Mimesis and Generality in the Late Eighteenth-Century English Novel

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Abstract

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The novel marks the end of a concept of literary activity--implicit, if only by way of tradition, in every other genre--which saw representation as part of a larger, cosmic economy in which disparate elements are united by way of their mimetic relations. The novel, instead, shows a marked suspicion of appearance. It calls into question the status of representation, as well as the status of the singular event, both of which are seen as potentially disruptive moments. This study addresses these two problems in the English novel from Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* through to the sentimental and Gothic novels. It does so, moreover, with respect to the avowed purpose of the novel, which presented itself throughout the period as a moral tool, a means of reconciling the individual and the social order.

The introduction addresses the awareness of historical and temporal existence that informed the novel as well as the theoretical issues that underlie the problems of mimesis and representation. Chapter One, on *Tom Jones*, shows how Fielding avoided the twin problem of circumstance and representation

by making them both subject to narratorial judgment, which is in turn presented as an exemplary activity of human consciousness.

Chapter Two shows the break-down of this solution in Fielding's last novel, *Amelia*. Chapters Three and Four follow the progressive replacement of grounded representations by ungrounded repetitions. This shift from representation to repetition is crucial, since it marks the progressive re-appearance of mimetic modes that find their source, not in consciousness, but in a concrete objective world that resists the work of consciousness. What remains of the ethical sphere is articulated in the sentimental and Gothic novels less around activity than passive virtue in the face of circumstance. In Chapter Three, the sentimental novel is explored in light of its avowed affinity with the ethical condition of Greek tragedy. The problems of repetition and of the event are shown, in Chapter Four, to reach their most extreme expression in the Gothic novel, which projects them onto a screen of amoral creaturely existence.

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Contents

When I hear a Man complain of his being unfortunate in all his undertakings, I shrewdly suspect him for a very weak Man in his Affairs. In conformity with this way of thinking, Cardinal Richelieu used to say, that Unfortunate and Imprudent were but two Words for the same Thing.

Joseph Addison

La Nature commande à tout animal, et la Bête obéït.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Introduction:
Time, Mimesis and the Novel

I

There are many reasons why this study does not qualify as a literary history, reasons of breadth and of scope not least among them, but there is nevertheless a narrative progress at work here, one that, however speculative, should be stated at the outset. In following the movement from Fielding's *Tom Jones*, through *Amelia* and the sentimental novel and finally to the Gothic novel, it traces the fortunes of a particular problem of mimesis. For Fielding it is a moral problem, a matter of reconciling the individual with the social good or, more commonly in the comic narratives themselves, reconciling the virtuous individual with a social order characterized by arbitrariness and circumstance. In either case, the whole field of literary representation is enlisted to bring what is singular and circumstantial under the sway of what is universal and essential. This is not easy in a secular order, even less so in the quintessentially secular genre of the novel, and in *Tom Jones* the mimetic economy finds its ground, ultimately, in judgment and in consciousness. In and by the act of consciousness, the particular events and circumstances are subordinated to the unifying order of plot. In line with the Lockean epistemology of the day, what is general and

unified--or, to be precise, what can be perceived as general and unified--is so by virtue of a conscious work of unification and generalization, and what is singular and irreducible is somehow outside of this human sphere.

This dichotomy between the singular and the general, and its relation to mimesis, forms the basis of this study, and the narrative progress it traces is in fact the history of this relation between mimesis and generality. *Amelia*, Fielding's last novel, marks, for the purposes of this study, the beginning of the breakdown of the grounded mimesis that Fielding forged in *Tom Jones*. As consciousness loses its grip on the mimetic economy, mimesis takes on what can only be described as extrahuman characteristics. Thus the unifying power of representation in plot, the ordering of circumstance into a unified action, is replaced in *Amelia* by other mimetic forms that do not resolve so much as repeat. As we proceed through *Amelia* and into the sentimental and Gothic novels, the perhaps naive Enlightenment confidence in the human world gives way to the extra-human forces of chance and of circumstance.

The objective force of the world set beyond and against human work, which in *Amelia* appears as a formal condition, becomes more and more the subject of literary representation as we move through the sentimental and into the Gothic novel. To a certain extent, then, this study follows the progressive thematization of the dichotomy between the singular force of the world and the human power of generalization. Literature,

as always, reflects on its own conditions, on its own representational activity. But there is another movement within this one: representation, the human activity of reference and meaning, gives way to more properly mimetic forms, to repetitions and doubles that interrupt the work of reference and meaning. The movement from *Tom Jones* to the Gothic novel charts the progressive appearance and centrality of these mimetic forms.

It is no coincidence that this "progress" unfolds in the novel, in what Bakhtin and Lukács take to be the generic form of modern consciousness, the genre that makes the incompleteness that comes with historical existence its frame of reference. But in order to enter into what is particularly novelistic about this problem, and about the relation between mimesis and generality, it is necessary to take some account of the period and of the mimetic and representational forms themselves.

II

When the issue of generality in the eighteenth century is addressed in the critical literature, it follows one of two related paths of inquiry. The discussion turns, on the one hand, to the differences between neoclassical and empiricist notions of the ways in which the particular is ultimately mediated in and by generality; and, on the other, to the more

or less discontinuous development from the eighteenth-century predisposition to make particulars yield to a general design, towards the Romantic preference for particulars over generalities.[1] The parameters of this inquiry have changed very little in the past fifty years. Leo Damrosch's 1997 article on generality in the eighteenth century, if it differs in style and tone, still differs in no significant way in its treatment of generality and particularity from Scott Elledge's 1947 essay on the same topic, nor from Ian Watt's discussion of particularity that opens *The Rise of the Novel*. Thus with empiricism, for example, we are presented with a new-found attention to individual sensual experience which recognizes that all knowledge is particular, and that generalization is in fact a product of the human mind, born of utility and habit. Damrosch is in line with the traditional readings when he observes that "In philosophical terms, these views reflect a great cultural shift from ontology to epistemology," so that the mediation of particularity and generality is seen to differ from the Aristotelian system primarily in its psychologization of the general term (392), whether in what is strictly speaking the epistemological realm or, in the larger realm of style and affectivity, in the realm of aesthetics.[2] Either the particular is taken to be understood in the period solely by

[1] See in particular Cassirer; Elledge; Crane, "English Neoclassical Criticism"; Abrams; Wellek; Youngren; and most recently Damrosch, "Generality and Particularity."

[2] See Elledge on this aesthetic aspect, in particular the sublime.

virtue of its ultimate generalization or, in the case of the autonomous individual consciousness, the individual is seen, as it is in Ian Watt, as a principle of unity in itself, to which the particulars of experience are reduced.

No doubt this well-known account of the matter is fundamentally correct; but the tendency is to focus on the solution, on the ways in which the particular is successfully reduced to a generalizable form. Thus when Ernst Cassirer, in his still unrivaled work of intellectual history *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, declares that the period saw a shift of "emphasis . . . from the general to the particular, from principles to phenomena," and that, within the period, "the basic assumption remains . . . that between the two realms of thought there is no opposition" (22), he does so at the risk of eliding certain moments of struggle and of irreducibility, certain singular elements that resisted generalization, and that were in fact what made generality an issue in the eighteenth century in the first place. Although true of some areas more than others, there is no place where this resistance was not felt, whether one speaks of the often derided neoclassical obsession with generality as an aesthetic category, or the new political category of the nation, or the empiricists' unresolved struggle with general terms. The shift from ontology to epistemology and psychology brings with it more than a change of venue; a whole new set of problems and kinds of particularity arise that demand new generalizing forms which

in turn function under new exigencies.[3] There is, in any case, something in the nature of particularity in eighteenth-century England that makes "philosophical terms," unless they are used very carefully, all but useless.[4] At a certain point this problem, ultimately a problem of representation, can only be addressed by the self-conscious attention to representation characteristic of literary discourse.

Which is not, of course, to say that it does not appear in philosophical discourse. Take, for example, Hume's discussion of the problem of knowledge and experience:

> all inferences from experience suppose, as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past, and that similar powers will be conjoined with similar sensible qualities. If there be any

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[3] "Generalization does not refer, as in Aristotle's theory of universals, to really-existing universal categories in which particulars somehow participate. Categories of classification are merely human inventions: they make use of properties that particular things really have, but the same properties could just as well be grouped and described differently in other classificatory schemes" (Damrosch, "Generality" 382). Damrosch follows through some of the exigencies arising out of the fictional status of these "classificatory schemes" in *God's Plot*. It should be noted too that this fictionality affects the moral as well as the epistemological sphere. See for example Hume's discussion of justice and superstition in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, III.ii.

[4] As Jonathan Lamb has pointed out, the British "suspicion of system," their general rejection of the *a priori* reasoning associated with the Continent in favour of *a posteriori* methods grounded in concrete experience, made the pragmatic and "adaptive positions of the British . . . much more vulnerable to shock":

> Supported by nothing more substantial than custom or iteration, the self-evidence of favourite British notions is subject to sudden collapses . . . . Such emergencies are experienced with sharper pain for being uninsured by any explanation or justification at a higher level than practice. (7-8)

> suspicion, that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion. It is impossible, therefore, that any arguments from experience can prove this resemblance of past and future; since all these arguments are founded on the supposition of that resemblance. (*Human Understanding* 24)

Hume is struggling here with this radical and irreducible potential, with a singularity at the heart of temporal experience that threatens to break all ties with generality and so to put an end to all knowledge. In doing so he ponders two related spheres that appear throughout the period, either singly or together, whenever the problem of an irreducible singularity arises. The first is the event, the historical occurrence of a thing in time and its relation--or lack of relation--to the past, or, more generally, to time as a continuum of cause and effect; the second is mimesis, resemblance, repetition, which usually brings individual things into a community of things, and which shows the event to be of a type, to be generalizable and therefore knowable. For Hume singularity is overcome by custom and belief, which act together as a grounding principle for the "step taken by the mind" (27) from the mass of particular experiences to a general law which can be applied against the raw unmediated time of the event.

But "there is no danger that these [generalizing] reasonings, on which almost all knowledge depends, will ever be affected by such a discovery"; the discovery, that is, that they are wholly unfounded in reason, and that they proceed instead by belief (27)--for Hume takes as a given that knowledge does in fact exist, that general reasoning, which informs every aspect of practical existence, is unshakable precisely because of its ubiquity and necessity. The novel does not have this luxury. Novels, says Lennard Davis, stating a commonplace of literary criticism "are framed works . . . whose attitude toward fact and fiction is constitutively ambivalent" (212).[5] This "ambivalence," of course, extends to all artistic representations, and certainly to all literary genres. But the novel stands apart in its distinct historicity: "like ideology, the novel's point of reference is . . . the social process of signification" (221). The novel takes up these two problems of Hume's, problems of time and of mimesis, from its point of reference in the secular social world. In its second phase, in particular, as it progressed from Fielding to the popular forms of the sentimental and the Gothic novel, the novel develops, in part at least, as a response to certain formal

[5] Davis' use of the term "ambivalence" should be understood here less in the New Critical sense than in the more critical Formalist sense of the auto-referentiality of literary discourse, a self-conscious reflection on representation in the thematization of the sign. Thus, for example, Todorov: "By its very definition, literature bypasses the distinctions of the real and the imaginary, of what is and what is not" (*Fantastic*, 167). See also Jakobson, *Fundamentals of Language*, in particular the essays "Closing Statement," and "The Dominant."

and political problems posed by the historical event and its relation to mimesis. In fact, it is in light of the specific historical juncture of mimesis and generality in this period that the political contours of the novel form come into relief.

III

The development of historical consciousness in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries forged a definitive relationship between history and mimesis, one in which exemplarity played a large part. Timothy Hampton comments on the tie between mimesis and political subjectivity in early modern European humanism, wherein "the act of reading history is in large measure linked to the central function of ancient exemplars as models that mediate between the reading subject and ideals of public action." His book *Writing from History* traces the decline of this mediation of the example, a growing "anxiety toward the difficulty of bringing forward words and deeds from a distant cultural context" (298). A consciousness of the historical specificity of different cultures eroded the sense of a temporal continuum that made historical exemplarity possible. Enlightenment historiography only deepened this consciousness of historical singularity. Discussing the gradual demythologization, as it were, of ancient Greece, and the growing realization that "ideal and

immobile serenity had been read back into the past by Europeans of the post-Renaissance era" Karl Morrison observes that the eighteenth century was faced with the prospect

> that ancient works were inimitable, not because they expressed eternal values in ways that were beyond the powers of later men, but because they lived and could live, only within a specific social order that had perished. (Morrison 280)

And yet, if neoclassical critics were willing to distinguish classical from modern civilization by virtue of its "climate and customs," even at times to argue against literary imitation, they always made historical difference secondary to a unifying transcendental order. This was particularly true when speaking of ancient Greece. The neoclassical notion of literary imitation depended on the originality, the proximity to a transcendental natural order, of the great works in the great modes. Thus Pope:

> Be Homer's Works your Study and Delight,
> Read them by Day, and meditate by Night,
> Thence form you Judgment, thence your Maxims bring,
> And trace the Muses upward to their Spring;
> . . . . . .
> Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteme;
> To copy Nature is to copy Them. (*Essay on Criticism* ll. 124-40)

The "perfect resemblance" to nature that the ancients offer the poet is preserved less in the particulars of their works

than in the forms which remain preserved in the poetic genres (Dryden, *Works* 17.16). When Pope writes his *Pastorals*, he sees no need to do any more than set them on "Windsor's blissful Plains" (2) to make them contemporary; the form itself carries with it the universal simplicity and humility that characterizes the genre, and with it the order it invokes. Far from an arbitrary form, there is assumed to be a harmonious union with its given content, a "Nature Methodiz'd" by the universal rules of poetry.[6]

It is left to the novel, then, to deal with the problem of historical singularity. Rejecting neoclassical imitation, the novel does not imitate a form; rather, combining the multiplicity of generic types within itself, it calls form into question. In a novelistic age, says Bakhtin--such as, he claims, one finds in the second half of the eighteenth century--"any strict adherence to a genre begins to feel like a stylization . . . taken to the point of parody." This parodic tendency extends even to the formalization of the

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[6] Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (l. 89). See Pope's discussion of pastoral poetry and its formal and stylistic conduciveness to "the greatest simplicity in nature" (120) in the "Discourse on Pastoral Poetry" appended to his *Pastorals*. See *Poems*, 119-23. Under the aegis of this transcendental access, the political stakes in literary imitation on occasion come to the surface. After contemplating "how acceptable the voyce of Poesy hath been to God," suggests William Davenant in the Preface to *Gondibert*, "wee may (by descending from Heaven to Earth) consider how usefull it is to Men" (28). Poesy, says Davenant, acts as a rhetorical tool in support of government, a pleasing rule "presenting Images of Vertue so amiable that her beholders should not be able to looke off" (39). The transcendental access allotted to poetry guarantees its political efficacy. For a detailed discussion of the political claims made for poetry by Davenant in the Preface see Reiss, "Power."

novel itself, so that "Throughout its entire history there is a consistent parodying or travestying of dominant or fashionable novels that attempt to become models for the genre" (*Dialogic* 6).[7] On the level of form at least, the novel is anathema to imitation; or rather, imitation becomes a radical rather than a conservative mode. Prior to the novel, literary kinds could transcend their basically conservative function in two ways:[8] as a form for the expression of a kind of human experience, "the kinds may act as myth or metaphor for a man's new vision of literary truth" (Colie 30); and as "abbreviations for a 'set' on the world, as definitions of manageable boundaries . . . in which material can be treated and considered" (115) they act as a collection of norms with which "extrageneric behavior" can converse and against which it can define itself (128). But with the novel, form is set at odds with life; the forms of the past become, in the words of J. Paul Hunter, repositories

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[7] The formal and generic instability of the novel is nearly proverbial. See for example Marthe Robert, *The Origin of the Novel*, 3-46. On the break-down of generic forms in eighteenth-century literature more generally, see Ralph Cohen. Michael Holquist goes so far as to say that the strict adherence to generic form in neoclassicism was in part responsible for the novel, which appears as "the shadow side of all neoclassicisms . . . . It does not emerge on the horizon of possibilities with a literary culture until a neoclassicism has restricted the field of sanctioned texts" (414).

[8] Davenant emphasizes the conservative function of imitation: "limits to the progresse of every thing (even of worthiness as well as defect) doth Imitation give: for whilst wee imitate others, we can no more excell them, then he that sailes by other Mapps can make a new discovery: and to Imitation, Nature . . . perhaps doth needfully encline us, to keeps us from excesses" (7).

of a "relevance no longer clear" (*Occasional Form* 17).[9] But the novel does not languish in the sundering of form and content; on the contrary, it emerges as a response to this crisis of form, as a mode in which form and content can be reconciled. The reconciliation, of course, is invariably marked by a certain irony. *Don Quixote* is paradigmatic in this respect. In the second part of the novel Quixote must contend with the fact that Part One has been published, that the world of Part One has become the romance of Part Two. Only in this moment, where the book folds in upon itself making itself the object of its own representation, is form and content reconciled. The world, distinctly at odds with the literary frames that would seek to divide and explain it, finally gives itself up to the new genre only as the scene of this dichotomy between form and content.

The ironic edge is not always so sharp. But what remains consistent, at least through to the end of the eighteenth century, is the sense that the reign of tradition has come to an end, and that, as Fielding famously announces, a "new Province of Writing" (*Tom Jones* 77) must be erected in its stead. Whatever connection the novel maintains with tradition, this "newness," this radical break, is an

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[9] McKeon identifies the reflection on form and on the relation of form to content as a "distinctive feature of novelistic narrative" and marks this feature out as a point of contact between his own work and that of the "great novel theorists," Bakhtin and Lukács (266). Lukács' statement to this effect is worth quoting if only for its economy: "The dissonance special to the novel, the refusal of the immanence of being to enter into empirical life, produces a problem of form" (*Theory* 71).

essential feature of the novel. It declares itself against conventional progress, and so stands in the place of--what remains a recurrent theme throughout the eighteenth century--the world-weary association of civic progress and sophistication with moral decay.[10] This association, which underlies the satires of Pope and Swift, becomes, over the course of the century, less a ground for satire than for the kind of melancholic historical reflection such as is found in Gibbon and Johnson, as the tension between historical singularity and transhistorical humanity, which fueled satire from the side of the latter, begins to favour the former. This formal tension, the legacy of neoclassical poetics, leads to the practical problem of a growing isolation between these two artistic poles: on the one hand, towards the multiplication and hybridization of formal generic

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[10] "When a Government flourishes in Conquests, and is secure from foreign Attacks, it naturally falls into all the Pleasures of Luxury . . . . At such times Men naturally endeavor to outshine one another in Pomp and Splendor, and having no Fears to alarm them from abroad, indulge themselves in the Enjoyment of all the Pleasures they can get into their Possession" (Addison 1.234-5). Pocock find a similar political concern later in the century: "John Millar . . . [who] wrote a four-volume historical study of the growth of English political society . . . . recurs incessantly to the question whether, as society progresses to the point where men become capable of liberty and virtue, they do not become increasingly exposed to corruption; not merely in the sense that, once men are virtuous, they have nothing to fear except corruption, but in the deeper more alarming sense that the same historical forces which produce virtue produce also the distraction of the personality, less through the temptations of luxury than by the conscious confusions and alienations of the moral identity" (*Machiavellian Moment* 502-3).

categories,[11] and on the other towards the notion of the "failure" of art typical of Romantic irony, the self-conscious awareness of the limits of representation with respect to truth. It might be possible that the Romantic symbol reunites these two wayward modes; possible, that is, to conceive that the multiplication of generic categories led somehow to the particularization of form in the symbol, which, by the dim illumination of irony, re-unites form and content. But what the symbol effectively excludes, as Paul de Man made clear in his work on allegory and symbol,[12] is temporality; and that is, precisely what the novel sets out to confront.

IV

Georg Lukács was the first to make a systematic inquiry into the novel's distinctive relationship to time, taking time as the medium in which form and content are irrevocably separated. "Only the novel," says Lukács, "the literary form of the transcendent homelessness of the idea, includes real time . . . among its constitutive principles" (*Theory* 121). His exposition of the novel as the literary document of

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[11] See Cohen. But also Colie, who finds a similar, though by no means identical movement in Renaissance genre.

[12] See in particular "the Rhetoric of Temporality" in *Blindness and Insight*, 187-228, and *Allegories of Reading*.

modernity puts secular time at the centre of modern subjectivity:

> The most profound and most humiliating impotence of subjectivity consists . . . in the fact that it cannot resist the sluggish, yet constant progress of time; that it must slip down, slowly yet inexorably, from the peaks it has laboriously scaled; that time . . . gradually robs subjectivity of all its possessions and imperceptibly forces alien contents into it . . . . [W]e might almost say that the entire inner action of the novel is nothing but a struggle against the power of time. (120-22)

Time appears here as the limit of human activity, of self-identity, even--and I will return to this below--as the ethical horizon of the modern subject. Ian Watt gives a sense of the intellectual-historical dimension of this unprecedented "insistence on the time process": against the timelessness of the Platonic forms and the concomitant premise that "nothing happened or could happen whose fundamental meaning was not independent of the flux of time" the novel is the culmination of the post-Renaissance view of time "not only as a crucial dimension of the physical world, but as the shaping force of a man's individual and collective history" (*Rise* 21-22).

Because of the connection between the novel and the problem of temporal existence, the relationship between the

narrative strategies of historical and of literary writing has become a touch-stone of critical work on the novel. J. Hillis Miller, though he stays aloof from the more properly historical issues involved, is clearest about the stakes:

> Insofar as a novel raises questions about the key assumptions of story-telling, for example about notions of origin and end, about consciousness or selfhood, about causality, or about gradually emerging unified meaning, then the putting into question of narrative form becomes also obliquely a putting into question of history or of the writing of history. ("Narrative" 462).[13]

What is at stake then, for the period in which the novel came to dominance, is a reevaluation of the concepts of time and history, and with it a new set of narrative exigencies. These exigencies appear obliquely in Bolingbroke's concern about the status of "Naked facts," which "without the causes that produce them and the circumstances that accompanied them, are not sufficient to characterize action or councils,"

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[13] Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel* is the most exhaustive and rigorous discussion of the narrative form of the novel within the material-historical context of the period. Leo Braudy's discussion of the formal aspects of novelistic and historical writing in eighteenth-century Britain in *Narrative Form in Fiction and History* remains one of the best on the formal response in the period to the "problem" of the "continuity of history, both past and present" (3). On the relationship between novelistic and historical narrative see also Reed; Davis; Hunter, *Before Novels*; and Zimmerman. See also Louis O. Mink who discusses narrative more generally as a mediative force, subsuming the extremes of the "concrete particularity" of "all the occurrences of the world" under "the replicable instance of a systematically interconnected set of generalizations" (132).

(134) and hence, he says, fall short of providing a "sufficient authority to render [them] useful" (95). Authority is not derived from the objective truth of the facts, but rather from their contextualization, the reduction of the singular event, the raw material of history, to the narrative form necessary for historical knowledge:

> though they were true . . . [they] would be of no Value in my sense, because of no use towards our improvement in wisdom and virtue, if they contained nothing more than . . . a bare mention of remarkable events in the order of time. (124)

As in Hume, time in its rawest form is strictly singular, and what is at stake then is not so much the truth of the event as the absorption of this singularity into narrative, into the causal frame, for the sake of cognition--and, by extension, for Bolingbroke at least, action.

Hume, not surprisingly, strikes at the heart of the matter in a way that Bolingbroke cannot: for him the beyond of cognition that this singularity occupies is expressed most perfectly in the figure of the future, rising up in the fallacious but necessary supposition "that the future will resemble the past." It would not be inaccurate to say that in this figure, in this orientation towards an unknown future, Hume articulates an essential moment in the temporal makeup of modern subjectivity, though one that finds its roots in the Renaissance. John Lyons, for example, notes that "From Machiavelli to Lafayette there is an increasing doubt that

what has happened before will necessarily happen again" (*Exemplum* 237). Bakhtin, too, puts this figure at the advent of modernity: "It was in the Renaissance that the present first began to feel with great clarity and awareness an incomparably closer proximity and kinship to the future than to the past" (*Dialogic* 40). For Bakhtin this orientation towards the future is a crucial and distinctive aspect of the novelistic ethos:

> For the first time in artistic-ideological consciousness, time and the world become historical: they unfold . . . as becoming, as an uninterrupted movement into a real future . . . . Through contact with the present, an object is attracted to the incomplete process of a world-in-the-making, and is stamped with the seal of inconclusiveness. . . . [I]t is connected to our incomplete, present-day, continuing temporal transitions, it develops a relationship with our unpreparedness, with our present. But meanwhile our present has been moving into an inconclusive future. (30)

More a product of alterity than organicism, Bakhtin's "becoming" takes history--that is, the historicism that develops from the Renaissance through to the eighteenth century--not as an encounter with a transcendental form, or with a past to be organized and comprehended, but rather as the locus of a constitutive "unpreparedness," what he calls,

in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, the "unfinalizability" of the modern subject (63).

For Bakhtin this unpreparedness with respect to time is, to a certain extent, resolved by the dialogical process that he takes to be the central moment of novelistic discourse.[14] No such resolution was open to the writers and thinkers of the eighteenth century. It is one thing to look back on a formal condition and raise it to the level of a concept, however problematized; it is quite another to *live* it.

V

With Fielding and Richardson in particular, the novel declares itself in the name of this life. It was presented explicitly as a moral tool, a means of bringing the everyday life of the individual citizen into contact with his or her public duties. As such, the novel was in line with the development of certain modes of political thought that sought, as J. G. A. Pocock has argued, to deal with "particular and contingent events and with time as the

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[14] This resolution in the dialogical, of course, is as much a formal suspension of resolution as anything: "A man never coincides with himself. One cannot apply to him the formula of identity A = A. . . . [T]he genuine life of the personality takes place at the point of non-coincidence between man and himself . . . . [and] is made available only through a *dialogic* penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself" (*Problems* 59).

dimension of contingent happenings." Pocock has traced this tradition of thought,

> explicitly concerned with problems of political particularity, with what was intellectually possible when the particular political society was viewed as existing in time, when the particular contingency or event was viewed as arising in time, and when the particular society was viewed as a structure for absorbing and responding to the challenges posed by such events and as consisting, institutionally and historically, of the traces of such responses made in past time. (*Machiavellian* 3, 8)

We can see this tradition at work in the political reflections of Edmund Burke, where the collective wisdom of experience and the grounding stability of habit are enshrined in the institutions of the state. One is obliged to turn to this storehouse of wisdom in the face of particular and contingent events. "All the reformations we have hitherto made," he writes of the Glorious Revolution,

> have proceeded upon the principle of reference to antiquity; and I hope, nay I am persuaded, that all those which possibly may be made hereafter, will be carefully formed upon analogical precedent, authority, and example. (*Reflections* 81)

Without recourse to such precedent, singularity and circumstance would reign, and

> the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer. . . . and thus the commonwealth itself would, in a few generations, crumble away, be disconnected into the dust and powder of individuality, and at length be dispersed to all the winds of heaven. (145-46)

In Burke, as in Hume, experience is the issue. A political society must take care to direct all things away from the particular and towards the whole. In the spirit of civic humanism, Burke excludes from the work of the state those who, simply by virtue of their class, must direct their interests and their actions towards their own sustenance, those who "at the expense of the state . . . must pursue their private interests":

> they are rather disabled than qualified for whatever depends on the knowledge of mankind, on experience in mixed affairs, on a comprehensive connected view of the various complicated external and internal interests which go to the formation of that multifarious thing called a state. (*Reflections*, 94-5)[15]

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[15] This view was common enough for the period. "When a man of business enters into life and action," says Hume, "he is more apt to consider the characters of men, as they have relation to his interest, than as they stand in themselves; and has his judgment warped on every occasion by the violence of his passion" (*Essays* 567-8).

Parliament must operate on the same principle. Far from working in the interest of the particular constituency, the elected representative must submit that interest to a greater one:

> Parliament is not a *congress* of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interest each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but Parliament is a *deliberative* assembly of *one* nation, with *one* interest, that of the whole--where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. (*Works* 2.96)

The orientation towards the whole is, of course, only an ideal; but there is nothing essential to these particulars that makes them irreducible to the ideal. What resists the "general reason of the whole" does so along lines that, if they are stubborn and entrenched, are no less known. The struggle to achieve the general good is, for the most part, the application of known principles of unity against known forces of disruption.

But time and the singularity that it presents is another matter. In the face of time, of the future, the institutions themselves must take a stand as the reservoir of "more experience than any person can gain in his whole life" (*Reflections* 112), and they depend here on the resemblance of past events--absorbed into the organic body of the state as

precedent--to future ones. But with the most singular of historical events, events that are indeed of the order of crisis, the recourse to the venerable state, without being able to refer to the past out of which it arose for guidance, draws a blank. In such a case, particularity and circumstance reign. Thus, for example, on the eve of the American War of Independence:

> Whoever goes about to reason on any part of the policy of the country with regard to America upon the mere abstract principles of government, or even upon those of our ancient constitution, will often be misled. Those who resort for arguments to the most respectable authorities, ancient or modern, or rest upon the clearest maxims drawn from the experience of other states and empires, will be liable to the greatest errors imaginable. The object is wholly new in the world. It is singular. . . . ; nothing in history is parallel to it. All the reasonings about it that are likely to be at all solid must be drawn from its actual circumstances. ("Observations" 193-4)

Burke's state depends on historical analogies and the application of examples, on the reproducibility of events and experiences. But the "singular" and unprecedented, the truly new, breaks this communication with the past. Burke derides those revolutionaries in France who display a "spirit of innovation," for "People will not look forward to posterity,

who never look backward to their ancestors" (*Reflections* 83). So too with the event itself: what cannot be seen through the lens of the past threatens to undermine the continuance of its authority into the future.[16] Hume's "rule for the future" is suspended; and here, in the ethico-political realm, the certainty of knowledge cannot fend off the danger of the singularity of the future.

Tom Jones--which will be the subject of Chapter One of this study--will attempt to address this singularity in the moral sphere, and it will do so at the level of representation itself. But it is not without precedent in those works that are more properly political in their concerns. If this novel could be separated into its ironical and narrativistic modes, if the sovereign unifying power of the narrator could be separated from the narrative whole that his judgment produces, it would divide along a line not unlike that between the Hobbesian and Burkean response to the problem of the singular. For Hobbes, the sovereign will acts from outside of time; the sovereign is itself a force of singularity, though one that is redeemed by its dedication to and representation of the whole. Its necessity, as a

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[16] If Tocqueville's attitude towards the unprecedentedness of America was less burdened by an empiricist dependence on tradition, he was nevertheless unable to refrain from striking a note of despair in the face of this "société nouvelle": "Je remonte de siècle en siècle jusqu'à l'antiquité la plus reculée; je n'aperçois rien qui ressemble à ce qui est sous mes yeux. Le passé n'éclairant plus l'avenir, l'esprit marche dans les ténèbres" ["Peering into century after century, back to the most distant antiquity, I see nothing that resembles what is now before my eyes. The past no longer casting light upon the future; the spirit advances into the shadows"] (*Démocratie* 369).

guarantee against regression into the state of nature, is sufficient to render its every action just, however arbitrary and despotical--justice being merely one of several tools that directs individuals towards the good of the whole, one of those "qualities that dispose men to peace, and obedience" (138). The "inheritance" of posterity that upholds Burke's state exists for Hobbes only as a refraction of this single will. Custom--which Burke will take to be the foundation on which the state is built--for Hobbes, is merely one of several "naturall signes of the [Soveraign] Will" (100), as in the case of a long established law where "it is not the Length of Time that maketh the Authority, but the Will of the Soveraign signified by his silence" (138). Acting from outside of any causal sequence, or any accumulated experience, the sovereign power, when it makes itself felt, is itself an event, just as the American Revolution is for Burke: utterly singular and without precedent. And so it combats the exception mimetically; neither entirely of the transcendental mimesis of the *imitatio christi*--the sovereign is "that *Mortall God*, to which wee owe under the *Immortal God*, our peace and defense" (87)--nor the more mundane horizontal mimesis such as one finds in the novel, the sovereign nevertheless repeats the natural violence of the exception.[17] Only inasmuch as its action ostensibly guarantees the peace and security of its subjects does this singularity avoid acting, itself, in the role of the disruptive

[17] On Hobbes and the exception, see Schmitt, *Political Theology*.

singularity; only in this respect do its manifestations, its presentations of its own will--one act, in its interruptive power, a repetition of another--escape falling into the compulsive repetition that, as I will try to show over the course of this study, develops out of singularity, and which, to different degrees, is the dominant mimetic mode of the novel in the late eighteenth century.

VI

At stake in Hobbes and in Burke, in very different ways, is the relationship between mimesis and the exigencies of the political community, its need to subordinate, or at least relate, the particular to a generalizing term; but within the horizon of this necessity, they must contend with the singular term that at once demands and resists generalization. This resistance plays no less of a role in the novels of the period, which develop, in part at least, as a form for this irreducible content. Beginning with Fielding and Richardson, the construction of the public sphere and of the individual's relationship to it, which is to say the moral condition of the subject, becomes an essential part of the novelistic work and remained so at least until the Gothic

novel.[18] I hope to show in the course of this study that the moral and political dimension of the novel cannot be separated from the mimetic economies that inhabit it: mimetic economies which must include the mimetic activity of mediation, and the self-reflexive aspect of novelistic discourse, turned in upon its own representational activity.

Certainly mimesis has a long and complicated history of attachment to ethics and politics. The expulsion of the poets in the *Republic* is arguably a founding gesture of Plato's ideal state, just as in Aristotle's *Poetics*--in what is usually characterized as an overturning of Platonic iconoclasm in its insistence on the political and cultural value of tragic mimesis--representation is clearly directed, not merely at an audience, but at the polis.[19] Karl Morrison

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[18] This is not, of course, a strictly novelistic enterprise; Addison and Steele had a similar design in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. But the difference in genre makes a significant difference in the terms under which the community is to be formed, and the mimetic economy that is brought into play.

[19] See the opening statement of Book Ten of the *Republic* on the especial importance of the "the matter of poetry, ... In refusing to admit at all so much of it as is imitative" (595a), and Lacoue-Labarthe's comment:

> if we are to believe Socrates . . . , this expulsion would manifestly be the most decisive gesture as regards the 'foundation of the State,' . . . . That is to say, the political 'system' . . . would be organized upon this exclusion. (*Typography* 98)

On the nature of the reversal of the Platonic view of mimesis in Aristotle see Halliwell, esp. chap. 4; Morrison, chap. 1; Woodruff; Else; and, most compellingly, Girard:

> We can compare Plato's attitude to those ritual systems that regard the evil aspects of nature as inexorably evil and do their best to eliminate all trace of them from the community. Plato found it impossible to believe that tragic discord or tragic violence could ever become synonyms for harmony and peace. That is why he rejects with horror those

has argued that the Christian tradition, working from classical models of mimesis as "a movement of corrective reversion--of egress from and return to a primordial model" (24), set mimesis clearly within a transcendental horizon, as a strategy of mediation "between the archetype of humanity and its flawed image in actual men" (49).[20] It takes on a central role in Christian ethics as early as Irenaeus, in his *Adversus omnes Haereses*, where Christ is said to have "recapitulated in himself the long history of the human race" so that humanity might regain its existence "in the image and likeness of God" (cited in McGrath 176-77). The double iteration, from the transcendental to the mundane and back again, one the mirror image of the other, is perhaps the most perfect expression of the unity that radiates from mimesis in early and medieval Christianity and in all that it informs--and which, eventually, would be undermined with the rise of historicism and modernity.

Which is not to say that there are not some lines of continuity and relation that cross this divide. Erich Auerbach, in *Mimesis*, finds in early Judeo-Christian mimesis

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> patricidal and incestuous impulses to which Aristotle . . . assigned a certain 'cultural value.' (*Violence* 295)

[20] The importance of a positive mimesis in the early church, and so in the Christian tradition at least until Luther, can be gauged by St. Paul's association of Jewish iconoclasm with spiritual blindness: "Moses . . . put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. . . . [But] we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness" (2 Cor 3.13-14, 18).

a "realism," an epistemological and ethical attention to what in the classical ordering of representation would be considered "low," a realism that was to be recapitulated, in different terms, in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reactions to the neoclassical "advocates of a rigorous imitation of antique literature" (489). The "*figura*"--Auerbach's term for the mimetic order of "reality in late antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages" (490)--acts as a mediating term between *historia* and transcendental *veritas* (*Scenes* 47):

> In this conception, an occurrence on earth signifies not only itself but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms . . . . The connection between occurrences is not regarded as primarily a chronological or causal development but as a oneness within the divine plan, of which all occurrences are parts and reflections. (*Mimesis* 490)

Between the "vertical" connection to the divine--to the "omni-temporal" in which *historia* is reduced to a transcendental sameness, a "magnificent homogeneity"--and the "horizontal" dimension of time and ordinary causality (64-5), the Western tradition of mimesis, according to Auerbach, plays itself out. But with the realism that arises in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however much it may work within this tradition and concentrate its mimetic energies on the world of everyday existence, the link between the

"occurrences" of this world and the "divine plan" has been sundered. Stendhal, for example--who, with Balzac, Auerbach makes the father of modern realism--brings to "the actual historical moment" a consciousness that "the social base upon which he lives is not constant for a moment but is perpetually changing through convulsions of every kind" (404). Far from participating in a divine order, "a man seems to have been thrown almost by chance into the milieu in which he lives" (408). Even Balzac, who retains a confidence in an organic connection between order and history, uncovers at times the nefarious power of "'irrational' forces" (422) that disrupt any kind of transcendental access.[21] The mimetic forms of the Christian era, when maintained at all, persist only within the limits of historical existence.

Concerned with representation in its linguistic rather than stylistic aspect, Michel Foucault's *Order of Things* covers similar territory, tracing the shift from mimetic models of knowledge and action, which he sees dominant prior to the seventeenth century, to the taxonomic and historical models of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His conclusions, which are worked out from a vastly different position, are fundamentally in agreement with Auerbach's. Up to the end of the sixteenth century,

> It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis in the interpretation of texts; it was resemblance

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[21] Auerbach notes similar moments of chance and irrationality in the works of Flaubert, Woolf and the Russian realists. See for example 431, 433, 461-2, 470.

