FAMILIAR FEELINGS: EXPERIENCING EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SEXUALITY

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This dissertation focuses on sexuality and affect in eighteenth-century British literature in order to demonstrate how a focus on feelings allows for unpredictable links between the past and the present, connections that recognize the intricate imbrication of sexuality and affect. Using the novel as a means to showcase the development of what are now modern methods of reform, such as the cultivation of shame, the medicalization of sex, and the linking of sexual lifestyle and social elevation, I demonstrate how feelings in the early novel helped shape and solidify now familiar reformatory measures that seek to produce and ensure the status quo. Because eighteenth-century literature precedes the widespread medicalization of sexual identities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, writers relied on alternative structures to organize experience and identity, including structures of feeling.

I trace a growing interest in the relationship between affect and sex, an interest that is ushered into the public sphere via novelistic discourse. I begin with two eighteenth-century accounts of sex that are marginally invested in emotions, Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband* and John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,* and I conclude with two texts that are almost entirely consumed with emotion, Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* and Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*. What emerges from my readings are familiar feelings between the past and present that propose new ways of thinking about a literary history of eighteenth-century sexuality.

Representations of eighteenth-century sexualities offer a productive vantage point for this analysis because the dominant categories of identity that we typically rely upon—heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual—are not yet in circulation. We are invited, then, to study sex before sexualities. Rather than seeing identity as an essentialist term, I represent it here as the crystallization of experiences and feelings. My research demonstrates the central and complex role of emotion in the development of both sexuality and the sexual identities that begin to take shape via shared sentiments.

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INTRODUCTION

This project began with a now admittedly tricky agenda: to characterize the experience of queer sexuality in eighteenth-century British literature. The eighteenth-century novel offered readers frank discussions of sex—at times disguised as an investment in the benefits of virtue and the perils of vice—demonstrating that sex was a subject of eighteenth-century discourse, and an economically rewarding one at that. Alongside the so-called "amatory fictions" of Eliza Haywood and her fellow "shameless scribblers" Delarivier Manley and Aphra Behn, and the emergent "novel," are prescriptive literatures on sex. Neither the novels nor the didactic works, the most popular of which include the anti-masturbation text *Onania* and the sex-manual *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, can tell us what kind of sex people had during the eighteenth-century. However, their popularity and frequency of publication do offer a point of reference for recognizing sex as a subject of interest. Though it is difficult to know how much of this literature on sex was new knowledge and how much was vernacular, the rise of literacy and urbanization during the early eighteenth century in the least provided a new way to circulate sexual knowledge. Surely the literary did not fully replace sexual knowledge exchanged via word of mouth, but the rise of literacy and the rise of the novel unquestionably accelerated the exchange of sexual knowledge, much like new media has in the present. Still, what can eighteenth-century novelistic discourse tell us about the experience of sex before sexualities?

To answer this question, I turn to affect. The rise of the novel increased the public circulation of emotions and thereby made possible both affective community standards—the

appropriate emotional response to sexual acts and sexual tastes—and affective identifications with others. This public transmission of emotion contributes to the production of identity as it helps to make identity recognizable, and familiar. Identities begin to take shape through both the collective affective responses to groups of people and through identification—or familiar feelings—with others. In light of this, I argue that affect is a principal, if not requisite component of sexuality. Affect is what shapes our experience of sexuality. Experience, identity, and feeling are inextricably bound as they all play a role in transforming sexual acts, acts that are roughly comparable across time without the influence of social, cultural, and historical norms. While prescriptive texts often mapped hierarchies of sex acts and their consequences, feeding into a public concern over the risks of sexual pleasures, novels represent affective states. This difference—the shift from describing the impact of sex on the body to the impact of sex on emotion—imparts discourses of sex with a new disciplinary tool.

Sexual identities, as numerous critics have explored, are both consolatory and troubling. As Jeffrey Weeks explains, "[Sexual identity] is a term that speaks of our individual being, of our collective involvement with others, and about the ways societies regulate, and allow (or try to forbid) sexual differences to flourish."[1] The willful adoption of a prescribed identity helps to facilitate the solidification of types of sexualities. Even further, accepting an identity as representative of the self considerably shapes how we experience sexual acts, or even how we experience the desire to engage in particular forms of sexual gratification. In *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*, J. Jack Halberstam highlights the peculiarity of this process, showing how a brief history of the last one-hundred years of gay male identity can disrupt the seemingly normal process of identification. The relationship between discourse and sexual subjectivity began, as Halberstam argues, "in the medical lab or the therapist's office,"

but sexual identities "take on a sense of permanence and inevitability" when we begin to understand ourselves within these terms.[2] Because Eighteenth-century literature precedes the widespread medicalization of sexual identities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, writers relied on alternative structures to organize experience and identity, including structures of feeling.

As an example of the ways that identity can radically shape our experience of sexuality, Halberstam compares the experiences of three generations of what we might now call gay men: the effeminate man living in the early twentieth century, the mid-century homosexual, and the out and proud gay male from the late twentieth century. The first man might see himself as a "fairy," but he will likely marry, recognizing his same-sex attractions as "vice" or "sin."[3] The mid-century man would be encouraged to experience his desire as a terminal condition—a fixed identity that should be treated—and feel "doomed to a life of loneliness and stigma."[4] Finally, in the late century, and lasting through the present, gay men often proudly identify with the categories that were originally designed to exclude and pathologize. While pride is arguably preferable to shame, this process has led to specific forms of resistance, including gay marriage, lending "credibility to the very institution[s] that [have] acquired meaning precisely through excluding" those we might loosely identify as queer.[5] More pertinent to this project, the end result of our commitment to identity has resulted in a "lasting inability to see connections" among people we have been encouraged to see as "separate species."[6]

This project approaches eighteenth-century sexuality through identification, arguing that we can best locate and understand the experience of eighteenth-century sexuality via recognizable affects rather than particular types of bodies or identities. Broadly speaking, my understanding of sexuality as an experience conditioned by social and cultural factors that shape

our affective response to sex is underpinned by the work of Michel Foucault. In *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Volume Two*, Foucault describes his purpose in the first volume of his series as an attempt to "stand detached from" what we now call "sexuality" in order to examine its context.[7] By analyzing context over acts or behaviors—what we might call the hard evidence of sexualities—Foucault's work draws attention to the factors that allowed for the emergence of sexuality as both a subject of inquiry and a central aspect of identity. Foucault's *History of Sexuality* thus offers a way to understand how discourse, power, and knowledge shape how we feel about sexuality, and how our experience of this socially and historically specific feeling participates in the normalization of specific sexualities. In other words, Foucault shows how discourses on sexuality create sexualities that are in turn individually adopted, defined, and disciplined; one of the ways that this disciplining operates is through emotion.[8]

Foucault's work helps to explain two of the key terms of this project: experience and identity. I understand experience as the outcome of a wide range of social and historical conditions that have bearing on how we encounter sex and sexuality. Instead of seeing experience as the outcome of identity, I read experience as that which makes possible affective affinities that then create shared identifications and shared identities. Foucault speaks to the present as he urges us to recognize how the terms we use to name sexualities both describe *and* shape our understanding of sexual identity. Representations of eighteenth-century sexualities offer a productive vantage point for this analysis because the dominant categories of identity that we typically rely upon—heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual—are not yet in circulation. We are invited, then, to study sex before sexualities, an inquiry that requires us to find new ways of thinking about sexuality that do not employ categories of identity to capture feeling and

experience. Rather than seeing identity as an essentialist term, I represent it here as the crystallization of experiences and feelings. Sexual identity, which is often conceptualized as a fixed essence, is more appropriately understood as the result of shared feelings, feelings that are conditioned by a range of social, cultural, and historical thoughts and practices. Once categories of medical invention, sexual identities have retained their meaningfulness in part because our collective understandings of sexuality continue to produce the affective experience of sexuality and thus continue to influence our affinities with others, affinities that are conditioned by the structures of power that influence how we experience sexual tastes and practices.

Post Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks argues, "theorists question the naturalness and inevitability of the sexual categories and assumptions we have inherited."[9] I discuss Foucault's work at length here although without extensive mention of his theoretical claims in the following chapters because his redefinitions of sexuality underpin my understanding of sexual experience and sexual identity. As well, Foucault's suggestion that we continue to buttress the meaningfulness of sexuality via our explorations in sex prompts a justification for a research project that ostensibly seeks to define the very concept that some are seeking to render obsolete: sexuality. Even attempts to queer sexuality, some could argue, participate in the lingering significance of sexuality.

Queer theory moves us beyond identity and moves us toward the more difficult task of recognizing how all of our identities are constructed, maintained, valued, and challenged. To this end, queer theory has uses and applications for self-understanding for everyone—not just those who *feel* queer. Foucault has encouraged readers to ask important questions: How is sexuality a cultural artifact? How have we been led to embrace our sexual identities as meaningful and significant, and why were we left with these options? Do our claims to identity

or other useful fictions recapitulate, prolong, and secure sexual boundaries and categories? Because Foucault asks all readers to rethink our readiness to willingly embrace sexuality as a central truth of the self, he provides a frame for thinking about sexuality that queers existing ideas about sexuality. Instead of isolating, naming, and thereby creating fixed sexual identities, as with the emergence of the homosexual as a "separate species," we might think about what structures our feelings about sexuality. The experience of feeling queer, then, shifts according to the structures of power that form feelings. This power is carried out in discourse via the solidification of sexual identities.

While invested in the eighteenth century, then, the following chapters also reflect on the impact of affect in queer theory, and in queer readings of eighteenth-century literature. Queer literary projects are often overly invested with emotion. From recovery projects that seek to recuperate and celebrate queer historical icons from the past to theoretical inquiries that prod us to let go of or challenge existing ways of understanding the world in the present, queer literary history often holds out the promise of a new present or future. Evidence of this promise has resulted in responses to optimism, including Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism*, critiques of futurity, such as Lee Edelman's *No Future*, critical analyses of what kind of subjects should be recovered, like Heather Love's *Feeling Backward*, and projects devoted to rethinking the links we make between success and progress, such as J. Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure*. I work within this critique by drawing attention to the kinds of historical figures we have invested in, and the ways that we imagine resistance.

I want to briefly outline here some of the ways of representing sexuality and historical change before discussing the other key words in this work. The following summary of questions and concerns about so-called radical historical shifts serves to explain the historical and

interpretive problems that have been raised by both critics who see the eighteenth century as a period of tremendous change and those who take issue with what Scott Bravmann calls "grand, universalizing" accounts that have "obscured recognition of effective and meaningful difference within [the] overarching process of change."[10] In *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual*, Rictor Norton puts pressure on arguments of period-specific seismic change not because such models strip periods of meaningful differences, as Bravmann argues, but because such histories merely reflect what heterosexual people know about queers. He writes,

> Social constructionist discourse is fond of hyperbole such as 'crucial change', 'massive shift', 'distinctively new', 'profoundly different', 'vital moment', etc. (all from Weeks, 1991). As far as I am concerned, 'watersheds', 'shifts' and 'ruptures' have very little to do with queers themselves, and much to do with the education of heterosexuals, who gradually became less naïve as sexologists and the more outrageous queens made clear what queers have always known.[11]

There is a useful cautionary protocol in Norton's argument: we should not assume that what is made public via print necessarily signifies something new. Accepting that categories of sex, gender, and sexuality are always unstable, never fully defined, and thus rarely able to have a singular ideological coherence during any historical moment (certainly not our own) would be one of a number of problems with seeing specific periods as "watersheds" in larger trajectories.

However, this is not the problem that Norton attributes to such assumptions. It is perhaps true that the language he borrows from Weeks runs the risk of overstatement, but Norton regards this way of seeing change as incorrect since it merely documents the development of knowledge

amongst heterosexuals about queers and therefore falls short of documenting the experience of queers in history. Norton's claim that queers have always known what heterosexuals are late to discover overlooks a vast history of individuals that did not always know—people who were eager in fact to render themselves intelligible through representations and theories of identity made public by (perhaps heterosexual) authors and sexologists, among others.[12] His faith in essentialism, be it cultural essentialism or otherwise, comes into view via the assumed ahistorical and rigid "queer" and "heterosexual" monoliths that are vital to his reading of queer history. I return to this question of queer knowingness in Chapter Four.

David Halperin's discussion of change is also useful here as a demonstration of the trend that Norton critiques. In *How to do the History of Homosexuality*, Halperin writes,

> I take it as established that a large-scale transformation of social and personal life took place in Europe as part of the massive cultural reorganization that accompanied the transition from a traditional, hierarchical, status-based society to a modern, individualistic, mass society during the period of industrialization and the rise of a capitalist economy. One symptom of that transformation, as a number of researchers (both before and after Foucault) have pointed out, is that something new happens to the various relations among sexual roles, sexual object-choices, sexual categories, sexual behaviors, and sexual identities in Bourgeois Europe between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.[13]

Michael McKeon makes similar claims about the ongoing shifts in conceptions of sex and gender during this period. In "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in

England, 1660-1760," McKeon refines a common argument that is "established"—as Halperin accepts—though perhaps difficult to prove: that our modern understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality emerged during the eighteenth century. However, as McKeon carefully demonstrates, it is not that sexual difference per se was born. McKeon writes, "it is a change from a system in which the tacitly acknowledged difference between men and women is experienced as inseparably interwoven with sociocultural factors, to one in which the difference between men and women, although complex and problematic, is nonetheless understood as what renders the system systematic."[14] This "alteration," he argues, "was gradual, uneven, and in a real sense incomplete"—incomplete since differences in class (among other things, such as literacy rates) thwarted an even distribution of knowledge.[15]

In addition to representations of change, critics disagree on what counts as queer history. In the present, queer stands in for a number of sexual and gender identifications and practices that position someone outside of a set of social norms. Queer can be an identity that is allocated: an identity that is given to an individual by someone who has the power and influence to assign an identity to another. Queer is also a possibility that almost always accompanies the dominant culture. It is a way of seeing and being in the world that holds out the promise of an alternative to existing ways of thinking about being and desiring. By this understanding, queer is a space that always exists when a norm is present. Since queerness exists through norms that are historically and culturally specific, it is markedly not an essence but a response—a set of actions or feelings that emerge in relation to, and often in resistance to, a model way of being or desiring. This has produced a near allergic reaction to biology, or any assumptions about an inherent queer essence, in critical analysis.[16]

Though perhaps radical in his claims, Norton's theory of sexuality is useful here since it demonstrates precisely what queer theories of sexuality challenge. For Norton, "personal queer identity arises from within, and is then consolidated along lines suggested by the collective identity of the queer (sub)culture."[17] He argues that throughout the 80s and the 90s queer history was largely dominated by social constructionists who principally, due to their tendency to investigate the regulation of queers in culture, "document suppression or oppression" instead of the "authentic voice of queer experience."[18] Because he sees sexual identity as an internal essence, he refutes critics who argue that sexual identity is socially, culturally, and historically specific. As such, he sees his work—a work devoted to uncovering, recording, and liberating authentic queer culture—as revolutionary and marginalized in the face of dominant trends in queer theory.

Norton regularly uses the term queer, but he uses it in way that Carla Freccero describes as "identity producing" instead of destabilizing.[19] This approach limits what we look for in queer literary analysis. My research focuses on a range of affective states and familiar feelings in order to demonstrate how a focus on feelings allows for unpredictable links between the past and the present, connections that recognize the intricate imbrication of sexuality and affect, and connections that distinctly resist the easy links formed via categories of identity. I focus on what *feels* familiar so as to prompt us to think differently about our affective attachments in the present and to present an alternative way of thinking about sexualities in eighteenth-century British literature. Using the novel as a means to showcase the development of what are now modern methods of reform, such as the cultivation of shame, the medicalization of sex, and the linking of sexual lifestyle and social elevation, I demonstrate how feelings in the early novel

helped shape and solidify now familiar reformatory measures that seek to produce and ensure the status quo.

I focus on shared sentiments—familiar feelings—between the past and the present as a way to draw attention to similarities rather than differences. The title, *Familiar Feelings*, borrows from the eighteenth-century idea of "fellow-feeling." Our closest approximation to "fellow-feeling" is sympathy. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Adam Smith writes, "pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion."[20] However, unlike sympathy, fellow-feeling is at times transmittable through feeling alone. Smith explains, "the passions, upon some occasions, may seem to be transfused from one man to another, instantaneously, and antecedent to any knowledge of what excited them in the person principally concerned."[21] The concept has roots in Christian texts. The definition provided in the 1701 edition of the anonymously published *The Word of God, The Best Guide to all Persons, at all Times, and in all Places: or, a Collection of Scripture Texts* defines fellow-feeling as "compassion," and indicates that we must bear each other's burdens to "fulfill the law of Christ."[22] In this text, fellow-feeling denotes a visceral sympathy: "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."[23]

Over the course of the century, emotions are increasingly described as interior affects. In *Sentimental Figures of Empire*, Lynn Festa writes, "whereas the term emotion at the beginning of the eighteenth century refers to turbulent motions that irrupt into the self from without, by the end of the century, it alludes to specific affect originating from within."[24] If

earlier expressions of fellow-feeling helped to unite people to others through shared suffering, late-century articulations solidified a sense of identity: "In an era of imperial and commercial expansion, sentimentality invites readers to dabble in the emotional lives of others, while seeking to secure the continuity ('identity' in the eighteenth-century sense of the word) of the metropolitan subject."[25] The use of affect to construct and support identity is particularly notable in Sterne. The writer's thoughts on feelings for others are presented in *The Beauties of Sterne*:

> Where the spectacle is uncommonly tragical, and complicated with many circumstances of misery, the mind is then taken captive at once, and *were* it inclined to it, has no power to make resistance, but surrenders itself to all the tender emotions of pity and deep concern. So that when one considers this friendly part of our nature without looking farther, one would think it impossible for man to look upon misery without finding himself in some measure attached to the interest of him who suffers it—I say, one would think it impossible—for there are some tempers—how shall I describe them?—formed either of such impenetrable matter, or wrought up by habitual selfishness to such an utter insensibility of what becomes of their fellow creatures, as if they were not partakers of the same nature, or had no lot or connection at all with the species.[26]

Sterne's careful distinction between penetrable and impenetrable matter allows for feelings to participate in identity formation. As I argue in Chapter Four, Sterne's representation of the commitment to occupying the space of the penetrable subject in *A Sentimental Journey* portrays

a self-scrutiny that at once exposes the performative nature of deep feeling and satirizes the overstated style of sensibility. What is key here, however, is Sterne's link between feeling and species. Both sincere and ironic depictions facilitate the creation of communities and pronounced borders between people via sentiments. Festa writes, "both nonironic sentimentality and its parodic hyperbolization produce communities: irony consolidates a community of the archly knowing, while sentimental tears create a community of the tearfully feeling."[27] Chapter Four addresses this relationship between affect and social categorization via the use of feeling to consolidate and buttress class differences.

I trace a growing interest in the relationship between affect and sex, an interest that is ushered into the public sphere via novelistic discourse. I begin with two eighteenth-century accounts of sex that are psychologically uncomplicated, Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband* and John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, and I conclude with two texts that are almost entirely consumed with emotion, Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* and Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*. My discussion of sex and affect shows a gradual shift in understandings of identity that could suggest that a general awareness of the relationship between affect and sexuality deepened over the course of the century. However, the ways in which affect helped to foster an understanding of sexuality is undoubtedly uneven. In the present, for example, we do not all experience affective identifications with others based on shared sexual tastes. However, the organization of the chapters, which are situated chronologically by the date of the texts in question, tell a story of a developing awareness of how community standards shape how we experience sex. What emerges from my readings are familiar feelings between the past and present that propose new ways of thinking about a literary history of eighteenth-century sexuality. These new ways of thinking direct us to turn to affect

and to draw on our present understandings of identity as a way to negotiate the deadlock between essentialist and anti-essentialist theories of sexual identity.

Chapter One looks at Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband*, a text that links queer desire both to an excess of sexual knowledge and to sexual naivety and thereby offers an assessment of sexual desire that participates in a larger conversation about the dangers of experience—be it lived or literary. I trace the ways in which readings of Fielding's work are profoundly invested in the passing figure, an attachment that demonstrates how central affect is to our readings of queer literature. I also argue that Fielding's formula for understanding why some women fall for female husbands pays careful attention to women's affective states when queer desires are found in those who do not otherwise transgress gender. Our attention to the passing figure renders Fielding's "femmes" invisible. In Chapter Two, I demonstrate how John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* participates in the formation of sexual hierarchies by wedding marital sex to civic happiness and queer sex to shame. Like Cleland's *Memoirs*, Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, the topic of Chapter Three, allows readers to witness the experience of queer affect. I argue that Clarissa's madness can be read as a queer longing for an alternative to the institution of marriage, and particularly, an alternative to a model of love that is founded in the consolidation of land and wealth. Clarissa's queer longing is characterized by her desire to live outside of social norms, her refusal to accept her place in the system of exchange held intact by the institution of marriage, and her willingness to risk the loss of family to satisfy her own wishes. In Chapter Four, a reading of Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, I argue that the slow shift from blood to conduct as an index of value ushered in not only an increased demand for self-discipline but also the injunction to examine one's feelings. Sensibility—a quality that signals a keen awareness of affect that demonstrates character—shows how power

functions through feelings. Sterne's representation of the sensible man's submerged sexual desire demonstrates how the cult of sensibility both defined and restrained those aspiring to meet the demands of new definitions of respectability. Through this reconsideration of sex and affect in the eighteenth-century novel, *Familiar Feelings* connects the rise of the novel to the long history of what we now call sexuality. My research demonstrates the central and complex role of emotion in the development of both sexuality and the sexual identities that begin to take shape via shared sentiments.

The following chapters approach not only the representation of feelings in eighteenth-century literature, but also the ways in which feelings shape our readings of eighteenth-century texts. I approach "feelings" here as implicit and explicit emotional responses, and generally use "feeling," "affect," and "emotion" interchangeably. Feelings bespeak individual investments that we might understand as subjective and emotional—such as twentieth-century investments in recovering queer narratives of the past. More specifically, in Chapter One I consider how our affective attachments to the presumably disruptive passing woman of eighteenth-century fictions prevents us from recognizing other figures of queerness in Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband*. In Chapter Two, I demonstrate how John Cleland's representation of the familiar feeling of shame in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* invites us to review the strategic use of shame from an eighteenth-century standpoint. In Chapter Three, I explore how familiar feelings can establish atypical links between the past and the present, inviting us to read Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* within the canon of queer fiction. In Chapter Four, I turn to Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, a text that offers a familiar framing of what we now call class by representing class as a shared feeling, or sensibility. My readings result in some unsuspected heroes and heroines of queer fiction. Through these connections, I

seek new ways to think about our affective attachments in the present, and I participate in a larger conversation about the relationship between feelings and literary history.

1.0 FAMILIAR READINGS OF FIELDING'S *THE FEMALE HUSBAND*

"Until the end of the eighteenth century the existence of sexual feelings of women for other women was nearly inconceivable. Sex was seen as an exclusively heterosexual act."

—Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe*[28]

"Of these unnatural lusts, all ages and countries have afforded us too many instances; but none I think more surprising than what will be found in the history of Mrs. *Mary*, otherwise Mr. *George Hamilton*."

—Henry Fielding, *The Female Husband*[29]

Same-sex desire between women occupies an important if peripheral space in eighteenth-century literature. Eighteenth-century literary accounts struggle to explain desires that should not occur in nature, and their authors work to defend their representations of sex acts that many believed were best left unpublished. In these literary accounts, there is a notable faith in the relationship between discourse and subject formation, evidenced by the fear that publishing perverse sex acts could result in a proliferation of queer desires. Some eighteenth-century

writers justified their participation in making queer desires public by suggesting that people must be educated in vice so that they can successfully recognize virtue, as John Cleland demonstrates in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure.*

Recent scholarship demonstrates a considerable interest in historical and literary accounts of desire between women, particularly when gender transgression is involved. The substantial number of texts that can loosely fit into the genre of the "passing" narrative attests to the interest that this staple of history and fiction garners historically as well. I use the qualifier "passing" reluctantly because of the ways in which critical readings and histories of "passing women" have participated in a "regendering" of historical figures that might be more accurately situated under transgender history.[30] We cannot, in fact, always know the factors that underpin the choices these historical figures made. The basic facts—an individual assigned as female at birth adopts the dress, mannerisms, and/or occupations of men—offer little insight into the gender identification of the actor. However, implicit in the title "passing woman" is the central significance of the individual's "true" sex, a designation that by this formulation takes precedence to a chosen gender presentation. Erica Rand's scholarship on Frank Woodhull, who admitted to presenting himself as a man at Ellis Island in 1908 when required to undergo a medical examination, speaks to the great need to "denaturalize the representation of gender" in historical accounts of people who "were raised as female and then decided to live as male."[31] As Rand explains, "passing women" is used frequently and indiscriminately to define all passing figures as "women masquerading as men to get the advantages that men had: opportunities for work, travel, adventure, battle, and/or sometimes, female sex or marriage partners."[32]

Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband,* published in 1746, tacitly makes use of this final motive for "passing": dressing in men's clothes for female companionship. *The Female*

Husband narrates the story of Mary Hamilton, who was charged for fraud in Somerset in 1746. Dressed in her brother's clothes, Hamilton left home at fourteen, became a "quack doctor" under the name George Hamilton, and legally wed Mary Price the same year. The two were travelling when Price allegedly discovered that Hamilton was biologically female.[33] Fielding's narrative offers a fictionalized account of what might have happened—his endeavor inspired fan fiction during the nineteenth century as well, some accounts which have been said to transform Hamilton into a travelling salesperson selling her "specialized wares."[34] Even though Fileding's narrative is relatively brief, it offers a considerably expanded account of the actual case. Recent scholarship has shown the various traditions that *The Female Husband* borrows from, including the mock-heroic, criminal biographies, and passing narratives, demonstrating that the story of Hamilton offers yet another strange-but-true tale for eager fans of these particular genres. Critics have also paid attention to the female husband as a figure, noting her ability to foster both panic and erotic interest.

I focus here on the "passing woman" as an instrumental figure, which is to say, as an individual whose life choices—motives for which we will unlikely recover—are exploited for a range of reasons by both the eighteenth-century writer and the twentieth-century critic. Fielding's response to Hamilton circles through numerous feelings. His account is at times playful, and at times moralizing and instructive. His depiction of Hamilton's fictionalized exploits attempts to characterize the act of passing as monstrous, and yet he cannot quite conceal his attraction and curiosity. This vacillation mirrors twentieth-century representations of what we might loosely call queer sexuality, and further reveals the relationship between sexuality and affect. In the present, critics likewise demonstrate mixed emotions towards queer sex before sexuality. As Heather Love articulates, two dominant approaches to history shape our readings

of the past: affirmative history, "which seeks to confirm contemporary gay and lesbian identity by searching for moments of pride or resistance in the past," and curative history, an approach that "seeks out 'discontinuities' in the past in order to disrupt the stability or taken-for-granted quality of the present."[35] Both, I think, are structured by our sense of the critical use value of histories of sexuality, the latter version clearly aligning with a Foucauldian approach to identity, sexuality, and history. As well, a critic's affective response to a text can implicitly structure what we do with this history, and what kinds of texts we focus on to begin with.

Looking at critical investments in the passing figure—from an eighteenth-century point of view and from the recent past—presents us with an archive that tells a story about the relationship between feelings and sexuality. As good-humored as Fielding's story of Hamilton is, it nevertheless invokes some negative shared emotions between twenty-first century readers and eighteenth-century queers. Fielding's provocative retellings of moments of risk and discovery, for example—when Hamilton's sex might be or is revealed—likely invite familiar feelings for transgender readers. I do not pursue this possibility here, but I raise it as a reminder of the various ways that we encounter fiction, and as a caveat for recognizing how our own investments structure what we do with the text in question.

To explore this, this chapter looks at the critical investments of late twentieth-century readings of Fielding's text and Fielding's own investments in the passing figure with an attention to the strategic use of Hamilton's story for advancing claims about sexuality and identity. I also draw attention to some of the remarkable similarities among Fielding's text and more recent accounts of gender transgression, including Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion in Women*, and a lesser known document titled, "Death of a Deceiver," a narrative account of Brandon Teena's life and death, written by Eric Konigsberg and published in *Playboy* in 1995. What Fielding,

Ellis, and Konigsberg share is an urge to understand what we might loosely call queer desire through a heteronormative model. Although all of these accounts are outwardly invested in the story of a "passing" figure, they all share a telling investment in what we might loosely categorize as the femme: the women who fall for female husbands.[36] I conclude this chapter with some speculations on what structures the tendency to focus our critical attention on the "passing" figure at the expense of the femme figure.

1.1 READING *THE FEMALE HUSBAND*

Literary critics and historians of sexuality differ in their attempts to explain the significance of early, literary representations of intimacy and sexual desire between women. In *Dangerous Intimacies: Toward a Sapphic History of the British Novel*, Lisa Moore argues that the "late- eighteenth-century novel is engaged in the complex process of producing identity *per se* as a quintessentially modern category."[37] Part of the cultural work of the novel, then, is to offer readers a way of understanding the sexual self; the novel offers "the fiction of a unique and knowable selfhood" accomplished through the individual capacity to control sexual excess.[38] This emergent modern subject, defined as she is by her commitment to virtue, is first and foremost of the middling sort, and it is her ability to overcome vice that legitimizes her "bourgeois ascension."[39]

The study of sexuality, as Michel Foucault has noted in the *History of Sexuality*, is not a "history of behaviors" or a "history of representations."[40] It is the study of a concept. Foucault writes, "I wanted first to dwell on that quite recent and banal notion of 'sexuality': to stand detached from it, bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical

context with which it has been associated."[41] Studying sexuality—studying the diverse fields and forms that contributed to the modern understanding of sexuality as *a*, and at times *the* defining quality of a subject—requires a "history of the experience of sexuality, where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture."[42] In *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory*, Lynne Huffer describes Foucault's *History of Sexuality* as an "attempt to release sexuality as an ethical experience from its suturing to bourgeois categories of morality."[43] The "production of sexuality," Huffer argues, "is a story about the production of subjectivity through structures of moral exclusion."[44] Exclusions, Foucault claimed, define "the forms within which individuals are able, are obliged, to recognize themselves as subjects" of sexuality.[45]

Henry Fielding's novella, *The Female Husband*—published over fifty years before the term "sexuality" began to appear in print—offers a representation of and explanation for queer sexual inclinations, or to use Fielding's terms, "unnatural lusts."[46] As an allegedly instructive piece of literature, Fielding's narrative looks like an attempt to codify what we now call sexuality—to define sexual subjectivity via exclusions. *The Female Husband* might look crude or primitive through a modern lens for many reasons. However, to say an early reading is primitive is to misread the context. In fact, Fielding's reading is in some sense far more complicated than ours—if primitive is tantamount to simple—as its depiction of queer desire borrows from a range of explanations for what we might now call sexuality.

The text draws from a variety of different trends in literature of the "passing" figure. In mid-century periodicals, there was a story about a cross-dressed woman approximately every other month.[47] While not as pervasive as accounts of theft or other crimes, print media suggests

that there was a general awareness of passing women. Unlike contemporary, Western trends in film and literature—which almost exclusively link gender transgression with homosexuality or transsexuality—early modern explanations were far less limited. There were plebian cross dressers, criminals, lovelorn ladies following their men to sea or war, and sham husbands, both comedic and criminal.

By the mid century, then, writers had a variety of explanatory tools to choose from—far more than we rely on presently to make sense of female gender transgression. As sexual deviance begins to take hold of the imagination as the cause of gender transgression, narratives of passing decrease in publication. But prior to this development, the "discursive parameters of the passing woman" were far broader than ours currently are.[48] Twentieth and twenty-first century discussions of "passing" continue to rely on a simple formula that links gender and sexuality. This shared understanding of the alleged relationship between gender and sexuality indicates that we continue to recognize queer gender as evidence of queer sexual orientation. These familiar formulas bind us to the terms and binaries we seek to disrupt.

Alan Bray's work *The Friend* is useful here as it describes the trouble with making sexuality central to our readings of the past. For Bray, it is not that historians and critics who mark sex as always *the* secret truth, as Foucault has described it, are bolstering and thus prolonging the meaningfulness of sexuality; rather, sex is not the only possibility—and it is not the only mechanism. Yet it is one that we have relied on, as Bray sees it, gravely. Criticism that conceptualizes sexuality as *the* key, whether rooted in homophobia or feminist and queer theory, endorses a continued faith in the meaningfulness of categorization. Like "male" and "female," "homosexual" and "heterosexual" linger as basic terms—they are firmly held in what Nancy

Armstrong calls the "semiotics of modern life" and they sustain "the reigning metaphysics of sexuality."[49]

Bray takes issue with this tendency to use modern vernacular for its inaccuracy, not its potential dangerous complicity with the logics it confronts. In a similar critique, Fraser Easton brings attention to the ways in which present-day scholars' attempts to recover and understand passing women are shaped by the differing protocols of print forms. As Easton explains, "particular genres create specific mediations of the figure of the passing woman in terms of class, gender, and sexuality, on the one hand, and normalcy, transgression, and out-and-out fantasy, on the other."[50] Further, Fraser argues, "the emphasis placed by present-day scholars on the exceptional bravery or disreputable sexuality of these women is not so much anachronistic as it is partial, derived from specific print forms, on the one hand, and tied to the publication frequency of different periodicals, on the other."[51] As Easton illustrates, reading *The Female Husband* out of context overlooks the fact that the counterfeit husband was one of many ways to explain an inclination to pass "within acceptable codes."[52]

While Fielding's narrative of the counterfeit husband is a dramatic departure from narratives of "plebian" passers who typically endorsed the "stereotype of the woman warrior as a devoted wife or lover," it is similarly situated as instructive.[53] As Easton explains, passing narratives often attempted to endorse heteronormativity even as they challenged it. The "neat divisions" between "husband" and "warrior" almost certainly misrepresents the lived experiences of passing women, as many were likely both, but the available types, Easton argues, produced the parameters of acceptable and unacceptable conduct and thus participated in the management of behaviors.[54] Easton's research indicates that though the actual lived experience rarely fit formulaic explanations, writers were provided with various ways to describe the inclination to

pass. Simple abstractions obscure historical accuracy by molding these women into "good" and "bad" subjects. Whether a "sordid tale of criminal love" or a "sentimental story of wifely forbearance," these narratives were shaped to benefit and cherish codes of normative gender.[55] In the more recent past, we have come to rely upon one of many roots for gender transgression in women—sexuality—and this has only further conflated understandings of gender and sexuality.

