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The aesthetic pleasures of pain, 1688-1805

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THE AESTHETIC PLEASURES OF PAIN, 1688-1805

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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To my mother's courage, my brother's friendship, and my husband's support.

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines how representations of physical and mental suffering in literary texts reveal paradoxes in the structure of sympathy that remain under-explored by literary scholars. In the philosophical thought of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith, sympathy was a feature of the "moral sense," an aesthetic intuition that, with proper training, could compel individuals to act ethically in society. However, because sympathy allowed individuals to *feel* the experiences of others, not just through the imagination, but in connection with the body itself, the motivation for sympathizing with pain presented a significant problem for Enlightenment philosophy. Largely divested of its religious contexts, pain was increasingly classified as a mechanism that registered distress or pathology in the body, and as an experience that human beings instinctively avoid. Terry Eagleton, Adela Pinch, and G. J. Barker-Benfield, among others, have analyzed sympathy and the culture of sentimentality in terms of their moral relativism, derivative emotionality, and regulatory influence on gendered behavior and social norms. My dissertation makes a needed contribution to the field by focusing on the ways pain reveals structural contradictions in sympathy's claim to penetrate the boundaries of subjective experience, an experience that was becoming "buffered"— to use Charles Taylor's term — from the influence of others.

Each chapter of my dissertation positions a landmark text—Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688), Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), and William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1805) — within the context of Enlightenment moral sense philosophy to highlight the intentional and unintentional ways literary authors modified philosophical formulations of sympathy to create the ethically complex pleasure of sympathizing with the pain of others. Because the concepts of pain and subjectivity were taking on modern

shapes in these texts, literary critics must reconsider how ethical claims were made by the aesthetic practice of connecting representations of pain with the pleasure of sympathizing. Globalized media are bringing increasingly distant experiences of pain to our attention in increasingly intimate ways. These technologies can be invaluable for promoting a sense of social responsibility for the pain of even the most distant others, but only if we hold ourselves accountable for how and why we look.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines how sympathy with pain problematizes a cornerstone of eighteenth-century thought: moral sense philosophy. Reacting to a Hobbesian pessimism about humanity's self-interestedness and the secularized amorality of rational Enlightenment thinking, philosophers and artists alike were searching for new ways to conceive of their social obligations to others. Because "the moral sense" was conceived as a unique human characteristic that made social cohesion and ethical behavior possible, it increasingly became the model of eighteenth-century morality. As such, many Enlightenment and Romantic writers considered it their duty to hone the moral sense of their readers by depicting scenes of heart-rending emotional and physical agony in their texts. Unfortunately, if the sympathizer is confronted with the other's pain too intensely, there is little incitement to engage with it closely enough to relieve it.

Each chapter of this project focuses on different ways that key literary texts grappled with the problem of pain by considering how they amended the logic of sympathy and the moral sense. In doing so, I hope to sketch the rough trajectory of pain's evolving significance while simultaneously allowing moments of incongruity and contradiction to come into focus. The picture that emerges shows the excesses of pain—situated as it is between sensation and perception, between individual and community, and between language and inexpressibility— as well as the struggles eighteenth-century writers faced as they attempted to integrate those excesses into understandings of subjective experience and coherent philosophical, aesthetic, and moral systems.

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INTRODUCTION

In Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* (1788), two young girls are chastised for looking away from a terrible sight. On the ground before them lies a mutilated bird, which "had one leg broken, and both its wings shattered; and its little eyes seemed starting out of their sockets, it was in such exquisite pain" (4). The children's governess, Mrs. Mason, commands them to "Look at it" because it is their moral duty to see and to relieve the pain of others (4). To refuse to do so "would be cruel; and avoiding an unpleasant sensation" in themselves, they "should allow the poor bird to die by inches, and call this treatment tenderness, when it would be selfishness or weakness" (4). Because sympathizing with others was regarded as an ethical duty, many eighteenth-century writers depicted such scenes of suffering to hone the moral senses of their readers, just as Mrs. Mason is attempting to hone those of her young charges. By forcing the girls to overcome their own discomfort in relieving the pain of the bird, the lesson is also designed to correct the overindulgence of sensibility that could lead to selfish inaction and feminine weakness, of which Wollstonecraft's later work was so critical. But even for Mrs. Mason, confronting the bird's suffering is almost unbearable and as she "put her foot on the bird's head, [she turned] her own another way" (4).

This brief, but troubling, children's story illustrates a number of complications that pain poses to eighteenth-century formulations of sympathy as a feature of the moral sense and an impetus to ethical behavior. Sympathy enables the girls to experience sensations alike in kind to those felt by the bird. Theoretically, then, they should be eager to relieve its suffering, compelled to fulfill their social duty by the strength of their aesthetic sense of its pain. However, as continually happens throughout the century, pain obstructs the moral function of sympathy. The children are unwilling even to look at the bird's "exquisite pain" precisely because they are

fearful of what it will cause them to feel (4). Likewise, the telling detail that Mrs. Mason turns her head away in spite of herself suggests that she is overcoming a disinclination to engage with the bird's suffering because of her *preexisting* sense of social obligation, not because sympathy has created a sense of social obligation between herself and the other. On the contrary, sympathy with pain is something that must be overcome in order for her to perform her moral duty. Finally, because Mrs. Mason is relieving her own pain in addition to the bird's, her motivation is potentially more self-interested than altruistic. That is, in crushing the bird's head she is not only ending its pain; she is also putting a stop to the signs of its distress that cause her to feel discomfort. These overlapping motives create the possibility that her desire to relieve her own sympathy pains have overshadowed the importance of the bird's suffering.

This dissertation explores the way in which ethically complex moments, like those that arise in Wollstonecraft's story, result from the shifting significance of sympathy, pain, and subjectivity throughout the eighteenth century. Even as individuals celebrated the keenness of their sensibility and the refinement of their moral senses, the motivation for sympathizing with pain remained a vexed philosophical question. Once a spiritually and socially meaningful experience that resulted from the interplay of body, mind, and soul, pain became increasingly classified as a mechanism that registered distress or pathology in the body and as an experience that human beings instinctively avoid. Moral philosophers were thus hard pressed to explain why individuals would subject themselves to the pain of others through sympathy, particularly as sympathy was believed to transmit physical sensations from one individual to another. To account for this difficulty, philosophers in the first half of the century envisioned a variety of compensatory pleasures to rationalize and justify sympathy with suffering. These justifications, often troubling in themselves, became untenable as the status of pain and the structure of

sympathy continued to evolve into more recognizably modern formulations as the century advanced. On one hand, specialized physiological discourses pushed pain further into the body and out of the fuller context of lived experience. On the other, sympathy was newly conceived of as an imaginative endeavor rather than as a physical mechanism. Because internalized pain was not readily accessible to the imagination, sympathy with suffering became even more complex in the latter half of the century, even inappropriate to expect from others. Unlike sympathy with pleasurable or neutral sensations, sympathy with pain creates resistance to the ethical behavior and sociability it was supposed to facilitate. As such, painful sensations uniquely reveal sympathy's limitations in providing social meaning to embodied subjective experience and in facilitating inter-subjective connection. Pain thus contributes to feelings of alienation for the modernizing subject precisely because it exceeds the logic of sympathy, which was purported to act as a bridge between autonomous individuals.

As literary authors, like Wollstonecraft, attempted to develop and train the sensibilities of their readers, they often implicitly and explicitly grapple with the problem of pain in their texts, creating additional problems in the process. Each chapter of this project considers an individual literary author's depiction of pain and the conundrums that it poses to sympathy, subjectivity, and morality. Before turning to these literary texts, though, this three-part introduction will provide an overview of the critical conversations, historical developments, and philosophical contexts that will be pertinent to my analysis. In the first section, "Sympathy, Sensibility, and Sentimentality," I briefly discuss the origins and definitions of these closely-related concepts and survey important critical work that has been done on each. In doing so, it is my hope to clarify my project's contribution to a well-established facet of eighteenth-century studies. In my second section, "Pain," I first look forward to consider the differences between eighteenth-century

understandings of pain and contemporary ones. Then, I look backward to consider transformations in seventeenth-century thought that help to account for the secularization and mechanization of pain in the eighteenth century. In the final section, "Pain, Pleasure, and The Moral Sense," I consider the ways in which moral philosophers described the relationship of sympathy to morality and how they accounted for the problem of pain—that is, how they described the motivation for engaging with the pain of others while simultaneously positing that individuals will pursue pleasure and avoid pain and that goodness is inherently pleasurable and evil is inherently painful. This section concludes with an overview of the arguments that will be made in each of my chapters regarding the ways in which literary authors tried to make sense of pain, morality, and the self through secular philosophical terms.

Sympathy, Sensibility, and Sentimentality

In eighteenth-century physiology, sympathy "refers to the fact that an injured organ or part of the body provokes pain somewhere else" (Rey 122).[1] Because "sympathetic connections between regions or organs" could be used to explain the "occurrence, propagation, movement and the disappearance of sensations," physiologists believed that sympathy revealed "secret and mysterious underlying structures of the body" (Pilloud and Louis-Courvoisier 466).[2] Just as

1. As outlandish as this might sound, the concept of sympathy corresponds surprisingly well with the modern concept of referred pain. Referred pain, defined as "pain felt at a site remote from the site of origin/stimulation" by Lars Arendt-Nielsen and Peter Svensson in *The Clinical Journal of Pain,* remains helpful in diagnostics and elusive in mechanics (11).

2. Sympathy was also an important tool for indicating the source of pathology in ill patients. For example, because it was known that "when the stomach is affected, it is the head that suffers," physicians could rely on sympathetic headaches to point towards the source of disease or injury—in this case the stomach — helping to determine a course of treatment (Rey 122). It is possibly due to this reasoning that Dr. Buchan advises that "gentle vomits [should] be administered, as also purges of rhubarb" to treat headaches in *Domestic Medicine* (355).

philosophers would later claim that sympathy allowed sensations to pass from one individual to another, physiologists claimed that sympathy allowed sensations to pass from one organ to another. Likewise, both concluded that this transfer of sensation was dependent on sensibility.

As Roselyn Rey points out in *The History of Pain* (1995), "sensibility was a physiological concept before it was a psychological or aesthetic one and its characteristics had been defined through the observation of 'subtle anatomy' by the physicians of the [seventeenth] century" (89). Indeed, G. S. Rousseau's "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility" (1973) has famously linked the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility to Thomas Willis's discovery of the central nervous system and the "sensibility" of the nerves in 1664. Sensibility's association with the nerves solidified as the eighteenth century progressed due to the work of Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777). Haller's experiments were centered on establishing "distinctions between the irritability of the muscle fiber *i.e.* that which we term contractibility, and the excitability of the nerve fiber, which he called sensibility" (Rey 109). Whereas Haller relegated sensibility to nerves, other schools of thought, particularly vitalists, suggested that sensibility was present in even the "smallest living fiber"— "the sign of life" itself (Rey 114). Because the body was innervated with sensibility, sensations could move sympathetically between congruent tissues, through the animal spirits, or be circulated with the blood, "uniting" the disparate parts of the body "from a sensory point of view" (Pilloud and Louis-Courvoisier 466). Extrapolating from these theories, moral philosophers largely coopted the physiological concepts of sympathy and sensibility as they anatomized social interactions. The sympathetic communication of feeling, which produced an embodied connection between the experiential reality of sensible individuals, could reveal the "secret and mysterious

underlying structures" of society that made ethical behavior possible (Pilloud and Louis-Courvoisier 466).

Unsurprisingly, many studies of sentimentality begin, like sensibility itself, in the nervous body. For example John Mullan's *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (1988) shows that "the sensibility which might manifest itself in the disorder of internal organs" was largely inseparable from "the sensibility which is a privilege" of sentimental individuals (231). As a consequence of their exquisite sensitivity to others, individuals should be naturally inclined to virtuous social interactions. But, as Mullan points out, rather than fostering community engagement, "the apotheosis of feeling [in sentimental novels] typically involves the representation of sensibility in retreat, segregated from a world impervious to it" (213). Medical texts of the periods suggest that the readers of those sentimental novels were likewise inclined to an excessive and unsociable sensitivity. Because individuals diagnosed with "hypochondria, hysteria, and nervous disorder[s]" retreated from society into sickbeds, Mullan concludes that "there is no social space for sensibility" and "illness is its appropriate metaphor" (201, 240).

More recently, Paul Goring's *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (2005) has looked beyond the sentimental novel to public performances of the passions to explore the importance of the sensible body in eighteenth-century culture. Actors, orators, and preachers who displayed the "single tears, delicate sighs, [and] gentle swoons" of sentimentality were influential, Goring argues, in educating the public about what constitutes "polite" behavior in the "new social spaces and new discursive situations" of the "partially unformed ... bourgeois identity" (20, 21). Because "such figures occupied supremely public positions in eighteenth-century life," they "thus were ripe for taking on the symbolic function of embodying civility and

for dispersing this quality through a broader public" (Goring 25). Even privately-consumed sentimental novels, Goring suggests, are involved in the physical display of sensibility due to "strong public or social pressures upon readers to perform or advertise proper responses to novelistic literature" (Goring 29).[3]

Goring's insights into the importance of bodily displays of polite sensibility in public arenas builds from G. J. Barker-Benfield's encyclopedic discussion of the civilizing function of sensibility and sentimentality in *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1992). As Barker-Benfield notes, eighteenth-century discourses regarding sensibility considered female bodies to be particularly sensitive, making the female mind particularly receptive to the moral sense. The "refining" influence of feminine society thus could soften the edges of a rough and licentious masculinity. The domestication of men of feeling, Barker-Benfield argues, was largely accomplished through "eighteenth-century fiction" which "propagated a 'new ideology of femininity' and of masculinity, in opposition to ideologies represented by coarser, less civilized figures" (Barker-Benfield 215). The cultivation of sentimental men, however, gave rise to fears of male effeminacy, exacerbated by women entering the public sphere as authors and as consumers. Terry Eagleton's *Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990) has likewise drawn attention to the ways in which sensibility was used as a hegemonic tool—often to highly conservative ends. Despite drastic social changes, such as the emergence of the middle class and an increasingly mercantile public sphere, moral philosophers were optimistic that citizens could successfully coalescence into a unified social body through the "irresistible aesthetic appeal" of virtue (Eagleton 35). However, these "spontaneous"

3. The demonstrative weeping over novels that Goring describes, like the nervous invalids that Mullan discusses, are emblematic of the negative aspects of over-prized sensibility that Wollstonecraft's story attempts to correct. See G. J. Barker-Benfield for an overview of additional critiques of sentimentality's emotional excesses.

aesthetic experiences had to be cultivated through a genteel education dictated by aristocratic social standards.

In *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (1996), Adela Pinch demonstrates sensibility's importance in creating individual subjectivity in addition to communities of feeling. Through a close reading of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Pinch argues that David Hume positions sympathy as central to the formation of the subject, which is dependent on "catching" positive feelings about the self from others and internalizing those feelings as pride and, ultimately, as a sense of personal identity. The same contagious aspect of sympathy that creates subjective identity also allows emotion to move through entire communities in the manner of an infection. This phenomena can be seen, for example, in the "culture of quotation," which reprints poignant phrases to produce wide-spread sorrows in the reading public (Pinch 167). Because the passions played such a crucial role in society and in the self, they also sparked a parallel need to confirm their veracity. External bodily signs, like those discussed by Mullan and Goring, were important ways to gauge the authenticity of emotion. However, as Janet Todd points out, these outward signs were increasingly suspect. Todd's *Sensibility: An Introduction* (1986) offers a sweeping overview of sentimentality in English drama, poetry, and fiction, contextualized in "the shifting importance of various classes, the growth of London, the increase in publishing and literary activity in provincial towns, the changing perception of the family... the economic and cultural situation of women, and the interrelated developments in religion, philosophy, and science" (10). Todd asserts that the widespread belief in sentimental literature's ability to provoke an authentic "emotional, even physical response" in sensible readers had transformed into a distrust of "debased and affected feelings" by the 1780s (8). Markman Ellis is inclined to disagree with this timeline of

sentimentality's rise and fall in *The Politics of Sensibility* (1996). Ellis, who argues that "the sentimental novel effectively created a new political role for literature" "by addressing an audience that was disenfranchised and lacking political power," believes that sentimentality remained vital well beyond the 1780s (3). Just as the sentimental novel participated in debates regarding slavery, commerce, and prostitution in the eighteenth century, it also created "powerful forms of political argument and literary production in the nineteenth century and beyond" (Ellis 221).

Ellis presents his argument— which highlights the importance of gender as well as sensibility's origins in the "conduct-book tradition" — as a unique deviation from the "history of ideas approach" that has dominated much criticism of sensibility (34, 9). This approach, which "locate[s] the origins of literary sentimentalism in the writings of the moral philosophers of the early eighteenth century," is unsatisfying to Ellis because it does "not adequately account for the significant and specific transformation of gender inherent in the sentimental novel" (22-3). Ellis certainly is justified in pointing out the necessity of contextualizing such a rich historical phenomena beyond "the moral philosophy of Smith and Hume" (34). But the history of ideas approach continues to yield interesting insights— even at this late date in sensibility studies. For example, Ildiko Csengei has broken important new ground in *Sympathy, Sensibility, and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (2012) using the now familiar archive of moral sense philosophy.

Much like James Steintrager's *Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman* (2004),[4] Csengei's study is motivated by her interest in "the factors that make it possible for

4. According to Steintrager, "the inhuman was a category produced from within philosophical discourse, one that had to be posited if humanity was to take shape at all" (xv). His book explores the category of the inhuman as well as the "simple, arbitrary, but explicable

self-interest, cruelty and violence to become constitutive aspects of the ostensibly benevolent, philanthropist ideology of eighteenth-century sensibility" (1). However, this interest is subsidiary to her larger project of "link[ing] up sensibility and sympathy with the history of psychiatry and psychoanalysis," particularly with modern concepts like "empathy, transference, and identification" (Csengei 17, 22). Csengei's discussion of sensibility's psychiatric legacy is interesting, but it is her emphasis on "the co-existence of disparate notions of sympathy and their problematic conceptualization," that sets her study apart from the countless others that have caused Ellis to lament that there are no new worlds to conquer (21). Indeed, G. S. Rousseau notes that "sympathy was eventually destined to become a main participant in our debates about Enlightenment sensibility" and credits Csengei with "beg[inning] that task" (155). Drawing from a similar philosophical archive, my project continues the work of highlighting sympathy's centrality to the much-studied phenomena of moral sense philosophy, the culture of sensibility, and sentimentality. In particular, it is my hope that my analysis of sympathy's relationship to different theories of the moral sense helps to clarify a complex dynamic that is often glossed over. Additionally, this project's focus on the changing significance of pain in the eighteenth century and on pain's role in theories of human motivation allows me to pose unique questions: how is sympathy with pain made logical within the context of moral sense philosophy's claim to facilitate inter-subjective connections between individuals believed to avoid pain and seek pleasure instinctively? And, what are the consequences of this logic on conceptions of pain and of subjectivity both in the eighteenth century and today?

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refusal in eighteenth-century moral treatises to countenance the possible pleasure of malevolence or, in the more problematic versions of moral monstrosity, to consider this pleasure as a greater determinant than benevolence" (17).

Pain

"Human pain is never timeless, just as it is never merely an affair of bodies" (Morris 29). In *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Samuel Johnson defines "pain" in its noun form in the following seven ways:

1. Punishment denounced.
2. Penalty; punishment.
3. Sensation of uneasiness.
4. [In the plural] Labour; work; toil.
5. Labour; task.
6. Uneasiness of mind about something absent or future; anxiety; solicitude.
7. The throws of child-birth.

In the broadness of this definition we see evidence of what Stephen Pender calls "the multiple, variegated meanings of grief, of suffering, and of pain" characteristic of "early modernity" and continuing into the eighteenth century (469). Indeed, the variegation of the definition seems to provide a snapshot of the concept of pain in transition. Three clusters of meaning emerge: punishment, labor, and uneasiness. However, the irregularity of Johnson's grouping of the entries suggests that some of these facets were not as lucidly conceptualized as others. Whereas the entries that describe pain as punishment are grouped together, logically expanded upon from entry one to entry two, pain as labor introduces a telling division. The labor of "child-birth"[5] is separated from the labor of tasks and toils, creating distance between the significance of pain when felt in the public sphere of economic exchange and when felt in the private sphere, specifically by women. Pain as uneasiness, which is described in entries three and six, seems most inchoate due to the lack of continuity that interrupts the development of the idea. Interestingly, the idea of uneasiness is the only one of these three meanings that corresponds to modern definitions of pain while the others have become obsolete and even counter-intuitive.

5. The OED shows that "labour" was used to reference childbirth as early as 1472, and was utilized as such throughout the eighteenth century.

According to the International Association for the Study of Pain, an organization that "brings together scientists, clinicians, health-care providers, and policymakers to stimulate and support the study of pain and to translate that knowledge into improved pain relief worldwide," pain is "an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage." This definition provides a helpful point of contrast through which to consider the multiple meanings that Johnson presents and through which to examine the differences between the eighteenth-century concept of pain and current ones.

First, there are a few unexpected points of similarity that suggest some eighteenth-century beliefs about pain are attaining new resonance in modern contexts. For example, both the IASP and Johnson define pain as having mental and physical aspects. In granting that pain is "sensory" and "emotional" as well as "actual or potential," the IASP reflects what "medical views of the last four decades have increasingly come to [recognize]": the difficulty of categorizing pain as a purely physical phenomenon (Dijkhuizen and Enenkel 1).[6] By making space for the affective aspects of pain, the IASP resists "the artificial division we create in accepting a belief that human pain is split by a chasm into uncommunicating categories called physical and mental" (Morris 9).[7] This "Myth of the Two Pains," which David Morris critiques

6. Indeed, in *The Sense of Suffering* J. F. van Dijkhuizen and K. A. E Enenkel assert that "'Pure' pain does not seem to exist, both in the sense that what we think of as the singular sensation of pain is in fact a complex of physiological events, and in the sense that the experience of pain is inextricably bound up with our mental response to it. Pain, therefore, ... challenges common-sense dualist assumptions about the nature of physical and mental experience" (1).

7. David Morris provides compelling assessments of the illogic of categorizing pain as either physical or mental in *The Culture of Pain.* For instance, "Sharp pain and dull pain proceed on different paths to the thalamus and then continue on to the cerebral cortex. At some point they connect with the limbic system, which controls our emotional responses" (Morris 155). In

as responsible for stripping pain of its dimensionality, social context, and significance, reflects a Cartesian mind-body dualism, and as such can be projected upon perceptions of pain as early as the seventeenth century (9).

However, it is important to recognize that "Descartes' investigation of pain in the *Meditations* suggests that by the mid-seventeenth-century, the distinction between mental and bodily suffering … was still not self-evident or unproblematic" (Dijkhuizen 219). In fact, in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), pain links the body and mind more convincingly than his most meticulous reasoning could. Descartes writes:

> But there is nothing which this nature teaches more expressly (nor more sensibly) than that I have a body which is adversely affected when I am in pain, which has need of food or drink when I experience the feelings of hunger and thirst, and so on; nor can I doubt there being some truth in all this. Nature likewise teaches me *by these sensations of pain*, hunger, thirst, etc., that I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel, but that I am besides *so intimately conjoined, and as it were intermixed with it, that my mind and body compose a certain unity.* For if this were not the case, I should not feel pain when my body is hurt, seeing I am merely a thinking thing, but should perceive the wound by the understanding alone, just as a pilot perceives by sight when any part of his vessel is damaged. (93 emphasis added)

The radical division between mental and physical pain that Morris critiques in modern medical contexts may have derived from Descartes' mind-body dualism,[8] but this divisive way of viewing the sensations of the mind and body was by no means clear cut, even for Descartes, nor was it instantly transformative for his contemporaries.

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other words, the same nerve sensations that produce physical sensations activate emotional sensations in the process. Moreover, both these physical and emotional sensations are dependent on the mind, not the body, to be perceived as pain.

8. For Morris, modern science has refined Descartes's cruder physiological terms such that we "now talk about nociceptive impulses and endorphins rather than about filaments and animal spirits, but the basic idea is the same" (271).

Johnson, reflecting the belief that "emotions were indivisible from corporeal sensations," still salient in the middle of the eighteenth century, makes no clear division between uneasiness as a physical experience and uneasiness as a mental experience (Smith 460). True, the inclusion of both entry three—the ambiguously physical "*sensation* of uneasiness"— and entry six— the ambiguously mental experience of "anxiety" or "solicitude"— suggests that there is a qualitative difference between the two. However, the illustrative quotations that Johnson provides show that the distinction he is establishing is along temporal rather than experiential lines. For example, in the first quotation following entry three— "the pains of the touch are greater than the offenses of the other senses"[9]— the presumably "physical" pain of touch is on a continuum with the presumably "mental" pain produced by senses like sight or hearing. The pains are not different in kind, however, only in intensity. Likewise, in the third quotation— "He would believe, but yet is still in pain; presses the pulse, and feels the leaping vein" [10] — pain appears to be described and felt through the body—made visible by the leaping vein— but actually stems from the sufferer's doubts. The ambiguity between physical and mental experiences of pain in entry three is most clearly demonstrated in the final quotation: "What pain do you think a man must feel, when his conscience lays this folly to his charge?"[11] The pain of conscience is grouped with the tangibly physical pain of the touch in quotation one, not with the "future" possibility of "anxiety" in entry six. Johnson does not appear to prioritize a distinction between mental and physical pain, rather he prioritizes a distinction between what the IASP calls "actual" or "potential" pain.

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9. Taken from Bacon's Natural History section of *Instauratio Magna.*

10. Taken from Dryden's *Pygmalion and the Statue* translated from Ovid's Metamorphoses.

11. Taken from William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, adapted to the State and Condition of all order of Christians.*

Despite the fact that the IASP defines pain as having both mental and physical aspects, it does stipulate that pain is felt in or described through the body—through gross "tissue damage." In other words, the thought of the body, particularly the destruction of the body, is essential for an experience to qualify as painful.[12] However, as seen, Johnson does not grant the body particular primacy in his definition. Moreover, the implication that the body is destroyed by pain is only present in the first pair of entries: pain as punishment. The fact that bodily destruction is inherent when pain is used as punishment indicates a division between Johnson's eighteenth-century understanding of pain and those of previous centuries. As the following illustrative quotations demonstrate, pain is used for punishment in exclusively secular terms:

> i. "There the princesses determining to bathe themselves, thought it so privileged a place, upon pain of death, as nobody durst presume to come thither" (Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia).*
> ii. "On pain of death no person being so bold/ Or daring hardy, as to touch the list" (Shakespeare, *Richard II).*
> iii. "Interpose, on pain of my displeasure,/Betwixt their swords" (Dryden, *Don Sebastian*).
> iv. "None shall presume to fly under pain of death" (Addison, *Guardian*).

These quotations all stress the idea of death—or royal displeasure, which amounts basically to the same thing—as the "pain" of punishment. The body is literally destroyed as a consequence of disobeying the laws of decency, the will of the aristocracy, or, in Addison's case, the rules of patent and property.[13] Conspicuously absent in these quotations is the possibility that punishment might lead to spiritual cleansing or have redemptive potential. This absence contrasts starkly

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12. This stipulation is understandable given the parameters of the organization, comprised of scientists and clinicians committed to worldwide pain relief. However, such a stipulation nonetheless minimizes the relevancy and importance of emotional pain if imagined in terms other than of bodily experience.

13. When Addison claims that "none shall presume to fly," he means this literally. This excerpt is discussing a patented wing design, upon which none shall dare to infringe.

with the experience of pain in the seventeenth century and shows the drastic transitions that were taking place in the conceptualization of pain in the human experience.

The belief that bodily pain was symptomatic of impure living or spiritual disorder was a prominent part of religious, philosophical, and scientific thought in the seventeenth century and prior. For seventeenth-century thinkers, Descartes included, espousing "the Augustinian belief that 'nobody suffers pointlessly,'" bodily pains were "signs of moral import" that could lead individuals closer to God (Rey 78, Mayhew 303). Rather than seeking to alleviate pain as an undesirable consequence of bodily illness, prayer manuals and physicians alike instructed sixteenth and seventeenth-century believers "to experience pain itself as a cordial" (Mayhew 314). Pain as a punishment for sin plays an explanatory role in animistic schools of thought as well. Seventeenth-century animists, like G. E. Stahl, held that the body was a passive organism, requiring the intervention of the soul to animate it into sensation and action. Because animists "considered the soul to be directly responsible for all organic functions, it made pain a particularly important sign in illness and the sign of internal strife" (Rey102). Pain therefore was a "conflict between the free and voluntary pursuits of the soul and the impulses produced by natural appetites" (Rey 106). The more individuals could discipline their baser instincts into morality, the less pain was felt.

Comprehending pain as a necessary, and even welcome, moment on the road to salvation allowed sufferers to take control of their pain, Jenny Mayhew argues in "Godly Beds of Pain: Pain in English Protestant Manuals (ca. 1550-1650)." Protestant handbooks, like William Perkins' *Salve for a Sicke Man* (1595), encouraged readers to utilize a variety of rhetorical tactics when experiencing suffering to alter that experience into a spiritually meaningful one. For example, suffers were instructed to use "demonstrative rhetoric" that "def[ied] the meaning of

inflicted harm"; to construct an "internal dialogue" that "divide[d] a pained body from its superior soulful occupant"; to "'turn' the experience of pain, figuratively into another kind of experience"; and to "inur[e] the mind to the prospect of pain ... in advance of its onset" (Mayhew 304). These tactics were modeled both on the relationship of martyred saints to their torment, as recorded in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563) and, of course, on Christ. The access of Christians to Christ's pain, though, was subject of intense debate between Roman Catholics and Protestant reformers in the early modern period, forming what Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen calls "a watershed moment in ... 'the history of pain'" (190). For Roman Catholics, influenced by the works of Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), Louis of Granada (1505-1588), and Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the experience of pain was "a way of participating in Christ's Passion, and hence [was] a way of becoming one with Christ" (Dijkhuizen 215). Accordingly, bodily pain became "something to be cultivated and actively sought" (Dijkhuizen 215). On the other hand, Protestant Reformers, notably Calvin (1509-1564), resisted the idealization of bodily pain as an avenue towards Christ. Calvin cautioned that bodily "pain is not productive in itself" nor is it possible to "locat[e] Christ's divinity" in "his physical humanity" (Dijkhuizen 215). Despite these disputes, Calvin was unable wholly to suppress Protestant identification of bodily pain with spiritual beatification, as Mayhew's archive demonstrates. This failure attests to the value that believers found in identifying with Christ's suffering. It was a way to make pain, which was a frequent, intense, and inescapable part of lived experience, productive and personally meaningful. Given the prevalence and tenacity of this association in the early modern period, the fact that Johnson's definition makes no space for the spiritual significance of suffering attests to the dramatically secular reconceptualization of pain in the Enlightenment.

Whereas Johnson grants that punishment utilizes the threat of bodily destruction to enforce social order, the destruction of the body is absent in the other two meanings. For example, the entries describing pain as labor suggest that it is *cons*tructive, producing both goods and children. Even the entries describing pain as uneasiness evoke the possibility that the sensation has a constructive rather than a destructive potential. If pain is a disturbance in an individual's ease or repose, it creates desire—or so John Locke argued 60 years prior to the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary*. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke asserts that desire, founded on the uneasiness of pain, is central to all human motivation. The active resonance of pain, therefore, is still possible in Johnson's description of labor and to a lesser extent, in his description of uneasiness, which, as the illustrative quotations show, is moving towards a passive experience of distress. However, it is altogether illogical in the IASP's word choice, "unpleasantness."[14] By defining pain as a negative experience that is synonymous with the absence of pleasantness, or pleasure, the IASP is signaling its assumption that pleasure is central to human motivation. This thinking is common to modern secular societies, Talal Asad argues, which often presume that self-regulating autonomous individuals will actively pursue pleasure and intentionally resist forces that threaten to inhibit their self-empowerment, such as pain. Though such a relationship to pain had not fully formed by the mid-eighteenth century, I argue that this hedonistic line of thinking, so influentially utilized by Hobbes, can also be seen in the reasoning of eighteenth-century moral sense philosophers, contributing to the development of both modern conceptions of pain and of the self.

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14. The fact that pain is described in terms of what it is *not* —*un*easiness or *un*pleasantness— signifies, perhaps what Elaine Scarry would consider to be the difficulty of describing pain positively. In *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985) Scarry claims that pain, "more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language" and is almost always described through external objects and signs, like weapons or visible bodily damage (5).

The presumption that pain is a destructive and debilitating experience is central to Elaine Scarry's groundbreaking *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985) and much of the work that it has influenced. For Scarry, it is because pain "has no referential content" that it is so dangerous and so often exploited (5). For example, in torture, the victim is made to experience overpowering pain that "is not *of* or *for* anything" (Scarry 5). Because the objectless pain fills the consciousness of the victim, his world collapses into the unendurable presence of the body and its agony. The torturer uses civilization's tools and artifacts as weapons, thereby objectifying pain *as* those weapons and claiming them as agents of the regime's power. Scarry thus reads pain as a definitively passive experience, capable even of un-creating a subject's humanity. However, in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003), Asad points out that Scarry's perspective on pain is historically contingent, not universal and timeless. Rather, Asad demonstrates, different cultures, religions, and historical periods had radically different ways of perceiving pain, particularly as an active rather than passive experience. Though "the living body is the object of sensation (and in that sense passive)," Asad argues, it can become active when it "use[s] its pain in unique ways in particular social relationships" (89). In other words, if the subject in pain regards the experience as having a goal or as relational, they become as active in it as in any other autonomous action.[15] Such agency can be seen in the extreme physical pains of martyred saints—like those used as models by Catholic and Protestant sufferers described above— and even in those of birthing mothers.

15. The supposition that a person's relationship to pain can create positive value for it is reminiscent of "one of the more troubling aspects of Galenic medicine" (Schoenfelt 7). By making "patients the agent rather than the victim of his or her health, it also provides a framework for blaming the patient for the illness that arbitrarily afflicts him or her" (Schoenfeldt 7).

An awareness of the ideologically determined aspects of pain is particularly necessary, but particularly easy to overlook, due to pain's liminal position between a physiological fact and a historically/culturally mediated experience. Pain marks "the intersections between the physical human body— the product of evolutionary process—and the cultural body, the human body as it is experienced and perceived by people in specific cultural and historical circumstances" (Dijkhuizen and Enenkel 1-2). Asad can help us to re-approach Scarry's assessment of pain in the physical human body as a viable, but not inevitable, construction of pain in the "specific cultural and historical circumstances" of modernity. In doing so, we are able to appreciate Scarry's important work on the urgency and reality of suffering *and* able to consider how it depicts what is and is not logical to think about pain in a modern context. Scarry shows us that active, religious, or relational experiences of pain have almost entirely disappeared from the modern experience. One of the goals of this project, then, is to demonstrate the influence that the transformation of suffering in the eighteenth century had on the development of modern conceptions of pain, particularly eighteenth-century understandings of pain as an embodied, mechanical, and secular event. By considering the terms through which these changes occurred, it is my hope to contribute to on-going conversations regarding the value and the limitations of current ideas about pain.

Scientific advances in the seventeenth century, particularly "[William] Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood ... in 1628" and Thomas Willis's *Cerebri Anatome* in 1664 contributed to the secularization of suffering and paved the way for a more analytic, explanatory, and pragmatic relationship to pain that would come to dominate modern attitudes (Rey 71). Likewise, the publication of Thomas Sydenham's formula for the production of an "alcoholic opium tincture ... popularised under the name of laudanum" in 1676 ignited

discussions regarding the validity of seeking medical relief from pain as that relief became both more reliable and more readily available (Davenport-Hines 35).

Despite the advent of laudanum, pain was still very much a part of eighteenth-century daily life. As G. S. Rousseau points out, "doctors and surgeons in the eighteenth century generally expected a threshold of pain exceeding anything we can imagine" (53). But because of the culture of science that contributed to the advent of laudanum, "people became, quite simply, more aware of the possibilities of a healthier life and less willing to bear sickness with traditional religious resolve" (Anselment 225). This unwillingness to accept pain can be seen, for instance, in Elizabeth Freke's diary/memoir, which Raymond A. Anselment presents as a case study of eighteenth-century suffering. And for good reason— Freke's autobiographical narrative, which she began in 1702 and continued almost until her death in 1714, documents the frequency with which she and those around her were confronted with "inescapable, even insuperable suffering at times beyond human ministration" (Anselment 230). However Freke's methods for making sense of suffering differ greatly from methods recorded in diaries earlier in the seventeenth century. That is, she does not "see the suffering of sickness as a punishment for her sins or as a rod of chastisement" (Anselment 229). Instead, she attempts to take control of illness through medical knowledge and by incorporating it into a personal understanding of self.[16]

The desire to alleviate pain, or at least to give it non-religious personal meaning, grew as perceptions of its spiritual value waned. This can be seen poignantly not only in personal

16. Freke's diary contains hundreds of therapeutic recipes and remedies honed from extensive reading of medical texts, such as: John Colbatch's "'Book of Cirgiary' ... two books of Nicholas Culpepper's 'physick,' John Pechey's 'Compleatt Herball,' and 'i Book of the Family phisition'" to name only a few (Anselment 227). But also, it shows the extent to which Freke's identity as a wife and mother were "inseparable from her (at times) consuming obsession with her own history of pain and healing" (Anselment 229).

memoirs like Elizabeth Freke's, but in rich archives of consultation letters from the early eighteenth century. These letters, many of which were "written in the first person, by the ill persons themselves," offer unique insight into the way in which eighteenth-century sufferers understood and described pain (Pilloud and Louis-Courvoisier 454). Importantly, consultation letters reveal that pain was a site of negotiation. According to Séverine Pilloud and Micheline Louis-Courvoisier, who examine letters to the renowned Swiss doctor, Samuel Auguste Tissot (1728-1797), patients exercised significant agency over their own diagnoses. These letters frequently challenged Dr. Tissot's opinion, whose expertise they ostensibly sought out. Lisa Wynne Smith, who examines the consultation letters of Étienne-François Geoffroy of Paris and Sir Hans Sloane of London, concurs that the negotiation of illness was vital for patients, especially those who had to find a way of living with chronic pain. According to Smith, patients would negotiate with doctors until able to agree upon "frameworks for understanding their illnesses ... fitting with their self-perception" (Smith 472). These mutually-constructed frameworks "provided the first step to living more comfortably with pain rather than being dominated by it" (Smith 472).

Early eighteenth-century consultation letters suggest that the "bodily experience" of pain could be "constructed inter-subjectively" between patients and physicians (Pilloud and Louis-Courvoisier 454). This inter-subjective construction was possible, in part, because patients shared a common medical vocabulary with their doctors: the language of Galen's humors. Galen's conception of the body as "an internal [balance] of humoral fluids" might have seemed archaic to the Enlightened physicians whose reputations and expertise were centered on new "models of Nature ... as matter in motion, governed by laws capable of mathematical

expression," such as iatrochemistry and iatromechanics (Schoenfeldt 2, Porter 138).[17] Nonetheless, the usefulness of humoral medicine[18] ensured that it was not quickly or dramatically removed from lived experiences of pain and ideas about bodily health.

Instead, physicians like Tissot, Sloane, and Geoffroy—not to mention George Cheyne—"continued to use humoralism in practice, despite their adherence to other theories, not only because it allowed doctors and patients to speak the same language, but because it was effective—and the newer theories lacked practical applications" (Smith 466). Newer, mathematically-based and mechanically-oriented physiological models had to coexist with older frameworks of the body, at least initially. However, as the century progressed, there was a steady shift away from older Galenic models towards increasingly specialized ones. According to Steven Shapin, "when the corpuscles of micromechanism took the place of the four elements, there were new implications and opportunities for physiological and medical expertise. Iatromechanism and iatromathematics were platforms from which the advanced physician could speak for an invisible realm" (269-70). Because the body became something that only

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17. For example, Dr. George Cheyne, best known for *The English Malady* (1733) and his fashionable patients, effectively established his career through the "aggressively iatromathematical tract" *A New Theory of Continual Fevers* in 1702 (Shapin 271). The knowledge displayed in this earlier work allowed Cheyne to present himself as a "'rational physician' ... distinguished ... from the vulgar 'empirick'" (Shapin 271). Though Dr. Cheyne "repudiated his youthful mathematical brashness and excessive Newtonian enthusiasm" by "refashion[ing] himself into a dietetic doctor," he nonetheless occasionally displayed his "iatromechanical expertise" to establish authority over argumentative patients or other physicians. (Shapin 272, 270-1). In fact, "it was in large measure because Cheyne advertised his new ontological expertise" Shapin points out "that he took the risk publicly to defy dietetic tradition and common sense," as seen for example in his infamous milk and seed diet that Richardson, for one, found so distasteful (295).

18. As Smith notes, the movement and quality of the humors allowed patients to provide important descriptive details about their pain to physicians, including: "location, movement, pattern, intensity, emotional response, hotness or coldness, moistness or dryness, and sharpness or heaviness" (465).

specialized professionals could read and interpret, doctors exerted more and more control over the terms of illness, recovery, and pain. Accordingly, "the sick person's body ... gradually replaced his or her narrative" and pain becomes increasingly positioned in the "invisible realm" of medical expertise (Shapin 270). Sufferers then were losing linguistic control over their pain and the ability to negotiate meaning for it as the century progressed.

For instance, the battle to make sense of pain, the waning relevancy of humoral medicine, and increasing specialization of medical knowledge coalesce to form much of the humor of Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (1771). Smollett, himself a surgeon, pokes fun at the cantankerous Matthew Bramble's obsessive negotiation of his pain. Bramble, "an invalid surprised by premature old age, and shattered with long-suffering" (32), gripes to Dr. Lewis:

> The pills are good for nothing— I might as well swallow snow-balls to cool my reins— I have told you over and over, how hard I am to move and at this time of day, I ought to know something of my own constitution. Why will you be so positive? Prithee send me another prescription—I am as lame and as much tortured in all my limbs as if I was broke upon the wheel; indeed, I am equally distressed in mind and body. (5)

In a series of chatty consultation letters, Bramble seeks Dr. Lewis's help in relieving his pain while attempting to maintain ownership over his health and his symptoms. His outdated claims about the importance of "knowing thyself" are supported with recourse to the humors at work in his body and the need to balance them.

However, Dr. Lewis, whose answers are never presented, appears to reprimand Bramble for his presumption to medical expertise and his attempted participation in a specialized physiological discourse. To which Bramble grumpily replies: "I understand your hint. There are

mysteries in physick, as well as in religion, which we of the profane have no right to investigate— A man must not presume to use his reasons, unless he has studied the categories and can chop logic by modes and figure" (21). Though Bramble is met with resistance by Dr. Lewis, his critique of the "mysteries in physick" that discount the awareness of individuals in their own bodily disorders, as well as the lack of common sense that he observes in Dr. Lewis's treatments (particularly his prescription to drink the water at Bath, the dangers of which Bramble describes in stomach-turning detail), indicate that Smollett might have been equally skeptical of the validity of the new "invisible realms" of medicine which were taking access to bodily health away from individuals and placing it exclusively into expert hands.

The "multiple variegated meanings" of pain found in Johnson's definition indicate the changing possibilities for conceptualizing suffering in the middle of the eighteenth century (Pender 469). While it was still possible to experience emotional pain in the body and bodily pain in the mind, it was significantly less possible to consider pain as spiritual punishment and therefore as a point of access to the divine. Pain, largely bereft of religious value, becomes that which must be incorporated in meaningful ways into the personal, rather than spiritual, identity of the sufferer. However, because specialized medical discourses were moving pain outside of the realm of common sense and lived experience into the microscopic realm of the body, it was only read reliably by medical experts and was less available for patients to interpret as the century progressed. These medical experts, who described pain in mathematical terms as a mechanical bodily event, made no room for suffering's social dimension and increasingly classified pain as an indication of distress or pathology in the body, and as an experience that human beings instinctively avoid. Though such conceptions of pain might have been tolerably

functional in medical contexts, they proved to be much less so in moral ones, particularly because of the mechanism of sympathy.

Pain, Pleasure, and the Moral Sense

Descartes is often cited as pivotal in studies of pain. For example, in *The History of Pain,* Rey credits Descartes' "role in developing the concept of the reflex, his interest in involuntary movement... [and] his efforts to make progress in cerebral localisations" with paving the way for Thomas Willis's association of pain with the nerves and the nervous system (82). Dijkhuizen and Enenkel's *The Sense of Suffering: Constructions of Physical Pain in Early Modern Culture* discusses Descartes's influence on pain's conceptualization and valuation only less often than Christ's. And Morris's *The Culture of Pain* argues that the model of pain that Descartes initiates, which "strips away the social and psychological meanings of pain to expose almost an x-ray picture of a universal human nervous system," has reached its apotheosis in modern culture (274). "The post-Cartesian world has very successfully out-descarted Descartes," Morris argues, by "perfect[ing] a pain so stripped down that it has almost no meaning and no social value at all" (274). And yet, by all accounts, Descartes must be distinguished from "his later mechanistic followers" because of his insistence that pain must be processed by the soul (Morris 274). For Descartes, without the presence of the soul, which might be instructed by suffering, pain is pointless and incompatible with a Christian understanding of God. The value of pain for Descartes, then, is greater than the "instinctive movements and reflex movements" associated with it that form the "useful warning system" necessary to preserve the body from danger (Rey 78, Dijkhuizen 189).[19] Such reflexes are apparent in "soulless" animals, which Descartes

19. Dijkhuizen remains skeptical of the space that Descartes makes for pain's spiritual meaning. He claims that Descartes still "departed radically from pain discourses that had long

believes are not able to suffer. Suffering is exclusively an experience of the soul and retains some significance beyond just a bodily event. On the other hand, Thomas Hobbes's utter disregard for the soul makes it illogical for pain to have any but a negative value. Because pain signals a threat to the health or agency of an organism, the willful experience of pain becomes tantamount to a violation of laws of nature.[20] Therefore, I would argue that Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), less often included in histories of pain, plays an important role in its devaluation and has shaped modern perceptions—particularly Elaine Scarry's.

For Hobbes, painful experiences, like all other aspects of reality, derive exclusively from the mechanistic interaction of particles. Hobbes argues:

> The cause of Sense, is the Externall Body, or Object, which presseth the organ proper to each Sense, either immediately, as in the Tast and Touch; or mediately, as in Seeing, Hearing, and Smelling; which pressure, by the mediation of Nerves, and other strings, and membranes of the body, continued inwards to the Brain, and Heart, causeth there a resistance, or counter-pressure. (85)

Bodily sensations are simply the end result of a long series of cause and effect reactions between particles. As particles collide with the external body, they exert pressure on the nerves, which in turn exert counter pressure on the brain. These counter pressures not only result in physical sensations, they are also responsible for ideas and emotions. Ideas, thus, are also just material in motion. For Hobbes "whatever is in the universe is material, and as all things are in the universe, all things are material, or else they are nowhere and nothing" (Mintz 63).

In addition to creating sensations and ideas, Hobbes's mechanistic materialism also creates the "small beginnings of Motion, within the body of Man, before they appear in walking,

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been central to Christianity" by "effectively locating the religious dimension of pain solely in its god-given medical usefulness" (189).

20. Hobbes defines a law of nature as "a Precept, or a generall Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit, that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved" (189).

speaking, striking, and other visible actions" (119). These "small beginnings of Motion," which Hobbes calls the "endeavors" of appetite and aversion, motivate all human behavior. Hobbes's system of the endeavors is a hedonistic one; the endeavors are dependent "on the senses of what is pleasant, and unpleasant to the tast, smell, hearing, touch, and sight" (216). Unsurprisingly, appetite is associated with "*Delight*, and *Pleasure*" and aversion is associated with pain (Hobbes 122). The ability to pursue one's appetites and avoid one's aversions is dependent on an individual's power. Thus, C. B. Macpherson explains, "everyone ... is necessarily pulled into a constant competitive struggle for power over others, or at least to resist his powers being commanded by others" (37). The experience of pain indicates that one lacks the power to avoid what one is averse to or that one lacks the power to pursue one's appetites. For Hobbes, as for Scarry, pain is a necessarily passive and embodied experience that autonomous individuals will seek to avoid or minimize as they actively pursue pleasure.

Though many disagreed with Hobbes's *conclusions* about the egoism and selfishness of human nature, it was "virtually incumbent upon his successors to adopt, in their rebuttals, the analytic and anatomical *method* which he had wielded to such effect" (Porter *Flesh* 132 emphasis added). This is precisely, Roy Porter argues, what Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, does in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), a collection of essays that attempts to recuperate human benevolence and sociability.[21] Shaftesbury presents his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit* as a "moral arithmetic" that can be explained with

21. To call Shaftesbury's methodology analytical is somewhat counterintuitive given his disdain for philosophy's "quixotic search for analytical precision in domains ... where precision was far from attainable" (Klein xiv). This disdain is a key feature of the *Characteristics*, Lawrence Klein argues, as the gentlemanly, conversational tone and experimental structure attests. Rather than systemizing a philosophy, Shaftesbury models the introspective self-reflection necessary for self-cultivation as well as the turn back to society, from which his "worldly" philosophy cannot be separated.

"evidence as great as that which is found in numbers or mathematics" (229). Shaftesbury's insistence that "the main sum or general account of happiness" and virtue can be tallied through the "addition or subtraction" of enjoyment and misery is reminiscent of Hobbes's mathematical logic (229). But, in addition to adapting Hobbes's logical precision, Shaftesbury, and the moral philosophers that follow him, also adapted Hobbes's assumptions about pain and pleasure, with highly problematic results.

For Hobbes, "*Good,* and *Evill*, are names that signifie our Appetites, and Aversions" (216). In other words, whatever causes pleasure is called good and whatever causes pain is called evil. For Shaftesbury, good and evil are not relative terms dependent on pleasure and pain; they are "the eternal measures" of a world that is orderly and harmonious (175). The regular structure of reality inspires mankind with "the admiration and love of order, harmony, and proportion" that is "highly assistant to virtue, which is itself no other than the love of order and beauty in society" (Shaftesbury 191).[22] Because of the "the immutable independent nature of worth and virtue," Eagleton argues that Shaftesbury "rejects the hedonist creed that the good is simply what pleases us" (Shaftesbury 175, Eagleton 34-5). Whereas he certainly rejects Hobbes's moral relativism, pleasure and pain are nonetheless central to Shaftesbury's "moral arithmetic." Not only does Shaftesbury contend that "it is impossible that the divine order should be contemplated without ecstasy and rapture," thereby associating goodness with pleasure, he likewise argues that "to be wicked or vicious is to be miserable and unhappy," thereby associating evil with pain (191, 229).

The "ecstasy" of goodness and the "misery" of evil form the refrain of the *Characteristics* in ways that increasingly cause Shaftesbury's "moral arithmetic" to seem like a

22. Shaftesbury is also positioning himself against Bernard Mandeville, whose *Fable of the Bees* (1705/1714) presents Hobbesian egoism as the basis of "morality" and of society.

hedonistic equation. As Shaftesbury stresses that aesthetic pleasure in virtue and pain in immorality are "anterior to self-interested rationality, and will force [their] instinctual approbations and aversion upon our social practice," the means become confused with the ends (Eagleton 39). For example, Shaftesbury argues: "to love and to be kind, to have social or natural affection, complacency and good will, *is to feel immediate satisfaction* or natural affection ... On the other side, animosity, hatred, and bitterness *is original misery and torment*" (228 emphases added). Because of the satisfaction that goodness affords, the pursuit of pleasure becomes synonymous with virtuous action. Likewise, because of the torment that evil affords, avoiding pain becomes synonymous with avoiding evil. Shaftesbury thus develops "an ethics entwined with the sensuous affections" in which virtue is literally its own reward (Eagleton 35).

Rather than completely rejecting Hobbes's use of pleasure and pain as explanatory mechanisms in morality, Shaftesbury puts the cart before the horse and prioritizes goodness as the cause of pleasure instead of pleasure as the cause of goodness. Nonetheless, the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain remain as pivotal to Shaftesbury's optimistic ethics as they had been to Hobbes's nihilistic relativism. "There is a necessity," Shaftesbury reasons, "for the preservation of virtue that it should be thought to have no quarrel with true interest and self-enjoyment" (188). This way of thinking would not have been as logical one hundred years prior when suffering could become spiritually productive and when "sensuous affections" could become moral snares. Even as Shaftesbury adopts Hobbes's conception of pain, as that which individuals will instinctively avoid, and of pleasure, as that which individuals will instinctively pursue, he attempts to use these instincts to disprove Hobbes's conclusions about mankind's

natural selfishness.[23] In order to do so, it is his "business" to show that morality is "the chief means and power of self-enjoyment and that to want [it] is certain misery and ill" (Shaftesbury 200).