> that . . . made possible the knowledge of things visible and invisible . . . . The universe was folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflected in the stars. (17)[22]

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[22] Compare this with the opening of Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*, where he describes the mimetic condition of "integrated civilizations" such as that which--enshrined for him in the Greek epic--precedes the "problematic" civilization that produces the novel: "The world is wide and yet it is like a home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature as the stars." The novel arises out of the destruction of "the old parallelism of the transcendental structure of the form-giving subject and the world of created forms" (40-1). This tendency to set the novel against the backdrop of a more unified age, a historical origin from which the modern age breaks in crisis, runs through the critical literature. For Michael McKeon, for example,

> the authority of the idea of lineage . . . . [formerly] existed to resolve questions of virtue and truth with a tacit simultaneity, making both causal claims of genealogical descent attesting to an eminence of birth, hence worth, and a logical claim of testimonial precedent validating all present claims as true. (420)

Anthony Cascardi finds novelistic self-consciousness arising with the onset of "destabilizing conditions" that undermine the preceding "highly stratified societies, relatively secure in their concept of the good" (5). Lukács is less measured in his invocation of the ethical aspect of this earlier world: "each action of the soul becomes meaningful and rounded . . . because the soul rests within itself even while it acts" (29). It is Walter Benjamin, however, who puts this falling away from a more unified order definitively into ethical terms. In his essay "The Storyteller" he takes the rise of the novel as a "symptom of a process whose end is the decline of storytelling," the decline of a certain "orientation towards practical interests."

> [T]he storyteller is a man who has councel for his readers. . . . The novelist has isolated himself. The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself uncounceled, and cannot councel others. To write a novel means to carry the incommensurable to extremes in the representation of human life.

Don Quixote, the unwitting victim of the economy of exemplarity, is Benjamin's example of one who has become

But with the erosion of an ontological in favour of an epistemological model of the world

> At the beginning of the seventeenth century . . . thought ceases to move in the element of resemblance. Similitude is no longer the form of knowledge but rather the occasion of error . . . . 'It is a frequent habit,' says Descartes, in the first lines of his *Regulae*, 'when we discover several resemblances between two things, to attribute to both equally, even on points in which they are in reality different, that which we have recognized to be true of only one of them.' (51)[23]

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caught in this crisis of ethical expression: "Even the first great book of the genre, *Don Quixote*, teaches how the spiritual greatness, the boldness, the helpfulness of one of the noblest of men, Don Quixote, are completely devoid of councel" (*Illuminations* 86-7). I will not attempt to untangle the formal and historical, or the ideological stakes in these various formulations. Whatever lies behind this insistence on a prior unity, we can say that what the novel registers--formally, thematically and historically--is the separation of origin and what has, as de Man says in his essay on the rhetoric of crisis, "irrevocably fallen away from the source" (*Blindness* 8). To put it rather schematically, and to look forward into this study, if *Tom Jones* presents this source as a unifying act of judgment, *Amelia* presents the irrevocable falling away.

[23] See also Bacon: "The human understanding is like a false mirror, which receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it" (*Works of Lord Bacon*, (London: 1879) 2:435; Cited in Morrison, 241). On Descartes' concern with the dangers of imitation see John Lyons "Subjectivity and Imitation," as well as *Exemplum* where he notes that for Descartes "the repetition of the past in the future is not itself in question. But mere repetition, the iterativity of example, is split off from meaning, which is withdrawn from the outside world into the subjective realm" (237).

The divorce of similitude and knowledge that Foucault finds in the early modern era extends as well to the mediative relationship between God and man, likewise affected by a loss of faith in the ontological character of mimesis. Certainly Luther's rejection of good works rendered mimesis a strictly intramundane affair, breaking the mimetic bond between earth and heaven. The imitation of Christ, which had, since the patristic age, been the hallmark of transcendental mimesis, was limited by Luther solely to the work of pragmatic social integration which, at best, provided a foundation in the world from which to direct oneself, in hope, towards the divine. In the novel, a major engine of secular morality in Protestant England, this potential for deception in similitude, aided by new notions of time and history, appears as a problem of exemplarity. Henry Fielding will be the first to produce a properly novelistic response to this crisis of moral representation, in the figure of the author and in the critical moment of novelistic irony. But it is to Samuel Johnson's *Rambler* that we must look for a diagnosis of this moral dilemma.

What distinguishes the novel, according to Johnson, both from the romance and from the higher tragic and heroic forms of literary representation, is the fact that it is "engaged in portraits of which everyone knows the original," and so demands an "exactness of resemblance. . . . But when an adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world, and acts in such scenes of the universal drama as may be the lot of

any other man," the nefarious "power of the example"--"so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will"--can trap the unwary reader in the "levelled" world it represents (*Works* 3.20-1). What disturbs Johnson is, to use Auerbach's word, the "horizontal" trajectory of this mimetic economy. Readers are not called to imitate a model that stands above their compromised historical existence, but rather to find in the novel an image that they already possess. A horizontal mimetic order replaces the vertical, substituting consumption for excitation in the face of greatness, and sameness for transcendence. The transcendental sameness of the vertical order, where repetition is an earthly illusion produced by the oneness of all things in God, migrates to the horizontal axis: "life in its true state," (19) substituted for the "omni-temporal" divine, somehow preserves the "oneness" and "homogeneity" (Auerbach, *Mimesis* 490, 65) characteristic of the divine order, though there is a crucial difference. What in the divinely ordered universe is in fact a force of singularity, of the singular intervention of the divine in the temporal realm--so that, for example, the incarnation of Christ, the materialization of the logos, creates eddies of reflections in the past and in the future, reflections that are absolutely identical in their essential element--is, in the intramundane realm, merely exchangeability.

This attitude has not gone unnoticed. Exchangeability is the very principle of a capital economy. But this mimetic form was not limited strictly to the socio-economic realm. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer compare the representational aspect of sacrifice--Christological or otherwise--with that of the mundane economy of the same, here in the figure of Enlightenment science, that they find inaugurated in the eighteenth century:

> the holiness of the *hic et nunc*, the uniqueness of the chosen one into which the representative enters, radically marks it off, and makes it unfit for exchange. Science prepares the end of this state of affairs. In science there is no specific representation . . . . Representation is exchanged for the fungible--universal interchangeability. (10)[24]

There is more to say about what is left for singularity in this "scientific" reorganization of the mimetic field, but for the moment it is sufficient to note that in the intramundane realm this homogeneous order, where even the hero is "levelled with the rest of the world," partakes of a certain entropy:[25] acts of transcendental virtue are replaced

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[24] See also Arne Melberg, who similarly points out that as part of "a historical process that slowly invests *mimesis* with temporal dimensions," the eighteenth century witnesses the "turning of *mimesis* into *repetition*" (1).

[25] I am thinking here of Levi-Strauss' discussion of the homogenizing tendency of culture in *Tristes Tropiques*: "civilization, taken as a whole, can be described as an extraordinarily complex mechanism, which we might be tempted to see as offering an opportunity of survival for the human

by the most unexceptional, and the desire for emulation is driven, not by a vertical dichotomy, but rather by a horizontal identity. Readers already identify with the novelistic example, and will imitate that example, not to participate in a higher order of action and virtue, but to remain consistent with a social identity they already possess, one that is without any reference to a transcendental ground, and so essentially groundless; a repetition more than a copy, since there is no ultimate model, only a multiplication of the same, morally arbitrary image.[26]

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world, if its function were not to produce what physicists call entropy, that is inertia. Every verbal exchange, every line printed, establishes communication between people, thus creating an evenness of level, where before there was an information gap and consequently a greater degree of organization. Anthropology could with advantage be changed into 'entropology,' as the name of the discipline concerned with the study of the highest manifestations of this process of disintegration" (413-14).

[26] See Miller, *Fiction and Repetition*, on the distinction between a mimesis "grounded in an archetypal model which is untouched by the effects of repetition" and an ungrounded mimesis where everything is unique and singular, where "Similarity arises against the background of . . . [a] '*disparité du font*'" (6). See also John D. Boyd who, arguing from the perspective of the humanist notion of literature as a form of moral instruction, and speaking primarily of neoclassicism, has described the mimetic scene of the eighteenth century as the completion of a long cultural shift from *contemplatio* to mere *imitatio*, a succumbing to the "perennial temptation of the mind to level, to substitute one thing for another . . . . resulting in a univocal leveling" (298-99). That Boyd's findings concerning neoclassical mimesis, in particular with respect to the particular form of exemplarity that triumphed in neoclassicism, are so close to the "levelling" that Johnson associates with the novel would suggest a closer affinity between these two contemporary movements, at least with respect to mimesis, than is usually credited. In particular, see Boyd's discussion of Aristotle concerning the confusion of teleological contemplation and

Thus in Anna Barbauld's account of the "Origin and Progress of Novel Writing," for example, the prefatory essay to her 1810 collection *The British Novelists*, she finds again and again at the origin of the modern novel a certain levelling of identity. If the moral aspect of this mimesis does not interest Barbauld, she nevertheless finds, like Johnson, a mimesis that is more of the order of a simulacrum than a copy. The first modern novel she discusses, the *Astrea* of M. d'Urfé, "became so popular" we are told, that the fashionable set "assumed the airs and language of shepherds and shepherdesses" so much so that "men of gallantry were seen with a crook in their hands, leading a tame lamb about the streets of Paris." Outside of the realm of the example, too, repetition holds sway. "At the very outset of the piece," Barbauld writes,

> We find . . . the fountain of love, in which if a man looks, he sees, if he is beloved, the face of his mistress; but if not, he is presented with the countenance of his rival. (13-14)

In the period of the *Astrea*, where romance begins to transform itself into the realistic novel, such movement of substitution, according to Barbauld, would seem to be common enough: an Ethiopian princess who "having gazed at a picture of Perseus" gives birth to a white child; a woman who, without any previous attachment, asks to be married to the

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praxis in neoclassical exemplarity (18-35). I would argue that the novel arises out of the untenability of this form of exemplarity, and that it confronts it at the level of mimetic form.

murderer of her father on the assumption, Barbauld surmises, that "having deprived her of one protector, it was but reasonable that he should give her another" (17).[27] When romance and novel mingle again at the end of the eighteenth century in the Gothic novel this doubleness will again come explicitly to the surface. But if it is not as explicit thematically in the novel generally, it is nevertheless implicit in its mimetic economy. Johnson's moral economy, where the "adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world," is merely a displaced version of this ungrounded repetition. And it is not only those uninformed readers for whom Samuel Johnson fears, those minds "not fixed by principles," that are affected by the absence of a vertical exemplary mimesis (*Works* 3:21); the world of the novel itself, unmoored from a transcendental ground, becomes a theatre of confused horizontal identities.

VII

If the eighteenth century is the crucible of this temporality and new mimetic economy, they are not theorized as such until the twentieth. Nietzsche's philosophy of the future, the philosophy of the position and of the will, looks forward, ultimately, to Derrida's time of the other, a future which,

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[27] It is no coincidence that when Freud seeks an example of the "perpetual recurrence of the same thing" characteristic of the death drive he tells a story from Tasso not unlike these (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 22).

always still to come, is irreducible to the causal progress of narrative and as such comes equally out of the past as the future.[28] But Freud, in his discussion of traumatic neurosis in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is arguably the first real architect of this philosophy of the event, an event "that never entered consciousness" (23), that somehow resisted the assimilative powers of the ego, and which is therefore condemned to a repetition of the same. Cathy Caruth draws out this thread. Trauma and crisis consist "in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experienced it" (Intro. 4). It is precisely as something that lies beyond consciousness, and yet which remains, somehow, inhabiting the subject, that trauma presents a problem to analysis.

It is worth while distinguishing Caruth's reading of the death drive and its repetitions from Peter Brooks' more conventional reading. Attempting to apply Freud's insights into repetition to the problem of narrative, he begins with the notion that events are "endowed with narrative meaning only because we read them in anticipation of the structuring power of the ending" (*Reading* 94). He finds a precedent in Walter Benjamin's "The Storyteller," and comments:

> Benjamin analyzes the implications of the common statement that the meaning of a man's life is revealed only in his death, to reach the conclusion

[28] See for example *Memoires for Paul de Man*, and *The Other Heading*.

> that in narrative, death provides the very 'authority' of the tale, since as readers we seek in narrative fictions the knowledge of death which in our own lives is denied to us. Hence Benjamin can state that 'Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell' [*Illuminations* 95]. (*Reading* 95)

Brooks reads the repetitions characteristic of the death drive as a formalization of the "textual energies" that make meaning, and so the pleasure of unity, possible. Thus the repetitions serve "to bind the energy of the text so as to make its final discharge more effective" (108). The repetition compulsion of the death drive serves the pleasure principle, and, inasmuch as it guarantees the ultimate return, the pleasure principle serves the death drive (107). Thus the drive for "the gain of knowledge" (27) "the movement toward totalization under the mandate of desire" (91), is underwritten by repetition, the economic aspect of which is the establishment of "precedence and consequence, the movement from one detail to another" (91).

No doubt Brooks is correct with respect to the *work*, to the telos perhaps, of repetition,[29] but with respect to repetition itself--and certainly to an aspect of repetition that was more or less explicitly recognized in the latter half of the eighteenth century, not to mention to Freud--he is mistaken. His is a basically poetic account of narrative,

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[29] See, for example, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, (62-3).

where, indeed, the repetition of rhyme and motif and image bind the disparate elements of the poem together in a transcendence of the differences that time, space and the very dispersal of these effects across the poem instills in them. But it takes no account of the temporality--which is to say, the novelistic aspect--of these repetitions, the experience of time out of which they arise. Oriented as it is towards the ideal end, towards the narrative overcoming of time, his account effaces what Caruth calls "the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience" (Intro. 8), where the "delay of incompletion in knowing" the event results in its doubling, "its insistent return" (5). Within repetition this delay is perpetual. As I will try to show in the chapter on *Tom Jones*--and this is Brooks' point--the teleological drive of plot curtails this perpetuity. But when this end cannot be implemented, when the repetitions, ungrounded in themselves, cannot be inscribed into a proper and transcendental ground, another economy unfolds.

Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller," out of which Brooks takes his statements on death and writing, is of some use here. As Brooks makes clear, the "authority" of death "at the very heart of the story" (*Reading* 94) opens onto a perpetual repetition. "Death appears" in the story "with the same regularity as the Reaper does in the processions that pass around the cathedral clock at noon" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 95). But this does not serve to prepare the text for its

"final discharge" in the kind of meaning one derives from plot where, in the light of the catastrophe, the discrete events of the story are formed into a whole. We must look elsewhere in Benjamin's corpus to make sense of his notion of repetition and its resistance to consciousness and explanation, to "the structuring power of the ending that will retrospectively give them the order and significance of plot" (Brooks, *Reading* 94). In the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin sets repetition against "homogeneous, empty time," for the former lies in

> time filled by the presence of the now. Thus to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. . . . The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action. The great revolution introduced a new calendar. The initial day of a calendar serves as a time-lapse camera. And, basically, it is the same day that keeps recurring in the guise of holidays, which are days of remembrance. (261)

Such recurrences are not days of conscious recollection, but of the "*mémoire involuntaire*," "what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience" (160-1). "The true picture of the past flits by" (255).

In "The Storyteller" the distinction between the "continuum of history" and the repetition of "the presence of the now" appears as the "difference between the writer of history, the historian, and the teller of it, the chronicler." "The historian is bound to explain in one way or another the happenings with which he deals." Chroniclers, on the other hand, concerned with a divine rather than a secular order of the event, "basing their historical tales on a divine plan of salvation--an inscrutable one--have from the very start lifted the burden of demonstrable explanation from their own shoulders" (96). Brooks mistakes the "natural history" of the storyteller and the "eschatological orientation" of the chronicler (95-6) for the endowment of "narrative meaning . . . in anticipation of the structuring power of the ending" (*Reading* 94), and as such inverts Benjamin's scheme. The economic aspect of repetition transcends the economics of plot and interpretation, and lodges itself instead in an extra-human sphere.

But if Freud and Benjamin are the high water mark of the theorization of this problem of the event and the mimetic economy of repetition, it is no less a part of the eighteenth century speculation on knowledge and representation. My overriding claim is that it forms a crucial aspect of novelistic mimesis in the period, but inasmuch as it appears there at the level of theorization--that is, of philosophy--it is, once again, to Hume that we must look. It appears most explicitly in Book One of *A Treatise of Human Understanding*,

where the "repetition of perfectly similar instances" comes to give rise to the idea of necessary connexion (163). There is a three-tiered process in the apprehension of this idea, the foundational moment of knowledge for Hume, beginning with the repetition of similar instances, then to the effect of this repetition on the mind, and finally to the active application of this effect--the idea of necessary connexion--in thought.[30] Given a set of similar conjunctions of two objects, "after frequent repetition . . . , upon the appearance of one of the objects, the mind is *determin'd* by custom to consider its usual attendant" (155-6). "Similar instances," then,

> are the first source of our idea of power and necessity; at the same time that they have no influence by their similarity either on each other, or on any external object. . . . These instances are in themselves totally distinct from each other, and have no union but in the mind, which observes them, and collects their ideas.

Necessary connexion, the ground of knowledge and of generalized reasoning, "is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another" (164-5). In themselves, then, these instances, these events, are totally singular. The events

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[30] The details of Hume's discussion of necessary connexion are well enough known, and in any case less important in the present context than the status of repetition with respect to the work of consciousness in the idea. The discussion is concentrated primarily in Book 1, Part 3, Section 14 of the *Treatise*.

remain unchanged by their repetition, which is no more than the impression left on the mind. The ideas that arise out of this impression, this "determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another,"[31] are the raw material for the work of representation, which in turn allows the mind to establish causal relationships and go about its work of generalization. At the risk of oversimplification, we might say that Hume's reading of repetition--a reading, if articulated here with unusual clarity, is nonetheless characteristic of the period--stands somewhere between Brooks' "precedence and consequence" (91) and Benjamin's "accurate concatenation of definite events" (96); it lies between representation and the raw impression of the real singular things of the world outside of consciousness.

VIII

This study unfolds within the field of these mimetic and temporal concerns. Chapter One deals with *Tom Jones* which, in the shadow of neoclassicism, preserves the basic assumption of the sufficiency of human work to the problem of the world.

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[31] It should be pointed out that this is not a "determination" in the sense of a conscious and willful intention: "after a frequent repetition . . . the mind is *determin'd* by custom . . . . 'Tis this impression then, or *determination*, which affords me the idea of necessity" (156). The emphasis is Hume's. As Gilles Deleuze points out this determination is not yet conscious; it is a "passive synthesis": the impression of repetition "is not carried out by the mind, but occurs *in* the mind which contemplates, prior to all memory and all reflection" (*Difference* 71).

In history writing and in exemplarism *Tom Jones* struggles with what is essentially a crisis of representation. Fielding wants to put limits on the tendency of representation to function without reference to an informing unity, to break free of its models, its real referents, and so to become a tool, not of truth and community, but of deception and fragmentation. This he achieves in the figure of the "sovereign" narrator who, preserving an ironic distance from representation, offers in its place a form of moral and aesthetic judgment. Narrative represents the temporal order in such a way that the volitility and singularity of time and the event is brought under the rule of muthos without simply excising the event--or rather, while transmuting the event, in the alembic of narrative, into freedom. In place of representation and the dangers of appearance that arise there, *Tom Jones* presents the moment of positing and of consciousness that precedes and grounds representation.

In its basic structure, *Tom Jones'* confrontation with repetition is typically novelistic, or at least a recapitulation of what is generally considered to be the prototypical novel, *Don Quixote*. Anthony Cascardi cuts to the quick of the representational issues of this text. Finding in *Don Quixote* "that the eclipse of imitation as a standard of reading in fact generates a *proliferation* of models, none of which can be determined as authentic according to existing standards of literary truth," Cascardi connects this unmoored repetition to the foundation of the transcendental autonomous

subject that sets itself "not only above the possibility of sensory error, but beyond the deceits of imitation as well" (83).

It will be Fielding's sorrow in his final novel *Amelia*, as I will try to demonstrate in Chapter Two, to discover that this subject, the "sovereign" narrator of *Tom Jones*, is just dependent enough on representation to fall victim to precisely the "proliferation" that it sought to exclude. As a real force of unity, the sovereign narrator is notoriously absent from *Amelia*, but he remains, in bits and pieces, scattered through the text in the characters. This dismembering of the sovereign, as dramatic as it is, is only one of a number of surface effects that arise out of the now unchallenged force of singularity. The narrator can no longer establish his dominion over time, and narrative begins to break down under the pressure of singularity, of what will not be absorbed into the whole. Stasis and doubling are the effects--the very emblems of the demonic forces that Fielding had tried to contain in *Tom Jones*.

Amelia is thus caught between two mimetic modes, and this, as much as anything, accounts for what is generally considered to be its failure as a novel. On the one hand, the drive for narrative unity, for a moral order, and on the other, the amoral power of the event--even, and especially, the very event of judgment that, in *Tom Jones*, had seemed a preserve against the force of time and history. This conflict can be put in generic terms as well: on the one hand the

ironic distance from the world of representations, on the other, the sentimental attitude towards the event. This latter mode, towards which *Amelia* leans without being able to free itself from the former, is the subject of Chapter Three.

Accusations of quietism and empty benevolence are deservedly levelled against sentimentalism. But the simplicity of the social explanation of the sentimental stance--a politically impotent middle class expressing its thwarted social instincts in sympathy, and assuaging its guilty conscience in a pity that is loath to call seriously into question the oppressive social conditions to which this class owes its prosperity and leisure--does not do justice to the rhetorical power of the sentimental ideology, which shows itself most clearly in its mimetic attitude. Sentiment develops in the face of the representational crisis that, in *Tom Jones*, called the sovereign narrator into being. But the sentimentalist eschews the instrumentality of narrative and, in fact, all modes of unifying activity. Invoking tragedy, the sentimental assumes a world caught in the incomprehensible machine of fate. What had implicitly in Fielding--explicitly in Burke and Hume--been a question of time and history becomes in the sentimental a question of myth.

The Gothic novel is the apotheosis of this extra-human world. At its most extreme, the consciousness that appears triumphant in *Tom Jones* and that averts the mimetic crisis of appearance is utterly absent, leaving only an undifferentiated

continuum of mythic nature. Sameness and repetition, which the narrator of *Tom Jones* had set himself against, is the dominant mimetic form of the Gothic. The themes that had defined the sentimental--impotence, fate, stasis--and which had been inscribed there in a kind of tragic agon, are completely and unproblematically established in the Gothic realm. In a way, the Gothic presents the return, in an amoral creaturely universe, of the divine mimetic economy of resemblance.

Finally, these last two chapters are concerned with popular forms, with subgenres of the novel, and so have called for a different mode of exposition that, if it cannot be defended, must at least be acknowledged. There is no concerted effort to distinguish one text from another in these chapters, nor to observe the progress of an individual author through a series of works; rather, from a small group[32] of exemplary texts, taken more or less as a mass, the features of the genres are sketched in. Some texts are inevitably more heavily weighted than others--those of Henry Mackenzie in the case of the sentimental novel, those of Anne Radcliffe and Charles Maturin in the Gothic--and may seem to lord imperiously over the others, bringing their particular tropes and concerns in line with their own. Perhaps it is the inevitable fate of a study that begins with the decline in the power of the example to be subject, at the end, to its laws. But any discussion, whether it be about a single text,

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[32] Popular genres are called popular for a reason. Ann B. Tracy lists over two-hundred Gothic novels, "a very small portion of the Gothic novels published between 1790 and 1830" (15).

a corpus or an entire genre, must succumb to the exigencies of selection and judgment, must raise up certain elements above others, either to explain them or to exclude them. I can only say in defense that what statements I have made seem to me to be true at least within the terms of texts under discussion, that the context in which I place them goes some way towards explaining them and, more importantly, shedding some light on the issues of mimesis that underlie them.

Chapter One: *Tom Jones* and the Mimetics of Moral Fiction

I

"A heroick Poem," Dryden writes of Virgil's *Aeneid*, "is undoubtedly the greatest Work that the Soul of Man is capable to perform. The Design of it, is to form the Mind to Heroick Virtue by Example" (*Works* 5.267). The faith expressed here in the exemplary power of literature, of literature, as George Chapman said of Homer at the beginning of the seventeenth century, as "the true image of all virtues and humane government . . . . , the mirror for all . . . duties" (*Works* 3.8-9), is in fact a faith in the political efficacy of literature. In its highest form, in the highest genre, literary mimesis is seen to act as a force of mediation between, at once, nature and humanity on the one hand, and society and the individual subject on the other. The literary example, then, faces in two directions: towards the transcendental order of Virtue, of which it is the exemplary appearance, and towards the concrete moral world, the particular social and political world of the reader, for whom it is to act as a model.

The novel marks the end of this state of affairs. The moral concern that Johnson expresses over the novel, where "an adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world, and

acts in such scenes of the universal drama as may be the lot of any other man" (*Works* 3.20-1), must not be dismissed as a reactionary position in the face of the new. On the contrary, it merely takes the moral position on what Georg Lukács, a century and a half later, saw as a historical fact: that for the novel art "is no longer a copy, for all the models have gone; . . . the natural unity of the metaphysical spheres have been destroyed forever" (*Theory* 37). Fielding too, neither a philosopher nor a strict moralist, bears out this decline, and in fact, ultimately, sets out to save the novel from the moral ambivalence of novelistic representation.

The concern that Johnson expresses about exemplary representation is an accusatory one. Since representations--regardless of their moral value--will act as examples on many readers, "it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature which are most proper for imitation" (*Works* 3.22). But the novel and its adherence to an "exactness of resemblance" (20) to the everyday world has driven this cautious exemplarity unfairly off the field. Fielding, who would no doubt agree with Johnson about the incompatibility between the novel and the example, in no way regrets this state of affairs.[1] In Book One of *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding lavishes ironic praise on the authors of the "Lives of Mr. Colley Cibber, and Mrs. Pamela Andrews," who provide, as a "Service

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[1] See Jonathan Lamb, who finds in Fielding a resistance to "the meshing of the plausible example with the useful moral," a resistance arising out of the persistence of "the odd particulars" and "unruly exceptions" (249) that interrupt narrative. I take up these interruptions in Chapters Two and Three below.

for Mankind" the "valuable Patterns" of virtuous lives (17-19). Whatever else Fielding may be attacking, whatever high-minded arrogance or idealism he finds in Richardson and Cibber, what is ultimately at stake here is the moral status of the example. Nothing good can come of these models of virtue. Even when a positive example makes itself available, one that Fielding would endorse, a reason is found for its rejection, and ultimately for its necessary resistance to generalization. This is the case, for example, with the exemplary justice of the gypsy king in *Tom Jones*: "Nor can the Examples of the Gypsies . . . be here urged; since we must remember the very material Respect in which they differ from all other People" (673). Singular beyond the possibility of imitation, the gypsy king becomes, instead, the exception that proves the rule against absolute monarchy, so that the moral lesson of this tale--which at first seemed an exemplary case of enlightened despotism--becomes the conclusion that

> as the Examples of all Ages show us that Mankind in general desire Power only to do Harm . . . . it will be much wiser to submit to a few Inconveniences arising from the dispassionate Deafness of Laws, than to remedy them by applying to the passionate open Ears of a Tyrant. (672-73)

The example may serve here, it should be noted, as an instrument of cognition, as with the "Examples of all Ages"--the realms of knowledge and ethics separated, as Kant will say, by an "immense gulf" (*Judgment* 175)--but not of

morality.[2] And if, in light of this moral horizon, the positive representation must be rejected, so must the negative. Thus in Book Three of *Joseph Andrews* the writer of exemplary lives appears as his obverse, "the Libeller," who instead of "privately" correcting the faults of the wayward, "publickly exposes the Person himself, as an Example to others, like an Executioner." Far better, says Fielding,

> not to expose one pitiful Wretch . . .; but to hold the Glass to thousands in their Closets, that they may contemplate their Deformity, and endeavor to reduce it, and thus by suffering private Mortification may avoid public Shame. (189)

Positive or negative, mimesis is too volatile to be simply unleashed in the public sphere. As early as 1730, in the prologue to the play *The Coffee-House Politician*[3]--twelve years before the publication of *Joseph Andrews*--Fielding had made satire dependent on a private and individual relation to literary representation. Thus, the audience is divided into the object of representation, who "feels within the criminal he sees," and the virtuously exempt who "smiles, to find / No

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[2] John Lyons argues that there is something inherently literary about an example that is not restricted to being merely "a model of imitation," and goes on to list the ways in which literary exemplarity can transcend this limitation without necessarily excluding it (*Exemplum* 25-34). While I agree with Lyons statement with respect to literature generally, in the case of a self-consciously moral literature the moral dimension of the example necessarily becomes over-determined, and so the example operates here by a different set of rules.

[3] Also known as *Rape Upon Rape*. The less sensationalistic title was provided for publication.

mark for satire in his generous mind" (*Works* 9.76). What is called for here--true to the spirit, if not the letter, of the Reformation--is a personal relation to the moral aspect of the representation, a relation that, when mediated by the institutions of the public sphere, becomes quickly corrupted. The "Harlot Vice . . . constantly endeavors to set off the Charms she Counterfeits," says Fielding in his "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," while virtue, backward "to expose her naked beauty" (*Miscellanies* 1.174) is seen only by "an accurate and discerning eye" (161)--an eye, presumably, accustomed to the dimly lit, private and reserved "Charms" of true virtue.

Since Coleridge, who saw in Fielding's characters the germ of romantic individualism, the division between the public and private realms in Fielding has been a critical given. *Tom Jones*, Coleridge recognizes, "is, and, indeed, pretends to be, no exemplar of conduct"; character and conduct, in fact, the private and the social self, are sundered.

> If I want a servant or a mechanic, I wish to know what *he does*--but of a Friend, I must know what he *is*. And in no Writer is this momentous distinction so finely brought forward as by Fielding. We do not care what Blifil *does*--the *deed*, as separate from the agent, may be good or ill--but Blifil *is* a villain--and we feel him to be so. (*Works* 12.2.692-93)

It is fitting that what is at bottom, for Coleridge at least, a matter of romantic alienation should find in Fielding what would pass for a Romantic solution: immediate intuition. The Good Heart, antipathetic to the public realm where appearance is always susceptible to some sort of perversion, rarely has either the guile to clothe itself in the apparel of virtue, or the critical discernment to untangle truth from the web of intrigue. The Good Heart, on the contrary, comes finally to an "instinctive understanding . . . of Right and Wrong" (Kermode 69). Interpretation, the subjection of appearance to the penetrating gaze of criticism, is as likely to produce intrigue as resolution, and is, in any case, of no use to the Good Heart, who struggles against interpretation, against the interpretations laid upon it by others, and against its own difficulty interpreting the world. Just as Allan Wendt says of the appearance of virtue in Fielding, that "the naked beauty of virtue is a necessary but not a sufficient motive to ethically satisfactory actions" (134), so interpretation, which translates appearance into knowledge, however necessary it may be to narrative presentation, is insufficient for good action.

To be sure, the compromising of virtue by the very nature of appearance--as Jill Campbell observes of Fielding, "any ways in which virtue manifests itself externally allow for its impersonation" (46)--is as much a characteristic of the novel as it is of Fielding's work. In fact, this aspect of virtue stands behind Stendhal's pronouncement that "Virtue

in a novel is only there to be sacrificed" (207), a dictum that could be made--whether it can be followed is another matter--only in the twilight of exemplary virtue.

But Fielding is a special case in the history in the novel. Not only because of his undisputed place in the canon, his status, for better or for worse, as something of a patriarch of the genre, but because he peered so deeply and consistently into this twilight, and sought a solution not, as Johnson did, in a conservative return to the mimetic schemes of the past, but in a new, modern conception of mimesis at once grounded in the autonomous individual and committed to the social and political world to which this individual ostensibly owes its freedom. His awareness of the mimetic crisis, threatening the very possibility of a moral literature, can be traced to his earliest successes on the stage, where, in a rather more destructive than constructive spirit, he shows a profound suspicion of exemplarity. The stakes are concentrated in the title to one of his more popular farces: *The Tragedy of Tragedies*. As J. Paul Hunter observes, what is indicated here is not merely the poor state of tragic drama on the eighteenth-century stage, but the growing distance between tragic representation and eighteenth-century culture--in short "the demise of the modern would-be hero" (45), a lament for the heroic exemplar. The world has passed in which resemblance was an organizing principle, in which imitation and similitude offered moral and cognitive access to a larger unity connecting all levels

of existence. When, in *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, the ghost of Gaffer Thumb appears to King Arthur with the wisdom of the beyond, there is no sign of an ethical crisis arising out of the revelation as there is in the scene from *Hamlet* that it parodies. On the contrary, there is no revelation at all, just a string of useless similes:

> So have I seen the Bees in Clusters swarm,
>
> So have I seen the Stars in frosty Nights,
>
> So have I seen the Sand in windy Days, (130)

and so on, ad absurdum. The king is not pleased: " whilst thou tellest me what's like my fate, / Oh! teach me how I may avert it too! / Curst be the man who first a simile made!" (131). Representation has become repetition; mimesis has left the realm of knowledge and consciousness for something truly "beyond," truly dead and impenetrable. The "repetition of similar ideas" here, as in Burke's essay on the sublime and the beautiful, is closer to darkness "where it is impossible to know in what degree of safety we stand," than it is to the unifying illumination of metaphor (*Enquiry* 142-3).

And yet, however great his suspicion of appearance may have been, Fielding did defer to the possibility of rendering appearance transparent under the right circumstances. His careful and self-conscious attention to the reader's relation to the text is often taken, quite rightly, as just such a concern to establish those ideal interpretive circumstances. It is fitting, in any case, that in *Tom Jones*, his most perfect realization of the moral imperative to represent the

whole, Fielding is most willing to allow virtue a positive place in the economy of appearance: thus the dedication to *Tom Jones*, where, in what is perhaps a willful distortion of Plato's *Phaedrus*, "an Example is a kind of Picture, in which Virtue becomes, as it were, an Object of sight" (7).[4] As has been noted above, he makes a similar, if more qualified statement in his "Essay on the Knowledge of Characters of Men," where an individual's nature is legible at least to the "accurate and discerning Eye" (*Miscellanies* 1.161); an eye that is rare enough to be sure. It is a matter, he says, simply of rising above "the Generality of Mankind [who] mistake the Affectation for the Reality" (161-62).

This coincides with his belief, which he held at least until 1751, that not the laws of England, but rather the application of those laws were to blame for their failure to accomplish the ostensible goal of the state: the harmonious mediation between the disparate elements of the society. In *Tom Jones*, for example, as Leo Damrosch notes, injustice is a matter of "particular abuses rather than a disturbance at the heart of things" (280). With the 1751 publication of *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* however, Fielding's most involved work on social reform, the gap between the law and the society it is meant to form and govern has widened. The question is no longer whether justice will be, as in the prologue to *The Coffee-House Politician*,

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[4] Plato rather regrets the impossibility of a visual apprehension of virtue. See *Phaedrus* 250a-d. But the misreading was common enough: See Battestin's note to this passage in the Wesleyan edition.

abused by "Vice, clothed with power" (*Works* 9.75), but instead whether "the Justices, on whom this whole Power devolves, [have] an Authority sufficient for the Purpose" (*Enquiry* 72). The simple act of imposture in the first case, where a malignant force wears the mask of a good office, is replaced in the second by a questioning of the very validity of the office as an active force of cohesion. The latter case is thus marked by societal upheaval, a paralyzing confusion of the social hierarchy, "an Alteration in this Order of People." The metaphor of clothing, of the veil and of the mask, is no longer adequate, for

> the Introduction of Trade . . . . hath indeed given *a new Face* to the whole Nation, hath in a great measure subverted the former state of Affairs, and hath almost totally changed the Manners, Customs, and Habits of the People, most especially of the lower Sort. The Narrowness of their Fortune is changed into Wealth; the Simplicity of their Manners into Craft; their Frugality into Luxury; their Humility into Pride, and their Subjection into Equality. (emphasis mine, 69-70)

What is lost is a balance between "the original and fundamental law of the kingdom, from whence all Powers are derived" (65) and the historical conditions to which this power must adapt itself: a balance between the fundamental and the contingent, upset by the shift from an economy grounded in the qualitative hierarchy based on land

ownership, to the quantitative "equalizing" power of money.[5] Just as capital tends to bathe its objects in the thin deprecating light of the same, so a society in the grips of what was widely taken to be trade's most pernicious effect, luxury, threatens the social order with a levelling mimesis.[6] Luxury, "infectious by Example," trickles down from the great, and the disruptive movement towards equality and sameness--according to the then popular mercantilist view[7]--destroys trade and undermines the social order. Just as "the Nobleman will emulate the Grandeur of a Prince," the Gentleman the Nobleman, and the Tradesman the Gentleman, so "the very Dregs of the People, who aspiring still to a Degree beyond that which belongs to them, and not being able by the Fruits of honest Labour to support the State which they affect," become subject to idleness, beggary, and crime (77).[8]

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[5] For example: "Whereas in the antient Tenures the principal Reservation was of personal Services from the inferior Tenants, the Rent being generally trifling, such as Hens, Capons, Roses, Spurs, Hawks, &c., afterwards the Avarice or Necessity of the Lords incited them to convert these for the most part into Money, which tended greatly to weaken the Power of the Lord, and to raise the Freedom and Independency of the Tenant" (Fielding, *Enquiry* 69).

[6] On the concept of luxury in the eighteenth see Sekora.

[7] Mercantilism, a crude and vicious theory of economics popular in the early part of the century, held that a favourable balance of trade demanded a cheap labour force, and that wages should be low enough to guarantee sufficient desperation to ensure that the labourers were always in need of work. Fielding was sympathetic to this notion. See Zirker's Introduction to his edition of the *Enquiry*, lxiii.

[8] The association of imitation with societal upheaval is not uncommon in the eighteenth century. In a discussion of the "anarchy" that followed the death of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, for example, Gibbon can casually observe that

Even Shaftesbury, who built his theory of the passions around the imitative power of sympathy, saw in it a dangerous potential. When sympathy works from above, as when a magistrate "with a kind sympathy entering into the concern of the people" (14) refrains from acting with the violence at his command, it is a force of social amelioration and unity; but when it functions from below, or rather, among equals, "One may with good reason call every passion panic" which is conveyed "by contact or sympathy." In such a state "looks are infectious . . . . and the disease is no sooner seen than caught" (13).[9] If mimesis is a force of cohesion when it is grounded in a stratified social order, it is little better than a plague on the social body when it becomes "levelled," as Johnson says in his essay on the novel, when it loses its relationship to some kind of transcendental term.

