tender tho a Lawless Flame  
Think on thy Beauties and forget thy shame.  
(28)

These lines can also be read as an explicit discussion of the ability of poetry's role in depicting – or indeed describing – the ways in which emotion affects judgement. Both poetry and emotion colour events, and the poem's language here conflates artistic and linguistic persuasion: "call" and "paint" are used as equivalent verbs in their active power to change the way the reader, or viewer, thinks.

We do not know whether or not Grenville wrote this poem himself. The pencilled attributions at the top of the folio suggest "Mr L?etleton"<sup>6</sup> (crossed out) and "Wm.Pitt" – but but it seems to me to be made more likely by the fact that another Abergavenny poem is attributed by some to a Christ Church contemporary of his, Charles Sackville, Earl of Middlesex. The likelihood of Pitt's having written a poem commenting on the affair is seriously diminished by the fact that in 1728 a violent attack of gout compelled Pitt to leave Oxford University without finishing his degree. Sackville, on the other hand, had been at the college just over a year when Grenville matriculated on 6th February 1729/30, and they were of very similar ages. Like the previous poem, this also appears in the 1822 version of *The Works of Charles Hanbury Williams* (ed. Jeffries), titled "On Lady Abergavenny: by Charles, Duke of Dorset", and Urstad implicitly supports this attribution to some extent. A copy preserved among Hanbury Williams' own papers carries an attribution to Lord Hervey, an attribution supported by its inclusion in Bill Overton's recent definitive edition of Hervey's complete poems (Overton 2016).

As Urstad's remark suggests, this is the poetic response to the Abergavenny scandal that received the most prolonged public attention in print, as it became the subject of a sequence of articles in *The Grub-street Journal* in the spring of 1730, culminating in its being substantially re-written by a "Maeuius" in order to turn the spotlight away from the inevitable fall of a frivolous society belle, and onto the morally more serious fault of disloyalty in friendship among men: from Lady Abergavenny to Lyddel. The

6 George Lyttelton was also at Christ Church and was 20 years old at the time. He may in fact be the most likely author, in defiance of the pencillings.

first lines suggest a more conflicted view of Lady Abergavenny than the uncomplicated sexual praise of the previous poem. This author is aware of the difficulties and dangers of being a beautiful woman living in a sensual and superficial society:

Young, thoughtless, gay, unfortunately fair,  
Her pride to please, and pleasure all her care;  
With too much kindness and too little art,  
Prone to indulge the dictates of the heart;  
Flatter'd by all, solicited, admir'd;  
By women envied, and by men desir'd.  
(Pope 1776, 155)

Lady Abergavenny is both culpable and excused in this description: it seems to emphasise a child-like heedlessness above all, as the placing of the word 'Young' suggests. The poem's original version goes on to devote several lines to the way in which her story has been used didactically, though again the lines push together lascivious gossip and wholesome moralising, so closely that it can be difficult to tell the difference:

By ev'ry idle tongue her story told,  
The novel of the young, the lecture of the old.  
(156)

The "scoffer" or the "prude" both tell the tale, he says, but "good-nature" will be compassionate, though not blind: "weep her ruin while it owns her fault". The final section rather illogically (as *The Grub-street Journal* gleefully points out in its comprehensive demolition of the poem on May 14th 1730, no. 19) seems to suggest - that she was immune to guilt, but not to shame, and that in the end, she died as a love-offering to Lyddel:

Yet dying, still she shew'd so dear her fame,  
She could survive her guilt, but not her shame;  
Her honour, dearer than her life she prov'd,  
And dearer far than both, the man she lov'd.  
(Pope 1776, 156)

The case lends itself inevitably to images of fall - "at once from full prosperity she's torn, | By friends deserted, of defence forlorn" in the Sackville, and in the Grenville, "High plact as young Ambition could Aspire | You sink at once depriv'd of Fame [and] Breath"- and to the characterisation of malicious gossip as emanating from a 'prude' (both poems). The Sackville is shorter, simpler and more direct; the Grenville calls on a female "Muse" to depict the situation and direct our response. Perhaps all that can be

securely deduced is that this is a case that made a surprising number of people respond in personal and revealing verse, regardless of whether or not they had any knowledge of the details apart from what was in the public domain.