Despite the fact that scholarship on the passing figure indicates that this figure was indeed ubiquitous, eighteenth-century narratives of passing frequently code the transgression as rare and shocking. Similarly, contemporary critics, while acknowledging the relatively widespread trend, often claim that this cultural figure shocks the eighteenth-century public. In *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850*, Diane Dugaw describers one popular variation, the female warrior, as a "standard motif."[56] The frequency of this character leads ballads to unfold with what Dugaw calls "a rather startling matter-of-factness."[57] In *The Female Thermometer*, Castle likewise indicates that female warriors were standard figures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but particularly within literary and visual representations of the "world turned upside down."[58] In her research on Fielding's *The Female Husband*, Castle calls Mary "George" Hamilton—the title character—"the unmentionable possibility [Fielding] is compelled to mention."[59] Despite Fielding's reluctance to commit perversion to print, Castle indicates that research has indicated that "female transvestism was a far more common phenomenon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than has previously been suspected."[60]

However, while the passing woman is regarded as commonplace, she is still frequently recognized as a radically disruptive figure. Significantly, recognizing the "passing" trend as widespread does not establish whether these narratives and images were invoked for conservative purposes—as if to mock the likelihood of ever inverting the order of things—or for

politically radical use, as an attempt to display the artificiality of the body. Castle places Fielding on the conservative side, claiming that he "invokes the image negatively, as a way of ridiculing female aspiration."[61] Setting the question of intent aside, Dugaw reads the passing figure as inherently disruptive. She is unquestionably subversive; she "subverts—at least by implication—the structuring according to gender of its world."[62]

Though increasingly accepted as a standard figure in early-modern literature, then, critics continue to mention the disruptions and anxieties that the passing figure allegedly creates. Passing is regularly read as subversive, as the tool par excellence in exposing and undoing prevailing logics of sex, gender, and sexuality. Castle calls further attention to the disruptive potential of the passing figure in Fielding's account, arguing that "because she disturbs the 'natural' hierarchy of male-female relations so radically, Hamilton becomes for Fielding a version of what Susan Gubar has called the 'female monster' of Augustan satire—an offense to the great chain of being."[63]

However, a short list of heroines from early to mid eighteenth-century literature suggests at least a slight passion for narratives of passing. Along with the popularity of the masked ball or masquerade—which by some accounts drew crowds of eight hundred per week in London by the early twenties—eighteenth-century England appears to look like what Castle has named "the culture of travesty."[64] For Castle, "travesty," passing, or the capacity to successfully disguise oneself, "posed an intimate challenge to the ordering patterns of culture itself."[65] Castle notes that often the challenged pattern was that of gender: "in fashionable *équivoque* figures like the fop and amazon, moralizing contemporaries were quick to see a profound affront to 'Nature' and the order of things."[66]

Concerned responses to such figures are visible in various works. In Fielding's *The Masquerade, A Poem* (1728), for example, a female guest at a masquerade replies to a suitor:

> Your empire shortly will be ended:
> Breeches our brawny thighs shall grace,
> (Another Amazonian race.)
> For when men women turn—why then
> May not women be chang'd to men?[67]

Fielding may or may not be indulging an existing concern, but the apparent risk is potentially as frightening as it is erotic. The suitor will lose his empire, though to a woman with "brawny thighs." However tempting it is to acknowledge this threat as a thinly veiled fantasy of role-play, this is part of the history that is lost. We cannot know whether or not "brawny thighs" were to be, in Fielding's mind, frightening or tantalizing (or of course both). Likewise, it would be difficult to know whether or not this possibility felt possible—whether Fielding's poem is meant to show how unstable patterns of gender are, or to mock the possibility of ever upturning them.

Castle indicates that this irresolution underpins Fielding's text, and as a result his narrative is both "deeply confused" and "crude."[68] Much like the carnivalesque realm of the masquerade, Castle explains, in Fielding's reading Hamilton is both "sublime" and "taboo"—an "unmentionable possibility."[69] Castle brings attention to a paradox: how to fictionalize what should not be possible while simultaneously promoting it as an abnormality—as unreal, or beyond the human. As she argues, the move to put the unnatural into literature is seemingly counterintuitive, as literature offers readers the chance to maunder through the details of the

perverse. If then Fielding fictionalizes the perverse so as to manage the potential disruption, he has expressed what Castle calls a "contradictory wish": "Fictionalizing allows one to stay with one's subject for longer than might be possible. In contrast to the historian, the fabulist is free to elaborate more than the facts warrant, to play out to excess, to deliquesce—to *dwell*, in short, on his or her topos."[70]

By these accounts, Hamilton was both common *and* disruptive. However, literary accounts of queer inclinations were already explaining unnatural desires as an expected outcome of gender transgression, and for this reason, Hamilton's reasons for passing and the causes that underpin her sexual drives are largely formulaic. Fielding dwells on inclination, offering some explanation for queer urges, and Hamilton's transgressions take center stage, but the narrative is careful to account for queer inclinations in familiar ways. Critical readings of "passing" that appear overly invested in the disruptive potential of gender transgression suggest that violations of gender norms—and specifically, acts that can potentially "hide" an individual's "true" sex—necessarily participate in the dismantling of heteronormative sex/gender relations. I am not arguing here that this is not a possibility. Instead, I draw attention to how writers have characterized these figures as particularly useful *because* of their presumed capacity to shock and arouse audiences, a conclusion that seems entirely structured by our current faith in the destabilizing effects of "passing." In the following section, I consider how Fielding employs Hamilton's "passing" by using the narrative to explore women's education, and to protect the boundaries of heteronormative desire.

1.2 EDUCATION, SEXUAL INCLINATION, AND DESIRE IN FIELDING'S *THE FEMALE HUSBAND*

While critics have suggested that the passing figure creates a challenge—she needs to be explained within existing logics of sex and sexuality and yet an explanation requires making queer sex too public—in this section I argue that while Hamilton's case provides a provocative narrative, Fielding is as preoccupied with what causes the lovers' transgressions as he is with Hamilton's conduct. Fielding's attempt to explain Hamilton's lovers' inclinations, read through and against the passing figure, offers readers an opportunity to see how gender performance inflects sexual inclination. When gender fails to account for queer inclinations, Fielding proposes that experience impacts women's affective state and shapes their sexual choices.

While speculations on same-sex desire vary greatly during the eighteenth-century, and particularly so when comparing the representation of desire between women and desire between men, there are significant continuities between John Cleland's representation of same-sex desire in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* and Fielding's portrayal in *The Female Husband*.[71] When Fanny, Cleland's author and heroine, witnesses two men switch from same-sex frolicking to what she understands as sex, she imagines that the younger boy in the pair *must* be a woman in disguise. Cleland's description of the men engaged in same-sex sex indicates why Fanny is able to quickly revise what she witnessed: "the youngest could not be above seventeen, fair, ruddy, completely well made, and to say the truth, a sweet pretty stripling."[72] Younger and prettier, calling the "stripling" a girl fits the sodomitical scene within Fanny's knowledge of the world. In *Memoirs*, a man becomes visibly queer by "apeing" the female sex; "stript of all the manly virtues of their own sex," queer men demonstrate nature's mistake via gender misconduct on

display.[73] Gender is undeniably tied to sexuality here, whether it is a cause or a symptom. Queer gender is what makes a taste for the same sex require no further explanation. In another description of men who desire men, Cleland indicates that all of these men are visibly queer. Cleland writes, "for that among numbers of that stamp whom she had known, or at least were universally under the scandalous suspicion of it," the sign is present.[74] Here "suspicion" is brought about by the stamp, or visible gender transgression, and thus it seems not to matter whether the stamp leads to sexual transgressions or not. The stamp is enough to distinguish the subject as irrevocably queer.

As I discuss in further detail in Chapter Two, in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, Cleland links normative sex to health and happiness and thereby participates in the codification and regulation of sexuality through the promise of happiness. Significantly, Cleland's representation of same-sex desire is noticeably outside of this formula in that same-sex desire shapes gender, but it does not necessarily lead to poor health or unhappiness. Poor gender, unlike poor conduct, is not bad for the body. It is bad because it is queer. Cleland's sodomites are attractive and visibly healthy, and thus not suffering from the excesses indulged by his other characters, and more specifically, characters engaged in queer, cross-sex sex. Fanny quickly washes her hands of these men, and this suggests that Cleland's sodomites are beyond care and beyond recovery. Speculations on cause and effect and good-willed encouragements for reform are rendered immediately trivial once the subject has the plague-spot, or stamp, of gender misconduct. The queerly gendered do not require any further explanation, and worse yet, they are a lost cause.

If gender falls under the ideologically imposed standard of health discussed in Chapter Two, it is still remarkably different than the health standards established for "straight" queer

bodies. In *The Female Husband*, Fielding shares Cleland's outlook, offering neither solution nor solace for women who wear pants. Much like Cleland, Fielding presents a similarly static view of the gender queer subject. Once turned by circumstance and fancy and thus inclined to wear pants, Hamilton's recovery is inconsequential. As soon as the female husband's gender impropriety is in place and beyond question, then, she is differentiated; but she must be made public, like the sodomite, allegedly invoked to warn and protect otherwise normal women that might be led astray along the path to middling-sort marital relations.[75]

As George Haggerty suggests about the sodomite, the passing figure in Fielding's imaginary offers a cultural primer: useful tips for those who might encounter a lady gallant and soothing explanations that indicate how such a phenomena came to be. Fielding concludes his narrative with a justification for his contribution to making the provocative story public:

> In order to caution therefore that lovely sex, which, while they preserve their natural innocence and purity, will still look most lovely in the eyes of men, the above pages have been written, which, that they might be worthy of their perusal, such strict regard hath been had to the utmost decency, that notwithstanding the subject of this narrative be of a nature so difficult to be handled inoffensively, not a single word occurs through the whole, which might shock the most delicate ear, or give offence to the purest chastity.[76]

Castle suggests that Fielding attempts to navigate the demands of two different audiences—male and female—and thus develops a text that is both erotic and didactic, much in the tradition of amatory fictions from the early eighteenth century. As Castle explains, Fielding's "rhetorical

task is precisely to mention the unmentionable, to speak decorously of a huge lapse in decorum (the sexual impersonator being always among the least decorous of figures), to address a 'mixed' company of readers on the taboo subject of sexual mixtures."[77] This produces a confusing text. Though ultimately Castle argues that the confusion is Fielding's, that "he is torn between [Hamilton's] criminality and her androgynous appeal," his effort "to address readers of both sexes on a subject—lesbianism—which had traditionally been thought suitable for only one" results in a narrative that fails to meet the expectations of didactic *or* pornographic literature.[78] Fitting both genres requires Fielding to negotiate details: how much can he reveal without damaging women's virtue?

Fielding's regard for decency, however suspect, connects sexual knowledge to virtue. As Fielding shows, delineating the requisite amount of sexual knowledge for female readers is a fine balance. In fact, the text models this balance. As Fielding skirts around the details of Hamilton's sexual encounters, he demonstrates how writers can make taboo topics public. While Fielding models how to negotiate sexually explicit subjects, he also displays why this negotiation is important. The text offers readers a formula for sexual inclinations, including an explanation for Hamilton's desire to pass as a man and an account of what made her lovers susceptible to her advances.[79]

The explanation for Hamilton's queer desire, or the cause that allegedly establishes her inclination to pass for sexual reasons, is confusing, but particularly so from a 21st century standpoint. Her transition is the result of a whim put into action after a lousy break up. In *The Female Thermometer*, Castle comments on Fielding's remarkable lack of context for Hamilton's transition, stating, "Fielding [ ] is not interested in realizing Hamilton's charade from the 'inside'. He makes no attempt to imagine what complex motive might have led her to her act of

impersonation, or how she herself might have described the meaning of her behavior."[80] Castle adds, "psychological and political leaps, even of the rudimentary sort found in Defoe, are lacking in *The Female Husband*."[81] In the present, this could be read as productive—treating sexuality and sexual identity so swiftly, as if to say, they can and do change at whim. Fielding's text maps sexual possibilities, making queer desires public. But at the same time, he explains how this impossibility is possible in a way that serves strict, patriarchal models of desire. Once Hamilton's aberration is in place via her passion for wearing pants, Fielding turns to another problem: how she pulled it off.

Notably, the text narrates Hamilton's adventures, which generally describe her attempts to bed women for money or love, with an attention to the defects in Hamilton's sexual partners. This focus on defects explains impossible desires and renders them less threatening; the female husband can only wed (or bed) less than perfect women. When a woman has too much education, as with the lusty widow, or hardly any, like the country girl, she falls for a female husband. By this formula, sexual knowledge and sexual naivety are the only obvious roots of aberration. As such, Fielding suggests that sexual experience shapes sexual inclination. Though Hamilton takes center stage, her decision to pass and seduce women is distinguished from her lovers' motives for partaking in Sapphic love; a different factor determines the inclination.

Hamilton's decision to "dress herself in mens cloaths" and become a Methodist teacher follows a disastrous love affair between Hamilton and Anne Johnson, a Methodist and "no novice in impurity."[82] Johnson, once a neighbor of Hamilton's, befriends and quickly seduces young Hamilton. Following a brief love affair, Johnson leaves Hamilton, apologizing for taking her innocence and urging her to give up "such evil courses."[83] Hamilton's response offers little room to speculate on the perceived cause of transvestisim, as imagined by Fielding: "As soon as

the first violence of her passion subsided, she began to consult what course to take, when the strangest thought imaginable suggested itself to her fancy. This was to dress herself in mens cloaths, to embarque for *Ireland*, and commence Methodist teacher."[84] Hamilton plays the role of the abandoned "wife," but she disguises herself as a Methodist to ensure future "vile amours" with future partners.[85] The concern for Hamilton's seduction, fall, and betrayal ends quickly. She is transformed from victim to agent immediately upon losing Johnson and donning pants.

In this portrayal of same-sex desire and "passing," Hamilton's queer inclinations are the result of a chance encounter. A failed spiritual friendship between she and a Methodist woman is cause enough to lead her astray. Notably, Hamilton bears no mark. As Fielding explains, Hamilton's mother "used her with much tenderness, yet was the girl brought up in the strictest principles of virtue and religion; nor did she in her younger years discover the least proneness to vice, much less give cause of suspicion that she would one day disgrace her sex by the most abominable and unnatural pollutions."[86] Hamilton's mother wed three times and was thus arguably susceptible to sexual whims, but Fielding attributes desire between women to religious fervor, not parental influence. Defying the logic that vice is often imprinted on the mind early in a child's life, Fielding depicts Hamilton as an everyday country girl—a Pamela of sorts—who succumbs to the urge to wear pants after a failed affair with a Methodist. Hamilton's transition is a choice with no clear early childhood pattern.[87] Instead, Methodist practice stands in as a logical source. Fielding does not offer a detailed explanation for the relationship he repeatedly establishes between perverse sexual inclinations and Methodism and this lack of context makes his account of sex between Methodists looks like an inside joke.[88]

By identifying Johnson as a Methodist, Fielding participates in the tradition of linking Methodism with too fervent devotion.[89] Fielding writes, "As *Molly Hamilton* was extremely

warm in her inclinations, and as those inclinations were so violently attached to Mrs. *Johnson*, it would not have been difficult for a less artful woman, in the most private hours, to turn the ardour of enthusiastic devotion into a different kind of flame."[90] Johnson's Methodism—her ability to render Hamilton "susceptible enough to Enthusiasm, and ready to receive all those impressions which her friend the Methodist endeavored to make on her mind"—explains the root of "vile amours" between women.[91]

Fielding's depiction of seduction clearly invokes eighteenth-century ideas about Methodism. As Phyllis Mack notes in *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, the representation of Methodism in early eighteenth-century England suggests an element of hysteria over the lifestyle choices and alleged sexual behaviors of Methodists. In part, this hysteria was a response to the choices Methodism indirectly sanctioned for women. As Mack writes, "whatever their individual motives to remain single or to marry late, Methodist women were moving against the tide of the wider culture."[92] Statements on the benefits of celibacy within Methodist thought may have offered women a way to align themselves horizontally with other women in lieu of having a husband and children. Friendship held a "privileged status in Methodist culture" for "marriage or other kinship relations might be perceived as forms of idolatry, the worship of the 'creature' in place of Christ."[93] Within Methodist culture, Mack claims that "the ardor of women's (or men's) friendships was never seen as carnal or idolatrous, and it never aroused [ ] disgust."[94] Henry Abelove has suggested that institutionalized "Xtian friendship"—Christian friendship—while not outwardly authorizing "same-sex sexual feeling," still sanctioned alternatives to marriage that fostered different forms of kinship.[95]

Fielding's literary portrayal of friendship between Methodist women suggests a pronounced awareness of perverse possibilities within "Xtian" friendships. Hamilton and

Johnson become "inseparable companions, and at length bed-fellows."[96] In these early stages of intimacy, Hamilton "declares her love, or rather friendship, was totally innocent," until Johnson tempts her into a criminal attachment, a lifestyle she "learnt and often practiced at Bristol with her methodistical sisters."[97] The language of seduction in Fielding's account is attuned to contemporary ways of thinking about the too fervent and thus seductive nature of the Methodist preacher, tying conversion to spiritual seduction. In fact, Hamilton eventually loses Johnson to a "young fellow" by the name of *Rogers*.[98] Rogers is understood as either persuasive sexually or spiritually by Fielding, but in either case Rogers causes the cessation of "their vile amours."[99] "A young fellow," Rogers is able to seduce Johnson: "by his extraordinary devotion (for he was a very zealous *Methodist*) or by some other charms, (for he was very jolly and handsome) gained the heart of Mrs. *Johnson*, and married her."[100] Heartbroken and bound for Ireland, Hamilton meets another Methodist, this time a man who takes Hamilton as a lad and, "in the extasy of his enthusiasm," gropes Hamilton once they are alone in the cabin.[101] The various links between Methodism and sex shows a clear assumption: Methodism was an accepted and predictable root to queer sexuality in Fielding's imagination.

While the sexual possibilities of Methodist practice accounts for Hamilton's love for Johnson, Fielding abandons this explanation for queer desires for the remainder of the narrative. Now the seducer, Hamilton, barely introduced to the art of love, would presumably use the skills acquired from Johnson and convert her next love interest via spiritual friendship, thus perpetuating the link Fielding establishes between Methodism and queer desire. However, contrary to the established logic of queer desire that is initially introduced in *The Female Husband*, Hamilton's success as the seducer—Hamilton's desirability, in other words—is made possible by her lovers' faults, not a skill of Hamilton's own. The assumptions underlying

Fielding's portrayal of Hamilton's story expose culturally specific concerns about the boundaries, definitions, and meanings of biological sex.

Throughout the novella, Fielding takes measures to demonstrate that women cannot successfully pass as men. Hamilton is not *truly* desirable. She manipulates women who are already "damaged"—such as the twice-married widow—along with women too naïve to recognize proper objects of desire, including a greensick girl and an illiterate country girl. Fielding suggests that specific circumstances render particular women susceptible to female husbands, whereas nothing makes someone particularly inclined to the advances of a queer Methodist. By attributing a desire for a female husband to a defect, against the backdrop of a truly whimsical fall for a Methodist, Fielding attempts to account for queer desires for masculine women in a way that assuages the potential disruptions posed by this sexual possibility.

But forasmuch as Fielding attempts to represent the female husband as a failure, and only desirable by error, she is in part naturalized in the narrative. Fielding notes that though aberrant, such behaviors are "natural" outcomes of an unbridled "appetite."[102] He writes,

> That propense inclination which is for very wise purposes implanted in the one sex for the other, is not only necessary for the continuance of the human species; but is, at the same time, when govern'd and directed by virtue and religion, productive not only of corporeal delight, but of most rational felicity. But if once our carnal appetites are let loose, without those prudent and secure guides, there is no excess and disorder which they are not liable to commit, even while they pursue their natural satisfaction; and, which may seem more strange, there is nothing monstrous and unnatural, which they

> are not capable of inventing, nothing so brutal and shocking which they have not actually committed.[103]

Fielding's introductory comments imply that desire *must* be guided. Without "prudent and secure guides," "our carnal appetites" look as if they are capable of anything.

It is here, where Fielding attempts to iron out the inherent difficulty in recognizing desire as *naturally* occurring between men and women yet likewise capable of all sorts of invention, that we can witness the dangers incited via a novel way of thinking about sex, gender, and desire—not only is Fielding's approach novelistic (giving readers an opportunity to linger on the perverse), but he strays quite a bit from early eighteenth-century representations of desire between women. Early to mid-century representations of "unnatural lusts" tend to imagine the perverse body as marked in some way, offering some console to those particularly put out by perversions. Fielding moves away from this myth of the body as evidence. In his narrative, Hamilton's disorder stems from the mind, not the body. She is an otherwise normal heroine: "brought up in the strictest principles of virtue and religion."[104] She is beautiful, once virtuous, raised well and thus all the more shocking.

The question of whether or not Fielding approached this story with a desire to put to rest the anxiety produced by that which fails to fit the existing patterns or simply to profit from his voyeuristic production of a truly sensational and truly shocking story is not exactly answerable. Though Fielding admits in the final lines of *The Female Husband* that he has written the work "in order to caution therefore that lovely sex," many critics suspect that the text does not quite accomplish this goal.[105] It is never clear whether or not the text intends to caution women from wearing breeches or to warn those too innocent of dangerous and abominable lady gallants that

may be lurking in the city or the English countryside. But the text is full of moments that would corrupt an otherwise pure mind—and indeed if the work must inform and warn, it must also corrupt. If women are to be properly cautioned, in other words, they must have knowledge about what they are to protect themselves against.

As Fielding explores the possible conditions that produce sexual inclinations for female husbands, he connects sexual knowledge and sexual naivety to queer inclinations. Our "adventurer," as Fielding calls Hamilton, seeks her first romance with a "brisk widow of near 40 Years of age, who had buried two husbands, and seemed by her behaviour to be far from having determined against a third."[106] Hamilton attempts to seduce her with a letter, after noting the telltale signs of romantic interest; however, the widow rejects her. She explains, "Sir, I was greatly astonished at what you put into my hands. Indeed I thought, when I took it, it might have been an Opera song, and which for certain reasons I should think, when your cold is gone, you might sing as well as *Farinelli*, from the great resemblance there is between your persons."[107] Even with a cold that creates a hoarse voice and a twice-widowed woman eager for a third, Hamilton cannot pull this seduction off. Here, Fielding establishes that Hamilton is not passing very well, upholding and securing the male prerogative.

Not to be discouraged, Hamilton promptly finds a new mistress, Lady Rushford, who is "now in the sixty eighth year of her age."[108] She takes Hamilton for a lad, "and having pretty well outlived the bashfulness of her youth, made little scruple of giving hints of her passion of her own accord."[109] Highlighting the not yet corrupt or undesirable state of the forty-year-old widow, who is later married again though not to Hamilton, Lady Rushford's affection, Fielding notes, "would have afforded very little gratification."[110] Havelock Ellis offers a similar assessment of the nineteenth-century "feminine invert," who he describes as the "pick of the

women whom the average man would pass by," which, "no doubt" Ellis notes, contributes to their "open[ness] to homosexual advances."[111] In her discussion of Ellis, Esther Newton calls this account of homosexual desire in "always womanly" women an "extraordinary mix of fantasy, conjecture, and insight," and this reading accurately captures Fielding's narrative.[112] The woman who is not yet subject to excess, widow number one, is able to see Hamilton for what she is, an instance that secures an understanding of manhood as always biological and discernable. Rushford is undesirable, to Hamilton as well, whose design is only to secure herself the widow's fortune. Even in the event that Hamilton can take a woman off the market, and thus occupy the space of men, Fielding is sure to announce that Rushford is no longer recognized as desirable, and thus is not really a loss. Fielding writes,

> In her amour with the former widow, Mrs. Hamilton had never had any design other than of gaining the lady's affection, and then discovering herself to her, hoping to have had the same success which Mrs. Johnson had found with her: but with this old lady, whose fortune only she was desirous to possess, such views would have afforded very little gratification. After some reflection, therefore, a device entered into her head, as strange and surprising, as it was wicked and vile; and this was actually to marry the old woman, and to deceive her, by means which decency forbids me even to mention.[113]

Widow Rushford's age, together with her uninhibited passion, sufficiently justifies her perversion. Readers need not wonder why a woman would fall for a female husband as Rushford, though technically the victim of Hamilton's economic scheme, demonstrates that her

inclinations are rooted in a more general disregard for public conduct. Pushing this point further, Rushford chooses to celebrate their love in a public way, as Fielding explains, "with all kind of gaiety, the old woman triumphing in her shame, and instead of hiding her own head for fear of infamy, was actually proud of the beauty of her new husband."[114] Dressed as a "girl of eighteen," Rushford quickly attracts the jealousy of her peers, who begin to rail against "effeminacy in men" at the expense of Rushford's new husband.[115] Hamilton's ability to pass—to usurp the male prerogative—is largely attributed to a fault in the woman sought. Rushford is depicted as shamelessly eager—"having pretty well outlived the bashfulness of her youth."[116]

Fielding repeatedly returns to one question: how Hamilton pulled it off. The potential lover's folly is part of this equation, but narrating risky sex scenes when exposure seems possible also helps to secure how tricky passing is. In the narration of Hamilton's marriage with Rushford, Fielding taunts readers with the danger of discovery. During one particularly close call, Rushford's roaming hands are interrupted just in time, as Fielding notes, "her hands [began] to move in such a direction, that the discovery would have been made, had not the arrival of dinner, at that very instant, prevented it."[117] Whereas Hamilton's later conquests are secured via their sexual naivety, Rushford is characterized as particularly aggressive: a "tigress" who "almost murdered" Hamilton with her sexual advances.[118] The cliché of the hyper-sexualized widow explains how Hamilton became an object of desire, and thereby accounts for her appeal.

As Hamilton's affairs with widows come to an end, she promptly discovers a new type of conquest, this time "the daughter of Mr. *Ivythorn*, who had the greensickness."[119] Again, Fielding draws immediate attention to a defect that accounts for the lover's interest in Hamilton by giving Miss Ivythorn a condition peculiar to virgins. The girl thus becomes an "easy conquest" for Hamilton, and they live together for two weeks before discovery. In this

exchange, Fielding returns to Hamilton's not so perfect performance. Miss Ivythorn states, "I always thought indeed your shape was something odd, and have often wondered that you had not the least bit of beard; but I thought you had been a man for all that."[120] Emphasizing deception, the impact of Fielding's narrative about the greensick girl is twofold: it heightens the barbarity of the passing figure as it informs readers that innocent women might fail to recognize proper objects of desire.

Mary Price, Hamilton's last and most beautiful conquest, is inclined to perversion out of sheer ignorance. She is a spitting image of Konigsberg's naïve and rustic virgin. Hamilton meets Mary while "dancing among the inferior sort of people."[121] Fielding mocks Mary's low status through her borderline illiteracy, but her innocence only heightens Hamilton's wickedness. Mary is quickly lovesick, "which her youth and her ignorance could not well account for," and a loving letter from Hamilton only heightens this unfamiliar "torment" of love.[122] Despite comments from her sister, and a quarrel between Hamilton and another that ended in the exposure of Hamilton's breasts, Mary remains confused. In sum, Fielding explains, "the match" might have been ruined "with a less innocent and less enamoured virgin."[123] While her naivety encourages sympathy and also serves to characterize Hamilton as monstrous, her lack of education makes sense of what might be the more troubling part of the narrative: how to account for otherwise normal women who fall for female husbands. The multiple roots for transgression established by Fielding, including Hamilton's desire to pass—spirituality, age, illness, education—all point to a weakness, that predisposes women to queer desires.

Given its publication in *Playboy*, Konigsberg's account of Brandon Teena unsurprisingly returns to moments of risk and exposure, offering an opportunity to discuss sexual details. I consider his account briefly, here, because his understanding of how Teena passed uses a

formula similar to Fielding's. Teena's lovers, Konigsberg's explains, were all of a particular type: "younger than Teena, sexually inexperienced, naïve and poor."[124] When they are not qualified as such, Teena's charm is attributed to his attentiveness and his affection, two qualities that stood out to women accustomed to abuse, according to Konigsberg's projections. Again, we see the familiar formula of innocence and excess; the virgin country girl is too naïve to know what the passing figure should have, and the too experienced, or ill used, sees the youthful imposter as an ideal alternative to her current options.

Fielding's narrative of female sexual transgression repeatedly accounts for queer inclinations via a noted lack of, or excess of, sexual knowledge. Hamilton's success, then—her ability to pass and thus gain sexual access to women—stems from an inclination conditioned by education. Widow Rushford is overexposed, Mary Price clearly demonstrates a dangerous lack of education that leads to her being easily persuaded by Hamilton's charms, and the greensick lover is coerced into sex as a curative to her fictitious illness. By repeatedly stressing how Hamilton passed, Fielding's narrative reaffirms natural differences between men and women. But in the process, Fielding offers a convincing account of sex education, showing how a lack of sexual knowledge ultimately results in poor sexual choices.

Fielding's assessment of queer inclinations in women, which may be reductively read in terms of audience demand, or attributed to a personal conflict in the author, protects sex and gender as meaningful signifiers. Fielding emphasizes Hamilton's monstrous deception, and thus he repeatedly reminds his audiences of her performance. In each sexual encounter, he carefully describes how Hamilton pulled it off, offering details and comical exposures. Fielding's reading of the female husband, then, proves how tricky passing is, assuring his readers that the displacement of the phallus is never simple. Hamilton is repeatedly exposed in the text, and it is

precisely this emphasis on exposure, together with Fielding's effort to account for Hamilton's desirability via defect, that suggests that the passing figure's disruptive potential rests in her capacity to attract women, not her ability to pass.

While Fielding's reading of same-sex desire and masquerade serves conventional, patriarchal models of desire, his argument about sexual knowledge reflects a way of thinking about women's education that encouraged women's access to literature. Fielding advocates for sex education, if only to justify his participation in the circulation of erotic literature. And while his theory of sex education promotes a delicate balance in women's sexual education—demonstrating the risks of both too much knowledge and too little knowledge—his text clearly, if conservatively, shows how sexual naivety results in poor decisions.

The significance of this is best understood in the context of a persistent infantilizing discourse during the eighteenth-century that positioned women as too impressionable, like children, to safely read provocative literature. This general attitude is present in Fielding's conclusion, where he notes his "strict regard" for "decency."[125] With this, readers are left to imagine what the text would have looked like had Fielding narrated the events of Hamilton's life with less censure. Early commentaries on the influence of literature on women, such as Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, suggest that the novel's deleterious effects are not, in fact, a result of an already too delicate mind, but instead they are the predictable outcome of a kind of learning that is worse than naivety. Astell explains,

> A woman may study Plays and Romances all her days, & be a great deal more knowing, but never a jot the wiser. Such a Knowledge as this serves only to instruct and put her forward in the practice of the greatest Follies; yet how can they justly

> blame her, who forbid, or at least, won't afford opportunity of better? A rational mind will be employ'd, it will never be satisfy'd in doing nothing; and if you neglect to furnish it with good materials, 'tis like to take up with as much as come to hand.[126]

Astell's commentary against plays and romances—and particularly, literature on the passions—advocates for women engaging with loftier subjects. For Astell, romance does not offer what she calls "practical knowledge."[127]

Accounting for a perceived discrepancy in maturity between boys and girls, Judith Drake attributes an early maturity in the female sex to the reading of literature:

> Romances, Novels, Plays, and Poems; which though they read carelessly only for Diversion, yet unawares to them, give 'em very early a considerable Command both of Words and Sense; which are further improv'd by their making and receiving Visits with their Mothers, which gives them betimes the opportunity of imitating, conversing with, and knowing the manner, and address of elder Persons. These I take to be the true Reasons why a Girl of Fifteen is reckon'd as ripe as a Boy of One and Twenty, and not any natural forwardness of Maturity as some People would have it.[128]

Such comments on the benefits of the novel oppose critics who believed that, regardless of conduct, a woman who can tolerate a novel "must in her soul be a prostitute," as James Fordyce claims in *Sermons to Young Women*.[129]

In *Letters, Moral and Entertaining,* Ann Wingrove cautions female readers who find paragons of masculinity in the pages of novels. She tells the story of Maria, a woman past thirty

and without a husband, a consequence of her failed search for a man who meets the false expectations set by Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*. At the end of the century, Erasmus Darwin strongly refutes this argument in *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education, in Boarding Schools*, with the following example:

> And how can young women, who are secluded from the other sex from their infancy, form any judgment of men, if they are not to be assisted by such books, as delineate manners?—A lady of fortune, who was persuaded by her guardian to marry a disagreeable and selfish man, speaking to her friend of the ill humour of her husband, lamented, that she had been prohibited from reading novels. "If I had read such books, said she, before I was married, I should have chosen better; I was told, that all men were alike except in respect to fortune."[130]

While Darwin finds some use for romantic distractions, Mary Wollstonecraft encourages women to give up "such flimsy works" and pursue "something superior."[131] Wollstonecraft writes,

> Novels, music, poetry, and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed in the mould of folly during the time they are acquiring accomplishments, the only improvement they are excited, by their situation in society, to acquire. This overstretched sensibility naturally relaxes the other powers of the mind, and prevents intellect from attaining that sovereignty which it ought to attain to render a rational creature useful to others, and content with its own

> station: for the exercise of the understanding, as life advances, is the only method pointed out by nature to calm the passions.[132]

Wollstonecraft advances women's rights to education by arguing that virtue, in fact, depends upon reason. As she explains, "the grand source of female folly and vice has ever appeared to me to rise from narrowness of mind."[133] While Wollstonecraft continues to stress women's virtue as a quality that should be protected at all costs, an attitude that fails to critique the persistent notion that women are easily polluted by the discourses they consume, she employs this threat in the service of the advancement of women's participation in philosophical life.

This brief gloss of eighteenth-century social and philosophical works on the relationship between sexual knowledge and inclination demonstrates an extended period investment in the perceived role of literature in the shaping of sexual subjectivity. While scholarly investments in early-modern literature often look to early understandings of sexuality to disrupt and upend contemporary narratives of sexed subjectivity, these readings of desire mirror a notably familiar way of thinking about the construction of sexuality. Fielding, along with Wollstonecraft, Darwin, and Astell, suggests that sexual desire is not natural; it is discursively constructed.

More so than the female husband, printing the details of sodomy led critics to speculate on the relationship between discourse and subject formation. By 1710, there was enough speculation about sodomites in London to bring about a public crisis. Though exact numbers are difficult to estimate, author and bookseller John Dunton claimed knowledge of a "sodomitish crew" totaling forty-three in his satire "He-Strumpets" from the same year.[134] In 1708, Daniel Defoe wrote *Miscellanea*, first apologizing for his participation in making public "a Sort of Bestiallity discover'd among us."[135] Both Dunton and Defoe attempt to justify their contribution

to the publicity of sodomy. Dunton, surprised by the lack of commentary by well known writers, takes the topic up in the interest of the people; still, only after a thoughtful description of wanton tails, burning beaus, and brutish carnal lusts in his "alter'd and much enlarg'd" fourth edition, Dunton writes "*Sodomy*'s so vile a Crime, 'Tis LASH enough to name the Sin."[136] Defoe, likely with economics in mind, responds to public demand, and, in a similar paradox, asserts, "the publick Prosecution and Punishment of these hellish Creatures makes it but too publick, that there are such Monsters among us; *O tell it not in* Gath, *nor publish it in* Ascalon; smother the Crime and the Criminals too in the dark, and let the World hear no more of it."[137] Dunton and Defoe call attention to an early awareness of the relationship between discourse and subject formation. *Telling* it in Gath and *naming* the sin have real consequences. Above and beyond the certainty that, as Defoe makes clear, some of us will read about it and, in turn, "glut[] [our] vile Inclinations with a double Pleasure," publicity equals acknowledgement.[138] Accordingly, denying language refuses recognition.