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the social hierarchy is broken by the mimetic faculty, where "the lords of the innumerable castles were less prone to obey, than to imitate their superiors" (3.146).

[9] John Mullan's discussion of this divided sympathy drew my attention to this passage. See pp. 26-9. But the distinction is not, as he suggests, simply a matter of ambiguity, so that for example, equals of the "polite society" can "sympathize" with each other while those of the "multitude" cannot. What a society of the vulgar masses threatens is, precisely, the overturning of the hierarchy on which the "polite society" depend. When the members of this upper tier bond in sympathy, they unite in support of the vertical structure that guarantees their very existence. The mimetics of the multitude is of a qualitatively different order than that of the "polite society." Although Fielding differs in no essential way from Shaftesbury in his valuing of such a stratified order, he is less optimistic about being able to defend against the "infection" of a levelled mimesis; thus in Fielding it is seen to travel up the social hierarchy itself, turning this uniting structure into a force of dissolution.

These are the same mimetic troubles that Fielding finds in the problems of appearance and exemplarity: a representation without a ground. Fielding sets for himself the task of averting this crisis.[10] In 1743 he can write "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," a cautiously optimistic set of "Methods" by which to penetrate "the Cunnings and Designs of Hypocrisy" (*Miscellanies* 1.178). But in 1749, with *Tom Jones*, only an ironic stance towards mimesis, and hence a shift in emphasis from representation to presentation, will be sufficient to avert the dangers of a levelled world of mere appearance. *Tom Jones* will be his most ambitious attempt to do this, but it is important to see where this attempt lies in relation to his other reflections on representation, both before and after.

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[10] James Thompson has made note of a crisis in Fielding's work as well, which he sees as a crisis of value. Arguing from the position of economic history, he maintains that the development of the capital economy produced "a crisis in the notion of value" (2), and that the novel, its dialectical opposite, "can be read as an ideological regrounding of intrinsic value" (21). *Tom Jones*, in particular, attempts to reinscribe cash and paper credit, and with it the new economic reality of trade and finance, into a "traditionally fixed, hierarchal (and agricultural) economy . . . . . , a transcendental relation, unaffected by the vicissitudes of time, accumulation, and profit" (133). That is, to quote Jameson, the novel invents along with other aesthetic objects "imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (79). That Fielding was conservative, even for his own day, in his acceptance of fixed social roles and class privilege and inequalities is well known, and Jameson's statement no doubt applies. Unity for Fielding, the horizon of his moral poetics, was to be harmonious only in the most abstract sense. Only inasmuch as Fielding is developing, around irony, a program of social action does his fiction escape at least the crudest accusations of aesthetic ideology.

II

In the Preface to *Joseph Andrews*, where "a dirty Fellow . . . descend[ing] from his Coach and Six," or "a wretched Family shivering" in the presence of "China Dishes on the Side-board, or any other affectation of Riches and Finery," (9) provides the quintessential example of affectation, ridicule exposes these mimetic pretensions. In the *Enquiry* too, affectation is tied to the threat that the social distinctions--distinctions that presumably allow society to function--might be effaced. But the immediacy of the threat in the *Enquiry*, an explicitly empirical and polemical tract, raises the stakes in this play of appearance. What in *Joseph Andrews* can be solved by "the Discovery of this Affectation," (8) the unmasking of the vain or the hypocritical, in the *Enquiry* calls for a new schema, one that can accommodate justice to "the new Face" of the people.

Amelia, Fielding's final novel, in many ways the study of legality and crime that one might expect from the desk of the newly appointed magistrate,[11] was published the same year as the *Enquiry* and likewise shows a qualitative break from the more sanguine attitude of the earlier works. Just as in the *Enquiry* it becomes a question of whether justice has "an Authority sufficient for the Purpose" (72), so in *Amelia* we

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[11] Fielding was appointed Magistrate for Westminster on 30 July 1748 and, according to Battestin, *Amelia* was "well under way" a year and a half later. In any case, *Amelia* and the *Enquiry* were composed at the same time, the former set aside in the autumn of 1750 for the drafting of the latter. See Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (497-98).

find that "the same Legislature which provides the Laws, doth not provide for the Execution of them" (19). The change from the attitude expressed in the earlier fiction is subtle but decisive. What was formerly a problem of appearance has become a problem of essence; what once threatened in the clothes of power now threatens from within power itself. The threat that corruption can act in the guise of legitimate power has become the threat that power cannot guarantee its own activity, that action itself requires a set of laws that cannot be found.

If the instrument by which the generalized law is to be applied to the particular case is not supplied by the law--a law of judgment, as it were--, the laws themselves seem no better. The "Secrets of the Prison-House" (*Amelia* 32) include the patent injustice of a legal system that can offer bail for a man who wrongfully accuses another of murder, while offering none for a woman who steals a loaf of bread out of necessity (34-5). But *Amelia* raises the stakes higher still, for, like all of Fielding's novels, it takes as its central motif the mediation, not only of law and its transgression, but of virtue and its relation to the "way of the world." If the belief that the language of human nature is, at bottom, legible to the "accurate and discerning Eye" (*Miscellanies* 1.161) finds a corollary in a law that is ultimately just in the hands of the discerning magistrate, so the calling into question of the inherent justice of the law likewise has a corollary in the more general realm of interpretation and

appearance. There is an infinite distance between a truth that, though it may be obscured, can always come to appearance, if only for those who have eyes to see it, and a truth that may or may not coincide with appearance, that may or may not always be beyond sight. Theology touches this divide at every point in its edifice, but the profane world strikes it only at moments of crisis. *Amelia* is an expression of precisely this crisis.

The crisis in *Amelia* is in a sense typical of the novel, inasmuch as it arises out of a problem of representation, and sets out to solve this problem by reuniting the alienated content of the novel with its form.[12] Lukács suggests that the novel resolves the "dissonance" between form and content with irony, where what is required of content "by the form is attained precisely when the author goes all the way, ruthlessly, towards exposing its absence" (72). Although strange to say of one of the most plot-driven novels ever

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[12] The notion that the novel arises out of a representational crisis and that it sets out to solve this crisis, was first formulated by Georg Lukács. He defines the novel as "the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given . . . yet which still thinks in terms of totality" (56). The formal imperative to totality, faced with the crisis of an alienated content, with "the refusal of the immanence of being to enter into [its given content,] empirical life," is condemned to failure and mere abstraction (70-1). For McKeon, the novel arises out of a "social and intellectual crisis" (22) that at once sunders the complimentary realms of truth and virtue, epistemology and morality, and, in doing so, subjects each to a representational dilemma: on the one hand how to represent truth in narrative, and on the other how to relate "the external social order . . . to the internal, moral state of its members" (20). See also Cascardi, who finds modern subjectivity caught in "a rigid separation of substance and form" (8), and responding with representation, novelistic and otherwise.

written, this is just what Fielding does in *Tom Jones*. Only by exposing the representation as precisely a representation, only by taking a step back into irony can Fielding begin to free himself from the mimetic difficulties that plague him.[13] The crisis that haunts *Amelia*, then--which marks the disintegration of the edifice built in *Tom Jones*--might be more properly that of irony itself; a crisis, that is, in the authority and ability of the benevolent sovereign of the "new Province of Writing" who declares himself, in the interest of his "Subjects" "at liberty to make what Laws I please" (*Tom Jones* 77). The problem is ultimately one of moral action, of "legislation," as it were, of action in the interest of the good of the community, and *Tom Jones* is diligent in its efforts to create, with respect to representation at least, a just state.

III

In *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding explains that the virtue of biographical history is that it abstracts from time and place, thus describing, as every student of Fielding knows, "not Men, but Manners; not an Individual, but a Species"

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[13] See McKeon on Fielding's exemplary use of irony, where a "narrative reflexiveness aims to enclose its object in a shell of subjective commentary. Its ideal and unstated function is simultaneously to demystify fiction . . . as illusion and to detoxify it, to negate its negation, to empower it by ostentatiously enacting, even announcing, its impotence to tell the real truth" (393). See also Hatfield.

(189). False historians, "Topographers or Chorographers" as Fielding calls them, agreeing in the time and place of an action, "widely differ in the Narrative of Facts" (186); refusing to abstract from the discrete historical events, they excuse themselves from the demands of generality and knowledge. The issue here can be referred ultimately to Locke. Without abstraction from what he calls "the circumstances of real Existence, as Time, Place, or any other concomitant *Idea*," without the activity of the mind in its production of "general Names," these would-be historians let their genius run wild with "particular things," where "every particular *Idea* that we take in, should have a particular Name," and names, like genius, "must be endless" (*Essay* 159). The "eternal Contradictions, occurring between two Topographers who undertake the History of the same Country" (*Joseph Andrews* 185) no doubt owes something to this endless naming. But unlike Locke, Fielding finds this singularity less in the things of the world than in the writers themselves; identical "Facts being set forth in a different Light," the singularity arises out of the "happy and fertile Invention" (186) that the "Topographer" brings to the world. In place of knowledge they produce no more than a show of what Fielding facetiously refers to as their "surprising Genius" (187). Singularity, the antithesis of knowledge for Locke and Fielding alike, becomes in Fielding a willful refusal to abstract and generalize.

The "general and noble Purposes" of the biographer who presents "not an Individual, but a Species" (189) are concentrated, precisely, in the elimination of this tendency. Fielding's example of a "Species" of character "taken from Life" is telling:

> I question not but several of my Readers will know the Lawyer in the Stage-Coach, the moment they hear his Voice . . . . He hath not indeed confined himself to one Profession, one Religion, or one Country; but when the first mean selfish Creature appeared on the human Stage, who made Self the Centre of the whole Creation . . . then was our Lawyer born. (189)

The Satanic allusion here is not an idle one. This "first mean selfish Creature," far from a version of the self-creating Satanic genius of romanticism, is the very emblem of unrepentant singularity. It is a common enough association to make it into one of Fielding's farces: "The devil," King Arthur muses in *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, "is happy that the whole creation / Can furnish out no simile to his fortune" (131). The worst romancers, as guilty of this singularity as the lawyer, "*carry the Genius far off*, ... Indeed, far out of the Sight of the Reader, '*Beyond the Realm of Chaos and old Night*'" (*Joseph Andrews* 188). The quotation, of course, is from *Paradise Lost*, and the defiant "shout that tore Hell's Concave, and beyond / Frighted the reign of *Chaos* and old Night" (*Paradise Lost* 1.542-43)--a shout that makes

its way across the realm of Chaos to earth where it is transformed into the Satanic whisper--is none other than the voice of the defiantly singular self.

The biographer enlists generality to cause those caught in this particularizing romance of the self "to contemplate their Deformity" in the mirror of the work, in "the Glass [held] to Thousands in their Closet that they may . . . endeavor to reduce it" (*Joseph Andrews* 189). This is the "general and noble Purpose" of moral fiction. No doubt the image, in line with Fielding's over-riding suspicion of appearance, rises up only to be shattered; the subject of ridicule finds itself represented, as in Johnson's notion of novelistic mimesis, but the image is presented in such a way that the reader is prompted to break the mimetic tie. Nevertheless, it is in seeing itself represented, set in a community of thousands, that the demonic consciousness is made to give up its isolation. Only when this isolation is broken, when the singular self is given a double in representation, can it leave the realm of appearance behind to enter the intrinsic realm of the good heart.

A similar mimetic economy plays itself out with the paralyzing "Equality" that Fielding finds at work in his *Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers*, which, in fact, is little more than singularity writ large. Thus the singular genius of the Topographer produces histories that merely "keep even Pace with Time" (*Tom Jones* 76), and as such are no better than "a Newspaper, which

consists of just the same Number of Words, whether there be any News in it or not," or, in a similar vein, "a Stage Coach, which performs constantly the same Course, empty as well as full" (75-6). And like singularity, sameness is made the object of negative representation. In an early play, *The Lottery*, the "just glass which shows you as you are," the "magnifying" mirror of farce, (*Works* 8.267) represents a fragment of the social and political whole that has broken through its proper bounds and filled the world with images of itself. The title refers to a method of stock purchase that was also, after a certain fashion, a lottery.[14] Tickets were sold and resold, with and without the stock, and this expanding circle of financial speculation threatens, in the play, to consume everything in its path. The singular trajectory of the allegorical names--"Mr. Stocks," "Whisk," "Lovemore"--, the clusters of plays on words that unfold the nuances of this narrowly circumscribed territory, all testify to a "magnified" world where, in the laying claim to the whole by the part, "the world is a lottery . . ., / When born, we're put in, when dead, we're drawn out" (296). Singularity for Fielding, when it expands and multiplies itself in the public sphere, becomes the pernicious equality of the same.

It would be wrong to confuse this with the more conventional use of extremity. In *Tom Thumb* for example, the absurd union of life and death allows Grizzle--in a similar

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[14] See Robert D. Hume for a detailed account (119).

gesture to the poles of human mortality--to run the ghost of Tom Thumb through with a sword. This is typical farce; but the "just glass" of farce makes into the very object of satire--that which satire seeks to represent and root out--the false claim to totality of what is merely the same. This claim sets it in a different, more profound order of absurdity. Like the demonic self, the same tends to imprint itself on the world, to set itself between the world and knowledge. In Fielding's poem *Of True Greatness* sameness and singularity meet in what can only be described as the obverse of Locke's endless particular names. "Greatness," of course, has its Satanic element. *Jonathan Wild*, Fielding's negative image of true greatness, makes no mistake about that: "Permit me to say," says Wild, "tho' the Idea may be somewhat coarse, I had rather stand on the Summit of a Dunghil than at the bottom of a Hill in Paradise" (*Miscellanies* 3.20). In *Of True Greatness*, this Wildian "greatness" interferes with the power to name: those who naively pay homage to individualistic greatness "think a thousand Things the same, / And give contending Images one Name," (*Miscellanies* 1.19): the world is on its way to being reduced to the same by a single irreducible act of naming.

The "new Province of Writing" is set up to annihilate this sameness and singularity. The "Laws" of Fielding's Province are designed to intervene in it, to pass judgment, and to offer this judgment as the horizon of moral fiction. Fielding's allegory of narrative presentation in Book Eleven,

chapter nine of *Tom Jones*--his most concentrated presentation of the role of the narrator in the work of representation--is in fact an allegory, precisely, of this project.

IV

The better part of what remains of this chapter will be dedicated to the implications of this allegory, and so I would like to begin by quoting it at length:

> Our Pen . . . shall imitate the Expedition which it describes, and our History shall keep Pace with the Travellers who are its Subject. Good Writers will indeed do well to imitate the ingenious Traveller in this Instance, who always proportions his Stay at any Place, to the Beauties, Elegances, and Curiosities, which it affords. At *Eshur*, at *Stowe*, at *Wilton*, at *Eastbury*, and at *Prior's Park*, Days are too short for the ravished Imagination; while we admire the wondrous Power of Art in improving Nature. In some of these, Art chiefly engages our Imagination; in others, Nature and Art contend for our Applause; but in the last, the former seems to triumph. Here Nature appears in her richest Attire, and Art, dressed with modestest Simplicity, attends her benignant Mistress. Here Nature indeed pours forth the choicest Treasures which she hath

> lavished on this World; and here Human Nature presents you with an Object which can be exceeded only in the other.
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> The same Taste . . . which luxuriously riots in these elegant Scenes, can be amused with Objects of far inferior Note. The Woods, the Rivers, the Lawns of Devon and of Dorset, attract the Eye of the ingenious Traveller, and retard his Pace, which Delay he afterwards compensates by swiftly scouring over the gloomy Heath of *Bagshot* . . . . Not so travels the Money-meditating Tradesman, the sagacious Justice, the dignified Doctor, the warm-clad Grazier, with all the numerous Offspring of Wealth and Dulness. On they jogg, with equal Pace, through the verdant Meadows or over the barren Heath, their Horses measuring four Miles and a half *per* Hour with the utmost Exactness; the Eyes of the Beast and of his Master being alike directed forwards, and employed in contemplating the same Objects in the same manner. With equal Rapture the good Rider surveys the proudest Boasts of the Architect, and those fair Buildings . . . where heaps of Bricks are piled up as a Kind of Monument, to shew that Heaps of Money have been piled there before. (612-14)

The latter half of this allegory presents some familiar tropes. Just as in the *Enquiry*, where trade produces a plague

of equalization, so here, money and its "Offspring" threaten to upset the rule of judgment by which one scene is valued above another. In an image that will return throughout this study, in the sentimental and especially the Gothic novels, the distinction between the human and, for lack of a better word, the inhuman is blurred. The eye of the "Master" is reduced to the creaturely gaze of the beast. Humanity and nature are united as they were before the Fall, but now it is under the auspices of "Money," whose most seductive whisper promises, above all things, equality. But it is the union itself more than the medium that is essential here; for what Fielding presents, against this creatureliness, is a humanistic vision, a vision of the possibilities of consciousness. The willful refusal to abstract from the particular that characterizes the demonic is nothing less than a dehumanization of the self, levelling it with an animal nature that is unable to raise itself above the particular. Time and space here, measuring out the "equal Pace" of the traveller, appears in its pure, unabstracted form.

The transcendence of this creaturely enslavement to the particular is complex. Inasmuch as the narrative keeps pace with its objects, it allows itself to be determined by its content. Although this is, to a certain extent, a rhetorical illusion arising out of the allegorical nature of the passage, Fielding presents here a resolution of the dichotomy between form and content, between appearance and essence,

and, in the "new Province of Writing" at least, between law and application. That this resolution, the sought for horizon of a moral literature, takes place under the auspices of aesthetic judgment--that "Taste" and "Beauty" are the active principles in the interruption of the banal sameness of the creaturely gaze--is very much in line with a tradition of aesthetic theory that runs the full length of the century, from Shaftesbury to Kant. For the former, and for Fielding, the experience of beauty is the immediate apprehension of the whole, which is, in turn, taken as a good in itself.[15] For Shaftesbury, then, good action arises, not out of the rational application of principle, but rather from a moral

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[15] The violence inherent in generality, which arises with its iterability, its "operations," will be set aside in my discussion of *Tom Jones*; in part because this territory has been well mapped over the past decade, and in part because the turn that takes place in *Amelia*, the reconceptualization of the event, can be seen best in light of the conceptualization which it replaces: one which, if it has violent effects--Fielding's conservative and oppressive notions of social hierarchy, to choose a rather mundane example, if they are not essential to this conceptualization, are certainly consistent with it--they stand outside its own idea of its program. Seen in this light, the ubiquitous presence of the prison-house in *Amelia* is an allegory of the violent constraints of a program of human community that, striving for universality, has become a rigid system of oppression. Giorgio Agamben's discussion of Tiananmen Square in his *The Coming Community* is perhaps the most economical and illuminating treatment of what is at stake in this problem of generality and violence. In the same tradition of post-structural political theory, see Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*. John Bender's Foucaudian readings of eighteenth-century narrative techniques in *Imagining the Penitentiary* confront this violence on cultural lines. See also Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, as well as Michael Rosenblum's polemic against what he takes to be a tendency in cultural criticism--he singles out Bender and Armstrong--to oversimplify the generalizing drive for a "frame of reference," and to read it uncritically as an imprisoning authoritarian gesture (151).

sensibility analogous to taste. The Third Dialogue of Berkeley's *Alciphron* presents Shaftesbury's position with a succinctness that eluded Shaftesbury himself:

> A man needs no arguments to make him discern and approve what is beautiful; it strikes at first sight, and attracts without reason. And as this beauty is found in the shape and form of corporeal things, so also is there analogous to it a beauty of another kind, an order, a symmetry, and comeliness, in the moral world. (Berkeley 3.117)

Working loosely from Platonic notions of beauty, Shaftesbury brings ethics and aesthetics together in a way that in fact transcends simple analogy; the "symmetry and order, on which beauty depends" is one and the same with the unity of the moral world:

> Will it not be found . . . above all 'that what is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable, is true; and what is at once both beautiful and true, is, of consequence, agreeable and good?' (267-68)

It is, in any case, "by virtue of this moral or interior sense" that the "several distinct parts and members" of society, the various "bodies politic . . . are held together" (Berkeley 117).[16]

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[16] For Kant, who makes of aesthetic judgment a kind of bridge between cognitive and moral judgment, the political dimension, if it is more abstract, is no less explicit: "we compare our judgment not so much with the actual as with the merely possible judgments of others, and thus put ourselves in the position of everyone else" (*Judgment* 294). For a

Hence, in Fielding, when aesthetic judgment breaks in upon sameness, it does so as a unifying act. The "instinctive understanding . . . of Right and Wrong" (Kermode 69) intervenes, and it leaves plot, unified and complete, behind as its mark. Sameness, being merely a projection of singularity, is at best an illusion of such a unity. But the unity of plot, which projects itself backwards from the denouement, resonates in the individual narratorial judgments that turn mere sequence into progress;[17] the individual moments of judgment, interrupting the continuum of the same, impress unity, from without, onto the threatening particularity of history and time. Tom Jones' journey of exile and return may be, ultimately, the journey towards the comic reunion of Tom and his proper place in the world, a recognition that brings the virtuous individual and the social order together. But this union, which is ultimately a moral union, takes place equally in the interstices of the narrative.

> The World may indeed be considered as a vast Machine, in which the great Wheels are originally set in Motion by those which are very Minute, and

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thorough discussion of the political implications of this position, what Kant calls, with Shaftesbury, the *Sensus Communis*, see Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*.

[17] See Trimpi, who takes this aspect of plot as a general literary condition: "The cognitive/judicative relation of individual to universal . . . is articulated in the finished narrative by the structural relation of the particular incident to the total action" (58).

> almost imperceptible to any but the strongest Eyes. (*Tom Jones* 225)

The "greatest Events are produced by a nice Train of little Circumstances" (916), and it is the task of judgment to unveil them in light of this ultimately moral "greatness."

In a reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*, Paul Ricoeur goes some way towards clarifying the nature of this judgment. What he calls "emplotment"--the subjection of time and its contingencies to "the requirements of necessity or probability governing succession," the subjection of the actual and particular to the possible and general (39-40)--combines

> two temporal dimensions, one chronological and the other not. The former constitutes the episodic dimension of narrative. It characterizes the story insofar as it is made up of events. The second is the configurational dimension properly speaking, thanks to which plot transforms the event into a story. This configurational act consists of 'grasping together' the detailed actions . . . . It draws from the manifold of events the unity of one temporal whole.

This act, moreover, is closely tied to aesthetic judgment. "I cannot overestimate the kinship between this 'grasping together,' proper to the configurational act, and what Kant has to say about the operation of judging. . . . The kinship is greater still with the reflective judgment" (66). But,

Ricoeur continues, the narrative act is fully realized only "when it is restored to the time of action and of suffering" (70), to the time of contingency; this time, the time of the unprecedented event, is reached in the reader. Thus, "if emplotment can be described as an act of judgment and of the productive imagination, it is so insofar as this act is the joint work of the text and the reader" (76). Irvin Ehrenpreis has found this "productive" social tendency in *Tom Jones*, where "the novelist can be said to employ his whole story as a device for teaching the reader to act with prudence in arriving at moral judgments" (50).[18] If Ricoeur articulates, with uncanny precision, the program of Fielding's moral fiction as it stands in *Tom Jones*, it is because he clings--Heideggerian influences notwithstanding--to the Enlightenment nostalgia for the whole that informs what is arguably the most perfect plot in English fiction.

If I am covering some well-travelled ground in this chapter--discussing Fielding in terms of judgment and morality--it is only to show, as clearly as possible, how *Tom Jones* functions within this paradigm in order to set the stage for Fielding's turn away from this nostalgia in *Amelia*. What will make the difference for Fielding is a half-perceived sense that the event itself--even that of judgment-

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[18] Leo Braudy, similarly, is careful to point out that "Fielding's judge works in the court of equity, upholding the importance of specific situations and the individual nature of the case before him" (*Narrative Form* 92). See also Hunter, *Occasional Form* 20; Alter 21; Iser 31; Lynch 599; McKenzie 149; etc. The challenge, in fact, would be to find a serious work on Fielding that does not make a statement to this effect.

-interrupts the progress of what Ricouer calls "threefold mimesis," the movement from the manifold of history, through the organizing work of emplotment, to the activity of an ethical subject.

V

It still remains to show just how judgment, and more importantly the judging subject, is situated in Fielding. When he discusses judgment itself in Book 2 of *Tom Jones*, he is at pains to show that it is free from any taint of demonic singularity. Like Augustine's virtuous free will that chooses to subject itself to the eternal law, so judgment for Fielding unites, in considerably more secular terms, creative activity with passive discovery. If "Invention and Judgment," are "Qualifications . . . in a high Degree necessary to this Order of Historians," the former, to which the latter is intimately connected, is in no way a form of inveterate "genius." Judgment is that power of the mind that distinguishes the "essential Differences" between things, while true invention is a "sagacious Penetration into the true Essence of all the Objects of our Contemplation." These two activities are, in fact, two aspects of a single activity, "for how can we be said to have discovered the true Essence of two Things," asks Fielding, "without discerning their Differences?" (*Tom Jones* 490-91). The freedom of

invention and judgment then, is a freedom to defer to a higher law not unlike what Locke meant when he declared that "*by the Right he has of Preserving all Mankind*, and doing all reasonable things he can in order to that end . . . . *every one has the Executive Power* of the Law of Nature" (*Two Treatises* 274-5). And yet, "Concerning each" of these "Powers of the Mind," he warns, "many seem to have fallen into very great Errors,"

> for by Invention . . . is generally understood a creative Faculty; which would indeed prove most Romance-Writers to have the highest Pretensions to it; whereas by Invention is really meant no more, (and so the Word signifies) than Discovery, or finding out. (*Tom Jones* 490-91)

Thus invention and its obverse, judgment, are not to be confused with the demonic activities of romance writers, who cut themselves off entirely from the support of the natural order in the celebration of their own work. Judgment is not to subject itself to the law of the particular: a law that must include, alongside the "creative Faculty," the indiscriminate presentation of everything as if all facts were equal.

The demonic force of singularity flourishes in the novelistic world, in this world from which the divine presence, the transcendental guarantee of the play of mimesis, has retreated, leaving form sundered from content and appearance divided from essence. The judging subject,

presented in the narratorial presence, steps into this space. When Anna Barbauld, for example, takes on the problem of poetic justice in the novel in her essay "On the Origin and Progress of Novel Writing," she does not take it, as Dennis does, to be an imperfect "Representation of the Justice of the Almighty" (2.21), but rather the product of this authorial presence. Her example is *Tom Jones*. The "chance medley . . . of unconnected scenes" that is real life is submitted to the "*whole*, in which the fates and fortunes of the personages are brought to a conclusion, agreeably to the author's own preconceived idea." The reader

> has no doubt but that his parents will be discovered in due time; he has no doubt but that his love for *Sophia* will be rewarded . . . ; he has no doubt of the constancy of that young lady, or of their entire happiness after marriage. And why does he foresee all this? Not from the real tendencies of things, but from what he has discovered of the author's intentions. (55-7)[19]

If "The great Design of Arts is to restore the Decays that happen'd to human Nature by the Fall, by restoring Order" (Dennis 1.336), the order of the novel--certainly a more secular and social order--emanates from this judging subject.

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[19] See also Ehrenpreis: if "during the course of the history we can rarely feel sure of our ground when we judge . . . a particular person," with "the narrator . . .we enjoy precisely the opposite relation." Thus he can conclude with respect to *Tom Jones*, "the truth of the story depends on the reality of the narrator," whose "interventions," breaking into the linear progress of the narrative, underwrite the fiction and guard it from the dangers of romance (10-12).

But, "sagacious Penetration into the true Essence of all the Objects of our Contemplation" (*Tom Jones* 490) notwithstanding, the power of this subject to ground representation lies less in its confrontation with the world--or rather, with its representations--than in its ability to act. The integration of form and content in Fielding's allegory of writing, for example, depends not on the "chance medley . . . of unconnected scenes" (Barbauld, "Origin" 55), but rather on a content already determined by the narrative form, by the judgment that relates it to the whole. The tautology is at once ironic and an indication of a certain holism: for this tight circle of form and content cancels itself out only in order to illuminate the unifying activity that brought it about. Only authorial interruption, from outside of the string of narrative contingencies, only a narratorial act can bring form and content together. To the detriment of the representation itself, Fielding's ironic narratorial presence offers its own activity as exemplary. The perfect unity of the plot of *Tom Jones* is nothing more than a sign of this exemplary consciousness; not a representation, but the source, the presentation, in judgment, of the represented order.

If, says Paul de Man,

> irony is indeed the determining and organizing principle of the novel's form . . . . this form can have nothing in common with the homogeneous, organic form of nature: it is founded on an act of

> consciousness, not on the imitation of a natural object. (*Blindness* 56)

If this is true of the novel generally, it is particularly true of Fielding. It is precisely his irony, his formal privileging of the narratorial act over the product that sets him apart from his would-be rival Richardson. Johnson's distinction between the "characters of nature" of Richardson on the one hand, and "characters only of manners" of Fielding on the other is telling. The former may be, as Johnson claims, a more complete representation of "the recesses of the human heart" (Boswell 389), but then, as we know, Johnson was not sympathetic to the novel which he found immoral precisely by virtue of its mimetic activities. It is hardly surprising that he should prefer a writer who, by his estimation at least, partook of an economy of exemplarity in the old style; or rather, as Boswell says, encourages "a strained and rarely possible virtue" (389). Johnson's valuation of Richardson over Fielding is testimony to his neoclassical disposition, which in many ways was antithetical, if not to the novelistic program, then to the novelistic cosmos and its profound sense of a world limited by its temporality.

Fielding was, of course, no enemy to neoclassicism; but his notion of art and of nature, particularly in his novels, grew increasingly distant from neoclassical ideals. Art and nature are joined in neoclassical criticism under the auspices of a transhistorical humanity, whose work, however

inflected by the times, by mere convention, continues to participate in the same unified order. Though the fashions of expression may change, truth, and its relation to humanity, remains the same. In its satirical phase, neoclassicism prefers, as Howard Weinbrot has shown, a Juvenalian outsider who stands apart from and uncorrupted by his subject, hearkening back to an earlier and more humane dispensation.[20] The leaden age may sin against humanity, but humanity looks on not so much from the past as from outside of history: continuity and sameness stand above the monstrous productions of circumstance. The privileged genres derive their strength from their supposed connection with a transhistorical natural order.

But in Fielding, transcendence is not to be found in a transhistorical humanity; it is rather in the judgment of the individual. This is why, in his allegory of writing, nature, making a place for action, is reduced nearly to the status of a code, a cipher for the mediation of humanity and its social form in second nature. Exiled from a transhistorical nature by its historicity, humanity is victorious over time and its contingencies only in what McKeon calls the "triumph of the creative human mind" (*Origins* 418). While "in Richardson," McKeon continues "the triumphant mind is that of the protagonist; in Fielding it is that of the author" (419). It

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[20] See his essay on Dryden's "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satyr" in *Eighteenth-Century Satire* where he takes Dryden's preference for Juvenal over Persius and Horace--for whom the satirist is "'dipt in the same [illicit] Acts' of his Monarch"--as a defining moment for eighteenth century satire.

is in this light that we should look at Johnson's distinction. In Richardson this creative mind finds itself entangled in the narrative itself, which means that the mind must express itself in the agon of time; in Fielding the creative mind stands above narrative, for the autonomy for which the Richardsonian hero seeks expression is, in Fielding, expressed in the very existence of the text itself. A moral principle is implicitly at work here, for the text is an expression of the existence of an active subject.[21] More to the point, Fielding presents consciousness, while Richardson represents it. The dangers of appearance, which Richardson no doubt shared to a certain extent, are avoided by Fieldingesque irony in a way they could never have been in Richardson's earnest prose.

But what remains, in the representations themselves, in Fielding's "characters of manners," is not without a trace of this "victorious human consciousness." There is something in the comic character itself that, as Walter Benjamin says, presents, in "its exclusive character trait,"

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[21] In this respect at least, the moment of ironic affirmation is foreseen in Aristotle's ethics. It appears in a discussion of debt, beginning with the question as to why the benefactor has more love for the beneficiary than the latter has for the former. Rejecting the economic motive--that being owed is more desirable than owing--Aristotle puts forth an ontological one:

> The position of the benefactor . . . resembles that of an artist; the recipient of his bounty is his handiwork, and he therefore loves him more than his handiwork loves its maker. The reason of this is that all things desire and love existence; but we exist in activity, since we exist by living and doing; and in a sense one who has made something exists actively, so he loves his handiwork because he loves existence. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1167b-68a).

> the utmost development of its individuality . . . . The character trait . . . . is the sun of individuality in the colorless (anonymous) sky of man, which casts the shadow of the comic action. (*Reflections* 310-11)

The unity of the comic action, Benjamin implies, what in Fielding is the very sign of the "triumph" of narratorial consciousness, is refracted in the character of manners. The "anonymous" continuum of nature, against which this triumph is won, is no more than the foil for the light of judgment.

But in *Amelia*, Fielding's next and last novel, everything changes. In some ways it is the obverse of *Tom Jones* and of the victory that is registered there. The characters, similarly tied to the narrator, appear not as concentrated signs of the power of judgment, but rather as fragments of a broken consciousness. The singular events that are united to the whole in *Tom Jones* are, in *Amelia*, utterly indigestible so that the events themselves seem to take on the role of framing and organizing the narrative. There is nothing premeditated in this change; it would seem rather to have developed under the pressure of the victory itself, as if consciousness were not able to bear the burden of judgment for too long without stumbling. The opening chapter of *Amelia*, in any case, the "Exordium," contains what is perhaps the most lucid presentation of Fielding's moral mimetics:

> Life may as properly be called an Art as any other; and the great Incidents in it are no more to be

> considered as mere Accidents, than the several Members of a fine Statue, or a noble Poem. The Critics in all these are not content with seeing any Thing to be great, without knowing why and how it came to be so. By examining carefully the several Gradations which conduce to bring every Model to Perfection, we learn truly to know that Science in which the Model is formed: as Histories of this Kind, therefore, may properly be called Models of HUMAN LIFE; so by observing minutely the several Incidents which tend to the Catastrophe or Completion of the whole, and the minute Causes whence those Incidents are produced, we shall best be instructed in this most useful of Arts, which I call the ART OF LIFE. (17)

Not the model, but the production of the model, not the thing, but the art of the thing, this is what is offered up for imitation in Fielding's moral fiction. But in *Amelia*, regardless of what Fielding's "Exordium" says, the "several Incidents" take on a less than conciliatory role in the face of the "Catastrophe" and the judgment that is to unite them; the incidents step into the place of narrative intervention, and sentimentality, with its fascination with virtuous impotence and the minute, comes to replace judgment. Lukács best shows what is at stake here: the "minute causes, if they are not to destroy the whole, must be inserted into it by means which transcend their mere presence" (*Theory* 76); this

destruction plays itself out in *Amelia*. The popular literatures that follow it, inheriting the form if not the content of a moral literature, will map out a new, rather less triumphant, relationship with the generality that Fielding sets so clearly at the moral horizon of literary mimesis.

Chapter Two:
Amelia and the Failure of Fiction

I

"'My situation would now have been a Paradise,'" Booth tells Miss Mathews in the narrative that, from inside the prison walls, tells the tale of his fall. Having finally declared his love to Amelia, Booth tells of having unburdened his heart to her in terms that might very well stand alongside the epigrams on the happiness of unity that open the novel: "'How rich would be my Cup,'" Booth mourns to Amelia, "'was it not for one poisonous Drop, which imbitters the whole'" (*Amelia* 74).[1] Like a demonic symbol, in which the whole is present in the particular only by virtue of a creeping contagion, a Satanic reversal of the neo-Platonic theory of immanence and reversion, the particular turns the comic drive for unity into a lament. The lament is an ethical one, for if, as Fielding declares in the Exordium to *Amelia*, the "ART OF LIFE" bids us attend to the "several Incidents which tend

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[1] Battestin provides the following translations of the epigrams for the Wesleyan edition of *Amelia*: "Thrice happy and more are they whom an unbroken bond unites" (Horace, *Odes* 1.13.17-18); "A Man cannot possess anything that is better than a good Woman, nor any thing that is worse than a bad one" (Simonides, *Iambics* 3; translation from Addison, *Spectator* 209). The issues of marriage, the feminine and unity are of interest in themselves. I will return to this relationship below.

to the . . . Completion of the whole," (17) there is, nevertheless,

> nothing more difficult than to lay down any fixed and certain Rules for Happiness . . . . There is sometimes a little Speck of Black in the brightest and gayest Colours of Fortune, which contaminates and deadens the Whole. (161)

If there is no narrative without loss, then this poisonous speck might indeed be a figure of narrative origin itself. That narrative requires a breach of some kind for its very existence was not lost on Fielding. When Mrs. Bennett finishes with her "prefaces," she begins her tale thus:

> 'During the first Part of my Life, even till I reached my Sixteenth Year, I can recollect nothing to relate to you. All was one long serene Day, in looking back upon which, as when we cast our Eyes on a calm Sea, no Object arises to my View. All appears one Scene of Happiness and Tranquillity. . . . On the Day, then, when I became sixteen Years old, must I begin my History; for on that Day, I first tasted the Bitterness of Sorrow.' (268)

Hume, writing nearly contemporaneously, expresses a similar sentiment:

> nothing can furnish to the poet a variety of scenes, and incidents, and sentiments, except distress, terror, or anxiety. Complete joy and

> satisfaction is attended with security, and leaves no further room for action. (*Essays* 220n)

Plot then, which imposes order on a set of particular incidents, referring them to a single unified action, depends for its existence on an initial disruption of unity. This "contamination" of the whole, in fact, is a figure of narrative origin in a double sense: on the one hand, it is Hume's "distress," the "transgression" that Tzvetan Todorov speaks of, a crime that must be brought back, in narrative, under the subjection of the "law";[2] and on the other hand it is a condensed image of the narrator himself who, no longer supreme above time and its circumstances, is dismembered and scattered across his "Province," now populated with refracted images of his former powers. From this indelible mark, no longer readily subsumed in the economy of ironic creative activity, *Amelia* will produce two related moments: a mechanical repetition, a doubling that, in the space opened up by an uncertain narrative authority, insinuates itself into the mimetic economy of the novel;[3] and sentiment which,

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[2] See Todorov, *The Fantastic*: "At the start of the narrative, there is always a stable situation . . . . Subsequently, something occurs which introduces a disequilibrium (or one might say, a negative equilibrium)" (163). To a greater or lesser degree this constitutes "a transgression of the law . . . . , a break in the pre-established rules" (166). See also Brooks, where narrative arises out of a usurpation, "an infraction of order" (*Reading* 26).