## 2 Poetic Interactions Between Manuscript and Print

A version of this poem was first published by *The Grub-street Journal* on 16th April 1730. They were already interested in the case, and in the dangerously persuasive poetry about it that was circulating, but while they dismissed with heavy irony the importance of a case about a “vulgarly reputed Crime [... is] approved and practised by all who have any taste of politeness”, they could not resist returning to the “commission of what all well-bred persons esteem a piece of Gallantry” in their very next issue, publishing a heavily edited version of Sackville’s poem, and thus unwittingly illustrating precisely the combination of salaciousness and hypocritical moralising that the poem in its full version describes, keeping the case alive in their readers’ minds, while purporting to find in it only an opportunity for mature reflection on the wages of sin, as shown in the amended last lines:

She could not long, depress’d with guilt and shame,  
Survive the death of virtue and of fame [*sic*].  
(*The Grub-street Journal*, no 19, 14th May 1730)

Four editions later, however, they dealt with the Abergavenny scandal again, and this time devoting several closely-written columns to the poetry it had engendered. The climax of their analysis, however, was a corrective poem of their own, which further reinforces my theory that this was perceived as a case to be more properly discussed in verse, and that the editors therefore needed to fight fire with fire, or, as they put it, quoting from Pope’s *The Dunciad*:

Maggots half-form’d in rhyme exactly meet,  
And learn to crawl upon poetic feet.  
(Rumbold 2007, 24)

The editors seemed appalled at the ways in which poems “divert[ed] the Town”, springing up like mushrooms, and being composed by those who were ‘needy’, ‘malicious’ or possessed with “an itch of rhyming, or a desire

to see their works in print". They repudiate the way in which "These verses are generally very low, frequently loose and immoral, and sometimes levelled against persons, who in no wise deserve to be treated in a satirical manner". Nevertheless, when it comes to a corrective, nothing could do but verse, and the editors let their own maggots crawl freely in their re-writing, which was longer than the original by 29 lines.

There are two major changes in the content of the story as presented by this version, written six whole months after the scandal originally broke, and three after Lyddel's trial. They both emphasised the suffering the writer requires from both the wife and her lover. In Maevius' version, Lady Abergavenny suffers anguish for 14 long lines before dying of a broken heart, caused by an excess of silent grief "raging within". The author luxuriates in the detailed portrayal of grief, something conspicuously absent from the other poems discussed thus far, and makes explicit the parallel with sexual excitement:

The grievous pangs of one such dismal day  
Who'e years of highest, sensual joys outweigh.  
(*The Grub-street Journal*, no. 19, 14th May 1730)

The second change echoes the legal outcome of the case, making it not a question of a frivolous dead woman "improv'd by art'art", as the very first line is altered to say, but of a terrible betrayal of friendship and hospitality by Lyddel, Lord Abergavenny's friend. "For crimes like these is any mulct too high?" refers the reader specifically to the jaw-dropping sum that Lyddel was fined at his trial (see *The Whole Tryall of Richard Lyddell*, 1730), in spite of his lawyers' pleas of extenuating circumstances: that "this Action was not laid for an Assault in debauching the Plaintiff's Lady, but for destroying the Health, Satisfaction and Comfort of the Plaintiff"; that "the Lady's coming into Mr Lyddel's Chamber" made her "a Temptation unto him, and was a Temptation hard to be resisted".

As the report of the trial of Richard Lyddel suggests: the situation "might as well have been prevented as discovered [...] but that it seemed as if an Agreement was made to lay a Snare and a Temptation to draw him into a Criminal Action" (Liddell 1730, 8). *The Grub-street Journal* is firmly on the side of the jury, however, who "after a short Stay brought in their Verdict for the Plaintiff, 10,000l. Damages". As the poem puts it to complete the couplet, "For less the Criminal deserves to die", and the final lines condemn him to exile, and to hell:

Think not of pleasure, or of ease below:  
Thy doom is sorrow here, or future woe.  
(*The Grub-street Journal*, no. 19, 14th May 1730)