In other words, Shaftesbury is pressed to ensure that virtue is always enjoyable and vice is always miserable. The strain of this system can be seen both when Shaftesbury discusses the immorality of overindulgence in what would otherwise be virtuous or necessary actions— such as an "excess of motherly love," which becomes "a vicious fondness"— and in the pleasures of "unnatural affections"— such as "the unnatural and inhuman delight in beholding torments and in viewing distress, calamity, blood, massacre and destruction" (172, 226). It is only because such overindulgences and unnatural delights cause one to be cut off from the fellowship of mankind that Shaftesbury's equation is always functional; even if vicious behavior brings pleasure, it is "the certain means of losing us the chief enjoyments of life" which come from sociability (225). According to Shaftesbury, sociability accounts for "more than nine-tenths of whatever is enjoyed in life" and constitutes the "main sum of happiness" (204-5).

Virtuous social pleasures always overbalance the unnatural pleasures of immorality because of sympathy. For Shaftesbury, sympathy is "an enjoyment of good by communication, a receiving it, as it were, by reflection or by way of participation in the good of others, and a pleasing consciousness of the actual love, merited esteem or approbation of others" (204). Because sociable individuals participate in each other's enjoyment through sympathy, one individual's enjoyment of the other's enjoyment is ostensibly communicated back to the other,

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23. Additionally, Shaftesbury attempts to show that self-interest is not the same as selfishness. Whereas *excessive* love of the self is negative, "the affection towards private or self-good, however selfish it may be esteemed, is in reality not only consistent with public good but in some measure contributing to it" (170).

ad infinitum. Because of sympathy's amplification of pleasures through "sharing contentment and delight with others, of receiving it in fellowship and company and gathering it, in a manner, from the pleased and happy states of those around us," it is the "highest delight" available to individuals, who are thus motived to conduct themselves virtuously and sociably in order to attain it (204).

Pain is conspicuously absent from Shaftesbury's account of sympathy. In fact, Shaftesbury implies that only individuals who have conquered pain are virtuous enough to enter into sympathetic social relationships. The pleasures of sympathetic sociability are "wholly founded in an easy temper, free from harshness, bitterness, or distaste, and in a mind or reason well composed, quiet, easy within itself and such as can freely fit and qualify for the enjoyment of the pleasures mentioned" (Shaftesbury 206). For the mind to be free and easy, the body must be likewise. "Uneasinesses and defects" in the body and "the interrupted course of the humors or spirits" will "breed uneasiness and distaste," which Shaftesbury calls antithetical to social enjoyment (207). As a result of the association of pleasure with virtue and pain with vice, as well as Shaftesbury's assumption that individuals will pursue pleasure and avoid pain, he disavows the possibility that pain might also be shared through sympathy. Such a possibility would offset the balance of his moral arithmetic.

The ambiguously hedonistic motivation that results from Shaftesbury's association of pleasure with virtue and pain with vice is something that Francis Hutcheson's *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (1728) spends considerable time avoiding. Like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson grants that virtue is inevitably pleasurable to the moral sense. For, "these *Moral Perceptions* arise in us as necessarily as any other Sensation; nor can we alter, or stop them ... any more than we can make the Taste of

Wormwood sweet, or that of Honey bitter" (Hutcheson 17). The moral sense is thus "like external senses," in that perceptions arise "independent of our will" and are "not mediated by considerations of personal advantage or harm" (Turco 138). Even though virtue is pleasurable, the desire for pleasure or the avoidance of pain is not what motivates virtuous actions. In contrast to Locke, for whom desire is "really an aversion to present pain," Hutcheson contends that desire is "a simple idea, distinct from any sensation" (Jensen 15, 16). Because Hutcheson believes that "no Desire of any Event is excited by any view of removing the *uneasy Sensation attending this Desire itself*" and that no desire ever "arise[s] from a View of obtaining that *Sensation of Joy*, connected with the Success or Gratification of Desire," he creates space for disinterested benevolence in human actions (24).

Unlike Shaftesbury who ignores the possibility of sympathy with painful experiences, Hutcheson's disinterested benevolence ensures that "the Happiness of one is made to depend upon that of others, independently of his choice" (23). The desire to make others happy and to alleviate their misery, which Hutcheson dubs the "public sense" is so strongly disinterested that we do not attempt "to free our selves from the *Pain*" that it creates (Hutcheson 27). On the contrary, "we shall find a *Propensity* to run to such Spectacles of Pity" even when "we have no Hopes nor Intention of relieving them" (Hutcheson 52). Though he does not address the ethical ambiguity of running to spectacles of pity with no intention of relieving them, Hutcheson does address the problem of the "*Conjunction of Interest*" that the public sense creates (23). In fact, he imagines Epicurean naysayers to object that "the Happiness of others becomes the Means of private Pleasure to the Observer; and for this Reason, or with a View to this private Pleasure, he desires the Happiness of another" (23). For Hutcheson:

> It is certain that, *that Desire* of the Happiness of others which we account virtuous, [virtuous being the keyword] is not *directly* excited by prospects of any

> *secular Advantage, Wealth, Power, Pleasure of the external Sense, Reward from the Deity, of future Pleasures of Self-Approbation.* To prove this let us consider, That no Desire of any event can arise immediately or directly from an *Opinion* in the Agent, that his *having such a Desire* will be the Means of private Good, and not the *Existence of the Event desired*, then from *Self-Love* we should only desire or wish to have the Desire of that Event, and should not desire the *Event* itself, since the *Event* is not conceived as the *Means* of Good. (24-5)

This proof might be summarized as follows: it is illogical to suppose that someone could desire the good of the other simply because of the pleasure they would feel as a result. Such a motivation would change the terms of desire such that the person actually would only be *desiring to feel the desire* for the other's good, not actually desiring their good.

As convoluted as this seems, it becomes further complicated as Hutcheson grants that it is possible to feel a "*subordinate Desire* of the Happiness of others, conceived as a *Means* of our own" (26). This subordinate desire is "not that virtuous Affection" of universal benevolence described above, but nor is it illogical in the way that Hutcheson had tried to show (27). On the contrary, he grants that the "subordinate desire" for the happiness of others does motivate people to seek the other's good for self-interested reasons. Moreover, because the "ultimate Desire of the Happiness of others" is "not as strong as Self-Love," it appears that the latter might be more common than the former (Hutcheson 6). When sympathy is not experienced in the benevolent terms of the public sense, but with an emphasis on self-love, Hutcheson also faces a problem in situations of pain. That is, one might feel the altruistic pull to flock to a spectacle of pity if self-interest has been conquered, but if it has not then one presumes that one will flock the other way, or will seek to find some compensatory pleasure in that spectacle.

The strength of self-love, and its connection to pleasure and pain, is even more central to David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), which is highly indebted to Hutcheson, but which deviates from his system in important ways. Like Hutcheson had done, Hume

"place[s] an extraordinary emphasis on pleasure and pain" (Jensen 83). Whereas this emphasis makes "one wonde[r] nervously whether Hutcheson does not slip backwards at times into hedonism," it is also "a much-debated question whether Hume was some kind of psychological hedonist or not" (Jensen 83, Foot 96). Hume's examination of human nature, "Being an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects," endeavors to "improv[e] ... the science of man" by "explaining all effects from the fewest causes" (Hume 1, 5). Because pleasure and pain are "original impressions," which "without any antecedent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body," they become the fundamental causes that produce effects as diverse as the passions, ideas, and the moral sense (Hume 181).

Hume demonstrates, for example, that pride and love both derive from the primary impression of pleasure. Conversely, humility and hate both derive from the primary impression of pain. However, pride/humility occur when the experience of pleasure or pain takes the self as the object and love/hate occur when the experience of pleasure or pain takes the other as the object. So, when something causes one pleasure, and is understood in relation to self, one feels pride, as is the case in bodily beauty. When something causes one pain, and is understood in relation to self, one feels humility, as is the case in bodily deformity. Similarly, when either pleasure or pain is understood in relation to other, the passions produced are love or hatred. In this way, Hume is able to refute those who would argue that "each of the passions corresponds to a distinctive motion of the animal spirits," an explanation that creates a 'monstrous heap of principles' one for each passion," and fails to make the improvement in the science of mankind that Hume desires: to explain human nature with "the same economy of explanatory principles that characterizes astronomy and natural philosophy" (Norton 50).

On one hand, it is clear that impressions of bodily pleasure and pain are key to Hume's understanding of human nature. On the other hand, "the question of how Hume did understand the role of pleasure and pain *in moral motivation* has not ... been satisfactorily answered" (Foot 97 emphasis added). Hume asserts that "the chief spring or actuating principle of the human mind is pleasure or pain; and when these sensations are remov'd, both from our thought and feeling, we are, in a great measure, incapable of passion or action, of desire or volition" (367). The motivation to act is dependent on impressions of pleasure or pain; when those impressions are absent, so too are almost all passions and desires. Moreover, because Hume argues that "virtue is distinguish'd by the pleasure, and vice by the pain, that any action, sentiment, or character gives us," his moral theory is at risk of making virtue indecipherable from the self-interested pursuit of pleasure (305). And yet, as Foot points out, Hume does not believe "that all action was self–interested" (96). On the contrary, it is possible that action, even when motivated by pleasure and pain, can be altruistic because of the mechanism of sympathy. Sympathy allows us "to adopt the general or impartial view that makes possible and characterizes morality" (Norton 93). It *creates* the moral sense.

For Hume, sympathy is not "a particular feeling" but "a means or principle of communication," which allows "humans to know and to experience as their own the sentiments or opinions of others" (Norton 55). Sympathy allows the mind to convert impressions—produced by observing the other's experiences—into sensations in the self. This transfer of impressions is possible because "the minds of all men are similar in their feelings and operations" like "strings equally wound up" (Hume 369). When "the motion of one communicates itself to the rest," it "beget[s] correspondent movements in every human creature" (Hume 368). As Adela Pinch explains, an impression produced by this correspondent movement "is not a copy, a mark made

on the surface of the mind by something from outside the mind; it is rather an original, the sensation itself" (33). That is, an individual will physically *feel* the sensation with which they are sympathizing in their body and mind as surely as if the experience originated with them rather than with the other person. It is because of this process that Hume concludes that "we are all spontaneous impressionists or naturally mimetic animals, vividly receptive to others' feelings and able to reproduce them in ourselves" (Eagleton *Sweet Violence* 157-8).

The ability to sympathize results from the uniformity of human minds and is inherent. The moral sense, on the other hand, must evolve from the disinterested point of view that sympathy makes possible.[24] Only when sympathy "enabl[es] observers to feel the pleasures and pains produced in others affected by just or unjust actions that have no direct bearing on these observers," do they feel the moral sense (Norton 89). So, though morality is associated with pleasure and pain, it is not self-interested. On the contrary, the moral sense is an altruistic desire for the good of human kind that sympathy teaches one how to feel. However as Norton points out, "moral pleasures and pains, the moral sentiments, arise only in highly restricted circumstances.... these very special sentiments are felt only when we abstract from or ignore our own self interest" (80). Sympathy *can* give rise to the moral sense, but does not always do so.

Instead, when one is not able to abstract from one's own self interest, it can give rise to very different passions. As Hume demonstrates at some length, the creation of the secondary impressions is complex. The primary impressions of pleasure and pain can take very different ultimate shapes depending on the circumstances surrounding one's perception of them,

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24. Hume deviates significantly from Hutcheson, both in his concept of sympathy and in its role in producing the moral sense. As we have seen, Hutcheson calls the moral sense innate like the other senses and attributes the disinterested desire for the good of others to the "public sense."

especially with reference to the self. "Our strongest attention is confin'd to ourselves," Hume argues, making it particularly difficult to disregard one's own self-interest when feeling the pain of others through sympathy (314). This can be seen clearly in his example of the counterintuitive consequences of sympathizing with a poor man. When observing the misery of a poor man, the mechanism of sympathy will spontaneously create an analogous physical impression of pain in the observer. If the observer does not abstract this pain from the self entirely, he will associate the experience of pain with the other (rather than, perhaps, the injustice that lead to his distress, which would create the moral sense). As noted above, the impression of pain, when associated with the other, creates hate, not pity. Pity is only created if one's impression of the poor man's pain is overbalanced with a pleasurable anticipation of relieving that suffering. Nonetheless, this pity is as self-interested as hatred and at odds with the moral sense. It results only because of the experience of personal pleasure just as hatred results only because of the experience of personal pain. Furthermore, by shifting the circumstances of the impression of the other's pain, the secondary impression can transform yet again. For example, when one's pleasure is increased not by the thought of relieving the other's suffering, but by the self's relative greatness when compared to the poor man, one feels malice rather than pity. Therefore, sympathy does not guarantee moral action— far from it, in fact.

Conceptualizing sympathy as a matter of thinking and reflection rather than as an automatic sensory experience would become increasingly central as the eighteenth century progressed, particularly in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).[25] Like Hume, Smith's

25. Janet Todd would suggest that the title of Smith's treatise itself indicates an important difference between his moral system and that of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume. Todd argues that "often in literary criticism" the moral *sentiments* are "felt to be synonymous" with the moral *senses*, but this is not entirely correct (7). Instead, Todd claims, the moral sentiments are "moral *reflections*, a rational opinion about the rights and wrongs of human conduct" (7

entire moral theory is based on sympathy. But unlike Hume, sympathy is not primarily the transmission of feeling; it is a matter "of changing places *in fancy* with the sufferer that we might either conceive or be affected by what he feels" (Smith 12 emphasis added). In addition to imagining oneself in the other's situation, it is necessary to compare the other's reaction to their situation to one's own imaginary reaction. If these reactions correlate, then one commends the propriety of the other's response and readily participates in it. But if they do not correlate, the other's reaction is completely unsympathetic, even to the point of being considered blameworthy. The pleasure of sympathy, then, lies in the approbation of the propriety of emotion; for "nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow feeling with all the emotions of our own breast; nor are we ever so shocked as by the appearance of the contrary" (Smith 17).

The strong desire that individuals have for sympathy serves an important moral function precisely because of the limitations of imaginative identification. Smith postulates:

> Mankind, though naturally sympathetic, never conceive, for what has befallen another, that degree of passion which naturally animates the person principally concerned. That imaginary change of situation, upon which their sympathy is founded, is but momentary. The thought of their own safety, the thought that they themselves are not really the sufferers, continually intrudes itself upon them; and though it does not hinder them from conceiving a passion somewhat analogous to what is felt by the sufferer, hinders them from conceiving anything that approaches to the same degree of violence. (Smith 27)

In other words, the imagination might allow individuals to be "carried across the boundaries of our own persons" and to experience "an intersubjective identity" with the other, but only temporarily (Csengei 52). Moreover, because identification begins in the imagination rather than

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emphasis added). However, the distinction between the two might not be as clear cut as Todd implies. As Csengei helpfully demonstrates, even in Hume's "mechanical transfusion" of feeling, sympathy has "a subtle element of thinking and reflection" (50-1). Likewise, Smith's "moral sentiments" are not entirely rational and devoid of feeling.

the body, the sympathetic feelings it inspires will always be much less intense than the original feeling. If one has any hope of being approved by others, it is necessary to limit one's passions to a level that others will find sympathetic from their removed, less sensible, perspective. The desire for sympathy, therefore, causes individuals to internalize the perspective of a disinterested spectator, or "the man within the breast," which acts as a constant monitor of moral behavior.

The weakness of imaginative identification in Smith when compared to the sympathetic transfer of original impressions in Hume gives rise to important differences in the way pain functions in each formulation of sympathy. For Hume, as we have seen, the intensity with which one feels the other's pain can make sympathy a dangerous mechanism. Likewise, it can lead paradoxically to cruel behavior. In Smith's formulation, sympathy only allows one to experience a fraction of the other's pain—a fraction that is far overbalanced by the pleasures of "fellow feeling." Whereas this diminution in intensity might make it less likely that one will avoid sympathizing with the negative experiences of others, it also largely excludes bodily pain from sympathy all together. This is because sympathy "does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the *situation* which excites it" (Smith 15 emphasis added).[26] Internalized bodily experiences of pain are not as available to the imagination as are the situations that excite the passions. Because one cannot *feel* the bodily sensations of the other, "if he makes any violent out-cry," as a result of pain, one "cannot go along with him" and "never fail[s] to despise him"

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26. Scarry similarly argues that the poignancy of the *situation* of pain can overwhelm the *experience* of pain. She notes that in "medical case histories of people whose pain began with an accident, the sentences describing the accident … may more successfully convey the sheer fact of the patient's agony than those sentences that attempt to describe the person's pain directly" (15). Sentences that recreate the traumatic moment are recreating the situation that resulted in pain, not its actual experience. Sympathizers can project themselves into the situation and inhabit the moments surrounding pain in ways that they cannot inhabit the untenable descriptions of pain itself, be they ever so graphic.

(Smith 35). Therefore, Smith cautions that "it is indecent to express any strong degree of those passions which arise from ... the body" because "they excite either no sympathy at all, or such a degree of it, as is altogether disproportioned to the violence of what is felt by the sufferer" (Smith 34, 35).

Over the course of the eighteenth century, the moral sense, the moral sentiments and their relationship to sympathy shifted significantly. Yet, in these diverse manifestations, philosophers consistently worked from the assumption that human beings instinctively pursue pleasure and avoid pain, an assumption that secular thought and mechanical models of the body (which combined so dramatically to form the perfect storm of self-interest in Hobbes's thought) were making increasingly difficult to avoid. The need to make a hedonistic rubric functional in altruistic moral systems created complex problems, particularly when philosophers attempted to account for sympathy with pain. For Shaftesbury, sympathy was what made sociability the highest of human pleasures, thereby overbalancing the relatively lesser pleasures of immorality. In doing so, though, he disavows the possibility of sympathy with the suffering of others, particularly when that suffering is felt in the body with distressing effects on the mind. For Hutcheson, the moral sense and the public sense both allowed individuals to experience spontaneous aesthetic pleasure or pain accompanying moral or immoral actions. Because of his insistence that desire is object driven not sensation driven, though, the experience of pleasure or the avoidance of pain were never the *motives* for moral actions. And yet, Hutcheson finds it necessary to introduce exceptions that contradict this rule to account for a hedonistic self-interest in human interactions that he cannot avoid acknowledging. For Hume, the moral sense is not an innate sense at all, but one that evolves when the desire to maximize pleasure and minimize pain is abstracted from the self through the disinterested perspective that the mechanism of sympathy

made possible. However, sympathy is partially dependent on the way in which the mind conceptualizes the transfer of impressions. Because the idea of pleasure and pain in the self are so strongly present to the mind, it is difficult to abstract self-interest from the passions, making the altruistic moral sense elusive and creating ample room for cruelty and malice. For Smith, sympathy is no longer the physical transfer of sensations but the imaginative appropriation of sensations. But, because the imagination identifies with situations, not embodied experience, physical pain is not accessible to sympathy, necessitating that virtuous individuals minimize their reactions to it. In this way, pain becomes internalized and a source of disconnection from sympathy and from social relationships by the middle of the century.

The internalization of incommunicable pain in moral philosophy reflects the trajectory of pain in physiology. As we have seen, scientific approaches to the body in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries gradually rejected both the spiritual significance of pain and the patient's ability to make pain personally meaningful through the negotiation of illness with physicians or through the construction of narratives that incorporated pain into the context of lived experiences and understandings of self. Pain moved into the body whose complex microscopic mechanisms were accessible only to experts. As these experts took control of the language through which to describe pain, patients were made increasingly passive in their medical treatments. The internalization, incommunicability, and passivity of pain that have their roots in eighteenth-century philosophy and physiology have played foundational roles in modern understandings of pain and continue to exercise a significant influence on it. As we have seen, Scarry's seminal work on the subject presents eighteenth-century assumptions regarding pain as universal truths, claiming that: "physical pain—unlike any other state of consciousness— has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it,

more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language" (5). For Scarry, the embodied sensation of pain is only that—the firing of the nerves that makes little sense in the fuller spectrum of human experience, particularly in relationships and communication. On the contrary, "it is so elusive that 'hearing about pain' may exist as the primary model of what it is 'to have doubt'" (Scarry 4). Scarry's work likewise naturalizes the Hobbesian correlation of power and agency with the ability to pursue pleasure and avoid pain. As a result, she showcases the passivity of painful experiences which trap individuals within their bodies. Because of the influence of Enlightenment thought on even the most respected and respectful work on pain, it is important to reconsider the origins of these assumptions in order to come to a fuller sense of the place of pain in the human experience.

Moreover, the story of pain in the eighteenth century—its internalization, its loss of religious meaning, and its position in a nexus of appetite and aversion— is also the story of the emergence of the autonomous modern subject. Thus, as my dissertation considers the negotiation of pain and sympathy in literary texts, it also necessarily addresses issues of subjectivity. In particular, my readings draw frequently from Charles Taylor's discussion of the transformation of the "porous" self into the "buffered" self as a consequence of secularization. For Taylor, the pre-modern world is "enchanted" with meaning, agency, and power capable of infiltrating and affecting the self. In this enchanted world, the subject is not the master of meaning, instead "meaning is already there in the object/agent, it is there quite independently of us; it would be there even if we didn't exist" (Taylor 33). Because the enchanted world "can communicate this meaning to us, impose it on us ... by bringing us as it were into its field of force," the pre-modern self can be described as "porous" (Taylor 33). However, with the "disenchanting" process of secularization, the meaning and power that existed externally are made internal,

products of the mind. As such, the subject is no longer vulnerable to being affected by external meaning, but is "buffered" against it. Taylor's account of modern subjectivity is especially pertinent to my project because the transformation of sympathy corresponds to and contributes to the transformation of self. That is, in the early part of the century, sympathy is conceived of as a physical sensation or a mechanism that allows external passions and impressions to infiltrate and influence the experience of self. In this way, sympathy appears to make possible a secular "enchantment" and "porosity" (Taylor 35). In the middle part of the century, sympathy became a cognitive endeavor that is wholly dependent on the way in which the individual makes meaning for itself. For example, in Adam Smith's definition, sympathy is contingent on the correspondence of external meaning (the passions of the other) to the internalized perspective of the self. In this way, it reaffirms the boundaries of the buffered self rather than bridging them. Because pain is not only internalized but also inaccessible to the imaginative identification of sympathy, its experience retreats further and further from the control of the subject and the imagination of the spectator.

I supplement my use of Taylor's theories of buffered subjectivity with psychoanalytic readings of the discontents of modern selfhood as necessitated by the texts I study. In doing so, I am conscious of the anachronism of applying modern terminology to eighteenth-century emotional, mental, and psychological experiences and work to avoid distorting the parameters of eighteenth-century selfhood by viewing it too closely though modern lenses. However, because the modern self which these theories describe was beginning to form in the eighteenth century, they provide a useful, if limited, perspective. Likewise, I consider the ideological implications of the relationship between individuals and their pain, established as a result of theories of the moral sense and the moral sentiments, adding to important work that has already been done by

Eagleton, Barker-Benfield, Pinch, and others. Each chapter of my dissertation positions a landmark literary text—Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688), Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), and William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1805) — within the context of Enlightenment philosophy to highlight the intentional and unintentional ways literary authors modified philosophical formulations of sympathy to accommodate the problem of pain while considering the subjective and ideological consequences of those modifications.

Chapter one, "'He gave up the ghost without a groan or a reproach': Honor and the Disavowal of Pain in *Oroonoko,*" interrogates the dangers inherent in silencing pain. I argue that Aphra Behn's depiction of suffering as either shameful or nonexistent in *Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave* exemplifies an under-examined reaction to Hobbes's assessment that all human behavior was motivated by the body's aversion to pain and pursuit of pleasure. In direct opposition to Hobbes, Behn imagines conditions in which the body's sensations do not dictate Oroonoko's conduct. Rather, she attempts to redeem the dignity of man by dissociating her hero from the degrading influences of all physical stimuli. Unfortunately, this dissociation does unforeseen damage to the humanist cause Behn set out to defend. Because *Oroonoko* constructs a system of honor dependent on one's imperviousness to pain, nobility is contingent on disowning the reality and poignancy of suffering. To ignobly acknowledge one's suffering negates the subject's position as a valid member of the colonial community and "justifies" one's enslavement within it. Though *Oroonoko* was published several years prior to Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* (1711), Behn's disavowal of pain and of the body provide important context for understanding Shaftesbury's formulation of sympathy, which likewise makes little space for bodily pain within honorable, aristocratic selfhood. Though Shaftesbury's

essayistic/philosophical mode allows suffering to fade quietly into the background, Behn's narrative depiction of Oroonoko's silent torture and dismemberment paradoxically draws attention to the reality of the body and its pain.

Chapter Two, "'You stab me with your goodness ... and I cannot bear it!': Distressing Virtue in *Clarissa,*" demonstrates how representations of pain in sentimental literature reveal contradictions inherent to mid-century conceptions of sympathy as an "altruistic" mode of identifying with the experiences of others. In particular, I read the problem of pain in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa; or The History of a Young Lady* within the context of David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* and Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments.* As we have seen, Hume argues that impressions of bodily pain and pleasure are at the center of the human experience. Because those impressions are understood first and primarily in relation to the self, they do not always, or even typically, lead to the "elusive" moral sense. Likewise, Smith argues that the self is of utmost importance in producing sympathetic responses. If one does not identify with the reactions of the other, one is apt to despise rather than to pity the other. *Clarissa*, published approximately ten years after Hume's treatise and ten years before Smith's, relies on the lack of sympathy from self-regarding spectators, central to the moral philosophy of both. In order for Clarissa to demonstrate her Christ-like virtue in the face of the most outrageous torments, her trials must be allowed to run their course. That is to say, sympathy must fail to entice Clarissa's many friends and protectors to end her distress by intervening. These failures of sympathy, which are necessary to sustain Richardson's didactic agenda, arise because of the difficulty of identifying with Clarissa's inimitable moral virtue —a difficulty that Richardson would struggle to control in his readers. Not only are the Harlowes and Lovelace struck by a sense of moral inferiority when compared to Clarissa, they interpret her virtue as an indication of

her disapprobation of themselves. The pain they experience as result is used to justify the pleasure they take in degrading her. Furthermore, those who would assist Clarissa are prevented from doing so because her moral elevation positions her outside of the structure of benevolent sociability, dependent on reciprocity. Because those who sympathetically suffer on Clarissa's behalf are denied the moral pleasures of assisting her, their frustrated pity becomes a morbid fascination with seeing Clarissa made pitiful. The centrality of the self and the necessity of pleasure in sympathy may have remained fairly innocuous in the sterile soil of philosophical proofs, but these concepts grow poisonous indeed when planted in the richer ground of Richardson's turbulent fictional relationships.

Chapter three, "The Trauma of Sympathy and the Sublime in *The Sorrows of Young Werther,*" considers the intersection between aesthetic experiences and pain by following the path of sublimity to suicide in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). As the eighteenth century progressed, espousing a self-congratulatory sensitivity to the experiences of others became increasingly fashionable until sentimentality seemed to reach its ultimate peak in the suicide of Goethe's sorrowing hero. Werther's obsessive love, exquisite sensibility, and pitiable end thus positioned him as a kindred spirit to British "men of feeling" when the text's enormously successful English translation appeared. However, I argue that Werther's isolation from and distrust of other people suggest Goethe's deep ambivalence regarding sympathy's claims to act as an imaginative bridge between the boundaries of subjective experience—an experience that was increasingly "buffered" from the influence of others. Instead, the novel dramatizes the limitations of a self-validating sympathy, particularly Adam Smith's, as Werther is continually traumatized by the inaccessibility of his fellow man and sympathy's woeful inadequacy in making his own suffering communicable. Werther's reactions

to this trauma, specifically his pertinacious pursuit of self-dissolution through sublimity, indicate his desperation to disintegrate the boundaries of the autonomous self that sympathy failed to breach. In Goethe's literary treatment of the discontents of self-validating sympathy, he follows out Werther's yearning for "porosity" to its gruesome logical extremes. Ironically, though, the self-inflicted gunshot wound that Werther believes will effect his release from his isolated subjective experience—continually described through the metaphor of the body— traps him within his body and its pain for it a full twelve hours. This irony suggests that, for Goethe, the best way *out* of buffered subjectivity might not be in transcending bodily experience, but *through* bodily experience.

Just as chapter three offers a surprising portrait of Goethe as critical of the radical individuality of the modern self and of sympathy's self-validating limitations, chapter four, "'A miserable love that is not pain to hear of': Wordsworth, Spinoza, and Monistic Morality," reveals a Wordsworth who rejects the autonomy of the "buffered" self and who replaces self-regarding sympathy with all-inclusive love. I argue that in Wordsworth's poetry the continuity between self and other (often critiqued as egotistical), the conflation of the experiences of the other with those of the self (often deemed appropriative), and the identification of nature and mankind with God (often called pantheistic), indicate an "un-buffered" subject position that is better understood through the monism of Spinoza than the duality of Descartes. Because the concept of sympathy was philosophically necessary to account for benevolent sociability in autonomous individuals who would otherwise be engaged in a competitive struggle for power over each other, an "un-buffered" monistic view of subjectivity changes the basis of moral obligation in important, even drastic, ways. The pain of others, which is described in some detail in Wordsworth's verses, is pleasurable only insofar as it allows the poet to recognize the

interconnection of all individuals. Because the poetic imagination is uniquely able to apprehend this interconnection, which becomes synonymous with love, it is the poet's moral responsibility to convey a sense of it to his "less sensitive" readers. He attempts to do this, I argue, through meter. As the syllables and stresses of each metrical foot coalesce into the unified whole of a poem, the poet is able to replicate his imaginative understanding of the interrelationship of the particular and the universal. And yet, an "un-buffered" subject position and a monistic worldview are not without their vulnerabilities. Though the pain of individuals might lead Wordsworth to a pleasurable knowledge of the universal heart, human depravity serves to make the universality of the heart painful to contemplate. When the poet encounters depravity, as he does so dramatically in the aftermath of the French Revolution, he struggles to maintain the love of humankind that is the basis of his poetics and his ethics.

Because sympathetic connections so often fail at points of pain in eighteenth-century literature, an examination of these texts helps to show the excesses of pain—situated as it is between sensation and perception, between mind and body, between individual and community, and between language and inexpressibility— as well as the struggles eighteenth-century writers faced as they attempted to integrate those excesses into coherent philosophical, aesthetic, and moral systems. By attending to the varied ways in which writers described experiences of pain and contemplated ways to engage with it sympathetically, it is my hope that we can more critically assess the foundations of our current presuppositions about why and how pain matters.

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CHAPTER I

"HE GAVE UP THE GHOST WITHOUT A GROAN OR A REPROACH": HONOR AND THE DISAVOWAL OF PAIN IN *OROONOKO*

Readers of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave* (1688) no doubt remember the rapidity with which the short narrative degenerates into a blood bath of Shakespearean proportions. Oroonoko's pregnant wife, Imoinda, is killed, decapitated by his own hand. Oroonoko loses his strength and nearly his mind while holding vigil next to Imoinda's decaying remains. He vows to satisfy his vengeance with the blood of his enemies; defiantly rips out his own bowels and meets his end in severed pieces, reduced to little more than the gory signs of colonial power. Critics have often used this blood-smeared dénouement to speak about the text's conflicted participation in the overlapping discourses of colonialism, royalism, and an incipient mercantile economy. Yet critical voices fall strangely silent when it comes to considering the bodily pain implicit in these unraveling narrative threads. This silence mirrors Behn's uncharacteristic narrative restraint when it comes to depicting physical pain. The shroud of silence that Behn casts over the poignancy of mutilation and death indicates an underexplored conflict over the social and moral value of pain in the late seventeenth century, of which *Oroonoko* is emblematic. The changing cultural significance of pain, ushered in by an increasingly scientific, secular perception of the body, also gave rise to a reactionary rejection of pain's power to influence human behavior. This rejection is central to *Oroonoko*, in which Behn constructs a system of honor that is dependent on rendering pain not only insignificant, but also shameful or even nonexistent.

In the following chapter, I will examine both how this system of honor reveals pain's ideological instability in colonial contexts as well as the dangers inherent in disavowing pain's

significance. Within the text, Behn establishes three distinct modes of relating to physical and emotional suffering: an honorable disavowal of pain, an ignoble susceptibility to pain, and an exotic control over pain. Only the first of these, disavowal, positions individuals as valid members of the colonial community. In the narrative, to be honorable— and therefore above the degradations of slavery— one must be stoically unaffected by pain. Because this "honorable" relationship to pain is a marker of nobility, it allows Oroonoko and Imoinda to retain their royal status when all other circumstances change. For example, even after Imoinda has been enslaved and has helped to lead a revolt against the colonists, her virtually painless experience of decapitation demonstrates her honorable nature and elicits the narrator's respect and admiration. Conversely, to display an ignoble susceptibility to pain negates the individual's position as a subject within the colony and "justifies" their enslavement. As shall be seen, Oroonoko's physically crippling experience of grief over Imoinda's death problematizes his position as an honorable subject, igniting an outcry from the colonists and, surprisingly, from many critics as well. Whereas the honor of disavowal and the dishonor of susceptibility bear an inverse relationship to each other, the third mode of relating to pain—control over it—falls outside of the scope of colonial logic. The "exotic" ability to control pain, demonstrated by the self-mutilation of the natives, is largely incomprehensible to the narrator and positions the natives as "other". I will argue that Oroonoko's demonstrative use of pain prior to his capture likewise positions him as other and further distances him from his once royal identity. Finally, as the narrative negates Oroonoko's control over pain during his execution, he ironically becomes a secular martyr to the very ideology that enslaved him because deprived of the ability to speak against it.

The complications that these differing relationships to pain create in the narrative demonstrate an uncertainty regarding pain's cultural and moral significance. This uncertainty

was caused, in part, by the rapidly changing face of medical science and its impact on philosophical thought. As Roselyne Rey explains, the "biological revolution" in the seventeenth century ushered in a new "analytic attitude" toward the human body and human nature "which came about as a result of new explanations of the universe formulated in terms of mathematical principles" (71, 72). In addition to putting stress on the usefulness of pain in older models of anatomy and physiology, this biological revolution prompted seventeenth-century thinkers to reconsider the soteriological importance of suffering. Indeed, with the publication of René Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) and *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), "the machine becomes the model used to understand the living" and pain becomes primarily a "useful warning system that helps to maintain bodily health" rather than an indication of spiritual disorder (Rey 76, Dijkhuizen 189).

As long-lasting as Descartes's influence on modern constructions of pain has been,[1] his position is relatively moderate when compared to that of Hobbes, whose importance to the history of pain has been consistently underexplored. Descartes maintains that the experience of pain necessitates the presence of the soul. Even though Descartes describes the soul in terms of a material substance located within the mechanical body of man —in the pineal gland to be

1. Descartes's mind-body dualism is frequently cited as the catalyst of "organic reductionism" that current "medical thinkers ... [are attempting] to overcome in favor of a more holistic representation of disease and health" (Duncan 485). However, in "Mind-Body Dualism and the Biopsychosocial Model of Pain: What Did Descartes Really Say?" Grant Duncan contends that such assessments represent Descartes incorrectly. Duncan argues that "the mental philosophy commonly called 'Cartesian dualism' by many contemporary medical critics may, however, bear little resemblance to the dualism which Descartes himself actually proposed" (486). Descartes's discussion of pain in particular "serves as evidence for his overall thesis of mind and body as *conjoint* but different substances" (Duncan 489 emphasis added).

precise—his conception of pain nevertheless is not entirely bereft of religious and social value. Not so for Hobbes: "[f]or Hobbes it is not just the case that motion is the *cause* of sensation, a position accepted by Galileo and Descartes, but that sensation is itself a motion, a physical change in the brain" (Rogers 416). In other words, Descartes presumes that the sensation of pain is created when the animal spirits move through the body to the pineal gland, which then, in an unexplained way, creates suffering. For Hobbes, the sensation of pain, like everything else, is *just* the movement of particles. Therefore, in Hobbes's account of the mechanical man there is no place for the soul to hide. Not even the pineal gland. As shall be shown, the conception of pain as a purely physical phenomenon that indicates bodily distress or the lack of power is a pivotal component of Hobbes's social theory in *Leviathan* (1651). Because the desire to avoid pain constitutes a fundamental motivation in human behavior, mankind's ability to act with altruistic disinterest is radically compromised. However, as I will argue, Hobbes's argument regarding mankind's aversion to pain prompted reactionary counter positions, like that developed in *Oroonoko*. For Behn, honor, not an aversion to pain, motivates actions. And yet, her insistence that the only "valid" relationship to pain is to deny its ability to influence human behavior and moral decisions likewise offers a reductive assessment of the human experience.

The complex task of tracing various reactions to and arguments against *Leviathan* has already filled many a lengthy volume. Hobbes's treatment of religion – which earned him the reputation of an atheist and the moniker "The Monster of Malmsbury" – sparked not the least of these arguments and has deserved the thorough analysis it has received. For my purposes, though, it will be sufficient to attend in detail to just a few of the propositions informing *Leviathan* which Hobbes's contemporaries found so distasteful. The first of which, as mentioned above, is Hobbes's uncompromisingly mechanical conception of human nature. Hobbes,

working from Lucretius's theory of *plenum*, defined by the *Oxford English Diction* as, "space completely filled with matter," and Galileo's "work [which] exhibited the power of mathematics as applied to the natural world, and most centrally to motion" (Rogers 416), reached fascinating and controversial conclusions about the nature of mankind.

Hobbes reasoned that all "qualities called *Sensible*, are in the object that causeth them, but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presseth our organs diversly. Neither in us that are pressed, are they anything else, but divers motions; (for motion, produceth nothing but motion)" (86). Matter, with which space is teeming, perpetually plays upon the sensible bodies of man. These incessant collisions result not only in all physical sensations, but also all mental processes. This formulation of man starkly disregards the possibility of any "absolute, independent existence of spirit," which Hobbes's opponents were put in the difficult position of needing to prove (Mintz 67). If all human action can be "reduced to the effects of a mechanical apparatus consisting of sense organs, nerves, muscles, imagination, memory, and reason, which apparatus moved in response to the impact (or imagined impact) of external bodies on it," then man's ability to act freely or morally is called into serious question (Macpherson 28). This is complicated further by Hobbes's assertion that "these small beginnings of Motion" can have only one of two very basic results: appetite or aversion. Appetite propels man toward what he desires whereas aversion propels him away from what he fears. On the strength of this proposition, Hobbes systematically dismantles even the noblest of human passions.

His disheartening conclusions are, perhaps, clearest when the calculus of appetite and aversion is applied to pity:

> *Griefe*, for the Calamity of another, is Pitty; and ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may behall himselfe; and therefore is classed also Compassion, and in the phrase of this present time a Fellow-Feeling: And therefore for Calamity arriving from great wickedness, the best men have the least Pitty; and

> for the same Calamity, those have the least Pitty, that think themselves least obnoxious to the same. (126)

In some ways, this definition is commonplace if pessimistic. Pity occurs when a individual imagines himself or herself in the position of an afflicted person. The result of this projection is that the pitying person feels an aversion to the circumstance in the same manner (but to a lesser degree) as he or she would if affected by it personally. Nor is Hobbes's conclusion that the "wickedness" of the suffering person mitigates the pity that they inspire an outlandish one – indeed further research into neuropsychology has begun substantiate this proposition.[2] What is remarkable is the final line in which Hobbes argues that pity is *only as strong as one's likelihood of experiencing the hurt*. That is, in addition to being filtered through the imagination of the observing person, pity is only indicative of the probability of experiencing the circumstance and the consequent fear and aversion that this inspires. Pity therefore indicates one's relative vulnerability as well as one's fear; it is a degrading passion that the "best men" will feel least.

Human interactions fare little better in Hobbes's system than do human passions. Because all men, according to Hobbes, are roughly equal, it stands to reason that they will all exhibit equal appetites for the same thing. In what C. B. Macpherson calls "the grand conclusion of Hobbes's analysis of human nature" (37), Hobbes identifies the "general inclination of all mankind," as "a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death" (161). Men restlessly seek to meet their desire for power by taking it from others – hence Macpherson's claim that this universal appetite is a "necessarily harmful" one (37). Accordingly,

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2. In *Sympathy, Sensibility and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, Ildiko Csengei explains that empathy is partly a neurological phenomenon because the sight of pain actually "activat[es] the areas of our brain that ... are activated with the mental experience of pain" (71). However, this phenomenon is a contingent one, according to "recent research in neuropsychology," which "has confirmed the existence of our desire for so-called 'altruistic punishment'. This means that our empathetic responses to other people are dependent on the ethical judgments we make regarding their behavior" (Csengei 71).

"The *Value*, or Worth of a man, is as of all other things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power" (Hobbes 151). Passing aside the troubling implications for the powerless, who are thus "worth nothing" (Sorrel 150), it is important to emphasize that this principle leads Hobbes to reject the possibility of altruism in social behavior. The acquisition of the power of others or the subordination of their power to one's own use are the sole motivating factors in every human interaction, including seemingly disinterested ones. Furthermore, appellations – like honorable – which appear to describe a person's moral or ethical character, are merely "an argument and signe of Power" (Hobbes 155). In fact, honor is specifically amoral, as Hobbes illustrates with the following example:

> Nor does it alter the case of Honour, whether an action (so it be great and difficult, and consequently a signe of much power,) be just or unjust: for Honour consisteth onely in the opinion of Power. Therefore the ancient Heathen did not think they Dishonoured, but greatly Honoured the Gods, when they introduced them in their Poems, committing Rapes, Thefts, and other great, but unjust, or unclear acts. (156)

The mechanical, materialist nature of man, propelled by a universal aversion to pain and appetite for power, challenged deeply held beliefs about free will, religion, morality, and the nature of the social body. It is not surprising then that Hobbes's "account of the natural condition of mankind" was strikingly at odds with "the prevailing contemporary view ... of prelapsarian harmony or subsequent salvation" (Hoekstra 111). This account also lead to an unpalatable justification for what would have otherwise been an acceptable principle of sovereign authority in a moment of "civil war and international conflict," by which "Hobbes's thought was shaped" (Hoekstra 114).[3]

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3. Hobbes chose to appeal to man's self-interested, exploitative tendencies by "connect[ing] moral values to the goods of self-preservation" rather than seeking to "create moral values where there were none" (Sorrel 145). Since the object of "the voluntary acts of every man ... is some *Good to himself*," (192) Hobbes sketched a portrait of human life in which

Clearly *Leviathan* is much more complex than just the role of appetite and aversion in creating the passions and in motivating human interactions. In fact, much current scholarship is dedicated to situating the text's bleak starting propositions within the full context of Hobbes's system of natural laws, and the social contracts to which they lead, in order to emphasize the positive characteristics of his philosophical project.[4] My intention, though, is not to test the validity of these readings but to consider how the Hobbesian principles outlined above informed the construction and valuation of pain in other influential texts of the period. Many of Hobbes's contemporaries were not as careful in their readings of *Leviathan* as are current critics, whose analyses occasionally take the form of apologias. Instead, Samuel Mintz observes, few seventeenth-century critics troubled themselves to "dra[w] a distinction between what Hobbes actually said and the way in which his doctrines were received by his readers" (136).

Misreadings of Hobbes may certainly be to blame for the fact that he "generated more hostile literature than any other thinker in the seventeenth century" (Rogers 413). However this does not mean that he was not seen as an important intellectual figure and engaged with as such. On the contrary, Jon Parkin explains, "[t]he traditional story ... that [*Leviathan*] was a book that was rejected rather than read seriously ... was largely the creation of Hobbes's intellectual opponents" (441). To gauge the extent to which literary authors like Behn engaged with Hobbes, it isn't sufficient to consider whether or not *Leviathan* was perfectly digested by its readers.

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the only possible good could be found in the submission to sovereign authority. For, if one does not relinquish one's natural right for the protection of the state, "every man is Enemy to every man" and lives in "continuall feare, and danger of violent death" (186).

4. For example, Stuart Sim and David Walker observe that "[d]espite our natural disposition towards self-serving behaviour we can recognize the need for checks on it, and Hobbes outlines various 'laws of nature' by which we come to appreciate the virtues of peace as opposed to war" (18). Tom Sorrel similarly asserts that Hobbes's "moral philosophy... set[s] out the means of achieving the best human life," albeit a materially construed one (135).

Instead it is important to attend to the way in which "Hobbes exerted a subtle but powerful influence," even on those who sought to marginalize his social philosophy (Mintz 149). He did this by "oblig[ing] them to meet him on his own grounds, to combat him with his own weapons of logical exactitude and severe reasoning" (Mintz 149). The shape of his thought — "rational, secular, and extra-theological"—was deeply influential and proved to be highly adaptable (Mintz 143). Opponents who rejected Hobbes's conclusions were tacitly persuaded by his method and they sought to redeem man's altruistic, sympathetic, social qualities without resorting to the theological authorities of the past century. Like it or not, critics and supporters were obliged to play Hobbes's game on Hobbes's terms.

In order to consider the influence of Hobbes's thought on Behn's disavowal of pain from honorable colonial subjectivity, I will turn again briefly to *Leviathan,* particularly to the role of appetite and aversion in Hobbes's system of punishment. Hobbes appears anxious that man's inclination to aggrandize his own power at the expense of others could potentially compromise the social contract, to which all must submit if it is to provide successfully the protection it promised. The sovereign must therefore have the power to enforce obedience by "inflicting some type of harm which causes the criminal physical or mental pain and suffering" (Hüning 222).[5] Simply put, "the aym of Punishment is ... terrour" (Hobbes 355). Sovereign punishment parlays man's universal aversion to painful physical or emotional sensations into peaceful social

5. The role of pain or death in sovereign punishment is a potential weakness in Hobbes's larger schema because it is antithetical to the law of nature "by which we are forbidden to do any thing destructive to our life" (Hobbes 205). Natural law dictates that "no one who transfers the right of nature to the sovereign can be said to give up the right to judge whether he is in mortal peril. This means that someone within the commonwealth who sincerely fears for his life can do what he thinks best to protect himself" (Sorrel 142). Because a criminal has no reason or incentive to submit to the punishment of the sovereign, "escape clauses" seem written into Hobbes's social contract precisely at the point that it should be most binding (Sorrel 142).

behavior. Because the sovereign gains control over his subjects by appealing to the "rational self-interest" of human nature, "Hobbes does not have to invoke a God, a universal sympathy, or even the authority of a concept of impersonal welfare" (Sorrel 146-7).[6] Instead, it is sufficient to provoke man's compulsory aversion to pain excited by an inescapable, mechanical response to motion applied either to the body through force or to the mind through intimidation.

To oppose the conclusion that man's only incentive to behave "honorably" in society is his fear of physical or emotional pain, one must first dispute the assumption that aversion to pain dictates human behavior. This alternate starting postulate structures Behn's understanding of man in *Oroonoko*, which in its turn does unforeseen damage to the humanist cause it set out to defend. Indeed, her "ennobling" reactionary conception of human nature proves to be every bit as "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short" as that described by Hobbes (186). For Behn, as for Stoic philosophers like Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and Cicero, "[p]ain becomes both sign and source of our loss of freedom and of our falling away from wisdom" (Morris 162). By adopting a neo-Stoic indifference to pain, Behn's text celebrates subjects whose "willed conquest over pain" signals "an absolute victory of mind and will over body" (Morris 162). But, because honorable subjects must disavow the power of their suffering, expressing one's pain becomes tantamount to expressing one's worthlessness. In the logic of the narrative, then, a susceptibility to suffering is used as a justification for slavery and brutality. For this reason, *Oroonoko* is of particular interest

6. In "Hobbes on the Right to Punish," Dieter Hüning points out that this very aspect of "Hobbes's doctrine of punishment has had a great impact on the subsequent development of criminal law in the natural law tradition" (217). This is because "Hobbes's systematic distinction between divine and earthly justice has been fundamental for the secularization of penal law in particular" (Hüning 217). Again, this demonstrates that the shape of Hobbes's thought rather than his specific conclusions took hold of thinkers of the following centuries.

in understanding Hobbes's influence— even when inverted— on the valuation of pain into the eighteenth century and beyond.

In *Oroonoko,* Behn consistently valorizes individuals who are unaffected by the appetites and aversions that pleasure and pain produce, particularly Imoinda. Indeed, "the brave, the beautiful, and the constant Imoinda" surpasses even Oroonoko in the text's estimation because of her unfaltering commitment to honor without reference to bodily harm (77). For example, Imoinda counter-intuitively demonstrates her virtue early in the narrative through her submission to sexual violation at the hands of the king of Coramantien.[7] Though Imoinda is married to Oroonoko, who "contrary to the custom of his country" vowed "that she should be the only woman he would possess while he lived," she obeys the king's order to join his otan, "the palace of the king's women, a sort of seraglio" (Behn 17, 21). This a terrible trial for Imoinda and Oroonoko, who love each other with "the most tender and most passionate heart[s] that ever loved" (Behn 23). Nonetheless, Imoinda swears "by all [her] powers" that she is "not yet known to her husband," sealing her fate as sexually available to the king (Behn 20). Because of her belief that she must pay the king an obedience "not at all inferior to what they paid their gods," refusing to receive his caresses because of her aversion to them would be an "impious disobedience" to the laws of honor (Behn 19).

Moreover, when the king decides that Imoinda's relationship with Oroonoko has rendered her an unfit sexual plaything, she begs to be killed rather than dishonored. The king is unmoved and sells her into slavery nonetheless. His decision is cruel and unusual, the narrator

7. It is worth noting that although Imoinda is proving her honor in her willingness to submit to the king, Behn repeatedly calls attention to his impotence. Because the king, who is "an hundred and odd years old," could "but innocently play" with Imoinda, this problematic episode is, perhaps, more palatable to British readers and more consistent with romance conventions (13, 18).

stresses, not because it is physically harmful but because it is dishonorable. Even the king can acknowledge as much in his cooler moments of reflection, repining that he "ought to have had so much value and consideration for a maid of her quality as to have nobly put her to death, and not to have sold her like a common slave, the greatest revenge, and the most disgraceful of any, to which they a thousand times prefer death, and implore it as Imoinda did, but could not obtain that honour" (Behn 31-2). This offense is so outrageous that, despite the narrator's claim that lying was an unknown vice in the country,[8] the king must falsely report that Imoinda was "secretly put to death, for he knew he should never obtain [Oroonoko's] pardon" for selling her into slavery and disgrace (Behn 32).

Honor, dissociated from pain and aversion, both motivates obedience to sovereign authority and creates ideological continuity between the narrative's disparate developments in the romantic courts of Coramantien and in the contested colonial space of Surinam. Likewise, the disavowal of bodily pain provides a necessary point of consistency to the fluctuating literary styles at work in the text. In a single slim volume, *Oroonoko* manages to read alternately as a travel narrative, a heroic romance, a proto-novel, and even a historical allegory.[9] The instability

8. Robert L. Chibka's "'Oh! Do Not Fear a Woman's Intervention': Truth, Falsehood, and Fiction in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko,*" offers an interesting reading of the consequences of the "truthfulness" of individuals in Coramantien. Because Oroonoko is unfamiliar with the concept of lying, he is rendered particularly vulnerable to the lies of the colonists. However, the parameters for truth and falsehood are incredibly compromised in the text as Behn's narrator also self-consciously embellishes her story. Because the narrative "relentlessly conflate[s] artifice that expresses truth and artifice that dissembles," Chibka finds little value in searching, as many critics do, for evidence of the "truth" of Behn's residence in Surinam or for corroborating evidence in "authentic" travel narratives that she accurately represented life in the colonies (532).

9. Many critics focus on Oroonoko's generic complexity as a basis for interpretation. For example, in "Romance of Empire: Oroonoko and the Trade in Slaves" Laura Brown argues that Behn uses the familiar conventions of romance to depict Oroonoko as "identical and hence equal" to English aristocracy (204). Behn's romanticized account of slavery can thus be read as an allegory for the political unrest surrounding Charles I's execution, making both the sovereign

of its literary conventions, Michael McKeon notes, indicates the unstable ideological issues with which *Oroonoko* engages, slavery and colonialism most crucially.[10] However, because an honorable detachment from the influence of the body functions as a "nodal point"—an overarching ideological constant that "unifies a given field [and] constitutes its identity"— Behn provides her English readers with a rubric for assessing the world of her text and the worth of her characters, be they monarchs, slaves, or colonists (Zizek *Sublime Object* 105).

Approaching honor as a nodal point, which "designate[s] and at the same time constitute[s] the identity of a given object beyond the variable cluster of its descriptive properties," will help to enhance our understanding of an enigma that *Oroonoko* scholars have been hard pressed to account for (*Sublime Object* 108). That is, what causes Oroonoko and Imoinda to retain their royal identities even after they are transplanted from one continent to another and from one social position to another? Critics have tended to read the unmistakable, radiating worth of Behn's royal pair as an example of what McKeon calls "aristocratic ideology." In *The Origins of the English Novel*, McKeon describes aristocratic ideology as "the unity of outward circumstances and inward essence" that guarantees that the "social order is not circumstantial and arbitrary, but corresponds to and expresses an analogous, intrinsic moral order" (131). In

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and the royal slave "victims of the same historical phenomenon—those new forces in English society loosely associated with an antiabsolutist mercantile imperialism" (Brown 215). Similarly in "Spectacular Deaths: History and Story in Aphra Behn's *Love Letters, Oroonoko,* and *The Widow Ranter*" Janet Todd positions *Oroonoko* as a colonial allegory by sketching out the plausible correlations between characters in *Oroonoko* and colonialists Behn would have been aware of during her "own probable stay in Surinam in the early 1660's when William Byam, who becomes the perfidious villain of the short tale, was the deputy governor in charge of the colony" (44).