[3] Jonathan Lamb notes, for example, that there is something in *Amelia* working against the unifying power of representation in plot, something that "impedes its working out as a probable train of circumstances, and which traps characters and story alike in cycles of repetition, as if neither were capable of learning from experience" (254).

rejecting narrative, will turn its attentions to the enigmatic stasis of an unresolved and unmourned "distress." Quite as much as irony, at the ill-defined limit of which they appear, these two moments are the legacy of eighteenth-century narrative.

II

The purpose of moral fiction, in *Tom Jones* at least, is the translation of event into event: at once to set up a "true" causal relationship between events and, what is the same thing, to turn representation into action: that is, to turn literary mimesis into moral virtue. The accidents of time are shored up, not with a transhistorical perspective that recuperates historical contingency, but rather at the level of the event, with judgment. The task at hand is to bring the particular into contact with the whole, with its unity in the good, so that individual action becomes a kind of political action, an activity with and for the community. On the level of character this is achieved by the generalizing work of the authorial mind. On the level of narrative, more important because of its more authentic, or at least more obvious, engagement with time, the "minute, and almost imperceptible" (*Tom Jones* 225) cogs in the machine of history, the "little Circumstances" are brought into contact with "the greatest Events" (916). The messianic tone here is not entirely

accidental, for what is at stake, finally, is a "Christian Society" on earth, an admittedly impossible but nevertheless necessary horizon for the activity of the virtuous citizen (*Amelia* 375). What in the case of character seems to be an essentially epistemological endeavor, the subsumption of the particular under the general term, appears on the level of narrative as an act of aesthetic and moral judgment. This is not entirely the case of course, since character, inasmuch as it expresses a purified individuality in the character trait, is a projection of an autonomous active consciousness. In and by this consciousness, under cover of irony, the novel attempts to free itself from the deceptions of mimesis by presenting, instead, that which precedes it in judgment. Ostensibly outside of mimesis, judgment nevertheless, somehow, becomes an exemplary act. Thus Fielding preserves a hierarchical mimetic system from the sameness that threatens to subject narrative to the creaturely "pace" of the "Offspring of Wealth and Dulness" (*Tom Jones* 615). Time is not a sequence, a chain of circumstances, but a moment of action, an intervention that binds these circumstances into a whole.

If *Tom Jones* is the fullest realization of Fielding's victory over time by narratorial presence, the retreat of the narrator in *Amelia* marks a reemergence of circumstance from under the benevolent laws that govern the "new Province of Writing." A new dispensation has dawned in *Amelia*, where although the narrator claims knowledge of the laws of the

world, it is, unlike that of *Tom Jones*, "a world he never made" (Coolidge 163).[4] If in *Tom Jones* the author, on occasion, addresses the reader to give her misleading information--such as his repeated suggestion that Tom is to find his end on the gallows--in *Amelia*, more often than not, judgment itself seems to be called into question, and with it the narrator's ability as a lawmaker. Thus, when Miss Mathews, flattering Booth, questions whether he "'ever had an Equal,'" the narrator proposes to break off the chapter, to

> make a gap in our History, to give him [the critical Reader] an Opportunity of accurately considering whether . . . we have in this Place maintained or deviated from that strict Adherence to universal Truth which we profess above all other Historians. (73)

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[4] The differences between *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* might conceivably be reduced to a difference in their respective relationships to time, a difference that runs parallel to the two main conceptual frameworks by which, according to Pocock, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England sought to order its consciousness of public time. These two orders--which spanned across the social and political fields--are arranged around continuity and contingency respectively. But in each case what is at stake is "the capacity to act in response to contingency," to act, that is, in the interest of the public good, the good of the whole, in the face of the unforeseen events of mere fortune:

> When time is in the dimension of continuity, the institutional structure is seen as successfully creating its own time . . . . When time is in the dimension of contingency, the structure is seen as striving to maintain itself in a time not created by it, but rather given to it by some agency, purposive or purposeless, not yet defined. (*Virtue* 93-4)

Amelia finds itself in the latter situation.

In *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding had invoked a familiar metaphor to account for these "vacant Pages" between his chapters and books. They are to serve as "Stages, where, in long Journeys, the Traveller stays some time to repose himself, and consider of what he hath seen" (89-90). They are moments set aside for judgment, for no more than the writer should copy the "Money-meditating Tradesman . . . . , measuring four Miles and a half *per* Hour with the utmost Exactness" (*Tom Jones* 615) should the reader

> travel through these Pages too fast: for if he doth, he may probably miss the seeing some curious Productions of Nature which will be observed by a slower and more accurate Reader. (*Joseph Andrews* 90)

But if in *Joseph Andrews* the reader pauses to reflect on the text, and in *Tom Jones* the narrator pauses to reflect on the event, in *Amelia* the reader is invited to pause in judgment on the narrator; in fact, to pass judgment on his judgment, his ability to follow through on his contract, sovereign to subject, to subsume the particular in the universal state that is the "new Province of Writing." The pause here does not reverberate in the stillness of reflection as it does in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, but rather marks a distinct limit to reflection; it marks a space, which will appear under different guises in *Amelia*, that stands outside of the sovereign territory of the active and organizing subject.

III

The plot of *Amelia*, such as it is, is carried forward by two related themes: on the one hand there is the lascivious pursuit of virtue--embodied in Amelia--, a dichotomy between virtue and the way of the world; and on the other the space between appearance and essence, social position and merit, a schism that cuts its way across Booth many times over--from his wrongful belief in the "reigning passion" which blinds him to real virtue, to his guilelessness, to his own alienation from the powers that be. The trouble begins with the Booths' expulsion from the pastoral retreat of Harrison's farm, from a time outside of narrative in which, says Booth,

> nothing, I think, remarkable happened; the History of one Day would, indeed, be the History of the whole Year . . . . [T]he whole was one continued Series of Love, Health, and Tranquillity. (146-47)

Fleeing to London, they lodge at the house of Mrs. Ellison, who turns out to be a procuress for the nefarious and nameless "Noble Lord." Hardly has Amelia escaped his grasp with the aid of Mrs. Bennet when Booth's former army companion Colonel James, who shares the Noble Lord's desires, invites Amelia to a masquerade. Disguised as Amelia, Mrs. Bennet, now Mrs. Atkinson, fishing for a promotion for her husband, give the Noble Lord enough encouragement to continue the chase. He enlists the aid of Captain Trent who, like

James, knows Booth from Gibraltar, and who swiftly makes himself one of the guileless Booth's many creditors. Colonel James, beginning to lose hope in any immediate possession of Amelia, turns his thoughts back to Miss Mathews, whose immoderate affection for Booth had lured the latter, at his nadir in prison, into infidelity. Hating Booth for his successes with the ladies, James employs a "pimp" to watch Miss Mathews' house for signs of Booth. Booth appears, obeying Miss Mathews command that he visit her for fear that she tell Amelia of their dalliance, and the pimp, who is also in the pay of Captain Trent--who has been enjoined to take Booth out of the way so that the Noble Lord can lay siege to Amelia without fear of interruption--promptly has Booth arrested.

Booth finds himself once again in prison with one Robinson, who he had met on a previous tour. Recognizing Booth, Robinson makes what he believes to be a death-bed confession to Dr. Harrison that unfolds the treachery of Amelia's sister, who had swindled Amelia out of her fortune. Robinson's confession comes on the heels of another death-bed confession--neither, it turns out, are followed very closely by death--Atkinson's, who, distraught over the fight prompted by his wife's machinations at the masquerade, tearfully returns Amelia her portrait, which he admits to having stolen years before. This very portrait, the image of virtue itself, does to Robinson what the original could not accomplish with either of Amelia's suitors: he is struck suddenly with his

own guilt, and, having been wounded during his arrest, fearing death he confesses all. The hidden thread, Booth's blindness to the reality of good action, is cleared up unceremoniously: he is converted in the same prison by a book of Barrow's sermons.

Even a thumb-nail sketch such as this, beginning with Booth's release from prison and ignoring the subtler lines of the plot as well as the long segments full of incidents well outside of the narrative line, uncovers two distinct kinds of events. Up to and including Booth's final imprisonment, error and intrigue hold sway. Plot is, for a substantial portion of the novel, the by-product of James and the Noble Lord plotting the downfall of virtue. Virtue, antithetical to the program of deceit, interpretation, and disclosure that drives the plot, is waylaid by the very program of the narrative. Motivation here is clear, and the circumstantial, as it does in *Tom Jones*, acquires the aura of necessity. But with Booth's final imprisonment and the reappearance of Robinson, intrigue falls away to make room for the immediacy of the double conversion of Robinson and Booth. If the suddenness of Booth's conversion needs no amplification, Robinson's account of his conversion by the image of virtue does not spare added indications of its immediacy.[5] "Struck" by the image of

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[5] See Eric Rothstein on this "implausible" ending, which he sees working against the moral lesson of prudence that Fielding announces in the preface to be the didactic aim of the novel. If "Prudence depends on prediction, and prediction, on probabilities," then this prudence "seems in part to be mocked by a nearly miraculous conclusion" (*Systems* 202-203). On doubled events more generally in *Amelia* see Castle's comments on the "unmotivated occurrence" (*Masquerade*

Amelia, he shows his "Surprize"; on hearing her name, his "Guilt immediately flew" to his face at the "sudden Shock" of this revelation (516-17). If the portrait has made it to the pawn shop by ordinary narrative means, its effect on Robinson is as random and unexpected as Booth's conversion by Barrow--both conclusive and both unbidden; one is the reflection or double of the other.[6] The good arrives in this double conclusion from outside of the mere continuum of events, just as it does throughout Fielding's fiction, with one difference: it is now divorced from the narratorial intervention that had, in *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, underwritten it with ironic self-reflection. Immediacy is no longer the province of narratorial relevance; on the contrary, narrative virtuosity falls substantially short here. Judgment, which isolates events only in order to relate them to the whole, falls silent at the close of *Amelia*.

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235) of the second masquerade, which seems to have no formal function except as a double of the first. But, she notes, it does mark a certain fold in the narrative. Her description of this effect is telling: "Like the *deus ex machina* in classical dramaturgy, it is miraculously responsible for a proliferation of significant, ultimately euphoric incidents" (245). Compare these doubles, their effects and their relations, with the "coherence of relations of similarity," between "analogous 'episodes,'" the product of Fielding's "authorial intrusions," that McKeon finds in *Joseph Andrews* (*Origins* 405-6).

[6] As Alison Conway points out, the portrait itself harbours a certain doubleness, placing Amelia, heretofore in possession of an "unexchangeable" beauty, "on a continuum of value" (42-3):

> The undecidability between the portrait's value as a piece of jewelry, with a pretty face thrown into the bargain, and its value as a representation of ideal beauty and moral excellence is essential to the restoration of the Booths to their previous state of innocence. (47)

Unhinged from the horizontal axis of narrative sequence, the conversions are bound to the vertical axis in an apparent transcendence of time that, nevertheless, is not related to narrative judgment. It is no coincidence that Dr. Harrison invokes Jupiter to tell Amelia of the intrigue "'brought to Light'" (528) by Robinson's confession, for the gods would indeed seem to be at work. The "Great Wheels" of the "vast Machine" of the world (*Tom Jones* 225), the machine's moral and causal culmination, are turned here, not by the minute wheels uncovered by the strong eyes of the narrator, but rather by an enigmatic *deus ex machina*.

Denied a place in the unity and completion of *Amelia*, the narrating subject, the moral cynosure of *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, loses its role as the agent of the moral order. The triumphant human mind gives way to the enigma of the event that--putting unity at an immeasurable distance from the activity of judgment--might poison the whole as easily as sanction it, that, indeed, might poison the whole at the very moment that it accomplishes it. Immediacy now takes place in time as a break in time, a break in causality and not, as in *Tom Jones*, as a perfection of time, not as the transformation of the singularity and sameness of time into the unified moral whole of the comic plot.

The event of the conversion, not readily absorbed into unity by way of the narratorial consciousness, is not thereby merely a moment of what in *Tom Jones* appeared as demonic singularity, of willful unrestrained invention. On the

contrary, it more closely resembles a fragment of an objective unified world in its ability to respond to the narrator's silence, to stand in for the narrator--just as the narrator stands in for a providential unifying order--and bring the narrative to completion. The pessimism of *Amelia* does not lie in the conviction, such as is hinted at in plays like *The Tragedy of Tragedies* or *Pasquin*, that unity is a matter of empty generic convention, a testament to a unity no longer clear or, worse, a ruse of demonic invention; it is rather to do with the distance of that unity from the realm of human action.

Eric Rothstein is right to say that, in the absence of a properly narrativistic moral unity, "Fielding therefore must assert the values of *Amelia* through simple, emotionally striking means which run the risk of disgusting us as 'sentimental' or arbitrary" (*Systems* 205), but he strangely refuses to acknowledge the profound sentimentality and arbitrariness of the "implausible" ending. He chalks up the ending to conventional realism, to the assurances that the author is "not picking and choosing events to fit his predilections" (204), and so does not address the moral dilemma he uncovers in the strictly speaking Lutheran division between prudence and Providence--but he is nearly right. What Fielding is presenting, in fact, is the *inability* of the moral subject to pick and choose events to fit his predilections. Sentimentalism, in which Fielding "must assert the values of *Amelia*," is a response to this moral dilemma.

Inasmuch as sentimentality is a kind of mourning, then, it is this loss that it mourns. In *Amelia*, the unifying event marks the return of an enigmatic order beyond mere judgment, one which manifests itself, in the double ending, in a fallen order of resemblance. Incomprehensibility, as Claude Rawson notes, replaces omniscience in *Amelia* (*Augustan* 73), and the impact of incomprehensibility on judgment is registered in this double. The new mimetic order of resemblance does not function, as in Foucault's scene of the "earth echoing the sky" (*Order* 17)--a mimetic order in no need of an organizing subjectivity--but rather at the limit of a subjectivity alienated from any coordinated divine order: thus the twin death-bed confessions that flank Robinson's conversion in the pawn-shop, bridging the intrigue of the plot and the return of virtue to its proper place in the social hierarchy.[7] The narrator, not dead in a Barthesian sense, nevertheless finds himself at his mortal and epistemological limit in the face of circumstance.

IV

As much as any element in the novel, the narrator is subjected to this new, alien law that begins to exercise its authority in *Amelia*. No longer set over the narrative as a

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[7] Peter Brooks provides an excellent discussion of the limit aspect of death and its relation to narrative ends. See esp. *Reading*, 94-108.

sovereign subject, he becomes implicated in his various doubles in the narrative itself. This is not merely a matter of interpolated narratives, which are certainly in abundance in *Amelia*, but rather a matter of putting the transcendental narratorial activity of completion and authority at the mercy of time; and just as the catastrophe, the unifying conversion, which brings the multiplicity of the events of the plot under the unity of a single action, inexplicably duplicates itself in the twin conversions of Robinson and Booth, so the narrator, the active locus of the unity, is broken apart and spread across the text. Dr. Harrison is perhaps the most obvious of these, "a conflation," as Leo Braudy observes, "of Fielding's good men with the kind of epistemological good sense possessed previously only by the narrators" (*Narrative* 199). He is the unifier, negotiating the way through the conventional obstacles to marriage to bring Booth and Amelia together, providing their pastoral retreat in the country, and finally taking control of the action to bring the plot to completion: taking both Robinson's and Booth's confession, and putting Robinson's revelations to work. And yet, as John Bender notes, Harrison's arrest of Booth--placed "strategically" at the mid-point of the novel--where he most transparently embodies narratorial authority, where he is presented, to quote Bender, as "a means of governance" (*Imagining* 191-92), opens onto a constellation of "contradictions" and "overdeterminations" that effectively mark the limit of

narratorial omniscience.[8] The "Laws" that the narrator's "Subjects, are bound to believe and obey" (*Tom Jones* 77) in

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[8] Bender reads Harrison as an impossible representation: a doomed attempt to apply the representational schema of sovereign power--in which punishment is a representation of the facticity of power--to the "abstracted authority" of the modern bureaucratic state which functions, not through representation, but through the hidden mechanisms of supervision, guidance and control. Furthermore, he finds in Harrison a certain doubleness. While acting from this position of abstracted control,

> to the degree he acts as a character in the plot, [Harrison] makes serious mistakes that must be explained. It is possible to interpret this disconcerting doubleness in *Amelia* as arising from Fielding's attempts to bind realistic vignettes of corrupt contemporary society into a plot that treats problematically his aspirations to structure juridical systems in terms of the novel's own conditions of representation. Dr. Harrison must, in other words, plot within a system of liminal [i.e. 'sovereign' and arbitrary] justice that entraps him along with the other characters. He seeks reformation but must proceed within a social system whose institutions scarcely distinguish punishment from the 'spirit of revenge' he rejects. (193)

For Bender, the doubleness of authority in *Amelia* arises out of the historical overlap of two authoritative "regimes" in which both the novel and the penitentiary partake. True to the New Historical program, Bender sets out to map the territory of the shift from one mode of authority--aristocratic and monarchical--to another--that of the middle-class individualistic self--and with it the new lines of power that bring the manifold under the rule of this new system of structuration. Thus its articulation of subjectivity, and the power of totalization and law by which it defines itself, is in fact an articulation of the mediating activity of mimesis, the liaison between the particularity of the manifold and the unity of the whole. I differ from Bender in my reading of the doubleness--in Harrison, as he points out, and others--that accompanies this shift, and its relationship to the nature of subjectivity. Instead of disentangling the double into the representatives of two distinct and opposed paradigms of authority and subjectivity, I see it as a condition of subjectivity that comes to the fore with a reflection on the beyond of the subject in that subject's historicity: at once the development of the historiographic reflection that has its beginnings in the Renaissance, as well as the more properly political problem of futurity, the contingencies to which a time-bound state is vulnerable.

Tom Jones have become the laws of a juridical system that, as we are reminded repeatedly in *Amelia*, is corrupted with unjust laws, and which, if it may "provide the Laws, doth not provide for the Execution of them" (*Amelia* 19); justice is compromised by the very laws that should guarantee it.

In Dr. Harrison the benevolent sovereign of the "Province of Writing" finds himself in a realm the laws of which he did not create, where the drive for unity is compromised by the fallenness of an order no longer underwritten by a narratorial activity that transcends contingency. The agent of unity has instead become subject to the inscrutable laws of time. In Booth too, we find a withered fragment of narrative power. Here, however, there is a more explicit formal relation between narrator and character. As Jill Campbell observes, Booth and the narrator are both prone to narrative lapses. If Booth is "blind . . . to certain obvious explanations of events" and often offers

> not only incomplete but inconsistent and insufficiently integrated narratives, ... he is not so different from the narrator of *Amelia* himself, who frequently offers incompatible descriptions of characters or accounts of events in succession, seeming to hold himself responsible for local coherence but not for a sustained and total vision of the novelistic world he describes. (206)[9]

[9] What underlies these "incompletions" for Campbell is Fielding's refusal, in his later works, "to conceal the conflicts, the incoherencies of belief and identity, created by the process of historical change and by the individual's

The narrator, Campbell continues, even providing "different impressions, in succession, of a single event," does not allow the final version to bring the previous under the auspices of a totalized unfolding, but rather preserves them in a kind of "suspense" (227).

And yet these other impressions, extending themselves like shadow events alongside the narrative line proper, have no apparent narrative value. These distorted reflections of events seem at times gratuitous. Thus, for instance, in the midst of his tale to Miss Mathews, Booth announces that he is going to relate

> 'one of those strange Accidents, which are produced by such a Train of Circumstances, that mere Chance hath been thought incapable of bringing them together; and which have therefore given Birth, in

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implication in multiple social institutions," and so his "works' involvement in an ongoing process of historical struggle and change" (16). Thus the narrator "repeatedly takes us through a disorienting process of shifting perspectives, offering one account of a character or event only to withdraw it and replace it with an unexpected alternative," so that

> the incompatibility of his successive accounts . . . seems to mark the uneasy coexistence of much larger structures of belief (and their associated literary forms) that are potentially in conflict; so that these instabilities of plot and character may also make us aware of the ideological assumptions involved in one act or another of narrative explanation. (226)

Campbell's position is quite close to Bender's; though the respective areas of conflict are gender on the one side and the penitentiary on the other, in each case what is at stake is aesthetic ideology: the inability to resolve, in literature, what cannot be reconciled historically. In one way or another, the concrete materiality of history stands at the limit of narrative coherence. As I will try to show over the next two chapters, the sentimental and Gothic novels thematize precisely this irreconcilability.

> superstitious Minds, to Fortune, and to several other imaginary Beings' (87)

This might come directly from the Exordium, and would be on its way to providing a clear view of the "several Incidents" which tend to the whole, were it not that this strange accident had somehow split itself in two. The chapter begins with Booth and Amelia on the run, holed up in her nurse's cottage, and about to send to Dr. Harrison for help. It opens with a familiar enough pronouncement: "'From what Trifles, dear Miss Mathews,' cried Booth, 'may some of our greatest Distresses arise. Do you not perceive I am going to tell you,'" he continues helpfully "'we had neither Pen, Ink, nor Paper in our present Exigency'" (87). The message will be sent verbally with young Atkinson, he explains, but the message will fall victim to "'one of those strange Accidents.'" "'But where is the strange Accident?'" (88). Miss Mathews is forced to ask when none seems forthcoming. On the one hand it would seem to be, as Booth finally says, "'the strange Accident of . . . wanting Pen, Ink and Paper'" (90); but if this is the case, how is it that Booth mentions the fact of the want of pen and paper before warning Miss Mathews of a forthcoming accident? On the other hand, in the midst of the story, Booth intimates that Atkinson's giving the doctor the message "'in the presence of Mrs. Harris'" might be "'this accident, which appeared so unfortunate,'" and which, he says "'turned in the highest Degree to our Advantage. Mrs. Harris no sooner heard the Message delivered,

than she fell into the most violent Passion imaginable'" and, in due course, fell victim to Dr. Harrison's remonstrances, giving the union her blessing (89).

Booth, in any case, ignores Miss Mathews' question, for his narrative is incapable of reducing this accident to the kind of sequence of clear and distinct events to which the Exordium lays claim in the name of moral fiction. But what splits this event in two--or perhaps, what is summoned by this split--is less Booth's narrative incompetence than Miss Mathews' interruption. Standing in for the narrator-interlocutor of *Tom Jones*, she draws with her question a line between what, without this interruption, might have been absorbed into the novelistic rhetoric whereby contingent events are made to seem necessary, and where these two "accidents"--the lack of pen and paper and Atkinson's innocent mistake--, made to seem connected, would comprise one action.

Much of what distinguishes the narrative landscape of *Amelia* from that of *Tom Jones* can be accounted for in the status of the interruption. In *Tom Jones* narratorial judgment, acting from outside of the forces of mere equalization, interrupts the "equal Pace" (*Tom Jones* 615) of the same with the immediacy of virtue. But in *Amelia* the triumphant creative human mind can no longer hold itself above time, intervening at will under an imperative to moral unity. If *Tom Jones* or *Joseph Andrews* owes its unity to narratorial intervention, *Amelia* owes its relative disunity

to the peculiar status of its interruptions. As in the case of Miss Mathews, Booth's interlocutor, commentary finds expression from within the narrative itself; it seeps into the interstices of the narrative and stains it, much as Parson Adams finds himself stained with the experience of the world, the virtues of which he vehemently denies.

In *Amelia* the world which Fielding has all but abandoned to its own devices, which is no longer capable of the unity it acquired in *Tom Jones*, is allowed to give itself up to interruption, to moments of near transcendence, near irony, but which nevertheless turn inward to find an abandoned edifice. A crude tautology begins to appear, in which narrative is broken in upon by narration, which is, in turn, broken in upon by the time of the event. It is not that these moments are bereft of meaning, but rather that, unlike the tautology of form and content in *Tom Jones*, these mark, not the unifying presence of the author in judgment, but his retreat. This strange implication of the narratorial activity in its own narrative is as responsible as anything for the equally alienated tautologies that end Books Five and Seven: love being the object of love, contempt contempt's (*Amelia* 226, 305). An allegorization of the break, investigated most thoroughly by Hunter, with the Augustan faith in the continuity of classical culture, the interruption in *Amelia* has the timebound character of a historical dichotomy. In *Tom Jones* Fielding seeks to replace this dubious cultural foundation with that of an autonomous subjectivity, but the

author of *Amelia*, no longer convinced of the epistemological and moral validity of this subject, is not willing to place his bets on the subject as the origin and guarantee of unity in a time precarious enough to suffer interruption: a time which, cut off from the transhistorical dimension of the example, can produce only events that, far from being continuous with context, are as incomprehensible to their context as the context is to the event.[10]

Certainly the most explicit interruptions in *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, bringing the ironic status of the representation to the fore, the prefatorial essays, are lacking in *Amelia*. Their absence is made up, at best, by a kind of echo of the chapter title in the text. To be sure, unlike the doubles I have tried to show at work in *Amelia*, this echo has a more conventional poetic function. Thus, for example, Amelia's cry of impatience at Mrs. Bennet's rambling beginning to her tale, in the opening chapter of Book Seven, "'Nay but dear Madam, . . . this is all Preface,'" echoes, with a tinge of irony, the title: "A very short Chapter, and

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[10] A distant kinship might be found between this interruption, born out of a burgeoning understanding of the event and history, and the interruption that Benjamin sees as the central didactic moment of Brecht's epic theater. In any case, the terms under which Benjamin dismisses irony from the sphere of epic theater might mark out a fruitful path of enquiry for the anti-ironic impulse that *Amelia* introduces into Fielding's moral fiction and that, if we are to take Benjamin's final claim seriously, could open onto a discussion of Fielding's continued return to the trope of the theater throughout his career: "irony has no didactic aim. Basically it demonstrates only the philosophical sophistication of the author who . . . always remembers that in the end the world may turn out to be a theater" (*Illuminations* 153).

consequently requiring no Preface" (266-67); Amelia effectively responds to the extra-diegetical invitation to the narrative proper.[11] There is nothing subversive to narratorial power in this response. The dialogue moves in one direction only, from narrator to character, leaving the narrator untainted by the character's time-bound status. Dialogic proper, as Bakhtin describes it--and in which the whole world of the novel, from the narrator down, is caught in time--is a two-way street.[12] But this encounter between the author and his character cuts across the mimetic gesture of the narrative, bringing the authorial hand into focus in a characteristically ironic gesture. It should be noted that a large proportion of the doubles--what I would prefer to call, in this context, reflections--in *Amelia*, not to mention Fielding's earlier fiction, are essentially of this sort.[13] Thus the reflections set up between Amelia and Mrs. Bennet, Amelia and Blear-Eye'd Moll, or between Booth and Bath

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[11] See Pratt on the invitational function of introductions, 59-61.

[12] "Every conversation is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people's words. At every step one meets a 'quotation' or a reference" (*Dialogic* 338). In the novel the narrator cannot exclude him or herself from this heteroglossic space, so that a "character's voice, encroach[es] in one way or another upon the author's voice" (316).

[13] See, for example, Ehrenpreis, where Fielding's "habitual paring off of different persons so as to set their traits in high relief also adds to the peculiar clarity of the novel's structure in a way that strengthens one's impression of the author's candour. Allworthy's wisdom and Western's foolishness, Tom's good nature and Blifil's malice . . . [etc.]--this matching of contrasted figures . . . gives the novel a pattern that seems at once complex and intelligible" (20).

unify,[14] with an anti-mimetic gesture, the elements of the text that, lying outside of the narrative progress, are not subject to unity imposed by the catastrophe.

V

In another "prefaceless" chapter, again set at the beginning of a book--where Fielding might have affixed a prologue in *Tom Jones* or *Joseph Andrews*--an apparently gratuitous argument between Dr. Harrison and Mrs. Atkinson provides a veiled commentary on the stakes of this newer, and more time-bound, province of writing. The immediate interruption of a narrator, transcendent with respect to the narrative, is replaced by the to-and-fro of an argument that turns on the familiar narratorial themes of unity and judgment.

The subject of the chapter is "Matrimonial Union," the over-riding theme of *Amelia* as we learn in the Exordium, and Dr. Harrison goes about to prove, by way of a rather misogynist ruse, the dangers a learned woman bears towards this sublime bond, prone, as she must be, to put the imperatives of reason above those of marital duty. If, Harrison suggests to Mrs. Atkinson, the man

> 'should be a little unreasonable in his Opinion, are you sure that the learned Woman would preserve

[14] See Campbell, who takes Bath as a caricature of the contradictions--middle-class, feminine sentimentality versus aristocratic, masculine aggression and honour--in Booth's identity (213).

> her Duty to her Husband, and submit? . . . . For Instance, What can be a more strange, and indeed unreasonable Opinion, than to prefer the *Metamorphoses of Ovid* to the *Æneid of Virgil*? . . . . I believe you and I should not differ in our Judgments of any Person who maintained such an Opinion--what a Taste must he have?'
>
> 'A most contemptible one indeed,' cries Mrs. *Atkinson*.
>
> 'I am satisfied,' cries the Doctor, (408-9)

thus carrying the point, to his satisfaction at least, that a judgment of taste, however correct, could be guilty of dissolving the matrimonial union. Aesthetic judgment, which appeared in *Tom Jones* on the level of metanarrative--appearing in the text only as an interruption of the narrative progress--loses its implicit moral character when brought down to the level of narrative. What in *Tom Jones* had guarded narrative against the economy of the same, bringing taste and virtue to bear on the process of narrative selection and action, now, brought down into the narrative as a thematic element, threatens to dissolve rather than form unity.

That Harrison, the very embodiment of the drive for order and unity in this novel, should find himself in such an argument is no mistake; but what of Mrs. Atkinson?

> 'But do you think' said she, 'if I had loved him, I would have contended with him?'

'Perhaps you might sometimes,' said the Doctor, 'be of these Sentiments; but you remember your own *Virgil--Varium et mutabile semper Fœmina.*'

'Nay, *Amelia*,' said Mrs. *Atkinson*, 'you are now concern'd as well as I am; for he hath now abused the whole Sex, and quoted the severest Thing that ever was said against us, though I allow it is one of the finest.'

'With all my Heart, my Dear; cries *Amelia*. 'I have the Advantage of you however, for I don't understand him.'

'Nor doth she understand much better than yourself,' cries the Doctor; 'or she would not admire Nonsense even though in *Virgil*.'

'Pardon me, Sir,' said she.

'And pardon me, Madam,' cries the Doctor with a feigned Seriousness, 'I say a Boy in the fourth Form at *Eton* would be whipt, or would deserve to be whipt at least, who made the *Neuter Gender* agree with the *Feminine* . . . .'

'Why, it is very true as you say, Doctor,' cries Mrs. *Atkinson*--'There seems to be a false Concord. I protest I never thought of it before.'

'And yet this is the *Virgil*,' answered the Doctor, 'that you are so fond of, who hath made you all of the *Neuter Gender*; or as we say in *English*,

> he hath made mere Animals of you: For if we translate it thus;
>
> *Woman is a various and changeable Animal,*
>
> there will be no Fault, I believe, unless in point of Civility to the Ladies.' (409-10)

The "false Concord" produced by gender, in matrimonial or grammatical unity, partakes of a certain "feminine" logic; the same logic, in fact, that Judith Butler finds at work in "the question of female identity" which engenders a "totality [that] is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time" (14, 16). Mrs. Atkinson, certainly among the most "changeable" of Fielding's characters--changing names, masquerading as Amelia, taking on "masculine" qualities like rationality and learning--raises the question of female identity in a way that no other character could.

And yet, as Jill Campbell has noted, Fielding maintains an ambivalence, particularly in his later work, towards this feminized singularity and the various other "incoherencies of belief and identity, created by the process of historical change and by the individual's implication in multiple social institutions" (16); an ambivalence rivaled only by that towards trade, which he finds similarly implicated in the "moral Evils" of the subversion of social harmony. While trade, as has been noted above, threatens to upset the traditional order with its introduction of the economy of the same, it is equally part of "the Grandeur and Power of the Nation," where

> the Arts and Sciences are improved, and human Life is embellished with every Ornament, and furnished with every Comfort which it is capable of tasting. (*Enquiry* 70)[15]

The dubious connection here between trade and femininity was, in fact, part of the eighteenth-century landscape. What was found to be most threatening in the early stages of capitalism was the sheer volatility of a credit economy in which property depends, not on the solid foundation of property, but rather "hangs upon opinion" and "depends upon our passions."[16] The early commentators on the new economy, from Addison to Defoe, dredged up what they deemed a proper allegorical figure for fickle credit, a figure that invariably took feminine form in its role as the "changeable Animal." Thus, for example, Addison, observing the "quick Turns and Changes in her Constitution," finds "Publick Credit . . . . a greater Valetudinarian than any I had ever met with, even in her own Sex,"so "that in the twinkling of an Eye, she would fall away from the most florid Complexion . . . and wither into a Skeleton," only to "revive in a Moment . . . into a Habit of the highest Health" (1.15-16).

Fielding adapts this code to his own uses. Moments of narrative inconsistency, for example, come to be associated with the singularity apparently at work in the feminine. When

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[15] Fielding makes a similar statement in *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (38).

[16] Charles Davenant, cited in Pocock, 441. See also Hirschman on the "passionate" grounds of eighteenth-century capitalism.

Booth tells Miss Mathews the story of Mons Bagillard, he begins by mistakenly discounting Amelia's apprehensions as womanly error:

> 'if that excellent Woman could ever be thought unreasonable, I thought she was so on this Occasion.
>
> 'But in what Light soever her Desires appeared to me, as they manifestly arose from an Affection of which I had daily the most endearing Proofs, I resolved to comply with her, and . . . indulge [her] in an unreasonable Demand.' (*Amelia* 126)

It is Booth, of course, and not Amelia, who is in error, and Booth follows this account, without revoking it, with another that shows Mons Bagillard to be entirely worthy of Amelia's reaction. The perpetual deferral of totality that Judith Butler takes to be the structural condition of the feminine is, whatever Dr. Harrison may imply, in no way limited to the female characters of *Amelia*. The text itself is "feminine" in this respect.

Even the narrator is implicated in this structure of deferral, which for him amounts to an inability to generalize--what, for the narrator of *Tom Jones*, had been his highest and most crucial ability. There is, indeed, something "feminine" in this: in 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft will lament that

> the power of generalizing ideas . . . has not only been denied to women; but writers have insisted

> that it is inconsistent, with few exceptions, with their sexual character. (*Vindication* 54)[17]

The narrator of *Amelia* is no less lacking in this power. Early in Mrs. Bennet's acquaintance with the Booths, she expresses "some little Dislike" for the Noble Lord's "Complaisance" with Amelia. The narrator explains away her concerns with the

> general Rule, that no Woman who hath any great Pretensions to Admiration, is ever well pleased in a Company, where she perceives herself to fill only the second Place. (203-204)

Mrs. Ellison, in the pay of the Lord, likewise dismisses Mrs. Bennet's suspicion, invoking "the Generality of the World," which, she says, would agree with Amelia's declaration that "he was the finest Gentleman she had ever seen . . . . 'rather than with Mrs. *Bennet*'" (203). She is of course right in this, in a rather sinister way, seeing as the "Generality of the World" have been duped. But if Mrs. Ellison proves to be a liar, so too does the narrator prove to be cut off from the transcendental perspective that granted his generalizations a place in the divine comedy. No less than his characters, the narrator is subject to the constraints and prejudices of time, to the "feminine" condition of changeableness. If in *Tom Jones* the narrator's "errors" tend

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[17] See John Barrell on this passage, *Political Theory*, 65-68. Hume is rather less critical. He recommends for women the study of history rather than philosophy, for in the latter "the general abstract view of the objects leaves the mind so cold and unmoved, that the sentiments of nature have no room to play" (*Essays* 568).

to appear as false prolepses, false leads on a path that the narrator already comprehends in its entirety, here they seem the inevitable result of a judgment that must act from within time, and so whose attempts to bring a particular character or event under the auspices of a mediating generalization can at best strive, without transcendental guarantee, and often fail.

Neither cognitive nor aesthetic judgment then, can overcome the rule of the particular in *Amelia*. If Mrs. Bennet for example, feels the pressure of a drive for narrative completion, offering to tire Amelia with as little as possible of her "'unfortunate Life than just with that Part which leads to a Catastrophe,'" she nevertheless submits to a contradictory urge. In "'Stories of Distress,'" she explains

> 'especially where Love is concerned, many little Incidents may appear trivial to those who have never felt the Passion, which to delicate Minds are the most interesting Part of the Whole,'

a whole, a telos, Mrs. Bennet later admits to Amelia, which is inimical to "'those Particulars'" that she will relate (267-68, 274).[18] Love, like affection in Booth's "indulgence" of Amelia, is too attached to the object to suffer its

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[18] Mrs. Bennet's apologetic account of her narrative problems is a more accurate account of the narrative structure of *Amelia* than the narrator's own in his Exordium, where "the several Incidents" of the narrative and "the minute Causes whence those Incidents are produced" are to be presented with respect to "the Catastrophe or Completion of the whole" (17). The narrator, like nature in *Tom Jones*, becomes a kind of cipher, an empty form that, though it persists, no longer has constitutive authority.

absorption into a larger whole--love must, unreasonably and uneconomically, attempt to preserve its objects in their particularity. Sentiment rather than beauty will tie the subject to the event in *Amelia*; "Stories of Distress" become attached to "little Incidents" that comprise the whole only by default, and which are irreducible to a narrative progression towards a final catastrophe that brings the particular incidents under its totalizing law. In what Jill Campbell calls the "incompatible descriptions" brought about by this dedication to "local coherence" at the expense of "a sustained and total vision" (206), cognitive judgment comes up against a logic of the particular that disrupts the work of generality.