The longest and most detailed of the Abergavenny poems, “An Epistle from Calista to Altamont”,<sup>7</sup> is in the Badminton bundle written out on a large sheet of paper folded to 8” by 12”, in the Badminton bundle, and then folded again, addressed on the back and sealed with the coat of arms that appears most frequently in the collection. Like f.6, “Ye Muses all & pitying Virgins come”, the “Epistle” is in a female voice, though almost certainly written by Charles Beckingham, and published anonymously in 1729.<sup>8</sup> The introit is taken from Nicholas Rowe’s play *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (published by Lintot in January 28 1714) and is the final speech in Act One. After this affecting curtain-raiser, however, the “‘Epistle’ Epistle” takes a different tone, with the thrust of its thesis – that everyone’s everyone is doing it – immediately obvious in the defensive word “‘detected”’::

To jealous Love, and injur’d Honours Ear,  
What words can a detected Woman clear?  
(Lyddell 1730, 9)

The poem as a whole in fact reads as a compendium of recent marital scandals, suggesting that *The Grub-street Journal* editors may not have been wrong to suggest that the majority of the poems written on current news are written by those who have “no other view but to divert the Town, and thereby bring a little ready money into their own pockets”. Its length and range of reference imply that this particular case of adultery is simply the culminating example, which offers the author a chance to remind an avid public of the frequency with which those whom *The Grub-street Journal* calls “persons of distinction” seem to behave in this ‘polite and free’ manner. It is therefore particularly interesting to find it carefully copied out for, and preserved by, Lady Anne Coventry, whose pedigree places her socially well above the Abergavenny – and indeed almost any – family. It means that her interest cannot be characterised as a desire to see the high and mighty brought down, though it is also true that Horace Walpole has had no scruples in filling in the gaps in the adultery section of Pope’s poem “Sober Advice from Horace, to the Young Gentlemen of the Town”:

Oh love! Be deep tranquillity my luck!  
No mistress H-ysh-m near, no Lady B-ck!  
For, to be taken, is the dev’l in hell;  
This truth, let L-----l, J-----ys, O-----w tell.  
(Pope 1776, 29)

7 Muniment Room, Badminton House, Fm 1/4/4 f.8

8 The Folger First line Index of English Manuscript Poetry also suggests Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as a possible author, though it was certainly printed under Beckingham’s name.

Walpole's marginalia annotate this with 'e', 'a' and 'u' written respectively over the dashes, and at the bottom:

Mrs Heysham & Lady Buck were friends of Lady Hilsborough who had long had an Intrigue with Mr Jefferies, & went abroad with him & Ld Hilsborough, as it was supposed in concert with him too, to detect the Intrigue, which my Lord had long known and winked at, but now blew up to extort a sum of money from Jefferies. The two Ladies were deservedly abandoned by all their acquaintance & retired into the Country. Mr Liddel was detected with Lady Abergavenny. (Quoted in Sherburn 1938, 477)

The author's desire to include so very many vindicating examples of adultery tolerated and forgiven blurs the voice of the poem, however; Calista tells these stories with evident relish, then abruptly denies that she herself could ever take this flippant view:

Let the gay Wantons I've been bold to Name  
Triumph o'er Infamy, and conquer Shame,  
Not Altamont! is such Calista's Soul,  
She knows her late offence, and knows it foul.  
(Lyddell 1730, 10)

Rather than staying around to be a reproach and an embarrassment to her husband, she bids him a "Last Adieu", though also makes a tasteless pun on their only alternative means of separation in her last line:

Deaths the best Law to set the wretched free;  
Death shall divorce me from My Self and Thee.

Beckingham makes very obvious use of the morally fortunate fact of Lady Abergavenny's death, which is perhaps the feature of the scandal that makes it so particularly conducive to poetic response: the woman cannot speak for herself, and is also conveniently sacrificed to her own unlawful desire, thus making it safe to pity her without upsetting social and religious convention. His use of "wretched", however, to describe Calista's state could imply that in this poem too it is the state of marriage itself that can be 'wretched', and from which only death will provide deliverance.

