

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: "WELL-DISPOS'D SAVAGES": ELITE MASCULINITY  
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

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Writers in eighteenth-century Britain catered to, and helped create, public fascination with the brazen, sometimes illicit, often violent exploits of elite and aristocratic men. Literary critics have seen this elite male figure as part of an outmoded order superseded over the course of the century by the rising British middle class. Debauched aristocratic characters are often reformed over the course of eighteenth-century narratives, reflecting a larger societal shift in values towards polite restraint. As expressed in my dissertation's title phrase, however, many of the period's writers develop elite male characters whose behaviors and self-presentation blur those very boundaries between oppositional categories, like savagery and civilization, on which both Enlightenment theories of human progress and polite culture's prescriptions for decorum were presumed to rest. Through an examination of this paradoxical figure in novelistic, dramatic, and autobiographical literature, my dissertation demonstrates that the oft-repeated reform-of-the-rake narrative calls attention to obstacles and resistance to the ascendancy of a middle-class culture, not to the inevitability of its rise.

Each chapter centers on a site that is accessible to a larger public only through literary or dramatic accounts, including the club, the elite school, the court, and the overseas estate. Chapter One, “‘Our imperial reign’: Addison, Steele, Gay and the London Mohocks,” examines writings about a gang of rakish gentlemen rumored to prowl the streets of Augustan London. Chapter Two, “Schools for Scandal: Elite Education and Eighteenth-Century Narrative,” uncovers a relationship between key mid-century novels and a longstanding debate about elite schooling. The final two chapters trace the influence of late-eighteenth-century discourses of liberty and sensibility on constructions of elite masculinity. Chapter Three, “Command Performance: Boswell’s Libertine Diplomacy,” focuses on the journals and travelogues of James Boswell, a self-professed libertine who strove, with mixed results, to restrain his appetite for power and pleasure. Chapter Four, “A ‘strong transition of place’: Cultural Encounter and the reform plot in Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl*,” offers a new framework in which to read the genre of the national tale by shifting the critical lens from the novel’s Anglo-Irish marriage plot to a parallel plot of intersecting and competing masculinities.

“WELL-DISPOS’D SAVAGES”: ELITE MASCULINITY IN EIGHTEENTH-  
CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

by

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### Introduction: “Remarkable and Useful Things”

In 1680, Anglican bishop Gilbert Burnet published an account of the deathbed penitence of the notorious aristocratic rake John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. Burnet’s text, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of the Right Honourable John, Earl of Rochester*, was popular throughout the period known as the long eighteenth century, stretching from its original publication in the Restoration era through multiple reprintings in the Regency years of the early 1800s.<sup>1</sup> As a form of “Christian propaganda,”<sup>2</sup> Burnet’s narrative assures readers of the power of revealed religion to bring even the worst sinner and most confirmed skeptic toward faith and repentance. To give the reader a sense of what he encountered in his clerical discussions with Rochester, Burnet includes this insight into the libertine attitude toward morality:

For Morality, he freely own’d to me, that though he talked of it as a fine thing, yet this was only because he thought it a decent way of speaking; and that as [Rochester and his companions] went always in Cloaths, though in their Frolicks they would have chosen sometimes to have gone naked, if they had not feared the people: So though some of them found it necessary for humane life to talk of Morality, yet he confessed they cared not for it, further then the reputation of it was necessary for their credit, and affairs.<sup>3</sup>

This anecdote about Rochester’s desire to eschew conventional morality and indulge in naked frolics is notable for being one of the very few tangible descriptions of actual rakish behavior included in Burnet’s account. In fact, in a subsequent passage, while disavowing any literary embellishment or use of poetic license, Burnet explains how he strategically shaped the narrative through his decisions about which details of Rochester’s biography to include and which to omit:

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<sup>1</sup> See David Farley-Hills, ed., *Rochester: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of the Right Honourable John, Earl of Rochester*, 1680, 23.

I have said nothing but what I had from his own mouth, and have avoided the mentioning of the more particular Passages of his life, of which he told me not a few: But since others were concerned in them, whose good only I design, I will say nothing that may either provoke or blemish them. It is their Reformation, and not their Disgrace, I desire: This tender consideration of others has made me suppress many remarkable and useful things.<sup>4</sup>

According to Burnet, then, the central fact of “Reformation” is the heart of the narrative. Rochester’s life becomes a Christian tale of redemption instructive in its general outline and its theological underpinnings; the “remarkable and useful things” Burnet *could* have included are cast aside as unnecessary, and possibly harmful, distractions.