On the thematic level, this logic is most apparent in the conventionally comic trope of marriage. In *Amelia*, however, marriage is presented less as a trope of comic resolution than--as we have glimpsed in Mrs. Atkinson's threat of a "False Concord"--as something that must itself be resolved.[19] The narrative takes place in the shadow of this unity, consisting of "The various Accidents which befel a very worthy Couple, after their uniting in the State of Matrimony" (15), effectively turning marriage into a state of instability and decay. Marriage can, of course, in the mouth of the virtuous Amelia at least, retain its transcendental

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[19] John Cleland makes an observation to this effect in an early review of *Amelia* in *The Monthly Review* of December 1751. See Paulson, ed., *Henry Fielding*, 304-305. On the comic trope of marriage see Fielding, *Miscellanies* 3.111.

character as an overcoming of time and its vicissitudes, so that

> 'however other Friends may prove false and fickle to him [her husband], he hath one Friend, whom no Inconstancy of her own, nor any Change of his Fortune, nor Time, nor Age, nor Sickness, nor any Accident can ever alter.'

But this devotion serves only as a reminder of "how unworthy [Booth] was of this excellent Creature," the result of "those bitter Ingredients which he himself had thrown into his own Cup" (175). Marriage, carrying with it its conventional symbolism of union and fulfillment--the end of desire's perpetual deferral and so, since narrative is itself a deferral of its own self-transcendence, the end of narrative--appears *in* narrative as a sign of the exile that must be suffered in time. To "the way of the world" it is a force, not of unity, but of schism. Thus Amelia's kind words and kind looks for Colonel James,

> the very Love which she bore him, as the Person to whom her little Family were to owe their Preservation and Happiness, inspired him with Thoughts of sinking them all in the lowest Abyss of Ruin and Misery; and while she smiled with all her Sweetness on the supposed Friend of her Husband, she was converting that Friend into his most bitter Enemy. (338)

VI

If marriage, the very emblem of unity, can become caught up in the dissolution of unity, it is no surprise that it is a wound that draws the Booths together in the first place. It is Amelia's scar that makes "'the first great Impression on [Booth's] Heart,'" (66). There is something truly paradoxical in this. It is as if the breach or transgression that opens narrative up by calling for resolution somehow performs, immediately and without the intervention of narrative, the very completion it lacks. Accident is already essential; disfigurement is perfection.[20] What is at stake here is made somewhat clearer by the equivalency established between merit and wound, Booth's "'two dreadful Wounds,'" it would seem,

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[20] The narrator himself seems vaguely perplexed: "I know not whether the little Scar on her Nose did not rather add to, than diminish her Beauty" (*Amelia* 184). The paradoxical nature of this scar is reflected in the criticism. On the one hand, it is often tied to some disruptive aspect of material historical reality; on the other, it is an atemporal emblem of moral unity. Jill Campbell, for example, who traces the historical forces at work in *Amelia* to an agon between a received "masculine" and aristocratic tradition and an emerging "feminine," domestic ideology, finds in Amelia's scar a sign of "the various forums of social and political power [that] possess semiautonomous and material, and therefore potentially dissonant existences" (15). George E. Haggerty reads it, more generally, in the tradition of the bodily wound in eighteenth-century fiction, which he takes to be a sign of a "traumatic social division" (151). When the scar is taken atemporally, however, it becomes an emblem of unity. Hence Alison Conway: "The scar grants Amelia a particularity, and it is this particularity that becomes linked to a moral standard . . . . [for] it identifies Amelia's beauty as unexchangeable." This singularity sets Amelia apart from "the blank faces of the whores, whose lack of specificity enables deception" (41-42).

being his only claim to merit (383).[21] More pointedly political than the character-conduct divide in Fielding's earlier fiction, the dichotomy between merit and social recognition in *Amelia* brings with it similar issues of mediation: the reconciliation of humanity with second nature, with the social order, which threatens to stand over and against it.

This mediation is made more difficult by the fact that character in *Amelia* is more "realistic," more mimetic than the comic characters of the earlier fiction. With the retreat of the ironic and triumphant consciousness, of which these generalized characters were a sign, it is only natural that they should break down as well. Underwritten by consciousness, generalized characters transcend time and with it the concrete historical pressures of the social order. The characters of *Tom Jones*, says John Coolidge, are a part of the "fixity of nature" (160); in *Amelia* on the other hand "Our knowledge of a person's character is always provisory, pending further discovery" (165). Hence Mrs. Atkinson, the most "realistic" of the lot, is always "the compound sum of her words and actions to date" (175), open to the vicissitudes of the future. Character in *Amelia* is always open to the event, to the unforeseen, and so whatever completion it finds is fragile and provisional at best.

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[21] The equation, though qualified, is explicit and repeated: "if Merit in the Service was a sufficient Recommendation, Booth, who had been twice wounded in the Siege, seemed to have the fairest Pretensions" (169).

It is no mistake that *Amelia* begins rather than ends with the marriage of its two protagonists, with the comic reconciliation of desire and social convention, of nature and second nature. Only the curious affectation of beginning the novel *in medias res* keeps *Amelia* from unfolding as the other side of comic unity, as the tragic, or at least realistic, shadow cast by the comic drive for unity.

The association of Booth's wound with his claim to social recognition, a claim that drives the plot from the moment he is released from prison in Book Four, condenses into a single figure the problem that Fielding presents in *Amelia*: that in a world without recourse to a transcendental perspective, served in *Tom Jones* by the narrator, form and content, social structure and moral imperative, are set at opposite ends of an apparently unbridgeable chasm. Booth's alienation from the social body depends less on the cynical attitude of the nobleman to whom Harrison pleads his case in Book Eleven than it does on Booth's inability "to see the whole Matter," to see the thing "for that in reality it is" (194). His guileless acceptance of appearance leads him from folly to folly through the novel, and when he does manage to penetrate the veil of appearance, it is only in part. If Booth can read from the behavior of James' servant "that he had entirely lost the Friendship of *James*," he cannot--as he might, offers the narrator mockingly, "if he had been very Sagacious"--see into the system by which the acts of the servant and those of the master "correspond" (194-95):

> one would be inclined to think that the great Man and his Porter . . . like two Actors concerned to act different Parts in the same Scene, had rehearsed their Parts privately together, before they ventured to perform in Public. (194)

The underlying form of the appearance, the performance, is lost on Booth; he, and with him the whole world of the novel, is exiled from the conventionalized unity it represents.

Facing only the performance, denied the "rehearsals" of the social world--trapped, to put it in semiotic terms, in the *parole* with no access to the *langue*--Booth is threatened with exile in a perpetual transgression of the communal stratum. What appears, for the narrator, as a potential deviation "from that strict Adherence to universal Truth" (*Amelia* 73), is for Booth criminality and exile to the verge of the court. The reason behind the Booths' initial and most symbolically resonant exile--driven out of their pastoral retreat to suffer under the moral depravity of London--remains hidden to him. And yet, it amounts to little more than stepping outside of the system of social signs. When Booth, however innocently, lifts himself above his fellow tenant farmers by buying a used coach, he finds himself caught between the farmers who had formerly treated him "'as their Equals'" and the "'little Squires . . . , uneasy to see a poor Renter become their Equal in a Matter in which they place so much Dignity.'" Where he had once fit properly into the strictly coded social hierarchy, he now becomes an

unclassifiable cipher. Given an appropriately contradictory name--"THE SQUIRE FARMER"--he finds himself suddenly on the outside of a solid "united" front (149). Assimilable to neither traditional strata, compelled by the same luxurious compulsion to sweep aside social stratification that Fielding finds so threatening in the *Enquiry*, Booth's singularity wins him their combined hatred. But his theory of the passions hides his semiotic blunder from him. Knowing "'something of the human Passions, and that high Place which Envy holds among them,'" he ascribes his troubles to "'the mischievous Nature of Envy'" which "'tends rather to produce tragical than comical Events'" (148-49). He ascribes to envy what is no more than a problem of language, of social fluency.

Booth's erroneous reduction of human activity to a passive obedience to the passions leads him to the belief, as he tells Dr. Harrison after his conversion, "'that as Men appeared to me to act entirely from their Passions, their Actions could have neither Merit nor Demerit'" (511). The sameness that threatens narrative in *Tom Jones*, and with it the possibility of moral judgment, appears here in a more explicitly moral light. "'[A]ll Men,'" Booth tells Amelia,

> 'as well the best as the worst, act alike from the Principle of Self-Love. Where Benevolence therefore is the uppermost Passion, Self-Love directs you to gratify it by doing good, and by relieving the Distresses of others; for they are then in Reality your own. But where Ambition, Avarice, Pride, or

> any other Passion governs the Man, and keeps his Benevolence down, the Miseries of all other Men affect him no more than they would a Stock or a Stone. And thus the Man and his Statue have often the same Degree of Feeling or Compassion.' (451)

The homogenizing force first collapses the good and the bad, then the self and the other,[22] and finally the human and the inanimate. Benevolence and compassion emerge arbitrarily out of this field of the same. Character and conduct, essence and appearance, are severed. Cutting him off from his own claim to recognition, the theory of the reigning passion, essentially a denial of the possibility of moral action, blinds Booth to the only tie between living virtue and the calcified and conventionalized virtue of the social order.

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[22] Such collapses in Fielding often have no good effect. Mrs. Bennet's surprisingly economical description of the path of her father's hatred, for instance:

> 'tho' his Wife was so entirely Mistress of my Father's Will, that she could make him use me ill, she could not so perfectly subdue his Understanding, as to prevent him from being conscious of such ill Usage; and from this Consciousness he began inveterately to hate me. Of this Hatred he gave me numberless Instances, and I protest to you, I know not any other Reason for it than what I have assigned.' (*Amelia* 275)

Those who still believe that Fielding eschewed psychological observation for anything other than strategic reasons might do well to ponder the ease and precision with which Fielding describes this scene of projection and substitution.

VII

The redemption that J. Paul Hunter speaks of, the reclamation of value that Fielding promises his readers in the wake of the rising consciousness of historical isolation and singularity, in the retreat of the traditional forms, is more sincerely, and more desperately, sought in *Amelia* than in any of Fielding's previous work. *Amelia* is perhaps the paradigm of the "demonstration of brokenness" that Hunter takes as the organizing impulse of Fielding's novels (*Occasional* 20-1).

The tactics of unification that, in *Tom Jones*, set themselves against the disruptive forces of historical difference and demonic originality fail in *Amelia*, so that the highest goals of Fielding's moral fiction--the reconciliation of the virtuous subject with the social order--is itself held in suspension. For just as in the case of the doubled narrative explanations, where the privileged second explanation cannot entirely dispel the ghost of the first, so these complications of theme and of character remain only partially absorbed by the resolution of the narrative in the twin conversions. It would not be inaccurate to say, in fact, that the doubled resolution, unconnected to the causal chain that binds together the elements of the narrative, is nevertheless brought about precisely by the irreducibility of these local complications, the inability of theme and character to mediate between particularity and

generality. It is less a resolution than a collapse. Narrative causality is replaced by another more enigmatic causality, one caught up in the failure of the ironic consciousness, and so, perhaps, part of a kind of radical empiricism, a cause emanating from the failed activity of positing. Just as, in eighteenth-century republican thought, the state is threatened with dissolution at the hands of the unprecedented and unforeseen event, so too the ironic subject must face this radical moment in the only "real" event it finds in the fictional work: its own unifying activity of judgment.

This moment of judgment that offers itself up for emulation in *Tom Jones* gives rise in *Amelia* to another, less didactic and less epistemologically certain repetition. The "cruel divorce between social institution and the human purposes which they theoretically serve," Claude Rawson says of *Amelia*, "has a quality of absurd abstraction which Fielding finds incomprehensible" (*Augustan* 73). Incomprehensibility replaces omniscience, and with incomprehensibility, the failure of the cognitive drive of narrative, comes the mechanical and apparently gratuitous repetitions of the double. What has, in attempting to enter the world as unprejudiced judgment, become an autonomous aesthetic, produces the double out of its failure to generalize itself; its failure, quite simply, to comprehend itself and so to render itself generalizable.

Only at the end of his life did Fielding acknowledge this failure, when, in his preface to *The Journal of the Voyage to Lisbon* he substitutes history for fiction as what he now considers to be the highest literary goal, preferring the concrete objectivity of the historical event for the mercurial event of judgment. Apparently forgetting his rejection of objective history as hopelessly particular,[23] he accuses Homer of having "pervert[ed] and confuse[d] the records of antiquity" and wishes that, instead of fiction, he had "written a true history of his own time." The translation in fiction of the event into the event, the activity of turning mimesis into virtue, becomes, in a reversal of his earlier notions of "topography" and "biography," the author's exertion of the "immensity of their genius" by "extending fact by fiction." Like the narrator of *Tom Jones*, they do not so much "turn reality into fiction, as fiction into reality." But if

> their portraits are so just . . . that we acknowledge the strokes of nature . . . , without enquiring whether nature herself, or her journeyman the poet, formed the first pattern of the piece, (*Journal* 7-8)

the mingling of nature and art that attracts and accompanies narratorial judgment in *Tom Jones* (612-13) is poisoned by the

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[23] Subjective, "ingenious" and therefore particular. See *Joseph Andrews* Book Three, chapter one. For a comparative study of this problem, see Unger, who traces the course of the concern over subjectivity in historical writings in Germany through the eighteenth century.

singularity of this expressive genius. The traveller of *Tom Jones* is now no more than a "journeyman," a middling artisan with "pretensions to indulgence"; and the turning of "fiction into reality" has become merely a formal and autonomous activity, a true tautology, in place of the dynamic moral unity produced by the translation of event into event. The other poets then, which Fielding sets below Homer by virtue of the "improbability" of their fictions, are thus worse only by degree. They assert that "which no man can at once understand and believe" (*Journal* 8); a revealing turn of phrase, since precisely what has been lost here is the comprehensibility of the fictional world under the aegis of a narratorial omniscience, and with it the belief in the efficacy of "the demystified species of spirituality" internalized in the art object as the reality to which, says McKeon, the work is ultimately answerable; a belief, that is, in the moral reality of "the capacity of human creativity itself" as expressed in the work of art (*Origins* 120).

But the substitution of the historical event for the narratorial event remains a somewhat insincere gesture on the part of a man who made so much, for so long, of the pitfalls of simple representation and the dangers of appearance. In *Amelia* the loss of the event, of the power of judgment, is recouped by more sophisticated and, as has been made clear often enough, more ideological means.[24] For in his last novel Fielding embraces the tactics of his "rival" Samuel Richardson, and

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[24] See Chapter Three below.

fills the space left by the creative consciousness with the virtuous acceptance of impotence that is sentimentalism. Sentimental tears are shed in "an acknowledgment at once of man's inherent goodness and of the impossibility of his ever being able to demonstrate his goodness effectively" (Brissenden 29), an "awareness of the distinction which separated moral idealism and the world of practical acts" (77)--tears that appear in Fielding's earlier fiction, but which take on a heightened role in *Amelia*. Sentiment comes forward to provide the vital link to the transcendental that saves the narrative from the meaninglessness and dispersal that arises out of a temporality that escapes the unifying activity of consciousness.

It does so by a series of substitutions. For the social order, from which Booth has been cut off as a criminal, as a victim of its totalizing law, it substitutes a natural order. "The paradox that man though naturally good somehow creates the conditions which prevent him from acting virtuously" (Brissenden 29) notwithstanding, nature supplies what society cannot; so much so that, in the sole explanation given for Robinson's conversion, Dr. Harrison can conclude that "however *Robinson* had been corrupted by his old Master, he had naturally a good Disposition" (*Amelia* 530).[25] Inducing

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[25] Lukács gives a terse account of this sentimental leap over second nature to a hypostasized human nature: the sentimental stance, he says, finds "man's experience of his self-made environment as a prison instead of a parental home," and the turn to "nature as the bringer of comfort to pure feeling, is nothing other than the historico-philosophical objectivation of man's alienation from his own constructions" (*Theory* 64).

Robinson to an act of open-hearted benevolence, nature, not judgment, stands behind the immediacy that brings the narrative to a close. The totalizing interruption now takes place by virtue of a unity that is given, not posited. With the eclipse of freedom comes the spectre of determinism, which in the eighteenth century appears at once as a mechanism and a materialism. Quoting from the Latitudinarian divines that, as he has convincingly argued, first articulated the sentimental stance that would inform the whole of the eighteenth century, R. S. Crane provides an example of this second substitution: if "Nature prompts us to ease those Sufferings which we feel" by way of "An inward Principle [that] is more powerful than all external arguments," this principle partakes of a certain materiality: it is a "mechanical Sympathy,"[26] a natural causality that is often made to depend, as G. J. Barker-Benfield has shown, on a set of physical laws.[27] The sympathetic response to others which holds society together and provides the mechanism of moral activity sets natural laws before those of the province of writing; the body, not judgment, becomes the touchstone of moral action. Always the same, these laws submit the event to a logic: time becomes a matter of bodies and collisions, so

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[26] Crane, 218 (William Sherlock, *Sermons*, 215), 224 (Samuel Parker, *Demonstration of the Divine Authority of the Law of Nature* 55).

[27] See Barker-Benfield for a discussion of this materialism with respect to Newtonian physics and the explanations of intellectual and moral faculties in mechanical terms, 1-36. See also Brissenden, 16-24.

that problems of time and the event are solved by transferring them to a spatial order.

Thus sentiment performs the same task as plot, submitting the individual event to a larger whole, but it does so without the dynamism of a narrative solution. In one sentimental scene, Mrs. Atkinson confesses to Amelia the machinations she undertook in Amelia's name. The sergeant is on his knees to his wife, Amelia attempting to stifle her tears. At its very height, Booth enters the room, interrupting the action, an entry that "turn'd all in an Instant into a silent Picture" (447). In this frozen, speechless moment the disparate elements are captured in a sentimental union: a mourning portrait and a catalyst of unifying sympathy. The scene is broken, not from without by judgment, but from within the narrative, illuminating not a wheel in the vast machine of history, but an isolated, static tableau.[28]

In its silence it is isolated from the progress of the narrative, from narrative cognition and narrative explanation. The sentimental scene is invariably made to bear witness to the impoverishment of the narrator's abilities: "The Scene," says the narrator, in one of any number of such moments, "is beyond my Power of Description: I must beg the

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[28] On the sentimental tableaux see Todd (36), who considers it the central figure of sentimental dramaturgy, and Alter, who speaks of *Amelia* as a "series of moral tableaux" (159).

Readers' Hearts to suggest it to themselves" (316).[29] I will take up the problem of silence, and of sentiment generally, in the following chapter; it is sufficient to say now that what *Joseph Andrews* resolves in the mirror of ridicule, which at once breaks in upon the solitude of the demonic, generalizing it, and offers itself up to be shattered, *Amelia* resolves with the silent appeal to sympathy. In each case a certain generality is achieved in the shadow of representation, with its eschewal. But while the apparent collapse of reference in the former in fact refers to the unifying activity of judgment, in the latter it points, by way of the silent sympathetic appeal, only to a passive union in the ineffable. It is for this reason, this apparent abandonment of the subject to the givenness of the event, that sentimentalism could become entwined with an enthusiastic religion such as Methodism, and why critics still recognize in it a certain mysticism.[30] Sentiment responds melancholically to the loss of the active subject, while the pleasure it provokes, and the sympathetic unity it apparently brings, are indications of the mystical pleasure taken in the spontaneous givenness of the bond, the transcendental pleasure taken in being subject to the mechanism, not of plot, but of nature.

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[29] Booth makes an almost identical disclaimer with respect to his own interior scene: "'To describe my Sensation till she returned to herself, is not within my Power'" (73).

[30] See for example, Barker-Benfield, xix; Brissenden, 20.

But mysticism dwells in the flash against which every political body defines itself, and against which every work of art--precisely as a work, as a product--must measure itself and find itself lacking. Even at its most radical and most honest, where it contemplates the rapturous givenness of the world, there is nothing authentically mystical about sentimentalism. The event, external and incomprehensible, points to a transcendental otherness only in the most banal sense, and in fact acts more in the service of an internal and formalized passion. The internalization of the event--what happens outside the unifying activity of narratorial judgment--as passion brings it back within the purview of totality.

In any case, sentimentalism lays the ground for a unity in the absence of this omniscient authority, comprehending and absorbing the particularity of the event and so, also, of judgment itself. In a way, it aspires to be a law of jurisprudence, if such a thing could exist, a law that regulates the application of the law. But I will save my discussion of the sentimental redemption of fiction for the following chapter. *Amelia* provides only uneven evidence of its aspirations to a new unity for, inasmuch as it is unable to resolve the problem of merit, to unite virtuous activity with the society it is meant to serve, *Amelia* is Fielding's monument to the failure of fiction. It is a novel burdened by a slightly moribund tension, leaning on the one hand to his repudiation of fiction in the *Journal of the Voyage to Lisbon*

and on the other, with Richardson, towards the dominance of sentiment in the novel of the late eighteenth century.

Chapter Three: Sentimental Materialism

I

"It ne'er was apparell'd with art, / On words it could never rely; / It reign'd in the throb of my heart, / It gleam'd in the glance of my eye" (115). Thus Harley, the hero of Henry Mackenzie's immensely--though rather fleetingly--popular *The Man of Feeling*, wrote of his chaste love for Miss Walton. This short passage epitomizes the sentimental attitude towards the moral problem of mimesis: eschewing artifice it therefore distrusts words, and relies instead on the body for its expression. Gesture offers sanctuary from the limitations and dangers of language. Tied to the mechanisms of the creaturely body, gesture is presumed to be free of the intentionality that stands behind language, and which is now associated, not with freedom, but with the nefarious plots of the villain. Sentimentalism, in fact, does not make a place for intention in its moral universe; or rather, the active citizen who, like Fielding's narrator, cuts across the sameness of sequence to produce cause and effect, is now at best deluded, at worst villainous. In the absence of this intentionality sameness becomes a moral value--though not, of course, an unambiguous one.

Although the subject of these lines is love, they might easily have been written on any number of other passionate attachments; such discriminations are academic to the sentimental heart. In Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian*, for example, the good-hearted Belcour announces, with just enough irony to preserve him from absolute libertinism, that "there may be as true delight in rescuing a fellow creature from distress, as there would be in plunging one into it" (II.vi). This curious levelling is repeated again and again in sentimental literature. "If one man is transported with joy and the other with sorrow, I know not which of the two would be more reluctant to be bereaved of the sensation he feels."[1] The scholar Edward Taylor, if he is more sober--and more obviously indebted to Burke's aesthetics--he is no less willing to indulge this work of equalization: "the agreeable sensations we feel in sorrow," he writes in 1774 in his sentimentalized account of tragic drama, "result from the intimate alliance between pleasure and pain" (25).

Qualitative judgment is suspended in the realm of sentimental feeling, making way for these apparently careless equalizations; equalization that seem at odds with the black and white morality that is the hallmark of sentimental fiction. To a certain extent both this levelling and this tension is a product of the "popular" nature of sentimental literature, which generally sacrifices invention for formula;[2]

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[1] Abbé Prévost, *Cleveland*, English translation (London: 1734-35) 3.82-3; cited in Bredvold, 88.

[2] See John Cawelti.

so much so in fact that the formulaic mechanism of the sentimental response often seems suspiciously staged or, as Marshall Brown has observed, to border on farce. There is a sterility in sentimental literature, divided "between the emptiness of melancholy or sentimental melodrama and the emptiness of farce" (*Preromanticism* 83). Yet despite the crude self-reflection involved in what amounts to its staging of its own clichés, sentimental literature harbours an unresolved tension: constitutionally too sublime for words, contemptuous of artifice and yet too predictably prone to sympathetic tears, caught up with the singularity of objects and yet dedicated to a program of reductive equalization, sentimental literature seems at an impasse with its own, highly mannered form. Brown has convincingly argued that the latter half of the eighteenth century was caught between the "struggles toward new modes of expression" (3) and the "empty vessels" it fashioned to contain them: caught, that is, in what for the period became an intractable dilemma, the fact "that an author can only express ideas upon learning how to express them, and that new ideas can only develop in consequence of new styles of expression" (7).

Sentimental literature marks a particular place in this impasse in its utter capitulation to the intractable. A poem of Harley's, the narrator tells us in *The Man of Feeling*, was left "on the handle of a tea-kettle . . . ; and as I filled the tea-pot after him, I happened to put it in my pocket in a similar act of forgetfulness" (113). Like the sentimentalized

objects that populate its pages, sentimental literature lays itself without complaint at the mercy of larger, or at least other, forces; forgetfulness is a sign here, not of a freedom from the past, but rather a susceptibility to the forces of the present. Or, if one were to project Freud's thoughts on melancholy onto sentimentalism, one might say that the sentimentalist is forgetful of everything but what has been lost; and that lost thing, which can never be properly named or mourned, remains in a perpetual present. Thus whatever is dynamic in the genre is so against the grain of the internal logic of the sentimental, which is inherently static. If the new sentimental dramas, according to Henry Mackenzie, full of "deep impassioned sensibility" are

> favourable to moral principles and to the practice of virtue . . . ., [they] at best . . . only produce that momentary impression, which passes over the mind like a golden dream, amusing to the fancy, but without any effect on our actual conduct or dispositions. ("Account," 169, 173)

Feeling, for the sentimentalist "leads to more feeling, not to action or knowledge" (Brown 91). Its actions, benevolent or otherwise, are the automatic movements of the somnambulist.[3]

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[3] See also Lothar Fietz (p 90), as well as Robert Markley: "If sentimentality is not a dead end, it is a discrete moment that can provide the impetus only for reflection, not action." Markley means reflection here in the least critical sense possible: Yorick's travels, for example, full of this kind of reflection, "provide neither a satiric anatomy of society's foibles nor an epistemological quest for self-knowledge" (229). In a sense knowledge and action, in fact

This static quality, often taken--and often rightly--for social complacency, has made sentimental fiction particularly prone to accusations of ideological obfuscation. Thus George Haggerty, drawing on Zizek's formulation of ideology as the construction of a social reality "as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel," (Zizek 45), suggests that sensibility is at once a symptom and a fetishization of suppressed relations of dominance and servitude (Haggerty, "Amelia's" 140). Even a parodic work such as Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, opines Robert Markley, is caught within the ideological bind: Sterne

> attempts both to assert the 'timeless' nature of a specific historical and cultural construction of virtue and to suppress his reader's recognition of the social and economic inequalities upon which this discourse of seemingly transcendent virtue is based. (211)

The darker social motives of sentimental benevolence were no less apparent to the period; certainly William Blake saw through to its heart:

> Pity would be no more,
>
> If we did not make somebody Poor;

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the whole range of epistemological and moral problems, are set aside in the sentimental novel in lieu of what are essentially metaphysical problems. Thus, for example, issues of appearance and essence, as they appeared in Fielding, are translated in the sentimental novel into problems of immanence and transcendence. I will take up this translation below, but suffice it to say for the moment that the two poles are no more easily reconciled than they are in Fielding.

> And Mercy no more could be,
>
> If all were as happy as we. ("Human Abstract")

This emotional economy, in any case, must maintain conditions of oppression in order to perpetuate itself--or rather, it justifies these conditions under the aegis of its sterile benevolence. Pocock offers a more properly historical explanation for such quietism, arguing that the economic and political changes of the eighteenth century caused a shift in the standards of public virtue. As the citizenry grew beyond the landed aristocracy, as mobile capital replaced land as the foundation of political economy and as the traditional civic functions became increasingly specialized, the citizen "could no longer engage directly in the activity and equality of ruling and being ruled" and so could no longer be defined by his civic action. But if the citizen

> had to depute his government and defense to specialized and professional representatives, he was more than compensated for his loss of antique virtue by an indefinite and perhaps infinite enrichment of his personality,

so that his relation to the world became "social and not political in character" (*Virtue* 49).[4] Sentimentalism, then, an extreme refraction of this shift, tends to present less a

[4] It has been argued that the prevalence of sentimental literature in Scotland, as well as the attention paid to sentimental tropes such as sympathy in the Scottish Renaissance, is owing in part to the curtailing of the real political power of Scotland after unification. Bereft of political identity, the Scottish elite turned to alternate forms of group identity and found it in the social realm of sentiment. See Mullan (117).

politicized social world than one in which the social community is isolated from the political, and in which the "personally" virtuous are politically impotent. In its extremity, the sentimental presents a world in which power is always in the hands of those least entitled to it, and virtue exercises itself in the narrow circle that remains.

II

Nothing could be further from the comic unity achieved in *Tom Jones*. The movement from *Tom Jones* to *Amelia* might be seen as a disintegration of the will, wherein judgment must make way for accident, and the aesthetic pleasure of the whole is overturned by a sublime capitulation to forces that exceed our limited powers. The narrator of *Tom Jones* judges within the horizon of the whole, and the interventions he makes bring the isolated individual moment into contact with the unifying scheme of plot. The ironic attitude towards representation passes over, not merely the particulars of mere "topography," what in the *Poetics* is called history, but the particulars of the plot itself. It is judgment itself, the mediation of these particulars, that is presented, and it is judgment that is offered up for imitation.

In *Amelia* the ironic distance that preserves this narratorial presence from the dangers of representation--the fine line between appearance and essence, the tendency, in

the absence of a transcendental object of representation, for all representations to gravitate towards the still point of sameness--is disturbed, so that images of the narrator are scattered through the text. The narrator is denied his power of unification and resolution, and what is left is a struggle between the forces of mere contingency and the compromised but still extant narratorial presence. No such struggle exists in Henry Mackenzie's work; rather, the narrator tends to stage, even to take a certain melancholy pleasure in, his own impotence. "Our labour was vain . . . . 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit'" (1). Thus begins the short editorial introduction to *The Man of Feeling*, taking on an "Ecclesiastical" pose that is by no means unusual in sentimental fiction. The "Bitterness of Sorrow" that still opens up narrative in *Amelia* (268), that calls upon narrative to resolve it, is left, quite deliberately, unresolved; and this, perhaps more than any other single feature, is the defining characteristic of the sentimental.

As a result, the moral and political dimension of mimesis is profoundly altered for the English novel towards the end of the eighteenth century. The main, though by no means the only, issue here, in an age of growing historicism, is time. If the sovereign narrator in *Tom Jones* represents the passage of time, in proper Aristotelian fashion, as a single action, and offers up for imitation holistic judgment, the sentimental novel represents the effects and affects of circumstantial events. This difference appears, to a certain

extent, as a difference of narrative forms. In his seminal "Structural Analysis of Narratives," Roland Barthes points out that "narrative institutes a confusion between consecution and consequence, temporality and logic," (98)--"what comes *after* being read in narrative as what is *caused by*" (94)--that, in fact

> there is an atemporal logic lying behind the temporality of narrative . . . . Aristotle himself, in his contrast between tragedy (defined by the unity of action) and historical narrative (defined by the plurality of actions and the unity of time), was already giving primacy to the logical over the chronological. (98)

Fielding's explicit adherence to the Aristotelian scheme in *Tom Jones*, his preference for the type, the concept, over the individual, and his presentation of the extra-narrative and extra-temporal activity of judgment is in stark contrast to what happens in the sentimental novel. We can take the measure of this difference only at the peripheries of Barthes' structuralist claims, for however intentional, however staged the sentimental novel may appear, it nevertheless bears the mark of something extra-structural; and, not surprisingly, there is something distinctly historical about this excess. In the "accident," in what occurs without intention, in the objects with which the sentimental hero identifies himself at the expense of self-identification, sentimental fiction gives primacy, not to

logic, nor even to chronology, but to time. "[F]rom the point of view of narrative," says Barthes, "what we call time does not exist, or exists only functionally . . . . Time belongs not to discourse strictly speaking but to the referent" (99).[5]

If Barthes' terms would seem obscure at best in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it would not be so with his attitude towards time; certainly Burke and Hume would find the relation between Barthes' "discourse" and

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[5] Speaking of the "age of sensibility" generally, his well-known term for the literary attitudes of the latter half of the eighteenth century, Frye identifies an aspect of this referential quality:

> For Classical or Augustan critics the metaphor is a condensed simile: its real or common-sense basis is likeness, not identity . . . . For the Romantic critic, the identification in the metaphor is ideal: two images are identified within the mind of the creating poet. . . . But where metaphor is conceived as part of an oracular and half-ecstatic process [such as one finds in the age of sensibility] there is a direct identification in which the poet himself is involved. . . . the poet feels not '*je pense*,' but '*on me pense*.' (151)

This "direct identification," in which the poet finds him or herself, as it were, brought forth, "thought" by an objective world, the product of an intrusion of the world into the human edifice, might provide something of an answer to Eric Rothstein's contention that Frye's essentially structural analysis cannot do justice to the openness of eighteenth-century texts to an extra-textual realm. "Agency," Rothstein argues, "derives from notions of persons and action, such as textual poetics exclude." Thus works such as *The Man of Feeling* "thematize both the writer's agency and the temporal event of finding and reading a written thing, as well as, in the case of Mackenzie, the play of action and behavior in the tale" (214-15). Limiting the appearance of such events to their thematization, Rothstein effectively occludes the possibility of a more properly "textual" appearance of what is, to be sure, extra-textual. I will forego, here, the discussion of referentiality that is no doubt called for (a discussion that would require a more detailed reading of the past thirty year of literary criticism than I am prepared to make) and say simply that the problem of reference--and this assumption underlies this entire study--cannot be solved, if it can be solved at all, on the level of theme.

"referent" familiar. Both the causal logic of necessary connection and the accumulation of knowledge in tradition establish what are essentially logical, or at least atemporal, structures over and against a time of the referent--a world entirely outside of the realm of human work. From Vico's *New Science*, to Pope's declaration that "The proper study of mankind is man," to Hartley's association psychology, the known is limited strictly to the human and its products. Hume and Burke find in what lies beyond the human--for Barthes, the beyond of language--a threat to human knowledge, and both locate this threat in the singular nature of the event, that is, of time. At the limit of the "resemblance of past and future" where "all experience becomes useless" (Hume, *Human Understanding* 24), in the "wholly new" and "singular" productions of history that forbid the application of those "maxims drawn from the experience of other states and empires" (Burke, *Party* 193), the period faces the time of the "referent."

The sentimental novel blooms in the dark light of this non-human time, in which it confronts what Frederick Bogel, characterizing the late eighteenth century, called "the force of being" (4) that is irreducible to narrative. Along with the shift from a concern with "the mind's effort to know" to "the world's ability to be expressed" (4), Bogel finds a growing tendency for plots to "undermine significant progress, significant action" (41); the time of narrative, in such a climate, proves to be "a medium of mere addition, or inevitability, or aimlessness, and plot . . . a mere string

of episodes, . . . a rambling progress difficult to distinguish from stasis" (42). Certainly sentimental literature eschews narrative unity. The singular thing that threatens the whole, and that might otherwise engender narrative, remains, as it were, unmourned. Narrative unfolds, not as a reinscription of this "transgression" into the law of the whole, but rather languishes in the shadow cast by loss. Thus *The Man of Feeling* begins with an image of this immobility which hangs over the novel as a whole: "There was a languid stillness in the day," says the fictional editor, "and a single crow, that perched on an old tree by the side of the gate, seemed to delight in the echo of its own croaking" (3-4). Here and throughout the sentimental fiction, we find versions of the sameness against which the narrator of *Tom Jones* sets himself, and so also the empty repetitions, the doubles and the splittings that arise in *Amelia*. Under "the pressure of sorrow" (*Julia* 1.xii), the sentimental novel does not mourn or narrate, it repeats.

III

It is conventional for elegiac literature to turn the unifying power of narrative, its absorption of the singular moment into a larger chain of causes, to the task of mourning. William Collins' elegiac "Ode, to a Lady on the Death of Colonel Ross" addresses this aspect of mourning

explicitly. The problem of loss is introduced as an imagistic one: "Still Fancy to Herself unkind, / Awakes to Grief the soften'd Mind, / And points the bleeding Friend." That there is a double play on "Still"--a gesture to a static quality, an oppressive timelessness in the image--is made clear in the penultimate stanza, where the poet questions the efficacy of other images to rid the mind of the persistent and stultifying vision of death:

> If, weak to sooth so soft an Heart,
> These pictur'd Glories nought impart,
> To dry thy constant Tear:
> If yet, in Sorrow's distant Eye,
> Expos'd and pale thou see'st him lie,
> Wild War insulting near:

The substitutive power of the image, however it may gesture towards a transcendental union in the resemblance of all things, cannot interrupt the "constant" return of the same. "The warlike Dead of ev'ry Age," William Duke of Cumberland's prophesied triumph, past and future rise up in effigy to mourn the loss; but these images, however they may attempt to make a balm of history, have, nevertheless, no power over time. Thus in the final stanzas, after a catalogue of substitutive images, narrative is called upon to accomplish what the image cannot.

> Where'er from Time Thou court'st Relief,
> The Muse shall still, with social Grief,
> Her gentlest Promise keep:

Ev'n humble Harting's cottag'd Vale
Shall learn the sad repeated Tale,
And bid her Shepherds weep.

The preference given to the "repeated Tale" over the substituted image is all the more striking in a poet who is arguably guilty, in even the best of his poems, of gratuitous imagery. Repeated even in the most humble corners of the kingdom, narrative replaces the heroic apotheoses with a "social Grief," a public mourning that absorbs the event at once into the logic of narrative and the mimetics of the community. Just as the nation subordinates the vicissitudes of time and the heterogeneity of the moment to the "effects" of a geographical space, so narrative brings the event under the sway of its spatialized and homogenized time.[6] Narrative is offered here, as it was in *Tom Jones*, as the form proper to the absorption of the singular--which invariably appears in the elegy as death--into the general.

But the sentimental novel does not have this attitude towards the event, traumatic or otherwise; it is concerned less with the mechanics of plot than with the mechanics of

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[6] On the relationship between the nation and the narrative form characteristic of the eighteenth century see Benedict Anderson, 25-7. As for the connection between nation and elegy, it is not merely circumstantial. "[T]he essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things" (Renan, 11); a nation has always more or less successfully mourned the violence of its own origin. And as we know, there are always elements that cannot forget. The sentimental novel's rejection of narrative--at precisely the point where it is traditionally called into being, with loss--is part of its more general alienation from the social sphere where narrative, in Collins' "social Grief" for example, acts as a force of cohesion.

emotion. Sir Walter Scott recognized this principle in Mackenzie, whose express goal, he surmised, was

> to reach and sustain a tone of moral pathos, by representing the effect of incidents, whether important or trifling, upon the human mind . . . . This is the direct and professed object of Mackenzie's first work [*The Man of Feeling*], which is in fact no narrative, but a series of successive incidents.