Confused though the poem's moral message seems, however, there is clear evidence of its power in the British Library copy. Indeed, the annotation below this version of the poem in the British Library suggests that it is the poem itself that demands our grief, in the place of the original events to which it responds:

Tho my lady Abergavenny was a scandalous loose woman, and lost her life upon the detection of her amour with Mr Lyddall, for which her Lord refusing to see her more, & her Father abandoning her, She died with concern, yet I cannot but be affected with the solemnity and seriousness of ye following verses made on that occasion.<sup>9</sup>

### 3 The Case on Stage

Poetry here is both a private and a public medium for communicating emotion; but plays can more efficiently unite a large number of people in pity or censure with a single performance. Several plays already written were pressed into the service of this case, in particular two by Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent*, first published in 1703 and rushed back into print by Jacob Tonson in 1730, and *The History of Jane Shore* (1714), which as we have seen, provides both a prologue for “An Epistle from Calista to Altamont”, and many of the images re-used and negotiated by the poem:

Such is the fate unhappy women find,  
And such the curse entail'd upon our kind,  
That man, the lawless libertine, may rove,  
Free and unquestion'd through the wilds of love;  
While woman,—sense and nature's easy fool,  
If poor, weak, woman swerve from virtue's rule;  
If, strongly charm'd, she leave the thorny way,  
And in the softer paths of pleasure stray;  
Ruin ensues, reproach and endless shame,  
And one false step entirely damns her fame;  
In vain, with tears the loss she may deplore,  
In vain, look back on what she was before;  
She sets, like stars that fall, to rise no more.  
(Rowe 1714, 3: 12)

*The Fair Penitent* was performed twice at Drury Lane during the criminal conversation trial of Richard Lyddel, both times “at the particular Desire of several Persons of Quality”, and on 21st February, “the Concourse was so great, that several Ladies of the first Rank were excluded for want of room” (*The London Stage* 1960). As its popularity suggests, it does much more than provide the sentimental pseudonyms for Lady Abergavenny and her lover: the play itself defies the conventional narrative that the official (and officially recompensed) story of the affair attempts to regulate. Its resurgent

9 BL Add MS 47128 f.43r.

popularity at the time of the case reinforces the sense that the affair gives voice to a powerful and socially transgressive alternative reading of events. Rowe's Calista is pugnacious and defiant, and yet uses language instantly recognisable in the more tear-stained poems discussed above:

For 'tis the solemn Counsel of my Soul,  
Never to live with publick Loss of Honour:  
'Tis fix'd to die, rather than bear the Insolence  
Of each affected She that tells my Story,  
And blesses her good Stars that she is virtuous.  
To be a Tale for Fools! Scorn'd by the Women,  
And pity'd by the Men! oh insupportable!  
(Rowe 1730, 17)

The same concerns are conspicuous: the unendurable "publick Loss of Honour"; the contempt for the hypocritical prudes who condemn behaviour they long to commit; the self-fulfilling prophecy that this is indeed a 'tale for fools', and a very popular one. She is the villainess, of course, and has to die, but Rowe gives her the chance to engage in highly emotive declarations about male tyranny and the prison of incompatible marriage along the way:

Force, and the Wills of our Imperious Rulers,  
May bind two Bodies in one wretched Chain;  
But Minds will still look back to their own Choice.  
So the poor Captive in a Foreign Realm,  
Stands on the Shoar, and sends his Wishes back  
To the dear Native Land from whence he came.  
(31)

Imprisoned by their desirability and forced into bondage, Calista makes an early claim for the equal rights of women and slaves to be recognised as having been, just like free men, "born with high souls", and she takes control of her own "unfortunately fair":

This fatal Form, that drew on my Undoing,  
Fasting, and Tears, and Hardship shall destroy.  
(51)

By contrast, the squalid details of Lord Abergavenny's machinations to catch his wife and friend *in flagrante delicto* were the aspect of the case that inspired Henry Fielding in 1729 to write his play *The Modern Husband*, published in 1732, called *The Modern Husband*. Isobel Grundy draws attention to Fielding's preoccupation with the suspicious financial transactions of the case: it dramatises a husband who deliberately uses



his wife's attractiveness and discontent with their marriage to entrap and blackmail her potential lovers - a situation that some contemporary observers opined had been the fate of Richard Lyddel (Grundy, 1999, 296-7).

Fielding's play, contemporary with events rather than used allusively, pays less attention to the all-excusing beauty of Lady Abergavenny than to the poetic responses, but it certainly has a vivid scene of the servants discussing the profitable remuneration of their spying on the illicit couple which owes a great deal to the published account of the criminal conversation trial:

JOHN Then my master is to give me an hundred Pound to swear that he is a Cuckold.

LATELY What's this?