Eighteenth-century concerns over the relationship between reading and subject formation evidence a consistent awareness of literature's role in the cultivation of the self. Whether critics advanced their arguments in favor of novels or not, Eighteenth-century Britons put faith in the transformative power of literacy. Women's virtue, often heralded as the most important quality a woman could possess, was used to advance claims for or against literature. Depending upon the critic's position, literature could preserve or corrupt. Fielding participates in this discussion by suggesting that *The Female Husband* will educate women by describing proper and improper objects of desire. Fielding's faith in the relationship between discourse and sexuality is further evidenced by his attempt to banish Hamilton from the realm of acceptable models of identity.

This early awareness of the relationship between discourse and subject formation, along with the corresponding desire to prevent discourse from acknowledging, enabling, or bringing pleasure to so-called monstrous and bestial subjectivity, is an example of what Judith Butler identifies as a discursive "dehumanizing violence."[139] The classification of the real, and its necessary other the unreal, has its consequences. Butler makes this clear in the following statement: "to be called unreal, and to have that call, as it were, institutionalized as a form of differential treatment, is to become the other against which the human is made. It is the inhuman, the beyond the human, the less than human, the border that secures the human in its ostensible reality."[140] Thus to Butler, being called unreal, as is the case with those who exist outside of dominant cultural forms, is to be dehumanized, making the designation at once a form of control and a form of "dehumanizing violence."[141]

We have little evidence to make historical claims about lesbian or queer sexual identity based on Fielding's work. What it does offer, however, is an early glimpse at an attempt to narrate what was supposed to be impossible according to existing understandings of sex, gender and desire. In this we see something unsurprising: the female husband was as shocking as she was alluring. Fielding's attempt to make her make sense without disrupting the patterns he was familiar with fails in the end, but we cannot know for sure that he was faithful to these logics (or offering perfunctory homage to them). Though he seems committed to language that attempts to define Hamilton as unnatural, she is nonetheless occasionally treated tenderly—forasmuch as a sexual monstrosity can be treated as such. Further, in her multiple erotic jaunts, there is pleasure in the risk, which in turn offers readers an alternative reality filled with ill-disciplined and sex-starved older widows, feisty, passionate, and queer Methodists, and devoted yet naïve country lasses; it is hard, in other words, to not imagine a good number or readers wondering about this

world and the so-called unnatural lusts it offers. Much as we are in the present, Fielding seems caught between competing ways of understanding bodies and desires.[142] Hamilton is a natural, unnatural occurrence—a predictable result of unrestrained desire. In his failed attempt to explain risks and roots, he produces queer knowledge about desires and bodies. In the end, Fielding is not able to explain Hamilton (anymore than we should expect to be able to, despite his seemingly primitive understanding of desire). This inability to make sense of desire (adequately, thoroughly, or qualitatively) might be a lesson for us as we think through sexed subjectivity in our own time.

1.3 RECONSIDERING FIELDING'S FEMMES

As Esther Newton has argued about Havelock Ellis, "both antifeminism and [a] reluctance to see active lust in women" makes the fusing of queer desire and gender transgression an easy fit.[143] Theresea Braunschneider has argued along similar lines in reference to Fielding and other eighteenth-century writers. She writes, "passing women narratives attempt to construct amours between cross-dressed women and their female sweethearts as heteronormative; further, this normativity is defined by a principle that gender difference must precede desire."[144] Importantly, Braunschneider sees this structured relationship between gender and desire as not yet in place by the mid-eighteenth century, reading "passing women narratives as engaged in the very process of defining those relations, a process that generates some fascinating fallout."[145] We can read this eighteenth-century attempt to fuse and fix our understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality, particularly in light of its similarities to later accounts, as evidence of the ongoing attempt to naturalize heteronormative desire, a process that

is never quite complete. Of course, though not expressly the goal of this paper, such transhistorical parallels should compel us to rethink our sense of before, during, and after, qualifications that seem to inevitably inscribe our reading of texts.

In this conclusion, I pursue the question that troubles Ellis: How to define the feminine invert, and the same question that Fielding noticeably attends to, why would a woman fall for a female husband? The connections among these historically specific representations of desire—the femme of the present, the twentieth-century feminine invert, and the women who fall for female husbands in Fielding's narrative—draw attention to a persistent interest in a familiar enigma: queer desire in women who do not otherwise transgress gender, identified in the present as femme. This connection requires that we suspend a number of concerns about how to use the category femme, defined very loosely here as queer women whose gender presentation is feminine. However, as Castle has noted, *The Female Husband* says nothing of real women; "the real woman is transformed into an occasion for an effusion of masculine rhetoric."[146] The same can be said of this longer history of representation. The link I am making, then, is to recurring formulas for making sense of femme subjectivity, or, women who disrupt patriarchal logics of gender identification and sexual desire that link gender expression to what we now call sexuality.

I look here because we have shown a nearly exclusive interest in the "butch" or masculine figure in this equation—think Hamilton of Fielding's *Female Husband* fame, Radclyffe Hall's Stephen Gordon, the upper-crust butch or invert who brings to life Ellis's theories of inversion in *The Well of Loneliness*, and Brandon Teena, the trans man who was iconicized in Kimberly Pierce's film *Boys Don't Cry*, and also sensationalized in *Playboy*. Excepting Hall, all of these figures were taken up as stories by male authors to perpetuate theories of sex and gender in seemingly rather deliberate attempts to protect and define

manhood. As Castle says of Fielding, "the patriarchal intent […] is obvious."[147] And yet, our collective attention has disproportionately focused on the butch, used very loosely here, with little to no interest in the femme as hero or icon. Even further, we have held onto the so-called disruptive potential of the butch, or passing figure, even when characterized by people fairly invested in the gendered status quo.

What is so disruptive about a mannish woman who likes women? The parallels among Fielding, Ellis, and Konigsberg demonstrate that collective understandings of the naturalness of desire, and more particularly, the confounding of gender and sexuality, have in fact resulted in the persistence of some discomfited understandings of women who express queer desires in otherwise normatively gendered bodies. In examining Fielding's narrative through the lens of a longer history of representation, I seek two things. The first is to provide a reconsideration of what we call "interesting fallout." The passing figure, or the butch, is recurrently held up as the tool par excellence in the dismantling of the sex/gender system. But crucially, this figure serves the conflation of identification and desire rather well. Without entirely refusing the heroicized butch, I want to suggest that the femme has left critics perplexed, and particularly because she desires in a way that is theoretically impossible by the longstanding connection between gender and sexual preference. We struggle to offer heroic accounts of these figures, and I suspect it is because much of what accounts for femme desires in these narratives is attributed to lack and excess, or put another way, naivety and overindulgence.

The second aim borrows from recent queer critics who engage with both queer literary history and the politics of recovery. Heather Love's *Feeling Backward* offers a way to think through our attachments to queer subjects, at once "abject and exalted," and to reconsider our "impulse to turn these representations to good use in order to see them at all."[148] Of course, as

Love cautions, there is the "difficulty of distinguishing between homophobic discourse and homosexual existence."[149] Aside from the basic facts, Fielding's narrative is all fiction, so notably, Hamilton and her lovers are all projections, and are all in the service of inscribing the perimeters of normative desire. Yet, we have neglected that requisite figure, the femme. It is the femme's desire for queer masculinity that solidifies the passing figure's threat and disruption; it is this desire that Fielding labors to explain in patriarchal ways. Even further, femme desire, unlike the queerness of the passing figure, must be explained in a way that makes it not exist at all.

I suspect that part of the pleasure we take in the butch or passing figure comes from a long history of denial. As Castle notes in *The Apparitional Lesbian*, "when it comes to lesbians […] many people have trouble seeing what's in front of them"; "some may even deny that she exists at all."[150] The category "lesbian" does not work well for any of the people mentioned, but the point rings true; even when in plain sight, queer desires in women are rendered invisible or transient. When blatantly portrayed, and made the subject of the narrative, they are hard not to celebrate. However, if the continued effort to erase the queer woman from history, as Castle argues, "testifies to her particular cultural power," then we should look more closely at the subjects Fielding places in plain view, and which ones he attempts to remove from the realm of possibility entirely.[151] Fielding's portrayal of Hamilton's lovers as inherently flawed women asks us to consider how Fielding's femmes, not Hamilton, harborig a kind of desire that is fully unfit to mention.

Fielding's preoccupation with femme desire mirrors the more recent response to otherwise ordinary women who partake in sexual intimacies with similarly masculine female subjects, such as Ellis's depiction of the women who are ensnared by inverts and a late

twentieth-century speculation on the same tendency in a *Playboy* article on the last months of Brandon Teena's life. These transhistorical similarities point to an alternative curiosity, and quite possibly, a more threatening possibility: the otherwise normal woman who falls for female masculinity. As noted Fielding, like these contemporary writers, spends much more time explaining the defects of the women who fall for "female husbands," thus treating the trans subject (the invert, the female husband, the masculine lesbian) as easily explained. As Castle notes, "*The Female Husband* says more of Fielding himself—and certain characteristic projections of eighteenth-century masculine fantasy—than of its female 'subject.'"[152]

What to do with the persistence and familiarity of these themes and representations? I am not, apparently, resisting Love's call to part with the urge to make good use of queer history, even when, or perhaps especially when, it emerges barely visible in homophobic discourses. It seems to me, if these narratives can be said to signify an unsettled truth that must be somehow mitigated through fiction, that the most unsettling factor is that which never fully gets spoken: women's desire for men that are not exactly men. The emphasis on innocence as a cause for sexual choices and desires is familiar. Milton's Eve must be taught to love Adam. Freud's homosexuals, as discussed by Diana Fuss, exist in preodipality, "the ambiguous space of the precultural."[153] Fielding's innocent femmes fall for female husbands when without "prudent and secure guides."[154] Queer desire, when not already attributable to gender identity, is accidental, and at times instinctive, yet everything about this supposition, a projection that is supposed to make heterosexual desire natural, calls attention to the ever-proliferating desires we might act upon, possibilities that, in fact, are not so manifest in the easy to name and easy to rationalize "passing" figure. The logical end to excess as an explanation for queer desires in femme women, however it might render the subject used, has an equally problematic end for manhood. It states,

rather clearly, that too much sexual experience with men can turn a girl queer. In the absence of a simple, heteronormative formula, which queer desire in masculine women provides, Fielding turns to the relationship between knowledge and desire, abandoning the body as a knowable signifier of orientation. Lack denotes backwardness, and also signifies states of before: primitive, instinctual, natural, or untreated. Again, by the end of the century, Wollstonecraft is using this logic to push for women's education. She writes, "the grand source of female folly and vice has ever appeared to me to rise from narrowness of mind."[155]

We have long considered the display of mutability—masquerade, passing, female masculinity, transgender subjectivity—as the act that disrupts and disarms. I am arguing here that this subject's desirability is what the femme makes possible, and it is precisely this desire that Fielding is most eager to explain out of existence. Without the femme, the passing figure never actually challenges that fortress of patriarchy, of manhood, and all of the logics of rights and desire that come with it. I note more recent thoughts on this because the parallels are strong, but also to demonstrate that this way of reading—both the patriarchal attempt to attribute femme desire to naivety and excess and our habits of embracing butch figures as inherently disruptive—spans historical moments. We have read, historically and presently, the butch as that which puts our system in disorder, as the subject that, through her existence, as Jack Halberstam has recently argued, "encourages everyone around her to rearticulate his or her own sense of connections."[156] However, the persistent diligent attempts to account for women's interest in female husbands suggest to me that we need to shift our gaze. As Adrienne Rich has argued, what threatens patriarchy is indifference, not unbridled defiance.

2.0 SHAME AND SEXUAL TASTE IN JOHN CLELAND'S *MEMOIRS OF A WOMAN OF PLEASURE*

John Cleland's 1749 novel *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is a particularly useful text for demonstrating both a cultural preoccupation with what we now call sexuality and the general candor in discussions of sex that typifies some of eighteenth-century literature. Since the late twentieth century, *Memoirs*, also known as *Fanny Hill*, has been recognized as the most infamous, if not influential, pornographic novel from eighteenth-century Britain. In recent scholarship, critics have noted Cleland's various contributions to the history of sexuality and the rise of the novel. Still more recent, some have raised questions about Cleland's part in the development of methods to understand and reform eighteenth-century sexual tastes. As John Beynon and Katherine Sender have argued, in eighteenth-century discourse "taste" was frequently used to name a range of preferences, some congenital and some habituated, including what we now call sexuality.[157] Beynon notes that "discourse on 'taste' proliferated in eighteenth-century England, and it often functions as an approximation of modern notions of 'sexuality.'"[158] As an answer to David Halperin's call to "find ways of asking how different historical cultures fashioned different sorts of links between sexual acts, on the one hand, and sexual tastes, styles, dispositions, characters, gender presentations, and forms of subjectivity, on the other," Beynon's proposed approximation for sexuality speaks to the ways in which taste circulates in *Memoirs* as a way to differentiate between sexual subjects.[159]

As Pierre Bourdieu discusses in *Distinction*, "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier."[160] Further, he writes, "social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar."[161] For Bourdieu, taste is established through "preferences in music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle."[162] Such "choices," he notes, establish the value of the subject: taste becomes "a symbol of moral excellence and a measure of the capacity for sublimation which defines the truly human man."[163] On the question of taste and sexuality, Sender notes that although Bourdieu does not list "sexual decorum" as an indicator of taste, "sexual tastefulness is surely as embodied, naturalized, and yet ultimately as cultural as culinary and aesthetic principles."[164] For this reason, Bourdieu's understanding of taste—as that which produces and delineates respectable and legitimate desire—influences my sense of value as it relates to sexual preference and subjectivity. Sexual taste, like sexual preference, functions as a means to establish social divisions between subjects.[165]

This chapter contributes to this discussion by showing the ways in which conceptions of sexual taste in Cleland's novel link normative taste and happiness and thereby suggest that normativity is a prerequisite for individual and civic happiness and well-being. By this means, Cleland's *Memoirs* reflects a secular motivation for regulating what we now call sexuality. Even further, Cleland's use of shame, most evident in his depiction of the tragic lives of his queer characters, offers a system for cultivating desire, and specifically, a non-coercive one that uses worldly motives of reform and draws on Bernard Mandeville's theories of improvement. Because the disparaging account of queer sexual behaviors in Cleland's novel invokes shame rather than sin, Cleland's speculations on vice participate in the long Western tradition of tying sexual practices to a range of mental and physical diseases. Cleland, who also penned *Institutes*

of Health, a text that warns readers of the physical effects of individual habits, contributes to the production of what Gayle Rubin calls the sexual value system. This value system, as Rubin notes, "rationalize[s] the well-being of the sexually privileged and the adversity of the sexual rabble."[166]

While the benefits of temperance were widely explored in eighteenth-century culture, Cleland and Mandeville's satirical and secular rationale for virtue links normative choices with happiness, suggesting that individuals ought to—and are able to—curb their tastes for private benefits. Well-being and civic happiness, proposed as universal forms of aspiration with structured models to increase attainability, are offered as the prize for virtuous conduct, orienting readers to normative choices and tastes.[167] Failure—the inability to attain well-being and happiness in the simplest of sexual pleasures—is the result of wrong choices, or more frankly, queer tastes. Understanding queerness as, to borrow from Michael Warner, forms of deviance that become the "constitutive antithesis of the modern demographic imaginary," Cleland's excessive pleasures are queer as they reject normative models of taste.[168] Unhappiness is rooted in the failure to follow standards of taste that are heralded as templates for happiness, and specifically, standards that limit sexuality to heterosexual domesticity. This chapter focuses on the story that Cleland tells about sexual taste, individual well-being, and methods to foster normative sexual conduct. In light of the social and political implications of understanding sexual taste as a choice, I conclude by showing how the eighteenth-century deployment of shame raises important questions about current affective methods to encourage heteronormativity.

2.1 REFORMATORY PORN

Cleland's representation of sexual reform is unusual for its use of the pornographic to motivate normative choices. As Michael McKeon notes in *The Secret History of Domesticity*, "Properly understood, the author of pornography does not simply justify all manner of vice by insisting on its pedagogical necessity for recognizing virtue."[169] Fanny, the prostitute turned wife narrator of *Memoirs*, self-consciously reflects on this incongruity, noting, "possibly too you may look on it as the paultry finesse of one who seeks to mask a devotee to Vice under a rag of a veil, impudently smuggled from the shrine of Virtue."[170] But Fanny's sexual knowledge—"resulting from compar'd experiences"—is that which makes her valuable as a narrator, and ultimately, as an agent of reform.[171] Far from conjectural, Cleland likens Fanny's experience to a proto-scientific examination. In her introductory comments, addressed to an unknown "Madam," Fanny assures her readers that unlike her peers who look "on all thought and reflexion as their capital enemy," she has paid close and careful attention to the "characters and manners of the world."[172] Her sexual experiences, Fanny claims, have taught her about taste. Cleland writes, "let truth dare hold [vice] up in its most alluring light: then mark! how spurious, how low of taste, how comparatively inferior its joys are to those which Virtue gives sanction to, and whose sentiments are not above making even a sauce for the senses, but a sauce of the highest relish! whilst vices, are the harpies, that infect and foul the feast."[173]

As a result, Fanny claims, she was able to emerge from "those scandalous stages of [her] life," a surfacing she attributes to her capacity to "cultivate an understanding naturally not a despicable one."[174] Establishing that Fanny has learned from exposure and careful reflection, Cleland's prostitute stands in stark contrast to those who praise virtue and vice without

knowledge of either; she is a tour guide, helping readers to seek the "infinitely superior joys of innocence" over the "infamous blandishments" of vice.[175] Ultimately, *Memoirs* advises readers, showing which pleasures can help them achieve a privileged status, and which ones will render them pitiful and plagued. Cleland, then, with his learned prostitute as mouthpiece, establishes the means to a healthy and happy life.

In *Institutes of Health*, published in 1766, Cleland critiques those practicing the medical arts and thereby shows his concern for general health and happiness. *Institutes* provides what Cleland cannot find in medical literature: "a satisfactory plan of preventive management."[176] Having "suffered irretrievable damage by the most abandoned intemperance of all sorts," the author provides a prescription, as vain as it may be, to prevent suffering and secure health and happiness.[177] In both *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* and *Institutes of Health*, Cleland plays the role of the accidental expert who shares sexual knowledge out of sheer good will. Fanny, who has witnessed the tremendous suffering by others via luxurious sexual habits, offers a means to well-being—not a curative, like the doctor who seeks to treat the disease after the fact, nor the prostitute who indulges increasingly lavish desires, but a plan for "preventive management."[178] By reading Cleland's novel as instructive, I argue that *Memoirs* illustrates the utility of sexual knowledge, and, through claims about sanctioned and unsanctioned sex, participates in the production and distribution of shame via the delineation of normative sexuality. To say as much indicates that I read Cleland's *Memoirs* as more than a bawdy joke.

This way of thinking about Cleland's text contributes to research initiated by Jad Smith, in "How Fanny Comes to Know: Sensation, Sexuality, and the Epistemology of the Closet in Cleland's *Memoirs*." As Smith explains, even though "erotic writing may appear to modern

readers a strange vehicle for moral philosophy," Cleland appropriates Locke's theory of association in an effort to explain Fanny's process of education.[179] Smith writes,

> Cleland constructs sexuality through the theory of association. He adapts the concept of association to the purposes of sexual epistemology in both its taxonomic and epistemic capacities, using it not only to account for the existence of a range of sexual tastes and practices, but also to reveal how knowledge may enhance or constrain sexual agency.[180]

Smith argues that Cleland explains sexual taste via education and association. This formula offers a bit of sympathy for those with less than desirable tastes for their desires have been "distorted or constrained by obscure forces."[181] In these cases, "some deep and recalcitrant epistemic force, traceable either to nature or education, functions as an insurmountable obstacle to reason and, more significantly, social pleasure."[182] As a novelist, Cleland seems to accept the responsibility of moralist as he uses the novel as an opportunity to educate his audience about sexuality in order to ensure that his readers, like Fanny, are able to identify and practice sex acts that promise happiness. Hal Gladfelder's reading of Cleland's theory of fiction emphasizes the author's use of realism, or, as Fanny calls it, "Truth! stark, naked truth."[183] In response to Cleland's commitment to portraying "the corruptions of mankind, and the world, not as it should be, but as it really exists," Gladfelder notes, "Realism is thus the first principle of Cleland's theory of fiction; and the second is ridicule, by which folly and vice are exposed."[184]

Cleland's use of shame, or as Gladfelder articulates, the use of ridicule, together with the promise of worldly benefits to sway readers towards virtuous choices offers an articulation of an

existing disciplinary model. Specifically, Cleland's strategy for sexual reform, which plugs the benefits of exposing the subject to sex so as to diminish the sexual drive and curb absurd inclinations, draws upon the same cultural constructions of luxury that inform Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*. By demonstrating how virtuous sexual tastes result in well-being, and conversely, how sexual vices result in shame debilitation and disease, Cleland dulls the allure of sexual perversion while renewing and elevating the benefits of domesticity. In fact, by the end of her first letter, Fanny is so familiar with sex that she has become exhausted by her history. As she notes, the repetition of such scenes—as "there is no escaping a repetition of the near same images, the same figures, the same expressions"—dulls the experience.[185] Further, she claims, "the words *joys*, *ardours*, *transports*, *extasies*, and the rest of those pathetic terms so congenial to, so received in the *practise of pleasure*, flatten, and lose much of their due spirit and energy, by the frequency they indispensibly recur with."[186] As Robert Markley has noted, "Few novels stop in mid-course to tell you how boring they are."[187] But the repetition of scenes in *Memoirs*, scenes of ridicule that expose queer sexual pleasures as both vulgar and boring, showcases Cleland's deployment of a Mandevellian model of motive—his strategic use of shame and the promise of happiness to encourage readers to make virtuous sexual choices for their own good. Sharing motive as well as style, Cleland and Mandeville's satires of excess show reformatory models that nurture rather than curb or liberate self-interest. The benefits for virtuous readers are twofold: they garner public privilege for adopting acceptable models of conduct as they pique themselves upon their privilege via the depraved tastes of others.[188]

While the sexually explicit content, together with a prostitute as memoirist, understandably persuades us to recognize the novel as a satire of the allegedly useful instruction found in novels of virtue rewarded, including Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Cleland's text

ultimately sides with Richardson, if only for the last ten pages.[189] Thus, while it seems apt to locate Cleland with the "anti-Pamelists," for his narrative is attuned to particular conflicts that emerged via the *Pamela* craze, his text ultimately sides with Richardson, if only for the last ten pages.[190] As Gautier notes, "Cleland, in the tradition of the anti-Pamelists, debunks his own narrator."[191] Fanny is quite literally stripped of any moral worth, yet Cleland nonetheless positions her as astute and prudent *because* she has an excess of sexual knowledge. This difference is key, as Fanny's expertise—her knowledge of a range of desires and perversions—establishes her authority as a prostitute turned sex educator.[192]

It seems safe to say that Cleland is invoking anxieties over the novel and poking fun at the allegedly upright middling-sort housewife. In much the same way that narratives of transported pickpockets and whores tell us that the new world was founded by the lowborn, Cleland uncovers the sentimental, egalitarian marriage and discovers a prostitute.[193] However, amid this satire lies a Mandevillian justification for good conduct. Whereas the typical anti-Pamelist offers a class critique, revealing the dangerous results fictions of upwardly mobile servants might bring, Cleland indicates that the lowborn, or the prostitute, actually has something to say.[194]

Critiquing the means to domesticity and proper love, then, does not lead to a radically different stance on marriage and desire.[195] Different as they are, Cleland's *Memoirs* supports the same model for marriage that Richardson does in *Pamela*.[196] Accordingly, Cleland's *Memoirs* participates in the *Pamela* craze. Cleland's use of the epistolary mode, along with detailed sexual intrigues, suggests that this sexually provocative work was engaged in an ongoing dialogue over the propriety, or lack thereof, of a yet defined genre, the novel.[197] Typical of the

early novel, *Memoirs* warns readers of pollution, aberration, and sin, but in "keeping the curtains undrawn" Cleland nevertheless allows readers a full view of a range of sexual proclivities.[198]

If, then, *Memoirs* is a response to *Pamela*, Cleland's target, beyond his regular jabs at both the novel and marriage, is the creation of an orthodox method for educating the masses that evades the facts of life. By framing queer desire through tales of "disease" and "debility," Cleland graphically demystifies sodomy and other perverse sexual habits. Overall, *Memoirs* promotes the utility of sexual knowledge for the cultivation of proper sexual taste, for, as Fanny notes, "nothing is more certain than, that ignorance of a vice, is by no means a guard against it."[199] Because of its explicit content, then, *Memoirs* serves as a useful manual not only for what to do but what not to do.[200]

2.2 ESTABLISHING SEXUAL HIERARCHIES

The central plot of *Memoirs* describes the narrator's progress from raw, country girl to prostitute, to housewife and sex educator, yet this is a frame used to contain miscellaneous narratives that collectively form Fanny's memoirs. Noting the likeness to Cleland's *Memoirs of a Coxcomb*, published in 1751, Hal Gladfelder concisely explains the plot as such: "the narrator falls in love with an idealized partner of the other sex; the beloved disappears; the narrator is prevented from seeking out the beloved; (s)he enters into a life of wanton but unfulfilling sexual indulgence; the beloved is accidently found; the lovers are reunited."[201] Both narrators, Gladfelder continues, profess "to have learned […] the difference between real and sham pleasures, love and mere sex, virtue and vice."[202] Incidentally, Cleland could be said to use this larger frame of lost and found love as an opportunity to vicariously relate one sexual encounter

after another, and while this is true, these various plots still add up to a thinly veiled speculation on the risks and benefits of sexual choices.[203] Thus while the narrative exposes the reader to various sexual acts, it clearly does not advocate hedonism. As Peter Sabor explains in his introduction to the Oxford edition of *Memoirs*, Cleland's "novel makes careful discriminations among the various types of sexuality it portrays, giving unreserved approval only to the heterosexual passion of Fanny and her beloved Charles."[204] This is perhaps Cleland's most pronounced departure from the traditions of French erotic fiction, which Sabor describes as "entirely amoral in its enthusiasm for all forms of sexual encounters."[205]

Memoirs constructs a value system specifically for determining good and bad ways of indulging sexual pleasure. Rubin's discussion of the sex hierarchy is useful here as a frame for understanding the "outer limits" of sexual desire in Cleland's novel.[206] While some sexual acts described by Cleland are unmistakably corrupt (sex between men), others are simply tagged agitating or arbitrary (sex between women), and all acts outside of the "charmed circle" of heteronormativity clearly fail to produce the felicity gained via the conventional marriage.[207] The representation of sex in the novel implies that sex should be taken seriously, and not because certain sexual acts are deemed sinful; sex is serious because sex can ruin your health and prevent happiness.

Cleland's conspicuous interest in showing the relationship between sexual choices and individual health and happiness begins with Fanny's first client, Mr. Crofts. "Ugly and Disagreeable," Crofts, who attempts to take Fanny's virtue, is depicted as a horrific brute, willing to use force—"unmov'd by [Fanny's] cries and distress."[208] Crofts, "that frightful invader of [Fanny's] tender innocence," is represented as barely human.[209] He has a "yellow cadaverous hew" and "great googling eyes, that stare as if he was strangled."[210] His need of variety has

exhausted his income—for "he had lavished great sums on such wretches as could gain upon themselves to pretend love to his person"—but equally, craving excess, Crofts exhausted his body and developed impotency: "impotence, more than necessity, made him seek in variety, the provocative that was wanting to raise him to the pitch of enjoyment."[211] When able, Crofts brings about that "ultimate period" too quickly, damaging Fanny's "linen" instead of her virtue.[212] Though at first monstrous and fearful to Fanny, Cleland transforms Crofts into a pity-inducing object—one who "often saw himself baulked at."[213] This is because, in *Memoirs*, "maiden-hunting," will destroy the body.[214]

As Cleland describes Norbert, another of Fanny's clients, his attempt to construct a system whereby bodily surfaces reveal private perversions becomes clear. Constitutionally, Norbert is "greatly impair'd," a physical attribute that likely inflects his "over-violent pursuit of the vices of the town."[215] His overall physical health is greatly reduced via his sexual taste. "Having worn out and stal'd all the more common modes of debauchery," Norbert, like Crofts, develops impotency via excess.[216] Cleland explains,

> At scarce thirty, he had already reduc'd his strength of appetite down to a wretched dependance on forc'd provocatives, very little seconded by the natural powers of a body jaded, and wrack'd off to the lees by constant over-draughts of pleasure, which had done the work of sixty winters on his springs of life; leaving him at the same time all the fire and heat of youth in his imagination, which serv'd at once to torment and to spur him down the precipice.[217]

Fanny notes in passing that Norbert "was one of those sizes that slip in and out without being minded."[218] Indeed, Cleland garners a bit of a reputation as a size queen in *Memoirs*—his most masculine and healthy figures are typically well endowed. In linking sexual vice to penis size, Cleland further articulates the ways in which sexual desire can be turned into sexual shame; the public ridiculing of the perverse body gives shame a material reality. In this passage, Cleland shows the consequences of Norbert's unrestrained debauchery, likening the prostitute to a treatment, not a cure.

The maiden hunter suffers a specific fate that determines his well-being. Sexual excess leaves the body reduced and deformed, and dependent upon increasingly lavish "provocatives." In *Memoirs* perversion is written on the body, as the depiction of a new client, Barvile, likewise illustrates. As Fanny studies "the figure and person of this unhappy gentleman," she remarks on his "habit of fatness" as well as his "sterness," which "dash'd that character of joy."[219] Barely over twenty and "unaccountably condemn'd to have his pleasure lash'd into him, as boys have their learning," Barvile is one of Cleland's unhappy subjects whose body and conduct demonstrate his vice.[220] "Enslav'd to so peculiar a gust, by the fatality of a constitutional ascendant," Barvile is "incapable of receiving any pleasure, till he submitted to excessive and "extraordinary means" of pleasure.[221]

Barvile's "constitutional ascendant"—this superior urge that has become part of Barvile's constitution—fosters this self-loathing.[222] His body is likewise marked, as Cleland describes his "master-movement" as "humoursome," "scarce showing its tip above the sprout of hairy curls that cloath'd those parts, as you may have seen a wren peep its head out of the grass."[223] Fanny, with a "gust of fancy for trying a new experiment," lets Barvile strike her, and she concludes that "this rare adventure" was "ultimately much more to [her] satisfaction" than she had initially

thought it would be.[224] Fanny's capacity to take pleasure in spanking offers a brief moment of reprieve for the otherwise shamed subject. Even further, this brief pleasure presents a glimpse at what an alternative reading of queer sex in the novel might look like and thus helps to solidify the normative aims of the text. Momentarily, readers can explore the pleasure of shame rather than be reminded of its ill effects. However, in the end, Barvile is another object of pity; his tastes have rendered him both unhappy and unhealthy.

Bawd Cole, Fanny's procuress, urges Fanny to have compassion for these unhappy subjects. And here, most pronounced, desire becomes a question of taste, not morality. Cole explains "that she rather compassionated, than blam'd those unhappy persons, who are under a subjection they cannot shake off, to those arbitrary tastes that rule their appetites of pleasure with an unaccountable controul."[225] Excess, she continues, contributes to an inability to find satisfaction in "plain meats," "finding no savour but in high season'd luxurious dishes; whilst others again pique themselves upon detesting them."[226]

The story that Fanny tells about sexual choices, well-being, and happiness makes use of Mandeville's model of reform by continually exposing the ill effects of vice and shaming those that partake in sex acts defined by the "outer limits." Mandeville discusses the logic behind the trend towards material rather than moral motives for good conduct in "An Inquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue," from *The Fable of the Bees*. In this text, he explores the processes by which "untaught animals" are governed by "lawgivers and other wise men," noting that the principal challenge "has been to make the people they were to govern believe that it was far more beneficial for everybody to conquer than indulge his appetites, and much better to mind the public than what seemed private interest."[227] Governing inclinations is not easy, and so, Mandeville notes, "no wit or eloquence has been left untried to compass it."[228] He writes,

> But whether mankind would have believed it or not, it is not likely that anybody could have persuaded them to disapprove of their natural inclinations or prefer the good of others to their own, if, at the same time, he had not showed them an equivalent to be enjoyed as a reward for the violence, which, by doing so, they of necessity must commit upon themselves. Those that have undertaken to civilize mankind were not ignorant of this.[229]

Establishing "that flattery must be the most powerful argument that could be used to human creatures," they put this "bewitching engine" to use.[230] Flattery artfully performed, Mandeville claims, would allow access to "the hearts of men," which would thus make them malleable.[231] Once compliant, Mandeville suggests, they are persuaded to reform their animal instincts; and though they complained of suffering, this triumph was part of the reward: "They indeed confessed, that those impulses of nature were very pressing; that it was troublesome to resist, and very difficult wholly to subdue them. But this they only used as an argument to demonstrate how glorious the conquest of them was on the one hand and how scandalous on the other not to attempt it."[232]

This disciplinary approach, evident in Cleland's graphic representation of the perverse body to induce a state of shame in those with excessive sexual tastes, divides subjects into types. In David Halperin and Valerie Traub's edited collection, *Gay Shame*, George Chauncey notes, "Producing shame in the master class, let alone the lower classes and colonial subjects—shame about the body, its functions, and its difference from the colonizer's; shame about one's culture and one's place in a translocal social hierarchy—was a critical, but difficult and never entirely

successful, part of the civilizing (and colonizing) project. Producing shame in homosexual subjects was just as critical, and just as vexed, an operation of power."[233] Like Cleland, Mandeville civilizes via shame and the division of subjects into categories—"the true representatives of their sublime species" and "the dross of their kind"—bringing in a value system that rejects the uninhibited prowess of the libertine in favor of a model that renames such prowess as weakness typified by selfish "brutes": the "wild groveling wretches" who, "being enslaved," give in to "every gross desire."[234] Consequently, Mandeville continues, men will strive to occupy the superior category (for there is not a choice in such a binary) so that they too can be deemed "the most beautiful and valuable of their kind."[235] While the entire process transpires symbolically, the effects of this collectively agreed upon and collectively policed means of establishing worth are not imaginary. As Mandeville explains, "the reverse of honour is dishnour, or ignominy," and "this ignominy is likewise called shame from the effect it produces; for though the good and evil of honour and dishonour are imaginary, yet there is a reality in shame, as it signifies a passion, that has its proper symptoms, overrules reason, and requires as much labour and self-denial to be subdued as any of the rest."[236]

Mandeville recognizes discursive events as vital to the construction of the human—they become "realities in our frame."[237] His description of the social construction of norms exposes the scaffolding that holds the logic of proper and improper desire in place, an endeavor that suggests that this division is far from natural, but he is nonetheless a strong supporter of shame strategically used. Shame, and our willingness to be subject to it, is essential to society. It is an impulse, the "ingredient" as Mandeville names it, which encourages us (apparently beyond our natural desires) to follow the rules. Such rules include "a dextrous management of ourselves, a stifling of our appetites, and hiding the real sentiments of our hearts before others."[238] Though in

current times we are in the habit of reading conceptualizations of desire that highlight vast (naturally occurring) possibilities as queer, Mandeville divides and values types by what individuals do with this vast possibility—how they manage it, temper it, and direct it.[239]

Mandeville names two factors as key in the structure of desire: shame and education; "it is shame and education that contains the seeds of all politeness, and he that has neither and offers to speak the truth of his heart and what he feels within is the most contemptible creature upon earth, though he committed no other fault."[240] Where there is propensity for vice or immodesty in one subject more so than another, this inclination is generally attributed to instruction. Attributing so much worth to instruction, as Mandeville does, exonerates the perverse subject to some degree (or so we might think, for his or her catalyst can be deemed cultural rather than personal or physiological). However, as Eve Sedgwick has warned in *Epistemology of the Closet*, this logic is "peculiarly liable to tragic misfire."[241] Sedgwick explains, "Even though the space of cultural malleability is the only conceivable theatre for our effective politics, every step of this constructivist nature/culture argument holds danger: it is so difficult to intervene in the seemingly natural trajectory that begins by identifying a place of cultural malleability; continues by inventing an ethical or therapeutic mandate for cultural manipulation; and ends in the overarching, hygienic Western fantasy of a world without any more homosexuals in it."[242] Mandeville reveals how claims supporting the malleability of sexual desire can accrue value since they authorize didactic approaches to regulating pleasure. As such, prior to the alleged politically useful application of the constructivist argument, this way of thinking about desire assisted the regulation of pleasure.