Burnet’s account is one example among many popular reform-of-the-rake narratives that permeated eighteenth-century British culture. One of most popular plays of the Restoration period, for example, was George Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* (1676), whose central character is a libertine named Dorimant, modeled after Rochester, who softens his stance towards romantic love when he falls for the play’s heroine.<sup>5</sup> As these two examples show, the reform-of-the-rake tale does not remain in a fixed form either in terms of genre or narrative strategy. Burnet’s teasing, tantalizing omission of the scandalous details of Rochester’s pre-reform life and adventures, in fact, serves as an illuminating contrast to the methods of later, mid-century novelists like Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding, who give to their readers fictional accounts of those “remarkable” details of the rake’s character and misdeeds that Burnet seeks purposely to “suppress.” Burnet’s guardedness, his stated strategy of withholding material from the public marketplace of readers, like Rochester’s own opposition to the publication of his court-circulated poetry, emphasizes his membership in an elite circle marked by status, gender, and proximity to the power center of the court. Novels like Richardson’s *Pamela*

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<sup>4</sup> Burnet, 28-29.

<sup>5</sup> George Etherege, *The Man of Mode*, ed. John Barnard. London: A&C Black Publishers, 2007.

(1740) and *Clarissa* (1747), on the other hand, while they cannot claim to be first-hand accounts of the experiences of real-life rakes, use and develop the tools at the eighteenth-century writer's disposal, including the novel form, the print marketplace, and a public appetite for rakish characters, to transport the reader into the imagined life and sometimes the very imagined consciousness of the elite male rake and his aristocratic counterculture, whose "Frolicks" test the boundaries of what the English public (Rochester's feared "people") define as civilized behavior.

This study examines the techniques of narrative and characterization that writers develop throughout the long eighteenth century to provide imaginative access to the exclusive realm of the rake, where the social rules and categories of polite society do not apply. My first primary claim, then, is that rakes and libertines do not substantively disappear from the literary landscape after the Restoration. Due to eighteenth-century studies' focus on the historical rise of the British middle class, the critical assumption has been that the libertine, both as a fictional character and as a social type, was superseded over the course of the century, pushed to the margins by the polite gentleman and symbolically upstaged by the virtuous domestic woman.<sup>6</sup> Few have challenged Terry Eagleton's claim, for example, that the aristocratic villain of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747) "is a reactionary throwback, an old-style libertine or Restoration relic who resists a proper 'embourgeoisement'" and that, within the Richardson corpus, "the future of the English aristocracy lies not with him but with the impeccably middle-class

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: a political history of the novel*, New York: Oxford UP, 1987, and Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800*. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001.

Sir Charles Grandison.”<sup>7</sup> And yet, as the primary texts discussed in subsequent chapters show, the long eighteenth century continued to witness both widespread romanticization and widespread fear of the rake. As historian Gerald Newman writes of the lingering fascination of the English public with elite society, “The ‘theater’ of greatness was not just ‘imposed’ on the body of the people but also actively supported by them. It was theater-in-the-round, and mass participation was what gave it such a long run.”<sup>8</sup>

Significantly, the outlandish and often-violent behaviors of these elite figures are seen to have profound implications for the course of the British nation, reflecting the intransigence of traditional class and power structures even as the middling ranks make progress in the economic marketplace.

My second and related claim is that the very prevalence of the reform-of-the-rake narrative in eighteenth-century culture should make us pause to consider the continued ubiquity of the rake, not his banishment or replacement. After all, every time a real or fictional rake reforms, a new and unreformed one seems to pop up to take his place and inspire a new narrative. What, then, if instead of focusing solely, as Burnet does, on the fact and goal of reform, we examine the *persistence* of this narrative and character type throughout the long eighteenth century and look to its new sources of energy and inspiration?

My third primary claim is that many of these new sources of creative energy and inspiration guiding writers to explore the rake’s aristocratic counterculture took the form of imagined and romanticized cultural models from abroad: from Ireland, the Americas,

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<sup>7</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 89.

<sup>8</sup> Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830* Rev. Ed. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997), 26.

the Mediterranean, and beyond. These imaginings infuse the narratives with a new vitality and reveal new popular interests in and fears about what the libertine represents. If we return to Rochester's claim that he and his fellow revelers had to repress their desire to frolic naked through the streets, for instance, we see a divide between the rake and the "people" who disapprove of such behavior. In much subsequent literature, this divide in what constitutes desirable behavior and self-presentation reflects simultaneous distinctions of status and cultural tradition. Duane Coltharp, in a study of Dryden's libertine heroes and villains, argues that "what is at stake" in "the fictions of libertinism . . . is civilization, repression, and their attendant discontents."<sup>9</sup> The libertine "celebrate[s] the savage as the truest image of energy prior to civilized repression,"<sup>10</sup> in direct contrast to the guardians of polite English society who want the libertine to suppress his uncivilized urges. It is fitting, then, that as we will see, writers and cultural commentators often draw on reports and stereotypes of "savage" cultures to name and depict the characters that inhabit the realm of the rake.