10. See McKeon's discussion of the symmetrical trajectory of generic and ideological shifts in *The Origins of the English Novel*. Behn's vacillation between generic conventions, especially those of romance and "true" history, would suggest to McKeon that her ideological positions were likewise in flux.

other words, the accouterments of the aristocracy, their "wealth or political power," are the logical consequences of their nobility not the cause of it (McKeon 131). These external signifiers of internal worth, McKeon argues, extend even to "appearance itself" (131). Therefore, one might argue, the surpassingly beautiful Oroonoko and Imoinda display the indelible stamp of nobility on their very faces.[11] Aristocratic ideology allows "[t]he royal youth [to] appea[r] in spite of the slave" and causes "the whole country [to] resoun[d] with [Imoinda's] fame" (Behn 43, 45). It also allows Behn to reconcile her outrage at the treatment of Oroonoko with her participation in the colonial system that enslaves him. Oroonoko is a *royal* slave and the colonies are *royally* sanctioned.[12]

Yet the disparity between inner value and outward circumstance involved in Oroonoko's contradictory position as a royal slave also suggests that Behn's aristocratic worldview was not fully stable. In "Violence and Awe: The Foundations of Government in Aphra Behn's New World Setting," Richard Frohock uses McKeon's formulation of the natural rights of the aristocracy to point out significant fissures in Behn's ideological scaffolding. According to Frohock, honor and authority are not consistently self-evident in the text, making it necessary for Behn to reinforce them through the use of supplementary signs.[13] Though *Oroonoko* provides ample evidence of Behn's royalist sensibilities, such anxious additions indicate her uncertainty

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11. Unsurprisingly, the narrator describes the physical beauty of both Oroonoko and Imoinda in aristocratic terms. For example, "The whole proportion and air of [Oroonoko's] face was so *noble* and exactly formed that, bating his colour, there could be nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome" and Imoinda is called the "fair *Queen* of Night; whose face and person was so exceeding all he had ever beheld" (Behn 15, 16 emphases added).

12. Susan B. Iwanisziw, among others, helpfully clarifies this point.

13. That is, a rich array of tattoos verifies Oroonoko's royal status while escalating violence (problematically) verifies the monarchical basis for colonial power.

that the inherent signs of aristocratic honor would be immediately legible. Laura Wyrick more forcefully highlights the failures of Behn's aristocratic ideology in "Facing Up to the Other: Race and Ethics in Levinas and Behn." Wyrick argues that "the body can perfectly communicate the self's honor" when in the aristocratic regime of Coramantien (207). However, once the narrative shifts into the colonies, "nobility and aristocratic ideology must fail ... otherwise the conflict between Oroonoko's royalty and his slave status would be untenable" (Wyrick 209-10).

Clearly, then, Behn has difficulty constructing a stable social order and a meaningful standard of honor through aristocratic ideology because her protagonist – a royal slave – defies the congruity between inner worth and external signifiers that forms its "most fundamental justification" (McKeon 131). Instead, it is necessary to imagine a condition of honor that "stays the same in all possible worlds," thereby allowing an individual's inner value to be utterly divorced from the exigencies of their situation (*Sublime Object* 104). Behn creates space for this possibility in her narrative by severing the honor of the mind from the influences on the body. This construction of honor, which stabilizes the identities of the characters and the ideological field of the narrative, is not threatened by the outward change of circumstances. On the contrary, honor is dependent on one's imperviousness to such changes. In her "separation and detachment ... of internals and externals," Behn may be said to be participating in the "transvaluation of honor" away from the aristocratic ideal "that culminates in the seventeenth century" (McKeon 155).[14] This transvaluation, which McKeon christens "progressive ideology," ultimately "resolve[d] itself into virtue on one hand and aristocratic rank on the other" (155). Though Behn

14. McKeon is primarily interested in *Oroonoko*'s generic instability as it pertains to epistemological questions of truth, but he also uses the text to demonstrate the corollary questions of virtue implicit in the transvaluation of honor. (See *The Origins of the English Novel,* pp. 111-113).

does not detach worth from birth altogether, her strict separation of honor from bodily influence offers insight into how the thinkers of the period began to imagine the possibility of honor's transvaluation.

Just as honor motivated Imoinda's life in Coramantien, it also motivates her death in Surinam. Oroonoko proposes death to Imoinda as an alternative to rape and torture, which he imagines to be the almost certain consequences of leaving her unprotected during his suicidal crusade against his enemies. She is so ready and willing to die that Oroonoko "found the heroic wife faster pleading for death than he was to propose it" (Behn 71). However, her "noble resolution" to die is not prompted by her desire to avoid the pains of the imagined brutal attacks in favor of a more humane execution (Behn 71). Instead, Imoinda pleads for death both to quiet Oroonoko's apprehension on her account, which his "great heart could not endure," and to avoid the dishonor of being killed by anyone other than him (Behn 71). For, in "her own country," the narrator confides, "when a man finds any occasion to quit his wife, if he loves her, she dies by his hand, if not he sells her or suffers some other to kill her" (Behn 71, 72).

In the name of honor, then, "the lovely, young, and adored victim lays herself down before the sacrifice, while [Oroonoko], with a hand resolved and a heart breaking within, gave the fatal stroke, first cutting her throat, and then severing her yet smiling face from that delicate body, pregnant as it was with the fruit of tenderest love" (Behn 72). The narrative voice highlights not only the heroism of Imoinda's willingness to die, but also her apparent insensibility to the pain of decapitation. Indeed, Imoinda sacrifices her life to her honor with such an untouchable grace that a smile still haunts her detached head, leaving Oroonoko unwilling to bury it with the rest of her body so that he might continue to gaze upon it fondly. The impervious royal head is severed from the influence of the vulnerable body, literalizing the

separation of honorable action and painful stimuli that Behn consistently gestures toward throughout the narrative.[15]

Nonetheless, the physical suffering that Imoinda's smiling face disavows comes into negative focus as the narrator lingers on the details of her physical vulnerability through descriptive words like "young", "delicate", "tenderest", and of course, "pregnant". This last feature introduces an additional complication to the scene, Charlotte Sussman argues in "The Other Problem with Women: Reproduction and Slave Culture in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko.*" References to Imoinda's pregnancy cause her death scene to be haunted by the "specter of infanticide" (Sussman 226). For Sussman, this specter is "a measure of the brutality of the relation of slavery," wherein Oroonoko can only assert his connection to the still developing child "through murder" (213). As tragically true as this may be, the narrative also encourages us to read the sacrifice of the child as an additional index of Imoinda's heroic resolve. Neither the pain of losing her husband, her child, nor her own life can entice Imoinda to submit to the dishonor of living in slavery.

Nor does the narrative fault Oroonoko for the extremity of his actions with regard to his wife. On the contrary, the necessity of "killing her, and then his enemies, and next himself" is made as plain to readers as it is to Imoinda by the juxtaposition of the thwarted slave rebellion that occurs just a few pages before (Behn 71). Oroonoko incites a revolt among the slaves by attempting to impress on them the dishonor of their enslavers, "*who have no one human virtue left to distinguish them from the vilest creatures*," as well as the disgraceful manner of their

15. Wyrick reads the logic of Imoinda's decapitation— as well as Oroonoko's dismemberment at the narrative's conclusion— rather differently. She argues that they signify the necessity of separating the "external appearance" of slavery "from [the] symbolic value" of nobility because of the incongruity between external signs and internal value that has proven so disruptive to Behn's aristocratic ideology (214).

capture (Behn 62). For, they were not made slaves through "*the chance of war*" in "*honourable battle,*" but were "*bought and sold like apes or monkeys, to be the sport of women, fools and cowards, and the support of rogues, runagades* [sic]" (Behn 62). According to Oroonoko's logic, the dishonor of slavery lies not in the condition itself but in the circumstances surrounding it. Because of the degeneracy of the colonial masters and their contemptible, duplicitous tactics, submitting to slavery at their hands is antithetical to honor, "the first principle in Nature that was to be obeyed" (Behn 62). As such, anyone who abides by these conditions – even if they do so for fear of immediate personal danger – is unworthy of the honor of freedom and "ought to be abandoned and left a prey to the common enemy" (Behn 63).[16]

The reader is instructed to conclude, then, that the slaves justify their own slavery when they allow the ignoble influence of pain to deter them from their revolt. The contempt the narrator feels for this concession to bodily aversion is plain as she records:

> the women and children, seeing their husbands so treated [lashed in the eyes with whips], being of fearful cowardly dispositions and hearing the English cry out, *Yield and live, yield and be pardoned*, they all run in amongst their husbands and fathers, and hung about them, crying out, *Yield, yield, and leave Caesar* [Oroonoko] *to their revenge*, that by degrees the slaves abandoned Caesar. (Behn 65)

The infliction of pain overcomes the "fearful" women, whose cowardice is heightened by comparison to Imoinda, "who, grown big as she was, did nevertheless press near her lord, having a bow and a quiver full of poisoned arrows" (Behn 65). Likewise, the men, less honorably

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16. Joanna Lipking notes that Oroonoko's "theory of natural slavery ... dates back to Aristotle" and also has biblical referents (177). Yet, in this speech Oroonoko seems to have forgotten that he has sold many of the slaves he addresses to the masters he maligns. Laura Rosenthal argues that this indicates that Oroonoko "has already been influenced by European practices" of mercantilism rather than the classical notion of slavery here professed (152). Adam Beach, on the other hand, contests the assumption that slavery was somehow more "innocent" and less mercenary in Coramantien, arguing that such assumptions oversimplify the highly developed slave trade in Africa prior to European influence.

disposed than the stoic Oroonoko, cannot bear the combined weight of their own physical suffering and the despair of the families. Yield they do and, in so doing, they sacrifice their connection to Oroonoko and to the cause for which he fought. Thus, "the slaves, who, but a few days before, adored [Oroonoko] as something more than mortal, now had a whip to give him some lashes, while he strove not to break his fetters" (Behn 67). The slaves concede to a Hobbesian self-interest for immediate personal safety and are therefore unfit subjects within the ideological system of honor. As such these men, women, and children can only occupy the desubjectivized position of slaves, whose pain is ironically invalid.[17]

However, honor places Oroonoko and Imoinda beyond the influence of physical or emotional suffering. They both demonstrate this commitment when they agree upon the necessity of her death. Nonetheless, contemporary critics seem to overlook the overdetermination of Imoinda's murder as they denounce Oroonoko for having committed it. Just as Behn's fictional colonialist "cried out, *O monster! that hast murdered thy wife,*" so too do critics decry the act as monstrous (73). As seen above, Sussman condemns Oroonoko's actions as nothing more than "the sign of his absolute possession of wife and child" (220). Wyrick contends that Imoinda is sacrificed to Oroonoko's honor alone, which can only be retrieved "through the murder of wife and unborn child" (213-4). And Janet Todd positions Imoinda as the ultimate victim of Oroonoko's violent, aggrandized understanding of his own agency in the

17. Jean-Francios Lyotard description of the paradox of the "differend" is helpful in unpacking the dilemma that pain creates for the slaves: "either the damages you complain about never took place, and your testimony is false; or else ... since you are able to testify to them, it is not a wrong that has been done to you ... and your testimony is still false" (5). If the slaves are honorable subjects, then they will disavow their pain. If the slaves are not honorable subjects, then their avowal of pain does not matter. In other words, when pain is acknowledged, one forfeits one's honor, which is necessary for validating the injury.

colony. Oroonoko, Todd asserts, "thought to be the prince of a black rebellion and found himself simply a renegade slave. At the end he thinks to kill half the colony and ends up killing only his wife" (46).

The critical impulse to "rescue" Imoinda[18] by establishing Oroonoko's culpability also indicts the narrator— who, more often than not, is conflated with Behn herself. For example, in "New Hystericism: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: the Body, the Text, and the Feminist Critic," Ros Ballaster claims that the narrator "inspects and puts on show the black woman's suffering but ultimately refuses to 'comprehend' it" as she does Oroonoko's (293). Behn's purposeful exclusion of Imoinda from the narrator's worldview, Ballaster concludes, makes her "the mute bearer of female suffering on to whom the white female subject can project her own hysteria and be left at liberty to write" (293-4). Sussman similarly asserts that "the white woman speaks in the novel literally over the dead body of the black woman," problematically observing that "it is perhaps not the least of the cruelties of colonial slavery that one woman's identity must be constructed over and against another's" (230). Unfortunately, such arguments must read the text selectively, overlooking the agency that Behn attributes to Imoinda, who, as seen above, is described as a warrior in battle, as well as the admiration that prompts Behn to commemorate "the brave, the beautiful and the constant Imoinda" in the final lines of the narrative (77).

In each of these critical readings, Imoinda is positioned as a victim in Oroonoko's quest for power, a pitiable circumstance that culminates in her passive submission to a gory death at

18. In *Tropicopolitans*, Srinivas Aravamudan styles this trend "imoindaism," a critical phenomenon which "points to elisions" in the more typical "narratives of Behn's progressive ideology, feminism, and empathy for slaves" that are features of "oroonokoism" (31-2).

his hands.[19] That is to say, such readings assume that modern frameworks for understanding pain, particularly as articulated by Elaine Scarry, would have been equally logical to Behn. From a modern perspective, it seems inevitable that pain and death are antithetical to Imoinda's power and to the coherence of her subjective identity. This is because:

> It is the intense pain that destroys a person's self and world, a destruction experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe. Intense pain is also language destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject. (Scarry 35)

In this quintessentially modern formulation, objectless pain fills the consciousness of the victim, causing her world to collapse into the unendurable presence of the body and the passive experience of agony. This overwhelming pain "actively destroys [language], bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (Scarry 4). Because the sufferer's relationship to language is betrayed, her connection to external reality is severed and her agency and subjectivity are destroyed.

If the influence of certain external stimuli *must* result in extreme pain, and if extreme pain *must* destroy the subject, it seems logical to conclude, as many critics do, that Imoinda is deprived of her selfhood and is made a vulnerable pawn in a masculine game of colonial power. However, to presume that Imoinda's death scene is necessarily passive is to universalize

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19. Kelley Wezner's "'Myself an Eyewitness': The Imperial Gaze and Narration in Oroonoko" is an exception to this trend. Wezner attempts to recuperate a shred of agency for Imoinda by asserting that, in being "an object of visual pleasure," Imoinda has the power to subordinate others. This power is demonstrated when Oroonoko's "unwillingness to relinquish her ... even after death, leads directly to his recapture and subsequent torture and execution" (Wezner 22). A questionable consolation prize, indeed.

Hobbes's assumptions about the body's inevitable and mechanistic reactions to external stimuli, as well as the power of those reactions to influence behavior, that Behn is resisting. As such, these readings do more to illustrate the influence of Hobbes's association of the pursuit of pleasure with power and the experience of pain with powerlessness on modern thought than they do to illustrate the dynamics of Imoinda's death scene.

In addition to remaining honorably unmoved by the prospect of death or by the pain of decapitation, Imoinda actively uses her "pain in unique ways in particular social relationships" (Asad 89).[20] That is, the death scene affirms Imoinda's connection to her husband, her culture, and her sense of self. The narrator notes:

> While tears trickled down his cheeks, hers were smiling with joy [that] she should die by so noble a hand and be sent in her own country (for that is their notion of the next world) by him she so tenderly loved and so truly adored in this; for wives have a respect for their husbands equal to what any other people pay a deity. (Behn 71)

Imoinda's understanding of pain as a meaningful social and spiritual event rather than as a debilitating physical one is reminiscent of religious experiences of suffering that thrived before the Copernican shift of the "biological revolution" in the seventeenth century. Indeed, Behn seems to recuperate a martyric model of suffering in a secular context. By connecting the value of pain to the extra-theological concept of honor (upon which Imoinda's subjective identity is based), Behn finds a way to dispute Hobbes's arguments about the passivity and negativity of pain without recourse to explicitly religious explanations. Imoinda's anti-Hobbesian honor makes her insusceptible to bodily sensations, freeing her from the degrading compulsion of physical stimuli. In this passage, then, pain does not have the power to destroy Imoinda's

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20. In *Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad describes this active and relational mode of understanding pain as characteristic of a pre-modern (and I would argue a pre-Hobbesian) worldview.

subjectivity or to un-create her connection to the world. On the contrary, Imoinda's joyful imperviousness to pain reaffirms her identity as an honorable subject.

Given the readability of the scene in the logic of the narrative, we might ask ourselves why this moment holds critical attention as fast as it does. I will argue that the outrage surrounding Imoinda's murder is centered on the incomprehensibility of Oroonoko's actions, or rather inaction, *after* committing the deed rather than the deed itself. For, not only does Oroonoko fail to take revenge on his enslavers, but also, more strangely, he fails even to attempt it. By not pursuing his plan of vengeance, that which would have left Imoinda vulnerable to dishonor, Oroonoko belies all ostensible justification for her death. As such, Oroonoko offers no satisfying explanation of "so cruel a deed" and seems to scoff as much at readers as he does the textual interlocutors that "he had no leisure to answer impertinent questions" about the murder (Behn 74). It is his refusal to act that leads Todd to argue that "the rhetoric" of Oroonoko's boasting "is more impressive than the reality" (46). His empty claims lead only to the "grotesque mutilation" of a wife left to rot in the woods and the "absurd blunder" that is his plan for revenge (Todd 32). As the grandiloquent stratagems take on the appearance of mere bluster, Imoinda's death begins to seem increasingly futile and starkly indefensible.

This is because, contrary to expectations, Oroonoko does not act with the same honor that characterized Imoinda's death. Instead, the emotional pain that her loss inspires disgracefully incapacitates him. When Oroonoko first "found she was dead and past all retrieve, never more to bless him with her eyes and soft language," he experiences a grief-induced rage that will seemingly prompt him to execute his designs (Behn 72). But as quickly as rage rises up in Oroonoko's mind, it brings with it the painful memory of Imoinda, depriving him of all agency to effect his plans. For, "at her name, grief would get the ascendant of rage, and he would lie

down by her side, and water her face with showers of tears, which never were wont to fall from those eyes" (Behn 72).[21] In this most overwhelming trial of his honor, Oroonoko's internal grief and emotional suffering have physical consequences that deprive him of the "power to stir from the sight of this dear object, now more beloved and adored than ever" (Behn 72). Like the slaves who were made contemptible by their familial attachments and keen sense of personal pain, the once impenetrable Oroonoko allows his grief to overpower his resolve.

It is Oroonoko, not Imoinda, who is rendered passive by the death scene – a fact that is highlighted by his attenuated control of both his mind and body. As mentioned above, Oroonoko is unable to harness his rage into productive action. Instead, grief wreaks havoc on his senses and, the narrator confides, "he tore, he raved, he roared" without purpose "like some monster in the woods" (Behn 72). Likewise, his limbs shiver with weakness as painful thoughts leave him unable to preserve his physical health:[22]

> [Oronooko] found his strength so decayed that he reeled to and fro like boughs assailed by contrary winds, so that he was forced to lie down again and try to summon all his courage to his aid. He found his brains turned round, and his eyes were dizzy, and objects appeared not the same to him [as] they were wont to do;

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21. In "Aphra Behn and the Genealogy of the Man of Feeling," G. A. Starr cites Oroonoko's reaction to Imoinda's death as evidence that Behn "puts greater emphasis on the linkage between heroism and weakness," making Oroonoko an "ancesto[r] of the eighteenth-century man of feeling" (363, 372). For Starr, *Oroonoko* thus stands in contrast to the "tragic and heroic drama of the 1660s and 1670s [which] subjected characters to comparable vicissitudes, but largely as occasions to bring out their stoic grandeur" (363). However, I would argue that Oroonoko's weakness is presented as a liability rather than a testament to his value as a proto-sentimental hero.

22. Because Oroonoko's emotional experience of sorrow is felt by and described through the body it becomes difficult to disentangle it from the more discrete moments of physical pain in the text. In fact, this experience would be considered actually painful – not just emotionally distressing – by the International Association for the Study of Pain, which defines pain as "an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage" (IASP).

> his breath was short and all his limbs surprised with a faintness he had never felt before. (Behn 73)

Oroonoko's unprecedented vulnerability to his pain—the streaming tears, the disorientation, the faintness—attest to the betrayal of his bodily strength and pronounce that the hero is simply no longer capable of any active assault against his enslavers. Instead, he helplessly awaits capture, cradling the mortifying head of his wife that wafts "a stink that almost struck [one] dead" infallibly toward his pursuers (Behn 73). Oroonoko's passive and pitiably physical experience of pain following Imoinda's death compromises his coherence as an honorable subject, making him unworthy of his royal status and an indefensible murderer.

Had Oroonoko instantly acted upon his plans by seeking his enemies and dying with an uncompromised sense of honor, as he inevitably would have done, then Imoinda's death could have been seen as what Slavoj Zizek has called a "properly *ethical* monstrosity" (*Fragile Absolute* 144). That is,

> in a situation of forced choice, the subject makes the 'crazy', impossible choice of, in a way, *striking at himself*, at what is most precious to himself. This act, far from amounting to a case of impotent aggressivity turned against oneself, rather changes the co-ordinates of the situation in which the subject finds himself: by cutting himself loose from the precious object through whose use the enemy kept him in check, the subject gains the space for free action. (*Fragile Absolute* 140)

By sacrificing Imoinda, "*the fairest, dearest, softest creature that ever nature made*," Oroonoko divests himself of all that could potentially compel him to live on in the dishonor of slavery (Behn 72). A man that will sooner murder his own family and suffer any and all bodily torment willingly is a man that poses a danger great enough, perhaps, to effect the "fancied slaughter" that he imagines he will bring "over the whole face of the plantation" (Behn 71). But when Oroonoko refuses to carry out his plan of vengeance because he is preoccupied by his own suffering, the ethical dimension of the sacrifice is turned to its opposite. The reader, the narrator,

and contemporary critics thus scratch their heads in exasperation at Imoinda's death, now only monstrous.

And yet, I would argue that Oroonoko's susceptibility to pain in this scene should be read in a much different way precisely because it is antithetical to the narrative's code of honor. Imoinda's decision to submit willingly to a horrific death supports the ideological structure of honor that forecloses pain and obscures the outrages of her slavery. Indeed, even as the colonists express shock at the fact of her murder, which at first appeared "horrid," they also applaud its logic as "brave and just" (Behn 71). Imoinda's death perfectly expresses the disavowal of pain necessary for honor to remain untethered to the body and consistent across any conceivable change of outward circumstances. As such, it is valiant and comprehensible, but ultimately self-defeating. Were Oroonoko to carry out his quest for revenge with no regard for his personal suffering, he would likewise be reasserting his adherence to the honorable disavowal of pain that makes the injustice he experiences unspeakable. Instead, by giving over to the pain of grief to a point that is illogical in the text, Oroonoko is disconnecting himself from the system of honor that has enslaved him.[23]

Tellingly, Oroonoko's "dishonorable" reaction to Imoinda's death creates formal difficulties in the text. For example, Behn's previously established narrative voice cannot reliably communicate this ideologically fraught moment. In "*Oroonoko*: Reception, Ideology, and Narrative Strategy," Laura Rosenthal points out that Behn makes use of a "subtle shift in the

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23. In psychoanalytic terms, Oroonoko's disavowal of his grief would have reasserted his subjectivization to the nodal point that "interpellates [the] individual into subject by addressing it with the call of a certain master-signifier," in this case honor (*Sublime Object* 112). By embracing his pain, he not only refuses this interpellation, he also creates the "the possibility of the 'second death', the radical annihilation of the symbolic texture through which so-called reality is constituted" (*Sublime Object* 147). That is, he disrupts the coherence of the symbolic order that is organized around the stabilizing idea of honor which no longer defines his subjectivity.

narrative perspective indirectly through different characters" throughout much of *Oroonoko* (156). That is, she matches the text's two distinct narrative styles, romance and realism, with two distinct narrative voices, that of the heroic Oroonoko and that of the matter-of-fact young lady narrator. However, Oroonoko's painful period of mourning poses a significant problem to this narrative strategy, which Rosenthal calls Behn's "most prominent technical accomplishment" (157). The young lady narrator does not witness the events that take place in the woods and "it is difficult to imagine that in his madness and rage [Oroonoko] took the opportunity to relate in such precise details his killing of Imoinda" (Rosenthal 157). Therefore, Behn is obliged to use a "synthesizing, semi-omniscient authorial voice" to narrate the scene (157).

As McKeon has powerfully demonstrated, generic and formal instabilities often signal ideological instabilities. It is hardly surprising, then, that the excessive susceptibility to pain that violates the code of honor upon which Oroonoko's royal identity is based creates formal disruptions. Oroonoko's experience of pain necessitates the introduction of a synthesizing authorial voice, which smoothes over a portion of the text that cannot be narrated or comprehended under its previously established logic. However, the omniscient narrative voice that Behn uses to describe Oroonoko's grief creates a second formal anomaly. In "'Frightful Spectacles of a Mangled King': Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and Narration through Theatre," Marta Figlerowicz argues that "we do not perceive Oroonoko except through the eyes of other individuals, we do not have access to his inner life except in the midst of the opinions held about him by the mass of his observers" (328). In other words, Oroonoko's varying emotional states and internal motives are only knowable as "the sum of the reactions he produces in his observers" (Figlerowicz 331). Because Oroonoko's reaction to Imoinda's death is disclosed only

by means of the omniscient narrator, it is not authenticated by any witnesses and is difficult to interpret or to assimilate into his character.

Even as the young lady narrator resumes the story— asserting that "these were his thoughts, and his silent arguments with his heart, as he told us afterwards"— she highlights both her absence from the scene and the necessity of taking Oroonoko at his word (Behn 71). Whereas the narrator seems to have a reliable understanding of Oroonoko's emotional state when he "resolve[d] not only to kill Byam, but all those he thought had enraged him," beyond this her certainty is compromised (Behn 71). In fact, the narrator disowns her authority in the account of Imoinda's death by switching to a passive, conditional construction. She reports, "*it was not to be doubted but* the parting, the eternal leave-taking of two such lovers, so greatly born, and so sensible, so beautiful, so young and so fond, *must be* very moving, as the relation of it was to be afterwards" (Behn 72 emphases added). Furthermore, even if we assume that Oroonoko *did* definitely describe his painful interlude to the narrator, "[h]is physical decline and frantic moods make him increasingly a spectacle of 'otherness,'" whom the she cannot claim to know positively (Lipking 180).

However, I would argue that it is not just Oroonoko's physical decline that positions him as other, but also the dramatically altered relationship to pain that this decline signals. Following Imoinda's death, Oroonoko is not only susceptible to pain, and therefore deprived of his honorable identity, he also uses pain to distance himself from colonial ideology and to align himself with the other. For example, when the colonists discover Oroonoko grieving in the woods, he externalizes his internal suffering as a way to indicate its power and his difference from the colonists:

> *Look ye, ye faithless crew,* said he, *it is not life I seek, nor am I afraid of dying*, and at that word, cut a piece of flesh from his own throat, and threw it at them, *yet*

> *still I would live if I could till I had perfected my revenge. But oh! it cannot be. I feel life gliding from my eyes and heart, and, if I make not haste, I shall fall a victim to the shameful whip.* At that, he ripped up his own belly, and took his bowels and pulled them out with what strength he could, while some, on their knees imploring, besought him to hold his hand. (Behn 74)

In making this horrifying display, Susan Iwanisziw points out, "Oroonoko most certainly appropriates the ... heroic self-mutilation from the Indians he has encountered in Surinam" (101). Oroonoko's appropriation of self-mutilation at this moment is especially telling because he had previously denounced the practice as dishonorable.

Indeed, when Oroonoko accompanied the narrator to the "Indian towns," they were both appalled by the self-mutilation of the natives, which left some of them without "their noses, some their lips, some both their noses and lips, some their ears, and others cut through each check, with long slashes, through which their teeth appeared; they had several other formidable wounds and scars, or rather dismemberings" (Behn 56, 59). Instead of acknowledging even the "passive valour" of cutting oneself to pieces, Oroonoko disapproves of their injuries because they are self-inflicted "rather than wounds got in noble battle" (Behn 59).

The native honor of self-mutilation is in direct competition with the colonial honor of disavowal. That is, the natives use self-mutilation to incorporate pain into their understanding of honorable subjectivity whereas the colonists disavow pain from subjective experience completely– even the negative merit of overcoming it. The native, like the stoic, thus "constitutes himself in part through pain [because it] offers an opportunity to exercise true self-control" (Dijkhuizen and Enenkel 14-15). However, resignation to pain *despite its intensity* paradoxically attests to pain's ability to influence the body and mind. An acknowledgement of pain's power has no place in Behn's anti-Hobbesian, anti-mechanistic conception of honor as the only valid motivator of human behavior. Instead, suffering should not have the power either to

inhibit or to incite an individual's actions. It must fail to influence them in any way. The native conception of honor is thus pointedly coded as other, both by Oroonoko, who describes it as "a sort of courage too brutal to be applauded," and by the narrator, who takes the natives "for hobgoblins or fiends rather than men" (Behn 59, 56).

By using his pain to express his contempt and to attest to his personal power, Oroonoko is positioning himself as other precisely at the point in the text in which he has disclaimed his position as an honorable colonial subject through his refusal to disavow the power of his sorrow over Imoinda's death. Behn's anxiety over Oroonoko's destabilizing relationship to pain causes her to take extreme measures to reincorporate his suffering into the framework of honor that gave her narrative ideological coherence. That is, Oroonoko's attestations of pain—the cries of grief and the vitriolic language of reproach—must be quieted. To this end, he is executed.

The necessity of containing Oroonoko's excessive demonstrations of pain helps to account for the utter improbability of his recovery from his injuries. Oroonoko's self-inflicted disembowelment is apparently fatal, leading the narrator and her companions (and possibly the reader as well) to conclude that he is "dead or just dying" when captured and carried to a surgeon (Behn 75). Nor is it sufficient for the surgeon merely to cure Oroonoko of his wounds, rather he must reanimate him by "us[ing] means to *bring him to life"* (Behn 75 emphasis added). The consequences of this forced resuscitation are marked. Oroonoko, once a paragon of European beauty,[24] is now "so altered that his face was like a death's head blacked over, nothing but teeth

24. Critics often cite Oroonoko's Roman features as an indication of Behn's racism, but Adam Beach poses an interesting counter-reading in "Behn's *Oroonoko*, the Gold Coast, and Slavery in the Early-Modern Atlantic World." Beach proposes that Oroonoko might have been biracial, a fact, which, among others, suggests a more substantial acquaintance with the realities of the slave trade than Behn is usually credited with. Beach argues that it is important to acknowledge when and how *Oroonoko* whitewashes the complex and systematized reality of the

and eye-holes" (Behn 75). Oroonoko's hideous transformation, Wyrick concludes, distances him from the sympathies of the narrator, who "[b]y the end of the novel ... can see nothing in his face except his darkness," a quality that she had previously been ready to suppress (212). The face that had once served as a testament to Oroonoko's worth now signals the loss of his honorable identity. He is the very picture of living death, no longer a subject but a voiceless prop in a violent colonial masque.

In recalling Oroonoko's last moments, one might overestimate the narrator's descriptive efforts in memorializing the downfall of "this great man, deserving of a better fate and a more sublime wit than mine to write his praises" (Behn 76). But Oroonoko's execution is chronicled with an almost startling coolness and detachment. In fact, the record of his death, dubbed "one of the most gruesome moments in British literature" (Wyrick 206), is so short that we may look at it here in its entirety:

> He had learned to take tobacco, and when he was assured he should die, he desired they would give him a pipe in his mouth, ready lighted which they did, and the executioner came and first cut off his members and threw them into the fire. After that, with an ill-favoured knife, they cut his ears and his nose, and burned them; he still smoked on, as if nothing had touched him. Then they hacked off one of his arms, and still he bore up, and held his pipe. But at the cutting off the other arm, his head sunk and his pipe dropped, and he gave up the ghost without a groan or a reproach. (Behn 76)

In many ways, Oroonoko's understated and affectless dismemberment recalls Imoinda's decapitation. Just as Imoinda's smiling bodiless head signified the imperviousness of her honor to the influence of personal suffering, Oroonoko's unflinching acceptance of his dismemberment allows the "royal slave" to recover the subjective coherence that had been compromised by his previous cries of pain. Indeed, for Srinivas Aravamudan, Oroonoko's silence during the

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African slave economy, which it implies a knowledge of through details like Oroonoko's facial features.

execution "signifies his own irreproachability, making him into a sacrificial object" (48). Reading Oroonoko's death as sacrificial is almost inevitable given the biblical echoes of Behn's phrase, "he gave up the ghost." In irreproachably giving up the ghost, as Abraham and as Christ had done, [25] Oroonoko's death can be read as an example of secular martyrdom, in which resignation to suffering serves as a testament not to the strength of faith, but to the extra-theological "truths" of nobility and honor.

At the same time, Oroonoko's dismemberment is quite different from Imoinda's decapitation because of his silence and the narrator's exclusive focus on the execution's external aspects. We will recall that Behn utilized a "synthesizing semi-omniscient" authorial voice to narrate Imoinda's death and Oroonoko's disruptively painful response to it (Rosenthal 157). This narrative voice provides insight into Imoinda's understanding of her decapitation as an active, relational event. Imoinda cries tears of joy, the narrator informs us, because of her belief that her death will be the means of establishing an honorable connection with her husband and her culture. In describing this belief, the narrator passes over the painful physical reality of Imoinda's death entirely. However, Behn does not utilize this "synthesizing semi-omniscient" authorial voice to narrate Oroonoko's execution, nor does she permit the young lady narrator to witness it directly. Instead, the narrator is absent and is only able to report, secondhand, the account of her "mother and sister" who "were by him all the while but not suffered to save him" (Behn 76).

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25. Todd points out that this phrase is "used very frequently in the Authorized [King James] Version of the Bible, both in the Old and the New Testaments; for example in Genesis 25:8 Abraham 'gave up the ghost' and in Mark 15:37 and 39 Christ did likewise" (98). However, it is important to note that Christ's death *was* accompanied by a groan. In fact, he like other martyrs, "cried with a loud voice" before he "gave up the ghost" (*King James Version,* Mark 15.37).

Critics have used the narrator's conspicuous absence from the execution to support a surprisingly diverse range of interpretations, from the apologetic to the condemnatory. For example, Ballaster argues that the narrator "is crucially absent due to feminine fear" and powerlessness—the very characteristics that "enabl[e] her to sympathize with Oroonoko's position as victim and differentiat[e] her from the tyrannical male white colonists" (289). On the other hand, Ramesh Mallipeddi claims that "the female narrator's vicarious response to the spectacle of Oroonoko's public execution" problematically conflates "the hero's victimization with her own suffering" (476, 489). For Wezner, the absence is deflective. It allows the narrator to "avoi[d] placing herself where she could have exerted some influence to help save him, thus avoiding ethical responsibility" for Oroonoko's death while allowing "the colonial system to reassert itself without interference" (20). Aravamudan agrees that the narrator has a latent desire to contain Oroonoko's "actions when he threatens the power structure of English colonial rule" (48). Moreover, he suggests that her "graphic description, despite her physical absence from the scene" indicates "a wish fulfillment of sorts" to punish Oroonoko as well (Aravamudan 48).

Whether the narrator's absence is attributed to sympathetic feminine weakness or to the desire to disclaim responsibility for the execution, it nonetheless creates significant narrative detachment from the scene, ensuring that only the starkest factual details are available to readers. Given that the narrator elsewhere "admits to editing and arranging her story" to make it compelling enough to "compete with ... her sophisticated reader's world," it is difficult not to regard this detachment as a deliberate authorial decision (Chibka 514).[26] The narrator's focus on

26. Derek Hughes would suggest that Behn's editorial arrangement is just one of the artistic features that necessitates approaching *Oroonoko* as "a work of imaginative literature" which might be "distorting and rearranging categories in order to challenge them" rather than as a soap box for post-colonial critical agendas (17). In "Race, Gender, and Scholarly Practice: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*" Hughes calls scholars like Margo Hendricks, Margaret Ferguson, and

the surface details of the execution permits her to contain Oroonoko's potentially destabilizing experience of pain and to utilize the execution's signifying power to reinstate him as an honorably tragic hero by the text's conclusion. Whereas the "groans" Oroonoko uttered over Imoinda's severed head and the "reproaches" he leveled at the colonists signaled invalid attestations of pain's power, his silence at the time of his execution helps to reestablish his coherence as a colonial subject. And yet, the tenuousness of the narrator's control over Oroonoko's disavowed pain is apparent in the fact that Behn does not venture to describe his internal experience of the execution as she did Imoinda's. On the contrary, the stoically-detached narrative perspective suppresses Oroonoko's understanding of and relationship to his death and stands in for his silenced voice.

By cutting Oroonoko off from any linguistic connection to his death, which he might have used subversively,[27] the narrator also complicates his position as a secular martyr. The ability to speak is vital for establishing an active and spiritually meaningful interpretation of the body's experience of suffering, particularly for Foxe's martyrs, to whom Oroonoko is often compared. Jenny Mayhew explains that "persecuted martyrs in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* defy their persecutors in the midst of torment, responding with courage and celebratory assertions of

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Catherine Gallagher to task for "suspending the rules of evidence and even of good scholarly practice" in their readings of *Oroonoko,* which "achieve a literal-mindedness close to that of Ernest Bernbaum when he accused Behn of describing an armadillo without ever seeing one" (Hughes 3, 17). In particular, he is exasperated that critics "restlessly look for race in Behn, and find it in some surprising places"—such as in the threat of miscegenation and the apparent absurdity of an educated African man—only to "judge how correctly Behn reacts to the evidence that they have planted in her pocket" (7, 9).

27. For Aravamudan, Oroonoko's "refusal to reproach his persecutors is a figure of speech" in itself (48). Whether we read Oroonoko's silence as an indication that he has been deprived of his ability to speak or as a form of reproach, it indicates an alternation in his relationship to language, which before provided him with a powerful tool for critiquing his captors.

faith ... thereby gaining vocal control of a situation in which they are otherwise unwilling victims" (304). This "vocal control," which Mayhew calls "demonstrative rhetoric,"[28] allows sufferers to use "the language of insult or affirmation, of invective or encomium ... to 'turn' their suffered pain into speaking performance" (304). Speaking performances effectively shift the meaning, and potentially the felt experience,[29] of bodily sensation into an active confirmation of personal or religious values.

Unlike Foxe's martyrs, though, Oroonoko is completely silent. Because Oroonoko lacks "not only the words with which to tell [his story] but also an audience able and willing to hear [him] and to understand [his] words," his relationship to his execution is much more passive and powerless than Imoinda's relationship to her death had been (Brison qtd in Asad 83). The co-presence of active and passive experiences of suffering within the narrative indicate both the precariousness of adapting religious modes of relating to pain in secular contexts as well as the complexity of pain's transition into more recognizably modern formulations. Because Oroonoko's pain becomes— as Scarry would say— "interior and unshareable," he is made liable to many of the dilemmas that have come to epitomize modern relationships to pain (16).[30] That

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28. In *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature: 1563-1694,* John Knott describes this phenomenon as "bold speaking" (8). Mayhew, for one, finds "bold speaking" to be "a more suggestive term than the classical *apatheia*" in describing the relationship of martyrs to their suffering (304).

29. Mayhew notes that the "faithful appear to have succeeded in changing their actual experience of suffering" through rhetorical techniques (299). Although this is "impossible to prove," she suggests that it is a biological possibility: "cognition and sensation are so tightly interrelated that the manipulation of thoughts can affect what a person physically feels. Arguments have been made by social scientists that pain 'occurs' not only in the nerve endings, but in the cognitive, linguistic, and cultural activities that give pain meaning" (Mayhew 299).

30. Asad helpfully clarifies that is it not the case that pain is *inherently* unshareable, but that it "may come to be thought of—with added anguish—as unshareable" when "communication fails" (82-3).

is, Oroonoko loses subjective control over his suffering, allowing its signifying power to be objectified and redirected in ways that he cannot dictate.

In *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture,* George Boulukos also explores the impact of Oroonoko's disconnection from language on the coherence of his sacrificial death. However, Boulukos concludes that "Oroonoko's death *parodies* the death of a Foxean martyr" (70 emphasis added). This is because "the tobacco pipe," mentioned so frequently in the short description of the execution, acts "as a replacement for the confession of faith," which is a characteristic feature of martyrdom. Thus, Boulukos suggests, the death scene is "a grotesque joke by Behn, a royalist often suspected of Catholic sympathies, an intentional play on the Foxean Protestant martyrdom in which religious devotion is replaced by material devotion to one of colonialism's most notorious products" (70).[31] It is certainly true that the obtrusive pipe, imbedded in every sentence of the narrator's account of Oroonoko's death, seems to be a substitute for his linguistic connection to the execution. However, rather than reading this as "a grotesque joke," and Oroonoko's execution as a parody, I would suggest the that tobacco pipe plays a necessary role in appropriating the meaning of his sacrificial death as a testament to the ideological coherence of the colonies. That is to say, Oroonoko *is* a martyr in death, but to a cause other than his own.

The narrator's focus on the external details of the execution, particularly the pipe, dissociates Oroonoko from the experience of his pain and refocuses its signifying power in ways

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31. That is, Oroonoko pledges his devotion to tobacco. See Susan Iwanisziw's "Behn's Novel Investment in 'Oroonoko': Kingship, Slavery and Tobacco in English Colonialism" for an overview of tobacco's role in colonization. In particular, Iwanisziw notes that "all commercial tobaccos produced in North America derived from "the species *nicotiana tabcum*.... variously spelled orinoco, oronocco, and oronoko" (77). Orinoco, the tobacco, "was certainly cultivated in the colony of Surinam at the time Behn is believed to have visited" (Iwanisziw 77).

that fit more easily within the worldview of the narrative. In other words, the pipe functions as an objectifying metaphor. According to Scarry, objectifying metaphors, typically weapons that are capable of creating visible bodily damage, are necessary for communicating internalized experiences of pain to others. They help to bring pain out of the body, as it were, and into the sharable world.[32] Like a weapon, the pipe "exists ... or can be pictured as existing ... at the external boundary of the body, it begins to externalize, objectify, and make sharable what is originally an interior and unsharable experience" (Scarry 15-6). Held in the mouth of the smoker, the pipe marks and compromises the boundaries of the body. Furthermore, the smoke of the pipe unmistakably objectifies Oroonoko's "interior and unsharable experience" by bringing an invisible aspect of his existence, his breath, outward into the visible world as smoke (Scarry 16). Since Oroonoko "smoked on, as if nothing touched him" his logically quickened respiration is softened into a haze of stoically exhaled tobacco (Behn 76).[33] Just as the smoke must have literally obscured the painful physicality of Oroonoko's bleeding, despoiled face, the narrative fixation on the tobacco pipe— "a parable of stoical detachment from the body"— acts as a smokescreen, obscuring the disruptive power of his pain (Aravamudan 47). Ultimately, the quiet dropping of the pipe presents Oroonoko's demise as an undisturbed resignation to his fate, a resignation that would have been difficult to convey had the narrator focused instead on Oroonoko's visible bodily damage— which is reported with exceptional terseness— or on the weapon, that "ill-favoured knife"— which is mentioned only once (Behn 76).

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32. From Scarry's modern perspective, suffering is uniquely difficult to communicate because "physical pain—unlike any other state of consciousness— has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything" (5). As we have seen in Imoinda's death, though, pain can be perceived as "of or for" many things.

33. Some critics attribute Oroonoko's otherworldly calm to the "the narcotizing effects of smoking (now a commonplace protocol in cinematic execution)" (Iwanisziw 78).

Yet, as Scarry points out, objectifying pain introduces a problematic slippage between the signified attribute of pain and the signifying element, the weapon or the object.[34] As such, communicating pain creates an "inherent instability [that] arises precisely because it permits a break in the identification of the referent and thus a misidentification of the thing to which the attribute belongs" (Scarry 17). By bringing a painful sensation out of the body into language through the use of a referential object, the sensation previously tethered to the body is now associated with that object, causing the "felt-characteristics of pain— one of which is its compelling vibrancy or its incontestable reality or simply its 'certainty'— [to be] appropriated away from the body and presented as the attributes of something else (something which by itself lacks those attributes, something which does not in itself appear vibrant, real, or certain)" (Scarry 13-4). By attaching the "reality" and the "certainty" of Oroonoko's execution to a colonial artifact— the tobacco pipe which he had "*learned* to take" while enslaved in Surinam—his last request for a pipe does much more than "ironiz[e] ... his former 'delight in the white nations'" (Behn 76 emphasis added, Iwanisziw 78-9). The silent smoke that escapes Oroonoko's lips instead of "a groan or a reproach" validates the structure of honor that makes his pain unspeakable.[35]

Because objectified pain can "lend [a] cultural construct the aura of 'realness' and 'certainty' of the human body," Scarry notes, it is a powerful ideological tool (14). Bodily pain

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34. It might be observed that what Scarry identifies as a problem of pain is actually a problem of language. For, it is always the case that the signifier misidentifies the signified, not just when the signified is the sensation of pain. Nonetheless, the lack of any clear way of objectifying pain does seem to complicate its communication and to introduce additional space for misidentification.

35. Oroonoko's death thus illustrates the structure and function of torture. According to Scarry, the torturer uses civilization's tools and artifacts as weapons, thereby objectifying the pain as the weapon and claiming that weapon as an agent of the regime's power.

is thus frequently used "when there is within a society a crisis of belief— that is, when some central thesis or ideology or cultural construct has ceased to elicit a population's belief" (Scarry 14). In addition to the crises of aristocratic ideology and sovereign authority that the text is negotiating, Behn is also confronting the destabilization of the culturally constructed meaning of pain itself. Rather ironically, then, she uses the wounded, but stoically unmoved, body to lend credence to her thesis that the avoidance of pain is not a motive of human behavior, as Hobbes suggests. For this reason, the narrator is outraged when the dishonorable colonists attempt to reinvest Oroonoko's body with the pain that her description of his execution worked hard to suppress.

The colonists "cut Caesar in quarters, and sent them to several of the chief plantations" in order to use the "frightful spectacles of a mangled king" to influence the behavior of the slaves. (Behn 76). The horrific pain that is made visible through Oroonoko's mangled body serves to bolster the questionable authority of the colonists and as a form of intimidation to any individuals inclined to challenge it.[36] However, the narrator condemns this use of the body *because* it openly acknowledges the power of pain to influence others. Instead, the narrator distances herself from this dishonorable use of Oroonoko's remains by applauding the admirable Colonel Martin, who refuses to use the pained body for "terrifying and grieving" his slaves (Behn 76). Nonetheless, the narrator depends just as much on the wounded body as do the colonists. It is because Oroonoko's disruptive acknowledgement of dishonorable suffering is silenced and stabilized during his execution that she can celebrate "his glorious name" in the

36. Wezner similarly argues that because "Oroonoko seizes control of the onlooker's gaze by his words and his self-mutilation" when apprehended near Imoinda's body that "his captors respond by recasting him as a spectacle and castrating him before additional mutilations and quartering" (19).

final lines of the text and "hope" that "the reputation of [her] pen" is sufficient to ensure that his honor will "survive all ages" (Behn 77).

Through the extreme example of *Oroonoko*, we can come to appreciate some of the troubling consequences that accompanied the modernization of pain. The changing tide of science, secularism, and rationality necessitated the development of new ways of conceptualizing the body and the nature of humanity. But for thinkers like Behn, Hobbes's formulation of the human experience as an inevitably mechanistic material process was too pitiful to be readily assimilated. In attempting to redeem the dignity of man by dissociating it from the degrading influence of physical stimuli, Behn imagines an honor that transcends even the worst of bodily torments. Unfortunately, in so doing the reality and poignancy of suffering must be disowned as well. The alternate picture she paints, therefore, deprives her characters of the means of asserting the validity of their experiences of pain and can only scoff at their tears.

Oroonoko's neo-Stoic indifference to suffering can be seen as participating in a widespread cultural renegotiation of pain at the end of the seventeenth century. As can be seen in *Oroonoko*'s complex dissociation of honorable action from suffering, pain's ability to motivate human behavior, and the impact of this motivation on the "morality" of human actions, were serious social and philosophical questions. Indeed, much as Behn's *Oroonoko* does, John Locke's highly influential *Some Thoughts on Education* (1693)[37] likewise suppresses the relevancy of physical sensations and presents honor as the only "valid" motivating principle for ethical behavior. But unlike Behn, who presents the imperviousness of honor to physical stimuli

37. See Margaret J. M. Ezell's "John Locke's Images of Childhood: Early Eighteenth Century Responses to *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*" and Samuel F. Pickering's *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* for more information on Locke's influence on education and perceptions of childhood into the eighteenth century.

as an indication of the "natural" virtue and worth of aristocratic individuals, Locke provides a pedagogical method for *cultivating* honor.[38]

This cultivation is possible because, even as Locke accepts the Hobbesian argument that "*Pleasure* and *pain* .. are the hinges on which our Passions turn" in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), he also suggests that "thoughts and bodily states [have] an equal power to produce" pleasure and pain (Locke 229, Foot 83).[39] By conditioning individuals to value the pleasures of honor and the pains of disgrace above physically pleasurable or painful sensations, it is possible to negate the influence of the body on moral decisions. Thus, Locke cautions parents that they must avoid inadvertently strengthening the hold of the body over the mind in children:

> This Kind of [physical] Punishment contributes not at all to the Mastery of our natural Propensity to indulge corporal and present Pleasure, and to avoid Pain at any rate, but rather encourages it, and thereby strengthens that in us, which is the Root from whence spring all vicious Actions and the Irregularities of Life. For what other Motive, but of sensual Pleasure and Pain, does a Child act by, who drudges at his Book against his Inclination, or abstains from eating unwholesome Fruit, that he takes Pleasure in, only out of Fear of *Whipping*? He in this only prefers the greater *corporal Pleasure*, or avoids the greater *corporal Pain.* And what is it, to govern his Actions, and directs his Conduct by such Motives as these? What is it, I say, but to cherish that Principle in him, which it is our Business to root out and destroy? (30)

Corporal punishments and rewards reinforce a Hobbesian self-interest because they teach children to perform their social duties only insofar as those duties facilitate the satisfaction of their appetite for pleasure and cater to their aversion to pain. Instead, parents should foster an

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38. This may be seen an example of "those egalitarian elements in Locke … which leveled all innate attributes" (Porter *Flesh* 132).

39. Philippa Foot points out that Locke's adaptation of "Hobbes's belief that human nature is under the governance of two masters, pleasure and pain" indicates the "Hobbesian influence in his own work" despite "all of his scorn for Hobbes" (83). However, because Hobbes concludes that ideas and bodily sensations are both materially derived, it is unclear if Locke "freed himself entirely from Hobbes's materialist account of the origins of those elements of our experience," as Foot suggests (83).

appetite for honor and an aversion to disgrace in their children. Locke explains, "If you can once get into Children a Love of Credit, and an Apprehension of Shame and Disgrace, you have put into 'em the true Principle, which will constantly work and incline them to the right" (34). The principle of honor, because it is not dependent on satisfying the vulgar demands of the body, will produce a more selfless generation of citizens, at least in theory.

Once children's egotistical concerns for their own bodily welfare have been dismantled, they can be made impervious to the pain that they once feared. Parents simply must strategically associate the physical pain a child would have otherwise perceived as the consequence of their unwanted behavior with the pleasures of honor. To this end, Locke gives parents the following unconventional advice, which he acknowledges most will find "very unnatural" and "unreasonable":

> put [the child] in Pain ... when the Child is in good Humour, and satisfied with the Good-will and Kindness of him that hurts him, at the time he does it. There must be no Marks of Anger or Displeasure on the one side, nor Compassion or Repenting on the other, go along with it; And it must be sure to be no more than the Child can bear without repining or taking it amiss, or for a Punishment. Managed by these Degrees, and with such Circumstances, I have seen a Child run away laughing with good smart Blows of a Wand on his Back. (99)

The signs of "Good-will and Kindness" show the child that he is in good and honorable standing with the parent who hurts him. Because the child has been taught to desire to have good "Credit" with those he respects, his satisfaction at these proofs of his own honor will outweigh the negative physical experience of pain. Eventually, pain's ability to deter a child from his duty will be overcome. In Locke's system, then, children are taught to disavow the significance and even existence of their own suffering because honor has made it irrelevant.