Mandeville's reading of culture and desire, then, finds conservative[243] potential in what we in the recent past have supposed our "only conceivable theatre for our effective politics," but

his faith in the articulacy and persuasiveness of culture does not preclude physiological factors.[244] Culture molds, but it does not erase. Subjects need not cure their passions, if improper, but merely hide them: "virtue bids us subdue, but good breeding only requires we should hide our appetites."[245] To state the obvious, Mandeville is not operating within the modern binary of nature *vs*. nurture, though to some degree he understands that the two compete to influence the actions of the subject. When in some nature overrules, for the subject does not respond to shame, regulation, or instruction, he rather radically advocates for leaving such subjects be.[246] Mandeville explains,

> The passions of some people are too violent to be curbed by any law or precept; and it is wisdom in all governments to bear with lesser inconveniences to prevent greater. If courtesans and strumpets were to be prosecuted with as much rigour as some silly people would have it, what locks or bars would be sufficient to preserve the honour of our wives and daughters?[247]

With this we see Mandeville's most compelling, if infamous, precept: private vices have public benefits. In *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, Roy Porter attributes Mandeville's "no-nonsense" realism to his professional career as a physician. He was, in Porter's words, "professionally inured to the blunt truths of the flesh."[248]

It is precisely this Mandevillian logic—this materialist, "no-nonsense" attitude towards curbing various vices via a hierarchy of tastes—that is important to understanding Cleland.[249] *Memoirs* is written in a post-Mandevillian eighteenth century and participates in the same discursive and epistemological strategies at work in Mandeville's *Fable*. In *Memoirs*, the risks

identified by the text, and thus the lessons to be learned via these alleged risks, involve sexual choices. Fanny offers readers a means to a happy, married life, and Cleland's detailed descriptions of debauched bodies and desires employs shame as a useful strategy of reform. More than culture on the decline, Cleland's text narrates the connections between sexual taste, individual well-being, and happiness. Cleland's characters have choices, and these choices largely determine whether individuals will live in felicity or torment.

The defects of Cleland's vice-ridden subjects come into view via the description of Charles, Fanny's "conqueror" and future husband.[250] Suffice it to say that Charles apparently manages his sexual desire rather well as he is of that class of men defined by Cleland as full of "health, vigour, fertility, chearfulness, and every other desirable good in life."[251] Fanny describes his charms as such:

> For besides all the perfections of manly beauty which were assembled in his form, he had an air of neatness and gentility, a certain smartness in the carriage and port of his head, that yet more distinguish'd him: his eyes were sprightly, and full of meaning; his looks had in them something at once sweet and commanding. His complexion out-bloom'd the lovely colour'd rose, whilst its inimitable tender vivid glow, clearly sav'd it from the reproach of wanting life, of raw and dough-like, which is commonly made to those so extremely fair as he was.[252]

This perfection extends to his "engine of love," "for few men could dispute size with him."[253] While the surface of the body displays this superior state, the benefits are sexual. Fanny explains, the pleasure between she and Charles cannot be met through simple lust: "I returned his

strenuous embraces and kisses with a fervour and gust only known to true love, and which mere lust could never rise to."[254] In comparison, queer sexual pastimes become agitating (like too rich food) or just plain foolish (like sex between women).[255] The bliss shared by these lovers is their reward for making tasteful sexual choices.

In *Memoirs*, characters are reasonably tolerant of existing subjects stricken with a taste for perversion, like sadomasochism or "maiden hunting," though these very subjects become unwilling tools in an effort to educate and thwart any future misdirected desires. This process accepts that most desires can be controlled through proper instruction and thus attempts to curb perversion by shaming queer sex and elevating the sanctioned pleasures of what we would now call heteronormativity. Happiness, or individual well-being, is strategically employed as a mechanism to threaten readers into desiring particular models of love. Cleland positions his readers that have chosen the proper (and temperate path) as sympathetic voyeurs: we can take pleasure in objectifying perverse sex acts but we should, by the end of the tale, be able to recognize which desires are valuable and which desires are destructive. Unhappiness and poor health are visible because the body is both physically marked and physically exhausted by poor sexual taste and sexual excess. Men subject to such tastes are doubly tormented—unable to partake in the pleasures that Fanny indulges so easily—and so they become "self-loathing" rather than pernicious. Though Bawd Cole reserves her most passionate attack for the "unsex'd male-misses," a point I will return to, Cleland suggests that all queer desires—regardless of our modern distinctions between heterosexual and homosexual—will leave a visible "plague-spot" on the body, and this visual, together with a knowledge of vice, should be a "guard against it."[256]

Cleland's exhaustive catalogue of bodily pleasures, collected from Fanny's adventures, offers a fervent endorsement of sensibility—a renewed way of seeing "true love"—in its very

exposure of the body and its urges. It is Fanny's sexual education that enables her to clearly distinguish between "gross sensuality" and love, and it is her expansive knowledge of bodies and pleasures that makes her rationale reliable. Thus, while the central plot shows the history of Fanny's sexual education, the embedded plots cooperatively educate and regulate the reader's desire. *Memoirs* offers readers a "happiness script," and the model of happiness touted by Cleland encourages sentimental domesticity. As Sara Ahmed explains in *The Promise of Happiness*, "happiness scripts encourage us to avoid the unhappy consequences of deviation by making those consequences explicit."[257] Happiness, Ahmed continues, "is used as a technology or instrument, which allows the reorientation of individual desire toward a common good."[258]

Ultimately, readers learn which sexual choices will provide health and civic happiness via detailed descriptions of tastes that leave individuals in various degrees of poor health. By the conclusion of the narrative, readers learn that though the tale has traced Fanny's enlightenment, its purpose is to encourage this enlightenment in readers by exposing them to the material and personal consequences of sexual choices. As Fanny draws her second and final letter to a close, this becomes clear:

> You know Mr. C— O—, you know his estate, his worth, and good sense: can you? will you pronounce it ill meant, at least of him? when anxious for his son's morals, with a view to form him to Virtue, and inspire him with a fixt, a rational contempt for vice, he condescended to be his master of the ceremonies, and led him by the hand thro' the most noted bawdy-houses in town, where he took care that he should be familiariz'd with all those scenes of debauchery, so fit to nauseate a good taste. The

> experiment, you will cry, is dangerous. True, on a fool: but are fools worth the least attention to?[259]

Fanny pardons her impropriety as she carefully implies that she has done just as this gentleman has—she has led us through bawdy houses and scenes of debauchery. Her plea for pardon via the stated utility of the novel evokes the apology typical of the eighteenth-century preface. Cleland via Fanny, like Daniel Defoe, suggests that wrong readings are the readers' burden, not the author's. In the preface to *Roxana*, for example, Defoe writes, "scenes of Crime can scarce be represented in such a Manner, but some may make a Criminal Use of them; but when Vice is painted in its Low-priz'd Colours, 'tis not to make People in love with it, but to expose it; and if the Reader makes a wrong Use of the Figures, the Wickedness is his own."[260] As didactic fictions are useless for the criminal minded, so too, Fanny claims, is sexually explicit literature in the hands of foolish readers who seek not instruction but only pleasure. While a tour of popular bawdy houses might bring some pleasure, those with "good taste" will develop a "rational contempt for vice" through the material realities of debauchery. Those who fail to learn the lesson in the text are complicit in their unhappiness.

2.3 REPURPOSING THE WOMAN OF PLEASURE

Cleland announces his pedagogical goals in the introductory and concluding comments of the text, and keeping with the trends of eighteenth-century prostitute narratives, his stated goals have nothing to do with the well-being of the prostitute.[261] In fact, Cleland's superficial concern with prostitution is rather commonplace. In *Infamous Commerce*, Rosenthal discusses Cleland's

relationship to two of the most prominent trends in the prostitute narrative, libertine and reform narratives. She writes, "Cleland structures the *Memoirs* like an episodic libertine narrative, but adds an overarching romantic/mock-reformist plot."[262] Fanny invokes both trends. She is a libertine heroine in a narrative of reform.

Accepting that customarily critics read Fanny's "tail-piece of morality" as another attempt to satirize the apologist type who pens titillating tales of virtue and then claims to have stumbled upon the narrative and simply published it for public good (and not pleasure or profit), I want to suggest instead that this so-called debunking fails to strip Fanny of her logic and authority. While her too-easy admittance into the marriage state mocks such a union (or the novels that celebrate them), Cleland is nonetheless more historically accurate on this point, if intentionally satirical. As Hitchcock has noted in *English Sexualities*, low-rank women were known to exchange money for sex and then later enter marriage or domestic service. Indeed, Defoe's indictment against this "amphibious" lifestyle, though rhetorically sensational so as to garner proper public anxiety, was more exact than the narrative trends.[263] The habit in early and mid-century novelistic histories of prostitutes and courtesans, be they sympathetic or derisive (or both), was to remove the fallen women from heterosexual relations altogether. If not removed via death or a nunnery, such figures were rewarded with calamities, not marital bliss.

Cleland's representation of the eighteenth-century prostitute combines the trends of both popular domestic fiction and the prostitute narrative. Like popular fictions, prostitute narratives, rather than ascribing to a single position on prostitution, presented a wide range of attitudes.[264] Further, eighteenth-century prostitute narratives explored "the tensions between virtue and vice: they offered sensual and sentimental journeys, glimpses into high and low life, and relentless confrontations with the explosive power of money and the vulnerability of those without it."[265]

In fact, though describing prostitute narratives, Rosenthal's research on the common habits and trends within this genre bring Richardson's *Pamela* to mind. Rosenthal notes, "intriguing in themselves, they also explore a broader range of sexual and gendered possibilities than most canonical fiction, although Defoe and Richardson clearly owe much to this genre."[266]

In her discussion of domestic fiction and prostitute narratives, Rosenthal suggests that it is the latter genre that reveals "the fallout of the period's prosperity, mobility, modernity, imperial expansion, and increasing consumerism."[267] When sympathetically told, this genre, Rosenthal continues, "reflects the increasing economic vulnerability of women and mourns the loss of traditional kinship ties that offered both emotional and material security."[268] Further, as Rosenthal explains, "sentimental narratives" explore the many risks that women face, including sexual risks, and thereby show the end results of unfortunate circumstances or poor choices (or both). "Libertine narratives" showcase the ways in which women of all ranks can improve their lot via vice. Different as they are, both "explore anxieties generated by the increasingly mobile world of eighteenth-century society."[269] The comparison between less explicit narratives about virtue and the classic narrative of prostitution is an obvious one, in particular as concerns about upward mobility are one of the early characteristics of fiction; prostitution is, after all, a "spectacular form of upward mobility."[270] But what is clear from this analysis is that these narratives have quite a few shared hallmarks. And when they diverge—say, in how they represent love—these divergences cannot be exclusively assigned to one genre over the other.[271] Thus while a heroine touting the benefits of true love seems initially out of place in one of the most infamous eighteenth-century narratives of prostitution, some sense of the shared habits in early fiction lessens this sense.[272]

Memoirs sticks to the domestic novelistic formula by demonstrating a vested interest in desire, love, and marriage, and by idealizing a relationship more or less in line with acceptable models of love. Fanny falls for and weds her "conqueror" Charles who fantastically reappears at the end of her memoirs.[273] Whereas the habit in prostitute narratives was to demonstrate how material interests were destroying the married state, Fanny's rediscovery of her true love, which closes the tale, suggests Cleland's commitment to selling a means to domestic bliss. On the one hand, *Memoirs* offers readers a relatively formulaic narrative of the country girl turned urban madam.[274] But rather uncharacteristically, Fanny is able to happily marry by the end of her story. *Memoirs* revises the anxieties of the prostitute narrative with this domestic, rather than social or economic preoccupation.

Because *Memoirs* is notably invested in domestic rather than social or economic concerns, it likewise abandons the habits of representation typical of prostitute narratives. As Rosenthal notes, though overlapping categories, the generality of prostitute narratives can be categorized as either sentimental or libertine. Sentimental narratives depict the prostitute as a victim of social and economic depravity. The initial loss—the act that sets the heroine on a course of prostitution—is attributed to a misfortune. Sentimental narratives are frequently tales of "downward mobility," which is to say, they dramatize the fall of middling women and thus offer prostitution as the logical result of troubled society. In libertine fictions, the heroine's fall can be traced back to an individualistic desire, generally for wealth and a less precarious financial security.

Unlike narratives that link women's ruin to lost virtue, *Memoirs* discredits the value of virtue—or virginity—by challenging the link between sexual acts and sexual identities. Instead of causing her fall and constituting Fanny's identity as a fallen woman, then, Fanny's time as a

prostitute offers her an education. The significance of Fanny's lost virtue—typically a central episode in the novel—is further slighted through Fanny's description of women's virtue as "trinkets" with "imaginary value."[275] It is not uncommon for prostitute narratives, or fictions that explore the negative fallout of lost virtue, to deploy a narrative of lost virtue as an allegory for other social ills. However, *Memoirs* is unique in its use of the tradition to showcase the relationship between erotic choices and well-being.

Memoirs demonstrates a remarkable interest in men, and particularly men's bodies, by showcasing the physical effects of sexual excess. Notably, however, men who partake in same-sex intercourse instead of cross-sex intercourse are individuated by their sexual taste.[276] This distinction is visible in Fanny's description of sex between men. When Fanny rents a room in a "publick-house," she watches two men engaging in sodomy through a peephole in the wall. As with the others, this scene is graphically detailed, but Fanny's response alerts readers to a key difference: she is not seeing the "fooleries of a sickly appetite."[277] This is a "criminal" scene.[278] Speculations on sexual taste in Cleland's *Memoirs* draw lines between numbers of sexual inclinations, citing some as beneficial and others as exhaustive, agitating, or futile. However, in Cleland's attempt to carve out a way of imagining sexual taste as an index for individual well-being, he excludes a single propensity: sex between men. Sex between men affects Fanny—she is shocked and confused—but the men are in their prime; healthy and attractive, by Cleland's account, and thus rather well when compared to other practitioners of illicit sex in the novel.[279]

The decision to include what Danielle Bobker calls a "sodomitical subplot" in a text with an otherwise "hetero-domestic momentum" has raised questions about the function of sodomy on the periphery of domestic narratives. The prospect of sodomy haunts the narrative as the prostitute likewise reminds the reader of a threatening possibility.[280] George Haggerty has

suggested that scenes of sodomy function "as a kind of cultural primer"—a how-to read sodomitical sex—and notes the pleasure involved in the lesson: "sodomy emerges as a site of voyeuristic pleasure" and thus can be read as "the dark secret of a culture that outwardly condemns such 'monstrous' activity and turns its back, as it were, on such spectacles of male-male love."[281] Michael McKeon also comments on this sexual exchange between men, focusing on the apparent difference between this act and other types of sex in *Memoirs*: "Cleland seems to signal his sense of a basic difference between [sodomy] and vaginal penetration by shifting from imagery of domestic exploration to that of excursion in the out-of-doors," associating sodomy with masquerades and public houses.[282] Indeed, by the frame of analysis established for my reading of Cleland, these "unsex'd male-misses" are conceptually different from others with illicit tastes.[283] Cleland understands the sodomite as nature's mistake. He writes, "It seem'd a peculiar blessing on our air and climate, that there was a plague-spot visibly imprinted on all that are tainted with it, in this nation at least."[284] Sex acts between men are fundamentally distinct from sexual tastes that are perverse—or unhealthy by Cleland's account—yet still within the parameters of what we call heterosexual desire.[285]

The subject of reform, then, is not the sodomite; nor is it the prostitute. Cleland's sodomites are perfectly healthy, despite their noted lack of masculinity. By existing outside of Cleland's understanding of health and sexual taste, they become irrecoverable subjects. Similarly, Cleland's prostitutes are likened to a necessary measure; they exist to service queer habituated tastes. On the other hand, his male subjects—Fanny's clients—are suffering from remarkably poor health, and specifically, as a result of their sexual choices. Cleland describes these perverse, cross-sex urges as absurd and agitating, thereby elevating the virtuous pleasures sanctioned by domesticity.

Recent work in social history suggests that the habit of moralizing sexual acts was, if not on the decline, widespread enough to garner resistance. In *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*, Thomas Laqueur describes the cultural conditions that made masturbation a pressing problem "sometime around 1712," but his discussion is useful for thinking about the continued habit of attaching "serious ethical implications" to a sex act.[286] As Laqueur notes, "medicine had always been something of a moral guide, a kind of ethics of the flesh," but this "increased dramatically in the eighteenth century."[287] As Laqueur further explains, "excessive venery," though a concern "since Antiquity," had new traction as a root for disease—personal and societal—as secular causes increasingly circulated.[288] He writes, "it is not surprising that cultural anxieties were translated into disease: diseases of civilization, for example, caused by a variety of bad things—too much luxury, too much mental activity and not enough exercise, too much sympathy or too much novel reading, which stirs up the body and its nerves, or diseases that followed upon too much sexual activity."[289]

Conversely, the evaluation of perverse and thus allegedly unhealthy sexual tastes and acts helps to define good pleasures: pleasures one can enjoy without shame, and in fact, pleasures that elevate subjects for their capacity to make good sexual choices. The idea that pleasure was there to pursue, and in fact, the promotion of pleasure as everyman's pursuit, was, as Porter has argued, peculiar to the Enlightenment period.[290] In keeping with Laqueur and Porter's observations, Cleland warns readers of diseases of the body, rather than moral depravity, which tells us a bit about his methodological commitments. Significantly, though Cleland refuses to use morality as a motive for good conduct, he does not endorse a libertine ethos.[291] Fanny's promiscuity is acceptable, but only since it ultimately educates her; she witnesses the effects of improper desire and is accordingly steered away. Morality has little to do with this process.

Cleland's articulation of pleasure, restraint, and reward articulates Mandeville's faith in worldly motives, though they differ on the question of nature and inclination. While Mandeville presumes that what separates the human from the bestial is the peculiarly human capacity to subvert natural inclinations, Cleland attributes perversions to luxurious trends, advocating a *return* to natural inclinations. In *Institutes of Health*, sufferable tastes—"rank wanton" tastes without sentiment—including libertinism, originate in "the suggestion of false, absurd, and fashionable opinion."[292] Though false tastes feel natural, particularly as they can drive the subject "with as much fury as if it was a passion of nature," absurd tastes stifle natural inclinations and thus prevent pleasure.[293] In *Institutes*, Cleland laments that he has, "seen or rather felt [his] folly too late."[294] But equally, having indulged in vice, he knows the end result. He offers his experience, like Fanny's eyewitness testimony, as a critique of the medical arts for offering cures in lieu of practical advice for better health. Returning momentarily to Fanny's opening remarks, where she briefly apologizes for exposing her readers to the "scandalous stages of her life," Cleland suggests that while the prostitute offers advice stemming from experience, the doctor's knowledge is largely conjectural. As Fanny explains, "even amidst the whirl of loose pleasures I had been tost in, [I] exerted more observation on the characters of the world, than what is common to those of my unhappy profession, who looking on all thought or reflexion as their capital enemy, keep it at as great distance as they can."[295] The prostitute turned scientist observes and reflects. Fanny's introductory comments offer a preemptory rebuttal—a corrective for those who might assume that prostitutes fail to thoughtfully observe "characters and manners," particularly when "tost" into them. Her introduction equally implicates those of Cleland's profession—novelists—keeping with the agenda of the mid-century preface, by establishing its worth among other texts. Much less an apology than an utter attack, Fanny

indicates that her story, her "stark naked truth," eschews decency, but nevertheless actively reflects upon the very subject it supposedly reveals. Though lowborn and equipped with a "very vulgar" education, Fanny is positioned as an authority via her willingness to reflect on "situations" that breach the "laws of decency."[296] Far from a novice, in other words, Fanny is a connoisseur of sexual vice and thus is better equipped to discuss it.

Characterizing the medical field as largely "conjectural," Cleland writes, "I was always equally on guard against precipitating decisions on such half-lights and such a superficial tincture as mere theory destitute of practice must be expected to furnish."[297] (ix, vii-viii). Overall, there's a remarkable distinction between the conjectural and the material, elevating the practical knowledge of the prostitute, or man of pleasure, over the conjectural science of medical theorists. Furthermore, the man or woman of pleasure is positioned as allegedly unbiased, unlike the practitioner for pay, and thus offers advice out of sheer goodwill. As in *Memoirs*, Cleland links poor health with sexual excess. Once "depraved out of its natural taste," the appetite struggles to rise, and the "functions of the body" are "robbed."[298] Like Mandeville, Cleland blames intemperance, and similar to the disciplinary model represented in *Memoirs*, Cleland writes frankly, aspiring to educate the intemperate subject. The evaluation of perverse and thus allegedly unhealthy sexual tastes and acts helps to define good pleasures: pleasures one can enjoy without shame, and in fact, pleasures that elevate subjects for their capacity to make good sexual choices.[299]

Fanny requests pardon by the end of her history, indicating that her tales were told merely to make her choice that much more virtuous: "if I have painted vice all in its gayest colours, if I have deck'd it with flowers, it has been solely in order to make the worthier, the solemner sacrifice of it, to virtue."[300] The informed choice supplants blind accordance with duty as it

reflects Mandeville's logic: one should be rewarded for how they manage their brute desires, and indeed more so when the individual has experienced the joys before making the sacrifice. Representing sexual choices as sacrificial—as a literal giving up—allows sexual taste to elevate the individual. Whereas Mandeville's theory of reform outwardly encourages temperance via the promise of becoming truly human, Cleland's narrative simply promises the good life. Serial, heterosexual monogamy becomes the bevy of good health, good sex, and happiness, as it is pitted against alternatives that result in unhappy and unbearable lives.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Cleland and Mandeville's systematic attempt to educate, treat, and restore the perverse subject through shame and the promise of individual well-being and happiness (not to mention superiority), precedes Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's reading of the sanctioned institutional attempt to purge the world of homosexuals in our own time in her work, *Tendencies*.[301] But while Sedgwick is discussing the historically specific gay subject, Cleland and Mandeville are generally invested in heterosexual perversions.[302] Cleland could be said to offer this instruction as a sincere attempt to educate for the good of the subject, since this text is ultimately a guide to sexual taste and individual well-being, and still, there are continuities between this strategy and a contemporary rationale that veils homophobia with good intentions; *we merely want to protect our youth from shame and ostracism*. In this method, as Sedgwick has carefully noted in *Tendencies*, individuals can exonerate their hatred via good intentions. As such, those who treat perverse desires become good Samaritans—ethical doctors and educators—not participants in the continued violence against queer subjects.

If Cleland seems inspired to produce sympathy for the stricken, this sympathetic voyeurism enacts a limited tolerance for those already afflicted and a hard lesson for those who might be tempted to go astray. As well, interpreting taste as ultimately a choice—a tendency, when absurd, to struggle against—conveniently makes the subject who fails to acquire happiness complicit in her grief for her willingness to indulge absurd, unscripted pleasures. Cleland and Mandeville are a bit sympathetic, indicating that luxurious and absurd tastes are a fault of the time.[303] However, recognizing this as a strategic use of sympathy to promote a practical, secular, and well-intended yet mandatory model of normative sexuality makes Cleland's novel incredibly familiar. More to the point, our contemporary urge to "protect" the youth from unhappiness (bullies, social ostracism, structural inequality, suicide) is an updated version of Cleland and Mandeville's secular rationale for correcting vice.

3.0 MADNESS AND QUEER LONGING IN *CLARISSA*

Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, published in 1748, describes the effects of Clarissa Harlowe's refusal to marry in the interest of her family. After inheriting a sizeable estate from her grandfather, Clarissa becomes a pawn in her brother's financial scheme. Her brother, James, encourages an arranged marriage between Clarissa and Roger Solmes, a man willing to help James increase his land and stature through the union. Clarissa, having declined offers of previous suitors, including the libertine, Lovelace, finds Solmes unbearable. In a desperate attempt to preserve both her virtue and her happiness, Clarissa continues a correspondence with Lovelace, who promises some form of assistance. Yet instead of providing assistance, Lovelace abducts Clarissa and rapes her. Throughout the narrative, Clarissa continues to hope for a single life—what she calls "the life, the *only* life, to be chosen."[304] This hope is never fulfilled, and after months of duress she dies.

Richardson articulates Clarissa's response to the trauma of sexual assault through the language of nervous sensibility and thereby offers a framework that explicitly addresses the link between the mind and the body. Lovelace deepens this mind/body connection by insinuating that the intensity of trauma that Clarissa feels is influenced by her investment in the symbolic value of virtue. In the immediate aftermath of the rape, Clarissa begs Lovelace to commit her to Bedlam, or a "private madhouse."[305] Lovelace asks, "Who the devil could have expected such

strange effects from a cause so common, and so slight?"[306] "Miss Clarissa Harlowe has but run the fate of a thousand others of her Sex," he reasons; her troubled mind would be eased if she did not "set such a romantic value upon what [women] call their *Honour*."[307] To shirk his role in Clarissa's disorder, Lovelace contends that her madness is the consequence of her heightened sensibility: "these high-souled and high-sensed girls, who had set up for shining lights and examples to the rest of the Sex, are with such difficulty brought down to the common standard."[308] Clarissa's fragmented letters, written shortly after the assault, indicate that her lost virtue is of utmost concern. Quoting Samuel Garth's 1699 publication, *The Dispensary*, she writes, "when Honour's lost, 'tis a relief to die: death's but a sure retreat from infamy."[309]

By the time Richardson published *Clarissa*, "nervous sensibility" was an established medical theory. The nervous system, much like "humoral" physiology, offered a frame for understanding the relationship between the body and the mind.[310] Nervous fibers, as many claimed, confirmed the relationship between "psyche and soma" and thereby helped to define physical symptoms as emblematic of social distinction.[311] The established link between body and mind allowed sufferers the opportunity to demonstrate their individual value through their susceptibility to elite disorders.[312] Richardson's use of the language of sensibility and virtue is important for a number of reasons. First, he offers a literary consideration of nervous sensibility, a condition that was previously explored and developed in early medical texts by Bernard Mandeville and George Cheyne, among others. Second, his consideration of the traumatic aftermath of Clarissa's lost virtue, an event that was unquestionably central to the development of the text, is upstaged by the trauma of Clarissa's queer longing for a single life.

As many have argued, Clarissa's virtue is proven through her madness. And while I agree with this, I suggest that her madness is an effect of her virtue colliding with an alternative

possibility that promises *both* virtue and an alternative to marriage. To put it another way, Clarissa's madness is specific to, and conditioned by, the meeting of ideological opposites—the pursuit of happiness and a commitment to duty. While the plot of *Clarissa* invites readers to consider the impact of lost virtue on the highly sensible subject, in *Remarks on Clarissa*, Sarah Fielding—Richardson's contemporary, and sister to his literary rival Henry Fielding—directs her readers to consider the political and cultural conditions of Clarissa's distress as traumatic, and more specifically, to consider the ways in which Clarissa's lack of choice, what structures her madness, can be read as trauma. Because of this, Fielding redirects attention from both discourses of nerves and discourses of virtue, and thereby draws attention to an alternative origin of madness: the longing for an alternative to compulsory marriage.

Fielding's reading of *Clarissa* helps us to locate this alternative reading of madness in Richardson's text—a rethinking of madness that was also already present in medical discourse. In Mandeville and Cheyne's writings on what we might now call mental illness, we can see a demonstrable shift in representing and understanding those who suffer from nervous disorders. Quotidian habits and individual characteristics—presently named lifestyle—are increasingly employed as causes of disorder. In abandoning familiar formulas for understanding nervous conditions, such as humors or rank, and focusing on lifestyle habits and injunctions that, in fact, impact health, Mandeville and Cheyne offer a revision of medical models that blame disorders of the mind on the body.

The unfolding of illness in *Clarissa* allows readers to witness, in slow progression, the impact of compulsory marriage. Such a view of female experience, I argue, locates Richardson's work within a longer tradition that critiques and exposes the adoption of specifically female disorders to account for the abuses of patriarchy.[313] As Heather Meek has argued, during the

eighteenth century, "Women's mental difficulties became aligned not with wandering wombs and inherently disordered female bodies but with the depressed social condition of eighteenth-century women."[314] By the end of the century, as Meek notes, Mary Wollstonecraft named these poor social conditions the "wrongs of woman."[315] Meek's research traces understandings of mental illness during the eighteenth century, highlighting the relationship between medical discourses and literature. The range of writings that discuss this subject suggests that hysteria was a "powerful cultural metaphor, a catch-all that explained everything that was wrong with women."[316] The transition from attributing illness to wombs to linking illness to social and cultural conditions is particularly evident in fiction. While theories of hysteria were often a means to substantiate women's inferiority, they also offered a way to legitimate and consolidate a range of affective effects of compulsory gender roles.[317] Reading Richardson's *Clarissa* in light of this tradition highlights the ways in which Clarissa's madness is an effect of her investment in a self-fashioned, queer identity.[318]

Through this frame, I argue that Clarissa's madness is the result of her queer longing for an alternative to the institution of marriage, and particularly, an alternative to a model of love that is founded in the consolidation of land and wealth.[319] Clarissa's longing is *queer* as it denotes an ideological resistance to the social order. More specifically, Clarissa's queer longing is characterized by her desire to fashion an identity outside of the cultural frameworks that define and uphold categories of sex, her refusal to accept her place in the system of exchange held intact by the institution of marriage, and her willingness to risk the loss of family to satisfy her own wishes. As Clarissa asks of Lovelace, "do you suppose, that I had not thought of laying down a plan to govern myself by, when I had found myself so unhappily over-reached, and cheated, as I may say, out of myself?—When I found, that I could not *be*, and *do*, what I wished *to be*, and *to*

do, do you imagine, that I had not cast about, what was the next proper course to take?—And do you believe, that this next course has not cost me some pain?"[320] Clarissa's queer desires threaten her access to her family, and in risking expulsion, she develops madness—a queer affect. Richardson's attention to the structures of power that both prevent and create Clarissa's longing brings the relationship between queer longing and madness into view.

Trapped between two possibilities, the actual and the idealized, Clarissa suffers a slow death. Her nervous disease showcases her sensibilities—her inability to live in a world that makes virtue and happiness mutually exclusive. Typical of sentimental authors, Richardson offers an idealized way of living and being in the world—an impossible exemplary model—alongside the reality that makes this elevated state unattainable. The ideal subject, in this case Clarissa, cannot survive this world. To negotiate this problem, Clarissa longs for a third option that preserves her most important duty, the preservation of her virtue, and also allows for happiness. But by no means solitary, the single life opposes marriage by favoring alternative models of kinship. This elevated model of kinship is embodied in the love between Clarissa and her dearest friend, Anna Howe.

This alternative is cause for severe melancholy that eventually results in death. The promise held out is broken. In *Clarissa*, madness is an effect of possibilities not yet possible. The fantasy world that Clarissa yearns to live—a world that is indisputably more ethical and virtuous than the one in which she exists—tempts Clarissa to reject her familial duty. In response to Clarissa's letter describing repeated attempts to change her parents' minds about her arranged marriage to Solmes, Anna states, "You can no more change *your* nature, than your persecutors can *theirs*. Your disparity is owing to the vast disparity between you and them. What would you have of them? Do they not act in character?—And to whom? To an Alien.

You are not one of them."[321] Clarissa's longing for this alternative life brings about a mad desire—a "cruel optimism"—that ignites her ruin.[322]

My reading of *Clarissa* is influenced by studies in affect that address the political and cultural causes of depression. Much like feminist readings of the uses of medical science to mask the affective conditions of patriarchy, recent work by Lauren Berlant and Ann Cvetkovich demonstrates the relationship between structures of power and feelings. In part, I want to explore what Berlant and Cvetkovich can tell us about the eighteenth century. But also, I want to consider how this familiar, eighteenth-century rethinking of what we now call mental illness offer new insights into our understanding of madness in the present.

In *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant argues that "the neoliberal present is a space of transition, not only between modes of production and modes of life, but between different animating, sustaining fantasies."[323] According to Berlant, "optimism is cruel when it takes shape as an affectively stunning double bind: a binding to fantasies that block the satisfactions they offer, and a binding to the promise of optimism as such that the fantasies have come to represent."[324] Through her history of the present, Berlant aims to impart a vision of our current political state that is "apprehensible as an affective urgency to remake institutions for living."[325] Critical of the imposed tenets of the "good life," Berlant asks why people "stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies […] when the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds."[326] The failure of these fantasies presents itself in many forms: "depression, dissociation, pragmatism, cynicism, optimism, activism, or an incoherent mash."[327]

In *Depression: A Public Feeling*, Ann Cvetkovich notes that historical accounts of depression offer "alternative models" that "defamiliarize the medical model of depression."[328] She asks, what if depression is political, or cultural, instead of biochemical?[329] Likening

depression to biopower, she writes, "Depression is another manifestation of forms of biopower that produce life and death not only by targeting populations for overt destruction, whether through incarceration, war, or poverty, but also more insidiously by making people feel small, worthless, hopeless."[330] Like Berlant's description of obesity as a "slow death," depression "takes the form not of bodies expanding to the point of breakdown, but of an even less visible form of violence that takes the form of minds and lives gradually shrinking into despair and hopelessness."[331] Both Berlant and Cvetkovich demonstrate that we need new terms to express the emotions that emerge from structural violence.