### **Definitions and Critical Context**

The specific context for my study's concern with class and gender is embodied in two distinct, and often opposed, masculine types: the rake or libertine and the modern polite gentleman. James Grantham Turner explains that "[t]he word 'libertine' in early modern Europe could denote a challenge to orthodox religion, an attempt to construct an authentic self on the basis of the passions, a loosening of family bonds and respect for maternal authority, or a deliberate celebration of what [Jane] Barker called 'loose

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<sup>9</sup> Duane Coltharp, "'Pleasing Rape': The Politics of Libertinism in *The Conquest of Granada*," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700* 21.1 (Spring 1997: 15-31), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Coltharp, 20.

Gallantry.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, when someone pursues liberty in the form of *libertinism*, he is not invoking the Anglo-Saxon tradition of freeborn men, not honoring the Magna Carta, not trying to shake off the Norman yoke, but rather asking, as Geoffrey Ashe puts it, “Do you, or can you, promote human freedom and fulfillment in general through the personal freedom that sheds morality?”<sup>12</sup> Though this question can be broadly applied to the human condition, the libertine is specifically an elite character. Though he associates with - and glorifies his associations with - denizens of the brothel, the libertine’s elite status, drawn from traditional hierarchy and from his family name, is what grants him his extensive freedom to engage in risky pursuits with relatively little fear of legal consequences. Ironically, the libertine’s “personal” liberty can only be enacted in the context of a group identity based on social status, and the only thing that disrupts his peerless entitlement to pleasure is the threat that a more democratic masculine prerogative might one day supersede aristocratic license.<sup>13</sup>

In the sixteenth century, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term “libertine” referred to the member of an actual antinomian religious sect and came to denote more broadly “one who holds free or loose opinions about religion; a free-thinker” and even more loosely, “one who follows his own inclinations or goes his own way; one who is not restricted or confined.”<sup>14</sup> The *OED* also supports the common linking of libertinism to sexual promiscuity: the third definition, with a first noted usage in the late

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<sup>11</sup> James Grantham Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics and Literary Culture, 1630-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), x.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Ashe, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: A History of Anti-Morality*. Rev. ed. (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2000), 4.

<sup>13</sup> See Erin Mackie, “Boys Will Be Boys: Masculinity, Criminality, and the Restoration Rake.” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 46.2 (2005): 129-149.

<sup>14</sup> “libertine,” *n.* and *adj.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989. *OED online*. Oxford University Press.

1500s, is “a man who is not restrained by moral law, esp. in his relations with the female sex; one who leads a dissolute, licentious life.” However, as Harold Weber writes in his study *The Restoration Rake-Hero*, “Like Rochester, the rake is too complex and enigmatic a figure to be reduced to a sexual machine: his love of disguise, need for freedom, and fondness for play all establish the complexity of the rakish personality.”<sup>15</sup> In eighteenth-century literature the libertine is an economically privileged, elite (usually titled) male figure who boasts of sexual adventurism, espouses religious skepticism or outright atheism, and resists the developing norms of polite and commercial society. In Britain, libertinism flourished in the court circle that gathered after Charles II’s return from exile in France in 1660, and it long continued to be associated with Francophilia, though, as I will argue, libertinism also became associated with other, broader types of “foreignness” throughout the eighteenth century. Restoration-era figures like Rochester gained notoriety for outlandish exploits, sexual voraciousness, and staunch aversion to the Church and became the prototypes for the libertine character.

The term “rake” is often used synonymously with “libertine” and has an overlapping connotation of licentiousness. The major difference between the terms is that “rake” does not carry the religious genealogy of “libertine” and does not necessarily connote the same free-thinking philosophical outlook. According to the *OED* the rake is “a fashionable or stylish man of dissolute or promiscuous habits,”<sup>16</sup> and the label can thus be used as an umbrella term to include both philosophically-oriented libertines and less intellectually-inclined debauchees. My usage of these terms will be guided by the terminology employed by the primary texts under discussion.

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<sup>15</sup> Harold Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>16</sup> “rake,” n. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989. *OED online*. Oxford University Press.

This complex figure permeates print and visual media as well as popular gossip in a way that both marks and crosses the boundaries between social categories. Jeremy Webster, in his study *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court*, describes the interplay between the rake's exclusive and privileged fraternity and the public broadcasting of his exploits:

the libertine's pursuit of pleasure often placed him at odds with England's many figures of traditional authority: London's constables, women's husbands, fathers, and employers; and England's king and his ministers. Like Rochester's poetic persona, the libertine often called upon one lover or another to retreat to love's theater and to act its play with him, only to return to the stage of public life shortly thereafter to entertain his friends. . . with the story of successful seduction. Libertines thus performed traditionally secretive acts – excessive drinking, carnality, sodomy, sedition, assault, and sacrilege – in the public sphere in a variety of ways.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the libertine challenges the structures put in place to keep social order and protect his potential victims. His status as the object of popular fear and fascination and later as a model for fiction depends on the limited access the public – including those like the petty constables charged with maintaining public order – have to his private realm and the subsequently strong public desire for imaginative access to such an exclusive space.