Even his later works, "although assuming a more regular and narrative form, are . . . rather the history of effects produced on the human mind than the narrative of those events themselves" (171-2). Plot becomes secondary, so that the episode and the fragment become at once the dominant narrative form and a sentimental object in itself.

It is important to distinguish this sentimental attitude towards the fragment from that which would be developed later in Romanticism. For Anne Janowitz, the eighteenth-century notion of the "ruin," what remains of a once complete whole, gives over, in Romantic poetics, "to the shape of the fragment--the poetic incompletion . . . . The poem that has broken down may become the poem which is not yet finished . . . . Memory is superseded by longing" (10).[7] The sentimental fragment is, indeed, more ruin than fragment, situating itself neither in relation to incompletion and irony--in which the fragmentary work marks, as it does in Keats, the

[7] On the Romantic fragment see also Lacoue-Labarthe, esp. 39-78.

inherent failure of the human drive for totality, for pure poetic identification--nor, as it does in Wordsworth, in relation to hope. Instead, the fragment acts as a kind of memento, a consolation; not so much of an eroded past, a nationalistic origin or a some kind of golden age, but rather of a shared fate. The sentimentalist, in effect, identifies with the fate of the fragmentary object.

Thus the "editorial" introduction to *The Man of Feeling*, where we learn that the manuscript that is to be the novel was acquired already eaten away by neglect, having been used by a curate for gun wadding. "Disappointment" hangs over the opening like a metaphysical cloud, and the brokenness of the text resonates with the brokenness of sentimental existence:

> When we have been hurrying on, impelled by some warm wish or another, looking neither to the right hand nor the left--we find of a sudden that all our gay hopes are flown; and the only slender consolation that some friend can give us, is to point where they were once to be found. (3)

The sentimental novel, resisting the unity of plot, makes its own episodes into sentimental objects. In fact, the reduction of events into the narrative framework is taken to be a travesty against the integrity of the episode. The "editor" of *Julia de Roubigné* confronts the bundle of letters that make up the novel with this offense in mind: "I found it a difficult task to reduce them into narrative, because they are made up of sentiment, which narrative would destroy"

(1.x). "It is not so much on the story, as sentiment," he continues later, "that their interest with the Reader must depend" (2.vii).[8] The crisis that, conventionally, would open up narrative is bonded instead to sentiment. Occasionally this transfer is obliquely acknowledged. In Brooke's *Fool of Quality* the hero suffers no crisis that is not immediately resolved by his own benevolence, such that the episodic nature of the text, its inability to sustain the complex deferrals of narrative, is in fact a product of his goodness. He hovers above the action "like feathered Mercury, on his god-like errand" (1.187), from which height he looks down on the world. But when an interpolated narrative does appear--some "ingenious confession and sense of past error" (1.223)--it invariably radiates, not so much from a crisis per se, as from the sentimental response to that crisis. Thus the "History of the Man of Letters"--taking up the better part of two long chapters--does not emerge, as it would in *Tom Jones*, out of the judgments, the interruptions of the narrator, but out of hero's static sentimental response:

> One day, while Harry was watching to intercept poor travellers, as eagerly as a fowler watches for the rising of his game, he heard a plaintive voice behind the hedge . . . . He flew across the road,

[8] G. A. Starr discusses this resistance to narrative as a feature of the "anti-Bildungsroman" aspect of the sentimental novel. Presenting individuals who cannot be reconciled to their society, it does not indulge in a sequential progress but rather is caught in a mingled state of stasis and repetition: "its ideal is stasis or regression, which makes for episodic, cyclical narratives that finally go nowhere or back where they began" (501).

> and . . . soon found the unhappy objects he sought for. He stood for some time like a statue, and his compassion became too strong for his utterance. (1.185)

The man of letters, thus rescued, offers up his story as a fee: "since my life is yours, you have, surely, a right to an account of your property" (1.202). If narrative retains here the economy of loss and debt, of exchange and substitution, it does so only as a debt owed to the excesses of sentimental benevolence.

More characteristic of the appearance of narrative in the genre, however, is *The Man of the World*. The only proper narrative of Mackenzie's novels, it concerns itself less with sentiment itself than its destruction at the hands of the villain who, as Kim Michasiw notes, is characterized by "the ability, even the compulsion, to plot" (*Plot* 34).[9] The sentimentalist forswears any pretense of will so that, for instance, the would-be narrator of *Julia de Roubigné* contentedly ascribes the production of the tale to chance: the novel is merely one among "those little histories, which accident enabled me to lay before them" (1.v). The villain, on the other hand, turns accident into something "somewhat more than accidental" (*Man of the World* 1.209). Apparently "trifling circumstances" become, in *The Man of the World*, "a prelude of a design formed by Sindall for the destruction of

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[9] Lothar Fietz finds a similar sentiment in Diderot, in his notion of the villain as the *machiniste*, the "stage setter" of the drama where "the villain functions as the motor for the action" (94).

. . . innocence" (1.235, 253). "[T]he various incidents, which this and the preceding chapter contain," the narrator explains, were in fact "a route the most proper for the success of his [Sindall's] machinations" (1.253). In the hands of the villain, "incidents" become causes of no good effect; a will directing events towards an end is, in the sentimental realm, almost invariably a malicious one.

The antipathy between narrative and sentiment runs the other way as well. In the contemplation of "exalted sentiment" even Montauban, the villain of *Julia de Roubigné*, is reduced to a certain impotence, an inability to narrate: "My life is the sort that produces nothing; I mean in recital" (1.64, 61). Such an inability, in fact, is characteristic of the sentimental heart, which lapses regularly into silence. "Who shall give words to the soul at such a time?" asks Julia de Roubigné, having realized that she must give herself, against her inclinations, to Montauban. "My very thoughts are not accurate expressions of what I feel: there is something busy about my heart, which I cannot reduce into thinking" (1.153). Silence is the favoured mode of sentimental expression, which "insists on the primacy of the ineffable" in contrast to a "confidence in the power of language to incorporate reality" (Alter 167). This inability is, to be sure, one that extends beyond mere words into the larger realm of *logos*. In Book Three of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume banishes reason from the moral realm. Vice and virtue are discovered "by means of some impression

or sentiment they occasion" (470), and action springs out of the approbation or abhorrence produced. "[R]eason has no such influence . . . . Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals" (458).

But Hume, of course, was no sentimentalist. If sentimentalism upholds, with Hume, the exclusivity of the moral sense, it still grants to thought and to language, and not to passion and silence, the power of action. Although the heart leads to benevolence and to individual acts of charity, the world of action and power is tainted with deception and intrigue. It is power, in any case, that speaks:

> To see him, to speak to him thus, while the fate of my life was within the power of a few little words was such torture, as it required the utmost of my resolution to bear. . . . At last, turning fuller towards me, who sat the silent ~~victim~~[10] of the scene . . ., he said, he knew his own unworthiness . . .; but that every endeavor of his future life--the rest was common place; for his sex have but one sort of expression for the exulting modesty of success. (*Julia* 1.154-55)

Language expresses power, the power, ultimately, of the "common place." The conventionality of its signs however, is

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[10] In a gesture to the inadequacy of language the word "victim" is crossed out in the text, ostensibly a letter from Julia to her confidant Maria de Roncilles.

no guarantee of their sociability; language does not unite individuals:

> The desire of communicating knowledge or intelligence, is an argument with those who hold that man is naturally a social animal. It is indeed one of the earliest propensities we discover; but it may be doubted whether the pleasure (for pleasure there certainly is) arising from it be not often more selfish than social. (*Man of Feeling* 106)

The silence against which language articulates itself, then, the passive "victim" of circumstance--whether that be at the hands of the villain or the hands of fate--is defined in opposition to this inauthentic community. With respect to the social order at least--to which the villain, the "man of the world," is invariably linked--silence marks the site of the struggle between the sentimental individual and the law to which he can no longer submit. Anna Barbauld, for example, identifies sympathy and silence as the sentimental response to a society which has becomes exclusive and hermetic; silence, then, is a refusal to partake of the "indecent . . . coarse and vulgar language" of the establishment (*Works* 2.235).[11] As much as a turning away from the lyrical

[11] See Barker-Benfield, 274. Silence, then, is an extreme version of the kind of comic disorder of language that one finds in Smollett, a language that breaks its ties with the social order: "l'ultime refuge de l'individu qui se sont menacé par les pressions de la société" ["the final refuge of the individual, threatened by the constraints of society"] (P.-G. Boucé, *Les Romans de Smollett*, 438; cited in Starr, 503).

possibilities of a self-sufficient individual, silence is a rejection of the order to whose language, to whose law, it can no longer turn to express its purest moments of unity.[12]

The alienation of the sentimental hero from the society of which he is ostensibly a part has as its goal precisely this unity. It presumes a sublime community beyond mere language. Thus Hannah More's apostrophe to sensibility: "To those who know thee not, no words can paint, / And those who know thee, know all words are faint!" (5.336). But the social order, like the world of Jonathan Wild, is to the sentimental heart no more than a force of selfish individualism masquerading as a community. Like the narrator of *Tom Jones* then, sentimentalism sets itself against singularity in the name of an authentic generality,[13] but it does so from the other side of narrative power:

> We would attempt to describe the joy which Harley felt on this occasion, did it not occur to us, that one half of the world could not understand it though we did; and the other half will, by this time, have understood it without any description at all. (*Man of Feeling* 69)

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[12] "There are certain interests which the world supposes every man to have, and which therefore are properly enough termed worldly; but the world is apt to make an erroneous estimate: ignorant of the dispositions which constitute our happiness and misery, they bring to an undistinguished scale the means of one, as connected with power, wealth and grandeur, and of the other with their contraries" (*Man of Feeling* 10).

[13] Marshall Brown makes the "articulation" of part and whole in totality the (failed) object of sensibility. "Totality," he suggests, "was the prize that sensibility tried to purchase too cheaply" (*Preromanticism* 9).

Hegel of all people provides the best commentary on this aspect of sentimentalism. He lays out the terms of this struggle in a section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* entitled "Virtue and the Way of the World." Though it lays claim to universality, what passes itself off as a society is, to the sentimental heart,

> only a universal resistance and struggle of all against one another, in which each claims validity for his own individuality . . . . What seems to be public order, then, is this universal state of war. (§ 379)

Virtue sets itself against the false universality of the way of the world. Knowing itself to be "intrinsically true and good" and knowing "individuality," imposing its law on the social order, "to be the source of perversion," virtue cuts itself off from this perverted public order in silence, with "an appeal to the heart, which *inwardly* says what it means" (§§ 380, 390). "Silence," writes the good hearted Savillon, "is the only throne which adversity has left to princes" (Mackenzie, *Julia* 2.35). The true, inward nobility of a society--this higher moral and political order, raised above the intramundane world of the novel--finds refuge only here. What John Mullan says of Richardson's "virtue . . . , realized in the capacity to feel and display sentiments," is true of sentimental fiction in general: its "vocabulary is powerful because it is not spoken (but only spoken of); it is

everything that punctuates or interrupts speech" (61), cutting across language in its silence.

IV

Although this silence arises in every way out of a novelistic milieu, "developing" out of problems of time and subjectivity as they were articulated in the eighteenth century, and responding to the problem as part of a certain genealogy of the novel, it nevertheless bears a kinship with another silence, the silence of the Greek tragic hero. Certainly there has been a tendency to read the sentimental novel, in particular *Clarissa*, within the tragic tradition. It begins with Richardson himself in his postscript to the novel, in which he argues for the morally affective power of the tale--"designed to inculcate upon the human mind . . . the great lessons of Christianity" (1495)--in terms of eighteenth-century notions of tragedy and poetic justice.[14] The issue is ultimately one of representation. John Dennis sees the object of poetic justice to be "to imitate the divine Providence" (2.49):

> when we shew a Man unfortunate in Tragedy, for not restraining his Passions, we mean that everyone will for such Neglect, unless he timely repents, be

[14] See Sheldon Sacks' essay "*Clarissa* and the Tragic Tradition" on this issue.

> infallibly punish'd by infinite Justice here or hereafter. (2.21)

So too, write Addison, must the good be rewarded in this scheme, so that when writers "represent a virtuous or innocent Person in Distress, they ought not to leave him till they have delivered him out of his Troubles." But, as is well known, this is not Addison's own conclusion, nor is it Richardson's; to "always make Virtue and Innocence happy and Successful" is to defeat the end of tragedy (Addison 322). Addison rejects poetic justice on affective grounds in order to guarantee the "pleasing anguish" that is the proper end of tragedy, and that would be disrupted were we to "know that in the last act, he [the tragic hero] is to arrive at the end of his wishes and desires." And so,

> For this reason, the ancient Writers of Tragedy treated Men in their Plays as they are dealt with in the World, by making Virtue sometimes Happy and sometimes Miserable, as they found it in the Fable which they made choice of, or as it might affect their Audience in the most agreeable Manner. (322-23)

Richardson, who cites Addison approvingly, translates the problem of poetic justice into novelistic terms. Dennis had seen poetic justice as a representational necessity, forced upon us by our mortal state, an inadequate representation of the eternal realm in temporal human terms. Richardson refuses to make this representation, but his

refusal is based less on affectivity, as in Addison, than on mimesis. He preserves, in all its tragedy, the actual dispensation of God,

> whom, placing [mankind] here only in a state of *probation*, he hath so intermingled good and evil as to necessitate them to look forward for a more equal distribution of both. (1495)

But if he does so out of a certain realism, he does so also in the spirit of iconoclasm:

> who that are in earnest in their profession of Christianity but will rather envy than regret the triumphant death of Clarissa, whose piety . . ., whose meekness, whose resignation, HEAVEN *only* could reward. (1498)

The infinite mercy of the divine, as Dennis says, is irreducible to the "state of probation," and only the latter can be represented. The real dispensation of God, the real moral order, is representable only by its absence from the world.

Once again, silence. And this authorial silence radiates out from the moral centre of the novel where it is ensconced, projected into the novel at large. John Mullan finds it in various guises in Richardson, whether it be a matter of "feeling . . . [being] set against speech" (89) or in the curtailing of good works: "fellow-feeling in *Clarissa* has a vocabulary tragically divorced from application" (80-81).

But all of these silences refer back to this problem of poetic justice, to the mimetic justification of the tragic end. However much one might become entangled here in a genealogy of the notion of tragedy, in the often dubious application of Aristotle's reflections on tragedy to literature generally, these historical reflections can do nothing to efface the formal and metaphysical parallels between tragic and sentimental literature. The silence of the latter defines the sentimental hero at once with respect to her fate, against which she cannot act, and against her community, whose "indecent . . . coarse and vulgar language" (Barbauld, *Works* 2.235) she rejects. Without overstating the case, it is possible to find these tropes at work in tragedy as well. Like the sentimental hero, "The tragic hero has only one language that is completely proper to him: silence,"[15] a silence that arises out of a representational crisis that has its origin in the agon between the hero and the law. Thus, says Walter Benjamin, "The content of the hero's achievements belongs to the community, as does speech." But "Since the community of the nation denies these achievements, they remain unarticulated in the hero" (*Origin* 108).[16]

Fielding, too, had recognized, in his own way, this danger, inherent in representation itself, to the community

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[15] Franz Rosenzweig, 77; cited in Benjamin, *Origin* 108.

[16] Samuel Weber comments on this passage: the tragic hero sacrifices himself for a unity "as Man and God, and as a People that embodies both in its Community," standing against the reigning order in a defiant silence, "a positive decision *not to speak* a language whose authority is thereby rejected" (481-82).

which it is supposed to serve. Tragedy brings itself to the very brink of this crisis; it follows its contours, and, to a certain extend, resolves them. As such, it tarries, as Richardson does, at the very edge of representation. Timothy Reiss, whose *Tragedy and Truth* follows the tragic into eighteenth-century England, quotes Johnson's life of Dryden, to the effect that Dryden "'delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning'" (3; Johnson 194). Thus,

> Tragedy appears ultimately as the discourse that grasps and encloses a certain 'absence of significance' that may well be common to all discursive acts at the 'inception' of the discourse, making such acts possible, and that renders *im*possible . . . the meaningfulness of any such discourse. (*Tragedy* 3)

The silence of the tragic hero then, is, not unlike Fielding's distrust of representation, part of a more general "failure of discourse" (14), a sign at once of the limit and the origin of community as such. To inhabit this silence, as both the sentimental and the tragic heroes do, is to put oneself at the origin of a community not yet formed.

V

But before we follow this any further we should take stock how the period itself articulated this relationship between

tragedy and sentiment. The link established between sentiment and tragedy in *Clarissa* is carried on into the later phases of the sentimental novel. In the eighteenth century, suggests Sheldon Sacks, "the soul of tragedy transmitted from drama to narrative" (196); Mackenzie himself says that the "novel . . . is sometimes a kind of tragedy" (*Works* 5.238). According to the scholar Henry James Pye, writing in 1792, drama is no longer anything more than distraction for the present age--"it is impossible for any people to be less interested in the amusements of the theatre than we are" (142n)--, so that "Dramatic representation . . . neither occupies the time or attention enough to have any great, or permanent energy, on our passions" (145).[17] For his discussion of catharsis, therefore, he turns to the effects of the sentimental novel for examples, to "the young woman who is for ever weeping over the distresses of a Clarissa, or a Sydney Biddulph [sic]" (148).

Catharsis takes on a similarly sentimental tone in Edward Taylor's 1774 *Cursory Remarks on Tragedy*:

> terror and pity . . . inspire that sympathetic distress, that delicate melancholy which we feel for the misfortune of others, more pleasing to a

[17] Mackenzie also comments on the decline of tragic drama in England. See *Henry Mackenzie, Letters to Elizabeth Rose*, 72-3. See also, more recently, James W. Johnson who posits that the "pallid quality" of eighteenth-century tragedies is due in part at least to the neoclassical predisposition for generality, which worked against the grain of a tragic ethos that made singularity its expressed object and driving force (174-6). The novel, with its well-known "rejection--or at least attempted rejection--of universals" (Watt 12), was far better suited to tragic representation.

> sensible mind than the noisier and more transient joys of mirth. (1)

The fall of the tragic hero activates the tender passions, for "by a sympathy congenial to our natures, we feel for his unhappy situation" (22). Mackenzie is equally explicit. In a paper read before the Royal Society of Edinburgh, "An Account of the German Theatre," he links the flowering of the German tragedy to a general rise in "the taste for sentimental and pathetic writing" (158).[18] The new German theatre marks the "prevalence of highly refined sentiment" (158) on the continent, acting on "the general feelings of our nature" (163). The epilogue to his own avowed tragic drama, *The Prince of Tunis*, claims the tragic stage for sentiment: "Where Pity's soft luxurious tear should flow, / Should Passion warm, should conscious Virtue glow" (*Works* 8.200).

If Germany experienced a renewed interest in tragedy, in its theatres and in its criticism--the German encounter with tragedy during this period, in Lessing, Schiller and Goethe, and later in Hölderlin, Schelling and Hegel, remains a defining moment in the theory of tragedy--in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Britain seemed prepared to absorb the tragic situation into sentimental fiction.[19] The

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[18] The relationship between the English and the German stage in the eighteenth-century is a complex one. George Lillo's *The London Merchant* was very influential in Germany mid-century, though by the end of the century the flow of influence was reversed. See Fietz for a brief account of the various lines of influence, translation and adaptation between the two countries.

[19] Of course, Germany suffered from no lack of sentiment, as a novel like *Werther* well attests; nor could it be said that

occasionally superficial account of sentiment in tragic terms must be measured against the real parallels between the German critical account of tragedy and the critical reflections on sentimental fiction in England. Thus if Hegel saw

> The heroes of Greek classical tragedy . . . confronted by circumstances in which, after firmly identifying themselves with the one ethical 'pathos' . . . , they necessarily come into conflict with the opposite but equally justified ethical power, (*Aesthetics* 2.1226)

Mackenzie saw in the novel a similar agon: a "contrast between one virtue or excellence and another," a

> war of duties which is to be found in many of them, particularly in that species called sentimental . . . . [Here] the duty to parents is contrasted with ties of friendship and of love; the virtue of justice, of prudence, of economy, are put in competition with the exertions of generosity, of benevolence, of compassion. (*Works* 5.181-82)

The difference lies in the role given, in sentimental fiction, to feeling, to which is annexed, ultimately, the

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sentiment was not a defining feature of German tragedy. What I find interesting here is that, without a self-conscious return to the tragic form--as was the case in Germany--sentimentalism in Britain consciously retained some of the tragic ethos. But regrettably the changes which must occur under the distinct historical pressures of the period, as well as the formal pressures of the novel form, the ways in which tragedy was reformed to serve new political needs, new notions of community and of subjectivity, remains beyond the scope of this work.

tragic trope of fate. It is in this light that Scott sees the tragic mechanism at work in Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné*, where "naturally virtuous" characters are led towards catastrophe by

> the excess and overindulgence of passions and feelings, in themselves blameless, nay praiseworthy . . . coming into fatal though fortuitous concourse with each other . . . . The side of each sufferer is pierced by the very staff on which he leant, and the natural and virtuous feelings which they at first most legitimately indulged, precipitate them into error, crimes, remorse, and misery. (172-4)[20]

For Mackenzie too this "rivalship" often resolves itself into the destructive "enthusiasm of sentiment," ending in the substitution of "certain impulses and feelings . . . in place of real practical duties" (*Works* 5.182-83). The excesses of sensibility were accused of worse. "Perhaps if we were to inquire into the remote cause of some of the blackest crimes which stain the annals of mankind," suggests Hannah More, "profligacy, murder, and especially suicide, we might trace them back to the original principle, an ungoverned sensibility" (3.245). Oliver Goldsmith, who made this destructive excess a defining feature of the sentimental heart, sees it as a false generality, one which, responding

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[20] Compare the eulogy at the end of Frances Sheridan's *Memoires of Miss Sidney Bidulph*: "Thus . . . by a series of fatal events, each of which was occasioned by motives in themselves laudable, has one of the bravest and most noble minded men on earth been cut off in the prime of his youth" (464).

in its "universal sympathy" to "the slightest distress, whether real or fictitious" (*Vicar* 47), hides behind the appearance of community a selfish individuality: "That friendship," says Sir William Honeywell of his nephew's excessive good nature in *The Good Natur'd Man*,

> which is exerted in too wide a sphere, becomes totally useless . . . . They who pretend most to this universal benevolence, are either deceivers, or dupes. Men who desire to cover their private ill-nature, by pretending regard for all; or, men who, reasoning themselves into false feelings, are more earnest in pursuit of splendid, than of useful virtues. (51)

But Goldsmith's comic parodies of the sentimentalist, operating from the perspective of a single unifying duty, lacks the tragic tension, the conflict "between one virtue or excellence and another" that defines the sentimental novel for Mackenzie and for Scott.[21] This tension plays itself out

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[21] Goldsmith would not necessarily have been in a position to recognize this conflict. See his essay "On Justice and Generosity" in *The Bee*, which, if it is largely borrowed from French sources, is nevertheless consistent with his comic outlook; that is, his sense of a undivided and unconflicted moral order:

> Justice . . . . comprehends the practice of every virtue which reason prescribes, or society should expect. Our duty to our maker, to each other, and to ourselves, are fully answered, if we give them what we owe them. Thus justice, properly speaking, is the only virtue, and all the rest have their origin in it.

As for "charity, and generosity," they "are not in their own nature, virtues; and if ever they deserve the title, it is owing to justice. Without such a moderator . . . charity [might become] imprudence, and generosity mistaken profusion" (*Works* 1.406). It is arguable that Goldsmith's parodic

in the favour of sentimental excess in *Julia de Roubigné*, where the nominally social institution of marriage is shattered by the excesses of Montaubon's jealousy. In him we find a new kind of villain, distinct from the willful manipulators of accident, the Lovelaces and the Sindalls, one who, instead, like the sentimental hero, is at the mercy of passions and feelings that, however good in themselves, are warped by the agons of worldly existence into their opposite.

Sentimental nature has, in this, a determinative quality, a kind of fate. "[I]s it indeed the possession of such hearts that creates their misfortunes?" Julia asks rhetorically (*Julia* 2.149). But if there is a fate at work it is, to be sure, without much variation, just a,s if there is a sentimental correlative to *hamartia*, it is limited in these novels to the more or less innocent denials of the inexorable power of the heart. Thus Montauban, who will succumb to the very mechanism he here dismisses:

> If they say, that affection is a mere involuntary impulse, neither waiting the decisions of reason, or the dissuasives of prudence, do they not in reality degrade us to machines, which are blindly actuated by some uncontrollable power? (1.160-61)

For better or for worse, as it turns out, "they" are right. Ancient tragedy presents in fate a mythic determination, a "superior necessity" imposed on the hero (Vernant 53) by

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response to sentimental literature arises out of this insistence, against the sentimental ethos, on a unified moral order, a view more congenial to Augustan satire than to late eighteenth-century uncertainty.

virtue of his place--mortal, singular, limited--in a cosmic order that is ruthlessly immortal, unified and infinite. The tragic hero cannot help being caught between creaturely nature and human consciousness, between, as Benjamin would have it, fate and character. As such, suggests Jean-Paul Vernant, "tragedy can be seen as a particular stage in the development of the categories of action and agency," and the site of a tension between "a 'self' and something greater that is divine at work at the core of the decision" (71, 75).

The sentimental novel similarly occupies a particular stage in the development of notions of action and agency, questioning, as it does, the moral efficacy of the modern subject, cut off from the world as it is in its representations. But if, like tragedy, it sets its hero against the language and the generalizing power of the community, and if, like tragedy, it puts the hero at the crossroads of agency and fate, it does so, as it were, from the other side. Agency, and the self to which it is annexed, is now looked upon with suspicion. A certain fateful mechanism is now in ascendancy which, if it does not demand total capitulation, does, as Montaubon learns, command respect. The sentimentalist, far from entering into the tragic agon of fate and character, identifies with the impotence of the inanimate world; the sentimental hero experiences the struggle from the side of fate.

VI

Schelling's account of fate, published in 1795, will go some way towards justifying my use of the term, as well as offer an opportunity to clarify what place the sentimental claims in the tragic ethos. Schelling is speaking of the tragic conflict, which, he says, is ultimately

> the contest between human freedom and the power of the objective world in which the mortal must succumb necessarily if that power is absolutely superior, if it is fate. And yet he must be punished for succumbing because he did not succumb without a struggle. That the malefactor who succumbed under the power of fate was punished, this tragic fact was the recognition of human freedom. (193)

Fate, for Schelling, is the force of objective necessity set over and against human freedom which, in accepting punishment for a failure which is inevitable, identifies itself as a force of consciousness over and against this objective power. No such consciousness rises up in opposition in the sentimental novel; or rather, when it does, it is clearly only the illusion of freedom, the freedom of the libertine. The struggle takes place, instead, exclusively in the field of the "objective"; in the field, in fact, quite literally, of the object. For sentimentalism it is not the mythic realm of the gods, but rather a mechanized natural order that holds

sway. The "passions and feelings, in themselves blameless, nay praiseworthy," that come "into fatal though fortuitous concourse with each other" (Scott 172) do indeed, as Montaubon fears, make of humanity "machines, which are blindly actuated by some uncontrollable power" (*Julia* 1.160-61). "Even comparatively late in the century," observes John Mullan, "there is scarcely a separation between vocabularies of 'feeling' and 'passion,' on the one hand, and of anatomically considered mechanism, on the other" (220).

The relationship between sentimentalism and mechanism has been well documented. From the perspective of medicine and physiology, and despite the competing versions of the genealogy of sensibility--which certainly extend beyond this narrow field--mechanism has been amply shown to participate in the same discursive space as sensibility, to forecast many of its moments and to have been instrumental in its development.[22] G. S. Rousseau claims that "no novel of sensibility could appear until a revolution in knowledge concerning the brain, and consequently its slaves, the nerves had appeared" (153), and he goes some way towards delineating this "revolution," which he sees emerging out of the works of Locke and his sometime teacher Thomas Willis. Feeling, both physical and emotional, becomes a product of "the Impulse,

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[22] The first serious attempt to provide a historical account of the development of sentimentalism was R. S. Crane's "Genealogy." Modifications, attacks and defenses include Bredvold; G. S. Rousseau; Greene; de Bruyn; Barker-Benfield, esp. 1-37; and Mullan, esp. 201-40.

Motion or Action of Bodies" acting on the nerves.[23] The body, "a System of Veins, Nerves, and Arteries" subject to the mechanical laws of nature, becomes the locus of the "higher" functions, so that, for instance,

> All those sublime Flights and extatick Visions, that elevate the Soul above itself, whereby it towers above the Clouds . . . owe their rise to this due Modulation of the Solids, to this happy structure of the Fibres.[24]

For all of the differences between Shaftesbury's "Moral Sense" and the materialism of these notions of the body, the two systems were close enough to merge without a struggle in the sentimental novel. Thus, for Shaftesbury, "The case is the same in mental or moral subjects, as in ordinary bodies, or the common subjects of sense" (251).[25] However analogical this may appear at first glance, the Moral Sense, that curious reaction to Lockean epistemology, was never far from a kind of determinism, so that one could readily say that God had

> implanted in our very Frame and Make a compassionate Sense of the Sufferings and Misfortunes . . . of our Fellow-Creatures in

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[23] George Cheyne, *The English Malady*, 2 vols. (London, 1733), I. 71. Cited in Rousseau, 155.

[24] Nicholas Robinson, *A New System of the Spleen, Vapours, and Hypochondriack Melancholy* (London, 1729), 56-7. Cited in Mullan, 229.

[25] See Van Sant for a discussion of the fusion of literal and metaphorical reliance on physiology in the eighteenth-century language of sensibility.

> Circumstances of Distress, [and] we are naturally, I had almost said, mechanically inclined to be helpful to them.[26]

But even in the most extreme mechanism--which, by the end of the century, had been softened by an importation of vitalism[27]--the body was understood to be a moral force. "[T]rop instruit sur la Nature de ces actions," "le Matérialiste convaincu, quoi que murmure sa propre vanité, qu'il n'est qu'une Machine, ou qu'un Animal, ne maltraitera point ses semblables" (La Mettrie 196-97).[28] The sensibility that underlies virtue, and that is held responsible, variously, for melancholy, for physical and mental susceptibility, for enthusiasm and luxurious excess, for moral superiority and for libertinism, does so only by virtue of its passivity in the face of the mechanical forces that produce it.

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[26] Richard Fides, *Fifty-two Practical Discourses on Several Subjects* (London: 1720), 112-13. Cited in Crane 225.

[27] This shift, from a reductive mechanism to a "crypto-vitalism" served to consolidate the place of the body in the moral sphere. It amounted to "a move from Cartesian dualism to monism, with the nervous system itself as the bridge which possessed attributes of both mind and body" (Lawrence 24-5). See also Schofield, Brown and Yolton. As Michasiw points out, even a re-writing of the mechanistic principle as a kind of organicism, as in Frances Hutcheson, produces only an "analogical shift which mollifies but does not dissolve the chains of circumstance which drag man into moral action" (75).

[28] "[T]oo well instructed as to the nature of those actions," "the Materialist, convinced, against the grumblings of his vanity, that he is no more than a machine or an animal, will not maltreat his kind."

By the second half of the eighteenth century, sympathy had become the primary force of moral sensibility. If neither Hume nor Smith was prone to reduce sympathy to a mere physiological effect, it was nevertheless easy enough to speak of it as a determinative force, to refer to a "fatal and mechanical Sympathy" by which one "cannot but pity and commiserate the afflicted."[29] Even in cases where "the changes produced in the body are owing to the passions of the mind; yet the mind is only affected through the intervention of the optic and auditory nerves," that is, "instances of the general sympathy that extends through the whole nervous system."[30] Regardless of the mimetic activity occasionally assumed in the theory of sentiments--Adam Smith, famously, defined sympathy as "that perfect harmony and correspondence of sentiments" (44)--there is something profoundly anti-mimetic in all this, particularly when the mechanical aspect is brought into the foreground. The mechanical systems of the likes of David Hartley depended on the denial of "an inherent correspondence between the outside world and the order in which each human mind reconstructed its experiences." Instead, "Thought was seen as an event, something occasional and accidental, a random possibility that occurred by chance or by physiological (or mechanical) reaction" (Morrison 245). In the absence of an overarching order of resemblance, and

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[29] Samuel Parker, *Demonstration of the Divine Authority of the Law of Nature* (London: 1691), 55. Cited in Crane, 224. On the physiological basis of sympathy see Lawrence, 27-33.

[30] Robert Whytt, *Works* (Edinburgh: 1768), 493; cited in Lawrence, 28.

constitutionally unable to ground what remains in a transcendental subjectivity, the mechanical world, however nominally referred at times to some distant divinity, puts the human at the mercy of the event.

VII

It is in this respect that the body can be seen to act as a fate, and it is in the light of this "objective" force that the tragic agon unfolds in the sentimental novel. There was, of course, a debate implicit in the materialist proposition. As John Yolton has demonstrated, the scientific debates in eighteenth-century England around physiology, around the materiality or immateriality of the soul, around the mechanical, material or supernatural causes of human action, tended to organize themselves around issues of freedom and necessity. Thus, for example, John Leng in his 1717 Boyle Lecture:

> those men who are unwilling to allow the Being of any GOD, but the Universe, or any spiritual Substance, or any thing distinct from Matter and Motion, do likewise of consequence deny the power of beginning Motion, or what in other words is called *Freewill*, to be in Man. (73)

But in the sentimental novel this debate has been settled on the side of matter. What remains is the debate, if such it

can be called, within matter, within a field of circumstance and accident. It is a common enough accusation levelled against sentimentalism, as has been noted, that its "response" is antithetical to real action. Hannah More was neither the first nor the last to observe that the victim of an "ungoverned sensibility" may find out too late that "pleasure has blocked up the avenues through which misery used to find its way to her heart" (*Works* 3.249). Consider only Mackenzie's account of Hamlet's inaction:

> The basis of Hamlet's character seems to be an extreme sensibility of mind, apt to be strongly impressed by its situation, and overpowered by the feelings which that situation excites. Naturally of the most virtuous and most amiable dispositions, the circumstances in which he was placed unhinged those principles of action, which, in another situation, would have delighted mankind. (*Works* 4.375)

But if the sentimental heart, like Hamlet, is often in possession of a "sensibility too exquisite to allow of determined action" (4.377), it can also be said--and this is more accurate at least to the spirit of the genre--that what its tears mourn is the very possibility of action. On the level of the novel, they might be said to mourn the passing of the organizing narratorial consciousness, but in the context of the quotidian sufferings in which they excel,

sentimental tears arise simply in the face of inability: at the limit of speech, and at the limit of action.

Sentimental literature--and this is Mullan's central thesis--is about the impossible striving for a social order in "an uncorrupted social being" (15), a longing for a mediation between the action of the individual and the community to which he or she belongs. The decline in the hope of this possibility that I tried to show in Fielding's *Amelia* has become crystallized in the sentimental novel proper, and the same force that cancels out the interruptive power of narratorial judgment, imposing on its mediative activity and driving a wedge between the unity embodied in plot and the moral subject, this same principle is at the heart of the sentimental novel. But what remains, for the most part, at the level of form in *Amelia* is widely thematized in sentimental literature. Accident, circumstance and chance, more than the characters themselves, villains or otherwise, are the "free" and active forces in these novels.

These forces remain implicit at the level of form, of course. The horizontal mimesis characteristic of the novel flourishes in a genre that makes all things equal in the face of circumstance. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes, in which "All things come alike to all," is scattered across the sentimental landscape:

> neither prudence, foresight, nor even the best disposition that the human heart is capable of, are of themselves sufficient to defend us against the

> inevitable ills that sometimes are allotted, even to the best. 'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' (Sheridan, 11-12)[31]

George Barnwell, the unlucky hero of George Lillo's *The London Merchant*, finds himself similarly at the mercy of circumstance: "Friendship and all engagements cease as circumstances and occasions vary" (II.ii). "Is virtue inconsistent with itself?" ponders Barnwell later in the play,

> Or are vice and virtue only empty names? Or do they depend on accidents beyond our power to produce and prevent, wherein we have no part and yet must be determined by the event? (II.xiv)

Again, with accident, we can trace a debt to and a reorganization of the tragic ethos. Is the tragic ending, asks Elder Olson

> made necessary or probable by the antecedent action? It is not. As a matter of fact the catastrophe *seldom* is in the great tragedies of Shakespeare. What in the plot necessitates that

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[31] The Gothic, which shares many of the sentimental tropes, also finds some inspiration in Ecclesiastes. In this genre that finds its very pulse in the demonic forces of the earth, the destructive passions and the sublime threat, the levelling wisdom of this book takes on a familiar tragic tone:

> To Melmoth 'nothing was new under the sun.' Talent to him was a burden. He knew more than man could tell him, or woman either. Accomplishments were a bauble--the rattle teazed his ear, and he flung it away. Beauty was a flower he looked on only to scorn, and touched only to wither. (Maturin, *Melmoth* 360)

> Emilia should come too late to save Desdemona? Hamlet's death-wound, poisoned though the sword is, is a mere possibility of combat. . . . The catastrophe is no more probable than its contrary. (207)

This line of inquiry goes back at least as far as Hegel, and it is worth revisiting his analysis for at least one clarification. A. C. Bradley summarizes it nicely. In modern tragedy in particular, the catastrophe will often arise out of "unhappy circumstances and outward accidents," the products of an existence lived "in a scene of contingency and finitude." It is best, however, "when circumstance and accident are so depicted that they are felt to coincide with something in the hero himself," when what "seems to fall on him by chance is also within him" (80).[32]

One might say that it is by virtue of his or her extreme sensibility that the sentimental hero is susceptible to accident, that sentiment renders one too delicate for existence. But this observation, while no doubt true, hides the presence of a kind of *amor fati* that binds the sentimental hero to the accidental. Thus, for Joseph W. Krutch sentimental fiction is

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[32] Vernant finds a similar convergence of "chance" and the tragic hero in ancient Greek tragedy: "The hero of the drama is certainly faced with a superior necessity that is imposed upon him and that directs him, but the impulse of his own character prompts him to appropriate this necessity, to make it his own to the point of willing, even of passionately desiring what, in another sense, he is forced to do" (53).