JOHN Why, my Master has offered me a hundred Pound, if I discover my Lady and Mr Bellamant in a proper Manner; and let me but see them together, I'll swear to the Manner, I assure you. (Fielding 1732, 56)

Overall *The Modern Husband* is less concerned with the grief attendant on adultery than the poems are, but it nevertheless shares some of the other emotional concerns. The servants' dialogue here could be dismissed as comic relief, but in John's clinching argument - "which would you choose, a Husband with a hundred Pound, or a safe Conscience?" - we can see the shadow of Lord Abergavenny's £10,000 compensation. for, awarded because he was willing to assert his own cuckolded statecondition. Money also provides the metaphor for the emotion of the exchanges between the middle-class couples in the play:

MR MODERN In short, Madam, you shall not drive a separate Trade at my Expence. Your Person is mine, I bought it lawfully in the Church, and unless I am to profit by the Disposal, I shall keep it all for my own Use. (45)

The imperatives of this speech show once again that the issue that arouses greatest emotion in the men - both fathers and husbands - is possession; the chief prompt for the women is reputation:

MR MODERN You will never persuade me. My Reputation is dearer to me than my Life.

MR. M. Very strange, that a Woman who makes so little Scruple of sacrificing the Substance of her Vertue, should make so much of parting with the Shadow of it.

MRS. M. Tis the Shadow only that is valuable - Reputation is the Soul of Vertue. (5)

Fielding's ironies interweave with *The Grub-Street Journal's* commentary

on proper and improper emotional attachments: it is conspicuous in many of these literary responses that the appropriate performance of female grief for the loss of reputation is counterbalanced with the suggestion that the only thing really worth of their lamentation is being found out.

#### 4 The Uses of Genre in an Operatic Depiction of the Case: *Calista*

The drama, however, which best serves as a case study of the uses of genre, however, is another contemporary work: an anonymous opera called *Calista*, which came out in 1730. Its characters speak in prose dialogue, but they sing in poetry, fashionably set to well-known dance tunes and ballads in Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1719). The resulting, combination of forms and the two media expresses very different emotions. The text play begins with yet another type of prose: a discussion between a "Player" and the "Poet" about the truth of what we are about to see and hear:

PLAYER Are we then to look upon this Performance as a true Representation of Things which have really been transacted; or speak justly and deal freely, is it only the Overflowings of your own Invention.

POET Faith, Sir, I have scarcely taken a Poetical Liberty, - Things have been really and bona fide transacted exactly as I represent them.

The Player also makes a metatheatrical point about the interaction between fact and a literary representations of it:

PLAYER The Guilty will come to make the rest of the Audience believe they are not the Persons pointed at (which Custom is now become genteel and fashionable) and at the same Time their presence will be a Farce within the Operas. (*Calista* 1731, "Introduction")

Unlike the *The Grub-street Journal*, whose heavily ironised prose assumed a shared moral view, the prose exchange here reflects on the capacity of theatre to show different realities simultaneously, and consciously withholds persuasiveness, urging us only to observe as the audience absorbs the very different emotional messages of prose dialogue and poetic song.

Song is established as having a particular role in the transmission of scandal by a scene in Otway's tragedy *The Orphan* (1680), another play that was pressed into service to contextualise this affair:

PAGE Oh!  
You never heard the last new Song I learn'd;

It is the finest, prettiest Song indeed,  
Of my Lord and Lady you know who, that were caught  
Together, you know where.  
(Otway 1733, 44)

In Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, too, Calista claims – in blank verse – her freedom from forms of didactic and prosy instruction, dismissing a book that she has been offered:

He teaches holy Sorrow, and Contrition,  
And Penitence; – is it become an Art, then?  
A Trick that lazy, dull, luxurious Gownsmen  
Can teach us to do over? I'll no more on't;  
I have more real Anguish in my Heart,  
Than all their Pedant Discipline e'er knew  
(Rowe 1730, 61)

In the passage, poetry is therefore implicitly claimed as artless, spontaneous and emotionally powerful – 'anguish' is set against 'contrition' in the extract –, an idea reinforced in the opera, *Calista*, by the demotic associations of the dance tunes to which the songs are set, and by the absence of the heavy classical allusions which give "Gownsmen's" weight and artificiality to the prose dialogue, like the following rather overloaded speech:

I am sensible, there are few Families in which there is not a Judas; but I would rather be a Slave with a noble Mind, than creep to an Attendant – Fear not, my Lothario, Love, like ours, must have some superior Protector; and it is time enough to think of Death, and Despair, when we have out-lived our mutual Affection. Let us imitate Paris and Helen, and not dream of a Wooden Horse 'till we see Troy in Flames; and then die Martyrs to Venus in each others Arms. (*Calista* 1731, 46)

Most revealing, though, is the contrast at the start of the opera between the formal expressions of humility and obedience that Calista uses in speaking to her father in prose dialogue about her forthcoming marriage, and the powerfully opposing imagery of her song. Poetry is here being used as an active tool of private transgression, and one that facilitates a more complex and vivid expression of emotion, while theoretically 'hidden' in jaunty, popular music. Thus she speaks:

There's a Reverence due to Age and Understanding, which makes so deep an Impression on my Mind, that I leave all to the Judgment of my Superiors, believing that Discretion may be often wanting in our Sex, who are too frequently blinded by Prejudice, Passion and Chimera. (12)

But Calista sings:

AIR X

Provident Damsel.

I'm something, yet nothing, tho' sought and admir'd,

A Plaything, a Toy and a Bauble:

There's something indeed, for some time I've acquir'd,

But fear in deep Waters to dabble;

But fear in deep Waters, &c.

I hop'd at the first for myself I should chuse,

But Virgins are often mistaken;

And what is allotted I will not refuse,

Least I should my Character blacken;

Least I might, &c.

But if I shou'd miss of the Joys I conceive,

The Man I should curse that betray'd me;

And be quickly revenged in some way, I believe,

However the World might upbraid me.

(*Calista* 1731, 13)

Calista's sense of her own worthlessness in this male-dominated world makes her words surprisingly poignant, and her thought process internally mirrors the external acts for which she is condemned: she "hop'd" to be allowed to make a free choice of spouse, feared society's judgment on her stubbornness if she refused what her "Superiors" provided, but cannot in the end lose sight of the power inherent in her own desires, "however the World might upbraid me".

The opera's final conjunction of prose dialogue and song vividly juxtaposes two versions of the world's verdict on the actions of Calista, Lady Abergavenny, and by extension, all unfaithful wives. The prose register is exalted, incorrigibly noble, though to our ears also comic in its dismissive summing up of the melodramatic events:

COUNT HERMIO No truly; there is a tragical Scene in Altamont's Family.

PRINCESS DEL CARMEL What is it?

COUNT HERMIO Calista intrigued with Lothario, and, as it has been revealed; the Thoughts of being reproached by the World, have killed her. Lothario is distracted, Altamont and the Marquis del Fogo rave, and wish the World on fire, that they may perish in the Flames.

COUNT DE ULTO Remorse of Conscience, from what Cause soever it arises, does frequently produce such Effects; and an heroick Spirit will Die, rather than live in Disgrace. (*Calista* 1731, 59)

Calista's 'heroick Spirit', thus glossed, is then summarily contradicted by the song, to the tune of "Lord Byron's Maggot", which appears to put her back into the everyday pattern of the uncontrollable headstrong woman. The appearance of orderly coupledness is re-established with a closing 'Dance', but this is inevitably undermined by the passionate actions of the verse:

Hot-headed she wedded, her Father to please,  
But Women are Women, and will have their Ways;  
    She sigh'd before Marriage,  
    But after Miscarriage  
She griev'd to the Heart and Soul.  
In Bed she would tumble,  
At Table would grumble  
Her Life was a Scene of War.  
    She would tear,  
    And would swear,  
    Then cry,  
    Pish, fie,  
    Your Riches and Toys, Sir,  
    Are none of my Joys, Sirs,  
My humours you shall not control.  
[Here a Dance].  
FINIS.  
(*Calista* 1731, 60)

In the poem from which I take the title quotation is taken, "So shall she now the softest Couloours Chuse | To paint thy fate & shadow out thy Woes" the implication is that poetry can make the sordid events of the everyday world 'soft, beautiful, beautiful and sad' - to paraphrase the lines - through its conscious artistic skill. An examination of the literature surrounding the Abergavenny scandal, however, suggests instead that the poetry - both in discrete and embedded forms - could subvert conventional and patriarchal views of female behaviour with striking vivid, complex and, above all, memorable depictions of spontaneous emotion.

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