The modern polite gentleman, in contrast to the rake or libertine, is marked by civil behavior and self-restraint; he eschews the libertine's theatrical self-presentation and overt sexuality. In the introduction to *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century*, Erin Mackie provides the following definition and critical context:

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<sup>17</sup> Jeremy Webster, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

Guided by codes of polite civility and restraint, eschewing personal violence for the arbitration of the law, oriented toward the family in an increasingly paternalistic role, purchasing his status as much, if not more, through the demonstration of moral virtues as through that of inherited honor, and gendered unequivocally as a male heterosexual, the modern English gentleman has been cited in contemporary masculinity studies as the first type of ‘hegemonic masculinity.’<sup>18</sup>

This modern gentleman supplants old codes of honor that condoned actions like the duel with a new pattern of behavior that supports order in the domestic sphere and enables success in the new credit-based marketplace in which one’s reputation for trustworthiness may be worth more, literally, than one’s inherited title.

The gentleman does not just embrace reform in an abstract philosophical sense; he takes on a new masculine *form* in the material sense as well, choosing less ostentatious fashions than those associated with aristocratic courtiers. As David Kuchta writes of this progression towards a more “modern” style, “[i]f the three-piece suit is still with us, it is because the values of masculinity that it embodies today are more or less the same as those that ushered it in: since 1666, male gentility has been associated with modesty and plainness in dress.”<sup>19</sup>

This new form had a national context as well: modesty and restraint in appearance were characteristics ascribed to “the modern polite *English* gentleman.”<sup>20</sup> Libertine aesthetics and philosophies were often identified as French predilections, stemming from Charles II’s association with the French court and from the abundance of French romances featuring libertine behavior. *English* gentlemen were thus differentiated from libertines and “beaux” by their plainer dress as well as their more restrained behavior.

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<sup>18</sup> Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009), 1.

<sup>19</sup> David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity, England, 1550-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Mackie, *Rakes*, 1 (emphasis added).

The connection between libertinism and foreignness, however, should also be expanded beyond this conventional association with Francophilia. Many Restoration and eighteenth-century narratives (like Rochester's anecdote about naked frolics) show that the behavior and self-presentation of elite male figures interfere with binaries like savagery and civilization that were foundational to both Enlightenment theories of human progress and to polite culture's prescriptions for sociable behavior. This conundrum is expressed concisely in the dissertation's paradoxical title phrase, "well-dispos'd savages," from Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's Augustan periodical *The Spectator*. Such a phenomenon calls for us to look at the libertine figure in a broader context that could loosely fall under the term "the global eighteenth century," taking account of "the increased mobility of commodities and ideas, the unprecedented expansion of global trade, improved navigational techniques, and cultural and racial mixing."<sup>21</sup> In representing elite masculinity, authors draw on a store of images and tropes that were also commonly used to describe cultures considered exotic, tribal, or "savage." Socially-elite men are compared variously to Mohawks, Hottentots, and Irish chieftains, providing writers and readers an avenue for exploring, through imaginative literature, the boundaries posited in histories and philosophical treatises between Enlightenment cultural categories like the civilized and the primitive.

This cross-cultural lens differentiates my project from work by those scholars who *have* looked at the persistence of the libertine figure in the long eighteenth century, even while I draw on that important previous work in asserting the continued place of elite masculinity in the period's literature. Tiffany Potter, for example, identifies in her

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<sup>21</sup> Felicity Nussbaum, introduction to *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 8.

study of Henry Fielding's novelistic and dramatic heroes a "Georgian libertinism" that is more good-natured and sentimental than its Restoration precursor. Potter argues that while most studies of libertinism have been restricted to the late seventeenth century, reinforcing the idea that the libertine phenomenon can only be seen anachronistically or nostalgically in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, "libertinism continued as a powerful cultural force long after 1700, informing the public personae and private discourse of the most privileged part of English society" and taking cues from a new vogue for male sentimentalism. Potter contends:

Considerable evidence suggests that rather than replacing the libertine discourse, sentimentalism became a fashion and a filter through which libertinism moved. The resulting Georgian libertinism maintained the central philosophical tenets of libertinism but manifested them less aggressively, allowing the individual still to be skeptical and to pursue various freedoms, without the brutal Hobbesian domination of others so essential to the Restoration libertine.<sup>22</sup>

Potter points to Fielding's Tom Jones as an exemplar of the type of character who indulges his free-spiritedness and his appetite for sex without the need to define himself through his conquests. While Potter's argument convincingly applies to Jones, her definition of "Georgian libertinism" does not apply evenly across the spectrum of Georgian literature; it fails to account, for instance, for the brutality of *Clarissa's* Lovelace.