Even as Locke develops an educational program for disavowing bodily sensations and cultivating honor, his *Thoughts Concerning Education* nonetheless depends on the assumption

that pleasure and pain are powerful motivators in human behavior, much as Hobbes suggests. These ideas would take on important new dimensions in the thought of one of Locke's most influential pupils, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury, upon whom Locke "may have tried out ... some of the educational ideas expounded in his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education,*"[40] was also well acquainted with "his tutor's *Essay concerning Human understanding* and the two treatises of government" (Porter *Flesh* 131). Nonetheless, Shaftesbury disputed many of Locke's points, particularly his strikingly Hobbesian assertion that "things ... are Good or Evil, only in reference to Pleasure or Pain. That we call *Good*, which *is apt to increase Pleasure or diminish Pain in us* ... And on the contrary we name that *Evil* which *is apt to produce or increase any Pain or diminish any Pleasure in us*" (229). Interestingly, as Shaftesbury refutes the moral relativism of this proposition, he does not dispute the association of goodness with pleasure and wickedness with pain. On the contrary, he reinforces this association by claiming that perceptions of pleasure and pain are intuitive indications of absolute moral standards: the moral sense. Hobbes's articulation of the pivotal role of pain and pleasure in human experience—particularly with relationship to morality—was central, though modified in, the work of Locke and Shaftesbury. The quasi-hedonism of Shaftesbury's "moral arithmetic," which demanded that pleasure must always overbalance pain, was a difficult equation to solve for the moral philosophers that followed him as the eighteenth century advanced.

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40. One might wonder if this had something to do with Shaftesbury's "contempt for ... his body," which Roy Porter illustrates with the following amusing example: "'Should One, who had the Countenance of a Gentleman, ask me,' [Shaftesbury] recorded with disdain, 'Why I wou'd avoid being *nasty*, when nobody was present' — what he is talking about is blowing his nose in private— '... I should be fully satisfy'd that he himself was a very nasty Gentleman" (*Flesh* 135).

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CHAPTER II

"YOU STAB ME WITH YOUR GOODNESS ... AND I CANNOT BEAR IT!": DISTRESSING VIRTUE IN *CLARISSA*

In Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa; or The History of a Young Lady* (1748), Lovelace's thoughts take a painful turn as he waits impatiently to hear Belford's account of Clarissa after her second and final escape from Mrs. Sinclair's house/brothel in London. He writes:

> 'Tis impossible that Miss Harlowe should have ever suffered as thou has made me suffer, and as I now suffer! That sex is made to bear pain ... And they love best, whether man or child, who give them most! But to stretch upon thy damned tenterhooks such a spirit as mine—No rack, no torture, can equal my torture! ... I wish thou wert a post-horse, and I upon the back of thee! How would I whip and spur, and harrow up thy clumsy sides, till I made thee a ready-roasted, ready-flayed mess of dog's meat; all the hounds in the county howling after thee as I drove thee, to wait my dismounting, in order to devour thee piecemeal; life still throbbing in each churned mouthful! ... I can fancy that to pink my body like my mind, I need only to be put into a hogshead stuck full of steel-pointed spikes, and rolled down a hill three times as high as the Monument. (Richardson 1069)

Lovelace details his own discomfort through a colorful array of exaggerated comparisons, minimizing the importance of the pain of others relative to himself. Clarissa's suffering in being deceived, abducted, drugged, raped, imprisoned, and stalked is negligible when compared to the pains of Lovelace's unsatisfied curiosity and suspense. Likewise, in order for Belford to be "fairly" punished for causing Lovelace's mental distress— which he likens to being pushed down a cliff in a spike-encrusted barrel— Belford would have to be whipped, spurred, and eaten alive. For his soul, Lovelace asserts with some violence, is as exquisitely sensible as a stretched and broken body, impaled by Belford's ruthless withholding of information.

In Lovelace's impassioned description of his own experience, the value of his impatience is so inflated as to depreciate the value of even the other's torture. On one hand, Lovelace's letter serves to heighten the reader's understanding of his aggrandized self-importance rather than to

provide a realistic description of his discomfort. On the other, Lovelace's heightened sensitivity to his own suffering at the expense of others serves as an emblem of one of the central problems unfolded in *Clarissa.* The overwhelming importance of the self that distorts one's perception of the pain of others, and renders it insignificant by comparison, not only helps to justify the spiteful indifference of those whom Clarissa begs for help, but also demonstrates the limitations of a moral philosophy dependent on overbalancing the pain of the other with pleasure in the self.

Clarissa, published approximately 10 years after David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) and 10 years before Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), highlights the central role of the self in the physical experience of sympathy and in the imaginative experience of fellow-feeling. For Hume, sympathy is merely an mechanistic bodily process that does not typically, much less necessarily, produce moral feelings. Instead, the aesthetic sensations transmitted through sympathy are considered first and foremost with reference to the pleasure or pain they create in the self. Only in rare cases, when the self is entirely abstracted, will this lead to the moral sense. The self is particularly difficult to abstract when sympathy foists intrusive sensations of pain upon the receptive mind and sensible body. Instead, as Lovelace so imaginatively demonstrates, the pain of the self can overpower the relevancy of the pain of the other, and when caused by that other, even if only through sympathy, can lead to a troubling desire to inflict suffering on them in turn. For Smith, it is necessary for the self to approve of the propriety of the other's reactions and behaviors by acknowledging that they are the same as one's imaginary reactions and behaviors. That is, one only feels the pleasure of "fellow-feeling," the epitome of moral sociability, for others who reinforce the appropriateness of the self's own feelings. When they do not, they inspire the pains of disapprobation and create the displeasing sense that the other is disapproving of the self in turn.

In these formulations, then, if the self perceives the sympathetic transmission of sensation as painful, or if the self is pained by the other's disapproval, the very mechanisms that should create morality and compassion also facilitate indifference to the experience of the other, enjoyment of their suffering, or even a cruel desire to increase it.

These negative reactions, which are made possible by the logic of secular systems of morality, occur with surprising frequency in the novel given that Richardson described *Clarissa* as "a work designed to inculcate upon the human mind, under the guise of an amusement, the great lessons of Christianity, in an age like the present" (1495). However, I will argue that it is largely *because* of Clarissa's problematic position as an "angelic lady" in a secular world that moments of cruelty occur throughout the text (Richardson 958). Because Clarissa is a paragon of goodness, whom others cannot hope to imitate and whose virtue is often perceived as a reproach, she is beyond the scope of identification and approbation that could lead to sympathetic sociability and fellow-feeling. And, as becomes abundantly clear, those denied the pleasure of identifying with and pitying Clarissa will take their pleasure as they can in seeing her made pitiful.

On a most basic level, the lack of compassion that Clarissa elicits from nearly everyone who is brought into direct contact with her is a narratological necessity. That is, in order for *Clarissa* to convey the message of "virtue rewarded" while avoiding the pitfalls of self-interest that cynics were quick to point out in *Pamela* (1740), she must be allowed to die unassisted.[1]

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1. Many critics point out that skeptical reactions to Pamela's earthly rewards, Henry Fielding's *Shamela* (1741) being a particularly vitriolic example, caused Richardson to "reassert disinterestedness in a world too ready to believe that interest guides all behavior" in his subsequent novels (Gordon 483). For example, in *Mourning Happiness: Narrative and the Politics of Modernity,* Vivasvan Soni calls *Clarissa* Richardson's "attempt to perfect the form" of "the trial narrative" which he had innovated in *Pamela* (187). The logic of the trial narrative, which allows Richardson to compartmentalize finite periods of suffering as tests of virtue for

Therefore, Mrs. Harlowe cannot feel badly enough for her daughter to overcome her desire for domestic peace; Bella and James can have no affectionate tenderness for their sister; Clarissa's many paternal protectors must remain hard-hearted and indignant towards her; Mrs. Howe cannot be sufficiently moved by Clarissa's distress to offer her a place of refuge; Belford cannot feel her torment enough to intervene; and Lovelace, well, Lovelace cannot be dissuaded from being Lovelace. Despite her reputed "power of painting her distress so as to pierce a stone," Clarissa must find that she can move "not one" heart "that was not *predetermined* in [her] favour!" (Richardson 1156, 1122). According to R. F. Brissenden, it is something of a problem for Richardson "to make his readers understand how ... [Clarissa's] family could bring themselves to act with such appalling selfishness, cruelty, and stupidity" (164). However, I will argue that the "vast disparity" between Clarissa's merit and that of those around her is more than sufficient to justify their cruelty in the context of mid-eighteenth century theories of sympathy and the moral sense, which are inflected by Hobbesian self-interest and hedonistic assumptions regarding human motivation (Richardson 237). [2]

Critics tend to agree on the importance of Hobbes's influence on *Clarissa*, while disagreeing about the precise nature of that influence. For those who read *Clarissa* as reflecting

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Pamela, is extended indefinitely for Clarissa. The question of Clarissa's earthly happiness is indefinitely deferred as her entire life becomes a trial of her virtue. Instead, Morden exclaims, she "must look to a WORLD BEYOND THIS for the reward of [her] sufferings!" (Richardson 1014).

2. Carol Stewart aptly summarizes this influence in *The Eighteenth-Century Novel and the Secularization of Ethics:* "Hobbes represents the starting point for ethical naturalism in the eighteenth century: the conception that ethical conclusions and accounts of obligation can be established on the basis of facts about human beings and their world. The empirical understanding of human nature was subsequently replicated, with variations, in the ethical and political thinking of John Locke (1632-1704), Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), and David Hume (1711-1776)" (15). Because "the grounds of obligation have to be man's desire for happiness" for ethical naturalists, they posit that "pleasure and pain are motivating forces in human nature" (Stewart 15).

Hobbesian ideas, the ruthless pursuit of power over others is the rule of the game in the novel. For example, Jocelyn Harris notes that "Hobbesian animal imagery" is evoked throughout the text (by many characters *besides* Lovelace) as evidence that cruelty is "'natural' to man" (71, 80). In fact, Anna Howe's "belief in the necessity for fear, her anger, and her Hobbesian 'natural' images are remarkably like Lovelace's" (Harris 78). Anna self-consciously draws remarkable parallels between "*the nature of the beast*"—in which "all animals in creation are more or less in a state of hostility with each other"— and the nature of human interactions (Richardson 487).[3] Brissenden, like Harris, notes that Anna's argument "has a Hobbesian ring, and like Hobbes Richardson sees the nasty brutish nature of the beast operating in every human relationship" (173). Even Clarissa herself internalizes the assumption that hostility towards others is "the common weakness of human nature" as she chastises Anna for "being apt to slight what is in [her] own power" (Richardson 453).[4] As such, Jayne Elizabeth Lewis asserts that "the ironic

3. On this basis, Anna feels more than justified in her degrading, and arguably sadistic, treatment of Hickman during his "whining, creeping, submissive courtship" (Richardson 466). Anna reasons that she must "make [Hickman] quake now and then," in order to keep him from "endeavor[ing] to make [her] fear" (Richardson 487).

4. The underlying hostility of human interactions is also a central tenet of William Warner's *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation*. In Warner's argument, though, the struggle for dominance and power is played out not in the state of nature, or even in the boudoir, but rather in the construction of meaning itself. According to Warner, characters strategically use their letters as "ingenious and elaborate pieces of artifice, inventions designed for warfare" in order to achieve dominance over meaning, truth, and each other (Warner 10). Nor is the virtuous Clarissa excluded from this conflict; on the contrary she takes center stage as a dominatrix of interpretation, using narrative "to undercut the position of her adversaries" (Warner 10). In "Textualizing the Self (*Clarissa*)," William Ray complicates Warner's claim by arguing that Lovelace and Clarissa have different relationships to the construction of meaning. Lovelace, unlike Clarissa, conceives of himself as the ultimate manipulator of history, as can be seen in his elaborately staged letters and character impersonations. Clarissa, on the other hand, remains passive in the scripted reality of providence, authority, and social convention. However, this latter claim seems to minimize Clarissa's rhetorical control over her letters, which clearly present her story in ways that vindicate her behavior and establish her innocence.

lessons of *Leviathan*, taken to heart, haunt every page of *Clarissa*, and Richardson's novel thus naturally forges a Hobbesian link between pain's infliction and the acquisition of security" (53).

Conversely, for critics who read *Clarissa* as resisting Hobbesian ideas, the sympathetic communication of non-rational sensations in the novel (and to the novel's readers) attests to the possibility of benevolence and sociability in human nature. For example, Chad Loewen-Schmidt's recent "Pity, or the Providence of the Body in Richardson's *Clarissa*" posits that Richardson, like many eighteenth-century thinkers,[5] was "reacting against Thomas Hobbes's notions of the state of nature and social contract" by "strain[ing] to see in pity a natural and embodied principle of sociability" (3). Richardson's view of pity as an altruistic social instinct, providentially bestowed on human nature and felt through the human body, allows him to "transfer moral authority from the rational to the physiological register" (Loewen-Schmidt 20). Richardson's "deferral from [the] rational to [the] non-rational authority" of the sympathetic body, Scott Paul Gordon points out, "mirrors David Hume's enquiries" (487). Much like Hume had done, Richardson "deploy[s] a non-rational solution" to the problems of Hobbesian rationality and self-interest by appealing directly to "his readers' sensibilities, not their intellects" (484). That is, Richardson utilizes his readers' sympathetic bodily responses to Clarissa's distress—their fainting, tears, and shudders—as evidence of disinterested compassion in human nature. Likewise, for Carol Kay, the "sympathetic principles of social coherence," which constitute "the fundamental strategy by which Hume answered" Hobbes, are also apparent in

5. Particularly "theological writers of the period [who] sought in the body principles that would reattach nature to its divine referent. Isaac Barrow, for instance, preached against what he felt was Hobbes's suggestion that acts of benevolence were contrary to humans' natural impulses and that, without a common external force, men would be in a state of war" (Loewen-Schmidt 20). Similarly, Samuel Parker was "also reacting against Hobbes" in his argument that "Divine Providence has implanted in the Nature and Constitution of humane bodies a principle of love and Tenderness" (Loewen-Schmidt 21).

Richardson's novels (77, 78). However, because these "sympathetic principles" nonetheless bear traces of Hobbes's thought, particularly his assumption that pleasure and pain are primary motives in self-interested human behavior, it may be possible to bring together these conflicting critical perspectives.

This chapter considers Hobbes's subtle but pervasive influence on Richardson's text, and the tenets of moral philosophy it manifests, by exploring the centrality of pleasure and pain both in the sympathetic transmission of feeling and in imaginative identification with others. Moreover, I explore the way in which the problematic importance of the self determines if those pleasurable or painful sensations become either social or anti-social passions or judgments. In doing so, I hope to make clear that Richardson's "religious novel" was at once a part of larger cultural efforts to "stifle the secularizing effects of thinkers like Hobbes," while exhibiting Hobbes's secularizing, rationalized logic in the human relationships that it depicts (Stewart 59; Loewen-Schmidt 24). The tensions between Christian and secular moral systems in *Clarissa* help to account for what Robert Erickson calls the novel's "profound and disturbing exploration ... of the major religious issues in the Protestant tradition, primarily those of the meaning and nature of evil, the significance of the Fall, the conflict between the fallen world and the individual soul, the meaning of regeneration, the nature of Christian forgiveness, and the question of God's ultimate relationship to humankind" (174).

In particular, I will argue that Clarissa's status as a Christ-like figure creates distance between herself and others that is untenable within Hume's and Smith's secular formulations of morality, dependent on identification and fellow-feeling. Clarissa's position as a "beatified spirit," rather than a sympathetic human character, is evident throughout the novel in her inimitable merit, her uncompromising condemnation of errors in her own behavior, and her

desire to bestow unreciprocated obligations on others (Richardson 1275). As result of her virtuous disconnection from the sinful world, Clarissa's suffering tends to provoke either unproductive pity or animosity in others rather than the delights of moral sociability. In the first case, those who are filled with unproductive pity are bereft of the pleasure of assisting her, thereby frustrating the social function of their sympathy pains and creating space for sadistic enjoyment of her suffering instead. In the second case, those who are filled with animosity actively desire to degrade Clarissa. Clarissa's disconnection for sympathy and fellow-feeling is finally literalized by her lingering agency after death through the spectacle of her coffin and in her letters of forgiveness. Because her forgiveness beyond the grave irrevocably disrupts the possibility for reciprocal sociability, Clarissa's sacrificial death brings punishment rather than atonement for those who wronged her in life, satisfying the reader's desire for "poetic justice" (Richardson 1498). Troublingly, this desire for vengeance becomes conflated with Clarissa herself, who imagines and attempts to ensure that Lovelace is punished by leaving him without the ability to atone for his wrongs. *Clarissa* thus gives us insight into Richardson's "radical exploration and reworking of the main doctrines of Protestant Christianity"— particularly "the nature of Christian forgiveness" (Erickson 174). This "reworking" demonstrates the difficulty of adapting rational logic and hedonistic motivation to the "great lessons" of Christian forgiveness, or as Hume puts it "to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects" (1).[6]

We will recall that Hume endeavors to "improv[e] ... the science of man" by "explaining all effects from the fewest causes": pleasure and pain (Hume 1, 5).[7] Pleasure and pain form the

6. Richardson's novel thus participates in what Stewart refers to as the "secularization of ethics," in which ethics, both "in the broader sense of moral philosophy and in the narrower sense of rules for moral behavior" were separated "from religion" (4).

7. See Introduction, pp. 35-38.

basis of the passions, which "are what drive humans to all action and achievement" (Mullan 18). For John Mullan, then, it is "the mobility of passions [that] permits the communication upon which society is founded" in Hume's *Treatise* (24). However, because the passions are secondary impressions, they are not *communicated* through sympathy; they are *created* as the result of the self's understanding of sympathetically transmitted pleasure or pain. For this reason, circumstantial details present in the mind of the spectator, especially one's perspective on oneself, exercise an enormous influence on the final shape of the passions. Indeed, it is the centrality of the self that makes possible what Ildiko Csengei calls "the flip side of sympathy": "self-interest, cruelty, [and] solipsism" (12).

When primary impressions of pleasure or pain are transmitted through sympathy, they travel a treacherously self-interested road before becoming passions. This is because, Hume notes, "the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each other's emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may often be reverberated, and may decay away by insensible degrees" (236). In other words, the funhouse mirror of the mind can alter the meaning of an impression through a myriad of distorting influences. Because "our strongest attention is confin'd to ourselves," the idea of the self exerts the strongest force on the imagination and can warp the impression of the other's experience until it is "suitable to the temper, and agree[s] with that set of passions, which then prevail" in the mind of the subject (Hume 314, 186). For example,

> beauty, which of itself produces pleasure, makes us receive a new pain by the contrast with any thing ugly, whose deformity it augments. The case, therefore, must be the same with happiness or misery. The direct survey of another's pleasure naturally gives us pleasure, and therefore produces pain when compar'd with our own. His pain, consider'd in itself, is painful to us, but augments the idea of our own happiness and gives us pleasure. (Hume 242)

Though the other's misery will sympathetically convey painful impressions to the spectator, the passions that develop "entirely depend" on the imagination and can be "vary'd by some particular turn of thought," particularly as thoughts turn towards the relative position of the self (Hume 240, 238). On this basis, Mullan explains, "sympathy is not selflessness; its operation does not guarantee that our actions will be adapted to the sentiments of others" (30).[8] Instead, it merely makes possible "the accessibility of [the other's] sentiments, and therefore a sociability" (Mullan 30). And, Terry Eagleton points out, "it is not clear how self-regarding or altruistic" such a sociability is (158).

Furthermore, Hume suggests that our receptivity to the passions of others, necessary to create sociability, is derived from their similarity to ourselves. Hume reasons, "we have a lively idea of everything related to us. All human creatures are related by resemblance. Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasures must strike upon us in a lively manner, and produce an emotion similar to the original one; since a lively idea is easily converted into an impression" (238). When the other suggests a "lively idea" of ourselves, we are then able to form an impression of their emotions. However, "where you destroy ... resemblance and proximity," you also "preven[t] ... the mutual operation and influence" of sympathy (Hume 243, 244). The spectator only creates the lively impression of the other's pain

8. Similarly, Carol Kay explains, there is no "guarantee that individuals will experience sympathetic pleasure rather than envy and competition" in Hume's schema (89). On the contrary, if "we pay attention to what Hume and Richardson show going wrong, it seems amazing that sympathy and love of fame ever go right" (Kay 89). The "love of fame" is a key concept for Kay's argument, which explores how the desire to preserve one's reputation in Hume and Richardson prompts submission to "social rules" without need of the "arbitrary imposition of political authority" (79). Kay thus uses Richardson's novels to demonstrate how Hume's ethics become "crucially attached to politics" (80).

or pleasure when the other experiencing pain or pleasure is similar enough to the self as to conjure up the idea of one's own suffering or happiness. However, the "vast disparity" between Clarissa's merit and that of those around her often destroys "resemblance and proximity" and "prevents the mutual operation" of sympathy; when it does not, the greatness of her virtue often leads to the anti-social passions of envy and malice instead (Richardson 237; Hume 243, 244).

As Richardson depicts Clarissa as "the paragon of virtue," as "virtue itself," he creates significant obstacles to the function of sympathy in the novel and to the development of moral senses, like disinterested pity and indignation at her mistreatment, which sympathy would ideally facilitate (Richardson 427). Anna, the "stander-by [who] is often a better judge of the game than those that play it,"[9] continually cautions Clarissa that sympathy will backfire if her goodness becomes too radiant to be borne (Richardson 73-4). In human nature, Anna remarks, both "shades and lights are equally necessary in a fine picture" (Richardson 237). However, Clarissa's nature is "surrounded with such a flood of brightness, with such a glory" that it "dazzle[s]" those who see it (Richardson 485). Thus, when Clarissa repines about the unfeeling treatment to which she is subjected, Anna saucily questions: "What would you have of them? Do they not act in character? – And to whom? To an Alien. You are not one of them" (Richardson 237). On the contrary, Clarissa's "merit is [her] crime" and, Anna warns, she "must not be so very much too good for *them*, and for the *case*" (Richardson 237, 403).

Clarissa's virtue makes her foreign and unknowable to those brought into a painful intimacy with her, prompting her "father, mother, sister, brother, suitor, friend, and lover" to

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9. Richardson reiterates this point following Clarissa's forced elopement with Lovelace, making Anna assert once more that, "A stander-by may see more of the game than one that plays. Great consequences, like great folks, are generally attended and even *made* great by small causes and little incidents" (407).

"endeavor to bring down to their level this sun among faint twinklers" (Harris 51). In calling Clarissa a "sun among faint twinklers," Harris is echoing Anna's observations regarding why Clarissa's unsympathetic merit does not inspire the good will or admiration of her family, as Clarissa supposes it should. On the contrary, Anna teases:

> It must be confessed, however, that this Brother and Sister of yours, judging as such narrow spirits will ever judge, *have some reason for treating you as they do*. It must have long been a mortifying consideration to them (set disappointed love on her side, and avarice on his, out of the question) to be so much eclipsed by a younger Sister – Such a sun in a family, where there are none but faint twinklers, how could they bear it!—Why, my dear, they must have looked upon you as a prodigy among them: and prodigies you know, though they obtain our admiration, never attract our love. *The distance between you and them is immense.* Their eyes ache to look up at you. What shades does your full day of merit cast upon them! – *Can you wonder then, that they should embrace the first opportunity that offered, to endeavor to bring you down to their level*? (Richardson 129 emphases added)

In Anna's description, Clarissa, glaring as the midday sun, dries out and cracks the receptive soil of sympathy by discouraging the identification of her siblings. Instead Clarissa's glory blinds Bella and James when they gaze up at her. Cynthia Wolff even suggests that Clarissa purposely "aggrandizes herself at the expense of her brother and sister," thereby "confirming her own sense of self" in a way that "precludes recognition of theirs" (84). Whether Clarissa is aware of her own aggrandizement or not, the Harlowes and Lovelace certainly are aware of it and are not pleased. Bella, who feels that "nobody could be valued or respected but must stand like cyphers" in Clarissa's presence, is outright hostile (Richardson 194). Even Anna concedes that Clarissa's inimitable virtue is more than sufficient to justify the "unnatural" feelings of James and Bella. For, who would love to be chastised by her superiority and who would not hate to be cast in the shadows of relative worthlessness? According to Hume, the answer to these questions would be no one.

As shown above, Hume describes the process by which impressions become passions as complex and susceptible to the distorting influence of the self. When impressions are associated with the self, they will produce fundamentally different passions than impressions that are associated with others. Superiority, when an attribute of the self, is a source of pleasure and therefore pride; when it an attribute of others, it is often a source of pain and therefore hatred.[10] This hatred results from "a disagreeable comparison" between the self and others, in which the other "seems to overshade us" (Hume 243). Because "nobody had any but an inferior and second-hand praise for diligence, for economy, for reading; for writing, for memory, for facility in learning everything laudable, and even for the more envied graces of person and dress and an all-surpassing elegance in both," when compared with Clarissa, it is reasonable to expect that they might experience rather painful sensations when in her presence (Richardson 578). Therefore, as Anna blazons Clarissa's goodness, which elevated her "above the happiness of a mortal creature," she is also pointing to the problem that will plague Clarissa throughout the novel: her goodness becomes a thorn in the sides of those around her (Richardson 578).

Clarissa's very virtue, Hume would conclude, inspires others to distance themselves from her tacitly or to degrade her actively. Hume reasons:

> The mind quickly perceives its several advantages and disadvantages; and in finding its situation to be most uneasy, [it endeavors to effect] their separation ... *by breaking that association of ideas*, which renders the comparison so much more natural and efficacious. When it cannot break the association, *it feels a stronger desire to remove the superiority*. (Hume 244 emphases added)

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10. Because of the complexity with which impressions are translated into passions, it is important to note that the hatred of the superior other is a possible outcome, not an inevitable one. Instead, impressions can be perceived in ways that form a number of varying passions, those "curious phenomena of the human mind" (Hume 243). Because the passions "like colours may be blended so perfectly together," Hume's formulation can help to expose the way Clarissa's merit can provoke pity and admiration in some, while in others it provokes passions tinted an angry, violent red (243).

The more the self identifies with the superior other, the more they feel their own inferiority. In order to alleviate the pain that results from this inferiority, the inferior individual will either attempt to differentiate the self from the other, "breaking the association" that makes a comparison between them capable of producing such strong impressions in the mind, or they will attempt to destroy the source of superiority in the other. These two tactics are pivotal in *Clarissa* and create the contradictory positions of veneration of Clarissa's goodness and the malicious desire to destroy it. Despite the obvious differences in the way these two positions effect how characters interact with Clarissa, both nevertheless serve to disconnect her from the scope of benevolent sociability, which is dependent of identification and sympathetic reciprocity to create the moral sense or moral sentiments.

Anna can concede that Clarissa is "superior to all our sex" without any apparent envy because the greatness of her divine merit has broken the association of ideas between them which could have lead to painful comparisons (Richardson 292). That is, because Clarissa is "faultless in every particular," Anna views her as not justly comparable to herself (Richardson 1095). Anna thus is "heartless to imitate" Clarissa's example and contents herself with being "fitter for *this* world than [Clarissa]" while Clarissa is fitter "for the *next*" than she (Richardson 485, 69). Rather than feeling abashed by this, Anna gleefully highlights how differently she would behave in Clarissa's position. "Had I twenty Brother James's, and twenty Sister Bell's," Anna insists "not one of them, nor all of them joined together, would dare to treat me as yours presume to treat you" (Richardson 69). Likewise, she observes with some warmth, "upon my word, were I to have been that moment in your situation, and been so treated, I would have torn [Lovelace's] eyes out, and left it to his own heart, when I had done, to furnish the reason for it ... I wish it had been a poleax, and in the hand of his worst enemy" (Richardson 603). Anna's

veneration of Clarissa's divine merit differentiates her from it, making it possible to perceive without spite, but also making it impossible to aspire to. Clarissa thus is an exemplar of virtue who can't be imitated.

On the other hand, when individuals do not "break the association of ideas" between themselves and Clarissa, Richardson continually draws attention to the pain that they feel in being "overshade[d]" by her merit (Hume 244, 243). For instance, John Harlowe asks Clarissa, "how can you expect, that they who are hurt by you will not hurt you again?...If you *were* envied, why should you sharpen envy, and file up its teeth to an edge?... We are all afraid to see you, because we know we shall be made so many fools" (Richardson 253-4). This pain not only creates the ominous "desire to remove the source of superiority" in her; it also creates feelings of hatred, which lead to darker desires still (Hume 244). As Hume theorizes, "love and hatred have not only a *cause*, which excites them, *viz.* pleasure and pain, and an *object*, to which they are directed, *viz.* a person or thinking being; but likewise an *end*, which they endeavor to attain, *viz.* the happiness or misery of the person belov'd or hated" (237). Following this logic, we could say that Clarissa's inimitable goodness excites pleasure in the minds of other characters through sympathy. However, because the pleasure of her merit also highlights the pain of their lack of merit, it frequently creates the passion of hatred. The passion of hatred is "not compleated in [itself] ... but carr[ies] the mind to something further"— to seek the misery of the person hated (Hume 237). The influence of the self, which can turn pleasure into pain and pity into malice in Hume, thus naturally creates the "unnatural" cruelty of many of Richardson's characters. As such, Bella and James are not contented with depriving Clarissa of her "superiority," marked by the admiration of her family and the estate of her grandfather, they must also see her to suffer under their father's curse. Likewise, Lovelace sets his sights much higher than just depriving

Clarissa of her "honor," upon which she has "set such a romantic value" (Richardson 885). He also hopes to use her "high opinion of her own sagacity" against her. (Richardson 465) "I love, when I dig a pit," Lovelace remarks with sadistic amusement, "to have my prey tumble in with secure feet and open eyes: then man can look down upon her, with an Oh-ho charmer! how came you there!" (Richardson 465).

The desire to make Clarissa suffer *because of her merit* not only suggests that her "superiority" has "overshaded" others, but also that they perceive it as a deliberate reproach. Indeed, Clarissa seems intermittently cognizant of the fact that others experience her virtue as a type of judgment and, occasionally, as a type of punishment as well. For example, when describing an altercation with Bella, Clarissa discerningly notes: "I expected to feel the weight of her hand. She did come up to me, with it held up: then speechless with passion, ran down half way of the stairs, and then up again ... Then did she pour upon me, with greater violence; *considering my gentleness as a triumph of temper over her*" (Richardson 193 emphasis added). Clarissa's gentleness implicitly critiques Bella's impetuosity, making Bella ashamed of her behavior and angrier still. This dynamic repeats throughout the novel as characters assume that Clarissa's virtuous behavior indicates her disapproving judgment of themselves. Like Bella, they violently resent it. As such, I would argue that the "images of cruelty," which "appear and reappear like a pattern in scarlet thread," are partially motivated by Clarissa's Christ-like merit (Brissenden 173).

Interestingly, this dynamic anticipates pivotal components of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which sympathy shifts from the transmission of embodied feeling to the imaginative approbation of the propriety of the other's behavior. Therefore, by exploring the complicating role of pain and pleasure in the self in *Clarissa,* we not only come to a clearer

understanding of the contradictory reactions that the novel prompts, but also of the limitations of self-interested moral philosophy, even as it transformed throughout the century. Unlike Hume, Smith does not believe that sympathy is a mechanism for transferring physical impressions from individual to individual. On the contrary, Smith observes, "though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, *our senses will never inform us of what he suffers.* They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the *imagination only* that we can form any conception of what are his sensations" (11 emphases added). In other words, when the spectator regards his brother, strapped as he is upon the rack, he does not sympathetically feel his brother's pain (as Hume would suggest) or even attempt to imagine what his brother feels. Instead the spectator is strictly limited to his own experience and must consider "what *he himself would feel* if he was reduced to the same unhappy situation, and, what perhaps is impossible, was at the same time able to regard it with his present reason and judgment" (Smith 15 emphasis added).[11] If the brother's response to his torment exactly corresponds to the spectator's imaginary response, from the decontextualized perspective of his "*present* reason and judgment," then and only then, does he feel the pleasures of sympathy.[12] If the responses do not correspond, then the spectator feels a painful disapprobation of his brother—a disapprobation that he then projects onto his brother's perspective of himself.

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11. This "empty[ing] out [of] the other's emotions and fill[ing] the empty space with our own narratives and feelings" Csengei insists, allows "selfishness, cruelty and the lack of sympathy [to] enter into [sympathy's] very foundations" (61). See Csengei's *Sympathy, Sensibility and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 50-62 for an enlightening reading of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

12. Mullan helpfully clarifies the source of pleasure in Smith's formulation of sympathy. He explains, "sympathy becomes in itself a principle of pleasure, whether it be sympathy with 'pleasure' or with 'pain'. It is the 'observing' of the 'perfect coincidence'" between the passions of the self and the other (45).

Put another way, Smith argues that that "it is scarce possible that we should make use of any other rule or canon but the correspondent affection in ourselves" when making judgments about the propriety of the passions of others (23). Therefore,

> When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and on the contrary, when, upon bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do no coincide to what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the causes which excite them. (Smith 20)

Furthermore, when the spectator disapproves of the sentiments of the other, he assumes that the other will disapprove of his sentiments in turn. In fact, the other "*cannot avoid* disapproving [the spectator's] sentiments," Smith argues, "on account of their dissonance with his own" (20 emphasis added). For Smith, this "triangulated relationship, in which one responds to the image of oneself being looked at by the other," would become the basis for self-regulation in moral individuals (Park 375). That is, one internalizes the perspective of a "disinterested spectator" or the "man within the breast" and attempts to moderate one's passions and behaviors to a degree to which the disinterested spectator would approve. Interestingly, Anna attempts to moderate Clarissa's judgment of herself by creating this triangulated perspective: "Suppose yourself to be *me*, and me to be *you* ... and then give to yourself those consolations which, in that case you would give me" (Richardson 512). However, it is not possible for Clarissa to extend the pity she would feel for Anna's frailties to herself if she is to stand as the emblem of moral incorruptibility. Clarissa's perfect virtue thus stands in the way of the sympathetic perspective of herself that Anna attempts to convey. Moreover, the "dissonance" between Clarissa's behavior and that of others leads many characters to interpret her virtue as a critique. "Judging as such narrow spirits will ever judge," Clarissa's virtuous behavior is perceived as a painful reproach of moral failures, not as an incentive to correct them (Richardson 129).

Even as Clarissa refrains from casting judgment on those who have wronged her, particularly her parents, the severity with which she condemns the smallest, even imaginary, errors in her own conduct is internalized by others as an equally unforgiving judgment of themselves. For example, though Clarissa has been indiscreet in corresponding with and meeting Lovelace, Richardson's painstaking justifications of her reasons for doing so are enough to convince all but the severest of critics—that is to say, Clarissa herself—that she is blameless. Ventriloquizing the perspective that Richardson would have his readers take, Anna insists: "I use the words *misled* and *error* and such-like only in compliment to your own too ready self-accusations, ... for I think in my conscience that every part of your conduct is defensible; and that those only are blamable who have no other way to clear themselves than by condemning you" (Richardson 578). Richardson thus uses Clarissa's censure of her own "misconduct" as an indication of her merit rather than her guilt. That is, Clarissa's goodness lies in her unwavering insistence on the strictest of moral codes in regulating her own behavior. As such, Clarissa believes that even an unintentional indiscretion has made her unworthy of compassion, asking "who shall pity the creature who could fall by so base a mind?" (Richardson 901). In asking this, Clarissa is projecting her pitiless "present reason and judgment" of herself onto the perspective of other people and, Smith would claim, giving an indication of how she perceives them as well (15).

Anna, for one, seems to recognize that Clarissa's judgment of herself could be interpreted as a condemnation of others. She points out:

> If YOU think yourself inexcusable for taking a step that put you into the way of delusion, without any intention to go off with him, what must those giddy creatures think of themselves who, without half of your provocations and inducements, and without regard to decorum, leap walls, drop from windows, and steal away from their parents house to the seducer's bed in the same day? (Richardson 577)

Were "those giddy creatures" held to the same standard of behavior to which Clarissa holds herself, they would be hopelessly guilty. Even if they are not held to this standard, they must be painfully aware of the "vast disparity" between their conduct and that of Clarissa, who finds it "inexcusable" even to be kidnapped (Richardson 577). This is precisely how Mrs. Sinclair's "nymphs" —who have also been Lovelace's "prey"— interpret Clarissa's unflinching condemnation of her own culpability in falling blamelessly into Lovelace's "pit" (Richardson 465). Because Clarissa's judgment of herself implicitly indicates her disapprobation of their behavior, they are ashamed and pained by the lack of sympathetic fellow-feeling. Unfortunately for Clarissa, but necessarily for the development of the novel, this does not entice them to reform, but causes them to take "supreme delight" in the thought of "reducing [Clarissa] to their level" and to lend Lovelace all of the assistance in their power to do so (Richardson 729). Thus, even though Clarissa humbly cannot believe that her merit "inspire[s] people with an awe," it becomes clear that those awe-struck by her are only too ready to strike back (Richardson 453).

The implied critique of the self that Clarissa's Christ-like merit creates when viewed through the context of identification and fellow-feeling may have contributed to some of the unexpectedly rebellious readings of the novel that Richardson would try so hard to control in its second and third editions. When Richardson "discovered to his dismay, that readers were responding to the text in ways dramatically at odds with his moral intention," Terry Castle explains, he attempted to "enclose the text (and us) within the moral prescriptions," of a didactic preface and postscript (172, 171). Much as Clarissa's body is protected from the adulterating influences of the grave by her eternally fresh, white coffin, *Clarissa* is sealed off from the sullying effects of misreading through addendums and editorial devices designed to "teach the reader to focus his attention correctly" (Warner 182). This was especially necessary for readers

who criticized "problematic dimensions of Clarissa's behavior," like Frances Grainger (Warner 188). Grainger complained that Richardson's "heroine exerts an unpleasant pressure on the reader. The women who accept Clarissa must 'own themselves very weak and her very wise'" (Warner 179). Just as Anna cautions, Clarissa's merit can be overwhelming and can exert the "unpleasant pressure" of disapprobation on others (Warner 179). Richardson attempted to gloss over the rigidity of Clarissa's goodness that others were "heartless to imitate" in subsequent editions of the novel. However it was not feasible to remove the elements of her character that readers considered "'Prudish, too delicate, and *a silent Reproach to themselves*'" (Richardson qtd. in Warner 180 emphasis added). Indeed, the aspects of Clarissa's character that appear unattainable on one hand and "too delicate" on the other are necessary for "inculcating" Richardson's increasingly-compromised "great lessons of Christianity" (Richardson qtd. in Warner 180; Richardson 1495).

Because Clarissa's elevated position in the novel inhibits her from engaging in sympathetic social relationships, which are dependent on the *mutual* approbation of fellow-feeling, her virtuous perfection helps to expose a "flaw or potential weakness at the root of pity" in Hume and Smith's self-regarding formulation: "you can't feel pity without feeling potentially vulnerable or insecure yourself" (Eagleton 155). That is, Eagleton explains, "if we were fully self-contained we could not have compassion for others; indeed we would have a touch of the psychopath about us" (155). This caveat, which is strikingly Hobbesian,[13] also contributes to assumptions that Clarissa's unassailable moral goodness indicates her inability to pity the moral failings of others. Thus, when Lovelace asks Belford "what title has *she* to pity?" he might not

13. See Chapter 1, p. 59. Hobbes argues that "those have the least Pitty, that think themselves least obnoxious to the same" misfortunes that befall others (126).

just be equivocating (Richardson 402). Rather, he is gesturing towards the limitations of compassion—limitations he ponders throughout the text. For instance, while contemplating Lord M's dying agonies, Lovelace reflects:

> But when people's minds are weakened by a sense of their own infirmities, and when they are drawing on to their latter ends, they will be moved on the slightest occasions, whether those offer from *within* or *without* them. And this, frequently, the unpenetrating world calls *humanity*, when all the time, in compassionating the miseries of human nature, they are but pitying themselves; and were they in strong health and spirits would care as little for anybody else as thou or I do. (Richardson 1034)

According to Lovelace, compassion for another's distress stems from a solipsistic fear about one's own potential misery. In his argument, then, it is exclusively those facing the threat of bodily dissolution who lament the pains of the dying. Lovelace's ability to watch Lord M with an unmoved heart merely reflects his safety from the threatened misfortune. His reaction is not inhumane, he reasons, but definitively sympathetic given the parameters of pity. Just as his bodily health prevents him from feeling compassion for Lord M, Lovelace presumes that Clarissa's perfect virtue must prevent her from feeling compassion for flawed human nature. Thus as Lovelace repeatedly demands "can she deserve compassion, who shows none?" he is projecting his "psychopathic" indifference for others onto Clarissa, who, to be fair, is bafflingly "self-contained" (Richardson 673; Eagleton 155).

Clarissa's "radical autonomy," which Warner suggests causes her to seem "irreducibly self-centered," is not just limited to her disconnection from sympathetic identification and fellow-feeling, it extends problematically to her refusal to be under obligation to others (39). Clarissa regards the ability "to confer benefit[s] ... rather than to be obliged to receive them" as "a god-like power" (Richardson 1248-9). It is telling, then, that Clarissa will be a benefactor—a benefactor who can never be repaid—or she will be nothing. She proclaims, "If I am poor, sir, I

am proud. I will not be under obligation. You may *believe*, sir, I will not" (Richardson 1081). In "Clarissa and the Hazard of the Gift," Linda Zionkowski explores the power that Clarissa gains in thus refusing to take part in the system of economic and filial obligation. Zionkowski argues that her refusal allows Clarissa to assert "her equality with men and her right to self-determination" (489).

For Lovelace, who considers Clarissa's autonomy to be antithetical to the structure of society, this is a source of endless frustration. He insists, "there is no such thing as living without being beholden to somebody. Mutual obligation is the very essence and soul of the social and commercial life—Why should *she* be exempt from it?" (Richardson 760). Zionkowski suggests that Lovelace is here "invoking the norm of reciprocity as the foundation for civil society and its commercial economy" (489). However, I would argue that Lovelace is also faulting Clarissa for disrupting the *moral* economy, which is built upon the *sympathetic* reciprocity of its members. That is, Clarissa's resistance to reciprocal obligation threatens more than "the cornerstone of the patriarchal household" and "the hierarchy of the parent/child exchange" (Zionkowski 494, 478). It also positions her outside of the structure of benevolent sociability. Lovelace, who is vexed by his relative worthlessness when confronted by Clarissa's unsympathetic (and potentially un-sympathizing) goodness, is likewise pained by her "god-like power" to confer but not to receive the obligations of compassion and, ultimately, of forgiveness.

Importantly, Clarissa does not just refuse obligations from patriarchal benefactors, but also—with a truly Harlowean pertinacity— from her own bewildered Anna. Anna, who continually begs Clarissa to "think, my dear, if in any way I can serve you," argues that Clarissa's acceptance would "*ennoble*" Anna herself and would attest to the closeness of their relationship (Richardson 331). She asserts that she would be doing "no more than [her] duty in

serving and comforting a dear and worthy friend, laboring under undeserved oppression" (Richardson 331). It is Clarissa's duty, then, to accept; for, "if by a *less* inconvenience to ourselves, we could relieve our friend from a *greater*, the refusal of such a favour makes the refuser unworthy of the name of friend" (Richardson 355). Mutual obligation is absolutely foundational to Anna's definition of friendship. And, —the sum hidden in Anna's Norris notwithstanding—this obligation is sympathetic, not pecuniary. Anna reproaches Clarissa, therefore, for putting her "on a footing with Lovelace" "in refusing to accept of [her] offer" and threatens "never to forgive" Clarissa if she "suffer[s] any inconveniences ... that it is in [Anna's] power" to assuage (Richardson 407, 468).

However, Clarissa steadfastly refuses to be relieved—a fact that is all the more surprising given that she views the desire to help others as "TRUE GENEROUSITY," indicative of a "greatness of soul" (Richardson 594). Clarissa explains to Lovelace, much as Anna explains to her, that sympathy "incites us to do more by a fellow-creature, than can be strictly required of us: it incites us to hasten to the relief of an object that wants relief, anticipating even hope or expectation" (Richardson 594). On the most practical level, Richardson must persist in Clarissa's refusal to allow Anna "to hasten to [her] relief" in order to advance Clarissa's beatification through suffering. However, in doing so, he positions the paradigmatic heroine of sensibility beyond the reaches of compassion, necessitating that those afflicted with sympathy pains for Clarissa's distress will never be allowed the compensatory pleasure of assisting her.

Because of its quasi-hedonistic formulation, pleasure in sympathy is necessary if it is to perform its intended ethical and social functions.[14] As seen above, when sympathy is wholly, or

14. We will recall that Shaftesbury asserts that "there is a necessity for the preservation of virtue that it should be thought to have no quarrel with true interest and self-enjoyment" (188). This line of thought remains vital in Hume, who posits that "moral distinctions depend entirely

even primarily, painful it can backfire spectacularly. Thus, moral philosophers consistently envision compensatory pleasures to rationalize why individuals are willing to engage with the pain of others.[15] For Hume, these pleasures can stem from the fact that "the misery of another gives us a more lively idea of our happiness" or from the gratifying idea of our own goodness in relieving that misery (Hume 242). For Smith, these pleasures arise from the perfect agreement between the self and the other, which "alleviates grief by insinuating into the heart almost the only agreeable sensation which it is at that time capable of receiving": approbation (19). On one hand, Clarissa's refusal to accept the help of others forecloses the pleasures that they would take in assisting her, thereby disrupting the "mutual obligation" which Lovelace calls the "essence and soul of social ... life" (Richardson 760). On the other, her moral elevation renders the pleasures of approbation impossible. Instead, those who are sympathetically hurt by Clarissa are forced into one of two perverse positions: unproductive pity or sadistic pleasure. Even more problematically, these positions begin to merge.

The negative consequences of unproductive pity are clear in Anna's distress over Clarissa's plight. The information that Clarissa conveys regarding the "particulars of [Lovelace's] wickedness ... hurt and incense" Anna, who feels "impatience and bitterness ... boi[l] over in [her] heart" (Richardson 586, 354). Moreover, Anna's frustrated pity for Clarissa destroys her present happiness and compromises her future peace of mind. She asks, "Think you that any of the enjoyments of this life could be enjoyments to me, were such a friend as you to be

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on certain peculiar sentiments of pain and pleasure, and that whatever mental quality in ourselves or others gives satisfaction ... is of course virtuous; as everything of this nature, that gives uneasiness, is vicious" (367).

15. Edmund Burke, as will be discussed in chapter 4, makes things simpler by claiming that "we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others" (92).

involved in calamites which I could either relieve her from, or alleviate, by giving them up?" (Richardson 587). Mrs. Howe, who sees Anna suffering on Clarissa's account, thus reproaches her for selfishly "involv[ing her] friends and acquaintances ... into near as much unhappiness" as herself (Richardson 975). Mrs. Howe points out that not only is her "poor daughter ... always in tears and griefs" over Clarissa's misfortune, but also that Anna has "postponed her own felicity truly because [Clarissa is] unhappy!" (Richardson 975).

Even Anna urges Clarissa to consider that her pain is not confined to herself alone; it is shared and spread to others. Anna begs Clarissa, therefore, to allow her to come "privately to London" until Clarissa be "either honourably married, or absolutely quit of the wretch," if only to relieve Anna of the pain of her helplessness (Richardson 549). By accepting the help that she requires, Clarissa would be acting with mercy to them both by ending the pains of suspense and indignation that they both experience. Nevertheless, Anna is not permitted to "hasten to the relief of an object that wants relief" and is made to suffer unproductively in the pain she cannot relieve (Richardson 594). Thus, Mrs. Howe points out that as much as Clarissa's distress "grieves [Anna's] poor heart," it can "do [Clarissa] no good" (Richardson 975). She urges Clarissa, then, to "write not to her" if she actually cares for Anna, as she claims (Richardson 975).

Anna, who "wept for two hours incessantly on reading" Clarissa's minute accounts of her own suffering, models the ideal reader's painful relationship to the letters (Richardson 577). Indeed, Richardson's correspondence provides evidence that his readers were sensibly affected by Clarissa's distress much in the same way that Anna was. Lady Bradshaigh, for one, claims that her tears were so plentiful as to be measured by the "pint" and that her "heart is still bursting" as she reflects on what Clarissa has been made to suffer by Richardson's "cruel

disposition" (240, 244). [16] Lady Bradshaigh repines, "much pleasure have I lost, much pain have I endured" in Clarissa's distresses (243). Like Anna, Lady Bradshaigh attempts to relieve her own pain by devising solutions to save Clarissa. Appropriately, Richardson declines all offers of help in resolving *Clarissa*'s trials as steadfastly as Clarissa herself. Richardson's refusal to adapt any of Lady Bradshaigh's schemes positions her as a helpless spectator, whose pain is "much greater than [Richardson] imagine[s]" (239). As such, Lewis points out, Lady Bradshaigh "deem[ed] [the novel] 'too shocking and barbarous a story for publication'" (47). Anna and readers alike are unable to intervene and are therefore deprived of that pleasure of assistance that could compensate them for the shocking pain they experience.

Troublingly, though, this inability to assist Clarissa does not mean that readers—both real and fictional— were any less riveted to her pain. Lady Bradshaigh's frustrated compassion might have caused her, "when alone, in agonies [to] lay down the book, take it up again, walk about the room, let fall a flood of tears, wipe [her] eyes, read again perhaps not three lines, throw away the book, crying out, excuse me, good Mr. Richardson, I cannot go on" (240-1). However, she certainly *did* go on with her reading— for a staggering one million words. So too, Anna's appetite for the details of Clarissa's trials becomes more voracious as her distress becomes more shocking. She repeats, "I long for your next letter. Continue to be as particular as possible. I can think of no other subject but what relates to you and to your affairs"; "I shall think I have reason

16. Even the satirical Henry Fielding concedes that Richardson's novel could melt anyone not made of stone, writing "'God forbid that the Man who reads this with dry Eyes should be alone with my Daughter when she hath no assistance within call'" (qtd. in Barker-Benfield 141). For Barker-Benfield in *The Culture of Sensibility*, Fielding's comment points to the aspiration of sentimental fiction to transform " insensitive men ... into men of feeling" (250). In eliciting such refined and refining emotions, "Richardson's great seminal, sentimental novel, [would] be immortalized as a handbook of reform efforts against rakish 'annals'" (Barker-Benfield 253).

to be highly displeased with you, if, when you write to me, you endeavor to keep from me any secret of your heart"; and "I repeat—continue to write to me—I insist upon it; and that as minutely as possible: or take the consequence" (Richardson 87, 174, 549). The pain that others experience as a result of Clarissa's "radical autonomy"— which leaves them unable to intervene in her story— encourages a potentially sadistic fascination with the suffering that they cannot alleviate (Warner 39).[17]

This questionable fascination is more immediately apparent in Belford's interest in the affair. Belford, who is also "an eager observer of the unfolding show," mirrors Lovelace's delight in Clarissa's distress (Warner 151). Indeed it is difficult to distinguish between Belford's admiration of Clarissa's "piercing, yet gentle eye," in which "every glance" was "mingled with love and fear" and Lovelace's captivation with her "charms" when "fear [is] her predominant passion" (Richardson 555, 642). Even Lovelace finds their enjoyment to be comparable, arguing "I have as much pleasure in writing on this charming subject, as thou canst have in reading what I write" and threating to "punish" Belford by withholding the details of Clarissa's trials (Richardson 610). Though Belford prides himself on the altruism of his interest, Warner argues that he is "implicated in the rape":[18] Belford "watches patiently, comes close as he can, but never touches"— never offers Clarissa assistance while still in Lovelace's power (151). Whether this is

17. For Laura Hinton in *The Perverse Gaze of Sympathy: Sadomasochistic Sentiments from Clarissa to Rescue 911,* sadistic enjoyment is inherent to the structure of sympathetic spectatorship itself, which "disguises ... sadomasochistic visual desire" in the modest garb of "sentimental identification" (Hinton 2, 4).

18. Critics have similarly implicated Richardson in Clarissa's rape. Ian Watt suggests that Richardson's development of "the prodigious fertility of Lovelace's sexual imagination" goes "far beyond the call of literary duty," indicating his vicarious pleasure in Lovelace's schemes (235). Likewise, Morris Golden claims that Richardson's "obsessional interest in criminal sexuality" demonstrates his "deep unconscious investment in his hero's sadistic attempts to violate Clarissa" (2-3).

due to the narratological demands of Richardson's "religious novel" or to Clarissa's "god-like" position beyond the reaches of assistance and obligation, "there is a streak of cruelty in the kind of pity which finds itself helpless before a hopeless situation" (Eagleton 159). Helpless pity, "can fester into sadism," Eagleton claims, "as a kind of psychical defence against one's impotence" or, I would suggest, as a kind of pleasurable compensation for one's pain (159).