For Berlant and Cvetkovich, "despair and hopelessness," and more generally, depression, are the violent effects of specific historical and cultural circumstances. Clarissa's slow death, "every sigh, groan and tear," as Terry Eagleton argues, damns a "society where the rape of Clarissa is possible."[332] It makes the violence of existing models of love and kinship visible. Read as "another manifestation of forms of biopower," Richardson's description of Clarissa's disorder links her slow and brutal illness to midcentury ideologies of patriarchy coupled with the promise of autonomy and happiness—the promise that is held out by Clarissa's inheritance and the possibility of a single life. In attributing Clarissa's disorder to competing and conflicting possibilities—duty and happiness—Richardson's *Clarissa* offers an alternative model of madness, both an alternative to present understandings of mental health that are strongly influenced by traditional medicine, and an alternative to models of madness circulating in Richardson's own time.

3.1 EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY "NERVES"

Before exploring the relationship between madness and queer longing in *Clarissa*, we must first observe how Richardson's novel makes use of established tenets of what we might now call mental health. Richardson, patient of and printer for physician and author George Cheyne, borrowed from and adapted contemporary medical discourses, furthering public interest in fashionable nervous diseases while carefully dictating how one should respond to the afflicted. Cheyne's early eighteenth-century visualization of the relationship between physical health and the faculties of the mind provided a vocabulary for articulating the odysseys of pathos that typify the sentimental novel. In the Georgian imagination, the body was an index of interiority, representative of individual health and indicative of spiritual and moral worth. A healthy body signified temperance and habits of restraint increasingly valued and popularized in the proliferation of discourses of self-help. Health, like knowledge, was an egalitarian value and thereby offered eighteenth-century Britons of all ranks an opportunity to showcase individual pursuits of improvement.

With the growing tendency to read health as a barometer of discipline, the cult of sensibility regarded performances of pathos as emblematic of a virtuous interiority. Nervous sensibility, popularized by Cheyne who assured sufferers that the low-minded rarely suffered delicate nerves, demonstrated the genteel capacity for deep suffering and thereby offered new categories to define the self. However, because symptoms of madness were linked to social elevation, they were often read with skepticism. As Fielding notes in *Remarks on Clarissa*, many "have accused Clarissa of having a suspicious temper," indicating that readers questioned the sincerity of her emotions.[333] As madness came into vogue, new attempts to delineate the

boundaries of virtuous distempers emerged. This delineation, Richardson claims, is the purpose of tragedy: to teach audiences how "to spare their compassion for objects that deserve it. For there is an injustice in being moved at the afflictions of those who deserve to be miserable."[334] The equation of nerves and social value encouraged refinement, and it also raised concern over the capacity to perform sensibility. As George Rousseau has argued, "the more [sensibility] manifested itself among the elite in their behavior the more the lower orders aped it, prompting observers to inquire whether the degree of sensibility in any individual instance was genuine or feigned."[335]

Far from being undesirable, by the mid-eighteenth century weak nerves were an established means to physically demonstrate a superior interiority. A fragile nervous system was a sign of an elevated state.[336] Lovelace regularly comments on Clarissa's refinement, calling her divine, noble, and sublime.[337] While Lovelace recognizes constitutional weakness in Clarissa, he is slow to accept the newly prevailing myth that links weakness to a high capacity for feeling, and accordingly, elevated humanity.[338] When hearing news of Clarissa's poor health, he clings to the possibility that her illness is performed, a "plot" designed to "work up [his] soul to the deepest remorse."[339]

A review of early eighteenth-century thoughts on weak nerves indicates why Lovelace might have read Clarissa's symptoms with skepticism. In Bernard Mandeville's *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions*, first published in 1711, Mandeville offers his thoughts on the practices employed by physicians and apothecaries in the treatment of "the hypo in men and the vapours in women."[340] Mandeville offers a critique of current practices among physicians, providing a reading of the medical field that is similar to John Cleland's analysis in *Institutes of Health*. Mandeville notes that doctors, hindered by the "loose conjectures of [their]

own wandring invention[s]," have failed to meet the demands of "that glorious art that should teach the recovery as well as the preservation of health."[341] Writing for the benefit of the patient, Mandeville promises "all Hypochrondraical people" a forthright and accessible account of the "nature of their distemper," and "greater insight" than "they can be furnish'd with any where else."[342] By noting that the "Hypochondriak" is typically found among "men of tolerable sense," Mandeville seems attuned to male anxieties over symptoms of madness.[343]

But importantly, hysteria and hypochondria are gendered disorders; "hysterick passions" belong to the "fair sex."[344] Omitting the Latin in his discussion of hysteria and women "to render that part pleasant and entertaining as well as plain and instructive," Mandeville's narrator and physician explains the crucial, gendered differences between male and female nervous disorders: "For studying and intense thinking are not to be alledged as a cause in women, whom we know (at least the generality of them) to be so little guilty of it; and yet the number of hysterick women far exceeds that of hypochondriack men."[345] Largely eschewing what he calls "imaginary" causes of disorder among men, Mandeville explains the greater numbers of disordered subjects among the "fair sex" through the particularities of the female body. He writes,

> Thus I have shewn; that the want of spirits in hysterick women may often be imputed to their diet; in which the generality of them commit so many errors: but besides these their idle life, and want of exercise likewise dispose them to the disease, but above all the innumerable disorders, which upon account of the menstrual flux, and the whole uterus they are so often subject to.[346]

Dividing female hysterics into two classes, the first having a disorder attributable to poor health, and the second notably healthy but driven to hysterics via outside circumstances—"some accident of grief, passion, surprise, immoderate drinking"—Mandeville's spectrum of causes for madness in women suggests a less refined, and less systematized science than his understanding of madness in men.[347]

Mandeville's assessment of the causes of "hypochondriack" brings this difference into view. In his *Treatise*, Mandeville stages several dialogues but takes measures to clarify which character voices his stance on current medical practices and existing causes and solutions to hysteria and hypochondria. Changing his name to Philopirio, "a lover of experience, which [he] shall always profess to be," Mandeville writes, "I desire my reader to take whatever is spoke by the person I named last, as said by myself."[348] Other voices are added, sometimes "made guilty of some extravagant sallies" in order to demonstrate their distemper.[349] In one exchange, Mismedon, a "hypochondriak" male, asks Philopirio to explain why some thoughts greatly distress the mind, "disorder[ing] the brain, and consequently the tone and whole contexture of the spirits."[350] Mandeville via Philopirio explains that in men, "thinking" impacts the "spirits," but the quality of thought is a factor: "if witty men and blockheads spend the same time in thinking, the first must in all likelyhood waste the most spirits."[351] Mandeville continues, "the thinking then of blockheads, besides they seldom delight in it, can do them no hurt, because it does not exhaust the spirits, and they are almost as secure from becoming hypochondriacal, as those, that cannot write, from being pillory'd for counterfeiting other people's hands."[352] Assuring male readers that distemper customarily reflects an improved and advanced "sense," Mandeville assuages the concerns of men with weak nerves. As Mismedon notes, "the hypochondriaci are obliged to you for the compliment."[353] Mandeville's reading of distemper in

men accomplishes two things: it challenges the medical model that supposes that something in the body predisposes subjects to symptoms, and it demonstrates the high wit of those who succumb to its grip. He writes,

> Hypochondriacal people are generally ingenious without the assistance of an imaginary ferment of the spleen, which as we have shew'd before, some physicians would have to be the cause both of their wit and their distemper: for, as thinking consists in a various disposition of the images received; so what we call wit is nothing but an aptitude of the spirits by which they nimbly turn to, and dexterously dispose the images that may serve our purpose.[354]

Fortunately, Mandeville continues, "ingenuity only makes them proper subjects for the disease to work upon."[355] If "witty men" practice moderation "in those things that exhaust the finer spirits," and commit to exercise, they "will be as exempt from the distemper as the greatest logger-heads."[356]

It is worth looking at Mandeville's thoughts on rank and neurosis at length. In his depiction of the relationship between the two, he explains that distemper is rare among "people of lower fortunes" because this class of people do not have time for reflection. By this frame, a disinclination to neurosis, found among the lower ranks, is linked to economic necessity. Neurosis, then, is not a physical trait. Mandeville writes,

> Those that enjoy [even modest possessions] are more at leisure to reflect, besides that their wishes and desires being larger, themselves are more likely to be offended at a

> great many passages in life, than people of lower fortunes, who have seldom higher ends, than what they are continually employ'd about, the getting of their daily bread; which if they accomplish to satisfaction, they are commonly pleas'd and happy, because they think themselves so; if not, they labour under such a variety of necessities, and are so diverted with their present circumstances, that they have not the time stedfastly to think on one thing, and consequently the vexations of the mind have not so great an influence over them.[357]

Mandeville's understanding of "the vexations of the mind" connects mental health both to intellect and to leisure—both acculturated influences. Suffering from weak nerves might still establish rank, but Mandeville's articulation of the central roles of work and leisure draws attention to the material conditions that structure illness. Mandeville continues,

> It was unexpected fortune, that first made you in love with business, and the management your large inheritance required, cured you of your careless temper; give me leave to observe, that if you had been reduced to the want that threatened you and forced to maintain your family, either by copying, hackney-writing, or some other miserable shift, where you must have work'd *de pane ad panem*, and always lived from hand to mouth, I am of opinion, that your distemper (if it had ever troubled you at all) would neither so soon, nor so severely have attack'd you.[358]

Mandeville's attention to the relationship between leisure time and nervous conditions could lead to a problematic conclusion: women suffer in higher numbers because they are thinking more

rigorously than men. This reading is suppressed via the plethora of factors that could bring about madness in women.

Cheyne's *The English Malady* takes a similar approach to nervous disorders, aspiring to dispel longstanding causes which have "hitherto been reckon'd witchcraft, enchantment, sorcery and possession, and have been the constant resource of ignorance."[359] Focusing on "fluids," Cheyne writes:

> All nervous distempers whatsoever from yawning and stretching, up to a mortal fit of an apoplexy, seems to me to be but one continued disorder, or the several steps or degrees of it, arising from a relaxation or weakness, and the want of a sufficient force and elasticity in the solids in general, and the nerves in particular, in proportion to the resistance of fluids, in order to carry on the circulation, remove obstructions, carry off recrements, and make the secretions.[360]

Cheyne's reading of "distempers" sees the body as a system of nerves. This system ties emotions to the movement of an actual substance, fluids, and thereby gives them a concrete reality.[361] There is more to say about the effort to systematize emotions through medical literature during the eighteenth-century, but this brief summary highlights two things: the movement away from obscure causes of madness and the exploration of social and cultural causes for disorder.[362] Mandeville's attempt to attribute disorder in men to quality of thought reverses the mind-body relationship, attaching "hypo" in men to daily habits structured by leisure or economic necessity, while Cheyne's emphasis is on a physiological system that makes the individual suitable for disorder. Whereas Mandeville leaves room for vague physiological

causes of disorder in women, Richardson departs from the "anatomically tangible," offering a social and cultural reading of madness.[363] While "medical" theorists are revising the origins of madness in men, looking to social and cultural foundations of disorders, women's bodies are still held accountable for madness.[364]

3.2 "THE PROBLEM THAT HAS NO NAME"

In *Clarissa*, the discussion of madness, influenced as it was by Mandeville and Cheyne's validation of chic disorders of the genteel mind, explains madness via the individual and her environment rather than a condition of the body. People go mad not for physiological reasons but for cultural ones—when they are unfit for a particular life. This representation of illness exposes the conditions of madness, rendering the social and political foundations of nervous conditions visible. While undoubtedly participating in the solidification of the cultural value of nervous afflictions, Richardson likewise demystifies the "animal spirits" that had gripped the eighteenth-century imagination. In *Remarks on Clarissa*, Fielding encourages her readers to read Richardson this way, noting how family expectations result in Clarissa's slow death. In this section, I will demonstrate how Fielding guides her readers towards this analysis, and how Richardson makes this alternative understanding of neurosis available by locating Clarissa's madness in the relation between compulsory marriage and her personal desires.

Remarks on Clarissa, written by Fielding in 1749, depicts readers who have gathered to discuss Richardson's novel, published in volumes the year before. Fielding claims that she has not either "diminished or added to" the "criticisms" found in *Remarks*, and so she allegedly presents her collection of readings objectively: "perhaps an address of this nature may appear

very accountable, and whimsical; when I assure you, my design is fairly to lay before you all the criticisms, as far as I can remember them, that I have heard on your history of *Clarissa*."[365] *Remarks* concludes with an exchange of letters between two members of the group, Bellario and Miss Gibson, who had previously debated Clarissa's capacity to love. In this exchange, Miss Gibson makes a reasoned case for both honesty and spirit in a husband, for "a married life, tho' it cannot be said to be miserable with an honest husband; yet it must be very dull, when a man has not the power of diversifying his ideas enough to display trifling incidents in various lights."[366] Indeed, Miss Gibson continues, she could not "paint to [herself] anything more disagreeable, than to sit with a husband and wish somebody would come in and relieve us from one another's dullness."[367] Lovelace and Hickman, Clarissa and her friend Anna Howe's respective suitors, each fulfill half of Miss Gibson's requirements; Hickman, as Bellario notes, has both "sobriety and goodness," each necessary "to render a married state happy"; Lovelace, on the other hand, has "that gaiety of disposition which from a vast flow of animal spirits, without restraint or curb from either principles of religion or good nature, shines forth."[368]

As these considerations show, *Remarks* is largely occupied with questions of love, happiness, and marriage. Fielding's community of readers reflects upon Clarissa's perceived obstinacy or resolve in choosing not to marry a less than ideal suitor, suggesting how her decisions might determine and justify her fate, or her failure to acquire happiness. Is Clarissa's heart "as impenetrable and unsusceptible of affection, as the hardest marble," as one reader suggests, or is Clarissa too influenced by love itself, and hence under the influence of a heart too resolute to settle for a less than ideal companion?[369] While questions of virtue enter the conversation, among Fielding's readers in *Remarks*, Clarissa's fate, her unhappiness, and

ultimately her madness, are the result not of her lost virtue but of her "disposition of mind." Fielding (via Miss Gibson) states,

> For as in the body, too rich blood occasions many diseases, so in the mind, the very virtues themselves, if not carefully watched, may produce very hurtful maladies. Meekness therefore, and a long habit of submission, is often accompanied by a want of resolution, even where resolution is commendable. To be all softness, gentleness and meekness, and at the same time to be steadily fixed in every point 'tis improper to give up, is peculiar to Clarissa herself, and a disposition of mind judiciously reserved by the author for his heroine alone.[370]

Equipped with her mother's meekness, the obstinacy of her father, and her own peculiarly fixed resolve to be happy in marriage, or alternatively, to live a single life, Clarissa's virtues become her malady. Lovelace speculates on the impact of heredity, asking, "Was it necessary, that the active gloom of such a tyrant of a *Father*, should commix with such a passive sweetness of a will-less *Mother*, to produce a Constancy, an Equanimity, a Steadiness, in the *Daughter*, which never woman before could boast of?"[371] Even when overcome by madness, Clarissa remains fixed, according to the readers in Fielding's remarks—resolute—like "that hitherto beauty in King Lear, of preserving the character even in madness": "the same self-accusing spirit, the same humble heart, the same pious mind breathes in her scattered scrapes of paper in the midst of her frenzy."[372]

She is not, as noted in Fielding's *Remarks*, the only subject suffering from madness in *Clarissa*. As Bellario claims, Clarissa's father, "old Harlowe, who never gave up a point," is

"mad with the thoughts of his own authority"; Clarissa's brother, "the over-bearing impetuous" James Harlowe, is mad with "envy, arising from ambition"; her sister is gripped with the madness of "rivalship"; her mother, Mrs. Harlowe, suffers from "constant submission"; and last, "the mad vanity of Lovelace."[373] But the characters are "distinct in their madness," individually steady, all peculiarly obstinate, and all subject to the ensuing consequences of their paths.[374]

As the above causes of madness indicate, Fielding wants her readers to recognize madness in *Clarissa* as the result of unrestrained, unexamined, and singular dispositions—"meekness" becomes "tameness and folly," while authority turns into "great roughness."[375] But Clarissa, who exhibits both softness and resolve, is arguably Richardson's most disordered character. She is painstakingly resolute; but further, others heighten her madness. Fielding writes,

> [They] all conspire to the grand end of distressing and destroying the poor Clarissa; whose misfortune it was to be placed amongst a set of wretches, who were every one following the bent of their own peculiar madness, without any consideration for the innocent victim who was to fall a sacrifice to their ungovernable passions.[376]

As Fielding notes, Lovelace "wander[s] from the path that leads to happiness," while Clarissa walks it perfectly, but for one thing: not entirely meek, she demands a model of happiness that her family will not permit.[377] Miss Gibson reflects on this desire, noting, "But as the laws of God and man have placed a woman totally in the power of her husband, I believe it is utterly impossible for any young woman, who has an reflection, not to form in her mind some kind of picture of the sort of man in whose power she would chuse to place herself."[378] Caught between

two competing drives—filial duty and happiness—Clarissa's idealized piety, her virtue, together with her conviction that she is entitled to happiness, renders her unfit for her world. Fielding's readers tie Clarissa's madness to her relentless perfection, or Richardson's attempt to create a perfect heroine, "where every line speaks the considerate and the pious mind."[379] In making Clarissa exceedingly perfect—too perfect, in fact, to live within the present times—Richardson exposes existing customs that thwart happiness and encourage self-gain. Clarissa's perfection "amongst a set of wretches" offers a straightforward critique of the imperfect institution of marriage. Further, it presents a disillusioned glimpse of the upwardly mobile family, caught between demands for wealth and new principles of love and happiness.

The Harlowe family regularly draws attention to the crux of Clarissa's transgression: her desire to make herself happy at the expense of her duty. When Clarissa pleads her case, she regularly names her happiness as key.[380] As Clarissa sees it, her family is demanding that she "sacrifice" her "everlasting happiness" to meet her brother's mercenary needs, claiming, "I shall not give up to my brother's ambition the happiness of my future life."[381] Arguing that "Happiness and riches are *two* things, and very seldom met together," Clarissa begs to be given the right to give up her estate as evidence of her duty: "Give me leave to say, madam, that a person preferring happiness to fortune, as I do; that want not even what I *have*, and can give up the use of *that* as an instance of duty—."[382] To this, her mother replies, "No more, no more of your merits!—You know you will be a gainer by that cheerful instance of your duty, not a loser."[383] This familial insensitivity to Clarissa's pursuit of "everlasting" happiness is rooted in their own sacrifices. As Clarissa admits, her mother's mind was both "gentle and sensible," and, "from the beginning" she had "on all occasions sacrificed [her] own inward satisfaction to outward peace."[384] Clarissa's father suffered a similar temper: "he had pleaded, that his frequent

gouty paroxysms (every fit more threatening than the former) gave him no extraordinary prospects either of worldly happiness, or of long days: that he hoped, that [Clarissa], who had been supposed to have contributed to the lengthening of [her] *father's* life, would not, by [her] disobedience, shorten *his*."[385] "Upbraided" for "regarding only [her] own inclinations," Clarissa is characterized as both "undutiful" and "perverse" for attempting to secure her future happiness.[386] The distinction between secular and spiritual happiness is blurred. While Clarissa's longing for happiness is underpinned by her faith in an "everlasting happiness," she resists the unhappy duties structured by coerced marriage.

While the pursuit of happiness became an Enlightenment routine, some questioned this path. In *Rasselas,* Samuel Johnson noted, "Infelicity is involved in corporeal nature, and interwoven with our being; all attempts therefore to decline it wholly are useless and vain."[387] In his introductory comments to *The Paths of Virtue Delineated; or, the History in Miniature of the Celebrated Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe, and Sir Charles Grandison*, Richardson cautions against the lure of happiness with the following words:

> It is universally allowed by all moralists, that the most important part of education is implanting in the minds of youth, maxims of religion and virtue, and teaching the young inexperienced heart to govern its desires and pursuits after happiness.
>
> This is erecting the fabric of happiness on the most solid rock; an edifice, that shall grow more perfect, and receiving fresh strength and beauty from every storm, shall last forever unimpaired.

> But the young mind, though it pants after happiness, is, however, too apt to be disgusted with the formality of precepts, and the most important truths are slighted, when inculcated by dictatorial wisdom.
>
> [Clarissa's] dreadful struggles will shew the folly of a young lady's placing her hopes on the fair assurance of a man void of virtue.
>
> While the heroine is refined and exalted by her sufferings, her cruel destroyer is wretched and disappointed even in the boasted success of his vile machinations; and while she enjoys the firm and sublime supports of Christianity, and attains a happy immorality, he perishes miserably.[388]

Clarissa yearns for happiness, and according to Richardson she ultimately earns a "happy immorality," a happiness commensurate with an earlier standard that values "eternal" happiness over "fleeting pleasures," clearly advocated for here by Richardson.[389] Clarissa is both the youth panting after happiness, and the glorified subject, "refined and exalted by her sufferings." Significantly, while Lovelace stands in as the obvious "folly," Clarissa's willingness to respond to his seductive tactics is rooted in her desire for autonomy, not her desire for the libertine.

As Janet Todd has argued, "two unequal and opposing contexts are articulated in Clarissa": the female context and the patriarchal context.[390] "Obedience and integrity collide" and "Clarissa, the obedient and upright, cannot wholly espouse either."[391] Clarissa's integrity, and her desire for autonomy, most patent in her self-defined right to happiness, captures this liminal space between competing ideologies. Clarissa's yearning for happiness—her "animating,

sustaining" fantasy of the single life—is not yet possible, as she is bound to the modes of life that require her duty and service.[392]

3.3 QUEER LONGING AND MADNESS

In one of her letters, Clarissa describes Anna as "the principle pleasure of [her] life."[393] The intense love between Clarissa and Anna is routinely regarded as a sublimated, barely hoped for and thus inchoate love, unwittingly represented by Richardson. Anna is, as Clarissa tenderly exclaims, her "*sweet and ever-amiable friend—companion—sister—lover*."[394] Over and over readers learn that this is no ordinary love; it is, in fact, undeniably the most enviable model of love in the novel. But however extraordinary, this inarticulable love between friends does not explicitly suppose an equally fervent sexual desire.[395] The elevation of this specific partnership in the text, for that matter, hinges upon the absence of any other demands between partners, whether these demands are rooted in sex, blood, or kinship.

To see this love as untranslatable, as existing somewhere between what we might call "just friends" and "more than friends," requires us to acknowledge what we have collectively given up—which is an array of intimacies that are unclear, unscripted, and unpredictable. Richardson is as reluctant—if unable—to name the desire between Clarissa and Anna, which says something about what we share with the eighteenth-century writer: a poor lexicon for love outside of marriage and family. As current critics of marriage argue, as a system of enforced and entitled kinship, marriage renders all other promises between friends—or more than friends—as inferior to its bonds. Clarissa touches upon the richness of alternative kinships in a letter to Anna, writing, "And yet, in my opinion, the world is but one great family; originally it was so;

and then this narrow selfishness that reigns us in, but relationship remembered against relationship forgot?"[396] Clarissa's nostalgia for the "one great family" of the past points to a concern over the erosion of alternative kinship and intimacy by marriage.

But significantly, the epistolary affections between Clarissa and Anna occur at a time when people are "not ignorant of [what we now call] lesbianism."[397] Unthinkable is not the same as unknowable. Consider, for example, the exchange between Clarissa and Anna on "a woman going away with a woman."[398] Anna pleads, "Whether best to go off with me, or with Lovelace you can get over your punctilious regard for my reputation. A woman going away with a *woman* is not so discreditable thing, surely! and with no view, but to *avoid the fellows*!—I say, only be so good as to consider this point."[399] In her reply to Anna, Clarissa writes, "I come to the two points in your Letter, which most sensibly concern me: Thus you put them: 'Whether I chuse not rather to go off [shocking words!] with one of my own sex; with my ANNA HOWE—than with one of the other; with Mr. LOVELACE?' and if *not*, 'Whether I should not marry him as soon as possible?'"[400] In this letter, Richardson shows Clarissa's awareness of a key difference between the single life and going off with "one of [her] own sex." Noting her power of persuasion over Clarissa, Lovelace identifies Anna as a "vigilant wench."[401] But even Lovelace is able to see that this love between friends is extraordinary. He writes, "I never before imagined that so fervent a friendship could subsist between two sister-beauties, both toasts. But even here it may be inflamed by opposition, and by that contradict which gives spirit to female spirits of a warm and romantic turn."[402] Though confident that he can disrupt this romance between friends, Lovelace fails to challenge the intimacy between Clarissa and Anna.

Richardson elevates love between women, asking, as Anna does, "who is it, that has a soul, who would not be affected by such an instance of female friendship?"[403] It is a source of

pleasure and virtue, knowable but impossible to attain. As Raymond Williams has argued, "Clarissa is an important sign of that separation of virtue from any practically available world."[404] Clarissa longs for this impractical, queer world, occasionally believing that she can, in fact, achieve it. She writes, "Upon my word, I am sometimes tempted to think that we may make the world allow for us as we please, if we can but be sturdy in our wills, and set out accordingly."[405] Her notorious distempers, caught as they are between shifting priorities, and lived in the shadow of queer longings, reveal madness as the response to an unbearable life. Richardson's prolix account of Clarissa's suffering and death, together with his withholding of any medical claims about her condition, necessarily offers the cultural and political specificities of illness and thereby removes Clarissa's disorders from the realm of mysterious bodily origins, placing them within the more concrete structures of gender and rank that underpin her death. Her death signifies the urgent need to rethink "institutions for living," as it showcases what social, economic, and cultural demands *feel* like.[406] At the heart of Clarissa's struggle is an invitation to interrogate the relationship between our current models of happiness and mental health.

3.4 *CLARISSA* AND THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY

I have argued that Richardson's *Clarissa* presents readers with an understanding of what it feels like to have desires that are fundamentally at odds with existing social systems. Reading *Clarissa* in this way allows us to explore the "felt experience" of Clarissa Harlowe through the lens of queer theory and gay and lesbian history.[407] In my conclusion to this chapter, I will discuss the novel's contribution to the history of sexuality and I will also expand my reading of

Clarissa's experience as a queer affect. To do so, I make a case for why the narrative is not immediately recognizable as queer. Like the present-day femme, Clarissa is not always legible as a queer subject.

Conceptualizations of desire in eighteenth-century literature are frequently interpreted in one of two ways: either Georgian ways of thinking about desire are radically different from modern categories and formations and are thus entirely incommensurate with present categories of identity; or, they are recognizable and thus show evidence of transhistorical articulations of desire. Both positions, however, seem to be structured by implicit assumptions about what kinds of knowledge about sex are valuable to circulate. Radically incommensurate, and conversely, transhistorical conceptions of desire, offer two different ways of thinking about sexual orientation, both of which strike me as strategic ways to prove that particular desires are *either* social or biological. Further, both ways are politically motivated: if we can prove that homosexuality has always existed, or, contrarily, that desire is always historically and culturally specific, we can expose the fallacies of heteronormativity. Both of these methods have backfired.[408]

Alternatively, queer readings of desire are often attempts to manufacture what Carolyn Dinshaw has called a "queer community across time."[409] "Queer," in its most broadly used sense, specifies a relation to a norm.[410] In reference to Dinshaw's work, Cvetkovich writes, "Dinshaw proposes that histories can 'touch' one another. There are resonant juxtapositions between past and present whose explanatory power is not causal or teleological; instead, the affective charge of investment, of being 'touched', brings the past forward into the present."[411] In "developing queer history through the concept of affective connection—a touch across time—and through the intentional collapse of conventional historical time," Dinshaw "queer[s]

historiography."[412] Instead of locating specific and legible models of identities in the past, an essentialist project, affective connections track "a community of the isolated, the abject, the shamed."[413] From this, Dinshaw asks: "Who gets to be in a queer community, and who decides?"[414]

Clarissa is subject to many of the shared affective hallmarks of modern queer identity. Most notably, she experiences a variation of what Sarah Schulman calls "familial homophobia." The family, Schulman argues, is often the central site of homophobia. From familial rejection to familial disinterest, experiencing "familial homophobia" is, though not universal, a basic shared affect in the queer community. The connection I want to make between Clarissa and the homosexual child is a matter of kinship. Schulman contends that typically homosexuals share two experiences: "One is 'coming out', a process of self-interrogation in opposition to social expectation that has no parallel in heterosexual life. The second common experience is that we have each, at some time in our lives, been treated shoddily by our families simply, but specifically, because of our homosexuality."[415] The queer is shunned; "shunning is when people are cut out, excluded from participating in conversations, communities, social structures; are not allowed to have any say about how they are treated; and cannot speak or speak back."[416] "Gay people," Schulman continues, make a perfect "scapegoat" because "they are alone"; "they become a projection screen, the dumping ground for everyone else's inadequacies and resentments."[417] Schulman's project describes the "long term consequences of familial homophobia on the gay individual and the broader culture."[418] In doing so, she draws attention to "something that is persistent and yet invisible."[419]

Though Schulman argues that the experience of "coming out" has no parallel in straight culture, I argue against this.[420] Gayle Rubin's classic "The Traffic in Women" is useful here.

Through Marx (who Rubin describes as "relatively unconcerned with sex"), Freud, and Lévi-Strauss, Rubin finds the "conceptual tools" to define the "locus of the oppression of women, of sexual minorities, and of certain aspects of human personality within individuals."[421] In regards to Freud and Lévi-Strauss, Rubin writes: "they see neither the implications of what they are saying, nor the implicit critique that their work can generate when subject to a feminist eye."[422] This chapter has been advocating that we read Richardson's representation of Clarissa's life in a similar way. On Freud's work, Rubin argues, "Nowhere are the effects on women of male-dominated social systems better documented than within the clinical literature."[423] Freud's work, she continues, "could have been the basis of a critique of sex roles."[424] In fact, Rubin argues, "one can read Freud's essays on femininity as descriptions of how a group is prepared psychologically, at a tender age, to live with its oppression."[425] While the above cited quotes support reading Richardson's *Clarissa* in a parallel way, Rubin's analysis of kinship is particularly useful. Rubin writes, "It would be in the interests of the smooth and continuous operation of [kinship systems] if the woman in question did not have too many ideas of her own about whom she might want to sleep with. From the standpoint of the system, the preferred female sexuality would be the one which responded to the desires of others, rather than one which actively desired and sought a response."[426] Rubin's analysis speaks directly to the issue of female desire and choice. Her understanding of kinship demonstrates the shared space of sexual minorities and women who refuse marriage, both occupying the space of the shunned and discarded queer.

Some context on how single women were regarded in the mid-eighteenth century is useful. By the eighteenth century, cultural and political attitudes towards marriage had changed. Once acceptable as religious choice, choosing to remain unmarried was increasingly recognized,

however negatively, as a secular lifestyle, and particularly, as an individual preference that interfered with both nationalist prospects for growth and governing gender ideals. What should be familiar here is the overriding assumption about the effects of women's choices on gender and nation.[427] In *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, Amy Froide argues that the "differing experiences of ever-married and never-married women" are frequently overlooked.[428] While scholars in the present are typically attentive to differences of race, class, and sexuality, Froide argues that marital status is also a key "category of difference."[429] Further, Froide claims that single women and widows are commonly understood as one category, and the widow typically represents the members of the group.[430] She writes, the "tendency to see widows as representative of all unmarried women is especially problematic since, at any given time in early modern England, never-married women outnumbered widows in the population."[431] This has limited our understanding of never-married women, Froide argues, as it "misrepresent[s] how contemporaries in early modern England viewed women of different marital states."[432] The key difference is a matter of kinship: "widows had a public and independent place within the patriarchal society; never-married women did not."[433] Widows, in other words, "enjoyed a sanctioned social role."[434] Central to Froide's research on single women is the call to see marital status as a "category of difference."[435] She writes, "women's historians have long acknowledged the differences of gender, have become comfortable examining the differences of class, and more recently have become attuned to differences in race and sexuality, but we have not fully explored one of the critical differences between women—that of marital status."[436] The threat never-married women allegedly posed to national and patriarchal models of womanhood marks them as both abnormal and dangerous, and specifically as a result of their relationship to norms of gender and sexuality. The distinction between married and unmarried

women that Froide explores indicates that in the absence of marriage, and outside of the convent, women were forced to navigate a complicated set of social norms to explain their desire for a single life. Clarissa frames her longing for a single life within social norms, citing feminine virtue and propriety as key to happiness, but the affective experience of this longing lends itself to a queer reading.

Read as a narrative of trauma, *Clarissa* provides readers with a representation of the emotional impact of rape, perhaps most obviously. I am interested here in considering the novel as a response to what Cvetkovich calls "socially produced trauma."[437] Social traumas, Cvetkovich notes, "are only visible within the intimacies of sexual and emotional lives."[438] Unlike violence from "visible or punctual events," social trauma "can be understood as sign or symptom of a broader systemic problem, a moment in which abstract social systems can actually be felt or sensed."[439] Through the intimacy of the epistolary novel, *Clarissa* allows readers to see "the affective nature of everyday experiences of systemic violence."[440] Cvetkovich's "archive of feeling" provides an alternative frame for connections between the past and present, a frame that seeks out shared feelings rather than shared acts or identities. Both affect and trauma are, to use Dinshaw's words, "enabling concepts."[441] They allow us to locate *Clarissa* in queer history, but perhaps more significantly, they have notable implications for our understanding of the representation of what we have come to understand by categories like "sex," "gender," and "sexuality."

In *The Rape of Clarissa*, Eagleton seeks "retroactive significance" in *Clarissa* "so that […] we may better read the signs of our own times."[442] In spite of Richardson's seemingly conservative intent, Eagleton surveys the "genuinely subversive effects of *Clarissa*."[443] Of particular note, he contends that Richardson's work destabilizes privileged, patriarchal notions of

family. He writes, "*Within* his novels, to be sure, *family* has its usual designation, as the central apparatus of patriarchal society. But the sense of *family* which produces those fictions undermines, in however modest and implicit a form, that privileged meaning."[444] Eagleton continues, "what [Richardson] thereby fashions as a social form is also a kind of alternative to the patriarchal family, in which what counts is neither 'blood' nor sexual property but acumen and sensibility."[445] This ushers in, as others have noted, "the feminization of discourse"—a process that "prolongs the fetishizing of women at the same time as it lends them a more authoritative voice."[446]

The following chapter will discuss this process in greater detail, and in particular through the cult of sensibility, but here I want to highlight the peculiarity of Richardson's effort. It should not go unnoticed that the model of a new kind of love, and the revision of an older model of kinship and family, is articulated through Clarissa and Anna's friendship. It is an idealized relation, one that fails; it is also a sexless union.

Unlike the butch (or passing) lesbian, feminine women who reject marriage or sex acquire the status of the prude.[447] Instead of looking at the pathological title handed to women who attempt to create lives outside of patriarchal models of family, I am suggesting that we look elsewhere, at an "archive of feeling" that can enable us to locate otherwise invisible queer femme subjects. Looking for trauma, and a specifically queer femme trauma—a representation of the rejection of a subject who is characterized as a paragon of feminine virtue, but for her desires—allows us to bring into view a felt experience that is seldom recorded within the queer archive.

4.0 STERNE'S SENTIMENTAL TEMPTATIONS

"For no one who wholeheartedly shares in a given sensibility can analyze it; he can only, whatever his intention, exhibit it. To name a sensibility, to draw its contours and to recount its history, requires a deep sympathy modified by repulsion."

—Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp"

"Upon the whole, remember what is true life and what is false; and that as all life is fancy, or a certain motion, course, and process of fancies, the business is to know what kind of course, what exercise this is; whether a regular march and orderly procedure in time, measure, and proportion, as when the fancies are led and governed by rule; or whether it be a jumble and hubbub, as when the fancies lead and govern without rule; a mind and will making these to be its subjects, or these a mind and will; a man governing fancies or fancies a man. One of these two is necessary; either that a man exercise these, or these him; either the mind working upon the fancies, or fancies governing the work of the mind, and (as people say) making work with it."

—Antony, Earl of Shaftesbury, "Life"

In the previous chapter, I explored how Clarissa's knowledge of and longing for an alternative model of life, and particularly, a life outside of traditional heterosexual marriage relations, fed her madness. Clarissa's *knowingness*, her awareness of an alternative mode of life, in other words, left her unfit for the callous, mercenary relations of patriarchal domesticity. In many ways, Clarissa exemplifies the supreme sentimental figure. Characterized as she is by her inflexible virtue, Clarissa is willing to die to protect her values. But critics—both eighteenth-century and contemporary—disagree on how to read *Clarissa*. The immediacy of the epistolary form invites us to recognize Clarissa as a *feeling* person, and thus as free of rhetoric and design. Crucially, like the heroine of Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), a maiden must also always appear disinterested. Any hint of design renders her, and her commitment to virtue, suspect. As Scott Paul Jordan argues in "Disinterested Selves: *Clarissa* and the Tactics of Sentiment," eighteenth-century readers accused Pamela *and* Richardson of manipulating readers through an insincere commitment to virtue; "like Pamela, [Richardson] cloaks his texts in virtue only to further his interests, to seduce his readers and to snare a healthy reward."[448]

Like Richardson, Laurence Sterne was accused of veiling vice with virtue.[449] The scandal that quickly followed the 1759 publication of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* surpassed that of the *Pamela* scandal twenty years before. Sterne continued his infamous blend of bawdiness and morality in *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, published in 1767. The narrative follows the seemingly purposeless excursions of Yorick, Sterne's narrator, who self identifies as a "sentimental" traveler. The title of the narrative along with Yorick's self-definition aligns the text with the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility. If the novel, as Samuel Johnson claimed in 1750, offered "lectures of conduct, and introductions to life," the sentimental novel taught readers how to *feel* about life.[450] Sterne, well known to mingle "good and bad

qualities in [his] principal personages," to use Johnson's words, offers a similar mixture of polarized qualities in *A Sentimental Journey*: sentiment and sarcasm.[451] Sterne's physical features, according to one critic, mirrored the blending of qualities in his written work: "We are well acquainted with Sterne's features and personal appearance, to which he himself frequently alludes. He was tall and thin, with a hectic and consumptive appearance. His features, though capable of expressing with peculiar effect the sentimental emotions by which he was often affected, has also a shrewd, humorous, and sarcastic expression, proper to the wit and satirist."[452] This blend of attributes, which is also present in Yorick's performance of gender, makes it a challenge to decide what values the text is committed to.

In particular, Sterne's lack of commitment to the tenets of sentimentality—present in his ability to mock and praise the individual capacity to feel, and more precisely, in his satirical reading of the new ideological imperative to have and to showcase deep, sentimental feelings—remains as one of the central challenges for readings of *A Sentimental Journey*.[453] This chapter offers an analysis of how Yorick negotiates popular discourses of sensibility through parody and ambivalence. I argue that the profound ambivalence that Yorick portrays towards the lifestyle expectations of the sentimental man, and particularly, the imperative to use the language of sensibility to explain, condone, and elevate sexual longings, displays not only the possible attempt to veil vice with virtue but also a response to the cultural expectations laid out by sensibility. Through this consideration of Sterne's portrayal of the principles of sensibility, I demonstrate how conceptions of sensibility participated in the establishment of what we might now call the middle class, and helped to solidify sensibility as a quality—though influenced by both biology and culture—that became the property of a select class.

Because the source of sensibility is both material and mysterious—it is seemingly visceral and it is also a quality that only some are able to feel and recognize—it retains a slipperiness that allows it to participate in the development of an understanding of bourgeois status as both inherent and cultural. Sensibility *as a sensibility* thus becomes impenetrable: it at once upholds systems of value that see the body as the origin of worth, and it protects itself from feigned or acculturated demonstrations of status through its obscure, not quite quantifiable origins. Given that this depiction of the relationship between sensibility and class is a familiar one, and because this way of identifying and stabilizing the bourgeoisie characterizes present measures to draw lines between individuals, Sterne's text invites us to think about our current understandings of the relationship between sensibility and identity. To explore this, I turn to camp sensibility, and the discussions that followed Susan Sontag's "Notes on Camp." Though Sterne's novel could be read as camp, my purpose here is to raise questions about our attachments to camp sensibility, and more specifically, our attachments to camp sensibility as a gay sensibility with similarly obscured qualifications and origins. Queer sensibilities, like camp, provide marginalized people with a collective "essence"—a shared belief in a fundamental nature that separates and elevates members of the group. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the significance of Sterne's representation of Yorick's submerged sexual desire as a performative response—as a measure to veil lasciviousness with gentlemanly urges—and to examine the political implications for our own understandings of sensibility through a reading of the text as camp.

I approach this reading via Sontag's "Notes on Camp," and Moe Meyer's reading of Sontag, in which Meyer challenges Sontag's description of camp as apolitical, as well as her role in the general evacuation of gay identity from the notion of camp in common usage. In Sontag's

words from the above epigraph, Yorick's inability to "wholeheartedly share[ ] in a given sensibility" positions him as an astute critic. What he portrays, I argue, is a mixture of appreciation and contempt, or "sympathy" and "revulsion," that indicates his awareness of himself as a discursively constructed man. He is, in the words of Shaftesbury, trapped between two possibilities: "a man governing fancies or fancies a man." Like Clarissa's queer longing, Yorick longs for pleasures, a longing provoked by the simple pleasures he witnesses others partake in on his travels abroad. What emerges from this longing is a critique of the dictates of sensibility that urge men to interpret the sensations of the body through the elevated language of sentiment.

Of course, to claim that Yorick harbors a deep ambivalence about this emergent model of sentimental masculinity, and further, to claim that through this ambivalence he offers a parody of the discursively constructed rules that entrap middling-sort men is not to claim that he is only and always oppressed by the cult of sensibility. In fact, because Yorick establishes his difference through working, rustic subjects in a way that fixes their characters as noticeably less self aware, and happy with their lot in life, he participates in a larger conversation about the ethics of inequality, service, and slavery. Sarah Scott offers an analogous reading of enslavement in *The Man of Real Sensibility; or the History of Sir George Ellison* in which she makes a strong case for the benevolent patriarch as the ideal father figure of slavery. I bring Scott into this conversation briefly here not only because she portrays the dangerous side of sensibility, but also because her representation of "real sensibility" produces a narrative that can be read as a literal, corrective reading of sentimental figures that mask imperialistic agendas with whimsical tales of sensible men. Scott's man of real sensibility, unlike Yorick, does not mask the material benefits of sensibility with whim and wit. Ellison's story, though advocating for the more humane

treatment of slaves, teaches readers how to gain more labor and loyalty from one's "objects" of care. Scott's narrative straddles the border between earnest sentiment and camp. Read straight, Ellison represents a man notably without the affectation of sensibility that Sterne's Yorick clearly presents; he is a *real* man, of *real* sensibility, whose benevolence is visible in his actions. Read as camp, Ellison draws attention to the real benefits of this benevolence, exposing the relationship between discourses of sensibility and improved wealth.

Importantly, unlike Clarissa who *must* portray unaffected virtue, Yorick's performance of sentiment, along with the behavior of the sensible man in general, can be read as performative—and as a deceptive practice—but the materiality of his privilege is left intact. What we see in Sterne is an attention to the fabrication of identity, a pre-Foucauldian awareness of the impact of bio-power on the intimate details of life and lifestyle that mirrors existing assumptions that characterize the privileged (or sensible) individual with flexible, less inherent behavioral habits and tastes. Further, by this formula, only some of us can understand ourselves as constructed and malleable; the rest are innocent dupes of popular modes of conduct. More than a way of being, Yorick showcases a way of seeing, an awareness of the world that is routinely assumed to belong to a specific class of people. Camp sensibility refers to a similar way of seeing that is only available to select individuals, a view of the world, as Meyer argues, not available to straight people. While I am aware of, and quite committed to, theories of situated knowledge, I want to put pressure on widely held beliefs that have prolonged boundaries between individuals via an uncritical use of situated knowledge (or perhaps more apt, cultural essentialism). More succinctly, Sterne's narrative raises significant questions about the effects of attributing a certain type of knowingness to what we now know as class and sexuality.

In the following section, I discuss Sterne's representation of class and sentiment, focusing on how the novel offers both a veneration and critique of discourses of sensibility. I argue that the novel demonstrates a rather familiar ambivalence about categories of identity. Sensibility offered new ways of fashioning an identity, but it also left individuals with a new set of social and emotional expectations. Sterne represents this dilemma of social categories through Yorick's importunate descriptions of his inner experience—offered to substantiate his status as a sentimental traveler. However, in addition to exhibiting his status through sentiments, Yorick relishes the simplicity and plainness of the emotions showcased by the rural and less fortunate people he meets during his time in France. What this provides is a glimpse of the excess of sensibility, excess that offers a critique of sensibility, and allows for an interpretation of Sterne's text through the discourses of camp. The concluding section explores this camp possibility in Sterne with an eye to what we might learn about our current ways of defining and understanding sensibility.

4.1 SEX, CLASS, AND SENTIMENT

Yorick's self-reflection and self-indulgence, present in his continued attention to his private actions, feelings, and thoughts, offer instruction: how to travel without squandering the lessons to be learned abroad. Frequently understood as an interim, educative time of travel for young gentlemen, the Grand Tour operated as a means to cultivate taste and thus as a means to foster cultural hegemony.[454] While the Tour was commonly taken for improvement, it also offered the opportunity to showcase an already established superiority made visible through conspicuous consumption. As well, the Tour provided an occasion to explore love abroad, as

Yorick's narration of his amatory relations reveal. Sterne's *Journey* combines these two trends in travel narratives—the exhibition of taste and the prospect of erotic encounters abroad—establishing taste via erotic choices and behaviors. Yorick, the sentimental traveler who narrates *how to* take a sentimental journey, exhibits his excellent taste through his capacity—or perhaps more aptly his compulsion—to exhaustively explore and explicate the physical and emotional impact of his encounters. This seemingly constitutional urge to talk about experiences sentimentally demonstrates Yorick's elevated state. Thus *A Sentimental Journey* exhibits what excellent taste looks like; and significantly, Yorick's objects of consumption—the desired objects through which he demonstrates this superior sensibility—are women, not material possessions.

Literary discourses on sensibility critiqued the existing class structure of the eighteenth-century through a revision of what defines and constitutes individual worth. As Robert Markley has argued, "sentiment [ ] represents the bourgeois usurpation of and accommodation to what formerly had been considered aristocratic prerogatives."[455] In eighteenth-century literature, the space where this challenge is dramatized, the sentimental turn shows the slow movement away from aristocratic models of worth. This meant the gradual erosion of classifications that equate value with inborn and inherited traits. Sensibility helped to create an alternative system of individual worth that was founded in beliefs in the establishment and demonstration of benevolence, taste, and feeling—or the capacity to have feelings for others.

Sterne's representation of the shift from blood to conduct as an index of value supports Michel Foucault's claim in the *History of Sexuality, Volume One* that by the mid-eighteenth century the "bourgeoisie's 'blood' was its sex."[456] Foucault's discussion of the deployment of sexuality—and more precisely, the strategic use of sexuality in the self-affirmation of the

bourgeoisie—speaks to the relationship between sensibility and the establishment of an alternative model of value in the eighteenth century. As Foucault's account tells us, sexuality was created by and through scientific and authoritative discourses that legitimized sexuality as a "truth" of subjectivity. The creation of this sexual "truth" led to the development of a self-disciplining middle class, a class that willfully subjected itself to a set of norms and values in the interest of self-affirmation. This process, Foucault argues, "invented a different kind of pleasure," a pleasure found in the processes of seeking out, and speaking of, sexual desires.[457] Sensibility, like sexuality, established rank, and it also justified the speaking of desires through the promise of the betterment of self and society. Foucault names the demand to find and flush out desire an injunction; the cult of sensibility developed its own injunctions—the demand to feel, and to express feeling, so as to demonstrate individual worth—and this injunction had similar benefits and pleasures as those presented by sexuality.

Sensibility, then, held out the promise of an alternative definition of value by locating worth in conduct, public displays of feeling, and goodwill, and it offered a means to explore the positive attributes of physical and often sensual feelings through literature.[458] This focus on the individual and his or her capacity to do good, though seemingly more democratic than an inflexible, aristocratic understanding of value, still clung to theories of inborn value as *real* sensibility was imagined as a physiological response to one's surroundings. Though conceptualized as something one aspires to through a determined commitment to cultivating sensibility and a willful control of the self, eighteenth-century understandings of sensibility were largely materialist, locating feeling, or the capacity to feel, in the body and its nerves. This particular formula for deducing value has a familiar effect: it authenticates the middle class while offering an illusion of a permeable class system, an illusion that attempts to absolve new

members of a dominant class from widespread class injustices. This exoneration is furthered by public displays of sympathy for the poor performed by members of this newly recognizable class.

Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded*, represents one of the more infamous literary examples of this ongoing challenge to aristocratic systems of value. Pamela, a lowborn servant, repeatedly resists the seductive tactics of her master, Mr. B. After demonstrating her virtue through her resistance, and through her disinterest in advancing her rank—a disinterest that is, in fact, a prerequisite of her mobility—Mr. B "rewards" her virtue with a marriage proposal. Richardson's tale of upward mobility is a familiar one. Like contemporary films about interclass relations, *Pamela* tells a story of transformation in the contact zone between ranks.[459] Readers encounter a lowborn, helpless servant whose life is seemingly transformed by a privileged subject; however, as the narrative slowly reveals, the privileged character is, in fact, rescued by the lowborn. While this redefining of value unfolds in a narrative that clings to strict codes of gender and virtue, the critique of class that it offers should not go unnoticed. As Nancy Armstrong argues in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Pamela "asserts an alternative form of value to that of [Mr. B's] money and rank."[460] This challenge to an aristocratic value system is furthered by Pamela's capacity to refine the base qualities of her master, Mr. B. Pamela demonstrates this challenge to the aristocracy through her conduct, and she articulates it in her letters. In an exchange between Pamela and a housemaid, Nan, for example, Richardson via Pamela asserts that the "common" can be beautiful: "That's a pretty Sort of a wild Flower that grows yonder, near that Elm, the fifth from us on the left; pray pull it for me. Said [Nan], It is a common Weed. Well, said I, but pull it for me; there are sometimes beautiful Colours in a Weed."[461]

This challenge to aristocratic models of value is notable in sentimental fictions, however, Sterne's representation of the bourgeois citizen on the Tour clearly adheres to a model of rank that prohibits lowborn individuals from developing sensibility and thus elevating their status through the exhibition of a superior state, even through the seemingly egalitarian measures of improvement that the discourses of sensibility provide. Yorick admits to travelling for "knowledge and improvements," but his status as a man of an elevated rank is never in question.[462] His already established rank is key to understanding Sterne's representation of the bourgeois subject. In his prefatory remarks, Yorick clarifies his status by identifying and categorizing a range of travelers, including "Idle Travellers," "Inquisitive Travellers," and "Splenetic Travellers," and places himself in the class of "Sentimental" travelers.[463] The sentimental traveler, as readers slowly discover, has little investment in witnessing and recording the objective qualities of a new land, so readers of Sterne's *Journey* learn little to nothing about France. Instead, Yorick studies the *hearts* of the French.[464] As Yorick explains, by seeing the "*nakedness* of their hearts" he can discern "what is good in them, to fashion [his] own by."[465] This peculiar motive for travel distinguishes Yorick from travel writers who took a nationalistic approach to their time abroad. In fact, Yorick, in his hasty departure from London, forgot that his country was at war with France: "I had left London with so much precipitation, that it never enter'd my mind that we were at war with France."[466] This declaration further separates Yorick from inquisitive travelers, or travelers eager to record details about foreign landscapes or diets.

Sterne's representation of the materiality of sensibility is noticeable in Yorick's description of his servant in France, La Fleur. Excusing his use of another, to a small degree, Yorick agrees to a servant only after his landlord offers to procure him one. His initial encounter with La Fleur highlights Yorick's view of service. Yorick remarks, "I am apt to be taken with all

kinds of people at first sight; but never more so, than when a poor devil comes to offer his service to so poor a devil as myself."[467] Yorick is immediately assured of La Fleur's fidelity—by his landlord's conviction and by his own observation of La Fleur's sincerity—so he accepts the landlord's offer with little knowledge of La Fleur's skills. He notes, "I shall find out his talents, quoth I, as I want them."[468] It is worth looking at the description of La Fleur at length, as the depiction exemplifies the text's representation of rank, and offers a frame for considering the novel's relationship to sensibility. Sterne writes,

> As La Fleur went the whole tour of France and Italy with me, and will be often upon the stage, I must interest the reader a little further in his behalf, by saying, that I had never less reason to repent of the impulses which generally do determine me, than in regard to this fellow—he was a faithful, affectionate, simple soul as ever trudged after the heels of a philosopher; and notwithstanding his talents of drum-beating and spatterdash-making, which, tho' very good in themselves, happen'd to be of no great service to me, yet was I hourly recompenced by the festivity of his temper—it supplied all defects—I had a constant resource in his looks in all difficulties and distresses of my own—I was going to have added, of his too; but La Fleur was out of the reach of every thing; for whether 'twas hunger or thirst, or cold or nakedness, or watchings, or whatever stripes of ill luck La Fleur met with in our journeyings, there was no index in his physiognomy to point them out by—he was eternally the same.[469]

La Fleur's physiological and emotional consistency stands in stark contrast to Yorick's seemingly constant state of emotional flux. Yorick's body constantly reacts to his

environment—a thought of another's humanity could bring a "suffusion of a finer kind upon [his] cheek" or make him "as weak as a woman."[470] He offers these experiences without analysis, leaving it "to the few who feel to analyse."[471] Those who feel, like the sentimental traveler, presumably recognize the symptoms of sensibility, by Yorick's account, and thus can imagine themselves as members of a collective.

La Fleur's stability marks one of the characteristics of the less fortunate in the text. A second characteristic is simplicity. During their travels, Yorick and La Fleur come upon a man who has lost his ass. Sterne blends comedy with sentiment here, describing the "poor fellow" and his grief with wit: "The ass, he said, he was assured loved him," and when they were separated, "the ass had sought him as much as he had sought the ass."[472] The discussion of this tragic fellow's loss ends with an exclamation from Yorick: "Shame on the world! said I to myself—Did we love each other, as this poor soul loved his ass—'twould be something."[473] Humor aside, what Yorick finds in this man is simple grief and simple love, sentiments to be sure, but unadulterated by the dictates of sensibility. Of course, the glorified or sentimental depiction of rustic simplicity is not peculiar to Sterne. However, read alongside the description of Yorick's experiences and sentiments, the man and his ass, and La Fleur, appear as embodiments of true, or effortless sentiment.

I will return to this idea of effortless sentiment, but first it should be noted that the elevation of simplicity in the text competes with the eroticization of sensibility. When Yorick encounters his first French woman, he is at once hopelessly infatuated, even before he sees her face. He is "certain she [is] of a better order of beings," an assessment made by his heart rather than his understanding.[474] He is given her hand, notes a "pleasurable ductility," and, still before seeing her face, privately ruminates: "Good God! how a man might lead such a creature as this

round the world with him!"[475] Yorick's thoughts upon studying her face draw attention to both the linking of status to sensibility and the erotics of grief: "the muscles relaxed, and I beheld the same unprotected look of distress which first won me to her interest—melancholy! to see such sprightliness the prey of sorrow.—I pitied her from my soul; and though it may seem ridiculous enough to a torpid heart,—I could have taken her into my arms, and cherished her, though it was in the open street, without blushing."[476] This sudden emotion is typical of Yorick, who attributes it to "one of the singular blessings of his life": "to be almost every hour of it in love with someone."[477]

Sterne's contemporaries were quick to point out the thin line between sensibility and sensuality in the text, while others defended his use of sentiment. Ralph Griffiths, the editor of the *Monthly Review*, offers the following assessment of Sterne's *Journey*: "What delicacy of feeling, what tenderness of sentiment, yet what simplicity of expression are here! Is it *possible* that a man of *gross ideas* could ever *write* in a strain so pure, so refined from the dross of sensuality!"[478] In contrast, a 1782 review by Vicesimus Knox blames Sterne for adultery:

> That softness, that affected and excessive sympathy at first sight, that sentimental affection, which is but lust in disguise, and which is so strongly inspired by the Sentimental Journey and by Tristram Shandy, have been the ruin of thousands of our countrymen and countrywomen, who fancied, that while they were breaking the laws of God and man, they were actuated by the fine feelings of sentimental affection. How much are divorces multiplied since Sterne appeared![479]

Significantly, both Knox and Griffiths comment on innocent, or young readers, by speculating on reader reception. Griffiths suggests that an Englishman might indeed be offended by Sterne's works, a reaction he attributes to a "less lively piety."[480] However, unlike the "saturnine Englishman," the "truly innocent" will find edification: "to the native happy complexion of a truly innocent and virtuous mind, cherished and warmed in the sunshine of a more cheerful climate, such natural modes of expressing the grateful hilarity of a good heart, may be far from disagreeable.—O! that there were nothing more justly reprehensible in the effusions of this extraordinary pen!"[481] Griffiths appears torn between two assessments, accusing English readers of finding vice in simple expressions of the heart, and doubting that Sterne's text is, in fact, entirely free of vice—but his analysis mirrors Sterne's representation of rustic simplicity.

Sterne and Griffiths both exhibit nostalgia for an unadulterated relationship to emotions, an admiration that links simplicity to true and effortless sentiment. While Griffiths praises a culture and climate that might produce such a sensibility, and appears to read this purity of thought as an unattainable state longed for by the cosmopolitan writer, Sterne attempts to amend the meaning and use of sentiment through a demonstration of its humane applications. Yorick, as noted, is nearly always in love. Whether man, woman, or object, he takes great pleasure in this quality. Sterne writes, "I declare, said I, clapping my hands chearily together, that was I in a desart, I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affections—if I could not do better, I would fasten them upon some sweet myrtle, or seek some melancholy cypress to connect myself to."[482] This declaration of sentiment is a response to Tobias Smollett's *Letters from France and Italy*, but it also invites the reader to see similarities in desires for people and objects. Yorick pities Smollett—named Smelfungus in the narrative—because he "made the whole tour" but he "travell'd straight on looking neither to his right or his left, lest Love or Pity should seduce him

out of his road."[483] Set in opposition to Yorick's gift of deep affection for all things, those without sentiment are removed from the world and its surroundings, a distance that Yorick connects to the harsh treatment of others. Accordingly, generosity and good will come from the same source as sensuality; an individual prone to pity his or fellow man is also liable to find love. La Fleur is also always in love, and Yorick enthusiastically approves of this, explaining that it will "save [him] the trouble every night of putting my breeches under my head."[484] A man always in love is not a thief.

Yorick's generosity is similarly linked to his passions. Early in his travels, Yorick admits to feeling remorse after refusing to help a monk in Calais. He exclaims, "I considered his grey hairs—his courteous figure seem'd to re-enter and gently ask me what injury he had done me?—and why I could use him thus—I would have given twenty livres for an advocate—I have behaved very ill; said I within myself; but I have only just set out upon my travels; and shall learn better manners as I get along."[485] However, Yorick is not motivated to improve until he sees a woman conversing with the monk and he fears that the monk will speak ill of his conduct. In response, Yorick offers his snuff-box to the monk, contents and all. This gesture highlights the relationship between sensibility and sexual prowess, showing how a particular embodiment of love and sentiment for a fellow man can make a man sexually desirable. Though this exchange mocks the sentimental through the unveiling of his motives, it still supports a central principle: love, even when manifested as erotic temptation, is that which makes us do good. Yorick claims,

> Having been in love with one princess or another almost all my life, and I hope I shall go on so, till I die, being firmly persuaded, that if ever I do a mean action, it must be in

> some interval betwixt one passion and another: whilst this interregnum lasts, I always perceive my heart locked up—I can scarce find in it, to give Misery a sixpence; and therefore I always get out of it as fast as I can, and the moment I am rekindled, I am all generosity and good will again; and would do anything in the world either for, or with any one, of they will but satisfy me there is no sin in it.[486]

Yorick's sentimental temptations are sanctified by the promise they hold out—that he will bring more love and generosity into the world while in such a state of longing and feeling. Praising the "passion" and not himself, Yorick attributes his goodness to a benevolence for all people and things, vowing to "court" or "mourn" nature as quickly as he would greet a woman.[487]

Eighteenth-century and contemporary critics alike offer readings of Sterne's text that are consistent with the critical and cultural preoccupations of their times. Eighteenth-century critics read Sterne's text as a dangerous justification of vice, and as evidence of the seamy side of sensibility. Acknowledging his "powers to explore and touch the finest strings of the human heart," they accused Sterne of promoting sensibility over "religious and moral principle."[488] Refusing to acknowledge Sterne's argument that love—even of the erotic kind—can be the basis of reform, critics frequently saw Sterne's blending of the lewd and the virtuous as self-serving. Indeed, Sterne did little to veil how the tenets of sensibility were used to justify bodily passions, such that the text, in fact, reads like a deliberate attempt to showcase the sexual side of sensibility. However, while playfully avoiding sex as such—in fact, it is never quite clear whether Yorick remains celibate on his tour or not—Yorick is quite committed to the belief that his temptations make him a better man. There is, in other words, little doubt that he is publicizing the belief that erotic love goes hand and hand with humanitarianism.

Contemporary critics, however, have argued that Yorick's unremitting justification of his actions—his chronic use of sentiment to describe and validate his humanity—suggests that he is fretfully attempting to establish his identity. This reading brings to mind a twentieth-century preoccupation with the instability of identity and the putatively subversive consequence of pointing out the great measures we take to stabilize it. By this frame, Yorick's relationship to his status is a precarious one, further visible as unstable through his need to see La Fleur as inherently different from the sensible man. Critics have also paid significant attention to Yorick's gender, some citing his embodiment of both masculine and feminine qualities as evidence of his androgyny. I consider the works of two critics here at length, as they help to clarify how identity is represented in the text. Rebecca Gould, for example, argues that Yorick is a "Male Hysteric." Gould indicates that Yorick is in fact suffering a nervous disorder, but because he does not experience the typical symptoms of hypochondria, she diagnoses him with hysteria. As a result, she writes, "As a male hysteric, Yorick's consciousness and interactions with others are portrayed as simultaneously masculine and feminine."[489] In social interactions, Gould continues, Yorick experiences "confusion between masculine and feminine urges."[490] She reads Yorick's relationship with his valet La Fleur in a similar way, suggesting that his choice in a valet is immediately influenced not only by La Fleur's virility, but also by his own lack. Gould explains,

> Yorick chooses La Fleur upon sight, hoping that La Fleur's virility and masculinity will descend to him, making Yorick, from the start of the relationship, subservient to his valet. In a manner, Yorick pays La Fleur for the use of his masculinity. Thus, Yorick reverses both the typical homosocial and employer-employee relationships by

> playing the submissive role of disciple, hoping to learn from a master of masculinity his own role as a man.[491]

Gould has plenty to say about phallic power, and Yorick's deficiency, describing his performance of masculinity as always wanting, and in fact, impotent. Because of this lack, he borrows La Fleur's "phallic power."[492] Gould briefly remarks on Yorick's position of privilege in this exchange: "Yorick justifies his usage of La Fleur because La Fleur so easily acquires and exchanges women one for another that he feels entitled, not only by virtue of his misery but also by a specific entitlement attached to class position, to borrow some of that masculine power which he lacks."[493]

Gould only occasionally mentions the privileges that Yorick takes as a man with disposable income. Even an impotent man "can enter the world outside the home."[494] But his is a limited entitlement:

> In the company of women, Yorick immediately identifies with them because he is impotent, without the ability to articulate male power. In the homosocial context, Yorick is unable to participate successfully in the sharing of the phallus. He can only borrow, unable to lend. When in the company of both men and women, Yorick's subject position is also feminine because he allows himself to be used instead of doing the using, as exemplified by his experience in Parisian society.[495]

Ultimately, Gould places too much faith in the possibilities that Yorick's gender enacts. She optimistically argues that because Yorick "embraces neither the masculine nor the feminine" he

performs a "shift in traditional definitions of gender."[496] She concludes by restating her argument through Freud:

> According to one theorist, 'Freud links hysteria to bisexuality; the hysteric identifies with members of both sexes, cannot choose one sexual identity'. This partial definition of hysteria applies to Yorick, for it is the simultaneous presence of his exhibition of typically feminine behavior, his identification with the feminine role and object, with his retention of autonomy that defines his character.[497]

Key here is Gould's reading of Yorick's autonomy, which guaranteed Yorick a privileged entitlement that was never at risk. Aside from the passing comments she makes concerning Yorick's right to take as he wishes from La Fleur, Yorick is represented as an oppressed, insufferable figure.

What is missing from Gould's analysis is a thorough reading of class. In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Eve Sedgwick addresses this issue, highlighting Gould's shortcomings. Sedgwick writes, "Although novels like *A Sentimental Journey* and the Gothic spread a glamour of familial pathos over a complicated male strategy for homosocial empowerment, they are also intricately, even appealingly candid about the worldly ties and meanings of their narrators' project. Like psychoanalysis itself: imperialism with a baby face."[498] Sedgwick draws attention to the "ideological use of male 'androgyny'" by identifying Yorick as a "deft broker" of class and gender differences.[499] Whereas Gould sees Yorick's effeminacy as a lack—as a symptom of a nervous disorder—Sedgwick reads his lack of commitment to either masculine or feminine traits as an asset: Yorick "has a free and potentially

manipulative choice of roles, which is displayed as both attractive and somehow renunciatory in relation to the more rigid role assignment of others."[500] By Sedgwick's frame, Gould falls for Yorick's scheme: "the manipulative potential of Yorick's position, even when he exerts and profits by it, is presented to the reader as well as to the other characters as a form of vulnerability and helplessness."[501] Put succinctly, this is a "class/gender strategy."[502]

Sedgwick argues that Sterne's narrative "has (or originally had) a strong, conscious content about class," but this is not necessarily a positive attribute.[503] Sedgwick explains, "the class awareness, acute and crucial as it is, *is* not only bourgeois centered, but based on an aggressive pastoralization of working people."[504] La Fleur's talents are all untaught. His natural inclination towards serving Yorick, and the deep affection between the two men, upholds the logic of the "servant-master bond."[505] Sedgwick spots a crack in Yorick's reason, however: "Yorick's articulateness about the way he thinks of La Fleur—his need to describe and justify, under the guise of celebrating, the particular shape of the bond between them—is, like the very degree of his emotional investment in La Fleur, a sign not of a stable, hereditary, traditional, paternalistic bond to a servant, but of an anxious and ideologically threatened one."[506] Rationalizing a bond through an "ideologizing narrative *about* such a bond," Sedgwick argues, shows the instability of the assumed natural order of things.[507]

I want to return briefly to the conclusion of Gould's analysis where she raises a possibility that I want to pursue further. Gould writes,

> The eighteenth-century notion of sensibility which defines Yorick as a man of feeling places importance on feelings rather than on ideas. With the advent of clinical studies of hysteria in the nineteenth century, hysteria becomes a psychic disease, a disease of

> suggestion which values ideas over feelings. Under these new circumstances, Yorick's sexual dysfunction gains new significance. Perhaps Yorick's dysfunction is a psychosomatically-induced impotence, an ideogenic disorder: Yorick does not feel that he has a phallus (male power), so his phallus ceases to function.[508]

In positing the possibility that Yorick suffers from a psychosomatic disorder, Gould draws attention to the relationship between discourse and experience, and thereby offers a reading of Sterne's text that explores the ways in which sensibility—as a cultish, requisite, performative set of traits—ushered in a new felt experience that primarily impacted what we now call the middle class.

Elizabeth Goodhue offers a similar reading of Sterne's text, arguing that the humor of the account arises from Yorick's failure of completion, a failure that is similar to the impotency described by Gould. In her analysis of the text, she writes, "nothing is funnier about *A Sentimental Journey* than the way self-interrogation and self-interruption prevent Yorick from ever managing to complete a narrative point or complete a transaction with another individual."[509] This is, as Goodhue notes, the irony of the text, as Yorick is practically unable to fully partake in the transactions he describes because he is too preoccupied with describing the wonderful joy he might finally take from his experiences. Whereas Gould sees this as a sign of Yorick's impotence, and Goodhue describes it as comic irony, the representation of Yorick's predicament—an impasse that is made visible in the text through the juxtaposition of Yorick's impotence with the simple, completely satisfying experiences of rural characters in the text—creates another possibility: the discourses of sensibility, those that authenticate Yorick's position in the order of things, contain a set of requirements that, in turn, estrange Yorick from the very

experiences he longs to have. In other words, in order to appear sentimental, Yorick must deny himself the very pleasures that define him. As Goodhue argues, "when Yorick endures his painful, bitter tonic of tears again and again, we find him in the midst of attempting to exercise a kind of self-discipline that amounts to a strangely willful, even neurotic, indulgence in the denial of sweetness and pleasure."[510] The relationship that Goodhue describes here calls to mind Foucault's analytics of power; Yorick applies the discourses of sensibility to his conduct, and this process enables and disciplines a new "personage": the man of feeling.[511]

Sensibility developed into a kind of social currency during the eighteenth century that both legitimized members of a yet defined group, and critiqued a model of value that marked blood and lineage as the sole indicators of worth. While sensibility emerges as a way to challenge the seemingly immutable lines of value drawn by a birth-equals-worth model of rank, Sterne's representation of Yorick's persistent, seemingly neurotic need to demonstrate that he is feeling sentimentally draws attention to the relationship between discourse and subjectivity. Further, because Yorick's feelings are frequently submerged sexual longings expressed in the language of sensibility, *A Sentimental Journey* offers an illustration of how community standards shape the experience of sexuality.