> that vulgar sort of demi-tragedy produced when goodness is substituted for greatness as the necessary qualification of the hero and when, as a result, the catastrophe reveals him, not going down in rebellious defeat, but tamely acquiescent to the forces which destroy him. (158; cited in Sacks, 205)

Slander aside, Krutch puts his finger on one of the more central and enigmatic of the sentimental tropes. In a reversal of the coincidence of fate and character typical of the tragic, where the hero's "own character prompts him to appropriate this necessity [that is imposed on him]" (Vernant 53), the sentimental hero gives up his will in order to be imposed upon by the world. Werther--perhaps the most influential and widely imitated of the sentimental heroes[33]--derides those who set barriers between themselves and accident, those who are "highly skilled in averting future dangers in good time" (Goethe 33). Planning and plotting, if they are not the activities of a villain, are the work of one incapable of the heights of sentiment.

VIII

In the capitulation to the mechanical forces of the body, in the tragic embracing of circumstance, in the generally static

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[33] See Tompkins, 84.

quality of the genre, the sentimental dwells more with the inanimate than with the living. Denied any real relation with his fellow man, the sentimental hero turns finally to the object for companionship. Comparing the "age of sensibility" to Aristotelian tragedy, Frye finds that in tragedy, in which "there is a strong sense of literature as aesthetic product, ... pity and fear are detached from the beholder by being directed towards objects." In the case of the "literature of process" however--Frye's famous characterization of the literature of the latter half of the eighteenth century--"pity and fear become states of mind without objects." Fear without an object, he posits, expresses itself in the sublime, while "Pity without an object . . . expresses itself in an imaginative animism, or treating everything in nature as though it had human feelings" (149-50). In fact, the anthropomorphic flow from the human to the animal and the inanimate also returns along the same path, so that the human comes to identify itself with the thing. In "the bustle of pursuits," Mackenzie explains in an essay "On the attachment to inanimate objects," we lose this identification, this "relation which we owe to every object we have long been acquainted with" (*Works* 4.254). This sympathetic tie to the object is anathema to the way of the world; it is a

> pensive pleasure, which men who have retired from the world . . . or whom particular circumstances have somehow estranged from it, will be particularly fond of indulging. (254)

For like the sentimentalist, the object is marked by time; in "a withered stump," in a "lethern elbow-chair, patched and tattered" (252) the sentimentalist finds "a silent chronicle of past hours" (254).

William Shenstone, whom Geoffrey Tillotson calls "a pioneer in sentimentalism," goes some way towards clarifying the nature of this relation with the object world: "inanimates, toys, utensils," writes Shenstone, "seem to merit a kind of affection from us, when they have been our companions through various vicissitudes" (cited in Tillotson 109). But the shared personal history that often accompanies this relation to the world of objects must not be taken as the essential element of this relation. A genre, quite as much as a historical period, is not always sufficiently aware of its own impulses to express them with undiluted critical clarity. At most, this shared history separates one or two things from the confused mass of objects that populates every corner of worldly existence. Once raised up like this, the object projects the very passivity in the face of circumstance that is typical of the inanimate thing, familiar or not. It is that in the sentimentalist which is subject to a hard mechanistic fate that bonds him to the object, and it is in light of this shared fate that the mark of time on the object can be most clearly read. The accumulated "vicissitudes," the "silent chronicle" of the past inscribed on the sentimental object is nothing less than the trace of the event, of fate, on the world. Stripped of the explicit

political character it has in Burke, or of the moral character it has in Fielding, the event inhabits the sentimental as a force of nature.[34]

The "cavity worn by time" that marks every sentimental object turns out, on the final page of *The Man of Feeling*, to be the final resting place of the sentimentalist (132). It is from this hollow in an old tree, the narrator tells us, beneath which Harley is finally buried, that the two companions had sat, "and counted the tombs" (132). For all of its references to the world beyond death, to the justice that, lacking in the fallen mundane world, must reign there triumphant, the sentimental ethos does not allow for such transcendence. Death is the final realization of the immanent material forces, the fate, that reign over the sentimental realm. The mimetic crisis that, in Fielding, drove a wedge

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[34] Much might be said here of the fetish status of the sentimental object, and, in a larger context, about the development, over the course of the eighteenth century, of a certain "objectivization" of social relations. Pope's Cave of Spleen, where "living Teapots stand, one Arm held out," where Jars sigh and Goose-pyes talk, however much it may be a parody of melancholic delusions, equally shows an early recognition of the commodity fetishism that Marx would later see arising in eighteenth-century England. "It is nothing," says Marx, faced of course with a more pervasive and calcified form of this syndrome in nineteenth-century Britain, "but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (165). Pocock is, as always, helpful in putting this in context for the period. Speaking of the decline in the possibility of an active civic virtue over the course of the century, he notes that, in exchanging the political for the social sphere, the subject becomes "the product of the multiplying relationships, with both things and persons, in which he became progressively involved. . . . [A] right to things became a way to the practice of virtue" (49-50). Sentimentalism, with its particular problematic relationship to society and to political community, marks an extreme moment of these "multiplying relationships."

between appearance and essence takes on, in the sentimental novel, what is in fact a more ontological division, that between immanence and transcendence. If, as is the case in Fielding, the disappearance of a world in which mimesis is at once a form of knowledge and of goodness makes exemplarity a potentially dangerous activity, this is so only because representation has lost its status as a transcendental mode. Philippe Ariés finds this tendency at work on a more basic and material level in the second half of the eighteenth century, in

> a desire for simplicity in the things connected with death. At first this desire expresses . . . the traditional belief in the fragility of life and the corruption of the body. Later, it reveals an anxious sense of nothingness, which finds no solace in hope of the beyond, although this hope continues to be expressed. (322)

If Fielding must negotiate the web of appearance in order to uncover the essence--which for him is ultimately a moral essence, the good--sentimentalism is faced with the same problem with respect to immanence. The immanent creaturely force all but effaces the connection with the transcendental realm, whether that be in the form of an autonomous transcendental subject or the hope of a divine justice beyond the grave. Instead, an almost mythic nature bonds itself to the human. Reduced to a cipher in *Tom Jones*, a projection of the triumphant mind, nature returns in the sentimental novel

as the very antithesis of this creative generalizing power. Regardless of the scientific trappings of the mechanistic account of nature, regardless of the apparent grid of knowledge placed over the natural world, nature remains utterly aloof from the human. Its mechanical definition is ultimately negative.

As such, nature inevitably, if inauthentically, steps into the role of the transcendental, organizing and grounding the mimetic order. It does so most explicitly in the language of the body that ostensibly replaces the intentionality of ordinary language; the gesture, in effect, becomes a testament to the bond between the inanimate natural order and the human. This natural language solves the problem of appearance and representation, superficially at least. Thus Mullan can say of Sterne that "The gestures by which feeling is communicated are, in his fiction, the prerogative of those who cannot be imitated because innocence is inimitable" (200). The substitution is so explicit that Sterne can refer to "the several turns of looks and limbs, with all their inflections and delineations" as a "short hand" for verbal dialogue, one capable of "translations" (*Sentimental* 79). But if sentimental silence shows that the experiential world at its most powerful and profound cannot be represented, the gesture in fact marks the equally impassable distance between the representation and the world of action. Eyes turn towards heaven, bodies are cast to the ground, prostrate characters "look meaningfully" and embracing ones "start back."

> The gestures in which sensibility expresses itself . . . raise the question of the relationship of these books to life. Something must be allowed for the influence of the stage and of the emphatic style of acting developed in large play-houses; for it is not credible that any young Englishman, however penitent, indicated his state of mind by casting himself flat among the flower-beds of a public garden in Bath, as does Sir William Harrington,

the eponymous hero of a novel by Thomas Hull (Tompkins 10). Though wrong to make the theatre the origin of these gestures, Tompkins puts her finger on a defining feature of sentimental representation: the gesture is in no way a representation of the world, least of all the world of action. Rather, it represents a chasm that opens up between fiction and the moral world it *ought* to produce. Thus the Conclusion to Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*:

> He was buried in the place he had desired. It was shaded by an old tree, the only one in the church-yard, in which was a cavity worn by time. . . . The last time we passed there, methought he looked wistfully on that tree; there was a branch of it, that bent towards us, waving in the wind; he waved his hand, as if he was mimicking its motion. There was something predictive in his look! (132)

What he predicts is of course his death, when this mimetic "prediction," in which he declares his bond with the natural world, with the world of objects, is finally fulfilled. At what must stand for the climactic moment in a novel singularly without action--Mackenzie himself called it "simple to Excess; for I would have it as different from the Entanglements of a Novel as can be" (*Letters* 18)--mimesis brings the human into contact, not with the transcendental, but with the inanimate, with death in its most literal and final aspect.

The inhumanity of this sameness, its opposition to the triumphant mind and to the community of judgment that this mind engenders in Fielding, is on the way to being thematized in the sentimental novel. The levelled world of the sentimental goes beyond the "levelled" mimetic order that Johnson fears in the novel, where the "exactness of resemblance" (*Works* 3.20) between the representation and the world effectively cancels out the moral power of exemplarity, for there is, strictly speaking, no representational tie between the sentimental realm and the world. It is not a "realistic" genre; in every conceivable way, the sentimental retreats from the world into silence and stasis. But the retreat, however much it may be a retreat from representation in the ordinary sense, brings with it certain mimetic effects. Harley's gesture provides a glimpse of this. The bond it expresses between an immanent natural world and the human that cannot transcend it is equally a repetition within

the field of the same. At the limit of representation, of knowledge and of intentionality, repetition, mechanical and extra-human, lays claim to the order of mimesis.

But it is only with the Gothic novel, which develops out of and alongside the sentimental novel, that this repetition is given full and unambiguous expression. The two genres share a number of traits. Like the sentimental, the Gothic presents a passive virtue at the mercy of those who plot and plan, who try to make the event their own; so too, the inanimate world plays a central role in the Gothic. But the Gothic, not surprisingly, states its case in the extreme. Where the sentimental, for the most part, rests in the static sameness of impotent virtue, the Gothic takes on this sameness from the other side, repetition. And it is here, finally, that the break-down of the judging subject reaches its apex; the Gothic is the high-water mark of that sameness against which the narrator of *Tom Jones* set his judgments, and as such the end of a cycle in the concept and activity of mimesis. The Gothic reinstates the divine order of similarity, a world organized around mimesis, but it does so, as Lukács says, in "a world abandoned by God" (*Theory* 92)--and in such a world "the wish to achieve immediate silence must inevitably lead to mere stuttering" (91).

Chapter Four:
Gothic Nature

I

More by circumstance than by nature, the Gothic is a heterogeneous genre, but if it has a unifying feature, one that spans across its various modes and forms, it is its concern with the beyond of the human, with the forces that impinge upon but do not necessarily enter the realms of consciousness and society. Knowledge and experience are thus of no use in the Gothic world, and with them, as Coleridge saw, morality too must inevitably be abandoned. "[A] romance is incapable of exemplifying a moral truth," he writes in his 1797 review of Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*. "Human prudence can oppose no sufficient shield to the power and cunning of supernatural beings" (*Works* 11.1.59). Coleridge is not merely playing the concerned moralist here, for it is at this point of excess, where the human comes into contact with the world beyond its limits, that good and evil become indistinguishable and the Faustian villain of Maturin or Mary Shelley and the trembling heroines of Radcliffe come together. In fact, the villain and the heroine share a great deal in the Gothic which, in an extra-moral sense at least, subjects everyone and everything to the same fate. As in the sentimental, all comes alike to all; or rather, putting it in

mimetic terms that go farther to characterize the genre, "Everything corresponds to everything else" (Todorov 112). And yet, the effect of this vulnerability to a world beyond the self, and therefore the status of this world, is utterly different. The sentimental bows its head under the weight of the event; the Gothic takes its measure.

It does so, in part at least, in its critical attitude towards Enlightenment rationality and subjectivity. It is not, as Terry Castle would have it, a matter of a "romantic individualism," "a growing sense of the ghostliness of other people" where the "other is . . . reduced to a phantom--a purely mental effect, an image, as it were, on the screen of consciousness" ("Spectralization" 237).[1] The modern Enlightenment subject, which Castle describes here in "the moment of romantic self-absorption" (237), knows the world solely by way of its own representations of that world. Kant's declaration, for example, that knowledge is a matter of "representations of things which are unknown as regards what they may be in themselves" (*Pure Reason* B164)--conventionally taken as the defining moment of Enlightenment subjectivity--is exemplary in this respect. But the Gothic, thematically and formally, is the genre of the world in itself, outside of the subject and its ideas and concepts; or rather, more properly, the Gothic presents the effect, the imprint of that part of the world that strikes the subject,

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[1] I am more inclined to agree with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who argues that "the major Gothic conventions are coherent in terms that do not depend on . . . [a] psychological model" (*Coherence* 12).

and which the subject cannot represent. The Gothic thus exists in a state of suspension, on the cusp of representation. Radcliffe's theme, says Tompkins, "is not the dreadful happening . . . but the interval during which the menace takes shape and the mind of the victim is reluctantly shaken by its impedance" (258). The Gothic event is that which is not yet formed by the mind into knowledge, that which threatens precisely with what, in the Gothic moment at least, is its unknowability. Thus the Gothic penchant for the sublime, for that which is "contrapurposive for our power of judgment, incommensurate with our power of exhibition" (Kant, *Judgment* 245). It is, as Frederic Bogel says of the literature of the late eighteenth century, less a matter of epistemology than ontology, of the "mind's ways and modes of knowing" the world than of "the force of being" (4) that presses upon it. The return of the dead, the proliferation of doubles, the gratuitous appearance of repetition--in the mode of romance, but without the underlying ethos--all of these register the pressure of this being.

If we must define the Gothic negatively then, what is conventionally said of it, that it sets itself against the transparency and visibility sought by the Enlightenment, is true enough. But Sade, who knew something about horror, gives it a positive character that goes a little further towards explaining the genre in all its various manifestations and complexities. It is, he suggests, "le fruit indispensable des secousses révolutionnaires, dont l'Europe entière se

ressentait"[2] ("Idée" 31). It is a product of history, then, but in more than one sense. A product of the times, it is equally a product of the very shock that is historical existence, the suddenness, arbitrariness and violence of the event. This arbitarity, which covers the sentimental hero like a shroud, "impends" over the Gothic at the limit of knowledge. And yet, significantly, there is little or no sign of historical realism in the genre; the force of this event, as Sade knew, ultimately finds its home in "ce qu'on savait couramment"[3] (31). The subject meets its limit even in what is closest and most familiar. As death, not conceived "in the Gothic novel . . . in linear relation to life," this limit can appear, suddenly and without warning, even, and especially, in the presence of the infinite. "It interrupts the hero on his wedding day; it intrudes upon the timeless chapel of religion . . . . [L]ife in Gothic fiction never frees itself from the presence or threat of death" (Morris 308). Nature, which takes over from humanity, from history, from God, from all sources of motivation and power, which saturates the Gothic as a positive amoral force, becomes the location of this beyond.

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[2] ". . . the inevitable product of the revolutionary shocks felt throughout Europe."

[3] " . . . common, everyday occurrences . . . ." Terry Castle makes a similar remark: "The supernatural . . . . is diverted--rerouted, so to speak, into the realm of the everyday" ("Spectralization" 236). On the reinscription--Liu sees it as an ideological "repression"--of history in certain modes of Gothic nature, in particular the picturesque, see Liu, *Wordsworth*.

II

This is least apparent in Radcliffe, where nature, or rather the responsiveness of an individual to nature, acts as a measure of morality. The villains invariably care "little about views of any kind" (*Udolpho* 171) and see only "horrid mountains" (169) where the good souls are raised up in sublime rapture. Limited here almost exclusively to its aspect as a thing viewed--penetrated by the Enlightenment gaze, as it were--nature, even in its sublimity, seems a tamed thing; commanded by action, it is made a product of human work.[4] Take, for instance, the pavilion at Languedoc. The Count and Countess of De Villefort are surveying the "furniture and decoration." As the Countess spells out her plans for renewal, along with the paintings that "were to be renewed, the canopies and sofas [that] were to be of light green damask," the "marble statues of wood nymphs . . . [that] were to adorn the recesses between the windows," it turns out that the windows themselves "were to admit to every part of the room . . . the various landscape" (482). The slightly unusual use and repetition of the subjunctive, the repeated "were to," makes not only the furnishings but the landscape itself conditional and dependent upon the Countess'

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[4] I am thinking here of Francis Bacon's celebration of the "sovereignty of man" over nature in his essay "In Praise of Human Knowledge": "if we would be led by her in invention, we should command her by action" (*Works of Francis Bacon* (London: 1825), 1.254; cited in Adorno, 3-4).

organizational, and presumably tasteful, will. Architecture, the least mimetic and most pragmatic of the arts, frames nature; the landscape is no more a product of nature than the furnishings. And indeed, we find that the supremely rational octagonal shape of the pavilion frames eight distinct landscapes, organized according to the rules of the picturesque. Through one window can be seen, partially obscured, "the grey towers of Chateau-le-Blanc, and a picturesque part of its ruin." In another "the green pastures and villages" take on a purely compositional role, functioning to "diversify the banks of the Aude." In another we find that the receding woods "disclosed the distant summits of the Pyrenèes." And in yet another "the eye rove[s] among the woody recesses . . . bounded only by a lengthened pomp of groves" (482).

Elsewhere this roving eye of the viewer encounters more instruction from the composition of the landscape: at the window of Emily's room at La Vallée, for instance, where "the eye [is] led between groves of almond, palm-trees, flowering ash, and myrtle, to the distant landscape, where the Garonne wandered" (3). As in St. Aubert's stern speech to his daughter on "the duty of self-command," viewing a landscape is presented as something not to be entered upon without a certain ordering and limiting framework. Warning Emily of the follies of unrestrained passion, of the "dangerous temptations" of passions which are "extended beyond a certain boundary," he advises her that

> 'there is a period when all reasoning must yield to nature . . . and another, when excessive indulgence . . . weighs down the elasticity of the spirits so as to render conquest nearly impossible.' (21)

Even yielding to nature, it seems, requires a kind of frame to limit its unrestrained movement.

The aesthetic norms that Radcliffe brings to nature, here and elsewhere, in the ideas and theories of the picturesque--based, as they were, on the paintings of the likes of Salvator Rosa, Nicolas Poussin, and Claude Lorrain--subject nature to the specific representational demands of a frame. William Gilpin, from whom Radcliffe borrowed a great deal, shows how this aspect of the picturesque works within a larger mimetic economy. "The idea of the great original is so strong, that the copy must be very pure, if it do not disgust" (*Three* 57). Nevertheless,

> we must recollect that nature is most defective in composition; and must be a little assisted. Her ideas are too vast for picturesque use, without the restraint of rules. (67)

Thus he finds himself, as he says, "at perfect liberty . . . to dispose the foreground as I please . . . . I take up a tree here, and plant it there. I pare a knoll, or make an addition to it," and so on. One "must contrive to hide offensive parts with a wood," and one "must grace [the lines of the country] a little, where they run false" (70). Far from introducing what does not exist in "the great original,"

these are merely "a few of those simple variations . . . which time itself is continually making" (68).

Landscape viewing, then, involves a reconstruction of the landscape in the imagination according to a set of rules that are naturalized in order to disguise their instrumentality. The composition of nature being too great to fit into a frame small enough for human contemplation, one was licensed to exercise a certain picturesque justice, to augment that which falls within one's gaze in order to contemplate nature in its most perfect unity. And if the removal of unsightly elements seems a privilege of the painter that the picturesque traveller could not readily exercise, art is not so easily frustrated.

> The whole view was pleasing from various stands: but to make it particularly picturesque by gaining a good foreground, we were obliged to change our station backward and forward, till we had obtained a good one. Two large plane trees, which we met with, were of great assistance to us. ("Fragment" 177)

The "obligation" that Gilpin speaks of here must be read in the context of the naturalization of this mode of viewing landscape. The current of Enlightenment power runs both ways. When Foucault dissects the power of the Enlightenment gaze in the Panopticon he makes this obligation explicit: a call to subjectivity that implicates the viewer as well as the viewed, a demand that authority, in order to guarantee itself, take a certain narrowly described form. In any case,

it is no coincidence that Valancourt and Emily, who fall in love as viewers of landscape, meet in the gardens of Madame Cheron at the pavilion, a place designated as a viewing station, or that they are reconciled in a tower that each, separately and unknown to the other, uses to view the mountains of Languedoc.

The picturesque eye assumes what John Barrell describes as "a complex of associations and meanings . . . , a composition, in which each object bore a specific and analyzable relationship to the others" (*Idea* 5). Thus, though one is often presented with no more than "*parts of scenes;* which may be exquisitely beautiful, tho unable to produce a whole" (*Three* 49), "it is a breach of the most express picturesque canon if the *parts* engage the eye more than the *whole*" (*Observations* 107). Pleasure is derived from the contemplation of this "absent" whole:

> we examine what would amend the composition; how little is wanting to reduce it to the rules of our art; how trifling a circumstance sometimes forms the limit between beauty and deformity. (*Three* 49)[5]

Circumstance, here, is always subject to repair. "The man of science," says Adorno, the paragon of Enlightenment

[5] On the issue of the absent whole, Ann Birmingham suggests that Gilpin presents an "aestheticization of the part--the minutiae or trifling circumstance--rather than the whole" (83). This seems a bit unlikely, but certainly later picturesque theorists such as Richard Payne Knight make singularity, rather than unity, their explicit concern. See Paulson, *Representations* and Whale, "Romantics" who find in the later theorists evidence of an obsession with time and singularity, with "organic change, decay, and collapse" (Paulson 177).

rationality "knows things in so far as he can make them" (9). Such would seem to be the case with the picturesque.

And yet there remains an irreducible element in the picturesque, one that is somehow implicit in this relation to a whole that is at once present and absent; present beyond our perception, and so absent only to the limited powers of human cognition which rely on the frame of the composition. An economy of desire lingers over this frame, a motivation to exceed it out of a desire for a whole that can only be experienced, at best, as a kind of repetition:

> When we see a pleasing scene, we cannot help supposing, there are other beautiful appendages connected to it, tho' concealed from our view . . . . [Thus] we are incited by the beauty of what we see, to proceed in the same direction in search of scenes of the same kind. (Gilpin, cited in Barbier 136)

Far from opposing composition and the control that it effects, this economy of desire actually inheres in the very work of framing. What is "concealed from our view" by the frame, by that which makes the view possible in the first place, leads us beyond the frame. The organizing line that makes for the application of the "rules of our art" (*Three* 49) towards the formation of the whole, is just as much the line of incompletion, that which demands more "scenes of the same kind" precisely by making the initial scene so

desirable.[6] The picturesque frame marks at once the possibility and impossibility of the perception of the unity of nature.

The same paradox can be found in Radcliffe's Gothic, both in her application of picturesque principles and, more generally, in her attitude towards sight and vision:[7] what guarantees unity, understanding and vision is precisely what cancels it out. In one instance clarity confuses as much as it elucidates, where Emily finds herself "surprised and deluded" by the "thinness of the atmosphere, through which every object came so distinctly to the eye" (*Udolpho* 43). In another, when Emily leaves France with Madame Montoni for Venice, she looks down upon Tholouse and the plains of Gascony "beyond which the broken summits of the Pyrenèes appeared on the distant horizon." Sublimity is the conventional trope of that which is too great for perception,

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[6] Compare this to Alan Liu's discussion of the picturesque tour, which he connects to a similar repetition: "a tour is motivated by desire for . . . a sense of eventfulness whose site is inherently 'out there,' other, or elsewhere and so from the first adapted to the form of convention. Convention is the sense of a meaningfulness described by someone prior and other, a significance whose mere redescription in any itinerary will result in a feeling of complete eventfulness" (*Wordsworth* 8).

[7] On the tendency in the Gothic towards paradox and unresolved tensions see Brown "Philosophical." Bogel finds this tendency in later eighteenth-century works generally. See esp. 36-7. Both relate this to a noumenal or ontological tendency. Lamb associates paradox with the breakdown of systemicity in favour of particularity (14). And see also Kiely, who takes the "ingenious prevention of climax" and conclusion in favour of a "perpetual contest" as a defining feature of romantic fiction (252).

but it is not the sublime "broken summits" that will interrupt her sight.

> The trees, that impended over the high banks of the road and formed a line of perspective with the distant country, now threatened to exclude the view of them; but the blueish mountains still appeared beyond the dark foliage, and Emily continued to lean from the coach window, till at length the closing branches shut them from her sight. (162)

What frames the scene blots it out. The eye meets its limit precisely in what allows it to limit and view nature, to reduce it to its scheme.

III

At a certain point, what hovers obscurely at the limit of sight is not what one would expect of the Gothic, the horror of death, of a mortal end, but the horror of the measured and demarcated space of the Enlightenment eye: a horror which in one aspect must certainly be a spatialization of time, the substitution of contiguity for linear sequence, the threat that the inexorable flow of time should be subject, at the very least, to reversal, and that the dead should return across a boundary held fast by narrative. What hangs over one in time, in the future, is easily translated into spatial terms. The ruin implicitly presents itself as a metaphor for

the destructive forces of time; although oriented exclusively towards the past, it is a past marked by the event, by--as Barbauld says of the "antique mansion" in the "Fragment" attached to her essay on Gothic terror--the "injuries of time" ("Pleasure" 129). But it is in the very architecture of the buildings that space most emphatically acts as an allegory of time, in the hidden passage, the false wall, the trap door that suddenly breaks the smooth plain of the continuous. Even the most benign buildings have their covert spaces; even La Vallée has a "hollow place" in which St. Aubert stores his unspeakables (*Udolpho* 77).

It is worthwhile comparing this Gothic space to the narrated space of the gaze that John Bender finds at work in certain eighteenth-century novels. Making an analogy with the Panoptic space of the penitentiary, he finds "a precisely controlled material grid" through which the subject is effectively produced according to a narrative scheme inscribed in that space (*Imagining* 39). Space becomes the site of a manipulation of identity, so that, for example, "within the physical regime of the penitentiary, the self is perceived through and by its narrative construction" (45). Such a space must necessarily purge the liminal and the obscure from its architecture; it must, modeling itself on the chain of cause and effect, free itself from either duration or immediacy, or anything that operates against the progress of this self on its way to its inscribed identity.

This is not the case in the Gothic. In Radcliffe, where the influence of sentiment remains strong, narrative is, as it is in the sentimental novel, resisted in favour of the singularity of the event. But regardless of the apparent reliance on narrative, and in particular on the tale, in works like Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* or Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, what remains beyond narrative causality, and so knowledge, is what takes precedence. "The certainly of evil," we are told in *Melmoth*, can provide "a kind of courage. Suspense is the only evil against which it is impossible to set up a defense" (411). The suspension of knowledge, a languishing outside of the progress of knowledge and the pragmatics of certainty, is a favourite Gothic trope.

In Radcliffe, and in the picturesque on which she draws, this trope of suspension appears recurrently as an interruption of the Enlightenment gaze, an excess of the power of the frame. In addition to the enjoyment derived from relating the parts to the absent whole, suggests Gilpin, there is the pleasure in the scene that, "rising before the eye, strikes us beyond the power of thought . . . and every mental operation is suspended." This suspension of the faculties, "this pause of intellect," arises "before any appeal is made to the judgment" (*Three* 49-50). At a certain point, this pleasure in what exceeds the power of thought is one and the same with the gesture that the frame makes beyond itself. The deferrals and repetitions of desire, effectively canceling out the work of the frame, are not unlike a

suspension of that work. Not only the mind, but the scenes themselves appear suspended, and when they do there is inevitably something caught hovering at some boundary, the sight of which does not beckon--as it might in a scene where the composition contrives to "lead" or "disclose" itself to the eye--but rather repels the mind. In one "scene of barrenness," for example, on St. Aubert's final tour, the group comes across a "narrow valley" wherein

> No living creature appeared, except the izard, scrambling among the rocks, and often hanging upon points so dangerous, that fancy shrunk from the view of them. (*Udolpho* 30)

Predictably enough, the blurring of boundaries becomes the dominant trope of Radcliffe's most sublime landscape, the approach to Udolpho castle.

> The mountains seemed to multiply as they went, and what was the summit of one eminence proved to be only the base of another . . . . Still vast pine-forests hung upon their base [and] the scathed branches of an oak, . . . hung nearly headlong from the rock. (225)

The sublime--on which, in a way, the Gothic novel is merely a footnote--is, of course, precisely that which resists the power of thought. It arises, in Kantian terms, when the subject encounters "a natural object to which the imagination fruitlessly applies its entire ability to comprehend," when the world resists the aesthetic power of

the perception (*Judgment* 255). For Burke, the sublime is presented quite explicitly as the experience of a certain suspension:

> The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. (*Enquiry* 57)

The sublime fixes the mind to the object, so that perception and cognition are interrupted. This horror, says Radcliffe, no doubt following Burke, "contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates" the faculties of the soul ("Supernatural" 149).

It is not surprising, then, that whatever knowledge is supplied in the face of the supernatural--as it invariably is in Radcliffe--is insufficient. "Curiosity" says an anonymous reviewer of *Udolpho*, "is raised oftener than it is gratified; or rather, it is raised so high that no adequate gratification can be given it" (*Critical Review* 362). It is not, then, as Barbauld recognized some twenty years before, a matter of "suspense, and the irresistible desire of satisfying curiosity" ("Pleasure" 123), but rather another kind of suspension, where "A strange and unexpected event awakens the mind, and keeps it on the stretch" (125). The relationship to time is not one of expectation, where the

chain of narrative events will lead the reader, by way of the logic of causation, to the realization of what has come before, for "we know before what to expect" (125).[8] Instead, the Gothic offers up, as Radcliffe says in her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry," a

> suspension, or a momentary change, of the law prescribed to what we call *Nature*--that is, . . . one more exercise of the same CREATIVE POWER of which we must acknowledge so many million instances. (148)

This creative power, threatening at worst in Radcliffe, becomes more obviously sinister in the later Gothic novels. Where else but in the Gothic realm would birth be casually referred to as "the hour of danger" (Maturin, *Melmoth* 490).[9] Forbidden any kind of transcendence, creative power becomes, as it is in Sade, a demonic force.[10] *Frankenstein*--sometimes

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[8] Richter comments on the extra-narrative tendency of Gothic suspense: "The implied reader of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* . . . is expected to retain strong suspense about the secret concealed by the celebrated Black Veil, despite the fact that Emily, after her initial swoon, is not actively threatened by it," while "In a novel like, say, *Tom Jones*, suspense is aroused only by episodes that directly touch the plot's central instabilities" (117-18).

[9] This use of the word "danger," repeated three times in *Melmoth*, is not listed in the OED, or in any of the major dictionaries of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

[10] Sade, who died in 1814, never saw the fullest fruition of the Gothic novel, and he looked upon the works of Radcliffe and Lewis, which he had read, with only moderate favour. But his theory of nature, sustained by a rigorous if infernal logic, would nevertheless be at home in the Gothic. Still, where the Gothic stands in awe of nature, and ducks under its blows, Sade sets out to serve it. See in particular Pope Pius VI's sermon in *Juliette* (22.280-310) where nature, precisely

mistaken merely as a polemic against science, which it is only incidentally--presents this creative power at its most subtle and secular in what is really a horror of mimesis, where the creative power of humanity, scientific or otherwise, overreaches itself, where reproduction exceeds the consciousness that formed it. The monstrous, says Kant, "nullifies the purpose that constitutes its concept" (*Judgment* 253); it transgresses the frame into which it was inscribed, and which was, initially, the very condition of its existence.

But in *Frankenstein* the monster does not merely "nullify" his creator's purpose; rather, he establishes for himself a new purpose: he desires another like himself, and

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as a creative force, demands the destruction of its creations in order to clear the way for more.

> Si celles qui sont lancées ne se propageaient point, elle lancerait de nouveaus êtres, et jouirait d'une faculté qu'elle n'a plus. . . . [Donc] si les créatures se détruisent, elles ont raison, eu égard à la nature . . . . Ne nous le prouve-t-elle point par les fléaux dont elle écrase sans cess, par les divisions, par les zizanies, qu'elle sème entre nous? (22.284-86)
> [If those beings that she casts don't propagate, she will cast new beings, and revel in a faculty she has no longer. . . . [Hence] if her creations destroy themselves, they do well with respect to nature . . . . Does she not prove this to us by the endless scourges with which she crushes us, by the division and discord she sows among us?]

Sade is not far here from the rather more conservative and popular Holbach, who sums up the amoral force of nature with which the Gothic novel contends: "nature, dépourvue de bonté comme de malice, ne fait que suivre des lois nécessaires et immutables in produisant et détruisant des êtres . . ., en leur distribuant des biens et des maux, [et] en les altérant sans cesse" (7-8). ["nature, as destitute of benevolence as of malice, merely follows necessary and immutable laws in producing and destroying beings . . ., in dispensing good and evil to them, [and] in endlessly altering them."]

with it the power to create. With this new purpose, the suspension is lifted; a new creative power steps into the vacuum left by the old. That something should step in and resolve this suspension is quite as much part of the Gothic as the suspension itself. Todorov's discussion of the Gothic in his book on the literature of the fantastic makes this point. Like Radcliffe, he finds at the heart of the Gothic, and the fantastic more generally, an apparent suspension of the law: "In a world which is indeed our world, . . . there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of the same familiar world." Either this event is an illusion, "and the laws of the world remain as they are," or it is part of a reality "controlled by laws unknown to us." The fantastic, for Todorov, dwells in the space between these two explanations: between the "uncanny" of Radcliffe on the one hand, and the "marvelous" of Lewis and Maturin on the other. The Gothic novel divides itself between these two genres, into one of which any given novel will at least nominally fall.[11] But the fantastic, the experience out of which the Gothic arises, "is the hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (25). This "hesitation," he continues, hovering at the limit of knowledge and generalization, is anathema to narrative. Referring neither to the past nor the future, "the hesitation which characterizes it cannot be

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[11] For a similar division of the Gothic novel see R. D. Hume, 258.

situated . . . except in the present" (42), the present, in a phenomenological sense at least, of becoming.

"To a warm imagination," says Radcliffe, "the dubious forms, that float half veiled in darkness, afford a higher delight, than the most distinct scenery, that the sun can shew" (*Udolpho* 599). This "delight" in imaginative creation can, of course, cut both ways; these "hints to the imagination" (50) produce horror quite as much as joy. But for Radcliffe, who, if only nominally, will subject everything "inexplicable to known facts, to a previous experience" (Todorov 42), the new is merely an illusion born of excessive sensibility. In the Gothic of Walpole, Lewis and Maturin, on the other hand, what is presented is explicitly "an unknown phenomenon, never seen as yet, still to come" (42). But the difference here is only a matter of degree; more blatantly than in Radcliffe, what is not quite perceived in this "other" Gothic is that which is on the cusp of being.

IV

This space of betweenness belongs to nature, and nature permeates every corner of the Gothic.[12] The unity and perfection of nature one associates with the Augustans, no less than Wordsworth's benevolent tutor, is utterly foreign to the Gothic, which retains the evaluative use of adjectives

[12] On the centrality of nature to the Gothic see Nelson, and Brooks "Virtue."

like "natural" and "unnatural" merely out of convention. "Nature!" rants the incestuous Countess in Walpole's *Mysterious Mother*, "these feelings were thy gift. Thou knowest / How ill I can resist thy forceful impulse" (IV.iv). Incest, the breaking of the most universal and "natural" law, is itself nature's doing. Even in the virtuous mind, "delicately sensible to the beauties of nature" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 9) there is a hint of nature's malice, for it is the heroine's "mild resignation" (12) to the cruel vicissitudes of life that make her susceptible. Adeline's mind, we are told,

> had not lost by long oppression that elastic energy, which resists calamity; else, . . . the beauties of nature would no longer have charmed her. (9)

Only in resisting calamity can the heart be open to the beauty of nature; if not, nature becomes just that. Even the virtuous and susceptible occasionally glimpse this destructive aspect: "How poor the boasted power of man," ponders Ellena in *The Italian*, "when the fall of a single cliff from these mountains would with ease destroy thousands of his race on the plains below" (91). This threat, to be sure, is part of what is suspended above the "pastoral scenes" that lie "smiling amid surrounding horror, ... under the shade of the hanging woods" (*Udolpho* 226). The "chronic sense of apprehension and the premonition of impending but unidentified disaster" that Ann Tracy takes to

characterize the Gothic (3) invariably inhabits the genre, in one form or another, as a force of nature. But it is the villainous and the cunning that are most prone to this vision of a calamitous nature. They see in it nothing else. To Madame Montoni, who presumably lost her "elastic energy" long ago, the beauties of nature weigh on her like a disaster--"a long detail of the various terrors she had suffered" is the best the sublime alps can produce in her (*Udolpho* 169).

Susceptibility to nature is, of course, a measure of virtue in the Gothic, and not surprisingly those dulled to nature are singularly lacking in "the comforts of faith and resignation" (*Udolpho* 85). The self-important Madame Montoni is possessed by "a haughty impatience of misfortune"; hers is "not the placid melancholy of a spirit injured, yet resigned" (278). Like the villain of sentimental fiction, the Gothic villain plots and plans. "'[A]m I tame and abject as my fortunes,'" asks Schedoni in *The Italian*, "'Shall the spirit of my family yield for ever to circumstances?'" (223-24). For the villain, this is a call to battle; one who "'shrinks from action,'" Schedoni and the Marchesa agree (172), is beyond contempt. It may be this demonic recklessness in the face of circumstance--a recklessness that, most explicitly in the case of *Melmoth*, penetrates to the very soul--that makes gambling a favourite pastime of the Gothic villain. It is Montoni's most conspicuous vice, and La Motte, in *Romance of the Forest*, claims to have once, as a sharper, "held the wheel of fortune" (221). Lord Ruthven, Polidori's vampyre,

> always gambled with success, except where the known sharper was his antagonist, and then he lost even more than he gained; . . . it was not, however, so when he encountered the rash youthful novice, or the luckless father of a numerous family. . . . [H]e took no money from the gaming table; but immediately lost, to the ruiner of many, the last gilder he had just snatched from the conclusive grasp of the innocent. (239)

The gambler here is not such as we see in The Rake's Progress; the villain seeks to *take* chance, in the most literal sense of the term, so that, in one way or another, his "very wish" becomes "fortune's law" (239).