Reconsidering the way in which philosophical formulations of sympathy frustrate pity and facilitate cruelty in *Clarissa* thus gives us an alternative way to approach what critics have long described as the novel's *avant la lettre* sadomasochism. Sadomasochistic readings of the text typically adapt Ian Watt's lastingly influential argument in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957). Citing the historical conditions of courtship, Watt argues that the maelstrom of *Clarissa*'s sexual violence is caused by the riptide of repressed feminine sexuality and the churning current of masculine compulsion. Because "the hypocritical bashfulness of the '*passive* sex'" necessitated the use of "forceful methods," Watt concludes, sadism became "the ultimate form ... of the [eighteenth-century] masculine role," which was complemented by "the masochistic and asexual female" (226, 232). Like Watt, Brissenden also divides the novel's "sadomasochism" along gender lines, claiming on one hand that "Lovelace, like Sade, is a man fascinated by the *idea* of evil" and on the other that "at a very profound level [the rape] is also what Clarissa desires: she wants Lovelace to be not only her lover but also the one who punishes her for her independence and unconventionality" (182, 162).[19] By considering *Clarissa*'s violence and cruelty as the problematic consequence of self-interested formulations of morality and sociability, we might be

19. Hinton's "The Heroine's Subjection: *Clarissa*, Sadomasochism, and Natural Law" notably deviates from this trend. For Hinton—building Lynn Chancer's *The Sadomasochism of Everyday Life,* which itself is building from Hegel's master-slave dialectic— Clarissa does not exclusively play the masochist to Lovelace's sadist, but alternately fluctuates between both roles in her own right.

able to explore the "sadistic" moments in the text without forcing Clarissa into the position of a secretly-complicit masochist.

Even as Lovelace savors Clarissa's distress and plots her destruction in ways that Sade (presumably appreciative of the novel for reasons other than its heroine's virtue) would admire and imitate,[20] his motivation for doing so is rarely as simple as a fascination with "the idea of evil" (Brissenden 182). Indeed, Lovelace often claims that he hopes to "remove the superiority" that galls him in Clarissa in order to create a stronger "resemblance" and closer "proximity" between them (Hume 244, 243). In terms strikingly evocative of Hume's *Treatise*, Lovelace exclaims:

> I protest I know not how to look up at her! Now, as I am thinking, if I could pull her down a little nearer to my own level; that is to say, could prevail upon her to do something that would argue imperfection, something to repent of; we should jog on much more equally, and be better able to comprehend one another: and so the comfort would be mutual, and the remorse not all on one side. (Richardson 450)

The language of the passage emphasizes the disconnection created by Clarissa's merit through the physical terms of elevation and debasement. Lovelace must "look up" to Clarissa from the inferiority of his "own level." He hopes to "pull [Clarissa] down," then, in order to bring her back into the sphere of sociability and to engage in a relationship with her on terms of reciprocal comprehension and acceptance. This desire, which causes Warner to conclude that Lovelace's character "engenders something shared and mutual" that Clarissa's does not, might also have contributed to readers' "immoral admiration of Lovelace," despite Richardson's best efforts (Warner 38, 181).

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20. Whereas Sade "imitated Richardson's enormously successful formula of the virgin in distress" in such works as *Justine* in order to satirize it, his admiration of Lovelace seems more sincere (Schaeffer 370). For example, in *Le Comte Oxtiern, ou les effets du libertinage* (1791), Sade's Oxtiern was recognizably Lovelacean in conception, though in true sadistic style, he was also "'more of a scoundrel, more vile than Lovelace'" (rev. qtd. in Schaeffer 418).

As the novel moves inexorably toward the rape, however, Lovelace becomes increasingly hostile as he realizes that Clarissa's moral perfection cannot be "brought down a little nearer to [his] level" and that they will never take mutual comfort in "comprehend[ing] one another" (Richardson 450). Though Clarissa's moral degradation is impossible, the "angelic lady" is certainly susceptible to a variety of physical dangers (Richardson 958). Lovelace thus justifies his malicious delight in proving that "this charming frost-piece" can burn with blushes after all as just recompense for the pain he has suffered by "a merit so mortifying to [his] pride!" (Richardson 1147, 734). As such, escalating moments of cruelty begin to erupt in Richardson's moral masterpiece that could make their way with little difficulty into the corpus of Sade himself. For example, Lovelace confides to Belford:

> We begin with birds as boys, and as men go on to ladies; and both perhaps, in turns, experience our sportive cruelty. Has thou not observed the charming gradations by which the ensnared volatile has been brought to bear with its new condition? How at first, refusing all sustenance, it beats and bruises itself against its wires, till it makes its gay plumage fly about, and overspread its well-secured cage. Now it gets out its head; sticking only at its beautiful shoulders: then, with difficulty, drawing back, with renewed rage it beats and bruises again its pretty head and sides, bites the wires, and pecks at the fingers of its delighted tamer. Till at last, finding its efforts ineffectual, quite tired and breathless, it lays itself down and pants at the bottom of the cage, seeming to bemoan its cruel fate and forfeited liberty. (Richardson 557)

Like the "delighted tamer," who watches as the caged bird "beats and bruises ... its pretty head and sides, bites the wires, and pecks at [his] fingers," Lovelace takes pleasure in triumphing over the weakness in Clarissa's body that he cannot discover in her invulnerable soul (Richardson 557). Thus, when Belford asks, "why, in short, should not the work of bodies be left to *mere* bodies?" the answer is suggested in the question itself (Richardson 555). By proving that

Clarissa is a "mere body" as he perceives other women to be,[21] Lovelace does, in fact, hope to prove that "there is no difference to be found between the skull of king Philip and that of another man" (Richardson 885). By targeting "her pride of being corporally inviolate" Lovelace attempts to force Clarissa to "descend by *degrees* from *goddess-hood* into *humanity*" (Richardson 879, 706).

Though opinions regarding the precise significance of the rape vary, critics typically agree that it represents Lovelace's most aggressive and desperate attempt to violate Clarissa's sense of selfhood. Castle argues that rape, the "quintessential act of violence against women," allows Lovelace to "enforc[e] his 'construction' of the heroine *directly* upon her" (25). Similarly, Wolff posits that "the primary danger is to the integrity of [Clarissa's] personality" (123). In particular, the "primary danger" of the rape seems to be directed towards the *moral* integrity of Clarissa's personality, upon which Lovelace wants to "enforce" a "construction" more in keeping with his own. Clarissa herself seems well aware of this, asking with some astuteness, "will not his causeless vengeance upon me be complete, unless he ruins my soul too?" (Richardson 1275). For Mark Kinkead-Weekes, then, the rape not only indicates Lovelace's attempt to compromise Clarissa's virtue, but "to disprove the existence of moral *nature*" itself (59). Kinkead-Weekes draws parallels between Lovelace's claim that he is "bringing virtue to the touchstone with a view to exalt it, if it come out to be virtue" and Richardson's "ultimate question": "what is 'Clarissa' *essentially*?" (Richardson 427; Kinkead-Weekes 68). Richardson, like Lovelace, is willing "to disintegrate [Clarissa], to break her down to the last possible distillation before her personality disappears into the mechanism of madness" in order "to expose

21. Famously, Lovelace writes, "We have held that women have no souls: I am a very Jew in this point, and willing to believe they have not. And if so, to whom shall I be accountable for what I do to them" (Richardson 704).

her innermost nature" (Kinkead-Weekes 68, 60).[22] For Richardson, this exposure successfully confirms the authenticity and invulnerability of Clarissa's goodness, which is "so deeply blended that its fibers have struck into her heart" (Richardson 657). However, it backfires dramatically for Lovelace. Rather than bringing Clarissa's moral nature a "little nearer to own [his] level" through the violation of her body, Lovelace finds that Clarissa's "will is not to be corrupted" and "her mind is not to be debased" (Richardson 916). Instead, the rape initiates Clarissa's complete "abandon[ment of] her body" as she "seemed to tread air, and to be all soul" (Harris 105; Richardson 949). Put bluntly, Clarissa "chooses to leave her own body by starving it to death" (Park 390).[23]

Clarissa's gradual decline creates an ever greater distance between herself and others as it causes her to seem "more and more" like "one sent from heaven" (Richardson 1275). The divinity of Clarissa's merit, which had inhibited the potential pleasures of benevolent sociability

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22. Clarissa's exposure and disintegration are nearly literalized after her death as Lovelace "was actually setting out with a surgeon of this place, to have the lady opened and embalmed" (Richardson 1382). Unsurprisingly, Lovelace wants to assume control over Clarissa's virtue in death that he could not have in life by removing and taking possession of her heart. He frantically repeats, "I *will* have it. I will keep it in spirits. It shall never be out of my sight" (Richardson 1384).

23. Julie Park's identification of a scientifically plausible cause of death—starvation—is representative of the difficulty modern readers have in accepting Clarissa's apparently self-willed decline. However, Raymond Stephanson argues that critics often overlook the way in which medical understandings of sensibility would have made Clarissa's death not "the least bit puzzl[ing] or uncertain" for eighteenth-century readers (267). Citing excerpts from Richardson's correspondence with Dr. Cheyne, who treated him for nervous and physical disorders, and innumerable references in the text, Stephanson concludes: "Clarissa dies because of her nervous sensibility, or that intimate relationship of mind and body (the nexus is the nerves) in which one's mental state can have a direct effect on one's bodily health (or vice versa)" (268). This very interconnection seems to inform Lovelace's mistaken belief that defiling Clarissa's body would bring her mind closer to his level.

and mutual approbation throughout her life, becomes exclusively painful following her death. The pain created by Clarissa's moral elevation and social disconnection is most apparent in her family's reaction to her forgiveness of them. This forgiveness— which Erickson calls an "expression of the inhuman power of Clarissa's new divine self" that is "perfectly sincere" and which Doody calls "an act of reparation" necessary for one "seeking a relationship to God"— emphasizes Clarissa's Christian charity, even the sacrificial nature of her death (208, 170). At the same time, Clarissa's divine forgiveness painfully concretizes the "vast disparity" between herself and others and permanently grants Clarissa the "god-like power" of obliging others without being obligated in turn. Because Richardson uses Clarissa's elevated goodness and unreciprocated forgiveness to rebuke those who wronged her in life rather than to redeem them, Richardson's inculcation of the "great lessons of Christianity" is increasingly compromised by secular formulations of ethical social interactions and moral motivation. Not only does Richardson wield the pain of Clarissa's Christ-like death as a punishment, he encourages his readers to enjoy it.

Frequently throughout the novel, forgiveness is presented through the logic of the "gift economy" (Zionkowski 491). That is, Clarissa believes that if she were to receive pardon for her "offenses," she would owe a debt of gratitude to a gracious benefactor. Moreover, the benefactor's generous forgiveness would emphasize their superior benevolence and merit; her own faults, though pardoned, would sting her conscience all the more painfully as reminders of her relative unworthiness. As such, Clarissa seems to fear the possibility of being forgiven by her family, noting: "sometimes I think that, were they cheerfully to pronounce me forgiven, I know not whether my concern for having offended them would not be augmented: since I imagine that nothing can be more wounding to a spirit not ungenerous, than a *generous forgiveness*"

(Richardson 1119). Rather than being obliged by the forgiveness of others, then, Clarissa desires to bestow the gift of forgiveness on others. In doing so, however, Clarissa inflicts the precise "wounds" that she wishes to avoid suffering herself on those whom she forgives. Thus, whereas Zionkowski suggests that unreciprocated gifts that Clarissa bestows on her family after her death— "the estate, pictures, the silverware, even her own remains"— are "the painful and potent instruments of her revenge," I would suggest instead that the gift of her forgiveness becomes the "painful and potent instrument" of Richardson's punishment (491).[24]

Indeed, Belford points out that the radiant generosity that shines through Clarissa's letters of forgiveness, distributed *after* her death, must burn the hands of those who hold them:

> Well may I call this admirable lady divine. [The letters] are all calculated to give comfort rather than reproach, though their cruelty to her merited nothing but reproach. But were I in any of their places, *how much rather had I that she had quitted scores* with me by the most severe recriminations, *than that she should thus nobly triumph over me by a generosity that has no example*? (Richardson 1371 emphases added)

Belford's assessment of the letters reprises Clarissa's reflection on forgiveness. To nobly forgive is to triumph over those who have wronged one. Similarly, Morden remarks, "How wounding a thing, Mr. Belford, is a generous and well-distinguished forgiveness! What revenge can be more effectual and more noble, were revenge intended, and were it wished to strike remorse into a guilty or ungrateful heart!" (Richardson 1422).

Though Clarissa is safe in death from the charge of taking an unbecoming delight in her family's torment, both Belford and Morden model for readers how to enjoy it. Morden twists the

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24. Though Zionkowski is speaking specifically about material objects when discussing Clarissa's final gifts to her family, she does extend this logic to the gift of forgiveness in Lovelace's case (492). Zionkowski argues that "Clarissa's triumph is that of the donor bestowing an underserved gift, which she realizes will have greater effects on Lovelace than the dubious outcome of a legal prosecution" (492). This insight will inform my analysis of Clarissa's final interactions with Lovelace, though with differing results.

knife of Clarissa's forgiveness by taunting the assembled family that "she died blessing you all; and justified rather than condemned your severity to her," and then relishing the "general lamentation ... of anguish inexpressibly affecting" that this knowledge causes (Richardson 1396). The previously immovable Mr. Harlowe proclaims that the letters are "heart-piercing" and the inconsolable Mrs. Harlowe declares that her regret over Clarissa will "cost [her] *everlasting* disquiet" (Richardson 1396 emphasis added). Because the Harlowes are filled with remorse that "can yield no comfort" to the departed Clarissa, her forgiveness "serves only to exasperate [their] sense of [her] misery" at their hands, which can now never be repaired (Smith16).

The gaping wound in the family's conscience, which "is apparent in every protracted feature, and in every bursting muscle of each disconsolate mourner" is heightened by the spectacle of Clarissa's body and coffin (Richardson 1406). Clarissa's meticulously designed inscriptions and emblems literally stupefy her family with anguish: "Mrs. Hervey would have read to them the inscription—These words she did read, *Here the wicked cease from troubling:* but could read no further. Her tears fell in large drops upon the plate she was contemplating, and yet she was desirous of gratifying a curiosity that mingled impatience with her grief because she could *not* gratify it, although she often wiped her eyes as they flowed" (Richardson 1399). Mrs. Hervey is suspended in torment, unable to relieve even the pain of her impatient curiosity. Morden, triumphantly observing this and other indications of the family's grief, asks Belford then "*Could ever willful hard-heartedness be more severely punished?"* (Richardson 1406).

Richardson clearly expects his readers, following the example of Morden and Belford, to take pleasure in the punishment of the Harlowes. Indeed, in the postscript to the novel, Richardson observes that the suffering that the Harlowes experience as they reflect on Clarissa's charitable forgiveness fulfills "the notion of *poetical justice,* founded on the *modern rules*" of

tragedy (1498). As Richardson instructs his readers to take satisfaction in the fact that all who have wronged Clarissa are "*exemplarily punished*," he provides a long-deferred compensatory pleasure for the pain they have suffered on Clarissa's account (1498). However, this pleasure is dependent on the miscarriage of the text's religious lessons. In order for the Harlowes to be "exemplarily punished" it is necessary that they perceive Clarissa's forgiveness exclusively through the logic of secular moral systems, like Hume's and Smith's, that caused them to feel such animosity toward the "angelic lady" in life. That is, Clarissa's sacrificial death cannot be understood as holding out the possibility of atonement or redemption. Rather, it serves to increase the distance between herself and her family, whose painful awareness of their relative lack of merit becomes the source of their punishment.

It could be argued that Richardson is using the disconnection between the religious import of Clarissa's forgiveness and the perception of the Harlowes as a component of the text's "great lessons." The Harlowes create their own punishment in their inability to accept Clarissa's grace. However, this lesson is compromised when it comes to Lovelace, who not only seeks Clarissa's forgiveness while she is still alive, but who also attempts to atone for his wrongdoing after her death. As Clarissa rejects Lovelace's offers of social and legal atonement, Lovelace has "no power left ... to repair her wrongs!" and can find "no alleviation to [his] self-reproach!" (Richardson 1344). Not only is he bereft of the power to make reparations, a vital "part of repentance," Clarissa appears to take pleasure in the fact that the unmitigated greatness of Lovelace's crimes will testify the greatness of her forgiveness (Doody 170).

As the novel draws to its close, the possibility of atonement through marriage is held out as a solution to the tragedy. Lovelace remarks with characteristic levity to Belford that "MARRIAGE*, with these women ... is an atonement for all we can do to them. A true dramatic*

recompense!" (Richardson 1039). This sentiment, though more respectfully expressed, informs his proposals to Clarissa. He implores her to "extend her goodness to a man whose heart bled in every vein of it for the injuries he had done her; and who would make it the study of his whole life to repair them" (Richardson 1101). Even those who heartily condemn Lovelace begin to advocate for the match. Anna urges Clarissa that she "must not hesitate" to enter into an "alliance [that] is splendid and honourable," optimistically avowing that "all must end in a little while in a genteel reconciliation" (Richardson 1043). Tellingly, Anna attempts to appeal to Clarissa's love of being an unrequited benefactor rather than to the justice of the reparations. She argues that Clarissa's condescending agreement to the marriage would both "oblige" the Lovelaces and allow her "to resume [her] course of doing ... good to every deserving object" (Richardson 1043). Clarissa remains unconvinced. She asserts that she "never could deserve to be ranked with the ladies of a family so splendid and so noble" because she has been "abas[ed] into a companionship with the most abandoned of her sex" (Richardson 1172). In other words, she would be receiving the undeserved kindness of Lady Betty and Miss Montague, not conferring obligation on them.

Clarissa's refusal to marry Lovelace— especially when justified by her abhorrence to the idea of being indebted to the benevolence and sympathy of his family— caused many of Richardson's readers to complain that Clarissa was "too uncompromising, too fervent" (Doody 178). Indeed, "when measured by standards of ordinary prudence and the reasonable ethics of the world, which apply, for example, to the creations of Fielding and Smollett, Clarissa scarcely seems respectable" (Doody 178). However, in order for Richardson to depict a "new version of the traditional Christian account of how the Old Testament law of the father God gives way—in a regenerative process of unexampled trial and suffering...—to a new covenant," Clarissa must

persist in this refusal (Erickson 174). Clarissa's grace in death and not his own acts will effect Lovelace's pardon. As such, Lovelace, who has insufferably assumed that atonement is within his personal power for much of the novel, must find that his "jest" is in fact a "jest to die for" in Clarissa's eyes (Richardson 1308).

According to Peggy Thompson, in "Abuse and Atonement: The Passion of Clarissa Harlowe," the theological shift "from God's power and demands to Christ's gift" necessitates that "personal saviours, like Clarissa and Christ ... achieve the emotional and psychological power necessary to move others to repentance only by suffering at the hands of those they would save" (Thompson 164, 167). Clarissa's suffering, Thompson concludes, is demanded by the theories of atonement at work within the logic of the novel to facilitate Lovelace's salvation, "reinforc[ing] an eighteenth-century social construct of woman as passive, defenseless moral martyr" in the process (153). Because Lovelace is only intermittently affected by Clarissa's suffering while she is alive, she must die to put an end to his continual backsliding and to bring about true repentance. Clarissa, aware of the "emotional and psychological power" that her death will create, thus stipulates:

> [if] he insist upon viewing *her dead* whom he ONCE before saw in a manner dead, let his gay curiosity be gratified. Let him behold and triumph over the wretched remains of one who has been made a victim to his barbarous perfidy; but let some good person, as by desire, give him a paper whilst he is viewing the ghastly spectacle, containing those few words only: 'Gay, cruel heart! behold here the remains of the once ruined, yet now happy, Clarissa Harlowe!—See what thou thyself must quickly be and REPENT!' (Richardson 1413)

Strikingly, Clarissa gives little thought to the possibility of redemption following Lovelace's horrified repentance in this fantasy. Instead, she appears to relish the idea of Lovelace's shock

and regret upon viewing her dead body.[25] The evident pleasure that Clarissa takes in contemplating her own sacrificial death and its punishing effects on Lovelace, which Edward Copeland calls "ecstatic and almost embarrassingly sensual," has troubling consequences on the soteriological potential of her forgiveness (347).

Clarissa —who repeatedly asserts to Lovelace "My soul is above thee" and confides to Anna "I pity him!—*Beneath* my very pity as he is, I nevertheless pity him!" —begins to perceive her forgiveness as a testament to her superior merit, much as the Harlowes had done (Richardson 734, 1116). Indeed, Clarissa exclaims, with some ecstasy, "shall not *charity* complete my triumph? And shall I not *enjoy* it?—And where would be my triumph if he *deserved* my forgiveness?" (Richardson 1254). Not only does Clarissa take pleasure in the generosity of her charity towards an undeserving object, just as she had throughout her life, she seeks to preserve the perfection of her forgiveness by preventing Lovelace from being absolved of his guilt. Clarissa is thus appalled at Lovelace's presumption in seeking to make amends, exclaiming: "That that wretch could treat me as he did, and then could so poorly creep to me to be forgiven,

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25. The evident pleasure that Clarissa takes in contemplating her own death has attracted much critical attention. In "Courting Death: Necrophilia in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa,*" Jolene Zigarovich argues that Clarissa "prepar[es] symbolic messages, letters and a beautiful corpse for the attraction of Lovelace" because they "both, in their manner, are necrophilics" (125, 114). Though few take this as literally as Zigarovich, critics frequently examine the conflation of sex and death within the novel. For instance, Cynthia Wolff notes that "desire is never dissociated from the insistent threat of violence and death" as "Clarissa invariably associates strong passion of any kind with death or the loss of identity" (143, 145). For Mark Kinkead-Weekes, on the other hand, Clarissa's "idea of sex is deeper and more human than [Lovelace's], in its insistence that sex should be growth, fertile, harvest, warmth, richness—and by these values his idea of sex as ego-endorsement can only be seen as poisonous, corrupt and diseased" (65). In other words, Lovelace might be necrophilic, but Clarissa's conception of sexuality is very much alive.

and to be allowed to endeavor to repair crimes so willful, so black, and so premeditated!" (Richardson 1320 emphasis added).

Clarissa's willingness to forgive Lovelace, while insisting that he not be permitted to atone for his crimes, informs her decision not to prosecute him during her lifetime and her wishes that he will not be called to account after her death. Clarissa's refusal to bring Lovelace to justice borders on a failure in her moral duty, Morden reasons, for "rakes and ravishers would meet with encouragement *indeed* ... if violated modestly were never to complain of the injury it received from the villainous attempters of it" (Richardson 1251). In other words, Clarissa must prosecute Lovelace, both to prevent other women from being victimized by him and because it constitutes her larger social responsibility. However Clarissa exempts herself from this responsibility by positing her incomparability to other women. She simply points out that Morden's arguments "would have been unanswerable in almost every *other* case of this nature but in that of the unhappy *Clarissa Harlowe*" (Richardson 1253). Clarissa, disconnected from the sympathy and identification of others necessary for moral society, is likewise beyond the reaches of that society's justice. Instead, Clarissa pleads with Morden to "Let [Lovelace] still be the guilty aggressor; and let no one say Clarissa Harlowe is now amply revenged in his fall" (Richardson 1445).

By denying him the power to atone, Clarissa imagines that Lovelace will remain "the guilty aggressor" eternally. His unexpiated crimes simultaneously attest to the benevolence of her forgiveness and make Lovelace eternally worthy of punishment. Unredeemed offenses, Clarissa writes, are "beyond the *power*, as I may say, of the Divine mercy to forgive, since *justice*, no less than *mercy* is an attribute of the Almighty" (Richardson 1427). Because Clarissa

attempts to keep Lovelace from "justice," she seems to ensure that he will be subjected to the terrible fate that is the "portion of the wicked man" (Richardson 1427). She writes,

> Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. The first-born of death shall devour his strength ... His meat is the gall of asps within him. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. A fire not blown shall consume him. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. The worm shall feed sweetly on him. He shall be no more remembered. (Richardson 1427)

In painting this picture, Clarissa lingers on the idea of the vilest degradations and the most unrelenting torments being inflicted on Lovelace. His body will be desecrated, his memory will be abandoned, and his soul will be tormented by heavenly vengeance. The triumph of her charity, which Clarissa intends to enjoy fully, thus includes Lovelace's damnation, which she appears to appreciate wholeheartedly. As such, Lovelace's observations that Clarissa's grace only serves "to make *herself* more admired, [*himself*] more detested" and that "this merciless lady is resolved to damn [him]" do not appear to be quite as bitter and groundless as Richardson might have intended (1169, 910). On the contrary, I would argue that Clarissa's forgiveness of Lovelace, which Stewart claims is "proof of her extraordinary Christianity," actually moves the novel quite far from the "great lessons of Christianity" that Richardson hoped to inculcate and into the realm of secular morality, in which self-interested pleasure can be found in the misery of others (60).

Had Morden respected Clarissa's wishes, Lovelace would have been deprived of the final possibility of atonement, amplifying the glory of her charity through the depravity of his faults. But Morden does not respect Clarissa's wishes. Instead, he calls Lovelace to task in a fatal duel, thereby giving him the chance to redeem himself in the precise terms that Clarissa wished to prevent. Lovelace, who "provoked [his] destiny" and "f[e]ll by a man of honor," exclaims that

Morden has "well revenged the dear creature" through his death (Richardson 1487). With the words "LET THIS EXPIATE" upon his lips, Lovelace is able to die with "ultimate composure" rather than being seized with spiritual terrors as Clarissa envisioned (Richardson 1487). For Zionkowski, Lovelace's last words signify his "overwhelming if deluded desire for the attainment of reciprocity" (493). This desire is "deluded," she claims, because Lovelace can "never be even with Clarissa;" "the repentance that must follow her gift of forgiveness is denied to him by Morden's superior swordplay" (Zionkowski 493). Yet, I would disagree. The duel does not appear to deprive Lovelace of the chance to repent of his crimes, but provides him with the opportunity to atone for them. Indeed, after offering Clarissa the only amends left in his power, his own life, Lovelace "spoke inwardly so as not to be understood," as if to Clarissa herself, and "pronounced the word *Blessed,*" as if taking comfort in the idea that they will be "better able to comprehend one another" at last (Richardson 1488, 1487, 450).

The satisfaction that Lovelace's death provides for readers seems quite different than the satisfaction provided by the abjection of the Harlowes. By repaying his debts to Clarissa, Lovelace finds a way to bridge the distance created by her moral perfection, which was perceived by many as painfully alienating or condemnatory throughout the text. Because Clarissa's divine goodness "overshades" the value of others and disconnects her from the pleasures of mutual approbation, Richardson's "religious novel," exposes the limitations of a self-regarding, even hedonistic, morality (Stewart 59). Richardson, "a writer whose sensibility outruns his conscious art," may have outrun himself as he attempted to negotiate between conflicting moral systems (Price 38).[26] Though this might make us question how successfully

26. In "The Divided Heart," Martin Price contends that critics are too quick to read *Clarissa*'s complexity as the result of fully conscious efforts on Richardson's part. Instead of forcing uneasy interpretations onto sometimes self-contradictory evidence, Prince suggests that

Richardson can "inculcate ... the great lessons of Christianity" when employing the secular morality of "an age like the present," it does bring the conundrums of that age into intriguing focus (Richardson 1495).

Though there was resistance to Hobbes's arguments that the mechanism of the human body is dictated by its responses to pleasure or pain—as seen in the disavowal of pain in *Oroonoko*—moral sense philosophers of the eighteenth century attempted to recuperate Hobbes's hedonistic formulation of human motivation by endowing affect and sensation with moral authority and social value when sympathetically communicated from individual to individual. As such, the pain of others was not callously irrelevant; it was a shared human experience. However, unable to escape the influence of Hobbesian rationalism and self-interest, it became implausible to imagine the purpose of this sensitivity to pain without some kind of compensatory pleasure. *Clarissa,* the urtext of sentimentality, dramatizes with nearly every page the complications that a self-interested sympathy could produce as it moves into sadistic realms of unproductive pain and cruelty, ironically putting much of the ability to wound into Clarissa's virtuous hands.

Richardson's might have lost control of the consistency of his message in developing his characters so elaborately. Price thus shares Leslie Fielder's perspective that, "Richardson knows what [his characters] really fee[l] 'though he does not quite know he knows it.' The result of this 'happy state of quasi-insight' is that Richardson 'never falsifies the hidden motivations of his protagonists'" (36-7).

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CHAPTER III

THE TRAUMA OF SYMPATHY AND THE SUBLIME IN *THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER*

In his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811-1833), Goethe describes the harrowing conditions that led to the inception of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774). Goethe, consumed at the time by a hopeless love for Charlotte Buff,[1] recollects that writing *Werther* was necessary for him to overcome his suicidal depression:

> Among a considerable collection of weapons, I possessed a handsome well-polished dagger. This I laid every night by my bed; and before I extinguished the candle, I tried whether I could succeed in plunging the sharp point a couple of inches deep into my heart. Since I never could succeed in this, I at last laughed myself out of the notion, threw off all hypochondrial fancies, and resolved to live. But, to be able to do this with cheerfulness, I was obliged to solve a poetical problem, by which all that I had felt, thought, and fancied upon this important point should be reduced to words. For this purpose I collected the elements which had been at work in me for a few years, I rendered present to my mind the cases which had most afflicted and tormented me, but nothing would come to a definite form: I lacked an event, a fable, in which they could be overlooked. All at once I heard the news of Jerusalem's death, and, immediately after the general report, the most accurate and circumstantial description of the occurrence; and at this moment, the plan of 'Werther' was formed, and the whole shot together from all sides and became a solid mass, just as water in a vessel, which stands upon the point of freezing is converted into hard ice by the most gentle shake. (DW Vol. II, 214)

As Goethe tells it, the tormenting "elements which had been at work in [him] for a few years," were already nearing their freezing point, needing only the chilling details of Karl Wilhelm

1. Charlotte Buff, to Goethe's dismay, was engaged to and eventually married Johann Christian Kestner. The Kestners, who would be fictionalized as Lotte and Albert, found the parallels between their real-life love triangle and that depicted in *Werther* to be so striking that they were "deeply concerned that readers of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* would know or discover, that [they] had something to do with principle characters in the novel and that ... readers would get the wrong impression about the status of their marriage" (Saine 335).

Jerusalem's suicide to crystalize into *The Sorrows of Young Werther.*[2] In the (alleged) four-week writing frenzy which followed, Goethe sublimated an admixture of fact and fiction, personal experience and public tragedy, "leav[ing] no distinction between the poetical and the actual" as he "reduced" the spirit of the age "to words" (DW Vol. II, 216-7, 214). And as Jerusalem's world ended in the "ice" of Goethe's inspiration, Werther's would end by firing the imagination of a disaffected generation: "For as it requires but a little match to blow up an immense mine, so the explosion which followed [*Werther*'s] publication was mighty" because it "suddenly brought to an eruption" all of the "extravagant demands, unsatisfied passions, and imaginary wrongs" of "the youthful world" (DW Vol. II, 219).

On the one hand, Goethe claims that the novel perfectly captured the stormy temperament of a generation "tortured by unsatisfied passions" and uninspired by the "dull, spiritless citizen life" they faced (DW Vol. II, 212). *Werther* seems to have resonated so forcefully with its youthful readers, then, because it describes an individual's experience of the "pressures asserted by [the] social realities" of "a new bourgeois elite" (von Petersdorff 205, 203). The emergence of the middle class, and the "highly differentiated economy based on competition and money, instead of community and tradition," left Goethe's contemporaries with "the feeling of estrangement that comes from losing one's place in a self-sustaining community" (Hill 22, 21).

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2. The details of Jerusalem's suicide, which was motivated by his hopeless love for Elisabeth Herd, found their way nearly verbatim into Werther's story. Kestner, whose pistols Jerusalem borrowed, recounts: "After these preparations, around toward 1 o'clock, he shot himself in the forehead above his right eye. The bullet could not be found anywhere ... It appears to have been done as he was sitting in his armchair in front of his desk. The back of the seat of the chair was bloody, as well as the armrests. There was still a lot of blood on the floor" (103). See Edward Batley's "Werther's Final Act of Alienation: Goethe, Lessing, and Jerusalem on the Poetry and Truth of Suicide," for a reading of the similarities between the actual and fictional deaths, as well as for an interpretation of how German intellectuals— particularly Lessing, whose *Emilia Galotti* was open on the actual desk of Jerusalem and the fictional desk of Werther— reacted to the arguments Jerusalem and Goethe each presented regarding suicide.

This feeling of estrangement, David Hill suggests, was amplified by Germany's unique social structure during the eighteenth century. Germany, which "existed only as a cultural entity defined by a shared language, and not as a political unit," was characterized by the "prevailing ethos" of "autonomy" for its "constituent territories" (Swales *Goethe* 4, 1). The German "idea of the nation" reflected on a macro level "the idea of the self, a fragmented being for whose fulfillment" individuals "longed" (Hill 22, 21). Literature of the Sturm und Drang, whose "paradigmatic statement is Goethe's *Werther,*" depicts the "search for self-realization, or true selfhood" necessary to compensate for this sense of loss and longing (Hill 34, 22). It appears, then, that Goethe was wildly successful in solving his "poetical problem." *Werther* not only lays its finger precisely upon the conditions that caused more than one unhappy young man to seek comfort from the "sharp point" of "a handsome well-polished dagger," it also helps to formulate the aesthetic terms through which to express the sorrows of a particular epoch (DW Vol. II, 214).

On the other hand, though, Goethe claims that his melancholic contemporaries entirely missed the point of the novel. "It was only the subject, the material part, that was considered," he reflects, almost petulantly; "it cannot be expected of the public that it should receive an intellectual work intellectually" (DW Vol. II, 219).[3] Goethe's frustration with the text and its admirers, who thought "that poetry ought to be turned into reality, that such a moral was to be imitated, and that, at any rate one ought to shoot one's self," would continue for the remainder of

3. In *Fictions of the Self: 1550-1800,* Arnold Weinstein cautions against "using Goethe's hindsight [in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*] as a corrective lens" when "assess[ing] the power of Goethe's novel" (147). Despite Goethe's removed, and some might say more mature, perspective, "one fact does remain: Goethe wrote *Werther*; and, to some extent, whatever he said *about* the text, whatever his intentions may have been, all this comes afterwards and, as it were, at the periphery" (149). Though I do use Goethe's later reflections here to provide perspective on the novel, I am mindful that its power and influence are independent of that perspective.

his life (DW Vol. II, 218).[4] It was thus "the enthusiastic readers who confused the imaginary with the real and naively identified themselves with Werther," that Goethe found most trying, even more so, Bruce Duncan explains, than the "moral watchdogs who attacked the book" (20).[5]

The public's whole-hearted belief that they could identify with Werther may have rankled Goethe so intolerably because the difficulty and limitations of identifying with others are such significant components of Werther's sorrows. This can be seen, for instance in Werther's memorable description of his diplomatic service to the ambassador. Werther remarks: "I stand as if in front of a peep show and see the manikins and tiny horses jerk around in front of me, and I often ask myself whether it is not an optical illusion. I play along, or rather, I am played like a marionette, and sometimes I take my neighbor's wooden hand and shrink back with a shudder" (Goethe 50). The readers who assume that their "dull, spiritless citizen lives" are animated by the same invisible wires that move Werther, and who celebrate his suicide as a triumphant severing of those wires, have focused on "the material" of the novel without considering a larger problem condensed within it (DW Vol. II, 212, 219). As alienated as Werther is from his own compulsory

4. Tobin Siebers points out, "After the publication of *Werther*, Goethe was forced to travel incognito, and a number of pale young men donned the yellow waistcoat and [allegedly] fired a bullet into their brain" (19). Michael Gratzke questions the factuality of the apocryphal stories of copycat suicides that Siebers takes for granted in "Werther's Love. Representations of Suicide, Heroism, Masochism, and Voluntary Self-Divestiture." However, the copycat fashions and Goethe's unwelcome fame are substantiated by his own account in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and historical reports. For example, "in the early summer of 1775 the brothers Christian (1748-1821) and Friedrich Leopold (1750-1819) Stolberg, noblemen and authors in the sentimental tradition, and a friend persuaded Goethe to join them on a trip that they took to Switzerland, all four had suits made consisting of the blue coat and yellow waistcoat and trousers that Werther was famous for wearing in Goethe's novel and that had become almost a badge of the new sensibility" (Hill 13). Regardless of his subsequent literary accomplishments, Stuart Atkins points out, Goethe "never was allowed to forget that his world reputation had begun with the fame of *Werther*, and the novel of his youth was a main topic of many conversation or interview with him in after years, as when he met with Napoleon at Erfurt in 1808" (2).

5. For an encyclopedic overview of both the German and English "moral watchdogs," see Duncan's *Goethe's Werther and the Critics,* "First Responses," pp. 7-28.

social performance, he is further still separated from the marionettes that perform along side him. These uncanny others, who lurch about with simulated vivacity, appear to be radically unknowable to Werther. His feelings are as little translatable to theirs as his flesh hands are to their wooden ones, making him sigh, "I'll gladly let others go their own way, if only they let me go mine" (Goethe 48).

However, Goethe's dissatisfaction with the enthusiastic identification of the reading public who would not let Werther go his own way, might be laying the burden of misunderstanding on their shoulders in bad faith. According to Tobin Siebers, Goethe's "overly" literal readers were fully justified not only in identifying with the subject of Werther's story, but also in connecting it to Goethe's personal history. In the first case, they were fulfilling "the defining feature of the reading experience [which] consists of trying to identify with what other human beings think or feel"—nor should Goethe, or modern critics for that matter, chastise them for it (Siebers 19). In the second, they were demonstrating the natural "temptation ... when reading an esthetic work to return to an original scene, if one can be found," a temptation that was rather encouraged than otherwise in Goethe's bald use of "original scenes" from his own life, not to mention his use of scenes from the lives of Jerusalem, Charlotte Buff, and Kestner (Siebers 19). I would add to Siebers' points that the reading public's tendency to use Werther's sorrows as a way to express their own is a way of relating to texts that is repeatedly demonstrated in the novel.

Indeed, it is upon hearing that Lotte engages in such self-validating reading practices that Werther is first "beside [him]self" with love for her (Goethe 17). He recounts to Wilhelm:

> My partner's cousin asked whether [Lotte] had finished the book she had recently sent her. – No, Lotte said, I don't care for it; you can have it back. And the one before was no better ... since I have so little time to read, it has to be something *completely to my taste.* And I do love best of all that author *in whom I rediscover*

> *my own world*, in whose books things happen the way they do *all around me*; and whose story is as interesting and heartfelt as *my own domestic life,* which is no paradise and yet all in all is a source of inexpressible happiness. (Goethe 16-7 emphases added)

For Lotte to find pleasure in books they should be "completely to her taste" (Goethe 17). To be so, they must present her with a mirror image of her world, her experiences, and herself. Books that do not correspond to her idea of herself will not generate any palpitations of the heart and are not worth the trouble of exploring. In addition to admiring this trait in Lotte, Werther likewise matches reading material to his progressively darker moods, replacing the classical Homer with the melancholic Ossian.[6] Because the passions depicted by Ossian affirm the justness of Werther's pre-existing passions, it "successfully serve[s] his self-representation" and allows him to celebrate himself through its pages (Siebers 29). The readers who were inflamed by *Werther* used the novel in an identical way: it was a powder keg to ignite their extant ennui.

The disaffected readers who idolized Werther's character because it reinforced the justness of their own "morbid youthful delusion[s]" do no more than follow the logic presented in the text (DW Vol. II, 212). Though Werther finds this tendency adorable when informing the way a captivating young lady selects reading material, it is as insufferable to him in matters of "real life" as it is to Goethe. As such, self-validating reading practices, both in Werther's world and in Goethe's, might serve as a useful "fable" through which we can reconsider an important component of the "poetical problem" expressed in the novel (DW Vol. II, 214). That is, the use of texts to reaffirm one's pre-existing passions rather than to inspire new ones is emblematic of

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6. Critics have been sensitive to the shifting emotional state that the change in reading material implies. Goethe himself draws attention to this shift, which marks a movement from sanity to distraction, reminding his readers that Werther takes up Ossian only when he becomes more unstable. For a somewhat unique perspective, see Joyce Walker's "Sex, Suicide, and the Sublime: A Reading of Goethe's *Werther*." Walker argues that Goethe's association of Ossian with madness allows him to critique the destructive power of sublimity—especially as it is pertains to ideals of femininity.

the limitations of the self-regarding sympathy that forms the basis of the moral sense. Goethe, who explores these limitations, depicts the failure of the moral sense to facilitate "transsubjective" connections between isolated individuals—a failure that ultimately drives Werther to despair (Pinch 19).[7]

Werther's self-centered readers display some of Werther's infamous solipsism, exemplified already both in his disconnection from others in the "optical illusion" of social life and in his self-validating reading program (Goethe 50). Werther's overpowering sense of self, which negates the possibility of any "real dialogue" in the text and causes it to read like "one extended soliloquy," is widely considered to be the novel's primary point of critical interest (Blackall 43). For some scholars, like Clark S. Muenzer and Arnold Weinstein, this solipsism should be viewed as a positive, authentic aspect of Werther's character. In Muenzer's assessment, Werther's "radical turn inward" is not indicative of a "pathological detachment," but of his need to ground his subjectivity elsewhere than in "derivative sensation" (*Figures of Identity* 10, 8).[8] Muenzer rather quixotically claims that Werther's "death suggests a turning from the world, a last serene gesture that configures him in a relationship to a superior law of personal autonomy" (*Figures of Identity* 34). Likewise, Weinstein positions himself against critics who "see in [Werther] the prototype of the egoist, the narcissist totally absorbed in his own world" (158). Instead, he credits Werther with "true generosity, empathy, and love [that]

7. In *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen,* Adela Pinch describes Hume's formulation of feelings in *Treatise of Human Nature* as "transsubjective" because they could pass from subject to subject, impressing on each individual the authentic affective experience "caught" from others. The physical transmission of feeling from person to person thus made possible communal and unifying passions.

8. The radical turn inward indicates the modernity of Werther's sense of self, as will be discussed in more detail below.

can only come about when I becomes, or tries to become, the other" (162). Therefore, according to Weinstein, Werther's expansive sense of self is not egotism; it is a "struggle ... against human finitude" and "there is something splendid" in it (159, 160).

For others, like Martin Swales, there is nothing splendid in "the dreadful solipsism of the Werther mentality" (*Cambridge Companion* 133). It not only "blights his relationship to everything outside himself," but it is ultimately self-defeating (Swales *Cambridge Companion* 133). Werther's "increasing isolation" causes him "paradoxically but necessarily, [to lose] hold even on the one entity it cherishes above all else: the self" through suicide (Swales *Goethe* 29). For Eric Blackall, "the self-centeredness of the protagonist" causes him to create an "artificial order based not on any relationship of the individual to what lies outside himself, but on a total absorption in his own thoughts" (23). Werther's absorption into the self continues, Blackall observes, until there is "hardly any objective existence at all" (22). Siebers agrees that "other people provide merely the occasion for [Werther] to adore his own image" and "to demonstrate his uniqueness and awesome power" (25). Unlike Swales, though, Siebers contends that Werther's egotistically motivated suicide does not cause him to lose the self, but to "monumentalize" it by "muster[ing] all attention to the individual" (31).

Whether Werther's expansive self-consciousness is celebrated or condemned, it has become a cornerstone of critical discussions of the text. In joining these discussions, I will argue that the tendency towards solipsism is not unique to Werther, nor is it endorsed by him. Rather, it seems to be a necessary condition of his modern subjective experience that is as undesirable as it is alienating. Just like self-validating reading practices, the solipsistic individualism with which Werther is charged can be understood as a consequence of the sympathetic process when it is limited to reaffirming the propriety of one's own feelings. As shall be seen, our sorrowing hero is

profoundly discontented with what he perceives to be the impossibility of inspiring *new* feelings in others and of being inspired by them in turn. Far from celebrating the radical autonomy that this implies, Werther continually seeks to dissolve the boundaries of subjective experience that sympathy had failed to breach. In turning toward the sublime, both in nature and in Lotte, Werther momentarily glimpses the possibility of transcending the limitations of the self. However, because these moments only allow Werther to suspend his subjectivity, not to overcome it, he continually and traumatically reawakens into an autonomous sense of self and yearns for new ways of envisioning the relationship between individuals.

This argument complicates the standard view of Werther as a prototypical "man of feeling," for whom "feelings not only enrich life but are the basis of a legitimate and profound form of knowledge ... necessary to any understanding of aesthetics or ethics" (Duncan 63). Such a view, for example, informs Inger Sigrun Brodey's "Masculinity, Sensibility, and the 'Man of Feeling': The Gendered Ethics of Goethe's 'Werther.'" For Brodey, Werther's sensibility is everywhere apparent in the novel, seen in his distaste for the coldly logical Albert, the parameters of storytelling, and even grammar (126). Moreover, she argues that Goethe himself is "a man of feeling, heavily influenced by the cult of sensibility" (Brodey 126). The impact of the British culture of sensibility is certainly apparent in both *Werther* and *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Despite Goethe's more mature perspective on his youthful enthusiasm for texts like "Young's *Night Thoughts, ...* Gray's Churchyard, Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* and the soliloquies of Hamlet," he still peppers *Dichtung und Wahrheit* with admiration for melancholic English works, exclaiming: "how well has the Englishman succeeded in every sense of the word!" (Blackall 42; DW Vol. II, 171). In part, Goethe describes this admiration as arising from the perfect compatibility of somber English poetry with the German temperament. For, it is

characteristic of the German to be "serious," Goethe remarks "and thus English poetry was extremely suitable to him" (DW Vol. II, 209). This suitableness would indicate the sentimentality of the "serious" German to Charles Taylor, who argues that "it is only in an age which valued sentiment that melancholy could be cherished (*Sources* 296).[9]

Furthermore, the influence of "German Anglophilia," which Matthew Bell claims, "reached its peak in the 1770s, along with the cults of Shakespeare and Ossian, the idea of 'original genius', and other psychological notions that were transmitted in new translations of English and Scottish writings" also helped *to form* the somber German sensibility that Goethe describes above (61). He writes:

> Such gloomy contemplations, which lead him who has resigned himself to them into the infinite, could not have developed themselves so decidedly in the minds of the German youths had not an outward occasion excited and furthered them in this dismal business. This was caused by English literature, especially the poetical part, the great beauties of which are accompanied by an earnest melancholy, which it communicates to everyone who occupies himself with it. (DW Vol. II, 208)

Just as sentimental English poetry was precisely to Goethe's taste, so too was *The Sorrows of Young Werther* eminently readable to British audiences when the text was first translated into English in 1779.[10] Following the novel's meteoric rise in Germany, *Werther* exploded onto the

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9. Interestingly, Taylor also singles out "Young's poem 'Night Thoughts' and Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'" as doing the "most to shape the [melancholy] mood ... propagated by English writers, who were translated and had a great impact on the Continent" (*Sources* 295).

10. The first English translation, attributed to Daniel Malthus, is regrettably from one of "three French versions of the novel [which] had been published," before the novel was introduced to English readers (Long 171). This translation, Orie Long notes, "injured Goethe's novel as a work of art" both in its excisions and in its "unusual lack of force of the original" language (175). Nonetheless, Malthus's translation "did much to make *Werther* and Goethe known in England. It passed through several editions and was reprinted oftener than any of the other English versions of *Werther*, a testimony, perhaps, to the popularity of the story rather than to the merits of the translation" (Long 177).

British literary marketplace, becoming "nothing less than a 'catechism of sensibility,' a handbook for the sensitive heart" (Conger 21).[11] Indeed, "only in England did it ... achieve popularity as rapidly and to almost the same degree as in Germany" (Atkins 11). Goethe's *Werther*, "steeped in an English tradition," was instantly recognizable as a kindred spirit to British "men of feeling" (Atkins 11).[12]

The mutual influence of the British culture of sensibility on Goethe and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* on sensible English readers may make it seem counterintuitive to claim that *Werther* details the failure of sympathy and the moral sense.[13] However, as my argument will

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11. Fritz Gutbrodt's "The Worth of Werther: Goethe's Literary Marketing" offers a detailed account of "the novel's astonishing sales figures" as well as the public demand that prompted "the pirated editions, the translations from the imitations, continuations, parodies, tracts, plays, and other *Wertheriana*" that have become a nearly inseparable part of the novel's "textual field" (623). Stuart Atkins' *The Testament of Werther in Poetry and Drama* considers such pieces of "Wertheriana" in German, French, Dutch, Italian, and English. Despite the novel's international resonance, though, "more Werther poems were written in English than in any other language, including German" (Atkins 17).

12. See Sydney McMillen Conger's "The Sorrows of Young Charlotte: Werther's English Sisters, 1785- 1805" for an account of Werther's influence on British "*women* of feeling" as well. According to Conger, "no other single German book of the age ever again inspired so many feminine voices. Well over a dozen women poets, songwriters, and novelists pondered the fates of Charlotte and Werther in print: in addition to Austen, Anne Bannerman, Lady Sophia Burrell, Mrs. Sarah Farrell, Anne Francis, Anne Harrison, Barbara Hoole, Mrs. Horrel, Mrs. Hughes, Maria Montolieu, Amelia Pickering, Mary Robinson, Olivia Serres, Anna Seward, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Tomlins, and Lady Eglantine Wallace" (21).

13. My argument thus shares common ground with Carol Wellbury's "From Mirrors to Images: The Transformation of Sentimental Paradigms in Goethe's 'The Sorrows of Young Werther.'" Wellbury argues that *Werther* refuses to "conform to the traditional harmonizing model of sentimentalism and its conciliatory values" (231). Instead, Wellbury contends, the novel displays a "transformation of the sentimental code," which occurs in three ways: "What was an objective order embodying social and cultural norms—'nature'—becomes in *Werther* an uncommunicable presence that can be experienced only outside social, and even discursive contexts. Concomitantly, space is divided up into affectively significant sites while duration dissolves into repetition, isolating selected emotion-filled moments. And finally, the familial coding of relationships internalized by the protagonist and orienting his desire shifts from a patriarchal to a maternally centered organization" (234, 243).

attempt to make clear, Goethe's depiction of Werther's progressive isolation follows out the paradoxes and difficulties of the epistemology of feeling to the bitter end, making Werther an exemplary, though tragic, "man of feeling." In reconsidering the failures of sympathy to facilitate inter-subjective connections in one of sentimentality's most pivotal texts, I hope to approach the problem of Werther's solipsism from a unique perspective and to contribute to conversations regarding the Sturm und Drang aesthetic, which Bruce Duncan argues "fall[s] within the bounds of the established eighteenth-century discourse" of the moral sense (63). On one hand, *Werther* certainly posits that "some extraordinary faculty like imagination, intuition, or the moral sense" is urgently needed to "leap the gulf" between individuals "trapped in ... solitary experiential worlds" (Eagleton 156-7). On the other, it repeatedly shows that even the most sympathetic imagination is incapable of bridging the unbridgeable boundaries of a newly modernized understanding of subjectivity.

Werther exhibits a deep distrust of sympathy's ability to let individuals communicate anything like their emotional experiences to each other, much less to transcend the "solitary experiential worlds" of their bodies (Eagleton 157). For example, as Werther jocularly points a pistol to his forehead while debating the ethics of suicide with a reasonably annoyed Albert, he argues:

> Look at a man within his limitations, the way impressions affect him, ideas become entrenched in him, until finally a growing passion robs him of all his powers of calm reflection and destroys him. It is futile for a composed, rational man to appraise the condition of the unhappy person, futile to cheer him up! Just as a healthy man who stands at the bed of a sick person cannot impart to him the least part of his powers. (Goethe 36-7)

According to Werther, man's inescapable isolation within himself makes it as futile for others to try to assist someone suffering from "a growing passion" as it would be for them to attempt to

pour their physical strength into a dying man. Further still, this isolation makes it futile even to become "*appraised*" of the "way impressions affect him" and "ideas become entrenched in him." The imagination and the moral sense are absolutely incapable of overcoming the trap of self, making it impossible to judge when others have exceeded their capacity for suffering or when they are justified in "cast[ing] off what is normally the pleasant burden of life" (Goethe 36).

To illustrate this point further, Werther paints another picture of suffering and invites Albert to consider both the imagined sufferer's inability to receive relief and the futility of his efforts to offer comfort to her. In the second scenario, Werther describes a girl who is thwarted by her lover and left with "no prospect, no consolation, no intimation of the future" (Goethe 37). Clearly, he reasons, the girl "must die" because she has been "blindly cornered by the terrible need of her heart" and "finds no way out of the maze of these tangled and conflicting forces" (Goethe 37). The maze of emotional pain that the girl experiences likewise confounds those who would assist her. The "many men who could make up her loss" are distanced from her heartache as surely as they would be from a physical ailment (Goethe 37). Because her suffering is as unavoidable and as incomprehensible as a fatal disease, he reasons, it is pointless and ignorant to fault the suicidal girl, much as it would be to fault a dying man because his body has failed him.

Despite the eloquence of the story, Albert remains utterly unconvinced. This fact, though frustrating to Werther, nonetheless is more to the point than his conviction could possibly have been. Albert's indifference to the suffering of the girl stems from the fact that his feelings are not reaffirmed by hers. Just as Lotte refuses to waste her time in reading books unsuited to her own life and situation, Albert seems to be unwilling and unable to project himself into the tale of "an ignorant girl" because it is incompatible with his experience as "an intelligent man" (Goethe 38).