Through Yorick's ambivalence, Sterne's *Journey* demonstrates how the cult of sensibility both defined and restrained those aspiring to meet the demands of a newly formed identity. Sterne captures the ambivalence of this compromise through Yorick's obedience to what became an obligatory way of feeling. Yorick's struggle to feel within this paradigm is announced early in *A Sentimental Journey*. He claims to travel for improvement, keeping with the assumption that we can develop and polish "the ebbs and flows of our humours." He yearns to refine, indeed is obliged to refine, his sensibility, as defined by Samuel Johnson, his "quickness of sensation;

quickness of perception; delicacy."[512] His sense of obligation—his desire for improvement—comes from shame: a "sheepish inferiority" experienced in the presence of those "of a better order of being."[513] Travel offers such an opportunity to polish individual responses, brought about by various "collisions" with others in the world, like the Paris shopkeepers who Yorick claims have, "like so many rough pebbles in a bag," "worn down their asperities and sharp angles, and not only become round and smooth, but will receive, some of them, a polish like a brilliant"—like diamonds—via "a continual haggling with customers of all ranks and sizes from morning to night."[514]

But significantly, the polish Yorick seeks to display is different from urbanity, or what we might call the civility of a cultured man. Which is to say it is distinguished from the dullness of response that comes from too many collisions of a middling sort, of a shopkeeper's sort, that renders one so "worn down" that the individual becomes "little better than the stone under your foot," as Yorick sees the husband of a beautiful shopkeeper.[515] This dullness of response offers further insight into Yorick's description of La Fleur, who, having little knowledge and improvement, and fewer occasions to wear down his spirits by urban experience, exhibits a similarly untouchable temper. He was, as noted, "out of the reach of every thing," by Sterne's description.[516] Both the shopkeeper and La Fleur offer examples of impulses—partially acculturated and partially constitutional—that bring Yorick's elevated state into view. The sentimental man, embodied in Yorick, suffers his responses. Unlike La Fleur, perpetually unscathed, and unlike the shopkeeper, polished to dullness, a man with sensibility would have, like Yorick, "counted twenty pulsations" and be "fast towards the fortieth" before an encounter, while the servant or the shopkeeper, for their simple or dulled perceptions, would fail to feel a single stress on their respective tempers under similar conditions.[517]

This is a way to navigate the competing ideas of nature and nurture, either of which could challenge what Sterne proposes as possible: the refinement of sensibility via the collisions of travel and the innate moral superiority of a specific type of traveler, or the already sentimental "traveler."[518] La Fleur's eternal sameness gives Yorick reason to "repent" his own "impulses," those that "determine" him.[519] His ability to withstand hunger, thirst, and cold, or Yorick's impression of this capacity, justifies his lot in life. As Rousseau has argued, "nerves fed directly into the aims of empire and colonialism."[520] Witnessing La Fleur dress gallantly on a Sunday, hoping to spend time with a female acquaintance, incites Yorick's sympathy for the "sons and daughters of service," but La Fleur's impulses, by Yorick's estimation, are fundamentally different.[521] Yorick, chronically distressed, is "hourly" soothed "by the festivity of [La Fleur's] temper," a temper that distinguishes the two men, negating the cultures of improvement that suggest that any man can improve his state, and accounting for their respective ranks.[522]

Here, Sterne establishes the perceived differences between those with an inherent capacity for sensibility and those without it. Yorick, knowing himself of a higher order, is subject to a way of loving and feeling that La Fleur simply is not. As Katherine Turner notes, "physical susceptibility distinguished middle-class men from the sexual rapaciousness and fondness for bloodsports of the aristocracy on the one hand, and the bestial insensitivity of the working class on the other," enabling chauvinism, but also creating an imperative that leaves Yorick, as "weak as a woman," in his words, always about to burst into tears instead of fulfilling his desires.[523] Yorick mocks the simplicity and contentment that he finds in laboring men, like the man he passes along the road who is weeping over his "ass" with a plainness that excites Yorick, but his own imperative—to return to a kind of love typified by the "golden age" where

"Friendship and Virtue met together"—leaves Yorick always outside of the experience he most desperately wants his readers to believe he feels.[524]

The study of the relationship between community standards and feeling, like the one offered in *A Sentimental Journey*, acknowledges that communities set standards and thereby create normative expressions of emotion and sexual desire. Whether true to their promises or not, models of sensibility pledge endless fruits: health, happiness, respectability, and spiritual salvation. Theories and methods of improvement circulating in eighteenth-century Britain result in a steady preoccupation with self-improvement.[525] This culture of improvement influenced understandings of emotion, lending credence to the belief that one could learn to *feel* properly for cultural rewards. Sterne's characterization of Yorick shows the sustained effort to translate bodily urges into productive sentimental temptations, a battle that renders Yorick's desires as always inchoate—somehow better than the simple love between a man and his ass, but always imperfectly formed. He shows, then, a compulsive self-reflection conditioned by paradigmatic models of feeling established by sensibility.

Thinking more broadly about discourse, identity, and subjectivity, Sterne's *Journey* allows readers to see the lived experience of a way of thinking about the construction of the self that began well before Yorick's literary travels. Faced with a growing self-consciousness about how one *feels*, Yorick seeks constant affirmation, repeatedly explaining his impulses through the language of sensibility. This process reestablishes Yorick's gentility, offering a new category for understanding and affirming the self. It also creates a new channel for sexual pleasure. In addition, the text captures a restlessness—a neurosis—that shows the compulsory side of sensibility. Perhaps Yorick indulges in love, but never without a certain ideological imperative in mind. Sterne's ambivalent representation of love, visible in Yorick's struggle to frame his

bodily responses with virtuous intent, offers a glimpse of the injunctions produced by the cult of sensibility.

4.2 CAMP AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SENSIBILITY

I conclude this chapter with some speculations on camp sensibility for two reasons. First, recognizing Sterne's representation of Yorick's ambivalent performance of sensibility as camp offers a frame for understanding the depiction of sex, class, and sentiment in *A Sentimental Journey*. Further, reading Sterne's portrayal of excessive feeling as a camp affect highlights Sterne's use of excess, and allows us to see how it participates in a larger conversation about acts, identities, and performance. Second, I raise questions about how we define queer sensibility in the present through the debates over camp that circulated after the publication of Sontag's "Notes on Camp." I begin by highlighting the characteristics of camp, as defined by Sontag and Meyer, to demonstrate the shared qualities between twentieth-century articulations of camp and eighteenth-century understandings of sensibility. As sensibilities, camp and sensibility share characteristics: they both identify people with a heightened receptivity that structures the way they experience the world, and this heightened sensibility is significantly shaped by class. While eighteenth-century understandings of sensibility unapologetically display an investment in class, camp sensibility, and queer parody refers to a set of methods that seek to disrupt accepted understandings of class and sexuality.

In her introductory comments to "Notes on Camp," Sontag makes a critical clarification: "Though I am speaking about sensibility only—and about a sensibility that, among other things, converts the serious into the frivolous—these are grave matters."[526] Our sensibilities, otherwise

referred to as tastes by Sontag, are frequently understood as "mysterious attractions" that inflect our responses to people and art.[527] The common parlance "it's just a matter of taste" points to the presumably trivial impact of our unique and inexplicable leanings. However, Sontag writes, "taste governs every free—as opposed to rote—human response. Nothing is more decisive."[528] As prominent as taste is, camp taste, or camp sensibility, is *nearly* impossible to define.[529] Our individual qualities, whether improvable or not—what can be captured by the term sensibility—are similar to what we might call taste. Taste, in Sontag's words, is result of a "consistent sensibility."[530]

Sontag's definition of camp sensibility brings Yorick's understanding of "humours" to mind as she defines it as similarly inscrutable, "almost, but not quite, ineffable."[531] When sensibility is definable, or systematized and recognizable through "rough tools of proof," "it has hardened into an idea."[532] The act of defining a sensibility, for both Sontag and Sterne, is best accomplished through "jottings." Sontag writes, "The form of jottings, rather than an essay (with its claim to a linear, consecutive argument), seemed more appropriate for getting down something of this particular fugitive sensibility."[533] Sterne's speculations on sensibility in *A Sentimental Journey* are also jottings. Yorick's travel anecdotes capture feelings in an attempt to explore both the physiology of sentiment and the worldly benefits of erotic desire. Yorick is repeatedly interrupted by his own sensations, much like his creator, Sterne, who was suffering from consumption while writing his book. But perhaps what is most camp about Sterne's text is the distance between Yorick and his experiences, a distance generated through the injunction to experience the world sentimentally. The following definition of camp from Sontag speaks to this: "Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It's not a lamp, but a 'lamp'; not a woman, but a

'woman'. To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater."[534]

Further, Yorick's analysis of the relationship between sensibility and conduct exhibits an understanding of the relationship between agency and sensibility that is akin to Sontag's. When readers first meet Yorick, he has spontaneously decided to travel to France to "look into" an issue that he has learned the French more successfully manage.[535] In Yorick's understanding of human action, "humours" replace taste as the mysterious cause of our individual choices, attractions, and desires. After arriving, dining, and some speculating on the French "race," Yorick narrates one of his initial encounters, an exchange with the monk. He was, as he explains, "predetermined not to give [the monk] a single sous," and is attempting to account for this lack of generosity with his thoughts on our "humours," stating, "there is no regular reasoning upon the ebbs and flows of our humours; they may depend upon the same causes, for ought I know, which influence the tides themselves."[536] While invested in portraying "humours" as mysterious and unknowable, Yorick also notes the benefits of reading ourselves in this manner: "'twould oft be no discredit to us, to suppose it was so," he notes, "than have it pass altogether as my own act and deed, wherein there was so much of both."[537] Here Sterne considers the use of interpreting our inclinations as purely conditioned by unknowable "humours"—a theory of human action that fully exonerates individuals for their conduct—versus the reality of human "act and deed."[538] Through Yorick's travels readers learn that our conduct, though strongly influenced by enigmatic bodily responses, if not fully determined by these "humours," can and should be improved by the individual. This, he notes, is one of the central reasons for travel abroad.

The paradigm of sensibility, like that of sexual identity, invites a reflection on the nature of the self. As the newly emerging bourgeoisie attempted to define itself against an aristocratic class accused of employing empty, performative gestures, they faced a key conundrum. Theories of sensibility claimed that conduct, and more particularly, the allegedly uncontrollable gestures, emotions, and feelings that arise from an innate sensibility, demonstrated cultural value and legitimized individuals as members of a new class. To pass as a member of the bourgeoisie, to become visible as a member of this group, individuals were required to make the inner, core aspects of their identity evident through the actions and feelings of the body *without* revealing these actions as performative or excessive.[539] For this reason, sensibility is particularly available to queer readings. Camp exists and becomes visible through excess, and this excess offers the potential for a critique of a stable, knowable self. The discourses of sensibility invite a similar critique, particularly as they ask readers to identify the difference between real and fake sentiment. Much like camp, it is easy to read exceedingly earnest expressions of sensibility as camp.[540]

In "Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp," Meyer accuses Sontag of making camp "safe for public consumption."[541] In Sontag's account, camp's status as a "homosexual discourse" is nearly erased.[542] Consequently, camp is depoliticized and "irony, satire, burlesque and travesty" are mistakenly read as camp.[543] His text is a passionate call to restore and reclaim camp, embellished with strong accusations: appropriations of camp that are not invested in gay politics and visibility are "dehumanizing"; they represent the "heterosexual/Pop colonization of gay discourse and praxis."[544] In short, Meyer seeks to correct a long history of camp appropriations, misuses he argues were enabled by Sontag's 1964 essay, and to assert the following: "Camp was and still is a solely gay discourse and that it is only as a gay cultural expression that Camp can be

understood."[545] In Meyer's definition, camp is "the total body of performative practices used to enact gay identity, with enactment defined as the production of social visibility. Gay identity is performative, discontinuous, and processually constituted by repetitive and stylized acts marked by the deployment of specific signifying codes, the sum of which I am calling Camp."[546]

I do not intend to defend or dispute Meyer. In fact, his critical call to reclaim camp raises questions about the appropriation of camp, and speaks to a wider concern about the potential risks of opening up critical categories that have historically served to combat social injustices. It is with ambivalence, then, that I apply camp to Sterne's text. I draw attention to Meyer's account of the vexed history of the term camp in order to acknowledge camp's queer history, and to explore the critical possibilities and shortcomings of reading literary representations of exaggerated performances of sensibility as camp, or more precisely, as queer parody. The relationship that discourses of sensibility established between class, performance, and identity makes the demonstration of sensibility particularly open to queer readings. But importantly, like the term "queer," appropriations of camp have arguably diminished its critical use. To explore the risk of appropriation—or misuse—I ask the following: how do we read representations of self-reflexive and performative identities that use performance as a way to maintain, rather than queer, the status quo? Do exaggerated performances of identity always present queer possibilities? Should we, or how might we, contextualize performativity and parody as indicative of a shared sensibility that might be, in fact, an un-queer bourgeois tactic rather than a queer strategy?

The classification of performativity as a queer tactic masks the regular, and often flagrant use of performance to buttress the status quo. Parody for conservative ends, if and when it might be recognized as subversive in some manifest way, must then be recognized as accidently queer.

By this assessment, unintended queer readings of identity offer evidence of the instability of identity, and this proof of instability is further substantiated because it is seemingly unconscious. Meyer identifies uses of camp that serve conservative ends as camp traces, while others have referred to this use as "het camp."[547]

On one side of the binary is the self-aware, performative bourgeois individual, and on the other, the sincere and earnest rustic type. This first figure is associated with an affected relationship to class that must also appear natural so as to uphold the bourgeois critique of aristocratic airs. Whether conscious or not, bourgeois affect is marked by a need to demonstrate an interiority via taste and conduct. For this reason, it is understood as intentional, if not ostentatious. The artificiality of the bourgeoisie is brought into view through the simplicity of the laboring class in the same way that the allegedly authentic airs of the bourgeois display the artifice of the aristocracy. Of course, the poor and rustic are not always exempt from the use of artifice, nor are the middling-sort entirely incapable of sincerity. The perceived sincerity of Clarissa is, perhaps, Richardson's greatest literary accomplishment. Yet class dramatically shapes how we read performativity and sincerity. One only has to look at Henry Fielding and Eliza Haywood's adaptations of Richardson's *Pamela* to see that lowborn performativity is less affect and innuendo than material necessity. Likewise, bourgeois sincerity is always at risk of being read as pure camp for displaying an earnestness about life and conduct that fails to match the blithe spirit of the always already bourgeoisie.

While Sterne might trouble some of his readers' faith in a stable identity through the affected performance of sensibility, accepting this assessment without a critical analysis of privilege necessarily forgets that power influences who can challenge the boundaries of identity. As an aesthetic that is broadly recognized as failed sincerity, camp is used as a tool for

recognizing cultural principles. When the masquerade fails, the performance comes into view. The performance of cultural ideologies must always be underpinned by seriousness in order to be camp, and they must always be performed self-consciously. Yorick's performance of bourgeois pretensions offers a camp demonstration of the inherently performative nature of class, but his acute awareness of the world he travels, together with his responsiveness to his environment, in fact bolsters his identity rather than unsettles it. What Yorick's performance brings into view, then, is the utter stability of rank. His relationship to the norms established via sensibility is an ambivalent one, demonstrated by his willingness to adapt to the customs that he transgresses through satire. Indeed, as a queer aesthetic, camp responded to real social traumas. But the wedding of the performative to queer has encouraged us to see the awareness of the self as an identity that is held together only through mimetic acts as a *queer* awareness. While queer is recognized as a critique of bourgeois models of respectability, the awareness of performativity is also wedded to a bourgeois understanding of the self. Sterne's Yorick depicts the inherently performative nature of class, a depiction that invites us to consider the queer implications of the text. However, the text illustrates the limits of performance as a queer, or unsettling tactic by tying self-conscious activities to *real* sensibility.

NOTES

[1] Jeffrey Weeks, *The Languages of Sexuality*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 87-88.

[2] J. Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 98-99.

[3] Ibid., 99.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 100.

[6] Ibid. The idea of "species" that I am addressing here is attributed to Foucault. In his *History of Sexuality*, he describes the long transformation from sodomitical acts to homosexual identity, a process that resulted in the so-called birth of the homosexual around 1892. Tying affect to sexual identity sidesteps the problematic conceptualization of sexuality as a truth about identity.

[7] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality Volume Two* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 3.

[8] Leo Bersani explains Foucault's project as such: "It is the original thesis of [*The History of Sexuality, Volume I*] that power in our societies functions primarily not by repressing spontaneous sexual drives but by producing multiple sexualities, and that through the classification, distribution, and moral rating of those sexualities the individuals practicing them can be approved, treated, marginalized, sequestered, disciplined, or normalized." Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 81.

[9] Jeffrey Weeks, *The Langauges of Sexuality*, 199

[10] Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture and Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9.

[11] Rictor Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity* (London: Cassell, 1997), 26.

[12] This includes queer people in the present.

[13] David Halperin, *How to do the History of Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 28-29.

[14] Michael McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28 (1995): 295-322.

[15] Ibid., 301.

[16] I am admittedly ambivalent about the use of sexual identities, and much of my ambivalence stems from the reformulations of identity that surfaced during the late twentieth century. Leo Bersani's *Homos* offers a reading of the impact of these changes that accurately captures my relationship to the varying ways that sexual identities have been conceptualized. He writes, "The elaborating of certain erotic preferences into a 'character'—into a kind of erotically determined essences—can never be a disinterested scientific enterprise. The attempted stabilizing of identity is inherently a disciplinary project" (2-3). Foucault's "Panoptic vision," Bersani continues, requires "a successful immobilizing of the human objects it surveys" and "sexuality now provides the principal categories for a strategic transformation of behavior into manipulatable characterological types" (3). Conversely, Bersani points out, "Gay men and lesbians have nearly disappeared into their sophisticated awareness of how they have been *constructed as* gay men and lesbians" (4).

[17] Norton, 12.

[18] Ibid., 11.

[19] Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 26.

[20] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London 1759).

[21] Ibid., 6.

[22] Anon., *The Word of God, The Best Guide to all Persons, at all Times, and in all Places: or, a Collection of Scripture Texts, Plainly Showing such Things as are Necessary for Every Christians Knowledge and Practice* (London 1701), 139.

[23] Ibid., 140.

[24] Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 19.

[25] Ibid., 14-15.

[26] Laurence Sterne, *The Beauties of Sterne: Including all his Pathetic Tales, and Most Distinguished Observations on Life. Selected for the Heart of Sensibility*, London 1782, 121.

[27] Festa, 32.

[28] Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 57.

[29] Henry Fielding, *The Female Husband, The Female Husband and Other Writings*. Ed. Claude E. Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960), 51.

[30] In *The Ellis Island Snow Globe*, Erica Rand explores the ways in which the "passing figure" has been used to reinstate normative gender. She notes a set of "habits of interpretation," two of which are relevant here: "referring to 'passing woman' by terms that denote their original sex attribution, which implies that first identity necessarily to be more authentic or true" and "using 'passing woman' as a catch-all term for anyone in the not too recent past who lived as male after starting life with a female sex assignment," (84). Erica Rand, *The Ellis Island Snow Globe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

[31] Ibid., 83.

[32] Ibid.

[33] See Sheridan Baker's "Henry's Fielding's the *Female Husband*: Fact and Fiction," *PMLA.* Vol. 74, No. 3. (June 1959). See also Castle's chapter from *The Female Thermometer*, "'Matters Not Fit to Be Mentioned': Fielding's The Female Husband."

[34] See Baker. The "wares" here refer to a "strange device" Hamilton allegedly used with "her" wife.

[35] Heather Love, "Spoiled Identity: Stephen Gordon's Loneliness and the Difficulties of Queer History," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 4 (2001): 487-519, 497.

[36] I use the term "femme" rather loosely here. A more precise definition defines femme as an individual with a conscious and at times parodic embodiment of femininity. It is typically, but not exclusively, a term that circulates in queer culture. In my reading, none of the women that I identify as "femme" truly fit these criteria, but I use the term deliberately to draw attention to the kinds of connections we are willing to make across history. I suspect that readers more readily see commonalities among Hamilton and twentieth-century figures that "pass" than they do among Fielding's femmes and femmes in the present.

[37] Lisa L. Moore, *Dangerous Intimacies: Toward a Sapphic History of the British Novel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 2.

[38] Ibid., 3.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Volume 2* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 3.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 4.

[43] Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), xv.

[44] Ibid., 40.

[45] Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 2*, 4.

[46] Foucault reminds us to not make too much of this event, but still understands the emergence of "sexuality" as a concept as "something other than a simple recasting of vocabulary." Eighteenth-century approximations for sexuality, like taste or inclination, are useful, if inexact. If held accountable for the many feelings and behaviors Foucault sites as the "phenomena" of "sexuality," approximations would include the following instructions:

> I mean a notion that refers to a single entity and allows diverse phenomena to be grouped together, despite the apparently loose connections between them, as if they were of the same nature, derived from the same origin, or brought the same type of causal mechanisms into play: behaviors, but also sensations, images, desires, instincts, passions. (4)

Foucault's depiction of "sexuality" performs the distancing he cites as central to the study of it.

[47] Fraser Easton, "Covering Sexual Desire: Passing Women and Generic Constraint," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 35 (2006): 95-125.

[48] Easton, 116.

[49] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 24.

[50] Easton, 96.

[51] Easton, 119.

[52] Easton, 107.

[53] Ibid., 114.

[54] Easton, 114.

[55] Ibid., 105.

[56] Diane Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 5.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 78

[59] Ibid., 69.

[60] Ibid., 70.

[61] Ibid., 78.

[62] Dugaw, 4.

[63] Castle, 68.

[64] Ibid., 82.

[65] Ibid., 83.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Fielding, 8-9.

[68] Castle, 68.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., 72.

[71] For a discussion of desire between women in eighteenth-century literature and culture, see Lisa L. Moore, *Dangerous Intimacies: Toward a Sapphic History of the British Novel*, Elizabeth

Susan Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment*, and Emma Donghue, *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian Culture, 1688-1801*. For a discussion of the representation of women's friendship, see Janet Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature*.

[72] John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 157.

[73] Ibid., 159-160.

[74] Ibid.

[75] In "'An Infallible Nostrum': Female Husbands and Greensick Girls in Eighteenth-Century England," Bonnie Blackwell indicates that the habit of criticizing the acts of so-called perverse heroines in the opening and concluding lines of an otherwise provocative and erotic narrative was "indispensible for prostitute novels" (58). Fielding follows this custom in The Female Husband. Blackwell writes, "While expanding Hamilton's conquests and compounding her charms, Fielding claims—if only on the first and last pages of *The Female Husband*—to repudiate her 'unnatural lusts'. Since Fielding nominates Hamilton's personal and professional exploits as the most "surprising" in the entire pantheon of human perversions, some readers characterize his representation of Mary Hamilton as 'violently defensive' and as 'outraged' by the female husband's ability to 'belittle' legitimate ownership of the phallus. His authorial disavowal locates *The Female Husband* within the eighteenth-century novelistic tradition of what John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* calls the 'tail-piece of morality'. Indispensable for prostitution novels, this custom dictates that a scandalous book open and close with a brief rehearsal of regret and an assurance of reform" (58). Blackwell, "'An Infallible Nostrum': Female Husbands and Greensick Girls in Eighteenth-Century England," *Literature and Medicine*, Vol. 21. No. 1 (Spring 2002): 56-57.

[76] Fielding, 51.

[77] Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 68.

[78] Ibid., 76. See also "'An Infallible Nostrum': Female Husbands and Greensick Girls in Eighteenth-Century England." Bonnie Blackwell explains how "Fielding's text presupposes, in effect, not one but two audiences. The narrator addresses, in turn, two classes of readers—young, virginal readers, akin to the women Hamilton pursues, and more knowing male and female readers who grasp the rampant innuendo," 58.

[79] Inclination, like taste, captures some of what contemporary terms like orientation and preference attempt to express. Taste and preference suggest that our pleasures are largely structured by culture, and are whimsical but moldable, whereas inclination and orientation propose a scientific model for desire, suggesting that certain patterns orient subjects to particular desires. Thus defects create queer orientations or inclinations.

[80] Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 71.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 31, 33.

[83] Ibid., 32.

[84] Ibid., 33.

[85] By the time Fielding writes *The Female Husband*, the passing figure was a familiar character. As Dianne Dugaw explains, "Far from being isolated and idiosyncratic, the Female Warrior and her story assumed the status of an imaginative archetype in popular balladry, a standard motif" (5). While Fielding borrows from this tradition, his portrayal of a woman who passes for

pleasure is idiosyncratic. Often seeking husbands at war or sea, or seeking employment, the standard archetype did not pass for sexual gratification. For more on the tradition of passing in ballads, see Dugaw's *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850*. Castle also comments on this in *The Female Thermometer*, noting that "female transvestism was a far more common phenomenon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than has previously been suspected" (70). Crossdressing offered opportunities for women outside of the domestic realm, and it also provided safety for women traveling alone.

[86] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 30.

[87] Notably, Fielding departs from the *Pamela* pattern, where conduct is largely rooted in upbringing, despite his adherence to this rule in *Shamela*.

[88] Castle indicates that the Methodist was one of Fielding's "favorite comic butts" (70).

[89] See Henry Abelove, *The Evangelist of Desire*, for an exploration of sexuality and Methodism.

[90] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 31.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 150.

[93] Ibid., 153.

[94] Ibid., 153-154.

[95] For a detailed discussion of the Methodist's stance on celibacy, and the implied alternative to marriage fostered by it, see Henry Abelove's *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists: John Wesley and the Methodists* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

[96] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 31.

[97] Ibid.

[98] The OED offers the following definition of "roger": "usually of a man: to have sexual intercourse with (a person, esp. a woman)."

[99] Fielding, 31.

[100] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 31-32.

[101] Ibid., 33.

[102] Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, 68; Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 29.

[103] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 29.

[104] Ibid., 30.

[105] Ibid., 51.

[106] Ibid., 35.

[107] Ibid., 35-36.

[108] Ibid., 37.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., 37.

[111] Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman, *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society*, Vol. 9 No. 4 (1984), 557-575, 183.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 37.

[114] Ibid., 38.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid., 37

[117] Ibid., 39.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid., 40-41.

[120] Ibid., 42.

[121] Ibid., 43.

[122] Ibid., 44.

[123] Ibid., 47.

[124] Eric Konigsberg, "Death of a Deceiver," *Playboy* (January 1995), 94-95.

[125] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 51.

[126] Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, *Novel Definitions: An Anthology of Commentary on the Novel, 1688-1815*, Ed. Cheryl Nixon (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2008), 258.

[127] Ibid., 259.

[128] Judith Drake, *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*, *Novel Definitions*, 260.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Erasmus Darwin, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*, *Novel Definitions*, 246.

[131] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, *Novel Definitions*, 283.

[132] Ibid., 137.

[133] Ibid.

[134] John Dunton, *The He-Strumpets: A Satyr on the Sodomite-Club* (London, 1707).

[135] Daniel Defoe, *Miscellanea* (London, 1708).

[136] Dunton, *The He-Strumpets*.

[137] Defoe, *Miscellanea*.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11. As Butler explains, discourse constitutes what is and what is not intelligible by determining which modes of personhood are real and which are not. She writes "we live, more or less implicitly, with received notions of reality, implicit accounts of ontology, which determine what kinds of bodies and sexualities will be considered real and true, and which will not" (214).

[140] Ibid., 217-218.

[141] Ibid., 218.

[142] Present assumptions about orientation vary widely.

[143] Newton, 183

[144] Theresa Braunschneider, "Acting the Lover: Gender and Desire in Narratives of Passing Women," *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 45, Iss. 3 (Fall 2004), 214.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Castle, 607.

[147] Ibid., 615.

[148] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 3, 4.

[149] Ibid., 7.

[150] Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 2.

[151] Ibid., 7.

[152] Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, 71.

[153] Diana Fuss, "Freud's Fallen Women: Identification, Desire, and 'A Case of Homosexuality in a Woman,'" *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 44.

[154] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, 29.

[155] Wollstonecraft, 283.

[156] Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*, 67.

[157] See Sender, "Sex Sells: Sex, Class, and Taste in Commercial Gay and Lesbian Media," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 9 No. 3 (2003), 331-365.

[158] See Beynon, "'Traffic in More Precious Commodities': Sapphic Erotics and Economics in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*," *Launching Fanny Hill: Essays on the Novel and its Influences*, Eds. Patsy S. Fowler and Alan Jackson (New York: AMS Press, 2003), 9.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 6.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Sender, 334.

[165] Bourdieu's theory of class distinction, first published in *Distinction* in 1979, is easier to apply to the present since the categories he used to discuss the ways in which taste creates cultural capital are historically contingent. However, Bourdieu's understanding of how aesthetic tastes and dispositions accrue value offers a frame for understanding how sexual conduct garnered new

meaning in eighteenth-century British fiction. I offer a more nuanced discussion of this in chapter five.

[166] Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex," *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 151.

[167] The idea that pleasure was there to pursue, and in fact, the promotion of pleasure as everyman's pursuit, was, as Roy Porter has argued, peculiar to the Enlightenment period. In "Happy Hedonists," Porter explains, "What was new about the Enlightenment was the advocacy of pleasure not as occasional binges, mystical transports, or louche aristocratic privilege, but as the routine entitlement of people at large to satisfy the sense and not just purify the soul, to seek fulfillment in this world and not only in the next," (1573). Roy Porter, "Happy Hedonists," *BMJ*, 23 December 2000, 1573. For a detailed discussion of eighteenth-century happiness, see Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 258-275.

[168] Michael Warner, "Pleasures and Dangers of Shame," *Gay Shame*, Eds. David Halperin and Valerie Traub, 291.

[169] Michael Mckeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 671.

[170] John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 187.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid., 1.

[173] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 187.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid., 187.

[176] John Cleland, *Institutes of Health* (London: 1761), x.

[177] Ibid., iv.

[178] In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud attributes sexual restraint to self-preservation, which fosters a willingness to tolerate "unpleasure" so as to guarantee future pleasures. He explains, "in the theory of psycho-analysis we have no hesitation in assuming that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle," but the reality principle "demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure" (1, 4). Readers learn of categories of pleasures and unpleasures—"fresh pleasures," "pleasure that cannot be felt as such," "neurotic unpleasure"—and our pleasure and reality filters, Freud explains, determine which pleasures will grow extinct, which will be indulged, and which will plague the subject, unfulfilled (5). With this quick gloss of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* I aim to show the resilience of delayed pleasure as a motive for sexual restraint and conduct. This chapter reads Cleland's *Memoirs* as a text that educates readers about the material consequences of good and bad pleasures. Whereas Freud aimed to show the inner workings of the mind, Cleland's theory of pleasure and reward is embedded within the expectation that a descriptive narration of the ill effects of specific pleasures is an effective impediment to perverse sexual pastimes. He does not, in other words, provide a lengthy discussion of sexual inclination, as does Freud, but the structure of the text presupposes that explicit material threats are the tool par excellence in garnering good sexual conduct. Pleasure and unpleasure are as much germane to Cleland's understanding of desire and self-preservation as Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

[179] Jad Smith, Smith, "How Fanny Comes to Know: Sensation, Sexuality, and the Epistemology of the Closet in Cleland's *Memoirs*," *The Eighteenth Century* (Vol. 44, No. 2-3), 183-202, 187.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid., 189.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Cleland, 1.

[184] Hal Gladfelder, Ed. "Introduction," *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* (Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2005), 225.

[185] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 92.

[186] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 91.

[187] Quoted in Gladfelder, 103.

[188] Cleland's theory of pleasure and reward also bears a likeness to twentieth-century articulations of desire, namely Sigmund Freud's analysis of desire in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* In this text, first published in German in 1920, Freud attributes sexual restraint to self-preservation. Self-control promises a reward, and this promise encourages a willingness to tolerate "unpleasure" so as to guarantee future pleasures. Freud explains, "in the theory of psycho-analysis we have no hesitation in assuming that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle," but the reality principle "demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure" (1, 4). The reality principle is only operative against select urges, as it "can only be made responsible for a small number, and by no means the most intense, of unpleasurable experiences" (4). As the ego develops, Freud continues, the "mental apparatus" is "filled" with

"energy," which is activated by "instinctual impulses"; "in the course of things it happens again and again that individual instincts or parts of instincts turn out to be incompatible in their aims or demands with the remaining ones, which are able to combine into the inclusive unity of the ego" (4, 5). Readers learn of categories of pleasures and unpleasures—"fresh pleasures," "pleasure that cannot be felt as such," "neurotic unpleasure"—and our pleasure and reality filters, Freud explains, determine which pleasures will grow extinct, which will be indulged, and which will plague the subject, unfulfilled (5). With this quick gloss of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* I aim to show the resilience of delayed pleasure as a motive for sexual restraint and conduct rather than to exalt Freud for his depiction of this mystifying process. Freud, too, characterizes the development of instincts as "bewildering" and "obscure," attributing the trouble to an inadequacy of language (54). There is a lack of precision—in the process of translating the biological into the discursive much is lost in translation—but "we could not otherwise describe the processes in question at all, and indeed we could not have become aware of them" without "the figurative language, peculiar to psychology" (54). Apart from this gap between process and language, Freud remained convinced that the properly functioning "mental apparatus" responds to danger (whether physical or psychological) and the reality principle modifies the pleasure principle to alleviate this perceived threat (5). Various contemporary threats can stand in here as causes for modification, for example, illegal desires that warrant jail time and queer desires that might bring shame, stigma, or violence. Whereas Freud aimed to show the inner workings of the mind, Cleland's theory if pleasure and reward is embedded within the expectation that a descriptive narration of the shameful and physically debilitating aspects of specific pleasures is an effective way to encourage individuals to avoid perverse sex. Pleasure and "unpleasure" are

as much germane to Cleland's understanding of desire and well-being as they are to Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.*

[189] For a discussion of sexual knowledge in *Pamela,* see Scarlett Bowen's "'A Sawce-box and Boldface Indeed'": Refiguring the Female Servant in the Pamela-Antipamela Debate." Bowen notes, "Pamela's frank observations about sexual matters and their consequences reveal her affiliations with other servant and laboring women. Richardson unconventionally adopts the commonplace notion of laboring women's familiarity with sexual matters for the purpose of protecting Pamela's virtue" (266). Significantly, Pamela's reward relies upon Mr. B's faith in her innocence, not the reader's. What Richardson values, then, is performed innocence. References to Pamela's presumed lack of knowledge are noted with this in mind.

[190] While anti-Pamelism frequently deals with the politics of social rank and feigned "vartue," other critics have focused on Cleland's critique of Richardson's representation of marriage. For example, Andrea Haslanger describes Cleland's text as a critique of strategically employed representations of marriage in Richardson's *Pamela*. As well, in *The Secret History of Domesticity,* Michael McKeon notes how Cleland "uses domesticity to familiarize and accommodate a different yet oddly familiar way of life" (664).

[191] Gary Gautier, "Fanny's Fantasies: Class, Gender, and the Unreliable Narrator in Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,*" *Style,* No. 28 (1994), pp. 133-145, 133.

[192] A number of critics note that Cleland's use of pornographic vignettes (and thus erotic variety) ultimately challenges the domestic conclusion and lesson. As Beynon notes, "much of the pleasure that the novel's title promises both its heroine and its readership is grounded in non-heteronormative configurations that envision both erotic and socio-economic alternatives to the novel's otherwise heterosexual and bourgeois ideologies" (5). Similarly, Nussbaum suggests

that the "pornoerotic violates taboos by its very definition and liberates sexual desire into a baffling array of disruptive possibilities" (34).

[193] On this note, Haslanger discusses Cleland's attempt to "show that comedy's drive toward marriage and felicity can sanction remarkably grim encounters along the way" (164).