Mackie's *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates* provides a fuller analysis of the place of both politeness and criminality in eighteenth-century constructions of masculinity. Mackie's central question is whether the modern polite gentleman serves "*alone* as the

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<sup>22</sup> Tiffany Potter, *Honest Sins: Georgian Libertinism and the Plays and Novels of Henry Fielding* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1999), 5.

figure of hegemonic masculinity.”<sup>23</sup> Rather than marginalizing the rake, Mackie “view[s] him as one among a set of culturally prestigious masculine types . . . through which hegemony is secured.”<sup>24</sup> Methodologically, Mackie pulls together two veins of scholarly inquiry – the history of manners (which traces the development of the gentleman as prototype and ideal) and the history of labor, criminality, and dissent (which analyzes the sociocultural significance of highwaymen, pirates, and other outlaw figures). She argues that forms of masculinity associated with criminality underwrite and converge with, rather than form a strict opposition to, the modern polite gentleman, and that all of these forms, in their glorification of heterosexual masculine gallantry, “serve to consolidate the legitimacy of patriarchy.”<sup>25</sup> Thus Mackie sees the reform-of-the-rake plot as a narrative solution to the gentleman’s need to prove both his healthy sexual appetite and his bourgeois respectability: “The narrative of the reformed rake, in which all the sexual energies necessary to full masculinity are manifest extravagantly but then assimilated smoothly into the polite self-discipline of the gentleman, grows out of this contradiction between prestige, or honor, as politeness, on the one hand, and as sexual self-assertion on the other.”<sup>26</sup> Mackie’s analysis, then, uncovers often-hidden connections between the gentleman and his masculine “others” but still works within a larger teleological narrative of social change that culminates in the construction of the modern polite gentleman.

My method in this study is to take a step back from the historical narrative that sees, with the benefit of hindsight, the seeming inevitability of the rise of a middle-class society in Britain, with an accompanying transition in masculine ideals from aristocratic

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<sup>23</sup> Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

bravado to gentlemanly politeness or (as Mackie argues) an absorption of aristocratic bravado *by* the polite gentleman.

To be clear, however, while my study reconsiders the teleological rake-to-gentleman narrative, it does not deny the existence or importance of energies expended on actual reform attempts in the period. Indeed, beginning in the late seventeenth century, official reform societies targeted male manners, focusing initially on “the blasphemous side of the rakes’ activities” in secret societies like the “Hell-fire Clubs”<sup>27</sup> and coming to focus more generally on disturbances like “noise and drunkenness in the streets at night.”<sup>28</sup> Driven by both moral and economic considerations, associations like the Society for the Reformation of Manners came to urge the cultivation of politeness in the home as the grounds for a proper presentation of the self in the public sphere of commercial capitalism.<sup>29</sup> Private life and domesticity, naturalized gender identity and gender complementarity (meaning fixed, inherent gender identity and heterosexuality as intrinsic qualities defining the subject), gradually came to be valued over the public displays of debauchery, subjection, and flattery that had marked courtly behavior.<sup>30</sup>

This study asserts that the continued prevalence of libertine figures in post-Restoration British literature calls for a reconsideration of how imaginative literature engages with this history of social change. It considers what we can learn by foregrounding the “persistence-of-the-rake”: the ongoing creation, circulation, and

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<sup>27</sup> Evelyn Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: Sex, Satanism and Secret Societies* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2008), 14.

<sup>28</sup> Lord, 15.

<sup>29</sup> G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 44,88.

<sup>30</sup> Mackie writes that sex/gender as a “model of polarized sexual difference was accompanied by a revised concept of relations between men and women that were increasingly idealized as complementary relations between dominant (male) and subordinate (female)” (*Rakes* 7). Also see Thomas King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750*, Vol. I (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 3-7.

consumption of narratives about the brazen, sometimes illicit, and often violent exploits of elite and aristocratic men. Attending to the myriad ways in which writers imaginatively enter the elite and exclusive realm of the libertine leads to a fuller awareness of the public appetite for access to a world perceived to be secretive, subversive, and disruptive of the increasingly gendered and nation-centered boundaries associated with the reformers and the middling class.

### **Archive and Methodology**

This study constructs a cultural history through literary analysis, specifically by tracing a particular narrative and a particular character type across multiple genres over the course of the long eighteenth century. I am interested in the way fictional characters and narratives stir debate on such issues as education, gender relations, and criminal justice. Therefore, most chapters center on works that can be broadly classified as imaginative literature in their invention and use of characters who do not directly correspond to actual living or historical persons, even if the authors originally claimed otherwise. The obvious exception is Chapter Three, which focuses on the journals of James Boswell. Boswell wrote candidly about his own experiences, fears, joys, and ambitions, yet he often found it useful and perhaps even necessary to express his aspirations and shortcomings through comparison to fictional characters such as Macheath and Mr. Spectator or to masculine “types” like the blackguard and the soldier. I have included Boswell’s journals among the novels, plays, and periodical essays that make up the rest of the dissertation because his writings help us see how the narrative of reformation and the characters inhabiting that narrative permeated the consciousness of

an eighteenth-century man of letters, and because Boswell's journals have become pivotal texts for scholars studying mid-to-late eighteenth-century models of masculinity.