In other words, Albert cannot approve of the propriety of the girl's despair, making it impossible for him to offer her the comfort of approbation and sympathy. We will recall that in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) approbation is absolutely necessary to engender "fellow-feeling" between individuals.[14] Smith explains:

> When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and on the contrary, when upon bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper and unsuitable to the causes which excite them. *To approve of the passions of another therefore as suitable to their objects, is the same thing as to observe that we entirely sympathize with them* ... The man whose sympathy keeps time to my grief, cannot but admit the reasonableness of my sorrow ... On the contrary, the person who, upon these different occasions, either feels no such emotion as that which I feel, or feels none that bears any proportion to mine, cannot avoid disapproving my sentiments on account of their dissonance with his own ... according as there is more or less disproportion between his sentiments and mine, I must incur a greater or lesser degree of his disapprobation: and *upon all occasions his own sentiments are the standards and measures by which he judges mine*. (20-1 emphases added)

In Smith's formulation, sympathy does not arise spontaneously upon the sight of another's passions, as it had for Hume. It is a strictly imaginative endeavor, dependent on several rational processes: a preliminary assessment of the situation of the other, an identification with that other, and most importantly, the conviction that one's own imaginary response to the situation would be compatible with the response that the other exhibits. Even as Albert assesses the scenario that Werther describes, he does not identify with the girl and most certainly does not "keep time with [her] grief" (Smith 20). Sensing the futility of provoking Albert's sympathy, then, Werther cuts

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14. In "Weimar Classicism's Debt to the Scottish Enlightenment" R. H. Stephenson describes the "pervasive influence in eighteenth-century Germany" of Scottish philosophers including Hutcheson, Kames, and Smith (62). Because Stephenson calls it "nearly inconceivable" that Goethe was not "well-versed in their cardinal doctrines," I presuppose Goethe's familiarity with Smith's idea of "propriety" in my reading of sympathy in *Werther* (65).

off mid sentence, bemoaning to himself: "Oh, my heart was so full— and we parted without having understood one another. As in this world no one readily understands the other" (Goethe 38). The limitations of self-regarding sympathy, which are illustrated again and again throughout the novel, cause Werther to perceive himself as trapped within his radically autonomous and modern self, beyond the reaches of even "extraordinary facult[ies] like imagination, intuition, or the moral sense" (Eagleton 156).

Goethe's depiction of the dilemma of Werther's subjective experience is indicative of what Hill describes as the most significant and influential aspect of the Sturm und Drang: "the radicalism, the complexity, and the incisiveness of their analysis of the human spirit on the threshold of modernity" (5). As can be seen in the example of the heart-sick girl, Werther's way of conceptualizing the self bears one of the hallmarks of modernity: it rests on a sense of "localization whereby we place 'within' the subject what was previously seen as existing between knower/agent and world" and in "the fixing of a clear boundary between the psychical and the physical" (Taylor *Sources* 188). The girl's suffering exists "within" her as certainly as a disease would exist within the body. Though her suffering is internalized, however, it is not located in her physical body per se, but only in a psychical inner space somehow analogous to it. In this analogy, and in Werther's consistent descriptions of the body "not [as] a body but [as] a shell to be discarded," the text shows the influence of "the unbridgeable gap between body and soul [that] haunted German psychology throughout the [eighteenth] century": Cartesian dualism (Siebers 27; Duncan 52). Descartes' dissociation of "an individual's reason" from "the material world" sparked a "radical redefinition of the soul's relationship to the body, an undertaking that has fundamental consequences for the whole human condition," to which Duncan claims, writers of the Sturm und Drang were particularly sensitive (52, 49). Goethe's portrayal of an individual

struggling with some of the "fundamental consequences" of the inward focus of the subject and his disconnection from the material world in *Werther* makes the novel "a reflection of a distinctive feature of modern consciousness" (Hill 34).

Werther, "who does not possess an unproblematically given order of being," who has a "desire for meaning beyond empirical knowledge," and who searches for "an absolute and universally valid meaning," is very much "the unhappy bloom" of "the modern [epoch]" (von Petersdorff 211; DW Vol. II, 165).[15] That is to say, "*Werther* bears witness to the glory and the anguish that are part of a particular stage in the emergence of modern, *secular* individualism" (Swales 66 emphasis added).[16] In a secularized worldview, Taylor argues, subjects dissociate from and objectify the material world; they come to view it as "'disenchanted', as mere mechanism, as devoid of any spiritual essence or expressive dimension" (Taylor *Sources* 146). The disenchantment of the material world, which causes objects to lose their inherent meaning and power, also allows society, nature, and daily life to be conceivable without reference to God. The "porous" pre-modern subject, for whom "meaning ... [is not] placed simply within" nor "located exclusively without", is thus transformed into the "buffered" modern subject, who "no longer fears demons, spirits, magic forces" (Taylor *Secular Age* 35, 135). Put another way, "if thoughts and meanings are only in minds, there can be no 'charged' objects," like purposeful

15. See von Petersdorff's "'I shall not come to my senses!' *Werther*, Goethe, and the Formulation of Modern Subjectivity" for a reading of the way in which Werther constructs a series of "narratives," nature, love, and society, to stabilize his sense of self and the ultimate failure of each.

16. According to Herbert Schöffler, the influence of secularization is apparent in Werther's growing obsession with Ossian. Swales calls Ossian "a key work in the history of secular culture" because "the lamenting voice of man is constantly answered by an echo: there are no gods in Ossian, there is only the longing for them" (66).

rocks or malignant talismans, that can "get to" subjects (*Secular Age* 35). The modern secular subject thus is invulnerable to things beyond the boundary of the self, "buffered" from them.

Werther's infamously autonomous sense of self, enacts the condition of the modern secular subject, buffered not just from the objects that surround him, but also, tragically, from other subjects as well. The novel thus depicts "the experience of the modern condition which is fundamentally the experience of lack" (Gratzke 28).[17] Werther's buffered subjectivity causes him to lack a connection between mind and body, between self and nature, and also, because of the limits of the sympathy, between himself and others. His increasing desperation to breach the boundaries of the self— poignantly apparent in his turns toward the sublime—indicates the burden of buffered subjectivity and a yearning for pre-modern porosity that cannot be recreated with the insufficient tools of sympathetic identification or imagination. No matter how much Goethe might have complained that the general reading public missed the forest for the blood smeared trees, their enthusiasm for the story indicates that the tragedy of the emerging modern subject resonated with their own experience—an experience also marked by "disenchantment."

Despite the longing for wholeness and mutuality everywhere apparent in the text, Werther does not find the connections that he seeks through sympathy or the moral sense. Indeed, the text appears to dramatize Goethe's dissatisfaction with sympathy's inability to provide authentic connections between individuals. Examining how Goethe articulates this

17. Gratzke is here using the Lacanian concept of *meconnaissance* to explore Werther's relationship to Lotte. Though "in Lacan's view all lovers ultimately fail" and all "human relationality is marred by a fundamental lack of seeing and being seen, of understanding the beloved other, and of being understood by them," Gratzke argues that Werther attempts to overcome this lack by constructing the relational family structures that he desires both in life and in the afterlife (31). Because *meconnaissance* drives from a specifically modern subjective experience, it is interesting to consider the emergence of the eighteenth-century idea of sympathy as a possible way of overcoming it.

dissatisfaction might also shed intriguing light on the development of his thought, particularly in his collaboration with Schiller to create new aesthetic solutions to the problems of dualism and disconnection later in life. This collaboration, Weimar Classicism, supposes that "aesthetic knowledge of objects arises in a coordination of sense and mind, rather than in the initial subordination postulated by Rationalists and Empiricists alike" (Stephenson 66).[18] In *Werther,* the rationalization of sensory experience leads to a failure in one's ability to sympathize—to connect—with others because it limits sympathy to what is rationally appropriate from the self's point of view.

The importance of the self in the sympathetic process is due to the fact that, for thinkers like Smith, "we are not able to recognise and understand the affects of the other, and therefore we lend our own feelings, consciousness or soul to the objects of our fellow-feeling" (Csengei 61).[19] Much as Eagleton describes the romantic leap of imagination as necessary to bridge the "gulf" between individuals isolated within "solitary experiential worlds," Smith describes imaginative identification as vital to sympathize with others (156, 157). Because our senses "never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person," it is through "the *imagination only* that we can form any conception" of what the other experiences (Smith 11). In other words, if the self is forever separated from others—buffered against the world around it—the only way to enter sympathetically into the other's experience is by imaginatively imposing the sentiments of the self onto the experience of the other. If these sentiments are incompatible—say, because the

18. See Stephenson's "Weimar Classicism's Debt to the Scottish Enlightenment" for an interesting reading of the particular debt that Goethe owed to Thomas Reid's principle of a "common sense." Reid's *Enquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* holds that "we have, by means of sensation, a direct knowledge of objects. Objects of knowledge are not just 'ideas in our minds' as what Reid calls the 'ideal system' holds" (Stephenson 62).

19. See Chapter 2, p. 117.

other acts in a way that the self would not or experiences emotions with an intensity that the self cannot— sympathy is impossible. This formulation thus begs the question: "Would the recognition of the other *as other* be the exact point where sympathy breaks down?" (Csengei 61). In *Werther* at least, the "otherness" of others does seem to be the exact point where sympathy breaks down. Werther's radical incompatibility with others who do not mirror back his own sentiments – as well as his overwhelming but futile identification with those who do—lends convincing evidence to readings of his egotism, but it also points to something much larger. Goethe follows out the logic of self-regarding sympathy to its solipsistic end point and begins to imagine alternative solutions to the problem of alienation that sympathy, ironically, only served to intensify.

Within the paradigm of the moral sense under which the text operates, sympathy occurs only when the other's passions are already felt in the self. Though one cannot communicate new feelings to others, it is possible to intensify the other's preexisting feelings by sharing them. Sharing the other's feelings indicates a pleasing approbation of them, an acknowledgement of their propriety. In Werther's estimation, the cheering affirmation of propriety, though limited and minor, forms the primary basis of man's duty to his fellow man: "We can do nothing for our friends but let their joys abide and increase their happiness by enjoying it with them. When their innermost soul is tormented by an anxious passion or shattered by grief, are you able to give them a drop of comfort?" (Goethe 25). It is man's sacred duty, then, to preserve the joys of others and to increase them with our approbation whenever possible *precisely because* it is beyond our power to create them anew if once lost.

Werther attempts to impress this lesson upon Herr Schmidt, who jealously guards the smiles of his fair lover Friederike, by asking him, "Isn't it enough that *we cannot make each*

other happy, must we also rob each other of the pleasure that every heart is able to *grant itself* from time to time?" (Goethe 25 emphases added). According to Werther, Herr Schmidt's ill-humor does a double disservice to others because it not only indicates a disapprobation of their joy but also because it destroys a happiness that he cannot restore. Thus, Werther cautions him: "Woe unto them ... who use the power they have over another's heart to rob it of the simple joys that naturally burgeon from it. All the gifts, all the favors the world can bestow cannot replace an instant of pleasure in oneself that our tyrant's envious discontent has turned to bile" (Goethe 25). According to Werther, then, the power one has "over another's heart" is almost exclusively detrimental (Goethe 25). One can rob the other of the "simple joys" they feel, but cannot ever restore that which has been destroyed (Goethe 25). Nothing, not "all the gifts, all the favors of the world," can create "an instant of pleasure" for another when they have been made miserable (Goethe 25).

Whereas one might have been able to amplify the other's *pleasure* by echoing it back to them through one's mutual participation in it, the same does not hold true for pain. Pain is the point at which the self is untouchable by others, regardless of the fervency of their sympathy or approbation.[20] It is because Werther believes that *die leiden* marks the outer limit of sympathy that he so consistently describes it in terms of the autonomous and impenetrable body. *Die leiden* – meaning both sorrows and sufferings – presents an insurmountable barrier between self and others, making it imperative to avoid inflicting emotional wounds on others that one can never heal. Werther begs Herr Schmidt to reflect upon this point as he concludes his harangue with the following pitiable scenario:

20. As can be seen, for example, in the heart-sick girl's inability to receive comfort from the "many men who could make up her loss" (Goethe 37).

> And when the final, most frightening sickness befalls the creature you undermined when she was in flower, and now she lies there in the most pitiable exhaustion, her eyes lifted insensibly towards heaven, death sweat alternating on her pallid brow, you stand before her bed like a damned soul, *with the most intense feeling that with all your resources you can do nothing*, and you experience an internal spasm of fear, and you would gladly give everything to be able to impart to this dying creature a drop of comfort, a spark of courage. (Goethe 25 emphasis added)

Despite the sadness and regret that the spectator feels, he is nonetheless convulsed with the certainty that he cannot communicate one "drop of comfort" to the sufferer. Instead, he stands apart "like a damned soul," irredeemably separated from the beatified girl, whose eyes are lifted heavenward.

Interestingly, as intense bodily pain symbolizes the limitations of sympathy for Werther, it literally signifies the limitations of sympathy for Smith. According to Smith, "Pain never calls forth any very lively sympathy unless it is accompanied by danger. We sympathize with the fear, though not with the agony of the sufferer" (36). This is because a dangerous situation is available to the imaginary appropriation of the observer in a way that agony is not. By envisioning one's self in the threatening situation, it might be possible to experience a sympathetic *fear* that is comparable to the original sensation, but sympathetic pain will be "excessively slight" (Smith 34). Smith reasons that even the slightest sympathetic pain is dependent on the clarity with which one can visualize the cause of the pain or imagine its effects on the body: "I can scarce form an idea of the agonies of my neighbor when he is tortured with the gout, or the stone, but I have the clearest conception of what he must suffer from an incision, a wound, or a fracture" (36). In this argument, Smith anticipates Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985) by over 200 years and helps to perpetuate the Hobbesian legacy from which she will be working.

In terms almost identical to Smith, Scarry notes that "in order to express pain one must *both* objectify its felt-characteristics *and* hold steadily visible the referent of those characteristics" (17). The cause—Smith's incision—and the effect—Smith's wound—must be clearly available to the imagination if pain is to inspire sympathy in observers. It is for this reason that pain can be associated with weapons so successfully. Scarry explains, "as a perceptual fact, [a weapon] can lift pain and its attributes out of the body and make them visible ... the point here is not just that pain can be apprehended in the image of the weapon (or wound) but that it almost cannot be apprehended without it" (16). Also like Smith, Scarry insists that spectators are more likely to project themselves into situations that result in pain than to identify with the fact of pain itself: in "medical case histories of people whose pain began with an accident, the sentences describing the accident … may more successfully convey the sheer fact of the patient's agony than those sentences that attempt to describe the person's pain directly" (15). The necessity of evoking objects and situations to communicate pain results from the difficulty of signifying it directly. It is this precise difficulty that leads Smith to conclude that pain and any other experiences that "take their origin from the body," are largely beyond the parameters of sympathy (Smith 35). Because the spectator "cannot go along with him," into the intense and autonomous experience of the body, sympathy breaks down entirely and the spectator "never fail[s] to despise him" (Smith 35).

Werther similarly concludes that *die leiden* marks the limits of sympathy, but for fascinatingly different reasons. In the conversation with Herr Schmidt described above, Werther asserts that the girl's suffering, which is emphasized in itself through her "pitiable exhaustion," "sweat," and "pallid brow," conjures up the "most intense feelings" in the spectator (Goethe 25). However, the "internal spasm of fear" that Werther's imagined spectator experiences is a far cry

from the "excessively slight" sensation that Smith theorizes (Goethe 25, Smith 34). The "intense feeling" of "fear" derives not from the spectator's vulnerability to the situation that caused the pain or the objects that damage the body, neither of which is clarified (Goethe 25). Instead, the fear arises from the spectator's powerlessness before the girl's invulnerability. In other words, sympathy fails not because pain is unavailable to the spectator without supplementary situations or objects into which he can imagine himself, but because the sufferer is beyond its reaches; she is buffered against it. Just as Taylor's "disenchanted" objects have been bereft of their power to "get to" non-porous subjects, so too are subjects, even the most sympathetic ones, powerless to influence each other (*Secular Age* 35). When faced with the buffered subjectivity of others, Werther sorrows to find that sympathy is an ineffectual tool.

For Werther, frustration with this powerlessness can lead to devastating consequences, as he perceives it has in Herr Schmidt's case. Though Werther (gratingly to be sure) chalks Herr Schimdt's boorish behavior up to "an inner dissatisfaction with [his] own unworthiness," the terms of this dissatisfaction point toward a discontented disconnection from others (Goethe 25). It stems from the fact that "we see happy people whom we are not making happy, and *that* is unbearable" (Goethe 25 emphasis added). Herr Schmidt is not just displeased with himself, but with his relationship to others. Indeed, the happiness that they experience, which is wholly independent of him, is "unbearable" because it emphasizes his powerlessness to influence them positively. To compensate for this powerlessness, Herr Schmidt resorts to the negative influence of his condemnatory ill-humor. As we have seen, Werther posits that it is impossible to *create* happiness in others, but it is very possible to *destroy* the happiness they already feel. It is Herr Schmidt's willingness to do this that compels Werther to chide: "show me the man who is ill-tempered and yet is good enough to hide it, to bear it alone, without destroying the joy all around

him!" (Goethe 25). Unfortunately and inevitably, Werther's lesson again falls on deaf ears and he leaves the scene in tears.

Despite his failure to convince Herr Schmidt, the argument that the happiness of one is unbearable to others helpfully clarifies the trauma that buffered subjectivity imposes on Werther throughout the novel. Werther assumes that it is impossible to create emotions, like happiness, for others because sympathy, which should allow one to experience the emotions of others and reciprocally to facilitate their experience of the emotions of the self, is only ever self-affirming. In "Rousseau and Werther: In Search of a Sympathetic Soul," Ellie Kennedy explores the self-regarding nature of Werther's relationships with others, concluding that "Werther, believing it is his lot to be misunderstood, seeks someone who will understand him, and thereby validate his feelings and his Self. It is only of secondary importance to understand that someone in return" (114). In other words, Werther's purported search for sympathy is belied by the fact that "nowhere in the narrative do we see Werther providing the listening, understanding ear which he himself is seeking" (Kennedy 114). Though I agree with Kennedy's preliminary arguments in important ways, I would suggest that her conclusions are not broad enough. It is not merely that Werther does not care to understand others so long as his feelings are validated. Instead, he presumes that all "sympathy" and "identification" between individuals is limited to a self-centered desire of validation. Because sympathy is merely reflective of one's own feelings in the text, it cannot connect individuals; it can only solidify the sensations that each already feels with a sense of their propriety. And yet, propriety forms the shabbiest of sympathy's consolation prizes as it perpetually emphasizes the impossibility of being moved to new states of mutuality, connection, and understanding.

Because of the burden of the autonomous self and sympathy's limitations in allowing buffered subjects to "get to" one another, Werther attempts to find alternate and increasingly desperate ways to connect to others. Werther's masochistic debasement of self in his relationship with the sublime in nature and with the beauty of Lotte may be futile and temporary, but they help to mitigate charges like Kennedy's that he is motivated by a solipsistic desire for emotional validation alone. Rather, they indicate that Werther is motivated by the desire to dis-integrate the boundaries of the modern, secular self that sympathy has failed to breach.[21] In this way, the narrative is pervasively haunted by the death drive far before Werther's ultimate suicide. Because Goethe depicts these attempts to un-create the self as futile and temporary, Werther continually and traumatically awakens into a sense of his isolated autonomy, which appears to him as an inescapable feature of objective reality.

It is, of course, problematic to apply concepts like the "death drive" or "trauma" retrospectively to texts like *Werther*. Nonetheless, as Matthew Bell helpfully demonstrates in *The German Tradition of Psychology in Literature and Thought, 1700-1840*, it is not anachronistic to assume that such texts portray the psychological depth—and even the unconscious impulses—of their characters. Bell's historical survey of the burgeoning importance of psychology in German thought posits that "it is hard to form a historically faithful picture of German intellectual and cultural life without an understanding of psychology's role in it" (1). Rather, he describes the "sophisticated means of conceptualising psychological states" present in literature of the Sturm und Drang as well as their reciprocal "influence on the development of

21. Gratzke similarly considers both Werther's masochism and his "heroic self-sacrifice" as "vehicles of 'un-becoming'" (36). Using Leo Bersani's concepts of "self-shattering desires and voluntary self-divestiture," Gratzke argues that Goethe harnesses Werther's unbecoming to "tap into [the] 'pure potential'" of his desires in the "virtual space of literature," creating a therapeutic experience both for himself and for his readers (36, 37).

psychological theory in the nineteenth century in Germany" (1, 85). Citing the interest that eighteenth-century German thinkers had in dreams, sleepwalking and even (proto-Freudian) slips of language, Bell provides compelling evidence that the powers—and dangers—of the unconscious mind were in part created by and articulated through the psychological novel and the Sturm und Drang aesthetic. Though the terms being used are meant to describe the psychology of the modern subject, in many ways, *Werther,* "the first novel of supposedly unbridled subjectivity," displays "an autonomous, organic conception of mind" characteristic of the modern subject (Brodsky 32; Bell 60).

The traumatic nature of Werther's buffered subjectivity and its relationship to the death drive can be clarified by considering Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). For Caruth, working closely from Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trauma is a "wound of the mind—a breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and world" (4). In other words, trauma is characterized by its incomprehensibility. When faced with overwhelming violence or pain, the subject experiences a period of latency in which he cannot grasp what is occurring. Because the trauma is initially incomprehensible, the subject is compelled to repeat it as he attempts to process the event. But, more's the pity, in compulsively repeating the trauma, the subject realizes he only became aware of the traumatic threat too late to protect himself from it. The fact of survival, then, becomes a crisis for the subject, prompting him to continue to repeat the traumatic moment in an attempt to prepare for the threatened dissolution of self that caught him unawares before.

The structure of trauma is particularly relevant to my reading of *Werther* because of its "oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (Caruth 7).

That is to say, the threat of death is traumatizing, but not more so than the subject's inexplicable escape from it. This "crisis of life," Caruth argues, "is at the heart of Freud's formulation of the death drive," which is as follows:

> The attributes of life were at some time awoken in inanimate matter by the action of a force of whose nature we can form no conceptions ... The tension which then arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavor to cancel itself out. In this way the first drive came into being: the drive to return to the inanimate state. (qtd in Caruth 64-65)

The subject passes from an inanimate state, "death," into an animate state, life, "without knowing it" (Caruth 65). Because life itself can be seen as "an awakening out of a 'death' for which there is no preparation," it is a traumatizing experience (Caruth 65). The fact of being alive creates a crisis for the subject that instantiates the death drive. As the death drive compels the subject to return to an inanimate state prior to life, they seek to master their inexplicable and traumatizing animation. The "crisis of life" characteristic of trauma likewise instantiates the death drive, which compels the traumatized subject to compulsively repeat the threat of death, which they survived "without knowing it" before.

Werther, obsessed with the inaccessibility of others imposed by the prison-like confines of his subjectivity, attempts to disburden himself of himself through sublime transcendence. However, the sublime is incapable of doing more than suspending the boundaries that isolate Werther from others. As Eagleton explains, the sublime may allow subjects to "indulge in the masochistic pleasures of the death drive," but "as long as the ego still delights in its dissolution, it cannot have attained it" (173-4). Whereas the persistence of the ego indicates the delusive nature of the sublime to Eagleton, I would argue that it indicates the traumatic nature of the sublime, at least in Werther's case. As he inevitably reawakens out of the illusion of sublime dissolution to a sense of his autonomous and isolated self, Werther recreates the crisis of life that

he attempted to undo. The escalating cycle of the traumatizing crisis of life and the death drive helps to explain how the "dialectic tension between self-articulation and self-submergence," which Dye calls characteristic of Goethe's work, functions in the text (179). Werther's compulsory and unwanted "self-articulation" only serves to intensify his desire for "self-submergence" into a state of non-individuation (Dye 183, 181).

To say that Werther is influenced by the death drive seems painfully obvious given that he does, in fact, kill himself. Indeed for Ignace Feuerlicht Werther's suicide can be accounted for in no other way. In "Werther's Suicide: Instinct, Reason, and Defense," Feuerlicht works to dismantle the explanations typically offered by critics to rationalize Werther's "irrational death wish" (479). Neither insanity nor love-sickness; neither sacrifice nor self-punishment, Feuerlicht asserts, could "induce him to suicide" in the way that the death drive can (480). It is only because of Goethe's immense artistic talent, that he "found reasons for the irrational, lent an aura of greatness to weakness, portrayed somebody as a great sufferer who enjoyed many things in life, aroused sympathy for somebody who could be insensitive and even cruel," that readers are willing to accept such feeble justifications (Feuerlicht 482). Claudia Brodsky also uses the death drive to account for Werther's suicide in "Beyond the Pleasure of the Principle of Death: (Anti-) Sociability in Goethe's *Werther* and Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*." Brodsky suggests, however, that the death drive is as influential on Werther's life as it is on his death. This is evident in the fact that Werther's death, over-determined as it is, is so long in coming. The death drive does not simply amount to the wish for immediate death, Brodsky explains, because that "would release life equally from its subservience to the pleasure principle *and* the death drive" (31). Rather, it involves "the progressive regress to nonlife that is the aim of the *experience of life*" (Brodsky 31). Whereas Brodsky uses the death drive more generally to account for the

terms through which Werther understands life, I consider the way in which the death drive indicates a trauma in the way in which Werther understands the "crisis of life." Werther's traumatic reawakening into autonomy follows moments of sublime transcendence in which he temporarily envisions a way around the boundaries of the self.

Such a trauma occurs after one of Werther's more fascinating interactions with Lotte. In the following lines, Werther seems to become hypnotized by the presence of Lotte until the parameters of his body begin to fail:

> When I have sat beside her for two or three hours and feasted on her figure, her demeanor, the heavenly expression of her words, and all of my senses are gradually stretched to the breaking point, when it grows dark before my eyes, when I can hardly hear and my throat feels seized by an assassin, then my wildly beating heart seeks to release my plagued senses and only increases their confusion—Wilhelm, often I do not know whether I belong to this world! And—except that from time to time, melancholy gets the better of me and Lotte allows me the miserable solace of weeping tears of anguish over her hand—then I must leave, must go away! (Goethe 42)

Werther's senses are "stretched to the breaking point" in his contemplation of Lotte's excellences. Like the awe-inspiring grandeur of nature, her presence overwhelms his reason and his physical body, both of which are inadequate to the experience. Incapable even of drawing breath, Werther's faltering heartbeat and darkening vision at once connect his consciousness—his "self"—to the material of his body and allow him, momentarily, to suspend his awareness of his separate existence from Lotte. He exists instead in another world.

The transcendence of their autonomous states of being, painful to be sure, is most devastating in being so short lived. Even in describing the scene to Wilhelm, Werther is pulled back from the edge of Lotte's sublimity and returns to an agonizing sense of himself. When Werther reawakens from his trance, he looks to Lotte for the "miserable solace" of her sympathy. But within the paradigm of sympathy under which the novel operates, Lotte can only offer

Werther sympathy if she already shares the feelings that move him to tears. Thus, when she allows Werther to weep upon her hands, her tacit approval of his melancholy affirms the propriety of his feelings, which in itself indicates that she shares them. Her approbation soothes Werther with the knowledge that they both experience identical, though separate, emotions. Werther is therefore content to stay near her, though overcome with the miserable inadequacy of this nearness. But if Werther does not find the sympathy that he seeks from Lotte, which to be sure is only offered "from time to time," her disapprobation shatters Werther's dream of continuity with her completely. As such, he must—he reiterates, *must*— distance himself from the scene.

Werther's experience, though painful throughout, only becomes traumatic with the returning awareness of his coherent, discrete selfhood. For this reason, Werther hysterically seeks out experiences that will compromise and weaken his physical body, whose reasserted vitality thwarted the dissolution of self he nearly achieved in his transcendent state. He confides to Wilhelm:

> then I roam far and wide over the fields; then my joy lies in climbing a steep mountain, hacking a path through an impassable forest, through hedges that hurt me, through thorns that tear at me! Then I feel a little better! A little! And when, on my way, I sometimes lie down from weariness and thirst, sometimes in the deep of night, when the full moon stands high above me, I sit on a gnarled tree in the lonely forest so as to give my torn soles some relief and then fall into a slumber in an exhausted calm at the first dawn! (Goethe 42)

In despair of recapturing the fleeting moment of connection, Werther directs his steps to "hedges that hurt" and "thorns that tear" into his skin to find relief. The buffered self is targeted through the body, which is made literally porous in being torn apart. Likewise, the "weariness and thirst" that come about as a result of Werther's frenzied march through the forest recreate the slow

closing of senses that Werther found in Lotte's presence until he falls into a similar state of insensibility in "an exhausted calm."

Werther's self-destructive actions, because of their "close connection" with his "unfulfilled desire for Lotte" indicate to Roland Dollinger a tendency toward masochism (100).[22] According to Dollinger, "Werther's self-inflicted punishment and pain" in the passage cited above are an "anticipated reaction to the forbidden satisfaction of his desires for Lotte" (102). In other words, Werther's compulsion to punish himself for the pleasure he experienced in Lotte's presence "replicates the structure of sexual masochism," in which an individual "accepts emotional and physical pain all-too readily in order to gratify his desires for a love-object he is unable to attain and unwilling to lose" (102, 94). Though this certainly is a plausible reading of Werther's foray into the thorns, I question if "the continuous repression of desire" is really also to blame for "the traumatic effects of Lotte's presence on his senses" (Dollinger 100). There is an important difference between the awe-inspiring pain of drowning in Lotte's eyes and the trivial experience, say, of being torn by brambles afterwards. Indeed, Werther's painful sense of self-dissolution in the former instance indicates a sublime experience, which he only hysterically mimics in the latter instance. Werther's sublime pain is not an anticipatory punishment for future sexual misdeeds, but the pain of the death drive, with its promise of the relief of the non-existence of that "buffered self" that is impenetrable by others. On this basis, I would shift our perspective of the pain of this passage from Werther's masochistically structured desire for Lotte to the horror of waking up from the dream of communion with her.

22. Dollinger's conception of masochism is based on Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* and Theodor Reik's *Masochism in Modern Man*.

The brief, traumatizing transcendence that Werther experiences with Lotte is frequently repeated in his experiences of the sublime in nature. Muenzer, who observes that such scenes invite, even demand, a Kantian reading, argues that Werther's subjective transcendence is dependent on the failures inherent to the structure of the sublime.[23] However, Muenzer's assessment of sublime failure is quite different from Eagleton's. Rather than seeing the ego's "self-dissolution" as delusive, Muenzer views it as an essential step in the subject's sublime transcendence of the empirical mind. According to Kant in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), Muenzer explains,

> the mind's first moral awareness comes through its failure to process with the customary categories of understanding certain kinds of experience ... these mental breakdowns in confronting scenes of great extension or power facilitate the recuperative response of the sublime ... the mind's path through appetitive and contemplative phases of such awareness to reach a last transformation that recognizes an internal purposefulness independent of the sensible world. Kant calls this final turn of mind ... sublime. (29)

For Muenzer then, Werther experiences "pain and anxiety" as the sublime experience "draws him to another realm by forcing his turn from the empirical world" towards the "internal purposefulness" of the autonomous self (32). Despite Muenzer's argument that *Werther* insists on a Kantian reading, the sublime sections of the novel do not map perfectly onto a Kantian schema. One of the novel's most famous transcendent moments, recorded in the letter of August 18th, rather inverts the dual process of the sublime that Muenzer refers to above.

According to Kant, the sublime requires a double mental effort in which an "object is taken up as sublime with a pleasure that is only possible by means of a displeasure" (143). This

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23. This discussion of Muenzer condenses his arguments in both "Turning Toward the Sublime: Reflexivity and Self-Worth in *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*" in *Figures of Identity: Goethe's Novels and the Enigmatic Self* (1984) and "Goethe's *Werther* and Kant's Aesthetics of Failure" (1983).

displeasure is caused by one's painful sense of limitation in the face of infinity or dynamic power that dwarfs the subject into insignificance and inflicts "violence ... on the subject by the imagination" (Kant 142). Only then do the rational powers of the mind compensate by conceptualizing the infinite or the dynamic power that had obtruded upon it so violently. In other words, the painful prelude of the sublime experience is the price that must be paid to enjoy the pleasures of rational mastery over nature and bodily limitation. The agony Werther experienced in his interaction with Lotte, the smothered breath and dimming vision, can be read as the sublime displeasure that signals that his "senses are gradually stretched to the breaking point" as his mind reaches new planes of knowledge "independent of the sensible world" (Goethe 42; Muenzer 29). But in the letter on August 18th, the process is much less straightforward. Werther describes his experience in and of nature in terms of a transcendence already achieved— one that connects him to the sensible world and then gives way to the displeasure, even the agony, of his turn inward again into the buffered autonomous self.[24]

As Werther reports to Wilhelm, his observations of "the moss that wrests its nourishment from these hard rocks, and the shrubbery that grows along the barren sand dunes revealed to [him] the innermost glowing sacred life of nature" (Goethe 39). Though these images seem to be miraculous feats of life—stemming as they do from inhospitable rock and barren sand— they do not overwhelm Werther's perplexed mind. Instead, Werther asserts that he "enfold[s]" the sublime secrets of nature into his "warm heart" (Goethe 39). His absorption of "the glorious

24. Lloyd Davies offers an interesting reading of these sublime moments by drawing attention to the way in which they are mediated by the literary texts that Werther reads. Though Werther desires to emerge as an authentic self through sublime transcendence, Davies argues, he "cannot escape the literary and cultural determinations which constitute his subjectivity, even as a man who is a free and spontaneous lover of nature" (165).

shapes of the infinite world [which] entered and quickened [his] soul" make Werther become "like a god among the overflowing abundance" (Goethe 39). He is indistinguishable from the natural phenomena that surround him and— because they overcome the parameters of the physical self and bypass the limitations of the logical mind— intermingle with him.

And yet the point of the letter is to report the loss of Werther's momentary sense of nature's interfusion with self in the wake of his growing dread of isolation that is fueled by Lotte. When Lotte reflects back Werther's feelings with all of the pleasing approbation of their propriety—as Werther says she does in the preceding letter: "I can tell from Lotte that she would not like to lose me"—he describes "the full warm feeling of [his] heart for living nature" (Goethe 38). Werther's dawning realization of the self-deluding basis of his bond with Lotte causes him to cast a corrective glance on the natural world: "It is as if a curtain had been drawn back from my soul, and the spectacle of infinite life is transferred before my eyes into the abyss of an ever-open grave" (Goethe 39). Nature is no longer the coalescence of all things in a surge of an undifferentiated infinity. Instead, it is made up of fragments that are engaged in an antagonistic struggle with each other. Werther writes, "There is no moment that does not consume you and those near and dear to you, no moment when you are not a destroyer, must be one; the most innocent stroll costs the lives of thousands and thousands of tiny creatures; one footstep shatters the laboriously erected structures of the ant and pounds a tiny world into a miserable grave" (Goethe 39-40). The "thousands and thousands" of lives and worlds now individually apparent do not carry Werther's rational mind upward to the contemplation of the infinite. Quite the opposite, in fact, his "heart is *undermined* by the destructive force that is concealed in the totality of nature; which has never created a thing that has not destroyed its neighbor or itself. And so I

stagger about in fear! heaven and earth and their interweaving forces around me: I see nothing but an eternally devouring, eternally regurgitating monster" (Goethe 40 emphasis added).

This terrifying picture of nature's cycles of destruction and creation, eternally and inexorably repeated, might have prompted Werther's failing senses to achieve a more sublime comprehension of dynamic infinity. But it does not. Instead, as when he awoke from the trance of continuity with Lotte, Goethe focuses on the negative impact of Werther's reasserted sense of self. Critics, like Muenzer, often discount this end point as they apply the structure of the sublime to Werther's experiences. For example, in arguing that "by becoming nothing Werther becomes everything," Gratzke invokes the idea that sublime dissolution of ego creates an expansive alternative to it (30). Though viewed more pessimistically, Swales' claim that Werther "loses any sense of the contours that define self" when he loses "all hold on the phenomenal world" gestures toward the same fundamental argument (*Goethe* 69). Blackall similarly points to the loss of self that must accompany Werther's "desire to expand himself into Nature" (26). However, for Blackall, Werther is not as oblivious to the self-destructive consequence of this desire as Swales suggests: "Werther is here *recognizing* that expansion of self into limitlessness involves loss of self because self implies finite limits" (26 emphasis added). For Siebers, the sublime self-dissolution might be just another of the "metaphors of the self and its annihilation" that "Goethe systemically collects ... with an eye to strengthening our vision of Werther's marginality," an essential component of his identity as a "Romantic genius" (26). Though my analysis is also concerned with the dynamic of the sublime in *Werther*, my interest lies not in whether Werther's transcendent subjectivity causes him to lose hold of the phenomenal world, but in Goethe's instance that he must continually awaken out of the sublime experience of the ego's dissolution into his isolated subjective position. The letter of August 18th describes this

traumatic awakening out of "death" into life, this movement from the infinite to the individual, as a devastating and ghastly process.

The trauma of failed sublime transcendence is also apparent in Werther's description of the flooded valley in the letter of December 12th. Werther, "in the state of mind that must have been experienced by those unfortunate creatures who were thought to be ridden by an evil demon," feels compelled to prowl the scenes of his previous interactions with Lotte (Goethe 76). In doing so, he surveys the following:

> A frightful spectacle to see the rushing floodwaters whirling down from the rocks in the moonlight, over fields and meadows and hedgerows and all around and up and down the wide valley a single raging lake in the howling of the wind! And then, when the moon came out again and rested over the black clouds, and down below me the floodwaters rolling and pounding in the awesome splendid reflection: a shudder came over me and again a longing. (Goethe 76-7)

The decimated valley, like the savage power of nature's cycles, certainly seems to be fodder for sublimity. The wildness of the waters, animated by the wind and illuminated by the moon, overpowers Werther's perception and he shudders to look upon the evidence of its might. However, the longing he feels to "giv[e] up [his] human existence to be part of that stormy wind and tear the clouds apart and seize the floodwaters!" signals that he has not been sublimely moved by the scene (Goethe 77). The power of nature has not been enough to "bestow" on "this imprisoned creature," the "bliss" of joining with it; instead he merely feels the desire to do so, clumsily envisioning himself submerged in and drowned by the churning water (Goethe 77). By proclaiming at this moment, "I have the courage to die," we hear his profound discontent with the autonomous self that has been left intact despite the sublimity that surrounds him as well as his desperation to dissolve it (Goethe 77).

Intriguingly, Werther's desire to annihilate the boundaries of subjectivity through death, evident in the letter of December 12th, seems to be contradicted by the terms through which he

understands his impending suicide. Indeed, some critics suggest that Werther appears to take solace in the idea that the self will persist beyond death in his final letter to Lotte. He writes:

> To die! what does that mean? See, we are dreaming when we speak of death. I have seen more than one person die; but mankind is so limited that it cannot conceive of the beginning and end of its existence. Now still mine, yours! yours, oh beloved! And one instant—parted, separated—perhaps forever?—No, Lotte, no—How can I pass away? How can you pass away? We are, yes!—pass away!—what does that mean? That is merely another phrase! an empty noise, which my heart cannot feel. (Goethe 89)

In one sense, the confused language and halting sentences indicate the turmoil of Werther's emotional state. Such manipulations of language indicate to Bell the "new ways of representing psychology" characteristic of the Sturm und Drang aesthetic (55). "Rather than having characters describe what they are feeling," Bell asserts, authors "mobilis[e] elements of literary expression—imagery, diction, sentence structure, gesture—to represent mental states performatively" (55). Brodey agrees that "deep at the roots of the cult of sensibility and its German equivalent *Empfindsamkeit* lies the fundamental opposition of emotions and words" (120). Werther, she argues, exemplifies how "the fragmentation and disjunction which signify an inability to express also signify in themselves, a keen sensibility" (Brodey 120-121). Werther's inability to formulate his passionate emotions into language speak with more force than the words themselves could have if someone like Albert expressed them with clarity and logic.

And yet, there is a logic at work in this jumble of exclamations and fragments. First, we will notice that in speaking of death Werther is concerned with the limits of human capacity. Mankind's rational powers are impotent at the crucial moment of death—and of life. Being born into the world, having passed from the "death" of an inanimate state—is as incomprehensible as death itself. Moreover, the death of others sheds no light on its meaning. "We are dreaming" in trying to formulate an understanding of death based on observations of it. Because the observer

can have no empirical sense of death, they cannot project themselves into the experience of the dead, with whom no sympathy is possible. Werther finds that empirical sense, rational mind, sympathy, and the imagination are all incapable of supplying a substantive answer to the question: "what does [it] mean" to die? Instead, the words themselves constitute "merely another phrase! ... which [the] heart cannot feel."

Despite Werther's claim that death is unknowable, he also asserts that his death will not constitute a total annihilation of himself. For Feuerlicht, Werther's assumption that his self will persist beyond death helps to dismantle the "high-sounding" motives readers attempt to ascribe to the suicide:

> As to Werther's erstwhile yearning to transcend human limitations or his occasional longing to be one with nature, they do not play any part in his final suicidal scheme. There is no word of mystical union or reunion with God or nature at the end. At this point, Werther is not 'longing to be free of individual existence.'[25] In his vision of the beyond he sees himself, Lotte, and her mother as individuals. Only Albert, who is totally ignored in Werther's self-serving and triumphant prophecy, seems to be conveniently relegated to the limbo of nonindividuals, if not nonexistence. (484-5)

But in the confused intertwining of Werther and Lotte in his suicide note, we might question just how individual the would-be lovers are. In sputtering, "Now still mine, yours! yours, oh beloved!," Werther's loss of linguistic control occurs at the point of articulating a clear distinction between himself and Lotte (Goethe 89). Werther's disintegrating grammatical coherence points to something nearly inexpressible, but inexpressibly important. It points to his

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25. Feuerlicht is referencing Eric Blackall's provocative claim that a "longing to be free of individual existence, to abandon individuation" is what actually motivates Werther's ostensibly "religious longings" (35). In making this claim, Blackall is offering a correction to what he considers to be erroneous in Erich Trunz's "Anmerkungen" on *Werther* in the Hamburger Ausgabe von Goethes Werken. Unfortunately, this line of thought, quite in keeping with my argument, is only a brief aside in Blackall's larger discussion of the stages of Werther's development and not pursued further.

desire to annihilate the isolating autonomy that sympathy reinforced and that the sublime could not permanently suspend. Thus, I would argue with Feuerlicht that Werther's obsession with transcending "*individual* existence" does play a role in the suicide. That is, he envisions his suicide as the means of achieving a "porous" existence, in which he and Lotte have both communion and distinction.

To unpack this difference, it is necessary to consider the event that initiates the suicidal sequence. This, of course, is the reading of Ossian and the subsequent embrace Werther shares with Lotte. As Brodsky mentions, Werther's death is overdetermined throughout the text, making it reasonable to have expected him to have taken his own life at any number of moments. The reason that this situation triggers Werther into action is suggested by comparing it to the Lotte-induced trance discussed above. According to the oddly prescient editor:

> The full force of these words [in Ossian] fell upon the unhappy man. He threw himself down before Lotte in complete despair, grasped her hands, pressed them to his eyes, to his brow, and a foreboding of his terrible resolve appeared to fly through her soul. Her senses became confused, she squeezed his hands, pressed them against her breast, bent over him with a plaintive gesture, and their glowing cheeks touched. The world faded from them. He flung his arms around her, pressed her to his breast, and covered her trembling, stammering lips with furious kisses ... Werther! she cried in the collected tones of the loftiest feelings.—He did not resist, released her from his arms, and, insensate, threw himself down before her. (Goethe 88)

Immediately following this incident, Werther puts his suicidal plan into action, writing to Lotte that he is "punishing [him]self" for the illicit caresses (Goethe 90). Werther's proclaimed need for such drastic self-punishment is in keeping with Dollinger's account of his masochism. Whereas his previous transgression, occurring as it did only in the imagination, prompted a preemptive Werther to mortify his flesh in the hedges, it seems reasonable to take him at his word that the suicide is the necessary retribution for this actual, more extreme, offense.

Yet, as in the previous instance, the interaction resists a straightforwardly masochistic reading. At the very least, Werther's contrition for kissing another man's wife is complicated by the fact that he hopes to cement his possession of Lotte in death. In the very next breath an ecstatic Werther writes "From this moment on you are mine! mine, oh Lotte!" (90). In Thomas P. Saine's "close analysis of the last letter," such proclamations indicate that Werther views the suicide as "the means of taking Lotte away from Albert and gaining her for himself" (339). Because Werther's suicide is at least partly motivated by his assumption that he might win Lotte through death, it seems more self-serving than penitential. Indeed, as Saine points out through a comparative analysis of Goethe's own letters, it seems down right aggressive.[26] In Goethe's rather obnoxious letter to Kestner on April 10, 1773, he writes that Kestner should "pray nicely for [Goethe's] life and health, calves and stomach, etc.; and if [he dies], propitiate [his] soul with tears, sacrifices, and such like," because once dead, Goethe will have "somewhat to say up there" to God and he "shall fetch" Charlotte from Kestner "verily" (132). This letter, which "according to Hanna Fischer-Lamberg shows its agitation even in the handwriting," mirrors "the threat that Werther seeks to carry out in the novel written less than a year later" and sheds interesting light on its tone (Saine 341).

As Werther's claim that the suicide is self-punishment is disingenuous, so too is his claim that it is self-sacrifice. His death is detrimental to those at whom the "sacrifice" is directed. The editor, who asks to be allowed to "keep silent about Albert's consternation, Lotte's grief," nonetheless cannot suppress the fact that "Albert was unable to" attend Werther's body to the

26. Despite Saine's extensive discussion of similarities between Goethe and Werther, he is not unaware of the necessity of distinguishing between the two: "In our role as literary critics we will, of course, protest as Goethe did to Kestner, that Werther as a literary figure is not to be identified with his real-life forebears—that once the novel exists the figure is more than the sum of its parts" (336). Nonetheless, some of these "parts" are fascinating objects of analysis.

lonely site of its interment and that "Lotte's life" was "feared for" (Goethe 96). For Feuerlicht the "devastating effect" that "this alleged self-sacrifice" has "on the young couple" indicates that the "death instinct," under which he perceives Werther to be operating, "aims at both self-destruction and the destruction of others" (486). Saine likewise points out the perverse pleasure Werther seems to take in implicating them both in his "sacrificial" suicide. Albert, whose pistols he borrows, and Lotte, whose hands they pass through, "are obviously shocked by their involvement in the mechanics of Werther's death" (Saine 339). Furthermore, Saine argues, Werther "manages to murder them—in a moral sense—as well as himself" through the biting guilt inflicted in his final letter (339). Werther's suicide, prompted by the embrace, belies the pretense of self-punishment and the feeble justification of self-sacrifice and invites other explanations.

One possible explanation can be seen by considering once again the "poetical problem" of identification, which is expressed through self-validating relationships to texts in the novel. Werther believes that he and Lotte have achieved a meeting of the minds because of the similarity of their reactions to Ossian. Unlike the previous scene of short-lived transcendence, in which Werther awoke to the incompatibility of Lotte's feelings with his own, they have both been moved in the same way by the melancholic poetry. In being equally moved, both reflect the justness and propriety of the other's feelings, making sympathy possible. However, this sympathetic moment is fleeting for Lotte at least, who quickly returns to a sense of herself. As she commands Werther to release her, she is determined that their separation must be permanent: "This is the last time! Werther! You will never see me again" (Goethe 88). As she "hurried into the next room and locked the door behind her," Lotte reasserts the psychical and spatial barriers that had been compromised through the medium of the poem (Goethe 88). Given the finality of

Lotte's cries, expressed in "the loftiest tones," and the resonance of locking Werther's encroaching subjectivity into a room (much as he has imagined it locked within his inaccessible interiority throughout the novel), it is perhaps surprising that Werther makes no attempt to stop her. But Werther, lying "insensate" on the floor, does not need to stop Lotte because he has not woken into a sense of himself as he did in the previous episode. Enthralled as he is by the dream of being united with Lotte, Werther kills himself—finally—after this incident to avoid awakening.

As has been seen, Werther has been near this transcendent state before, both when observing Lotte and when moved by the sublimity of the natural world. In those instance, when Werther came out of the "death" of his autonomous selfhood into the trauma of subjectivity, he articulated his experience as a crisis, exclaiming: "What is man, the celebrated demigod! Does he not lack strength precisely where he needs it most? And if he soars upward in joy or sinks down in sorrow, will he not be arrested in both, just there, just then, brought back to dull, cold consciousness, when he was longing to lose himself in the fullness of the infinite?" (Goethe 72). The feeling of connection with Lotte—though perhaps only mimicked by their mutual appreciation of the poem—has caused Werther to "soa[r] upward in joy;" he is determined not to be "brought back to dull, cold consciousness" (Goethe 72). In Werther's logic, then, his suicide is not the total annihilation of his existence, but an end to the cycle of traumatic reawaking into buffered subjectivity. In other words, Werther has "courage to die" because he believes that his suicide will allow him to experience a porous mode of existence that "straddles ... the boundary" between the self, other, and world (Goethe 77; Taylor 35). This belief can be seen, for example, in "the fragmentation and disjunction" of his final letter (Brodey 121). The singular pronouns "mine" and "yours," that referred to the lives that Werther and Lotte each separately possessed

and that each separately might lose, are transformed into the plural subjective pronoun "we" that binds them together in a mode of existence in which they have unity and distinction simultaneously and from which they are inseparable. Dying is just "an empty noise" when compared to the triumphant "We *are*, yes!" (Goethe 89 emphasis added).

Of course, Werther does not go gentle into that good night. The body, which has stood for the boundaries of subjectivity throughout the novel, and which Werther tries to circumvent in death, has the final devastating say. The physicality of the suicide— the brain matter, and the blood, and the convulsions, and the paralysis, and the death rattle, and the botched surgical interventions, and the bandages— creates a striking "contrast between heroic intent and feeble execution" (Blackall 38).[27] If Werther believes that his death will somehow make possible a porosity with Lotte, the fantastical nature of that belief is exposed by the "conscious and purposeful irony" with which Goethe depicts his suicide (Blackall 39).[28] This irony— which accounts for Goethe's frustration for readers who thought "that such a moral was to be imitated, and that, at any rate one ought to shoot one's self"— suggests that Goethe is using the suicide to indicate a fundamental error in Werther's point of view (DW Vol. II, 218). Werther is mistaken in thinking that destroying his body will release his mind into the realm of pure abstraction in which truth and connection are possible. On the contrary, the bullet that Werther fires into his

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27. The "heroic intent," Blackall argues, is evident in the fact that Werther "views his death as a moral act of sacrifice, and takes pains to make it quite clear that his action resulted from a considered resolution, a conscious act of will" (38). As shown, though, the morality of this sacrifice is highly suspect.

28. The mode of death itself might also be seen as adding to the ironic undercutting of Werther's envisioned glory. As Saine points out, "there are passages from *Dichtung und Warheit* dealing with the most heroic and meaningful techniques for committing suicide, and Werther's shooting himself through the head does not qualify as one of these" (329).

"forehead above his right eye" destroys Werther's consciousness altogether as he becomes all body (Goethe 95).

As Scarry would put it, Werther's world is "unmade" because the intensity of the physical experience of pain destroys his ability to extend "himself" beyond his body through communication.[29] Not only does pain transform Werther's voice into "gasps" and a "death rattle," it also causes him to destroys the signs that he left behind (Goethe 95). As he struggles with the pain of the ruptured vein in his head, Werther, "thr[ows] himself convulsively around the chair" and disrupts the meticulously "stage-managed" scene of the suicide (Goethe 95; Blackall 38). His yellow waistcoat is sodden with blood and his chosen hour of death is inverted from the romantic shadows of midnight to the unforgiving light of noon.[30] Nor is Werther's voice reasserted, as he envisioned, in his triumphant suicide letter. Instead, the narrator closes the novel's pages with a detached terseness wholly distinct from Werther's impassioned last words. For Swales, "the editor's final page is a masterpiece of the legitimate handling of ... one of the most horrific scenes in the whole European novel" (85). Swales explains:

> Werther's last letters show him envisioning a noble, elegiac death. The editor, in brutally factual mode, gives us the physical details in all their horror. This is a botched suicide, which produces hours of pain, of animal writhings ... Seldom has the contrast between imagination and physical fact, between reflection and narrative event, been explored with such devastatingly laconic brutality. (85)

The replacement of Werther's voice and signs with the "devastatingly laconic" voice of the editor makes a mockery of his notion of transcendence through death.

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29. Being deprived of language, Scarry argues, causes the individual's world to telescope down into nothing beyond bodily sensation. Objectless pain fills the consciousness of the individual and his world collapses into the timeless and infinite experience of pain.

30. Brodey proposes that Werther's protracted death indicates that his "primary faculty is his heart, rather than his brain" (125). That is, Werther could not die instantly from the wound in his head because he must first lose the life's blood pumping through his sensible heart.

It is highly ironic, then, that Werther's intended escape from autonomous subjectivity, symbolized in the death of his body, instead isolates him within his bodily experience, the very state that for Adam Smith, at least, is the least accessible to the fellow-feeling of others and which Werther has used as metaphor for the trap of interiority. This ironic turn and Werther's repeated attempts to overcome his "individual existence" through self-dissolution complicate critical assessments that the novel celebrates "the self-centeredness of the protagonist" (Blackall 23). But also, Werther's twelve-hour entombment within himself points to the grievous mistake the Cartesian subject makes in discounting the power and meaning of the material world. Though Goethe might not have solved the "poetical problem" of how to recuperate a porosity and vulnerability for the buffered individual who is desperate to form a connection between the self and the other it cannot touch, he does gesture quite dramatically to the possibility that the body is a necessary form of mediation between self, other, and world.