[194] For example, see Henry Fielding's *Shamela*, in which Fielding urges people to read *Pamela* to their servants. For a discussion of the moral and textual authority of the lowborn, see Kristina Straub's *Domestic Affairs*. As Straub notes, Richardson's portrayal of the servant maid in *Pamela* suggests that Pamela's discursive agency, and resulting authority, depends upon her ability to persuade and reform Mr. B, or "aristocratic male consciousness" in general (57).

[195] For a discussion of Cleland's blending of the pornographic and domestic, see Lisa Moore's *Dangerous Intimacies*. Moore notes that Cleland's mixture of the domestic and the pornographic is possibly "the most troubling aspect of the novel for contemporary readers" (54). Importantly, Moore's sense of the domestic, though, is not limited to the home. *Memoirs*, Moore notes, identifies domestic vices—that is, English vices—abandoning the tradition of using foreign, typically eastern desires as examples of national superiority. As Moore explains, "such fantasies provided a rationale for English curiosity about English sexual practices, as a kind of prophylactic against imperial failure" (52). Yet, if the English sodomite replaced the Turk, both function as prophylactics. Both xenophobic pamphlets on foreign sexual vices, such as *Satan's Harvest Home*, and English tales of unhappy queers, such as *Memoirs*, tie domestic failure (in both senses) to sexual vice.

[196] Presently, we continue to attach cultural value to the model cherished by Richardson and Cleland, and as such, studying early ways to produce the compulsion to conform to orthodox

models of sexed subjectivity helps us to think through some our assumptions about the assumed results of public sexual knowledge.

[197] The two letters that make up *Memoirs* are written to an unnamed "Madam." Cleland's satire of the epistolary mode is present in form, but also in the text, as we learn that Fanny drops her pen while recalling pleasure. She explains, "I see! I feel! the delicious velvet tip!—he enters might and main with—oh!—my pen drops from me here in the extasy now present to my faithful memory" (183).

[198] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 181.

[199] Ibid., 158.

[200] At the same time, Cleland denies responsibility for incorrect readings. In "Sodomy, Geography, and Misdirection in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*," Danielle Bobker explains, "In his criticism, Cleland rationalizes the need to represent illicit acts realistically, while implicitly challenging the assumption that the novelists should be responsible for the range of responses that their texts might incite" (1036). This commentary invokes Samuel Johnson's warning in "The New Realistic Novel," in which he advises novelists: "But if the power of example is so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited; and that which is likely to operate so strongly should not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects" (176).

[201] Gladfelder, 12.

[202] Ibid., 88.

[203] Beynon argues otherwise, suggesting that the sexual episodes in the text "are largely inconsequential to the novel's frame narrative of love and marriage between Fanny and Charles,"

7. Jad Smith comments on this as well: “One could, of course, understand Fanny’s concern with particulars as a thin ‘porn’ premise, as Cleland’s flimsy excuse to jump from one graphic sexual episode to another. However, the novel more than delivers on its initial claims of epistemological complexity,” 184. Without denying the queer pleasures that the text indeed portrays, I am suggesting that the novel’s cursory claims to morality and instruction, typical of the eighteenth-century preface, are fully supported via Cleland’s portrayal of the health problems caused by sexual excess and perversion.

[204] See the editor’s introduction to the cited edition of *Memoirs*, xviii.

[205] See the editor’s introduction to the cited edition of *Memoirs*, xviii.

[206] Rubin lists the following under the title “The Outer Limits”: “Homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, commercial, alone or in groups, casual, cross-generational, in public, pornography, with manufacture objects, sadomasochistic” (151).

[207] Rubin’s list of characteristics that define the “charmed circle” include the following: “Heterosexual, married, monogamous, procreative, non-commercial, in pairs, in a relationship, same generation, in private, no pornography, bodies only, vanilla” (151).

[208] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 20.

[209] Ibid., 16.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid., 21, 19.

[213] Ibid., 16.

[214] Ibid., 129.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Ibid., 132-133.

[218] Ibid., 133.

[219] Ibid., 145.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid., 145-146.

[222] For a detailed discussion of Barvile, see Misty Anderson's "Mr. Barvile's Discipline: Habit, Passion, and Methodism in the Eighteenth-Century Imagination." Anderson states, "Habits, which I define as specific practices repeated over time, can provide narratives of self-improvement or involuntary compulsion," 200.

[223] Ibid., 146.

[224] Ibid., 144, 152.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), 41, 41-42.

[228] Ibid., 42.

[229] Ibid.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Ibid., 42-43.

[233] *Gay Shame*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, 279.

[234] Mandeville, *Fable*, 43.

[235] Ibid.

[236] Ibid., 51-52.

[237] Ibid., 53.

[238] Ibid., 54.

[239] Many recent studies in queer theory and sexuality have made productive use of mistaken articulations of the natural, reading such mishaps as a queering of sexual knowledge. When writers struggle in vain to prove that desire is naturally heterosexual, for example, but simultaneously note that it must be disciplined and channeled or else it is capable of endless invention, it is custom and potentially politically productive to regard such writers as ensnared by their own faulty logic. As the previous chapter argues, the introduction to Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband* demonstrates this confusing logic, as Fielding attempts to account for both natural propensities and queer urges.

[240] Mandeville, *Fable*, 57.

[241] Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 41.

[242] Ibid., 42.

[243] Cleland outwardly establishes his text as conservative by, as John Beynon notes, "stressing the transitory and ultimately unsatisfactory nature" of queer pleasures (3). However, other critics claim that, despite this conservative aim, the text allows for repeated disruptions in heteronormativity. For example, see Lisa Moore's *Dangerous Intimacies*.

[244] Sedgwick, 42.

[245] Mandeville, *Fable*, 57.

[246] For example, Mandeville writes, "the passions of some people are too violent to be curbed by any law or precept; and it is wisdom in all governments to bear with lesser inconveniences to prevent greater. If courtesans and strumpets were to be prosecuted with as much rigour as some silly people would have it, what locks or bars would be sufficient to preserve the honour of our wives and daughters?" 71.

[247] Mandeville, *Fable*, 71.

[248] Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2003), 141.

[249] Porter attributes Mandeville's "no-nonsense" realism to his professional career as a physician. He was, in Porter's words, "professionally inured to the blunt truths of the flesh," 141.

[250] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 36.

[251] Ibid., 187.

[252] Ibid., 36.

[253] Ibid., 40.

[254] Ibid., 42.

[255] Upon seeing a naked man for the first time, Fanny states, "For my part, I now pin'd for more solid food, and promis'd tacitly to myself that I would not be put off much longer with this foolery from woman to woman," (34).

[256] Ibid., 159, 158.

[257] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 91.

[258] Ibid., 59.

[259] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 188.

[260] Daniel Defoe, *Roxana*, 2.

[261] For a discussion of trends in eighteenth-century prostitute narratives, see Laura Rosenthal's *Nightwalkers*. Of note, Cleland's superficial concern with Fanny's story is rather commonplace. Rosenthal argues that the genre was typically used to reveal "the fallout of the period's prosperity, mobility, modernity, imperial expansion, and increasing consumerism," and thus Cleland's use of the genre to speculate on sexual choices and happiness is not so uncommon (xiv).

[262] Rosenthal, 120-121.

[263] For Defoe's comments on this topic, see *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*.

[264] In the introduction to *Nightwalkers: Prostitute Narratives from the Eighteenth Century*, Laura Rosenthal explains, "representations of prostitution in the eighteenth-century British popular culture," rather than ascribing to a single narrative with a singular position on prostitutes, "offered a wider spectrum of attitudes than one might expect" (ix). Like the novel, eighteenth-century prostitute narratives explored "the tensions between virtue and vice: they offered sensual and sentimental journeys, glimpses into high and low life, and relentless confrontations with the explosive power of money and the vulnerability of those without it" (ix). In fact, though describing prostitute narratives, Rosenthal's research on the common habits and trends within this genre bring Richardson's *Pamela* to mind. Rosenthal notes, "intriguing in themselves, they also explore a broader range of sexual and gendered possibilities than most canonical fiction, although Defoe and Richardson clearly owe much to this genre" (xiii). Aside from the less-veiled erotic appeal of prostitute narratives, this genre typically abandons the discovery of a "single predictable lesson expressed through poetic justice" (xiii).

[265] Ibid., ix

[266] Ibid., xiii

[267] Ibid., xiv. With this assessment, we can see the influence this genre had on Daniel Defoe's fiction, as Rosenthal has suggested, and particularly *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*. Defoe, in this tradition, uses the fallen heroine as a vehicle to push for social and economic reform.

[268] Ibid., xvii.

[269] Ibid., xx.

[270] Rosenthal, x. Haslanger likewise emphasizes the need to read narratives of prostitution alongside the novel, claiming that *Memoirs* "takes several of its defining formal features from the early English novel, and reveals the logic underlying them by taking them to the extremes" (164).

[271] In *Infamous Commerce*, Rosenthal discusses Cleland's relationship to two of the most prominent trends in the prostitute narrative, libertine and reform narratives. She explains, "At a time when libertine narratives explored the prostitute's profits from the instrumental use of her body and reform narratives suggested her alienation, John Cleland published his *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748-1749). Cleland structures the *Memoirs* like an episodic libertine narrative, but adds an overarching romantic/mock-reformist plot: born into a poor but honest family in a small country village, Fanny Hill hopes that she will better be able to support herself in the metropolis but must turn to prostitution to pay her debts," (120-121). Fanny invokes both trends. She is a libertine heroine in a narrative of reform.

[272] Of note, Sabor suggests that Cleland's "unusual depiction of prostitutes can best be compared with that of Eliza Haywood in two innovative novels, *Fantomina; or, Love in a Maze* (1724) and *Anti-Pamela; or Feigned Innocence Detected* (1741), in which the heroines Fantomina and Syrena are as successful as Fanny in their dealings with men" (xix). Though, both Fantomina and Syrena are punished for their actions, whereas Fanny is rewarded via marriage.

[273] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 36.

[274] One notable representation of the risks encountered by country girls in the city is William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*. The story, first told in a series of six paintings in 1731, then in engravings in 1732, bears some resemblance to Cleland's *Memoirs*, and to Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. The first plate shows a young woman arriving in London, equipped with scissors and a pincushion. She is admired by her future procuress, an older, pox-ridden woman. The subsequent plates display the young woman's rise and fall, including engravings that display her as a well-kept mistress, a common prostitute, and a prisoner. In the end, Moll dies of syphilis. While the conclusions are remarkably different, the opening plate of Hogarth's *Progress* nearly mirrors Fanny's entry into prostitution.

[275] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 23.

[276] In "Is There a History of Sexuality," David Halperin claims that one of the hallmarks of sexuality, as we think we know it, is that "it implies that human beings are individuated at the level of their sexuality, that they differ from one another in their sexuality and, indeed, belong to different types or kinds of being by virtue of their sexuality" (417). Sodomites are similarly individuated by taste in Cleland's *Memoirs*.

[277] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 153.

[278] Ibid., 159.

[279] The sexual acts committed between men are not parallel to illicit sexual acts between prostitutes and clients, or men and women, in Cleland's *Memoirs*. Whereas the sodomitical loosely refers to sex acts outside of marriage and procreation, it is clear in Cleland's narrative that not all illicit sex acts were seen as equal in vice.

[280] Bobker, "Sodomy, Geography, and Misdirection in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*."

[281] George Haggerty, "Keyhole Testimony: Witnessing Sodomy in the Eighteenth Century," *The Eighteenth Century,* Vol. 44 No. 2-3, 169.

[282] McKeon, 666.

[283] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 159.

[284] Ibid.

[285] Cleland's distinction between same-sex desire and heterosexuality raises questions about the contemporary call to collapse all forms of illicit desire under the term queer. This eighteenth-century account of two very different approaches to publically managing private lifestyle habits invites the opportunity to consider whether all queer practices are conceptually distinct in contemporary models of reform.

[286] Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003), 17, 13.

[287] Ibid., 16.

[288] Ibid.

[289] Ibid.

[290] Roy Porter, "Happy Hedonists," *BMJ*, 23 December 2000, 1573. For a detailed discussion of eighteenth-century happiness, see Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 258-275.

[291] For a discussion of libertinism, see Brian Cowan, "Reasonable Ecstasies: Shaftesbury and the Language of Libertinism," *The Journal of British Studies,* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr., 1998), 111-138. Brian Cowan indicates that a libertine ethos promotes "the valorization of sexual activity itself, especially in a way which legitimizes sexual promiscuity," 123.

[292] John Cleland, *Institutes of Health* (London: 1761) 31, 32.

[293] Ibid.

[294] Ibid., iv.

[295] Ibid.

[296] Ibid., 2, 1.

[297] Cleland, *Institutes*, ix, vii-viii.

[298] Ibid., 45.

[299] As noted, the idea that pleasure was there to pursue, and in fact, the promotion of pleasure as everyman's pursuit, was, as Roy Porter has argued, peculiar to the Enlightenment period. In "Happy Hedonists," Porter explains, "What was new about the Enlightenment was the advocacy of pleasure not as occasional binges, mystical transports, or louche aristocratic privilege, but as the routine entitlement of people at large to satisfy the sense and not just purify the soul, to seek fulfillment in this world and not only in the next." Roy Porter, "Happy Hedonists," *BMJ*, 23 December 2000, 1573. For a detailed discussion of eighteenth-century happiness, see Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 258-275.

[300] Cleland, *Memoirs*, 187-188.

[301] See Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). Sedgwick explains, "There are many people in the worlds we inhabit, and these psychiatrists are unmistakably among them, who have a strong interest in the dignified treatment of any gay people who may happen already to exist. But the number of persons or institutions by who the existence of gay people is treated as a precious desideratum, a needed condition of life, is small," 161.

[302] Notably, the men engaged in same-sex sex in *Memoirs* are beyond the pale. They do not factor into Cleland's assessment of sexual vice and bodily health. They are plagued not by ill health, but effeminacy.

[303] In *Institutes*, Cleland highlights the struggle to "escape contagion of the present system," 47.

[304] Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, ed. Angus Ross (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 1117. All subsequent references are to this edition. My reading of *Clarissa* looks at the first edition rather than the third, for practical reasons. The 1751 third edition is now available in abridged form from Broadview, and this creates a difficult choice for scholars as neither the first edition nor the third edition—the two texts available in print—are complete. Shirley van Marter's "Richardson's Revisions of 'Clarissa' in the Third and Fourth Editions" offers the most detailed account of Richardson's revisions. She makes a strong case for using the third edition, but also notes that scholars often see it as a choice between the "purity of the first edition" and "the completeness of the third" (151). However, as she notes, this distinction is not very clear as Richardson may have intended to revise from the beginning, and its very possible that some of the additions were removed from the original. Even still, critics frequently assume that Richardson's third edition is representative of Richardson's "final intentions" (199). Other critics, however, believe that the revisions provided by Richardson are the result of audience feedback and thus the first edition is more representative of Richardson's ideas. Many of the changes provided by Richardson attend to subtle differences between liking and love, and shifts in the characterization of Lovelace. The second edition includes footnotes that, as van Marter argues, "urge readers to be more attentive to Lovelace's artfulness and to Clarissa's true sense of propriety" (123). My project sidesteps intent and instead invites readers to consider how we

might use queer theory to think about early representations of female desire. *Studies in Bibliography* 28 (1975), 199-152

[305] Ibid., 895.

[306] Ibid., 889.

[307] Ibid., 885.

[308] Ibid., 889.

[309] Ibid., 893.

[310] For a discussion of "humoral" physiology and the rise of 'nerves', see Roy and Dorothy Porter, *In Sickness and in Health, The British Experience 1650-1850* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 68-72.

[311] As Roy and Dorothy Porter note, "the idiom of the nerves became the elite way of representing the subtle sympathies of consciousness and physical state"; "if the nerves were 'high', or 'highly strung', the mind was bright, and the body felt sensations acutely," *In Sickness and in Health,* 70, 71.

[312] By the end of the century, this association fed discourses on sensibility, furthering the conviction that heightened sensibility was the property of specific subjects, a formula that helped to secure differences among ranks at a time when the age-old adage "birth equals worth" was in question.

[313] I am thinking, here, of Betty Friedan's critique of "the problem that has no name" in the *Feminine Mystique*. For another reading of this tradition of critique, see Dianne Hunter's, "Hysteria, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism: The Case of Anna O," in *The M/Other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Criticism,* eds. Madelon Sprengnether, Shirley Garner, and Claire Kahane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Hunter writes, "Feminism is

transformed hysteria, or more precisely … hysteria is feminism lacking a social network in the outer world," 113.

[314] Heather Meek, "Of Wandering Wombs and Wrongs of Women: Evolving Conceptions of Hysteria in the Age of Reason," *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, Volume 35, Issue 2-3, June/September 2009, pp. 105-128, 106-107.

[315] Ibid., 107.

[316] Ibid., 106-107.

[317] Ibid.

[318] Including Richardson in this tradition implies that I might also read Richardson's text as a feminist work. Many theorists have located *Clarissa* within feminist thought, including Terry Eagleton, Terry Castle, Carol Houlihan Flynn, and Margaret Anne Doody. For a detailed reading of Richardson's feminist potential, see Lois A. Chaber's "Christian Form and Anti-Feminism in Clarissa," Eighteenth-Century Fiction, Vol. 15, Number 3-4 (April-July 2003), pp. 507-537. Though Chaber ultimately disagrees with critics who champion Richardson's feminism, her reading discusses the feminist possibilities presented by other critics at length. Of note, Chaber regards Clarissa's self annihilation as too familiar: "Personally, I have had occasion for close contact with psychologically disturbed female adolescents who abuse themselves instead of turning their anger at family and society outward, and I am afraid I see too many similarities to Clarissa" (534). Ultimately, I agree with Chaber's reading of Clarissa as a "dangerous and misleading model for women—in her own century or ours," but I am less invested here in categorizing Richardson as feminist or anti-feminist than I am in representing a kind of illness that stems from knowledge of other, non-compulsory possibilities, and a kind of trauma that produces a specifically queer affect (537).

[319] While I argue in this chapter that *Clarissa* exposes the trouble with coerced marriage, in the eighteenth-century the single life was also read as a cause of hysteria. Meek writes, "theorists of eighteenth-century hysteria, whether physicians or female sufferers, frequently look to the institution of marriage in their elaboration of symptoms, causes, and treatments. Medicinal practices into the eighteenth century saw widows, virgins, and nuns as most prone to hysteria, and there was a lingering belief that male semen somehow kept the womb in order" (117). Consequently, while the novel shows the fallout of nonconsensual marriage, it also inadvertently supports the link between marriage and mental health.

[320] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 852-853.

[321] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 237.

[322] As Berlant notes, "optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving; and, doubly, it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or a world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming," *Cruel Optimism*, 2.

[323] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 261.

[324] Ibid., 51.

[325] Ibid., 63.

[326] Ibid., 2.

[327] Ibid.

[328] Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 87.

[329] I see a strong link between the eighteenth-century revision of medical models and Cvetcovich's call to consider the cultural and political conditions of depression in our own time. Though not synonymous, accounts of hysteria, as Meek notes, "focus on a continuum of psychological states ranging from persistent sorrow, social isolation, and depression to paranoia and anxiety" (109). A longer project could easily demonstrate Clarissa's experience of all of these symptoms.

[330] Ibid., 13.

[331] Ibid.

[332] Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) 74.

[333] Sarah Fielding, *Remarks on Clarissa* (Pasadena: The Castle Press, 1985), 43.

[334] Richardson, *Clarissa,*1498.

[335] Ibid.

[336] For more on the positive attributes affiliated with weak nerves, see Raymond Stephanson's "Richardson's 'Nerves': The Physiology of Sensibility in Clarissa," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1988), 267-285. Stephanson notes, "As a socially perceived trait sensibility can also be a positive thing, desirable because a weak or delicate nervous system means a greater degree of intellectual, imaginative, and emotional refinement. For many people, complaints about the vapors or one's nerves will be a fashionable claim because of the socio-medical overtones and assumptions; sensibility, in other words, becomes proof of one's humanity and elevated awareness," 275.

[337] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 853.

[338] Arguing that Lovelace subscribes to an outmoded model of nervous sensibility, one that regards male sensibility as "a physiological impossibility," Stephanson claims that the novel "is a

rejection of an earlier, emotionally-repressive masculine code in favor of a physiological model which not only makes possible the existence of a Man of Feeling but also encourages and cherishes this type," 279, 281. Noting Richardson's weak nerves, he suggests how, in narrating Lovelace's struggle with sensibility, Richardson justifies and elevates his own struggle with nerves along with the dominant medical model held by Cheyne.

[339] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1335.

[340] Bernard Mandeville, *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions* (1711), 1.

[341] Ibid., iv, iii.

[342] Ibid., ix-x.

[343] Ibid.

[344] Ibid., x.

[345] Ibid., x, 166.

[346] Ibid., 172.

[347] Ibid., 175-176.

[348] Ibid., xi.

[349] Ibid., xii.

[350] Ibid., 164.

[351] Ibid.

[352] Ibid., 165.

[353] Ibid.

[354] Ibid., 164.

[355] Ibid., 165.

[356] Ibid.

[357] Ibid., 15-152

[358] Ibid., 150-152.

[359] George Cheyne, *The English Malady* (1733), vii.

[360] Ibid., 10.

[361] As Roy and Dorothy Porter argue in *In Sickness and in Health*, "Georgian body language cared less for soberly 'naming the parts' than for creating a system of inner and organic referents for feelings," 46. Referencing nerves rendered nervous disorders "sufficiently somatic," as Porter and Porter note, because "nerves after all were anatomically tangible," 70. For more on this, see Porter and Porter, *In Sickness and in Health, The British Experience 1650-1850* (Basil Blackwell, New York: 1989).

[362] For more on this, see Rousseau, *Nervous Acts*, 216.

[363] Porter, *In Sickness*, 70.

[364] For more on the persistent significance of women's bodies in medical discussions of mentall illness, see Meek. For example, Meek writes, "From Thomas Sydenham to Robert Whyt, the medical view that women were inherently pathological was made obvious in a continued reliance on metaphors of diseased uteri, weak nerves, disordered animal spirits, corrupt menstrual blood, and animalistic wombs" (109). Even when the mind was considered as a central influence, the womb was not totally ruled out (Meek, 109).

[365] Fielding, *Remarks*, 4.

[366] Ibid., 27.

[367] Ibid.

[368] Ibid., 28, 29.

[369] Ibid., 13.

[370] Ibid., 10.

[371] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 852.

[372] Fielding, *Remarks,* 42.

[373] Ibid., 37.

[374] Ibid., 42.

[375] Ibid., 9, 12.

[376] Ibid., 37.

[377] Ibid., 48.

[378] Ibid., 51.

[379] Ibid., 37.

[380] The idea that pleasure was there to pursue, and in fact, the promotion of pleasure as everyman's pursuit, was, as Roy Porter has argued, peculiar to the Enlightenment period. In "Happy Hedonists," Porter explains, "What was new about the Enlightenment was the advocacy of pleasure not as occasional binges, mystical transports, or louche aristocratic privilege, but as the routine entitlement of people at large to satisfy the sense and not just purify the soul, to seek fulfillment in this world and not only in the next," (258). "The Enlightenment's great historical watershed," Porter writes, was "in the validation of pleasure," (258). Both Hobbes and Mandeville supported this logic, seeing "self-fulfillment" as something to embrace rather than deny, "because it is inherent in human nature and beneficial to society," (260). On happiness in marriage, the tides were changing, too. While one might be hesitant to read Boswell as evidence of a widespread shift, his claim that there is no "higher felicity on earth enjoyed by man than the participation of genuine reciprocal amorous affection with an amiable woman," supports

Clarissa's stance against Solmes. See Porter, "Happy Hedonists," *BMJ*, vol. 321 (December 2000), 258-260.

[381] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 112, 105.

[382] Ibid., 106, 92.

[383] Ibid., 92.

[384] Ibid., 54.

[385] Ibid., 109.

[386] Ibid., 109, 190.

[387] Porter, "Happy Hedonists," 259.

[388] Samuel Richardson, *The Paths of Virtue Delineated; or, the History in Miniature of the Celebrated Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe, and Sir Charles Grandison* (1768), iii-vii.

[389] Ibid.

[390] Janet Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 11.

[391] Ibid., 12.

[392] Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 261.

[393] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 66.

[394] Ibid., 1357.

[395] It is possible that what looks like erotic interest is a matter of convention. If, as Janet Todd suggests in *Women's Friendship in Literature*, the custom by the mid eighteenth-century was "ecstasy—in friendship, family, or love," then we must recognize the language of female friendship during the eighteenth-century, as conventional and customary (360). And so, by these terms, Clarissa and Anna are *just friends*. But importantly, our modern distinctions—"just

friends" or "more than friends"—demonstrate the distance between our conceptual categories and early-modern understandings of friendship.

[396] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 62.

[397] Todd, 360.

[398] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 354.

[399] Ibid.

[400] Ibid., 359.

[401] Ibid., 632.

[402] Ibid., 637.

[403] Ibid., 354.

[404] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 65.

[405] Richardson, *Clarissa*, 54.

[406] Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 63.

[407] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings,* 43.

[408] As Eve Sedgwick has noted.

[409] Carolyn Dinshaw, "Got Medieval?" *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April 2001), 203.

[410] Ibid., 206.

[411] Cvetkovich, 47.

[412] Dinshaw, 203.

[413] Ibid., 204.

[414] Ibid.

[415] Sarah Schulman, *Ties That Bind: Familial Homophobia and its Consequences* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 1.

[416] Ibid., 10.

[417] Ibid., 12.

[418] Ibid., 17

[419] Ibid.

[420] My reading here is in part inspired by an exchange with a student. She left Russia for the United States primarily due to family obligations that she refused, most notably, marriage. She identified with the deep, unbearable pain that comes with familial homophobia, describing also a similarly profound experience of being rejected and discarded for her choices. Schulman does not pay attention to these important connections between straight and gay subjects. She states, "On the other hand, dear, close straight friends who have known gay people for years may never be able to fully comprehend the dimensions and impact of the homophobia that their close gay friends face from their families. The gulf in experience is so profound and has so much specificity that its full impact can feel impossible to convey. After all, straight people also have problems with their families and so often cannot differentiate between the degree. It's the old 'white people have problems too' syndrome, in which the dominant person is unable to imagine the burden of prejudice on top of regular human difficulties" (30). I see her point, but I find the description of experiential difference as an unfathomable "gulf" unproductive. I think there are shared affects, and these commonalities are often useful political tools. A perfect example of this is the great interest some of my former students' have taken in K. Rocco Shields' short film, *Love is All You Need*. Shields portrays heterophobia in a world where gay is the norm, using

young people for greater impact. They find this film powerful and moving—it helps them to "get" the felt experience of homophobia. Eve Sedgwick's reading of minoritizing versus universalizing understandings of sexuality is useful here.

[421] Gayle Rubin, *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 34.

[422] Ibid.

[423] Ibid., 47.

[424] Ibid.

[425] Ibid., 56.

[426] In Halberstam, 13.

[427] Spicksley, 314.

[428] Amy M. Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16.

[429] Ibid., 1.

[430] Ibid., 15.

[431] Ibid., 16.

[432] Ibid.

[433] Ibid., 17.

[434] Ibid.

[435] Ibid., 42.

[436] Ibid.

[437] Cvetkovich, 68.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Ibid., 43.

[440] Ibid., 44.

[441] Dinshaw, 203.

[442] Eagleton, vii.

[443] Ibid., ix.

[444] Ibid., 13.

[445] Ibid.

[446] Ibid.

[447] For more on "illegible femmes" and the eighteenth-century prude, see Wendy Lee's unpublished work.

[448] Scott Paul Jordan, "Disinterested Selves: 'Clarissa' and the Tactics of Sentiment," *ELH*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), 475.

[449] Vicessimus Knox, for example, claims that Sterne endorsed "every species of illicit commerce." For more on Sterne's sexual undertones, see Elizabeth K. Goodhue, "When Yorick Takes his Tea; or the Commerce of Consumptive Passions in the Case of Laurence Sterne," *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2006), 51.

[450] Donald Greene, ed. *Samuel Johnson: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 176.

[451] Ibid., 177.

[452] Unknown Author, "Prefatory Memoir to Sterne," *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy; Also, A Tale of a Tub* (London: Ballantyne Press, 1882), 21.

[453] As Goodhue notes, "the power of Sterne's irony to keep competing interpretations in open circulation continues implicating readers to this day, refusing to let any critical reader reduce the text consumed to the idea of an embodied author solely accountable for its production," 54. Goodhue's comments here inadvertently speak to the requisite relationship between author and reader in the production of camp.

[454] Christopher Hibbert claims that the Tour was not only imagined as a supplementary education, but a replacement for the low quality of English universities in the eighteenth century. He explains, "The discredit into which English universities had fallen in the eighteenth century was in fact, so Adam Smith, the Scottish economist and philosopher, declared in 1776, the principal reason why the Grand Tour had been brought into repute as an important, if not essential, part of upper-class education" (20). Students at Oxford and Cambridge discuss their days at the university as idle, and note that exams were "no more than a formality," sometimes "conducted during drinking bouts or on horseback" (19). This depiction of university life for men of privilege speaks to the general ideology of sensibility during the mid to late eighteenth century. Though conceptualized as something that we can aspire to, and, in theory, an egalitarian model of worth, the wedding of sentimentality to the emergent middle class tended towards a similarly static understanding of value as the aristocratic model.

[455] Robert Markely, "Sentimentality as Performance: Shaftesbury, Sterne, and the Theatrics of Virtue," *The New Eighteenth Century*, Eds., Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987) 217.

[456] Foucault, 124.

[457] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol.* 1, 171.

[458] As Markley explains, discourses of sensibility "attempt to reconcile aristocratic systems of value based on innate worth and patrilinear inheritance to middle-class conceptions of value based on notions of individual merit and worthy deeds" (217).

[459] I am thinking here of *The Blindside* and *Pretty Woman*, though the general theme is recurring in twentieth-century U.S. film. Felicity A. Nussbaum discusses the plot similarities between Pamela and *Pretty Woman* in "Naughty Pamela's 'Sweet Co nfusion.'" She writes, "Just as in *Pamela*, the success of *Pretty Woman* requires the heroine's failed self-recognition of her desire to achieve higher class, together with her naïveté—or at least ambivalence—about her secret affection for the prince until he offers marriage" (64). This is a particularly useful approach to teaching *Pamela*, as Nussbaum explains, "Drawing parallels between the novel and familiar cultural fables enables students to recognize both the historical imperative to moral behavior in the eighteenth century and the heedless fascination that romance continues to inspire in the modern moment" (64). I would add, too, that this comparison facilitates an understanding of our continued use of the "good" poor to champion certain tales of upward mobility. Such representations create the fiction of a permeable middle class, and they justify the economic exploitation of the lower class.

[460] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 113.

[461] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* ( ) 224.

[462] Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, Ed., Katherine Turner (Toronto: Broadview, 2010) 67.

[463] Ibid., 65.

[464] As Judith Frank notes, Yorick's purpose for travel is a "typically sexualized version of the sentimental traveler's project: the spying of the hearts of others in the service of bourgeois self-improvement and self-empowerment" (97).

[465] Ibid., 137.

[466] Ibid., 122.

[467] Ibid., 85.

[468] Ibid., 86.

[469] Ibid., 87.

[470] Ibid., 58, 75.

[471] Ibid., 74.

[472] Ibid., 95.

[473] Ibid.

[474] Ibid., 71.

[475] Ibid.

[476] Ibid., 73.

[477] Ibid., 97.

[478] Ibid., 228

[479] Ibid., 253

[480] Ibid., 228

[481] Ibid., 229

[482] Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, 82.

[483] Ibid., 83, 84.

[484] Ibid., 88.

[485] Ibid., 62.

[486] Ibid., 88.

[487] Ibid., 82.

[488] In Turner, 254.

[489] Gould, 645.

[490] Ibid.

[491] Ibid., 647.

[492] Ibid., 650.

[493] Ibid., 649.

[494] Ibid.

[495] Ibid.

[496] Ibid., 651.

[497] Ibid.

[498] Sedgwick, 65.

[499] Ibid., 72.

[500] Ibid., 69.

[501] Ibid.

[502] Ibid., 74.

[503] Ibid., 68.

[504] Ibid.

[505] Ibid., 71.

[506] Ibid., 70.

[507] Ibid.

[508] Gould, 650.

[509] Goodhue, 69.

[510] Ibid., 56.

[511] Foucault, 110.

[512] Barker-Benfield, 1.

[513] Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, 71.

[514] Ibid., 107.

[515] Ibid.

[516] Ibid., 87.

[517] Ibid.

[518] Ibid., 65.

[519] Ibid., 87.

[520] George Rousseau, 17.

[521] Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, 153.

[522] Ibid., 87.

[523] Ibid., 32, 75.

[524] Ibid., 94, 95, 89.

[525] See Jenny Davidson, 58.

[526] Susan Sontag, 1.

[527] Of note, in this clarification, Sontag highlights the risks for those who do not harbor camp knowingness. The naïve are completely blind to the all-encompassing powers of taste.

[528] Ibid.

[529] Sontag declares that sensibility is "one of the hardest things to talk about" (1). Camp is especially difficult to define because it is "esoteric," and any attempt to characterize its features is seen as a "betrayal" (1). Further, an attempt to define Camp, if too earnest, might result in the production of "a very inferior piece of Camp" (2).

[530] Ibid., 1

[531] Ibid.

[532] Ibid.

[533] Ibid., 2.

[534] Ibid., 5.

[535] Sterne, 57.

[536] Ibid., 59.

[537] Ibid.

[538] In "Sterne Among the Philosophes: Body and Soul in *A Sentimental Journey*," Martin Battesin reads Sterne's *Journey* as a negotiation between the atheist logics of the philosophes and his own faith as a priest. Battesin writes, "There Yorick would try to puzzle out the question of who—or what—he is: is he a man whose sympathetic feelings prove he has a soul worth saving, as Sterne's favourite Latitudinarian divines, Tillotson and Clarke, had argued in refuting Hobbes? Or was he merely a sophisticated piece of machinery controlled by his appetites and reducible at last to dust, as the philosophes so eloquently reasoned, who befriended Sterne in the salons of Paris and whose cleverness he admired?" (18).

[539] Thomas King succinctly defines this "paradox within bourgeois ideology": "On the one hand, the bourgeoisie had set themselves against upper-class spectacularity; on the other, they

recognized that interiority had to be made visible if moral judgments made on the basis of character were to be legitimated" (in Meyer 24). In other words, King explains, the bourgeoisie needed "to make consciousness visible while at the same time denying the performability of the body" (in Meyer 24).

[540] As Sontag notes, "It's embarrassing to be solemn and treatise-like about camp. One runs the risk of having, oneself, produced a very inferior piece of camp" (2)

[541] Meyer, 37.

[542] Ibid.

[543] Ibid.

[544] Meyer, 445, 47.

[545] Ibid., 52.

[546] Ibid.

[547] Meyer, *Camp*, 162.

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