And yet, for all this lack of resignation, this apparent struggle against chance and fate, the villain is not set against nature; his or her inability to appreciate sublime scenery must be understood properly. When the villain looks on sublime nature, he does not encounter a vast otherness set over and against his powers of cognition, rather he finds merely himself: he looks, without surprise or concern, at his own features. Even in Radcliffe, where picturesque nature retains a certain degree of "repose," the villain is given a natural turn. If nature displays a "sweet obscurity" (*Udolpho* 242), if it regularly "suspends" the powers of cognition that seek to frame it and penetrate it, the villain is no less suspenseful and "unsearchable" (262): "'O could I know,'" complains Emily, "'what passes in that mind; could I know the

thoughts, that are known there, I should no longer be condemned to this torturing suspense'" (243). Montoni delights in "the tempests of life" (182), and when he is angry Emily despairs of conciliating a man "in whose eyes the rising tempest of his soul flashed terribly," and who speaks in "a voice of thunder" (277).

Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, perhaps more than any other Gothic novel, makes the villain one with the amoral forces of nature. "If there be a storm coming on, I care not," says an inkeeper at the prospect of Melmoth lodging in his inn, "those who can raise them are the fittest to meet them" (396). When nature erupts in its fits of violence, Melmoth's "fixed and fearless eye seemed to return flash for flash to the baffled and insulted elements" (322). An elemental force himself, arbitrary and ruthless, he is as untouched by the elements as he is "unmoved by the storm" that wrecks the ship near Melmoth's seat (66). Thus when Stanton, on his first encounter with the stranger, watches as the bodies of two lovers are carried off, struck dead by the storm, Melmoth appears as a personification of the "destroying angel" that hovers over the scene. He approaches

> with a calmness of step and demeanour, as if he were alone unconscious of danger, and incapable of fear; and after looking on them for some time, burst into a laugh so loud, wild, and protracted, that the peasants, starting with as much horror at

> the sound as at that of the storm, hurried away. (29-30)

Only one other creature is immune to nature's destructive force: one who, like him, stands outside of the human world where the forces of light and darkness wage their war. In Immalee, the innocent child of nature, Melmoth, creature of darkness, meets his double in the world of light. Both are strangers to the human world, and stand above the vicissitudes to which it is subjected simply because they are parts of that force that stands over and against the human. When a storm hits Immalee's island paradise,

> with all its . . . clouds of suffocating dust, and thunders like the trumpet of doom, she stood amid the leafy colonnades of the banyan-tree, ignorant of her danger . . . . So she lived like a flower amid sun and storm . . . . as if she was a thing that nature loved, even in her angry mood. (281)

Lodged together at this still point of creation and destruction they are, of course, free of its vicissitudes: like Melmoth, "defying space and time" (66), Immalee takes "no note of time" (297); they inhabit, together, a pure changeless realm outside of the struggles of ignorance and knowledge.[13] Sameness, in a universe of change, is their shared trait. Before her temptation, before her taste of "the

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[13] See Brown, who reads the suspension of time and space in the Gothic novel in light of Kant's transcendental aesthetic: that is, with the "origins of experience" ("Philosophical" 279) in "the pure, undifferentiated intuition of space and time" (286).

tree knowledge" (308), "light and darkness had hitherto been the same" for Immalee (313), the one, as she says of herself in eulogy "'who never changed'" (318). Not incidentally, a similar thing is said of the Inquisition, where, deep in the recesses of tyrannical power, "day and night are the same" (531). At the poles of innocence and guilt even the most fundamental distinctions, the very tools of the Enlightenment subjugation of nature, are rendered inoperative. Even when Immalee is forcibly removed from her paradise, thrust into society where these natural forces make themselves cruelly felt, she retains something of this impassability. Far from her island, having fallen into the familiar difficulties of a love-lorn heroine of romance, the suffering of the world returns upon itself as a source of pleasure. "Isadora," as she is now called

> had not yet learned that theology of the skies, whose text is, 'Let us go into the house of mourning.' To her still the night was day, and her sun was the 'moon walking in its brightness.' (357)

As for Melmoth, the terrible sameness of Fielding's demonic inheres in his relation to the world; for him "'nothing was new under the sun'" (360). Whatever place there may have been for judgment as an intervention in this stultifying sameness is consumed by the inexorable fate that awaits him. If, in *Tom Jones*, the narrator cuts across sameness and repetition with his judgment, in the Gothic authorial arbitrariness, and hence a banal equality, becomes the rule. "All events are

levelled into one common mass," says Coleridge of *The Monk*, "and become almost equally probable, where the order of nature may be changed wherever the author's purpose demands it" (58-9). But if the genre itself is saturated with it, the villain nevertheless remains the purest representative of this levelled nature. In Melmoth's agelessness, in his contempt for all things fragile and human, in his exultant returns and visits to his victims, sameness becomes an emblem of his curse. It is thus that he appears to Stanton in the asylum:

> Between him and the light stood the figure of Melmoth, just as he had seen him from the first; the figure was the same; the expression was the same,--cold, stony, and rigid; the eyes, with their infernal and dazzling lustre, were still the same. (54)

Even Schedoni, wracked by passions as he is, appears unchanged by their force, "which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated" (*Italian* 35). And it is thus that the villain remains unmoved by beauty: Lord Ruthven, "amidst the various wild and rich scenes of nature, was always the same" (Polidori 239).

At opposite poles of the moral world, then, both the villain and the virtuous soul reside together in the state of suspension that hangs over the Gothic. That their courtship, in *Melmoth*, takes place on an Edenic island that, before the arrival of the tempter, gives Immalee no inkling either of

pain or of death (280) is not offered merely as a counterpoint to the world of artifice and suffering on which Melmoth preys; rather it is from this still point that the world of suffering is born, the human world in which the clear line between good and evil becomes muddled and confused. The Gothic, moreover, is a Manichean world; the strife of humanity is born out of a deeper, more profound, more elemental strife. All of the Gothic resides near this still point, in the timeless pause after the creation. Its melodramatic extremity and its morally unambiguous characters attest to this proximity.[14] Like the mythic world it is a world freshly born and still in the throes of its birth-pangs, still at the mercy of its elements.

The demonic aspect of nature in the Gothic owes something to this nascent status. The Genii who toy with men, we are told in Beckford's own notes to the 1816 edition of his *Vathek*, are the work, not of God, but of the earth itself, "as if these supernatural agents had been an early production of the earth, long before Adam was modeled out of a lump of it" (125).[15] These "'terrestrial powers,'" confides Vathek's mother Curathis, "'are always terrible'" (29). The "fixed and fearless eye" (*Melmoth* 322) of the demonic

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[14] See Peter Brooks on the "polarized gestures" ("Virtue" 251) typical of melodrama, in and out of the gothic novel, in "Virtue and Terror," and "The Melodramatic Imagination."

[15] See also Walpole's facetious Preface to his *Hieroglyphic Tales*, where he declares that they "were undoubtedly written a little before the creation of the world" (vi).

presence is as unchangeable as the primordial earth whose power it represents.

To say, then, that the Gothic world is a Fallen one is not entirely correct.[16] The "early production of the earth," before the divine spirit breathed life into the material of the world, also has its place here. The moral vacuity of the genre--"incapable," as Coleridge says, "of exemplifying a moral truth" (11.1.59)--is testimony to the profound suspension of this genre. It inhabits, at moments, a place before creation and destruction, a place utterly denied transcendence--not because it has fallen utterly, but because it has never risen. It is a levelled world, a world trapped in the same. Vathek can get away with the atrocities he commits against his people, killing them one day and successfully placating them the next, only because he rules over a province in which morality has no purchase.[17] When

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[16] Tracy associates this "fallen world" with "a nature infested with insinuations of hostility," (3-4) and, more tellingly, with a the event: "Disaster in these novels, as in Eden, strikes swiftly and relentlessly and is irreversible" (9). The fall of the Gothic, Tracy intimates, is the fall into historical existence.

[17] Gothic suspense, then, is as much moral as it is epistemological. In the later Gothic novels in particular, observes Robert D. Hume, "the suspense of external circumstance is de-emphasized in favour of increasing psychological concern with moral ambiguity" (285). The Gothic novel tends to wallow in "moral ambiguity; there is no message, no moral, no final statement of right and wrong" (287). In a genre concerned, as it is, with revenge, virtue and evil--not to mention its place in a certain genealogy of the novel that made morality central to novelistic representation--it goes without saying that it is not a matter of a lack of concern for issues of morality. Rather, as with knowledge, the Gothic hovers at the cusp of the moral, in the amoral space "before" morality.

Vathek is finally punished in the Hall of Eblis, Beckford gives only lip service to Christian ethics. His punishment has less to do with his "atrocious deeds" than

> that blind curiosity, which would transgress the bounds the wisdom of the Creator has prescribed to human knowledge; . . . [and] that dreadful ambition, which, aiming at discoveries reserved for beings of a supernatural order, perceives not, through its infatuated pride, that the condition of man upon earth is to be--humble and ignorant. (120)

Vathek is condemned less for his murders than for his striving beyond the creaturely lot of humanity.

But of course, when the purity of this world is diluted, when it comes into contact with the human, as it must, it then appears as a fallen world.[18] The natural law to which it bows in such moments is a Hobbesian one. "'Self-preservation is the great law of nature,'" says the irredeemably nasty Marquis in *The Romance of the Forest* while trying to convince La Motte to kill Adeline, "'when a reptile hurts us, or an animal of prey threatens us, we think no further, but endeavor to annihilate it'" (222). As Monçada's companion gleefully relates in *Melmoth*, the "'disunion of every tie of the heart, of passion, of nature,'" uncovers, underneath the thin shell of human love and benevolence, the "'natural

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[18] See Hart, for whom the Gothic moment arises out of the mingling of the human and the non-human, the "shock" felt by basically human and "mimetic characters" when they are "thrust into a world of romance" (91) and must contend with the "violence and amoral power" of the natural order (98).

operation'" of a world of amoral material need. Recounting the death of two illicit lovers, locked in a cell together to starve, he traces their decline into animality:

> 'It is one thing for lovers to sit down to a feast magnificently spread, and another for lovers to couch in darkness and famine. . . . I heard the shriek of the wretched female,--her lover, in the agony of hunger, had fastened his teeth in her shoulder;--that bosom on which he had so often luxuriated, became a meal to him now.' (212-13)

Such extremity brings Lukács' pronouncements on the novel to their highest pitch: if the novel is the presentation of the "transcendental homelessness" of humanity (*Theory* 61),[19] "the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God" (88), and the place where "the refusal of the immanence of being to enter into empirical life" results in a fragile world of "unprocessed raw material, whose weak cohesion will have to be destroyed" (71), the Gothic novel is arguably its purest expression. At the very least, it is concentrated on what both Lukács and Bakhtin take to be the defining feature of the novel: the confrontation with the irreducible incompleteness of the modern subject, with an alterity that

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[19] Adeline's lamentation in Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* is typical:

> An orphan in this wide world--thrown upon the friendship of strangers for comfort, and upon their bounty for the very means of existence, what but evil have I to expect! Alas, my father! how could you thus abandon your child--how leave her to the storms of life? (101)

The "wide world" to which she is abandoned is, of course, an elemental one.

the Gothic presents at its most primitive and opaque. R. D. Hume has argued, in his seminal article on the Gothic, that it is somehow trapped in the material, unable to overcome it. Though "possessed by the same discontent with the everyday world" as the Romantics, unlike them the Gothic writers "have no faith in the ability of man to transcend or transform it imaginatively. Their explorations lie strictly within the realm of the world" (289). And nature, whether it be the landscapes of Radcliffe, the demons of Beckford, or the elemental forces of Maturin, stands at the centre of this world without transcendence.

> From the tranquil and hopeless aspect of the divinity, smiling on the misery it neither consoles or relieves, and intimating in that smile the profound and pulseless apathy of inaccessible elevation . . . --from this the sufferer rushes for consolation to nature, whose ceaseless agitation seems to correspond with the vicissitudes of human destiny. (*Melmoth* 341)

God, and more simply the consolation of an eternal state, is utterly absent from the Gothic world.[20]

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[20] "Maturin's peculiar combination of Calvinism and Deism . . . . places man beneath contempt and God beyond human reach" (Kiely 207). Nelson touches on this absence more generally, if more tentatively: "it is tempting to suppose that once God had been secularized out of the graveyard and the terrifying manifestations of nature, what remained was the primeval horror of demonic violence" (237). Varma makes a similar claim: "Man's first stirring of religious instinct was his acute horror of this powerful Deity," a "Being greater far than he, one who created and destroyed at will"; and in the Gothic novel "it was to such primitive emotion that he reverted, emancipated from reason, but once again ignorant of

Nature, of course, occasionally takes on the trappings of the transcendental. Emily looks upon scenes that "seemed to unite earth with heaven" and to fill the mind "with the certainty of a present God" (*Mysteries* 28); sublimity and obscurity, in which Radcliffe's landscapes abound, lend themselves to "that pure devotion, superior to all the distinctions of human systems, which lifts the soul above this world" (48). But such devotion is quite as ornamental as the characters to which it is annexed, characters who are more part of the landscape than psychological or moral beings. As Laurie Fitzgerald observes, "narrative interest is not centered on the characters' actions so much as on their responses to and associations with the settings," which are, in turn, fundamentally "static" (79-80). Change and arbitrariness may be the human experience of nature, but nature itself is changeless; and it is a changelessness that, far from standing above the human, remains beneath it.

God, his spiritual world in chaos" (211). But it is Bogel who puts it in the clearest and most compelling terms. Speaking generally about the late eighteenth century, he finds there at once an absence and a persistence of the divine. The figure of paradox, for example, which "gestures toward the transcendental" is modified in the period:

> it relinquishes the transcendent term itself, and it conserves a tensional relationship of some kind while divesting it of the transcendent intimations . . . . There is only one major order of being, that of common natural and human reality, but within that order there arises tensional relations that recall, without reproducing, something of the tension that had formerly arisen from the yoking of ontologically heterogeneous spheres. . . . In a sense what occurs is a toppling or lateralizing of a hierarchical structure, a lateralizing that preserves the tension between elements . . . but projects it into a single ontological sphere. (199)

V

It is in representation, above all, that the priority of an omnipresent nature over an absent divinity makes itself most felt. In a move predictable enough for a genre born out of Protestant iconoclasm--or at least out of a certain tradition of the novel, dating back at least to Fielding, in which representation is looked upon with a moral distrust at least equal to the theological distrust avowed by Luther and Calvin--Lewis makes the temptation of Ambrosio in *The Monk* take place via the portrait of the Virgin.[21] At first it seems

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[21] Peter Brooks comments on this shell game:

> The painting of the Madonna/Matilda is in fact a kind of witty conceit demonstrating why God can no longer be for Ambrosio the representative of the Sacred: spirituality has a latent daemonic content: the daemonic underlies the seemingly Holy. ("Virtue" 257-58)

If the Gothic novel is a reassertion of the irrational in the face of the tyranny of the rational, it is so, suggests Brooks, as a reassertion of the sacred, albeit "in the most primitive possible manifestations, as taboo and interdiction" (249). Guilt, in such a world, "is no longer related to a sense of unworthiness in relation to the Godhead, but rather to the fear of retribution entailed by transgression" (252)--a transgression that, as in Greek tragedy, "is inevitably bound up with the very condition of mortality" and so part of "the very definition of life" (262). In this mythic world of fate and punishment "'Nature' is everything: and it is not a source of comfort and reconciliation" (263). Brooks final judgment though is one regularly passed on the Gothic, and one that I would like to dispute: i.e. that "the primal numinous awe puts us in touch, not with the Godhead, but with the unconscious" (262), that the ethical imperatives of the sacred have been "psychologized" in the Gothic (249). I would say instead that in this reign of Nature we see precisely what cannot be psychologized, which is, for eighteenth-century psychology and phenomenology, what cannot be represented by the mind to itself. This is less a

that Matilda has had her portrait done in the style of the Madonna and conveyed to Ambrosio; later it turns out that Satan, observing Ambrosio's enslavement to the image, his "blind idolatry of the Madonna's picture, ... bad a subordinate but crafty spirit assume a similar form" (440). Either way, the distance between God and the world is far too great to toy with representations of the divine: the representation of the absent transcendental merely provides an easy conduit for the present, if hidden, powers of the earth. When the spectre of divine justice does arise in such a world, it is only as an after-thought to "one of those awful convulsions [of nature]--one of those abortive throes of desolation, that seems to announce a more perfect wrath to come" (*Melmoth* 312). Nature, not God, communicates to humanity its fate:

> Is the murmur of the ocean without a meaning?--Is the roll of the thunder without a voice?--Is the blasted spot on which the rage of both has been exhausted without its lesson?-- . . .Do we not find in them, an answer to those questions with which we are for ever importuning the mute oracle of our destiny?--Alas! how deceitful and inadequate we feel the language of man . . . . What a difference

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psychological problem than a literary problem, the very problem, in fact, that Keats was turning over in his final poems as Maturin wrote *Melmoth*. While Keats pondered the death blow that art levels against itself as a representation, the static lassitude of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" or "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," Maturin thematized, in the extreme, the raw destructive force of the event.

> between words *without meaning*, and that *meaning without words*, which the sublime phenomena of nature . . . convey to those who have 'ears to hear.' (321)

Nature, in the mute signs of its "rage," speaks a language more pure and true than human language, a concrete language of fate and destiny. But it would be wrong to see in this "voice," in this personification of nature, any intimacy between nature and humanity, that is, between nature and that which transcends it. There is nothing of a promise of salvation in this destiny, no sense of a transcendental escape from the "roll" and "murmur" of the world. There is nothing of the divine at work here; but more importantly, there is nothing of the human. The destiny nature foretells is a strictly material destiny, one laid out for the creaturely aspect of man. It is made explicit that nature in no way speaks of or to the individual consciousness, or anything separated off from this creaturely existence:

> we love to connect the agitation of the elements with the agitated life of man . . . . The tremendous storm that shook all England on the night of Cromwell's death, gave the hint to his puritanical chaplains to declare, that the Lord had caught him up in the whirlwind . . . as he caught the prophet Elijah; while all the cavalier party . . . proclaimed their confidence, that the Prince of the power of the air was vindicating his right, and

> carrying off the body of his victim . . . in a tempest, whose wild howl and triumphant rage might have been variously, and with equal justice, interpreted by each party as giving testimony to their mutual denunciations. (61-2)

Nothing meaningful, in any determinate sense, can be wrestled from the language of nature; though the storm that prompts this narratorial reflection is, of course, prophetic of something: it brings with it a shipwreck and the death of nearly all on board. Maturin does not use the term "equal justice" without a certain irony, for nature's message is not one of individual destiny, but of universal destruction. All things are the same in her eyes.

> the house of Narbonne
> May perish from this earth
> . . . . . .
> But light'nings play not to announce our fate:
> No whirlwinds rise to prophecy to mites.
> (Walpole, *Mysterious* III.i)

Rather, mites and humans alike will fall to nature's hand, whose "mute oracle" prophesies an identical fate for all things. What binds them together is their material subjection to nature, or rather, their inability to transcend what, in Sade's words, "n'est autre chose que la matière en action" (*Philosophie* 50).[22]

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[22] ". . . is nothing but matter in action." At the level of matter, says Sade, there is no change. Even in the case of death, where "tout paraît se dissoudre" ["everything seems to disintegrate"], it is only the narrow limited perspective of

The demonic "terrestrial powers," of course, partake of this earth-bound materiality. There is something enigmatic and literally impenetrable about the gaze of Polidori's vampyre, which "fell upon the cheek with a leaden ray that weighed upon the skin it could not pass" (236), not to mention the curious transformation of the Indian into a "fatal ball" in *Vathek* (19). In Maturin's *Bertram* barren materiality is invoked independantly by both lovers as the sign of their curse. "[A]ll things leave me," says the wretched Imogine, "all things human" (V.i); a sentiment to be echoed in the next scene by Bertram. The profoundly physical and mechanical account Burke gives of the sublime, which David Morris takes as a testament to the deficiencies of his theories for an understanding of the Gothic (301-2), in fact cuts to the heart of Gothic terror. If Burke's theory is deficient, it is only because, in making the sublime a matter of "a tension, contraction, or violent emotion of the nerves" (*Enquiry* 132), it does not show the terror inherent in materiality itself. For the Burke of the *Enquiry* matter

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humanity that finds change:

> nous le croyons, par l'excessive différence qui se trouve alors entre cette portion de matière, qui ne paraît plus animée; mais cette mort n'est que imaginaire . . . . Il n'y a enfin nulle différence essentielle entre cette première vie que nous recevons, et cette seconde qui est celle que nous appellons mort. (*Juliette* 22.288)
> [We think it to be so because of the excessive change that seems to take place in this bit of matter, which no longer appears to be animate; but this death is merely imaginary . . . . There is, in the end, no essential difference between this first life that we receive, and this second that we call death.]

produces all forms of aesthetic pleasure, and arguably all forms of consciousness; in the Gothic this matter takes its revenge on the consciousness that owes it its birth.

Thus it is that matter asserts its rights in language, in the first fruit of this consciousness according to the speculative histories of Condillac and Rousseau,[23] in the only mimetic form that is exclusively human, exclusively the product of consciousness. There is a tendency in the Gothic for metaphorical language to become literalized, as if the weight of the denoted thing were too great to allow the metaphor, which transcends the thing, to operate. Todorov, in fact, puts this literalizing tendency at the very origin of the supernatural, which, he says, "often appears because we take a figurative sense literally" (77). To do so is to undermine the very principle of language.[24] Language depends upon what is essentially a figurative move for its existence; that is, language exists where a word used to represent one singular thing is extended so as to represent another similar thing. For Hume, for example, this extension is the foundation of language and of knowledge:

> there is no such thing as abstract of general ideas, properly speaking; . . . all general ideas are, in reality, particular ones, attached to a

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[23] See Aarsleff on eighteenth-century language theory, esp. 153-68.

[24] On the failure of language in the Gothic see Ehlers, "'Incommunicable,'" and Sedgwick, *Coherence*. Both situate the Gothic at the very limit of language. Thus Ehlers: "Maturin addresses himself to . . . [the] tension between the logos and the abyss of unmeaning" (181).

> general term, which recalls, upon occasion, other particular ones, that resemble, in certain circumstances, the idea, present to the mind. Thus when the term Horse, is pronounced, we immediately figure to ourselves the idea of a black or a white animal, of a particular size or figure: But as that term is also usually applied to animals of other colours, figures and sizes, these ideas, though not actually present, are easily recalled. (*Human Understanding* 109n).

For Locke, similarly, the work of abstraction is summed up in the power to name, the power to move from the particular to the general, from mere experience to knowledge. The transcendence and subjugation of nature, the apotheosis of the Enlightenment subject, requires a generalizing language free from the thing which it proposes to name, a "figurative" language, as it were, free of its merely "literal" value;[25] or rather,

> *a distinct Name for every particular Thing, would not be of any great use for the improvement of Knowledge*: which though founded in particular Things, enlarges it self by general Views; to which, Things reduced into sorts under general Names, are properly subservient. (*Essay* 410)

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[25] I am taking these terms in a wider context than Locke would have allowed with his eloquent attacks on rhetoric, not merely out of perversity, but in order to project it forward into the Gothic: a translation, as it were, into a different milieu.

Gothic horror destroys this power. In the characteristically feeble light of the Gothic, objects become "nameless" when "seen imperfectly through the dusk" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 18). Similarly, superstition about the power of the name, as in the magical rituals of invocation that play such a central role in *The Monk* and *Vathek*, arises out of a sense of the weakness, not the strength, of language. Here the particularity of the named thing becomes too strong for the work of generalization. Singularity, in fact, the obverse of the same, is the "*incommunicable condition*" (*Melmoth* 237) of the demonic fate. To be cursed, as Frankenstein's monster is cursed, is to be singular, "alone and miserable" without a "companion . . . of the same species" (Shelley 139), without resemblance and without substitution. This is Melmoth's fate: "'No one has ever exchanged destinies with Melmoth the Wanderer'" (538). To find such a substitute would in fact be against the very logic of the demonic, since its power resides in its irreducibility to generalizing consciousness. Thus the demonic power of the name is predicated, not on the human power over the thing, the power to name it, but rather on a supernaturally intimate connection between the word and the thing.

What invocation is to the proper name, the literal is to the figure. Thus, when Melmoth the Wanderer appears to young Melmoth the night of a ship-wreck, "unmoved by the storm" and its destructive power, he becomes literally immobile:

"[young] Melmoth's surtout . . . was fluttering in rags" but "not a thread of the stranger's garments seemed ruffled by the blast" (66). So too, as David Morris has observed, in *The Castle of Otranto* "hyperbole passes from language to action," and "a figure of speech . . . falls from the sky with a weight which crushes one of the characters" (303). Like all things in the Gothic universe, language is susceptible to a kind of moral gravity that drags it down towards its most base form. Material and creaturely, all things hit bottom in passion and blind instinct, and this is as true of language as of anything. Anne Williams tellingly connects the fall of words into the "horribly 'literal'" with Fate (68); that is, with a power that sets itself over and against the self-actualizing power of human consciousness, that which materially resists the "idealizing" power of speech.[26] To be sure, the human spirit invariably prevails over these forces in the end: "even the feeblest of his [Melmoth's] adversaries has repulsed him with a power that will always annihilate his" (501). But this power, strong precisely in its weakness and resignation, is, like Radcliffe's explanations, incidental to the spirit of the genre. Victorious consciousness reigns over nature only on the peripheries. The demonic element that stands at the heart of the Gothic is essentially the personification of the earth-bound

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[26] "Materiality," Williams continues, following Kristeva, "must be repressed so that we may enter the Symbolic" (76), and so the whole constellation of language and culture. Horror, in this scheme, is the failure of the Symbolic in the face of what is beyond it, a recoiling in nausea and distaste from materiality. See esp. 72-6.

materiality that resists this transcendence and so acts with the amorality of animal nature. It is in this light only that one can make sense of the curious description of Melmoth speaking with "a rapidity that literally made one word seem to devour another" (220), a language so singular that it is unable to form a society even amongst its own elements.

VI

To a certain extent, these visions of an overriding animal nature, set over and against the human world, is part and parcel of the romance heritage that the Gothic has never sought to disguise. Frye, for example, finds in the romance tradition a movement from one plane of existence to another, themes of ascent and descent, that, at the bottom end, identify "a human or humanized figure with something animal or vegetable" (*Secular* 105). The "structural core," then, of romance, is a "sharp descent," a "break in the continuity of identity" (104) and the subsequent production of a "demonic double" (141) in the lower world with which the now alienated consciousness identifies in lieu of its true self. The variations on this theme are, of course, multivalent, so that Christ, quite as much as Narcissus, fits this pattern (108), ascent and return following descent and alienation. But in the grips of the "night world . . . everything is an object" (117); at the bottom of the descent material reigns supreme.

The "double identity" of romance divides itself between these two worlds (108), and the narrative movement it embodies is essentially the movement into the darkness and back.

The Gothic differs in its suspension of this movement. The double, which pervades the genre quite as much, if not more, as in romance proper, crosses no boundaries and sets up no path of return and redemption. Certainly doubles and substitutions often bring about a fall in the Gothic. Frankenstein is punished for imitating, too infinitely, "the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world" (Shelley 9). As we have already noted, Ambrosio loses his soul by way of the image of the Madonna.[27] More blatantly, and more to the point, the incestuous Countess in *The Mysterious Mother*, guilty, above all of "coupl[ing] / Distinctions horrible!" (V.v), shows the double to be a paradigmatically criminal force:

> my fancy saw thee,
> Thy father's image--
> . . . . . .
> Yes, thou polluted son!
> Grief, disappointment, opportunity,
> Rais'd such a tumult in my madding blood,
> I took the damsel's place (V.vii)

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[27] David Morris makes a similar observation concerning *The Castle of Otranto*: "when Manfred in jealous rage stabs the figure he believes to be Isabella, it is not coincidence but the Gothic truth of repetition which substitutes his own daughter Matilda" (305).

But, of course, "family" resemblance is not always so sinister in the Gothic novel. If the "familiarity" of Ambrosio's voice (250) helps him to seduce and destroy his sister Antonia, Schedoni's portrait, found around Ellena's neck, is precisely what saves her. But as Ian Watt has argued, these doubles are all refractions of a more fundamental double, a "double past; for the crucial events of the past, whether betrayal, theft, murder, rape, or incest, were themselves the residue of an infinitely earlier past," a past that Watt associates with "the unrestrained impulses of the id" and the "archaic violence of the unconscious" ("Time" 165-66).

However right it may be to insist on a connection between the double and time, there are no real grounds for reducing the Gothic to some version of subjectivity, common as it may be to do so. If a Freudian model of the subject must be used here, it is more likely that what lies behind these doubles is a past that "never entered consciousness" (*Beyond* 25), a compulsion to repeat born of a profound entropy, the drive for the "restoration of an earlier state of things" (38). The events that produce such repetitions, says Cathy Caruth, "resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely, literal," and the "overwhelming occurrence that then remains, in its insistent return, [stays] absolutely *true* to the event" (Intro. 5). Here repetition is not a product of the return of the repressed, but rather of the irreducible being of the world. Given that "*inanimate*

things existed before living ones" (Freud, *Beyond* 38), this restoration is not one that particularly benefits consciousness; the "ego-instincts arise from the coming to life of inanimate matter and seek to restore the inanimate state" (44)--the tyranny, as throughout the Gothic universe, of the material.

Repetition, like the extra-human natural order to which it is tied, is spread across every aspect of the Gothic. The most ordinary events must submit to this law of repetition.[28] Everywhere, it seems, remarks and inquiries must, for no apparent reason, be repeated in order to receive a response; no recognition can take place without there first being a case of mistaken identity; no chamber can be approached without first being abandoned and then approached again.[29] Predictably enough, the supernatural element expresses itself in this repetition of the same, a special case of the entropic "fixities of repetition" that, as Sedgwick notes of the Gothic, suppresses "difference, play and change" ("Character" 264). The Bleeding Nun, for example, appears "once every fifth year, on the same day and at the same hour when She plunged her Knife in the heart of her sleeping Lover," (Lewis 176), and, haunting the unfortunate Raymond,

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[28] For discussions, and copious examples, of repetitions and doubles in the Gothic see Morris, 302-305; Castle, "Spectralization," 237-39; and Sedgewick,"Character," 263-64. See also Bogel, who finds in the period more generally an "effort to replace a substantial center with patterns of simple doubleness" (39).

[29] See, for example, to take only one work, *The Italian*, 246, 249, 313, 327.

returns to him every night at the hour of this fatal act. Dreams produce their share of startling doubles,[30] and even in the most banal repetition the voice of that "inanimate state" can be heard: "As he walked over the broken pavement," Radcliffe tells us of La Motte's first exploration of the "Gothic remains" that will become his home, "the sound of his steps ran in echoes through the place, and seemed like the mysterious accents of the dead" (*Romance* 15-16). Like all inanimate and unconscious things, the dead are associated with repetition because, unchanging and, in a strictly secular sense, eternal, they appear within the progression of individual moments in time, not as a development, but as a recurrence. Nothing, of course, is achieved by these repetitions.

> The mind . . . is exhausted by the eternally-recurring necessity of domestic conflicts--victories by which she must lose, and defeats by which she might gain praise and perseverance, and feel such gain was loss. (*Melmoth* 372)

What Fitzgerald says about the two settings in *The Italian*, the Southern European landscape and the Gothic structures, that they "are static . . . and do not acquire additional meaning through repetition" (80) is typical of the trajectory, or lack thereof, of repetition throughout the genre.

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[30] See for example Radcliffe *The Italian*, 318-20, and *The Romance of the Forest*, 41, 108-110.

But far from being a characteristic of material itself, of the natural realm that resists consciousness, repetition arises out of the intersection of this "infinitely earlier" world with the time bound consciousness. Life, in particular Enlightenment life, must move forward, must progress, and so it encounters stasis as a sudden shock quite as interruptive as death; repetition, return, "haunting," is the result. There is no question that the destiny nature foretells for humanity is one of repetition. Thus Immalee, "in an anticipation of her destiny" turns away from "all that is beautiful in nature . . . to make alliance with all that is awful and ominous":

> She had begun to love the rocks and the ocean, the thunder of the wave, and the sterility of the sand,--awful objects, the incessant recurrence of whose very sound seems intended to remind us of grief and of eternity. Their restless monotony of repetition, corresponds with the beatings of a heart which asks its destiny from the phenomena of nature, and feels the answer is--'Misery.' (*Melmoth* 312)

Such is eternity in the Gothic; inimicable to the human world, a distant echo of the divine world of resemblances, it shows itself in a mechanical repetition that cuts across the living, "organic" progress of the human spirit. "[H]ow deceitful and inadequate we feel the language of man" when confronted with the "meaning without words" that nature

conveys to man about his "destiny" (321). It is deceitful solely in its self-referentiality, in the tendency of human language, as Locke and especially Hume saw, to name only representations of consciousness and not the world of things beyond it. When nature speaks, when, as much as is possible, it puts on a human face, it speaks only of its sameness, which to the human ear is the "misery" of the repetition of the same. But this misery must not be understood in the ethical, or even in the properly emotional sense; it is, rather, the experience of a mis-joining, an incompatibility between two mimetic orders. The Gothic wants only to present the confrontation between consciousness and an arbitrary natural world: "Allow the possibility of the facts," boasts Walpole in his preface to *Otranto*, "and all the actors comport themselves as persons would do in their situations" (8).

When Fielding confronts sameness and repetition in *Tom Jones*, in the "equal Pace" of the traveller, consciousness is no less called into question than it is in the Gothic, "the Eyes of the Beast and of his Master being alike directed forwards, and employed in contemplating the same Objects in the same manner" (615). What he offers in place of this creaturely union is an apotheosis of consciousness, the ability to judge and to differentiate, to turn a levelled world into an ordered one. Consciousness now, and not God, stands in as the transcendental guarantee of mimesis, as that which relates the appearance to the whole. The proliferation

of doubles, such as begins to show itself in *Amelia*, cannot be tolerated by this consciousness, and to a certain extend, as the Gothic amply shows, spells its destruction. But it would be wrong to say that the Gothic, by indulging this intolerable state, is thereby more radical in its explorations than Fielding who, more than is usually thought, was a thinker as much as a novelist. The Gothic reflection, in fact, takes place in relative safety. A popular genre, the Gothic is inherently directed towards a certain complacency, and arises less out of a critical volition than out of "a strong need for security" (Groeben 391). It is allowed a breadth of exploration that was denied Fielding because of his commitment to the moral possibilities of the genre. Untroubled by the moral subtleties of the problem, the Gothic is free, in the sublime and in the demonic, to set the two poles of mimesis, representation and repetition, into conflict.

VII

Mimesis must be diluted if it is to be of use. Language, as Locke recognized, depends on the arbitrary sign, on the power to name; that is, on the ability to install a difference between the world of things and the representational sign. Inasmuch as it lacks this difference, the pure form of mimesis, the repetition of the same, is beyond consciousness,

for consciousness is dependent on this difference for its activity. In the divine order of resemblance, in the theological universe that began to unravel in the Renaissance, this extra-human world of pure mimesis was underwritten by a real and present divinity. Tied to a transcendental ground, the inhumanity of repetition stood as an expression, even a manifestation, of the oneness of God. No better illustration of this can be found than in the Catholic and medieval doctrine of the mystery of the incarnation, where spirit and flesh are made one: what to humanity, in order to be known, must be taken as two distinct orders of being, is, to God, merely the repetition of the same. And there is no better sign of the decline of this notion than in the Protestant rejection of the "real presence" or, more radically, of good acts--sundering the divine from the human world, and leaving behind mere repetition.

The movement from *Tom Jones* to the Gothic traces the fortunes of this repetition; retaining its fundamental inhumanity, but no longer grounded in the divine, it is left to find that inhumanity in the lower world. The irreducible, what had formerly been a theological problem, is suddenly thrust into the human world; a world that more and more certainly seeks its transcendence in the intramundane realm of the historical rather than in the divine, in the sequential unfolding of a time broken into equal and quantifiable units instead of the messianic moment of

redemption. As what is available to knowledge shrinks to exclude all that which lies beyond the realm of human work, this irreducible element, carried over from the ontological and theological tradition, becomes a register of the force of the objective world when it arrives unmediated by human will and experience.

It is not only in the Gothic, of course, that the novel in the first half of the nineteenth century measured itself against an irreducibly concrete world. The historical novel shares this honour, and indeed, shares more than this. "During the decades between 1789 and 1814 each nation of Europe underwent more upheavals than they had previously experienced in centuries." It is thus, says Lukács, that faced with "the quick succession of these upheavals" the historical character of experience became apparent; aware of "history as the concrete precondition of the present . . . . the masses no longer have the impression of a 'natural occurrence'" (*Historical* 18-20). It is no coincidence that Sade gives an almost identical account of the origin of the Gothic novel, which he similarly saw arising out of the "secousses révolutionnaires" of late eighteenth-century Europe:

> Pour qui connaissait tout les malheurs dont les méchants peuvent accabler les hommes, le roman devenait aussi difficile à faire, que monotone à lire; il n'y avait point d'invidu qui n'eût plus éprouvé d'infortune en quatre ou cinq ans, que n'en

> pouvait peindre en un siècle, le plus fameux romancier de la littérature; il fallait donc appeler l'enfer à son secours. ("Idée" 31)[31]

There is no doubt that there is an aesthetic ideology at work in this difference of response, and the fundamental difference is to be found in the relationship to both historical time and the mimetic order that arises out of this time. Where the historical novel looks into the past for concrete preconditions of the present, the Gothic novel looks into the future towards the concrete singularity of the event. Only the former can be made subject to representation. What may not have the impression of a "natural occurrence" in retrospect is, in the blind suspension of the future, indistinguishable from nature, just as, in the face of the unforeseen--before narrative as it were--the "Minute and almost imperceptible" (*Tom Jones* 225) cause is indistinguishable from the "greatest Events" (916).

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[31] "For those who knew first-hand all the evils that can fall to man, the novel became as difficult to write as it was monotonous to read; an individual suffered more at the hands of fortune in four or five years than the best novelist could paint in a century. Thus it was necessary to call hell to one's aid."

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