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CHAPTER IV

"A MISERABLE LOVE THAT IS NOT PAIN TO HEAR OF":

WORDSWORTH, SPINOZA, AND MONISTIC MORALITY

If the covers of nearly every modern edition of William Wordsworth's poetry can be trusted, his life's work is best expressed through images of sunny daffodils, idyllic landscapes, and kind-eyed, contemplative gentlemen. These covers, frequently done in water-colors as soft as the billowing clouds they depict, suggest that their contents have likewise blurred away the harshness of any discordant line. Nor do these covers bely Wordsworth's stated intention for the verses within: they ought to present the natural world—mankind included—"as a tree through a tender haze or a luminous mist, that spiritualizes and beautifies it" ("Essay" 332). The poet, naturally sensitive and, so claims *The Prelude*, molded for his task by the hand of Nature itself, is capable of looking upon "the heavy and the weary weight/ Of this unintelligible world" through the beautifying mist of the mind and concluding that it is, after all, "full of blessings" ("Tintern Abbey" ll. 40-1, 135). But for all of the "tender haze" of the poet's perspective, the vivid colors of human suffering threaten to bleed through and to spoil the placidity of the picture. For each sweetly murmuring mountain stream, there is a Martha Ray, whose cries, "O misery! O misery," won't be drowned out ("The Thorn" l. 223). And under even the quietest of skies, there is that mossy hilltop, which just might be "red with drops of that poor infant's blood" ("The Thorn" ll. 222, 236).

Despite the loveliness of the images that editors choose to represent him, Wordsworth's interest in pain was by no means negligible. On the contrary, as Charles Woodard's somewhat rudimentary quantitative assessment helps to show, it was rather extensive:[1]

> The entries for the word *death* [in a concordance of Wordsworth's work] take up two columns, as does the word *sorrow* in its various forms. The word *grave*, mostly the noun, takes up two columns; the various forms of *pain* require two and a half columns, as does *sad* with its variations. *Suffer* in its different forms, *blood*, and *sick* each occupy a column. The entries for the word *poor* take up almost three columns; and, perhaps, most notable of all, *fear* takes up more than four. (3)

And so, we have a bit of a puzzle: why would Wordsworth, who insists that producing pleasure is the *sole* object of poetry, so often look to the miserable for material? For Woodard the answer is simple: it is due to the "perverse confusion of pleasure and pain, or the derivation of the former from the latter, in circumstances where conditions of human cruelty or suffering may seem to be unduly or gratuitously dwelt upon" (2). It is both "the frequency with which suffering appears in the poems," as well as "the remarkably detailed way" in which Wordsworth describes it, that makes him as much of an "agonized romantic" for Woodard as the likes of Keats, Byron, and Shelley are for Mario Praz (6).[2] However, such an argument imposes assumptions about the pleasure of regarding pain that Wordsworth did not necessarily share. In fact, it is because Wordsworth takes such pains (if I may) in his poetic theory and prose writing to distinguish between a pleasure *coincident* with pain and a pleasure *derived* from pain that he is of interest when attempting to account for pain's uneasy position within sympathy and moral sense

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1. Though the following list is certainly suggestive, Woodard's argument that Wordsworth's interest in "every conceivable form of human suffering" makes him comparable to the "erotic sensibility" of Sade, whose *Les 120 journées de Sodome ou l'école du libertinage* is arguably the most extravagant catalogue of human suffering ever imagined, is tenuous (3).

2. This refers of course to Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* (1933), in which Wordsworth's conspicuous exclusion is, to Woodard's mind, an oversight.

philosophy. The philosophical basis for this distinction, as well as its consequences in Wordsworth's depiction of subjectivity and sympathy in his poetry, make a sidetrack through the less scenic paths of Wordsworth's prose well worth the trip.

This detour seems only appropriate given Wordsworth's "intrinsically reflective stance towards his work" and his desire to systematize the "connected 'principles,' or 'plan of writing,' which publicly continued to typify his enterprise" (Regier and Uhlig 1, 3). Despite the fact that Wordsworth's political and religious sensibilities were changeable over the course of his long life and career, it was nonetheless his desire to present his poetic theory as consistent and cohesive both in his prose expositions and in the arrangement of the poems themselves, which were "classif[ied]" in various collections according a system "of Wordsworth's own devising" (Gill *Casebook* 8). The "attentive reader," Wordsworth insisted, should consider each piece in itself and as an element of a larger poetic project in the same way that "diverse architectural features ... make up a gothic church" (*Excursion* 16; Gill *Casebook* 8). If *The Prelude* (1805),[3] which I will discuss presently, forms the "antechapel" of the poet's unrealized masterpiece, *The Recluse* (*Excursion* 16), then the 1802 "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* can be seen as something

3. My choice to use the 1805 version of the poem rather than the 1850 is informed by arguments that Wordsworth "practiced a kind of theological surgery on the body of his poem, grafting on to it pious digressions, and cutting away parts so distempered as to offend sound doctrine" in the later version (Jones 157). It will be my claim that the "distempered" parts of the 1805 version help to reveal an important and consistent structure of thought that informs Wordsworth's poetry, even when the more explicit expressions of that thought have been discarded. Though John Jones, in *The Egotistical Sublime: A History of Wordsworth's Imagination*, considers the *Two-Part Prelude* (1798-1799) to be an even more authentic version, "in the high tradition of solitude and relationship" that marks Wordsworth's best work, the 1805 *Prelude* is the earliest version of the poem's full articulation (125). For an overview of critical disagreements regarding the artistic merits of the 1805 and 1850 versions, see Stephen Gill's introduction to *William Wordsworth's The Prelude: A Casebook*, pgs. 11-16. For an example of the rich scholarship produced by a comparative reading of the two, see Susan Wolfson's "Revision as Form: Wordsworth's Drowned Man" in *Formal Changes: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (1997).

of a blueprint, detailing a relatively well-conceived plan for the poems and elaborating a distinctive theory of sympathy as their foundation. Though the "Preface" may not fully disentangle pain from pleasure in Wordsworth's thought, it does reveal the intricacy of the knot, especially as he deviates from more prominent systems of accounting for pain and aesthetic pleasure, like those of David Hume and Edmund Burke. Therefore, before indicting the poems for their "perversion," it will be useful to consider the principles of design upon which the "little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses" of Wordsworth's work were based (*Excursion* 16).

In the "Preface," Wordsworth describes the characteristics he perceives to be necessary in the poet and, famously, details the ways in which he is revolutionizing poetic conventions.[4] But also, he spends considerable time describing the effects that poetry should have on readers and how to achieve these effects. According to Wordsworth, "the Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human" ("Preface" 605). The reason for this one restriction appears to be simple enough:

> We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathize with pain it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. *We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone* ... However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that *his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge*. What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life ... finding every where objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature,

4. In "Joanna Baillie's Introductory Discourse as a Precursor to Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," Mary Yudin makes an interesting case that the "Preface" was not as revolutionary as Wordsworth would have liked to believe. Rather, Baillie's "Introductory Discourse," written two years before Wordsworth's, anticipates his celebration of ordinary language, events, and persons as proper subjects of aesthetic analysis.

> are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment. ("Preface" 606 emphases added)

For Wordsworth, as for Edmund Burke in *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759), the ability to sympathize is absolutely contingent on pleasure, especially if the object of one's sympathy is experiencing pain. However because this pleasure is associated with *knowledge,* derived from contemplating the "general principles" of "particular facts," Wordsworth indicates an important difference in his conception of the necessary pleasure of sympathy than that described by Burke.

In his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke asserts that "we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others" (92).[5] Burke argues that "our Creator" made this sadistic delight proportional to the other's pain because "our sympathy is most wanted in the distress of others" (93). Burke famously demonstrates this delight by suggesting that even "the most sublime and affecting tragedy" pales into insignificance in the face of the real pain of a public execution. Therefore, he concludes:

> there is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue, as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity; so that whether the misfortune is before our eyes, or whether they are turned back to it in history, it always touches with delight. This is not unmixed delight, but blended with no small uneasiness. The delight we have in such things, hinders us from shunning scenes of misery; and the pain we feel, prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer; and all this antecedent to any reasoning, by an instinct that works us to its own purposes, without our concurrence. (Burke 93)

Because regarding pain is delightful, the spectator is attracted to it. But, because it also creates uneasiness in the spectator, they then desire to relieve it. Burke assumes that all individuals will

5. It is important to note that Burke distinguishes delight from pleasure, calling it a "species of relative pleasure" and using it to name "the sensation which accompanies the removal of pain or danger" (84).

experience this uneasy pleasure because the senses through which individuals experience empirical input operate identically.[6] Pleasure in pain is, therefore, an inevitable feature of human nature—and it is a providential one, providing the basis for sympathy and community.

Burke's insistence on the necessity of delight when regarding pain reflects the Hobbesian assumption that pleasure and pain are fundamental to human motivation as well as a physiological framework for understanding sympathy that he inherits from Hume. Because Burke presumes that sympathy allows an individual to *feel* what the other is feeling, there is little reason to engage with that other if they are feeling pain unless some sort of compensatory feeling of pleasure accompanies it. It is thus that Burke believes—problematically, no doubt—that the "delight" one feels in the pain of others is a type of providential bait, attracting people to scenes of misfortune, which they "would shun with the greatest care" if the sympathetic feeling inspired by such scenes "was simply painful" (92).[7]

Moreover, Burke "can never persuade [him]self that pleasure and pain are mere relations, which can only exist when contrasted" (81). Instead, he "discern[s] clearly that there are positive pains and pleasures, which do not at all depend upon each other" (81). The discernment that pain and pleasure are both positive sensations, admittedly based only on his own personal experiences and observations, is presented in direct contrast to such thinkers as Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hume. Whereas Locke, in *An Essay on Human Understanding* (1690), contends that the

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6. Burke minimizes the obvious inconsistency of people's reactions to stimuli by noting that they arise merely from acquired tastes or individual associations that have nothing to do with the nature of the experience itself. The consequences of these inconsistencies, as trivial as their causes might be, are not so deftly treated.

7. Terry Eagleton calls this explanation as "ingenious as it is implausible," posing an important objection to Burke's reasoning: "Why should we put an end to our pleasure by rushing to the aid of the injured, unless the impulse to help is always for some reason stronger than the pleasure itself?" (171). Why indeed.

diminution of pain leads to pleasure and vice versa, Burke contends that the diminution of pain is merely delight, not positive pleasure, and the diminution of pleasure is usually indifference, and in extreme cases grief, neither of which is positive pain. To demonstrate this, Burke asks us to

> recollect in what state we have found our minds upon escaping some imminent danger, or on being released from the severity of some cruel pain. We have on such occasions found, if I am not much mistaken, the temper of our minds in a tenor very remote from that which attends to the presence of positive pleasure; we have found them in a state of sobriety, impressed with a sense of awe, in a tranquility shadowed with horror. (82) [8]

If pain and pleasure are not opposing ends of a spectrum of sensation, then the experience of the one is not contingent on the absence of the other. This point is important because it allows Burke to argue that aesthetic pleasure and pain can result simultaneously from the same stimulant.

Burke thus modifies a few aspects of Hume's formulation of sympathy in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). For Hume, exposure to the experiences of others produces a compulsory physical impression in the brain that results in a parallel, though diminished, sensation in the body. This sensation, *either* pleasurable *or* painful is understood with reference to the self and does not necessarily produce sympathetic or sociable feelings.[9] Take, for example, Hume's assessment of sympathy with the rich and the poor: "Upon the whole, there remains nothing,

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8. That is to say, one experiences the sublime. Burke's unique distinction between pain and pleasure provides the foundation for his speculations regarding the aesthetic experiences of the sublime and beautiful as well as the stimuli that trigger those experiences and the physiological ways in which they operate.

9. In "Wordsworth, Sentimentalism, and the Defiance of Sympathy," Nancy Yousef discusses how this aspect of Hume's sympathy leads to serious "epistemological" problems. As shown above, sympathy does not necessarily produce moral feelings for Hume, therefore "it is a paradox of Hume's ethics that sympathy turns out to be a powerful natural affection potentially in conflict with a sense of justice that seems to require another order of sympathy altogether" (207). See Yousef's article, also, for a discussion of another epistemological problem of sympathy, "uncertainty" in Shaftesbury and Smith, which she discusses through a reading of Wordsworth's episode of the discharged soldier.

which can give us an esteem for power and riches, and a contempt for meanness and poverty, except the principle of *sympathy*, by which we enter into the sentiments of the rich and poor, and partake of their pleasure and uneasiness" (234). Whereas the spectator enters into the rich man's power and happiness through sympathy, the sight of the poor man, though pitiful to be sure, forces the spectator to enter into all of his negative sensations. In this way, pity is an "uneasiness," which Hume argues, "shou'd naturally, as in all other cases, produce hatred" (245). Sympathy for the poor man produces an unqualified sensation of pain in the spectator and, without the compensation of a self-regarding pleasure, is tantamount to hatred.

To account for the considerable anecdotal evidence that painful phenomena *can* provoke compassion rather than hatred or delight, Wordsworth insists that some "subtle combinations" of pleasure and pain must be at work, producing an "overbalance of enjoyment" that is not dependent on the relative importance or happiness of the self, as Hume would say, or derived from the fact of the other's pain in itself, as Burke would say. The *necessary* "overbalance of enjoyment" in sympathy comes from "the contemplation of particular facts" that leads to an understanding of the "general principles" of human nature ("Preface" 606). This enjoyment is put under no extraordinary strain when the poet contemplates facts that are beautiful, uplifting, or even somber. However, it is incredibly strained when those facts are woeful, cruel, or ugly. For this reason, the painful aspects of human nature, which Wordsworth encounters so dramatically in the devastation following the French Revolution, help to make visible the structure and source of Wordsworth's sympathetic pleasure, which can be distinguished from the sadistic or the masochistic.

In his defensive assertion that he "would not be misunderstood," Wordsworth seems to be aware of the potential conclusions that could be drawn from his proposition that sympathy with

pain *must* produce pleasure ("Preface" 606). Therefore, he takes care to present his position more moderately than Burke's unabashed assessment that we take delight in pain. Though Burke is quick to explain that this delight performs a necessary social function, the implicit cruelty in his view of human nature is a vulgarity that Wordsworth, requesting a little patience and understanding, does not choose to share. Though Wordsworth is unwilling to espouse Burke's conclusion about the nature of mankind, he shares Burke's sense of the necessity of pleasure in pain, but accounts for it much differently: this pleasure derives from a knowledge of mankind that becomes synonymous with love.

However, there is the discontinuity between the ordinary man's sensitivity to pleasure and the poet's. Wordsworth defines the poet as "a man ... endued with *more* lively sensibility, *more* enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a *greater* knowledge of human nature, and a *more* comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices *more* than other men in the spirit of life that is in him" ("Preface" 603 emphases added). This greater sensibility makes the poet receptive to the pleasures of understanding and loving human nature that can overbalance the pain that is sure to have "no trivial influence/ On ... a good man's life" — the object of his study ("Tintern Abbey" ll. 33-34). Much like the anatomist, who "feels that his knowledge is pleasure" no matter how "painful may be the objects with which [his] knowledge is connected" ("Preface" 606), Wordsworth finds an overbalance of enjoyment in his knowledge of human nature, even at its worst. Such is not the case for the paradoxically *less* sensitive reader, who will be overwhelmed by pain and therefore deterred from understanding human nature. For, as Wordsworth insists, where there is no pleasure there is no knowledge, be it anatomical or aesthetic. So the question

remains, how does one convey pleasure in pain to those incapable of finding an overbalance of enjoyment from a knowledge of and love for "the spirit of life" ("Preface" 603)?

The "Preface" implicitly focuses on this question, but its answer is highly unusual: meter. I will argue that Wordsworth's peculiar emphasis on meter as a way of ensuring that pleasure eclipses pain in poetry for the ordinary man, who is incapable of accessing the same pleasures as the poet, is structurally resonant with the monistic worldview so often observable in his verses. The same structure of thought that allows Wordsworth to position meter as a point of access to pleasure in pain also allows him to reconceptualize the sympathetic process in his poetry on the basis of a "porous," even "un-buffered," subjectivity—a subjectivity that threatens to introduce as many pains as it soothes. For Charles Taylor, the porous subject exists in the pre-modern "enchanted" world, in which "meaning is already there in the object/agent, it is there quite independently of us; it would be there even if we didn't exist. And this means that the object/agent can communicate this meaning to us, impose it on us" (*Secular Age* 33). That is to say, the external world is enchanted with meaning, agency, and power capable of infiltrating and affecting the self. However, with the "disenchantment" of modernity, "we make the rigorous distinction between mind and body, and relegate all thought and meaning to the realm of the intra-mental. We have to set up a firm boundary ... which defines the buffered self." (Taylor *Secular Age* 131). The "buffered" self, no longer vulnerable to being affected by external meaning, is also "disengaged" from its "whole surroundings, natural and social" (*Secular Age* 41-42). As such, Taylor notes, "there have been frequent attempts to 'reenchant' the world," to create a sense of engagement rather than disconnection (*Varieties of Secularism* 304). Romanticism is a case in point. The monistic worldview that Wordsworth exhibits allows him to

conceive of a newly "un-buffered" subject position that is not disengaged from its surroundings, but open to and determined by others and the world.

Wordsworth's assessment of the pleasure of meter is a commonly discussed aspect of the "Preface"—perhaps because it is so odd and unclearly developed.[10] He reasons:

> if the words by which this excitement is produced are in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger in that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feelings. ("Preface" 609)

Because the words themselves are capable of making deeply exhilarating impressions on the reader, [11] the poet must take care, through the "co-presence of something regular,"[12] to mitigate the excitement before it becomes overwhelming and unpleasant. To demonstrate that "there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition, especially in

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10. See, for example, Brennan O'Donnell's impressively thorough and technical *The Passion of Meter: A Study of Wordsworth's Metrical Art* (1995). Using Wordsworth's reflections on meter in the "Preface" and the 1804 letter to John Thelwall, which "provide important and hitherto overlooked evidence about his understanding of the interplay of diction, syntax, and meter," O'Donnell argues that "Wordsworth's resistance to contemporary developments in prosodic theory and practice is of primary importance in reading Wordsworth metrically" (28, 31). Such metrical readings are important to O'Donnell, who claims that Wordsworth's prosody is much more complex, purposeful, and varied than typically acknowledged by critics.

11. The transmission of feelings from one person to another through the impressions created by words follows neatly with Hume's mechanistic conception of sympathy, as Adela Pinch has shown in *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen.*

12. This phrase originates in Coleridge's *Notebooks*, Rowan Boyson points out, "which describe two key impulses of mankind as the pleasure taken in 'variety' and the pleasure taken in 'uniformity'" (112). Such pleasures form "a possible analog for 'small but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement,'" for reasons that I will examine in depth (Boyson 112).

rhyme, than in prose," Wordsworth appeals "to the Reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the re-perusal of the distressful parts of Clarissa Harlowe" ("Preface" 610). In Wordsworth's logic, Clarissa's trials are unpleasant to the point of deterring the common reader (but presumably not the poet) because their contemplation affords no compensatory pleasure. We can only speculate how he might have accounted for its remarkable popularity. At any rate, meter becomes more and more necessary as the subject matter becomes more and more painful because the regularity and arrangement of words gives access to a pleasure that overbalances it.

As mild and inoffensive as such a pleasure might appear, James Averill's *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering* (1980) cites this same section of the "Preface" as evidence that Wordsworth not only depended upon human suffering to excite his creative faculties, but that he was fully "aware of the peculiar moral status of sentimental pleasure" derived from that suffering (14).[13] It is the concept of "excitement" in particular that troubles Averill, who argues that "a major effort of *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Prelude* is to create and legitimize a poetry that can depend on suffering for excitement without seeming ghoulish or morbid. This effort is not

13. The pleasure of sympathizing with pain is often a point of critique for scholars because it appears to "mark [Wordsworth's] works as complicit in a conservative social ideology that could at best only sentimentalize the reality of material need" (Yousef 212). Wordsworth's disregard for material realities, and the social ideologies that create them, have dominated New Historical approaches to his work, like Marjorie Levinson's *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems* and Alan Liu's *The Sense of History*. Jonathan Bate, on the other hand, objects to the implication that Wordsworth "*ought* to have written about real economic conditions" — as in Roger Sales' "angry reading of 'Michael' which accuses the poem of ignoring where economic change comes from" and David Simpson's examination of "agricultural histories in order to establish the real state of sublunary nature in the Vale of Grasmere" (14-5). Not only do such readings "misapprehend poetry's function," they fail to appreciate an "ideology rooted in a harmonious relationship with nature [that] goes beyond ... the political model we have become used to thinking with" (Bate 29, 19-20).

entirely successful" (14).[14] Yet, it seems necessary to qualify how Wordsworth might have conceptualized excitement and where he might have located enjoyment. It is important to be attentive to the real differences between a pleasure in pain and a pleasure in the knowledge derived from pain, as we re-approach the longstanding critical interest in Wordsworth's engagement with others, especially others who are suffering.[15] As shown, there is a distinction to be made in Burke's hearty enjoyment of the "distressful parts" in both art and real life, and in Wordsworth's pleasure in gaining knowledge through pain—a knowledge that becomes synonymous with love. The *extreme* subtlety of Wordsworth's claim that this pleasure can be replicated in the sound and arrangement of words might contribute to the tendency to conflate a pleasure in the poetry with a pleasure in what is depicted by the poetry, one which is made troubling by the fact that the poetry so often depicts scenes of suffering.

Wordsworth's focus on meter as the *one* type of artistry that typifies pleasure is thus an important one to attend to. It is my hope that examining the fundamental reasons Wordsworth

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14. For an alternative reading of Wordsworth's interest in pain, especially in the *Lyrical Ballads*, see William Richey's "The Rhetoric of Sympathy in Smith and Wordsworth." For Richey, Wordsworth did not appropriate the pain of others for his own pleasure or self-satisfaction as Averill contends. Rather, Wordsworth's construction of self-focused fictional speakers in *Lyrical Ballads*— the gossipy narrator of "The Thorn" being a prime example— makes it a "collection of poems that consistently challenges the conventions of late eighteenth-century verse and ruthlessly exposes its tendencies toward egotism and self-absorption" (Richey 436).

15. For example, in "The Wordsworths, the Greens, and the Limits of Sympathy," Michelle Levy argues that Wordsworth takes a specifically Burkean pleasure in suffering, much to the expense of the sufferers, in life as well as in his poetry. Citing the tragic case of the Green children, left orphans after the drowning of their parents, Levy describes Wordsworth's curious decision to limit the monetary contributions of individual donors so as not to "rob" others of the chance to be charitable. The importance of the pleasure of benefactors in giving rather than the importance of the relief of the needy, Levy claims, also caused Wordsworth to resist compulsory taxation to support the poor as well as any measures that would remove the indigent from the community.

provides, and extrapolating from those reasons to the poetry itself, will help us to conceptualize what Rowan Boyson calls the "missing 'systematic' explanation of how pleasure is produced" upon which "his arguments all rest" (110). The explanation is especially necessary, Boyson insists, because the idea of pleasure "begins as an occasional topic of his poems at the beginning of the 'great decade' and gradually swells to become a central feature of his poetics," until "by the 1802 version [of the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*] pleasure is daringly made analogous with God" (110). But also, the "'systematic' explanation of how pleasure is produced" is necessary because it gives insight into Wordsworth's reconception of the sympathetic process which circumvents some of the subjective problems seen in *Oroonoko*, *Clarissa,* and *Werther* — a reconception that looks very much like appropriation of the other's experience.

We will recall that meter provides "the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state" and as a result it is capable of "tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feelings" ("Preface" 609). In other words, meter is pleasurable for two reasons: because of its regularity and because of its association with pleasure. Let's take the less interesting proposition first, meter's association with ordinary sorts of pleasure. To support this claim, Wordsworth has recourse to the same argument that allowed him handily to dismiss the elaborate and ornate forms of poetry he finds so distasteful. It is "the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or meter of the same or similar construction" ("Preface" 611). In short, that which one has been taught to associate with enjoyment will produce enjoyment. Meter will provide readers with pleasure for the beautifully simple reason that they have been conditioned to associate meter with pleasure. The other reason, regularity, is

more complicated.[16] To support this claim, Wordsworth has recourse to the argument that there is a "pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude" ("Preface" 610). W. J. B Owen and Jane Smyser call this assertion "a commonplace of eighteenth-century aesthetics," citing similar claims by Hutcheson and Kames (211). They also point out that Wordsworth's pleasure shares common ground with Smith's "aesthetic pleasures arising from a sense of difficulty overcome in the production of the artifact, which again, is based on the recognition of a disparity between the object imitated and the imitative medium" (Owen and Smyser 212). There is a pleasure in art when it inspires the imagination with an idea of its similitude to reality, despite the pleasure or displeasure of that reality. But, Wordsworth's application of this concept to meter seems like a short cut, achieving the same end without the same burden. That is to say, the similitude that is perceived in dissimilitude is not that of art with reality, but of the pattern recognition of meter. It is an artificial similitude of the metrical feet with the systematic whole of the poem. Meter, then, provides an overbalance of pleasure for the ordinary man when confronting the pain of others merely because it imposes a rhythmic whole through which the painful feelings expressed take on a soothing similitude. For this reason, the poet might use meter as a substitute pleasure for the ordinary reader who is incapable of appreciating the pleasure gleaned from the poet's potentially painful knowledge of the "spirit of life": it is the sense of each part's interconnection to the whole ("Preface" 603).

The way the poet uses pain to gain knowledge of the unified human condition, which fills him with the pleasure of love, is well demonstrated by other of Wordsworth's prose works, particularly the "Essays upon Epitaphs" (1809-10). Wordsworth shows that he can wander

16. For David Gervais, the regularity of meter allows readers to persevere through painful episodes because, "Where anguish would break down, rhythm can keep going. It supplies a kind of second consciousness which abates our consciousness of the subject itself" (6).

through churchyards as pensively as a Thomas Gray or Edward Young, but his meditations on the epitaphs lead him in rather different directions. The "mute inglorious Miltons" don't turn his thoughts toward the ambivalent tragedy of unfulfilled potential, the ephemerality of human life, or promise of immortality in the afterlife. Rather, his meditations on the language of the epitaphs result in a theorization of their composition that complements several elements of his poetic project. For this reason, W. J. B. Owen, in *Wordsworth as Critic* (1969), points to the "Essays" as an important part of the coherent poetic theory Wordsworth continually attempted to articulate throughout his career. Indeed, Owen claims, they clarify some of the most important ideas presented in "the tangled arguments of the *Preface*" (115). For instance, Wordsworth's qualms with Popeian wordplay, forced language, and unnatural images that dominated his discussion of poetry in the "Preface" are also taken up in his discussion of epitaphs in the "Essays." But also, Wordsworth's emphasis on the principle of pleasure in unity, diffusely developed through his discussion of the pleasure of similitude in dissimilitude in meter is further illuminated by his unexpected praise of the clichés common in epitaphs.

The "monotonous language of sorrow and affectionate admiration" might cause less perceptive churchyard wanderers to yearn for novelty ("Essays" 341). But, Wordsworth cautions, this desire only leads to the "errors" of wit, so notable in Pope. The beauty of the epitaphs and the pleasure to which they give access lies precisely in the monotony of their message: it is "under that veil" that one can find "a substance of individual truth" ("Essays" 341). The epitaphs collectively express "some thought or feeling belonging to the mortal or immortal part of our nature" ("Essays" 330). In other words, the consistency of their message points to the interconnection of human beings. The churchyard wanderer's recognition of this fills him with "pleasure and gratitude" no matter how "general or even trite the sentiment [that the epitaphs

express] may be" ("Essays" 330). This "pleasure and gratitude" is wholly independent of the sorrow expressed on the stones, because based on the ontological "truth" of unity and interconnection rather than a sadistic enjoyment of grief and mourning.

It is thus that Wordsworth can access and communicate a subtle combination of pleasure and pain. It is a "Sorrow that is not sorrow, but delight,/ And miserable love that is not pain/ To hear of, for the glory that redounds/ Therefore to human kind and what we are" (XII. 245-48). The sorrows in the "very heart" of individual men are strictly painful; however this pain is overbalanced because those individual hearts resonate universally, indicating the existence of a unified whole that is delightful to perceive (XII. 238). If readers, less sensitive than the poet who is "possessed of more than usual organic sensibility" and who has "also thought long and deeply," cannot appreciate the pleasure of this knowledge of humankind, they can at least feel an analogous pleasure in the interconnection of syllables and stresses ("Preface" 598).[17]

In Boyson's quest for a systematic expression of Wordsworthian pleasure she reaches a similar—and helpful—conclusion. Wordsworth's "Enlightenment idea of pleasure" is grounded in the "*sensus communis*," the common sense (16). "Because we are creatures that form part of a larger whole and exist relationally," Boyson explains, "we experience pleasure in perceiving the order to which we belong" (31).[18] The poet, who "takes special pleasure in observing the

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17. And yet, for Wordsworth, the pleasure of meter might have been more than analogous to the pleasure of human interconnection. The two may have been identical. Both the "Preface" and the "Essays" suggest that Wordsworth equates words with tangible reality. In the former, Wordsworth insists on the necessity of cautious word selection because they are "themselves powerful" (609). In the latter, "the words are converted into 'substantial realities' and language becomes the incarnation of thought" (Devlin 78). It is because "Wordsworth treats words as living things rather than mere signs" that David Haney takes "issue with deconstructive critics" in *William Wordsworth and the Hermeneutics of Incarnation* (Mahoney 135).

18. This seems to be a different way of expressing what M. H. Abrams calls Wordsworth's "version of the great commonplace of the age: unity with himself and his world is

pleasurable knowledge, that all men intuitively possess, that the world is pleasurable," is thus in agreement with the aesthetic principles of Shaftesbury and Kant (Boyson 116). As interesting and convincing as Boyson's argument is, she does not address the implications of the tributary channels of pain that make up the undercurrent of Wordsworthian pleasure and that problematize the intuition of the pleasurableness of the world. No matter how beautifully communal and unifying Wordsworthian pleasure might be, disregarding the frequency of its basis in a world of pain makes our understanding of it necessarily incomplete. Moreover, reading Wordsworthian pleasure from the context of Shaftesbury, for whom "Art must attempt to evoke the whole, without any disrupting particulars," disregards his correspondent dictate that one's "taste and moral feelings" also depend on "dissimilitude in similitude" (Boyson 30, "Preface" 610). By examining how Wordsworth's poetic pleasure overbalances pain and by using Spinoza's *Ethics*, an important influence on the thinking of both Wordsworth and Coleridge,[19] I will argue in the

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the primal and normative state of man, of which the sign is the fullness of shared life and the condition of joy" in *Natural Supernaturalism* (278). Because this idea becomes so untenable after the French Revolution, Wordsworth must find a way to recuperate a love for human nature after it has demonstrated its capacity to commit atrocities.

19. As seen, for example, by a particularly colorful episode of *Biographia Literaria.* Coleridge recalls a spy who "fancied that we were aware of our danger; for he often heard me talk of one *Spy Nozy* [Spinoza], which he was inclined to interpret of himself, and of a remarkable feature belonging to him; but he was speedily convinced that it was the name of a man who had made a book and lived long ago" (254). See Stanley Spector's "Coleridge's Misreading of Spinoza" in *The Jews and British Romanticism* for an overview of Coleridge's changeable and ambivalent feelings regarding Spinoza. Coleridge's admiration of Spinoza "caused him, according to [Henry Crabb] Robinson, to kiss Spinoza's picture" and to "identif[y] the *Ethics* as one of the three 'greatest Works since the introduction of Christianity'" (Spector 234). Nonetheless, Coleridge "had difficulty reconciling Spinoza's account of God with his own understanding of God as culled from the Gospels" and "criticized Spinoza's reasoning on the basis of premises in fact introduced not by Spinoza, but by Coleridge himself" (Spector 234, 235). Coleridge's debt to Spinoza can be seen in "The Eolian Harp" and his theory of the "one Life within us and abroad" (l. 26). This theory was short-lived, however, as Coleridge was unable to make Spinoza's ideas compatible with "a religion of transcendence," just as he was

next section that the pain of others is pleasurable when it reveals the universal interconnection between selves, who are not fundamentally distinct but expressions of a single substance. However, the "un-buffered" subject position from which this pleasure is possible is vulnerable on two fronts, necessitating the *simultaneous* perception of similitude in dissimilitude and dissimilitude in similitude. First, the sense of humankind's interconnection in an undifferentiated whole threatens to dismantle the poet's claim to unique genius. Second, an "un-buffered" subjectivity provides no boundaries between the self and negative aspects of human nature. The ugliness and cruelty which continue to erupt into Wordsworth's work threaten to become intimate parts of the self, disrupting the pleasure that can be derived from a knowledge of human nature, which his poetry strives to produce or to replicate for readers.

The subject position from which Wordsworth can perceive the continuity between self and other, often called egotistical;[20] the free conflation of the emotions of the other with the emotions of the self, often called appropriative; and the overlap between mankind, nature, and

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unable to make the Unitarianism of Joseph Priestly, by whom he was also "deeply impressed," compatible with the same (Gaskell 8). These religious difficulties with Spinoza's thought were not ones that Wordsworth necessarily shared, Paul Fry helps to show in *Wordsworth and the Poetry of What We Are.* Fry points out that Coleridge "disapprovingly diagnosed Wordsworth's preoccupations" with the "One Life" and, I would argue, with Spinoza's philosophical system as well (23). By approaching Spinoza's influence on Wordsworth directly rather than as mediated through Coleridge, it is my hope to complicate what appears to me to be oversimplified readings of the importance of Spinoza's monism in Wordsworth's thought as merely an "acceptance, revision, and eventual abandonment of Coleridge's notion of the One Life" (Ulmer 304).

20. Charges of "the 'egotism' of Wordsworth's emotional extravagance," have a long critical history (Pinch 73). Keats famously dubs Wordsworth's style the "egotistical sublime"; Hazlitt asserts that "He sees nothing but himself and the universe ... His egotism is, in this respect a madness" (323); and De Quincy complains that, in "The Ruined Cottage," the peddler "found so luxurious a pleasure in contemplating the pathetic *phthisis* of heart in the abandoned wife, that the one obvious word of counsel in her particular distress, which dotage could not have overlooked, he suppresses" (qtd. in Bate 379). It is "the intermediary presence between reader and story" of the egotistical poetic persona that Averill claims "characterizes Wordsworth's pathos" (10).

God, often called pantheistic, might be better approached from the monism of Spinoza than the duality of Descartes.[21] Marjorie Levinson's "A Spirit and a Motion: Romancing Spinoza," has already begun to show, with the help of Jonathan Israel's *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*,[22] Spinoza's pertinence to Romantic thinkers and the "clear political valence" that Spinoza's philosophy contributed to "the age's climate of ideas" (367). In fact, it is because Levinson can "hea[r] the Spinozistic echo in words such as joy, nature, affection, appetite, and motion" so strongly in Wordsworth's early poetry that she can feel, in 2007, "the presence of an active and pointed cultural engagement in poems that seem to lack a polemical element," that she had not yet felt in 1986 (367).[23] Levinson makes fascinating use of Spinoza to think about the nature of existence and the nature of death in Wordsworth, particularly in "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal," "Animal Tranquility and Decay," "We Are Seven," and "The Last of the Flock." All of these poems, Levinson argues, are involved in

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21. By approaching Wordsworth in this way, I hope to problematize claims like Gaskell's that "from Platonism and Christianity [Wordsworth] had inherited, as we still inherit, a dualistic view of the universe" (10).

22. In "Radical Enlightenment," Israel calls the commonplace "claim that Spinoza was rarely understood and had very little influence" on Enlightenment thinking "an abiding historiographical refrain which appears to be totally untrue but nevertheless, since the nineteenth century, has exerted an enduring appeal for all manner of scholars" (159). Though, "in Britain many (but by no means all) writers deemed Hobbes more widely pervasive than Spinoza," Israel argues that Hobbes "simply was not and could not have been, the source and inspiration for a systematic redefinition of man, cosmology, politics, social hierarchy, sexuality, and ethics in a more radical sense than Spinoza was" (159). This is because "Spinoza imparted order, cohesion, and formal logic to what in effect was a fundamentally new view of man, God, and the universe rooted in philosophy, nurtured by scientific thought, and capable of producing a revolutionary ideology" (Israel 160-1).

23. See Levinson's *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems* for a discussion of Wordsworth's "suppression of historical consciousness" (45).

> pondering the switch-point between two states of the individual (refusing the deep and essential category distinction between human and thing and/or animal, life and death) and between individuals and each other and their physical surround[ings]. At the same time, these poems do without recourse to a soul in the sense of some immaterial principle of continuity transcending the life-death divide. They show instead, how, "in both the natural and the moral world, qualities pass insensibly into their contraries, and things revolve upon each other." (389)

Building from this, I would also argue that Spinoza's understanding of the mind and the body as the same substance experienced in different modes and the interconnection and interdependence of "every 'self' or singular body" which "is also an effect of the striving, pulsating whole" (Levinson 381), can be a vital tool for thinking about the structure and function of sympathy and the moral sense in Wordsworth's thought, a structure that I have tried to show is so foundational as to find expression in Wordsworth's very emphasis on meter. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Cartesian perspective of the subject conveyed a sense of its being impervious to outside influences, resulting in a self that was tragically "buffered" from others and in a stunted notion of sympathy as an affirmation of one's extant passions. For Wordsworth, sympathy is not perceived as a tool to bridge, with varying success, an isolated and buffered subjectivity as was the case in *Werther*. Instead, the tendency towards "egotism" and "appropriation" are only the apparent results of an idea of subjectivity that is not fundamentally distinct from other subjects or from all of the natural world. As such, Wordsworth's monistic perception of nature and subjectivity permits him to envision a "re-enchanted" world, in which meaning can be seen "as including us, or perhaps penetrating us" (Taylor *Secular Age* 35).

In the *Ethics* (1677), Spinoza advances just such an understanding of reality, thereby not merely presenting "a solution to the dilemmas of Cartesian dualism" but rather presenting "a radical reframing of the field that produced those dilemmas" (Levinson 369). It is this reframing of "the dualistic legacy of the Cartesian tradition, which created so many problems in

physiology" that made Spinoza's philosophy especially attractive to romantic thinkers, Frederick Beiser explains in "The Paradox of Romantic Metaphysics," especially as his substance monism could be conceived as "a pantheistic identification of the divine with nature" (226). In *Spinoza's Modernity: Mendelssohn, Lessing and Heine* (2004), Willi Goetschel objects to the identification of Spinoza with pantheism, claiming it is a reinterpretation of his philosophy rather than the basis of his philosophy. Such a categorization, Goetschel argues, "requires us ... to overlook aspects that are central to [Spinoza's] thought. For, rather than taking the cue from key oppositional pairs such as God/Nature and immanence/transcendence and reconfiguring them, Spinoza proposes a fundamental change in the way these dichotomies are thought to play themselves out" (25). This fundamental change is the "scandal" of Spinoza's "theoretical framework" and also its innovation (Goethschel 5). For, "it enables one to address the particulars no longer as simply opposed to the universal but linked to and determining it. For Spinoza, the particular thus assumes a constitutive role in the construction of the universal" (Goetschel 5). My analysis takes this objection seriously, choosing to address the philosophical tenets of substance monism instead of a potential pantheism in Wordsworth's thought. This focus, I hope, will ease objections like William Ulmer's in *The Christian Wordsworth, 1798-1805* that "If the Wordsworth of 1798 was unprepared to write an explicitly Christian poetry, he was equally unprepared to endorse a conceptually rigorous pantheism" (71).

The precise nature of Wordsworth's religious thought is a complex question. Whereas Stephen Gill calls him a "profoundly religious poet," he also notes that Wordsworth's poetry "eschews doctrine and dogma and is not Christ-centered" (*The Prelude* 39-40). For M. H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*, Wordsworth's spirituality can be felt structurally rather than explicitly. For example, the poet's

circular journey in *The Prelude* mimics the Miltonic trajectory from Paradise, to its loss, and its eventual rediscovery. However, because that journey is told through the terms of personal development, "*Bildungsroman*," and poetic development, "*Künstlerroman*" Wordsworth "converts the wayfaring Christian of the Augustinian spiritual journey into the self-formative traveler of the Romantic educational journey" (Abrams 74, 284).[24] For Lori Branch, there are consistent threads in Wordsworth's religious thought that can be seen as early as his celebration of spontaneous emotions in the *Lyrical Ballads*, which "invoke free prayer as its model" in the "logic familiar from seventeenth-century enthusiasm" (176). Likewise, Wordsworth's later "interest in liturgy," which is often used by critics to indicate the "sharp disjunction between the young radical and the mature, conservative Wordsworth," is "already foreshadowed in *Lyrical Ballads*' concern with repetition" (Branch 13).[25] For Ulmer, Wordsworth's religious affiliations are not only consistent, but dogmatically Christian. Ulmer argues that the poetry from 1798 to 1805 "reveals a progressively emergent identification with Christian values," attributing the fact that "Wordsworth's earlier poetry generally ignores Christ," to the "kind of poetry he was trying to write" rather than private doubt (7, 28). Nonetheless Ulmer has some difficulty in accounting for Wordsworth's "flirtation with Coleridge's One Life idea" and seems to protest too much

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24. For Abrams, Wordsworth thus fits in with other Romantic writers who "undertook to save the overview of human history and destiny, the experiential paradigms, and the cardinal values of their religious heritage by reconstituting them in a way that would make them intellectually acceptable as well as emotionally pertinent" (66).

25. Because Wordsworth describes repetition as a tool "for *shaping* ... spontaneous responses" in the *Lyrical Ballads*, Branch locates agency in deliberate, ritualistic repetition, calling "liturgy and ritual ... the ways human beings can intervene in and shape in themselves those modes of desiring and gazing, and thus effect change in the community or nation" (182, 197). Wordsworth's concern for agency within ritual helps to account for his "leeriness ... of the Tractarians' making liturgy into a movement" and helps to refute a "host of attempts to coopt Wordsworth for Tractarianism" (Branch 13, 206).

when trying to contain the damage of Coleridge's reference to Wordsworth as a "'*Semi*-Atheist'" (19, 9). By contextualizing the "pantheistic," and even "atheistic," elements of Wordsworth's thought within the framework of Spinoza's philosophical reformulation of the universal and the particular in the *Ethics* (also called pantheistic and atheistic by turns), it is my hope to establish a clearer view of the significance of a monistic philosophy on Wordsworth's aesthetics, his view of subjectivity, and his modifications of the moral sense.

Spinoza's substance monism informs all of the arguments in the *Ethics* — from the conflation of God and nature, to the identity of mind with body, to the bondage of the affects, and to the way to achieve the ethical state of "Blessedness." These arguments all depend upon the central proposition developed early in the *Ethics*, that "Except God, no substance can be or be conceived" (93).[26] According to the definitions which Spinoza provides, a substance "is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing" (85). In other words, a substance is irreducible to any smaller conceptual part, making its "essence" self-contained, though perceivable through its attributes. Because Spinoza claims that God is "a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes" and that "there cannot be

26. In "Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Politics of Pantheism," Richard Hooton cites this tenet as potentially dangerous in the aftermath of the French Revolution because "it carries with it the political repercussions of democratic revolution. [Spinoza's] definition of Nature provides for a belief that all individuals participate equally in God-Substance and none, therefore, have the 'God-given' right to dominate others, leading Coleridge to refer to Spinoza as the prophet of democracy" (64). It is for this reason, Hooton suggests, that "Wordsworth [suppresses] his former pantheism (whether real or merely poetic) in order to minimize the threat from the State as well as to improve his image during a time in which he sought government employment" (66). As such, Hooton concludes, Wordsworth's "systematic transformation of pantheist ideas into the less radical pantheist and Christian forms found in the 1850 version" of *The Prelude* resulted from "fear of social and legal antagonism" (61, 62).

two or more substances of the same nature or attribute," it is nonsensical to suppose that there is more than one substance in existence (85, 87).[27] Spinoza attempts to demonstrate this as follows:

> Since God is an absolutely infinite being, of whom no attribute which expresses an essence of substance can be denied (by D6), and he necessarily exists (by P11), if there were any substance except God, it would have to be explained through some attribute of God, and so two substances of the same attribute would exist, which (by P5) is absurd.... Cor. 1: From this it follows most clearly, first, that God is unique, that is (by D6), that *in nature there is only one substance*, and that it is absolutely infinite (as we indicated in P10S). (94 emphasis added)

Beginning with this formulation of God as the eternal and infinite substance that forms all of nature, and thereby is synonymous with "those most general principles of order described by the fundamental laws of nature," Spinoza's understanding of the mind and body as well as the nature of individuation—both of which will be important for reconceiving of the way Wordsworth seems to play fast and loose with the mind's relationship to experiential reality and the self's relationship to others—allows him to conceive of reality in a way wholly distinct from Descartes and the model of buffered subjectivity that his thought helped to instantiate (Curley xxv).

Because Spinoza feels that he has proven that there can be only one substance in existence, he concludes that the mind and the body are necessarily of the same substance, though each is perceived through different attributes, thought and extension respectively. Descartes' mistake was to confuse the perceived differences between mind, body and soul for actual differences and, as a result, to present "occulted" theories of the animal spirits and the pineal

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27. In "Substance Monism and Identity Theory in Spinoza," Andreas Schmidt shows that it would have been equally possible for Spinoza to conclude that there are infinite substances rather than just one. Because "no shrewd Aristotelian or Cartesian would have had any trouble denying their [Spinoza's conclusions] truth and replacing them with other principles more suitable for their own purposes," the question becomes one of "Spinoza's *motive* for his substance monism" (79).

gland to explain the interaction between these substances. In the final section of the *Ethics*, Spinoza takes Descartes to task for his flawed deductions, writing with unusual passion:

> I would hardly have believed it had been propounded by so great a man, had it not been so subtle. Indeed, I cannot wonder enough that a philosopher of [Descartes'] caliber—one who had firmly decided to deduce nothing except from principles known through themselves, and to affirm nothing which he did not perceive clearly and distinctly... should assume a hypothesis more occult than any occult quality. (246)

It is only because Descartes "conceived of the mind to be so distinct from the body that he could not assign any singular cause, either of this union or of the mind itself. Instead, it was necessary for him to have recourse to the cause of the whole Universe, that is, to God"—and a God wholly different from the one that Spinoza describes (Spinoza 246).[28] Spinoza avoids the problem of accounting for the interaction between body and mind because his definition of substance allows him to conclude that the mind and the body are *not* distinct, but are "the same thing, conceived in different ways" (Curley xxxviii). Despite the substance's ability to be expressed as an attribute of thought, a mind, or as an attribute of extension, a body, it does not follow for Spinoza that the substance is thereby fundamentally distinct in those two expressions. This difficult concept can be seen as analogous to the modern understanding of the wave-particle duality of light. As we know, light can behave as both a wave and a particle simultaneously; so too does Spinoza's

28. According to Spinoza, "neither intellect nor will pertain to God's nature," making his conception of God "resolutely anti-anthropomorphic" (98, Goetschel 6). Though "the God whom Spinoza celebrates ... has not always seemed to other men to be recognizable as God," Curley points out that Spinoza, "deeply resented" accusations of atheism on that account (xxi). Indeed, God is of utmost importance in the *Ethics*, which "begins with a geometric demonstration of the existence of God ... and ends by claiming that our salvation consists in the intellectual love of God" (Curley xxi).

substance behave as a mind and as a body simultaneously and without contradiction, though these modes appear to be mutually exclusive.[29]

When Wordsworth's poetry is read from the Spinozistic perspective that "the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that," his frequent "egotistical" turns away from the experiential world toward the perceiving mind seem to be less a refusal to acknowledge reality than a shift of mode (Spinoza 119). I don't mean to say that Wordsworth does not lose himself in his own thoughts from time to time, in the conventional sense, as when he lays on the "genial pillow of the earth ... soothed by a sense of touch/ From the warm ground," while nonetheless "seeing nought, nought hearing, save/ When here and there, about the grove of Oaks/ Where was my bed, an acorn from the trees/ Fell audibly, and with a startling sound" (I. 87-89; 91-94). In this case, though the poet's mind wanders away from the reality that surrounds him, he nonetheless has a distinct and separate sense of himself as a body, experiencing the softness and warmth of ground and hearing the sounds of the grove. However, it seems a different matter when the sensations of the body are identical to, though parallel with, those in the mind. As, for example, when he writes: "while the sweet breath of Heaven/ Was blowing on my body, [I] felt within/A corresponding mild creative breeze" (I. 41-43). Or more strikingly, when physical reality is conceived as only a product of the mind:[30]

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29. It is a point of coincidental interest to note that arguments regarding light's status as *either* a wave *or* a particle were lively and divisive in the seventeenth century. Unsurprisingly, Descartes proposed that light was *only* a wave in *Le Monde* or the *Treatise on the Light* (1629-33).

30. Gaskell identifies the relationship between the creating mind and nature, between "perception and imagination," as the primary theme of *The Prelude*, calling the poem "a sustained mediation of the mind on its own nature, its origins and powers" (58, 42). In *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814*, Geoffrey Hartman similarly considers how "the double

> Oft in those moments such a holy calm
> Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
> That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
> Appeared like something in myself, a dream
> A prospect in my mind. (II. 367-371)

The fluidity with which Wordsworth allows himself to reconceive physical reality as mental reality, and the seamless correspondence he perceives between them, is for him a matter of truth. It allows him to cease to be a "slave/ Of that false secondary power, by which/ In weakness we create distinctions, then/ Deem that our puny boundaries are things/ Which we perceive, and not which we have made" (II. 220-24). By overcoming the falsely conceived distinctions between the world and the mind and between others and the self, the poet feels that "The unity of all has been revealed" (II. 226).

For Spinoza, the recognition that "the order and connection of ideas ... is *the same as* the order and connection of things" is also the basis of truth (121 emphasis added). Put another way, "for any given mental state x of substance, there is a state x^* of substance that exactly corresponds to x , except that x^* is physical" (Miller 107). The substance is and must be identical to itself, even when perceived under different attributes; as such the only "true" and "adequate" thoughts will correspond exactly to the physical world. The recognition of the precise correspondence between "action from within and from without:/ The excellence, pure spirit, and best power/ Both of the object seen, and the eye that sees" is a perception that Wordsworth believes is "fit/ To be transmitted and made visible/ To other eyes" (XII. 377-9; 371-3). The pleasure that the poet gains in his privileged access to the nature of mankind makes him "abundant recompense" for the pains of lending his "plaintive voice" to "the sorrows of the

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agency of inward and outward ... informs every act of poetry" for Wordsworth (36). However, because this double movement between mind and reality indicates Wordsworth's inability wholly to transcend nature through the imagination, Hartman considers it a poetic failure.

earth" (XIII. 382-83). For those sorrows are "center[ed] all in love, and in the end/ All gratulant if rightly understood" (XIII. 384-85).

The "re-enchantment" of such a worldview is only too apparent in much of Wordsworth's most gorgeous poetry. In the famous "Blessed Babe" episode of Book II, for example, the underlying unity of the universe allows for the seamless human connection that permits the "Mother's eye" to transmit feelings into the infant "Like an awakening breeze" (II. 243, 245).[31] Because the newborn child, like the poet, is not enslaved by the "puny boundaries" imagined by men and imposed onto reality, he is "eager to combine/ In one appearance, all the elements/ And parts of the same object, else detached/ And loth to coalesce" (II. 247-50). He can perceive that "there exists/ A virtue which irradiates and exalts/ All objects through all intercourse of sense" (II. 258-60). The child is further blessed because his wholeness is not limited to include only self and mother, but because "the filial bond/ Of nature" makes him an integral part of "the world" and "this *active* universe" (II. 263, 264, 266). Moreover he, as "an agent of the one great mind,/ Creates, creator and receiver both" (II. 271- 73).[32] The inextricability of the child from others and God is the "first/ Poetic spirit of our human life" and it is the "truth" that the poet, filled with love at the thought, must tell.

Not only are minds, bodies, and souls—that is to say, persons— modifications of the one substance, in "Spinoza's famous doctrine of panpsychism," all *things* are modifications of the

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31. Critics often pause over this passage both because of its beauty and because of its "astonishing breakthroughs into the language of psychology familiar to us today" (Gill *The Prelude* 2). Indeed, a Lacanian reading almost seems to unfold itself. In the imaginary, prior to the mirror stage and its subsequent fragmentation, the baby, not yet a subject, exists in a state of illusory wholeness with the mother.