In addition to primary texts by Boswell, John Gay, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, Sydney Owenson, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding, I have consulted several other types of primary material ranging from early-eighteenth-century constabulary reports to cautionary tales about the dangers of public schools. This wide-ranging archive demonstrates the reach and persistence of certain narrative patterns – constables' descriptions of assaults reported by citizens in London, for example, mirror the staged violence in John Gay's short play *The Mohocks*, while Samuel Richardson's account of Lovelace as a privileged and tyrannical college student has intertextual resonance with lesser-known stories, letters, anecdotes, and cautionary tales. Throughout the dissertation I conduct close readings of all of these texts in order to uncover the modes of characterization and narration that built and reflected public fascination with, as well as fear, disapproval, and emulation of, elite libertinism.

A study of libertine characters in particular provokes questions about the intersection of imaginative literature and historical fact. Upon encountering Addison and Steele's essays or Gay's dramatic afterpiece about the Mohocks, for example, readers understandably want to know if such a club actually existed. Yet the very mystery surrounding elite and exclusive clubs like the (fictional?) Mohocks, which is precisely what piqued eighteenth-century readers' curiosity about them, continues to make definitive historicization difficult. As Evelyn Lord writes in a recent popular history of eighteenth-century Hell-Fire Clubs, “[u]nfortunately, the sources that tell us about what went on at club meetings are few and unreliable. These clubs were, after all, secret

societies, but what their contemporaries did not know about them they were happy to make up.”<sup>31</sup> The libertine character’s noted theatricality furthers the confusion. As Jeremy Webster explains, “the libertines were actors who captivated spectators with their scandalous behavior, the libertines were playwrights who embodied their own reputations in their libertine protagonists, and, through their activities and plays, the libertines were themselves texts to be analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated.”<sup>32</sup> Tim Hitchcock, in his study *English Sexualities 1700-1800*, asserts a gap between what professed libertines claimed to be and to do and what the scant records of rakish clubs reveal: “while the rhetoric of libertinism, with its aggressive and predatory sexuality, suggests a justification for promiscuity and a new attitude to sex itself, the reality of libertine clubs provides evidence only for the prudery, sexual and emotional immaturity, and general social incompetence of the participants.”<sup>33</sup>

My aim in this study is not to disentangle fact from fiction, but to interrogate why writers “made up” these particular accounts and characters. A cultural history of the eighteenth-century’s “well-dispos’d savage,” through analysis of literary features and patterns, is a history of representations. Through these representations we gain insight into how the novel, the periodical, and the theatre granted imaginative access to the elite, non-democratic spaces inhabited by the never-quite-reformed rake.

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<sup>31</sup> Lord, xx.

<sup>32</sup> Webster, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700-1800* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 22.

## Chapters

Chapter One, “‘Our imperial reign’: Addison, Steele, Gay and the London Mohocks,” looks at writings about a gang of rakes rumored to prowl the streets of Augustan London. I focus on Addison and Steele’s *Spectator* papers (1711) and John Gay’s short unperformed play *The Mohocks* (1712) to explore how and why this gang, whose real-life referents are elusive, captivated early-eighteenth-century Londoners. Drawing in part on Joseph Roach’s theory of circum-Atlantic performance, I argue that accounts of The Mohock Club allegorize early British imperial ambition while using accounts of Native American culture to infuse new life into the popular belief that elite male identity is pagan, theatrical, and secretive.

Chapter Two, “Schools for Scandal: Elite Education and Eighteenth-Century Narrative,” uncovers a relationship between two key mid-century novels and a longstanding discourse about elite schooling. Educational theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most notably John Locke, asserted that sending boys “abroad” to elite public schools (such as Eton and Westminster) and universities (Oxford and Cambridge) estranged them from the civilizing influence of the home and bred vice, cruelty, and moral corruption. While the critical rise-of-the-middle-class narrative tends to portray corrupt aristocratic masculinity as increasingly marginalized and outmoded, the elite, cloistered, and “savage” nature of the schools designed to educate future leaders is depicted in the period’s literature as a very current problem. In *Clarissa* (1747) and *Tom Jones* (1749), respectively, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding create novelistic characters who emerge from this system, in which the lack of familial influence in

childhood and young adulthood is seen to have a profoundly negative influence on the formation of elite men and thus on the nation at large.

The final two chapters consider the influence of late-eighteenth-century discourses of liberty and sensibility on constructions of elite masculinity. Chapter Three, “Command Performance: Boswell’s Libertine Diplomacy,” focuses on the early journals and travelogues of James Boswell, a self-professed libertine youth who continuously strove, with mixed results, to restrain his appetite for power and pleasure. I argue that Boswell sets out to construct an ambassadorial persona that allows him to channel an inclination toward libertinism through advocacy for liberty. This is most evident in his self-appointed role as liaison to the court of Corsican general Pascal Paoli but emerges as well in writings on military masculinity in general and in an article on a Mohawk chief descended from one of the 1710 ambassadorial Mohawk “kings” (precursor to the 1712 Mohock “scare”) in particular.

The final chapter, “A ‘strong transition of place’: Cultural Encounter and the reform plot in Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl*,” offers a new framework in which to read the genre of the national tale. In this chapter I shift the critical lens from the novel’s Anglo-Irish marriage plot to its parallel plot of intersecting and competing masculinities – English, Irish, libertine, and sentimental. My reading of *The Wild Irish Girl* examines the effect of Owenson’s interest in Irish culture on the way she reworks the generic contours of the reform-of-the-rake narrative and questions the extent to which “reformation” is the right term to employ in characterizing the hero’s journey.

## Chapter One

### “Our imperial reign”: Addison, Steele, Gay, and the London Mohocks

In the March 12, 1712 issue of the popular periodical *The Spectator*, Richard Steele published a letter, ostensibly from a reader, containing the following account: “I could not forbear communicating to you some imperfect Informations of a Set of Men (if you will allow them a Place in that Species of Being) who have erected themselves into a nocturnal Fraternity, under the Title of *The Mohock Club*; a Name borrowed it seems from a sort of *Cannibals* in India, who subsist by plundering and devouring all the Nations about them.”<sup>34</sup> This information is “imperfect” indeed, a secondhand account marked by both the hedging tone of rumor and by obvious geographical confusion. Daniel Defoe commented shortly afterwards that the name derived not from India but rather from “a small Nation of Savages in the Woods, on the back of our two colonies of New-England and New York” whose members were “always esteem’d as the most Cruel of the natives of North America.”<sup>35</sup> Despite the obvious confusion between North America and the Indian subcontinent, however, the writer in fact uses language reminiscent of travelers’ accounts of Iroquois territory; first because the Iroquois were divided into “nations” and second because the Mohawk nation was often described by European travelers and officials as the most formidable as well as “the most arrogant and cruel” among them.<sup>36</sup> The Iroquois Confederacy, an alliance of five nations, was courted in the early eighteenth century for strategic alliance by both England and France. In 1710,

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<sup>34</sup> Addison, Joseph and Richard Steele. *The Spectator* no. 324. *The Spectator* ed. Donald F. Bond, Volume III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965). Subsequent volume numbers, issue numbers, and page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>35</sup> *Review* vol. viii, No. 153 (15 March 1712). Qtd. in Richmond Bond, *Queen Anne’s American Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 77.

<sup>36</sup> Snow, Gehring, and Starna, eds. *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1996), 15, 40, 140.

London had witnessed a diplomatic visit of four Iroquois “Kings” sent to discuss such an alliance. And in 1712, as *Spectator* 324 reveals, the name “Mohock” was being applied to a gang of violent rakes rumored to prowl the streets of the metropolis.

Around the same time that *Spectator* 324 appeared, the Middlesex Justice of the Peace was spurred by complaints of unprovoked violence committed by roving gangs of well-dressed young men<sup>37</sup> to issue an official notice calling “for petty Constables within Westminster Holborne & Finsbury Divisions” to discover “any . . . person or persons that have been assaulted, beaten wounded bruised maimed . . . by a person or persons called Mohawks or suspected to be such.”<sup>38</sup> Yet the Constables who responded to the warrant failed to gain any information that would concretely confirm rumors of the Mohock Club’s existence and misdeeds.<sup>39</sup> The question arises, then, of why this “Mohock scare” entered early-eighteenth-century public consciousness and print culture with such imaginative force. What is the relationship between a club of English rakes allegedly terrorizing London with nocturnal assaults and drunken riots, and an American Indian nation from the contested territories of Canada and upper New York? Why does Steele’s reader (or Steele himself, posing as a reader) infuse his geographically-confused account with the image of one nation “cannibalizing” everything around it? In exploring such questions, this chapter argues that texts about, and images of, American Indian men that circulated in early modern London provided writers new terms with which to depict an

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<sup>37</sup> For example, on March 31, a cookmaid reported being assaulted while “going about lafull besnes” (MJ/SP/1712/Ap/28); two women had reported a similar incident on March 17 (MJ/SP/1712/Ap/30), and a man reported being surrounded by “Severall Men” and being cut “one the head with a Sword” on March 23 (MSP 1712/Ap/31).

<sup>38</sup> Middlesex Justice of the Peace Session Papers (MSP) April 1712 (housed at the London Metropolitan Archives). (As these examples demonstrate, there is no consistent spelling of Mohock/Mohawk in this period. To reflect predominant usage, I will refer to the Londoners as Mohocks and the North American tribe as Mohawks).