32. Gaskell contextualizes this passage through "what Coleridge would later call the primary imagination, and this is a creative act" (58).

substance in exactly the same way: they are the idea of God extended (Curley xxviii). Edwin Curley explains:

> For if the human mind is just the idea existing in God of the human body, there must be an idea in God of every other mode of extension, then every other body must have a mind in precisely the same sense that man does. Spinoza puts this by saying that all things are animate, but he hastens to add that they are animate in different degrees. A mind's capacity for thought is strictly correlated with its body's capacity for interaction with its environment. So the minds of very simple things, which can only act and be acted on in very limited ways, are capable of thought only to a very limited extent. We are not to imagine that stones feel pain, much less that they think of Vienna. (xxviii)

The extended natural world is exactly parallel to its incarnation in thought and is a modification or an expression of God, just as is man. If the idea of God animates all things in the same way, then mankind, the natural world, even the laws of nature are capable of having meaning and agency in precisely the same way, though to different degrees. Meaning is therefore not located in the mind of buffered individuals but emanates from the mind of God—that is, from the substance— into all of reality, endowing people, mountains, and streams with an identical animation while insisting on their deep interconnection.

Critics have frequently remarked on the peculiar relationship between person and thing in Wordsworth's poetry. For example, in *Wordsworth and the Poetry of What We Are* (2008), Fry describes this interconnection as "the heart of [Wordsworth's] poetic originality" and also as an important point of distinction in the "conjectural pantheism" of Wordsworth and Coleridge's thought (9, 143). As Gaskell has shown, Coleridge "struggl[ed] to unify—or rather to see as in reality unified—three realms we usually think of as discontinuous: the inorganic world of rocks and stones, the organic world of plant and animal, and the world of mind and spirit" (9). Instead, Fry suggests, Coleridge preferred to view "the 'fixed and dead' natural world [as] resurrected by the repetition in the finite human mind of divine creative life" (143). Not so for Wordsworth,

who embraced the continuity of even the most discontinuous realms. For Fry, "Wordsworth discovers the revelation of being itself in the nonhumanity that 'we' share with the nonhuman universe" (x). That is to say, because "the oneness figured most frequently by rocks and stones is inanimate, not animate," Wordsworth's conception of the human insists on the presence of the "nonhuman in human identity itself" (Fry 143, 10).[33]

Adam Potkay similarly explores the relationship between the human and the non-human in Wordsworth's "lyric apprehension of the life of things, a life that human beings, with their passions and actions and words, share almost as equals with other thinking things and indeed with all things" (398, 400). Combining "thing theory", Heidegger, and, to a lesser extent, Spinoza,—"from whom Wordsworth borrows selectively,"[34] — Potkay insists that "Wordsworth uses *things* in a way that blurs distinctions between persons and nonpersons, between entities and events" (397, 395). Thereby he offers "a way beyond not only ('Romantic') individualism but anthropocentrism itself, and in Romantic studies, critical initiatives tethered to Cartesian and Kantian models of subject and object" (Potkay 392). Though I certainly agree that Wordsworth "blurs" the distinction between person and thing and mind and nature, the monistic thought that allows him to do so also causes him to blur the distinction between self and other. The consequences of this blurring have not been adequately explored, especially with relation to Wordsworth's reformulation of sympathy and subjectivity. The perceived continuity between self and other changes the terms of sympathy and the moral sense in important, even drastic,

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33. Gaskell takes the opposing view, claiming that in *The Prelude* "we have been alerted by a number of suggestions that nature has a life akin to ours—a life of feeling, even perhaps of consciousness" (11).

34. To demonstrate this borrowing of what Potkay refers to as "Spinoza's pantheistic view of God," he cites the following "manuscript fragment" written by Wordsworth in February 1799: "[A]ll beings live with God, themselves/ Are God, existing in one mighty whole" (397).

ways. It allows us to ask a fascinating question: What happens to the sympathetic process and the moral senses it produces if one rejects the isolated and buffered subject position on which it is usually based?

At this point, a disclaimer is necessary—even overdue. I am not suggesting that Spinoza is inherently compatible with the most basic assumptions regarding the function and purpose of sympathy as the moral sense. Spinoza attaches no value to the emotions arising from external stimuli, nor does he believe that ethical behavior, moral truth, or social cohesion are accessible through sensibility. On the contrary, Spinoza stringently argues for the necessity of conquering the passions produced when an individual is affected by others, be it physically or mentally. The affects, which he equates with "Human Bondage" in the fourth part of the *Ethics*, cause individuals to believe that their power for action has reached a greater degree of perfection (producing joy) or a lesser degree of perfection (producing sadness). However, because joy and sadness are "confused idea[s]"—that is, they are not "perceived through [man's] essence alone"— a person who "is determined to act" by the passions "is acted on ... which does not follow from his virtue" (Spinoza 196, 211). For Spinoza, it is thus necessary to achieve rational mastery over the affects that cause the passions in order for the mind to conceive an adequate understanding of reality and, ultimately, of God, which is "the greatest thing the mind can understand" (213).

That being said, we might still benefit from exploring the Spinozistic threads of Wordsworth's ontology if we bear in mind how Wordsworth might have, to use Levinson's amusing phrase, "Romanced Spinoza"—how he might have made him compatible with Romantic ideals. As it turns out, such "selective borrowing" was not a particularly unusual thing. Indeed, Taylor notes that in the "widespread invocations of Spinoza in the Romantic period," his

philosophy was frequently adapted to the point that "Spinoza himself would have been astonished to hear the doctrines for which he was admired" (*Sources* 371, 314). Put more pointedly, "the romantics profoundly re-interpreted Spinoza ... in ways that would have made Benedictus turn in his grave" (Beiser 226).[35] On the basis of adaptation and reinterpretation, Spinoza "emerges as a forerunner of that great quasi-pantheistic sense of a cosmic spirit running through the whole of nature and coming to expression in mankind, which seized the imagination of a whole generation" (Taylor *Sources* 314).

It is my claim that Wordsworth's poetics are based on the recognition of the "cosmic spirit" that unites reality, but that he reinterprets the manner in which one can perceive that spirit aesthetically and through the imagination— even though such a move might have provoked some degree of grave-spinning. For Spinoza, the recognition of the "cosmic spirit" can only be achieved by conquering the affects and intellectually understanding that all things, persons, and ideas are modifications of the substance, of God. For Wordsworth, the recognition of the "cosmic spirit" can be achieved by appreciating the "universal" resonance of the affects, which to him is a testament to the interconnection of individual to individual and individual to nature and which overbalances even painful stimuli with pleasure.

Nonetheless, whether this sense of monism is perceived intellectually, with the suppression of the affects, or imaginatively, with the celebration of the affects, the result is one and the same: a universal love for all things. Spinoza describes this universal love as the state of blessedness, which is "the ultimate end of a man who is led by reason" (239). Wordsworth describes this universal love as the province of the poet, whose ultimate end is to find a way to

35. For example, by making the "mechanism" of Spinoza's system, compatible with "all the latest advances in electricity, magnetism, and chemistry" (Beiser 226).

inspire it in others, thereby "bind[ing] together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time" ("Preface" 604). Because the poet has a "greater promptness to think and feel" the unity of "human society," he is uniquely responsible for conveying this feeling to his readers. For someone like Averill, Wordsworth's interest in the pain of others derives from the fact that suffering is intense. A sensation seeker, Wordsworth fixates on scenes of suffering to quicken the pulse and churn the blood, taking pleasure in the animation that he feels from a pain that is not his own, nor to which he is properly compassionate. However, if Wordsworth is situated within the fuller context and peculiarities of his poetic theory, it is possible to reconsider this fixation on suffering as a component of a different way of understanding an un-buffered subjectivity, receptive to the influences of an "enchanted" world and desirous of creating the pleasure of love despite the pain it perceives.

Thus far, I have explored how the pain of individual experience can be overbalanced by the pleasure of perceiving the monism of all human beings, indeed of all reality, which the poet is able then to replicate for the reader, even if only through meter. But, this un-buffered view of subjectivity creates problems for the poet who never can un-know the security of the buffered self, which "sees itself as invulnerable, as master of the meaning of things for it" (Taylor 38). For this reason, Taylor argues, attempts to recreate the porous self are "more fragile, often evanescent, subject to doubt" (*Varieties of Secularism* 304). *The Prelude* dramatizes these vulnerabilities and doubts, which include the threat of losing one's individuated identity— a loss that is doubly distressing because the loss of the self also entails the loss of access to the universal— and the threat of internalizing the evils of the other. The first vulnerability can be seen, for example, in Wordsworth's description of London, which is:

> To the *whole swarm* of its inhabitants;
> An *undistinguishable* world to men,

> The slaves unrespited of low pursuits
> Living amid the *same* perpetual flow
> Of trivial objects, *melted and reduced*
> *To one identity*, by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end; (VII. 701-705, emphases added)

The industrialized cityscape forms the perfect backdrop for highlighting the dehumanizing effects of living amid the flow of trivial objects without meaningful connections to the world. The "slaves unrespited of low pursuits" are united by "differences," because these differences "have no law, no meaning, and no end." That is, each individual's estrangement from purpose and from others paradoxically unites them into a homogeneous group. But while describing this unifying alienation, Wordsworth repeatedly laments the loss of a discreetly bounded selfhood, indicating that the city dwellers have caused him to reflect on problems of subjectivity in addition to problems of modernization. In the natural image of the "swarm," for example, Wordsworth describes humankind as a "whole," "undistinguishable" as individuals. The swarm is a suggestive idea, evoking a shared activity and purpose that can be found only when each of the constituent members integrates its individual motion into the motion of the group. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that it is used in such a clearly negative way. The integration of London's "inhabitants" into an undifferentiated whole is in no way evocative of a sympathetic or transcendent connection between individuals in this instance.

When read through "Spinoza's radically modern universalist thrust," however, the anxiety of the swarm is perfectly logical (Goetschel 6). As mentioned, Goetschel calls Spinoza's philosophy most radical in his "reconception of the universal and the particular" (7). This reconception

> rests on a notion of the significance of the particular that figures the particular/universal no longer as [a] disjunctive pair that excludes the possibility of thinking the particular as connected to the universal, that can only posit a universal as devoid of any particularity. For Spinoza, the particular and the

> universal are imagined in a framework that exceeds an exclusionary mode. Spinoza allows them to be thought together, connected in a continuous chain of being that neither descends nor ascends but connects all that exist 'geometrically' in nonhierarchal fashion. (Goetschel 6)

In other words, it is not the case that the universal exists without reference to the particular. Rather, "any universal at which we might arrive is always a universal notion based on the particular ... As a result, the universal no longer appears a criterion of truth" (Goetschel 7). The "truth" of the universal is only as good as the "truth" of the particulars that constitute it. The swarm of humanity that Wordsworth views with such disdain is negative because the particular individuals are "melted and reduced" into a whole whose meaning is invalidated because its contingent particulars no longer exist. The "vast Mill" of London, which is "vomiting" out "Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms," does violence to its inhabitants not merely because they are impoverished within it, nor solely because they are separated from the natural world (VII. 693-5). The violence is effected as their individuated identities are lost and with them the hope of any universal meaning.

In the *Ethics,* there is a mechanism that "saves Spinoza's monism from meltdown into undifferentiated unity," not fully present in Wordsworth's thought: conatus (Levinson 382). From Spinoza's perspective, "Bodies are distinguished from one another by reason of motion and rest, speed and slowness, and not by reason of substance" (125). Conatus, literally "attempt," "endeavor," or "exertion" in Latin, conceives of the individuation of persons and things as the result of their drive to exist. In fact, they are inseparable from this drive: "the striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but *the actual essence of the thing*" (Spinoza 159 emphasis added). A body strives to maintain its individuation from the bodies that act upon it by acting upon them. Therefore, each self, as such, "is sustained and 'continually regenerated' by other bodies" (Levinson 383). Whereas Spinoza's concept of conatus allows him

to account for individuation, Wordsworth struggles with the possible collapse of an un-buffered subjectivity, a threat that informs his discomfort of the crowds of London. I argue that this struggle motivates Wordsworth's claim that our "taste and our moral feelings" depend not only on the perception of similitude in dissimilitude, but also on the perception of *dissimilitude in similitude* ("Preface" 610). Though this dual perception does not shore up the boundaries of the self, it does provide Wordsworth with a justification for continuing to appreciate individuals as individuals—thereby also making space for a perception of himself as the poet whose uniqueness remains intact and who stands as a testament to the universal "truth" of human nature.

Without dissimilitude in similitude there are no particulars by which to constitute the universal, making a pleasure in it impossible. Though dwelling on the displeasure of the "overflowing Streets" of London is contrary to the stated goals of poetry, it might be explained by the poet's dissatisfaction with the city's refusal to yield up any resonant affects through which to access a monistic universality (VII. 595). Instead, Wordsworth repines:

> ... the face of every one
> That passes by me is a mystery.
> Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
> By thoughts of what, and whither, when and how,
> Until the shapes before my eyes became
> A second-sight procession, such as glides
> Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
> And all the ballast of familiar life,
> The present and the past; hope, fear; all stays,
> All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man
> Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known. (VII. 597- 607)

Wordsworth is unable to access the "what, and whither, when and how" of the experiences and passions of others, no matter how ceaselessly he looks into the mysterious faces that pass him. The others, "neither knowing me, nor known," do not give access to the compensatory pleasure of universal love capable of overbalancing the pains of London. Wordsworth's confidence in his

own poetic identity is thereby "oppressed" by doubts and he ceases to advance the "heroic argument" of *The Prelude*: to articulate what is in "the very heart of man" (III. 182, XII, l. 238).

To regain the pleasure of universality that makes it "not sorrow, but delight" to look into these hearts, Wordsworth retreats to nature, claiming that its love leads to a "Love of Mankind" (VIII). And yet, before describing the natural world, the poet fixates on his interactions with the individuals that populate the countryside. Indeed, the "sounds" of the Grasmere festival, "which are heard/ Up to [Helvellyn's] summit" immediately upon the opening of Book VIII seem to provide the "ennobling harmony" that Wordsworth attributes to "the Spirit of Nature" in the closing lines of Book VII (VIII. 1-2, VII. 736, 741). As he descends into the scene with "a watchful eye/ Which with the outside of human life/ Not satisfied, must read the inner mind," the poet finds that which was missing "on the broadening Causeway" of London, where depthless and indecipherable others seemed so many "written characters, with chalk inscribed/ Upon the smooth flat stones" (VIII. 66-68, VII. 217-18). The poet's "watchful eye" not only sees the beauty of the "sweet Lass of the Valley," but that she sells "Fruits of her Father's Orchard" and, moreover, that she is "half pleased with, half ashamed/ Of her new calling" (VIII. 37, 39, 42-3). The particulars of the girl's association with the valley, her relationship to her family, and her activity in the community are the stuff of "ordinary human interests" (VIII. 167). But for this reason they "faste[n] on the heart" of the poet who claims to access a universal love through them (VIII. 169). Gill might be skeptical that "the poet's ... love for the inhabitants of his particular nook of earth" leads him to "anything as grand as Loving Humankind" (*The Prelude* 75). But I would argue that the two types of love are identical for Wordsworth because he, like Spinoza, "relocate[s] the universal within the particularity of every human being, just as Spinoza's ontology does this for everything that exists" (Gotschel 9). For Wordsworth, loving a

particular human being in a particular nook of earth *is* as grand as loving humankind and, "what we have loved/ Others will love; and we may teach them how" (XIII. 444-5).

Such a lesson is taught in the "Preface" as Wordsworth describes strategies for fostering enjoyment in one's perception of the structure of the whole while nevertheless preserving a perception of each individual part:

> the language of such Poetry as I am recommending is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, *will of itself form a distinction far greater* than would at first be imagined, and will *entirely separate* the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and *if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that the dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind.* (602 emphasis added)

The poet's "true taste and feeling" allows him to find universalizing particulars in the "language really spoken" by individuals that elevate his poetry above the "vulgar" circumstances in which that language was uttered. Even if the "common man" is incapable of perceiving this, he will still be satisfied by the dissimilitude of the poems from the meanness of "ordinary life" by virtue of meter being "superadded thereto"— the very device that imposes a simultaneous similitude upon dissimilitude.

This "tangled argument" can again be illuminated by turning to Wordsworth's treatment of epitaphs (Owen 115). Because each epitaph "speaks of a particular person who is now dead and lamented," it is up to the poet to "achieve a reconciliation of general truth with a particular case" (Devlin 99). For D. D. Devlin, in *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Epitaphs*, Wordsworth's "heroic attempt at inclusiveness" in reconciling particulars with general truth is "his greatest achievement" (6). Each epitaph is appreciated for itself and for its place within the churchyard, which is a composite of the individual stones and expressive of the consistent "thought or feeling ... of our nature" ("Essays" 330). So too can each metrical foot be appreciated for what it

individually expresses and for its place within the rhythm of the poem, which is a composite of its lines and expressive of a unified thematic message. The poet, whose "theme/ [is] No other than the very heart of man/ As found among the best of those who live," experiences an overbalance of pleasure in recognizing and loving the interconnection of human existence based on particular individuals, even if those individuals are expressing grief or experiencing pain (XII. 237-39). The same quality that allows him to arrange syllables, words, and lines into poetry allows him to maintain a view of individuals as unique and as the collective face of human nature.

The poet, therefore, is someone "who hath among least things/ An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts/ As parts, but with a feeling of the whole" (VII. 711-3). He strives (with all of the word's Spinozistic connotations) to perceive that which is unique among the "parts as parts" by telling the stories of individuals— not those who are homogenized in the city, but those who appear along "the lonely roads" where the poet can see "into the depth of human souls,/ Souls that appear to have no depth at all/ To vulgar eyes" (XII. 163, 166-8). It is through these souls alone that one can perceive "a feeling of the whole." As such, I would argue that the space that Wordsworth provides for the individual, for the perception of dissimilitude in similitude, modifies the terms of the "subjective universality" that Boyson describes as the basis for Wordsworthian pleasure (41). Though the *sensus communus,* which allows the subject to feel its relationship to the whole of human kind, does account for one aspect of Wordsworthian pleasure, there is an additional pleasure in maintaining a sense of individual consciousness, paradoxically all the more necessary in a monistic worldview.

The Prelude is "a landmark in European literature because it records the coming into being of an individual consciousness at exactly the moment when European society was being

tortured into extreme self-consciousness through the convulsions of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic war that followed" (Gill *The Prelude* 3). But *The Prelude* does not only tell the story of the "growth of the poet's mind" in all of its uniqueness. It tells the story of an individual mind that is a representative model of the human mind. As the French Revolution books of *The Prelude* show, such a mind is not able to find a separate peace for itself in the midst of European convulsions. Instead, Wordsworth's treatment of the French Revolution reveals an additional anxiety of un-buffered subjectivity: what happens when human consciousness—into which the poet is an integrated part—has unlovable characteristics? The deep interconnection between self and other of a monistic worldview insists that the unlovable characteristics of the other are also a part of the self.

It is perhaps for this uncomfortable reason that Wordsworth is often charged with attempting to appreciate humanity in an abbreviated state—one in which its ugliness does not exist. Just as Wordsworth insists that the judicious poet will "remov[e] what would otherwise be painful and disgusting" from his poetry in the "Preface," so too does he sanction the suppression of "painful and disgusting" character traits when commemorating the deceased in the "Essays on Epitaphs" (604):

> The character of a deceased friend or beloved kinsman is not seen, no—nor ought to be seen, otherwise than as a tree through a tender haze or a luminous mist, that spiritualizes and beautifies it; that takes away, indeed, but only to the end that the parts which are not abstracted may appear more dignified and lovely; may impress and affect the more. Shall we say, then, that this is not truth, nor a faithful image; and that, accordingly, the purposes of commemoration cannot be answered?—It *is* truth, and of the highest order; for, though doubtless things are not apparent which did exist; yet, the objects being looked at through this medium, parts and proportions are brought into distinct view which before had been only imperfectly or unconsciously seen: it is truth hallowed by love. (332-3)

Because the epitaphs reconcile the particular with the general—the individual life with a universal truth about human nature— the particular should convey that which is "dignified and

lovely," not the faults and imperfections that Wordsworth can barely bring himself to acknowledge, naming them vaguely as those "things ... not apparent which did exist." The epitaphs need not attend to the defects in character, but, like poetry, present only that which will not compromise the enjoyment of feeling the unity between human beings. This truth, "of the highest order," allows Wordsworth to focus in on the "imperfectly or unconsciously seen" beauty of the human condition in which he has (almost) unshakeable faith. Despite the poet's spiritualizing gaze, ugliness continues to erupt into the truth that Wordsworth would "hallow by love." The fact he does look at this ugliness, in spite of his own advice to omit it, leads him to his greatest challenge in *The Prelude*, which is to find a way to love human nature with an understanding of its capacity for evil.

Many critics have discussed the devastating impact that the French Revolution, Robespierre, and the Napoleonic wars had on Wordsworth politically and personally. For Alan Liu, in *Wordsworth: The Sense of History,* the structure of the Revolution books forces the reader to partake in this devastation. Through a series of generic shifts (from Tour Poem, to Narrative Poem, to Lyric Poem) and through a series of "paradigm shifts" within each genre, readers feel Wordsworth's youthful enthusiasm, they misread history along with him, and they are also ultimately betrayed by that history. This shifting, Liu explains, is characteristic of revolution itself, "in which protagonists in one phase of action turn antagonists in the next, necessarily perpetuat[ing] the state of war as the very condition of its being" (378). For Gill, Wordsworth's depiction of the Revolutionary books is more disingenuous. For example, he finds the story of Vaudracour and Julia, "presented without comment" in the "flattest verse" of *The Prelude*, an insufficient account of the poet's experience in being permanently separated from his lover, Annette Vallon, and their child by "the outbreak of war" (80, 79). Furthermore,

"Wordsworth telescopes many years of disparate experience into one dramatic narrative of crisis and fall because the economy of *The Prelude* demands it" (Gill 82). The trauma of these experiences, arguably equally present in the turbulent structural shifts, the affectless narration, and rhetorical shaping and displacement of experiences, can be further explored by considering how the crisis of faith in the Revolution produces an analogous crisis of faith in humankind and in the self that both constitutes it and is constituted by it.

The experiences in France, like the experiences in London, compromise Wordsworth's identity as poet, endowed with a keen perception of the unity of mankind and able translate this perception into an experience that others can feel and enjoy. Whereas in London Wordsworth did not find the particulars necessary to create a generalizable pleasure for others, in France those particulars are available, but do not lead to pleasure. For example, he recounts:

> I crossed (a blank and empty area then)
> The Square of the Carousel, few weeks back
> Heaped up with dead and dying, upon these
> And other sights looking as doth a man
> Upon a volume whose contents he knows
> Are memorable, but from him are locked up,
> Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
> So that he questions the mute leaves with pain
> And half upbraids their silence. (X. 47-54)

The assertion "I crossed ... the Square of the Carousel" is so straightforward that its poetic character is questionable in itself. In fact, the only aspect that elevates the description above the everyday is the density of temporal perspectives that crowd the lines. The memory of crossing the square is amended by the poet's description of its emptiness from his current perspective and the tragic past that makes a mockery of its present quietness.[36] Enclosed in a parenthetical pause,

36. Throughout, of course, the poem is "a text of both past history *and* present consciousness" that reveals the struggle of "reinvoking and analyzing past emotion without effacing it, the struggle of being true to the past *and* to the present (Gill 13).

readers can skip over the visually distinct "blank and empty area" and attend to the matter of fact description. But the half-repressed interjection is nonetheless obtrusive, disrupting the already compromised meter with a troublesomely dense description that doesn't quite fit within the line, nor that the poet can unpack in the remainder of the verse paragraph.

The empty Square, overburdened by the weight of human depravity, creates complications for Wordsworth in ways that the pain of death alone does not. There is a marked contrast, for example, between Wordsworth's unflappable depiction of the encounter with the drowned man in Book V and this. In the earlier episode, death is similarly associated with "breathless stillness," this time in the guise of a "calm Lake" (V. 466, 463). The peaceful prelude heightens the shock of the dead body, whose dreaded resurgence breaks open the serene surface of the water: "At length, the dead Man, 'mid that beauteous scene/ Of trees, and hills and water, bolt upright/ Rose with his ghastly face: a specter shape/ Of terror even!" (V. 470-73). As terrifying as this scene is, though, Wordsworth deflates death's power in the pleasure of art:

> …and yet no vulgar fear,
> Young as I was, a Child not nine years old,
> Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
> Such sights before, among the shining streams
> Of Fairy Land, the Forests of Romance:
> Thence came a spirit hallowing what I saw
> With decoration and ideal grace;
> A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
> Of Grecian Art, and purest Poesy. (V. 473-481)

The body, presumably rising "bolt upright" because grotesquely bloated, quickly fades from view as the pain of reality is overbalanced with the enjoyment of previously encountered aesthetic objects. The "smoothness" of the "Grecian Art" (one can hardly keep from picturing the urn around which Keats' thoughts revolve) and the regularity of "purest Poesy" soothe the child's disgust and fears in the same way that the harmony of meter soothes those of

Wordsworth's less sensitive readers. The pain of the experience is coincident with a pleasure—if not of universal knowledge, than at least with the aesthetic sense of unity conveyed by the works of artists more perceptive than the child can yet be.

But Wordsworth is unable to transform the Square into artistic pleasure either for himself or for others in this way. On the contrary, the "blank and empty area," and the actions its silence cloaks, severs him from the tools with which he might seek to understand and overcome it. He attempts to look upon it "as doth a man/ Upon a volume whose contents he knows," as he did as a child in coping with the terrifying resurfacing of the drowned man (X. 50-1). However, when confronting the implications of the empty Square,[37] this coping mechanism is entirely unsuccessful. First, line 50's enjambment throws over the poet's presumption in being able to "know" anything of the contents of human nature. Instead, the certainty of knowing is transformed into the certainty of an important but inaccessible truth. The poet "knows" only that the contents "Are memorable, but from him are locked up" (X. 51). The access to this knowledge is carried further and further away. It is not just "locked up" but also "written in a tongue he cannot read" (X. 52). And more so still, that "tongue he cannot read" will not speak; it is "mute" in response to his questions, his pain, and his reproaches (X. 52, 53). Unlike previous painful episodes that made it possible to access pleasure in the knowledge of the "universal heart," human depravity serves to make the universality of the heart painful to contemplate.

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37. The Square of the Carousel, or Carrousel Square, was the site of the burning of the dead following "the storming of the Tuileries Palace [which] took the form of an attack and counterattack between the Swiss palace guard and the Parisian crowd, resulting in heavy losses on both sides" (Friedman 242). This event lead to the September Massacres, the mass execution of "so-called royalist prisoners, many of whom were in fact common criminals" (Friedman 242). As such, Friedman explains, it indicates a turning point in the Revolution, which came "to function like the retributive letter of the law it was supposed to abrogate" (242).

Unable to communicate a privileged poetic vision of love to others in this instance, Wordsworth takes on a far more personal, even vulnerable, tone, writing only to Coleridge:

> Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
> Were my day-thoughts, my dreams were miserable;
> Through months, through years, long after the last beat
> Of those atrocities (I speak bare truth,
> As if to thee alone in private talk)
> I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep,
> Such ghastly visions had I of despair
> And tyranny, and implements of death,
> And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
> Before unjust Tribunals, with a voice
> Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
> Of treachery and desertion in the place
> The holiest that I know of, my own soul. (X. 368-380)

Because the "bare truth" that Wordsworth speaks indicates his despair rather than any type of pleasure, the burden of writing for the "common man" becomes too great. Thus, in the whispered aside of lines 372-3, he seeks a different type of reader to whom he can express the "bare truth" of his despair. With repeated entreaties for intimacy, for confidentiality, Wordsworth addresses Coleridge "alone" in "private talk".[38]

The "tyranny" and the "ghastly visions" that haunt Wordsworth's dreams force him to confront the "fears, anxieties, even terrors that belong to the porous self" (X. 374-375, Taylor *Secular Age* 300). From a porous position, in which the boundary between inside and outside is permeable, the evils of others are not kept at a safe distance. Wordsworth's "re-enchanted" view of subjectivity and the world, which I have described through the structure of Spinoza's

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38. Jonathan Wordsworth reminds us that even "though *we* may at times forget [Coleridge's] presence, Wordsworth never does" (336). The "poem to Coleridge" not only "is addressed to Coleridge again and again," he "validates the whole undertaking, often providing the sustaining thought" (Wordsworth 336). Though Coleridge is the constant addressee, Wordsworth's insistence that this section must be read as a "private" confidence by him nonetheless signals its different resonance.

substance monism, enables him to recreate this porosity for a newly "un-buffered" conception of self. Whereas the openness of this un-buffered subject position filled Wordsworth with joy when contemplating beauties like the "blessed babe," he begins to agonize over its permeability when contemplating horrors like the "implements of death." Bereft of the imperviousness of the buffered self on the one hand and the spiritual framework of the porous self on the other, Wordsworth struggles with the implications of his vulnerability when confronted by the problem of evil. His obsession with "those atrocities" in his "day-thoughts," "dreams," and the "ghastly visions" leaves him with "a brain confounded, and a sense,/ Of treachery and desertion in the place/ The holiest that I know of, my own soul" (X. 378-380). Though the perpetrator and the object of this treachery are ambiguous,[39] Kenneth Johnston notes, "the real nightmare of the passage is that the advocate feels untrue to himself" (286). The betrayal of the Revolutionary ideas that Wordsworth witnesses produces an internal betrayal, one that Wordsworth feels in his very soul.

Moreover, as "The goaded Land waxed mad" and "the crimes of few/ Spread into madness of the many," Wordsworth also confronts the dangers of universalizing the particulars of mankind (X. 312-313). The "madness" of the Terror, in "which all perished, all/ Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,/ Head after head, and never heads enough/ For those who bade them fall," attests incontrovertibly to the possibility of evil in particular human actions, a possibility that becomes devastating for Wordsworth to consider in the universal (X. 333-336).

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39. For instance, it is possible, to read the lines as Wordsworth *experiencing* treachery. Given that Wordsworth counted himself among those "who throned/ The human understanding paramount/ And made of that their God" (X. 317-19), he may be referring to feeling betrayed by the "intoxicating emphasis on human perfectibility" that he derived from "the writings of Condorcet and Godwin" (Stelzig 416). Or, it is possible to read the lines as Wordsworth having *committed* treachery. In that case, the object of his treachery "could only be Annette [Vallon]" (Johnston 286).

As such, Wordsworth seems to lose confidence in the basis of his poetics and his ethics: a love of human nature that the poet must communicate as pleasure to his readers, overbalancing the pain of the circumstances that surround it. The struggles of maintaining and justifying a love of universal human nature while in the midst of "those evil times" cause Wordsworth to compartmentalize the horrors he witnesses and to introduce protective buffers between good and evil and between humanity and nature (X. 410) Though these distancing tactics may have permitted Wordsworth to cope with the violence in France, they also seem to have contributed to the crisis of faith in his poetic identity that persisted "Through months, through years, long after the last beat/ Of those atrocities" (X. 360-361).

Wordsworth asserts that, even at the height of the "rage and dog day heat," he still found "Something to glory in, as just and fit,/ And in the order of the sublimest laws" (X. 411-413). That is, he found pleasure in "sprinklings of human excellence" (X. 443). Wordsworth takes solace in these examples of "human nature faithful to itself under worst trials," not just because they attest to the persistence of honor in his fellow man, but also because they attest to the promise of humanity's glorious rebirth after the horrors of war (X. 447). The "Motions [that] raised up within [him]" thus conveyed an optimistic conviction into his heart: "If from affliction somewhere do not grow/ Honor ... The blame is ours not nature's" (X. 417, 425-426, 429). However, by suggesting that only attributes like "fortitude, and energy, and love," are authentic aspects of human nature, Wordsworth appears to be creating an idealized vision of it (X. 446). Indeed, for Eugene Stelzig, "Wordsworth's reluctance to fully face up to the dark side of human nature, despite the fact that his deepest prophetic intuitions point him squarely toward it ... helps to account for the claustrophobic sense of moral ambiguity and disturbed conscience" in the Revolution books (Stelzig 425). This "moral ambiguity," I would argue, results from the

introduction of protective divisions that cordon off the actions his "disturbed conscience" does not know how to incorporate into his sense of self or of human nature. For example, Wordsworth describes the "guilt/ And ignorance" that "burst and spread in deluge through the Land" as a sickness separate from that nature, a sickness that might be and should be disgorged (X. 436-7, 439). Moreover, by insisting that it is the responsibility of *human* nature— distinct from *nature* itself— to ensure that it grows beautiful again on the floodplains of its own sickness, Wordsworth introduces an uncharacteristically stark division between the two.

A love for the beauty of humanity, which insists that its ugliness is separate from both "authentic" human nature and from nature, limits the pleasure that Wordsworth can convey to his readers to that which is already pleasing. It is a love that approaches "the Shield/ Of human nature from the golden side,"[40] without considering what lies on the other (X. 662-663). Not only is compartmentalizing the unlovable aspects of human nature as separate from the question of love not much of an accomplishment, it is not sustainable.[41] The ruthless course of history forces Wordsworth to recognize that the deluge of "guilt and ignorance" has not soothed the sickness in France. On the contrary, as "when we see the dog/ Returning to his vomit," he watches France feed upon the "loathsome charge" that "burst and spread in deluge through the Land" (X. 933-

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40. See Eugene Stelzig's "'The Shield of Human Nature': Wordsworth's Reflections on the Revolution in France" for an interesting reading of this powerful image. For Stelzig, Wordsworth's "quasi-Rousseauvian perception of man's natural goodness," which "serves him effectively as a justification for the Revolution" (416) comes into conflict with "a Hobbesian sense of humanity's natural depravity" when the promise of Revolution turns first to terror then to conquest (420).

41. D. J. Moore claims that Wordsworth consciously chooses to "privilege joy over despair" for practical reasons: "It is a mature decision to cultivate a psychological state of healthy-mindedness" (198). Though this may be true, my argument will explore the poetic resolution of his "conscious distress when faced with overwhelming evil" (Moore 198).

934).[42] After this final "veil had been/ Uplifted" and the painful realities of the human condition can no longer be obscured, Wordsworth must confront the problem of how to love humanity, warts and all (X. 855-856).

Interestingly, Wordsworth attempts to solve this problem, much as Hume had done, by applying "the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects" (1). Describing himself as the vivisector of human nature, Wordsworth exclaims: "I took the knife in hand/ And stopping not at parts less sensitive,/ Endeavored with my best of skill to probe/ The living body of society/ Even to the heart" (X. 872-876). However, the vivisecting rationality that examines "impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground/ Of moral obligation, what the rule/ And what the sanction," is ultimately unable to find the "proof" that he "demand[s]" (X. 894-896). The dualistic thinking that causes Wordsworth to suppose that the rational powers of the mind can dissect the heart of human nature, that human nature has a distinct and separate existence from Nature, and that external evil can be safely separated from internal goodness, cause Wordsworth to lose "all feeling of conviction" and to "Yiel[d] up moral questions in despair" (X. 898, 900).

Instead, the heart "which had been turned aside/ From Nature by external accidents" must turn back again in order to discover "truth in moral judgments and delight/ That fails not, in the external universe" (X. 885-886; XIII. 118-119). The process by which this "truth" and "delight" are discovered is complicated, involving several equally complicated steps.[43] First, in turning

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42. Put more plainly, Wordsworth is disappointed that the execution of Robespierre is followed by the coronation of Napoleon rather than a return to the ideas of liberté, égalité, fraternité that he felt justified the violence of the Revolution.

43. Jonathan Wordsworth explains this process as follows: "the poetry expands to take in an animist landscape, then to evoke the power lying beneath the animation, and finally to imply the kind of response that is taking place" (321). This process, he suggest, allows Wordsworth to lose "awareness [and] see into the life of things," making the Snowdon episode "the ultimate

back to nature, Wordsworth perceives phenomena that simultaneously attest to similitude within dissimilitude and to dissimilitude within similitude. He hears, for instance, "the roar of waters, torrents, streams/ *Innumerable*, roaring with *one* voice" (XIII. 58-59 emphases added). In the unified voice of the water, which is constituted and maintained by the particular murmurs of each stream, Wordsworth argues that "Nature had lodged/ The soul, the *Imagination* of the whole" (XIII. 65). That is, when the imagination is struck by the unity of the disparate parts of the natural world,[44] the poet is able to apprehend the relationship of *all* particulars to the universal. He discovers "the life/ Of all things and the mighty unity/ In which we behold, and feel, and are" (XIII. 253-255). This discovery gives rise to an "intellectual love" that "fails not, in the external universe" (XIII. 186; XIII. 118-119).[45] On the contrary, such a transient love "is human merely" while intellectual love "is divine" (XIII. 164-165). Intellectual love, which persists in all circumstances, thus is the "truth in moral judgments" that creates "delight" (XIII. 118).

To clarify how Wordsworth envisions intellectual love, and to consider its role in both his poetical and moral systems, it is helpful to turn again to Spinoza. Indeed, the apogee of Spinoza's ethics, "Blessedness," is strikingly similar to Wordsworth's formulation of intellectual love. As suggested by his title, *Ethics*, Spinoza's meticulous attempt to demonstrate the monistic

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border possibility" (25, 328). My explanation agrees on many points, but with important differences that will be described below.

44. Or, when the imagination is inspired by human love like that which the poet feels for and receives from Dorothy and Coleridge in the following lines.

45. Abrams similarly claims that Wordsworth's experience on Mount Snowdon allows him to come to terms with the problem of evil through love. For Abrams, "far from denying the reality of pain, terror, and suffering," Wordsworth "insists not only that they are humanly inevitable but that they are *indispensible* conditions for developing the calm, the insight, and the power that is ours when, as Wordsworth put it, we are worthy of ourselves" (113 emphasis added). By reading this passage through Spinoza, my argument advances a different perspective on how this resolution is achieved and also considers how it factors into Wordsworth larger poetical and ethical system.

basis of reality is in service of describing the highest ethical imperative of mankind: "Knowledge of God is the mind's greatest good; its greatest virtue is to know God" (213).[46] For Spinoza, as we know, God is the "one substance" which contains all attributes and is the original cause of all effects (94). To know God, which "is the greatest thing the mind can understand," is to recognize reality and one's place in it for what they "are": the infinite and eternal as conceived through one finite part (Spinoza 213). This recognition, "wherein our salvation, *or* blessedness*, or* freedom, consists," is love (Spinoza 260). Thus Spinoza explains, "The mind's *intellectual love* of God"—the term is identical to Wordsworth's— "is the very love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity; that is, the mind's intellectual love of God is a part of the infinite love by which God loves himself" (Spinoza 260 emphasis added). "The perfect image the mighty Mind" that is revealed to Wordsworth in the mists of Mount Snowdon seems to be one that has achieved a state of "Blessedness" (XIII. 69). It is a mind "that feeds upon infinity,/ That is exalted by an underpresence,/ The sense of God" (XIII. 70-72). Such minds, Wordsworth argues, are capable of achieving "consciousness/ Of whom they are, habitually infused/ Through every image, and through every thought, /And all impressions" (XIII. 108-111). As a result, such

46. There is a paradox in Spinoza's argument of the highest good, as Andrew Youpa points out. Because Spinoza also states that to persevere in being through conatus is the point of existence, some critics read him as Hobbesian. That is, "*Perseverance in being*, in a Hobbesian interpretation, is understood in the ordinary sense of prolonging the duration of an individuals' psychophysical existence. Thus whatever character traits are good are good for the sake of prolonging the duration of our lives" (Youpa 244). However, Youpa presents a solution to this paradox, which he asserts, "casts some suspicion on any facile attempt to assimilate Spinoza's ethical theory to Hobbes's" (244). Because thought and extension are identical but expressed in different modes, conatus is the extended correspondent of blessedness. What striving to persevere in existence is to the material manifestation of the substance, striving to understand existence is to the cognitive manifestation of the substance.

minds are capable of enjoying the "highest bliss/ That can be known": intellectual love (XIII. 107-108).

For Wordsworth, intellectual love is not possible to perceive merely through the aesthetic sense of interconnection that one feels in the natural world. Much less is it accessible through rational thought. Instead, the imagination is necessary to give rise to it. In fact, the two are so deeply related to him that it is not possible to speak of one without the other: "Imagination having been our theme/ So also hath that intellectual love,/ For they are each in each, and cannot stand/ Dividually" (XIII. 184-187). In terms that are exactly parallel to Wordsworth's,[47] Spinoza argues that "intellectual love" is not possible to perceive merely through rational thought (260). Much less is it accessible through the empirical knowledge gained from the body. Instead, "intuitive knowledge,"[48] is necessary to give rise to it. Rereading Wordsworth's concept of the "imagination" through its counterpart in Spinoza, "intuitive knowledge," gives us a framework for considering how the imagination takes on ethical value for Wordsworth. Additionally, this framework brings together many of the critical debates regarding the meaning and role of the imagination in Wordsworth's poetry, particularly as expressed in the Snowdon episode.

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47. Though Spinoza's formulation is parallel to Wordsworth's, the conflicting value of rational and aesthetic knowledge indicates an important difference between them. For Spinoza, knowledge based on the input of the body, which gives rise to the passions, is always inadequate and therefore always false. On the other hand, rational knowledge is very closely linked to intuitive knowledge. For Wordsworth, the opposite seems to be true. Whereas "the laws of vulgar sense" always "oppress" and "enslave" the mind, aesthetic knowledge is very closely linked to the imagination (XIII. 140, 139).

48. Spector's description of intuitive knowledge might help to clarify this: "the point at which one recognizes the interrelated system of bodies, while simultaneously viewing oneself under the form of eternity, is precisely the recognition of the absolute essence of God as the attribute of extension. At that moment, the individual is no longer himself in the sense of a discrete, particular modification of substance, but part of substance itself" (243).

For Abrams, the "imagination is the complement and intermediator of a "love [that] can neither exist nor triumph over evil" without it (Abrams 118). As such, he argues "The mind plays a role equivalent to that of the redeemer in Milton's providential plot" (Abrams 119). Jonathan Wordsworth is dissatisfied with Abram's suggestion that the "imagination for Wordsworth has the redemptive role of Milton's Christ" (243). Citing "the poet's amazing remark in 1812 to Crabb Robinson: 'I have no need of a Redeemer,'" Jonathan Wordsworth argues that "the Imagination is the power that has *at all times* enabled him to ward off the universe of death" (243). For Geoffrey Hartman, on the other hand, the "unresolved opposition between Imagination and Nature prevents [Wordsworth] from becoming a visionary poet" (Hartman 39). The imagination, through which Wordsworth could achieve "independence from sense-experience," is never fully transcendent because of Wordsworth's commitment to material reality: "the power he has looked for in the outside world is really within and frustrating his search" (Hartman 39, 192). For Fry, "Wordsworth's critique ... of Coleridge's theory of the imagination as a 'shifting spirit,'" indicates that "Wordsworth himself sees the imagination— if that is what it is—as the openness of the mind to the revelation of unity" (Fry xiii). And yet, Fry argues, the "Wordsworthian imagination always serves to show that things (all things, including God and eternity) are one, *not that things are significant*" (Fry 18 emphasis added).

Combining elements of each of these arguments, I would suggest that the imagination does allow Wordsworth to conceptualize a love that can "triumph over evil," but not in the same way as "Milton's Christ" (Abrams 118, Wordsworth 243). This *intellectual* love is not thwarted because the imagination does not ultimately transcend "sense-experience;" instead, "the revelation of unity" is created by the interplay between inside and outside (Hartman 39, Fry xiii). The imagination, like Spinoza's intuitive knowledge, creates a perception of the relationship of

"all things, including God and eternity"—a perception that *is* significant (Fry 18). It is "absolute strength/ And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,/ And reason in her most exalted mood" (XIII. 169-170). For Wordsworth, when the "soul hath risen/ Up to the height of feeling intellect," it is no longer possible to misapprehend the individual's relationship to the whole or to misapprehend the basis of goodness and evil (XIII. 205). Misapprehensions like these are what allow individuals to rationalize murder and conquest through "the laws of vulgar sense,/ And substitute a universe of death,/ The falsest of all worlds, in place of that/ Which is divine and true" (XIII. 140-143).

Spinoza provided Romantic thinkers like Wordsworth with a way to re-imagine the "enchantment" of the world, insisting on the interconnection of self, other, nature, and God. This interconnection not only reframes the terms of subjectivity as un-buffered from others and open to the world, it also radically reframes the basis of moral obligation. For Spinoza, "the perfection of things," their goodness or evilness, is not "to be judged solely from their nature and power; things are not more or less perfect because they please or offend men's senses, or because they are of use to, or incompatible with human nature" (115). Instead, good is "knowledge of God—understood as knowledge of nature" and evil is that which "can prevent us from understanding" (Curley xxxii, Spinoza 212). As such, Spinoza's morality is not dependent on the Hobbesian association of goodness with the pleasure of satisfying the appetites for "such things as honor, riches and power" and evil with the pain of being overpowered by the competitive appetites of others (Curley xxxii). As shown, Hobbes's hedonistic basis of morality was extremely influential on philosophers like Shaftesbury, Hume, Smith, and Burke, whose theories of benevolent sociability were dependent on personal pleasure conveyed through the aesthetic or imaginative mechanism of sympathy. The necessity of personal pleasure in sociability creates

ethical difficulties, particularly when individuals sympathize with the pain of others. However, Wordsworth seems to embrace Spinoza's framework of accounting for the good as "Blessedness," which he rearticulates as the "love intellectual [that] cannot be/ Without Imagination" (XIII. 166-167). This goodness can "be shared by many without anyone's portion being diminished" (Curley xxxii). In fact, because "each finds that his own portion of knowledge [of God] is increased" when it is shared, individuals will strive to "share their knowledge with each other" (Curley xxxii). Wordsworth thought "long and deeply" about how to do just that ("Preface" 598). He argues that, "if the object which I have proposed to myself were adequately attained, a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry, in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations" ("Preface" 615). Though we might certainly ask ourselves, as Wordsworth prompted his readers to ask, "how far [he has] attained this object," critiques of his poetry as egotistical, appropriative, or inattentive to the real face of human suffering will remain incomplete without an awareness of the framework and object of his poetry ("Preface" 615).[49]

49. Indeed, as Kenneth Johnston notes, "Romanticism is always accused of avoiding or slighting, and sometimes did ignore" the question of human suffering and the problem of evil (409). However, he points out, "Wordsworth's high Romantic argument always forced him to confront this question, for it challenged his great faith in the powers of the creative human imagination" (Johnston 409).

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CONCLUSION

As neural science continues to explore the location of pain and the origin of empathy, eighteenth-century ideas about the fluidity between mind and body and the receptivity of the mind to the experiences of others are returning in surprising ways. Conditions as exotic as mirror-touch synesthesia, in which individuals *feel* the physical sensations and *experience* the moods of others, are now topics of popular podcasts.[1] Likewise, the relationship between reading and the cultivation of an individual's ability to feel empathy can be studied and measured in the responses of mirror neurons in the brain.[2] These advances are reopening questions that eighteenth-century thinkers faced: what is our motivation for opening ourselves up to the pain of others and what stories will we tell ourselves to make sense of our senses?

Even though pain, as a physiological fact, is inescapable, the meaning we make of it is not.[3] Indeed, as David Morris provocatively suggests, "there is no conclusion to the study of pain;" there are only questions about "whether the meanings [of pain] in the future will be ample and sustaining or thin and sterile" (267). Elaine Scarry's claim that "physical pain— unlike any other state of consciousness—has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything" (5), encapsulates many "thin and sterile" assumptions about the status of pain in the human experience, and the difficulty of sharing pain with others, that have become common to modern perspectives. For Scarry, physical pain is distinct from *all* other experiences, including emotional pain which might be tethered to "referential content" rather than to bodily experience. When pain

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1. See "Entanglement." *Invisibilia*. NPR. 29 Jan. 2015. Radio.

2. See David Kidd and Emanuele Castano's "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind" in *Science.*

3. As can be seen, for example, in James Lipton and Joseph Marbach's study of the way in which "patterns of reporting and expressing discomfort" shift dependent on an individual's ethnic group and culture (1279).

is located exclusively "inside," in the interior space of the body, it is disconnected from larger narratives of self and society that could give it personal, social, or spiritual value. From this perspective, Scarry concludes that pain is a passive, isolating, and even dehumanizing experience.

As we strive to construct new meanings of pain that are more "ample and sustaining," it is necessary to think about how pain has been, and can be, altered by one's understanding of its relationship to the self and one's ability to express it to others. This project thus explores how different frameworks of pain, subjectivity, and sociability were constructed, challenged, and reimagined in the literature and philosophy of the long eighteenth century. Of course, such complex frameworks far exceed the literary texts and philosophical systems that I have used to approach them. However, because these influential texts reflect on and describe pain's location, communicability, and personal and ethical value, they provide important insight into different ways of making sense of pain as it was taking on modern shapes.

Beginning with the immediate aftershock of Hobbes, I argue that Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* rejects the idea that the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain dictate human behavior. Her neo-Stoic insistence that honor, not physical sensations, constitute the basis of sociability allows her to eschew Hobbes's assessment that "good" and "evil" are just other words for mankind's appetites and aversions, which must be exploited to induce peaceful, sociable interactions. In doing so, though, Behn reveals the ease with which a refusal to allow bodily sensation to influence behavior can give way to making the sensations of the body absolutely irrelevant. Oroonoko's silent execution thus provides a dramatic early example of the dualism that would insist that the mind must conquer the body's pain and that would come to celebrate

individuals for enduring bodily pain stoically rather than allowing the expression of pain to be a non-degrading aspect of one's human experience.

My second chapter moves to a very different cultural moment, one in which the ideas that Behn resists have become incorporated into secular models of morality. Though Hume's influential philosophy accepts pleasure and pain as the primary sources of human passions, motivations, and actions, it also attempts to make space for disinterested sociability. Hume posits that the physical mechanism of sympathy, which imposes the pains and pleasures of others onto the self, could eventually lead to the abstraction of the self and to the creation of a "moral sense". Hume's formulation of sympathy suggests that he did not view pain as strictly located in either the body or the mind; neither was it located within an isolated individual self. It was a shared human experience. These views inform Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*— most obviously in Clarissa's physical death from mental injuries and in her pain's contagious influence on others. However, as *Clarissa* dramatizes, the fact that pain is sharable does not in itself lead to compassion, understanding, or community. Instead, the desire for pleasure in the self can warp an individual's perspective of and reaction to the pains of others, especially if those pains are physically transmitted through sympathy. In addition to reflecting aspects of Hume's philosophy, Richardson's text also anticipates important aspects of Smith's. Clarissa's status as an extraordinary individual places her beyond the reaches of imaginative "fellow-feeling" and the pleasures of approbation. As a result, other characters frequently interpret Clarissa's virtue as an indication of her disapproval of themselves and are quick to resent it.

If sympathy is dependent on the approbation of the other's reactions when they mirror the imaginary reactions of the self, it risks becoming a solipsistic process of self-validation. This possibility, which operates under the surface of *Clarissa*, is brought to the foreground of

Werther. Moreover, because sympathy is only as strong as one's ability to imagine oneself in the other's *situation*, sensations that have no clear cause and no clear effect are not available to sympathy. For this reason, Werther sorrows to discover that he has little hope of making his pain understood by others and is unable to offer any comfort to others in pain. Goethe's exploration of "the human spirit on the threshold of modernity" in *Werther* thus offers a prescient picture of pain as Scarry describes it: pain is isolating, incommunicable, and has retreated into the interior space of the self (Hill 5). And yet, Goethe self-consciously presents the limitations of such a view of pain, the self, and sympathy and gestures toward the importance of reincorporating the body into lived experience in the ironic physicality of Werther's suicide.

Whereas Goethe dramatizes the limitations of self-regarding sympathy and the irrelevance of bodily experiences of pain that it creates, Wordsworth rejects these limitations in favor of an un-buffered, non-dualistic idea of selfhood. From this monistic perspective, which indicates Spinoza's influence on Wordsworth's thought, the pains of others are not strictly separate, nor do they exist dichotomously in either the body or the mind. As a result, Wordsworth claims knowledge of and access to the experiences of others—though in doing so he has raised many critical eyebrows. Wordsworth's monistic worldview not only alters the terms of subjectivity, but also the relationship of pleasure and pain to questions of morality. I argue that for Wordsworth, as for Spinoza, "good" is not synonymous with pleasure. Rather it signifies one's striving toward an intellectual love of humankind and reality, even when that reality includes painful aspects. "Evil" is not synonymous with pain, but with the misapprehension of humankind and reality. Though this monistic moral system is challenged by the painful possibility of evil and human depravity, Wordsworth claims that he is able to recuperate an intellectual love through the imagination. The poetic imagination can grasp the unity of reality

and can comprehend human depravities for what they "are": the misapprehension of the individual's interrelationship to others and to the world. Because this imaginative knowledge is so rare, Wordsworth feels it is his moral duty to communicate it to those around him through his poetry. Though such a claim is certainly not above critique, it does demonstrate that the philosophical frameworks that cause pain to seem shameful, isolating, passive, and incommunicable are not inevitable, nor are the theories of self and of moral motivation that contribute to them.

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