<sup>39</sup> MSP 1712, Ap/16, Ap/17, Ap/25

elite British masculinity that had long been associated with ostentatious and often violent displays of power. Whether or not the Mohock Club existed as a historical reality<sup>40</sup> (I take the position that no conclusive evidence exists to confirm the existence of the Club), literary accounts of London Mohocks claiming sovereignty over city streets and “plundering and devouring” the metropolis resonate within a geopolitical context in which Britain was actively contesting and acquiring territory in North America, often through strategic alliances with the same native peoples whom travelers and metropolitan writers deemed arrogant and cruel.

As figures of the popular imagination, the London Mohocks’ genealogy includes both literary and political archetypes. The Mohocks fit broadly into the category of rakish hooligans who were popular subjects of Restoration and Augustan literature. Such characters are heirs to the libertine courtiers of the seventeenth century who used the freedom and free time afforded by elite social status to pursue every pleasure and vice the tavern, the brothel, the theater and the court could provide.

Yet within these broad categories, the Mohock occupies his own niche: the persona applied to him emphasizes, rather than disguises, his desire to be recognized as holding the reins of power. While many accounts of rakes showed their subjects

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<sup>40</sup> Critics and historians are not of one mind on this issue. Some write of the Mohocks as a real, though brief, historical phenomenon: see Ashe, 42 and Robert Shoemaker, *The London Mob* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 164-5. Some posit it as an entirely literary phenomenon. For example, Calhoun Winton writes that Gay’s play *The Mohocks* “helped give reality to an imaginary London club, the Mohocks of the title, which has entered history and indeed the Oxford English Dictionary in spite of its nonexistence”; see Winton, *John Gay and the London Theater* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 21. Some hedge their bets by including the Mohocks among a list of “the menagerie of factual, fictional, and fantastical clubs that mapped out the pleasures of eighteenth-century London”; see Marie Mulvey Roberts, “Pleasures Engendered by Gender: Homosociality and the Club” in Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts, eds., *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: New York UP, 1996), 48.

“dressing down” to mingle with denizens of the brothels and other underworld figures, Mohocks are often described as well-dressed and assertive of their power and prerogative. In fact, neither early-eighteenth-century rumors nor print scrutiny impeded accused Mohocks from taking places in positions of government, even very shortly after the scare. Take, for example, the case of Edward Montague, Lord Hinchinbroke, alumnus of Cambridge, the Grand Tour, and a company of dragoons, and the son and heir of Lord Sandwich. Hinchinbroke was arrested during the period of the Mohock scare for attacking a watchman.<sup>41</sup> Yet less than two years later, at the age of twenty-one, he was elected to a seat in Parliament,<sup>42</sup> demonstrating the continued power of name and rank to determine one’s political destiny and tying Mohock rumor directly to accusations of aristocratic misconduct.

Despite this connection between the Mohock craze and the British power structure, however, little has been written about the London Mohock as a literary and cultural trope, and even less has been conjectured about the imaginative connection between the London Mohocks and their North American namesakes. The affinity between elite British men and colonial cultures has been overshadowed in eighteenth-century criticism by a focus on middling-class merchant characters, like Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, on one hand, and by a focus on non-European elite figures, like Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko*, on the other. Yet it is important to recognize that men from the ranks of the traditional British elite were also involved both historically and imaginatively in

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<sup>41</sup> Daniel Statt, “The case of the Mohocks: Rake violence in Augustan London,” *Social History* 20.2 (May 1995): 179-200), 188.

<sup>42</sup> In addition to Statt, Robert Shoemaker also notes the involvement of Hinchinbrooke, as well as “Sir Mark Cole, a baronet” (165).

early colonial endeavors. P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, in arguing for the importance of “the role of that elusive creature, the English gentleman,” in the economic history of imperialism, write, “By the close of the seventeenth century the landed magnates had ceased to be a feudal aristocracy and were ready to embrace a market philosophy. Nonetheless, they were still the heirs of a feudal tradition: the landed capitalism which evolved in Britain after the Stuarts was heavily influenced by pre-capitalist notions of order, authority, and status” that would be disseminated throughout the colonial world along with capital and commodities.<sup>43</sup> Writings about the London Mohocks incorporate several of these concerns, including longstanding notions of inherited authority, emerging colonial and transatlantic activity, and the changing nature of “that elusive creature, the English gentleman.”

The central connection between the London Mohocks and their North American namesake is the ambivalence a wide range of writers express about the “civility” of both American Indian and elite British men. In the early eighteenth century, American Indians were not necessarily seen as racial Others in the modern sense, since, as Roxann Wheeler has demonstrated, until the end of the eighteenth century when more credence was given to scientific taxonomies, “older conceptions of Christianity, civility, and rank were more explicitly important to Britons’ assessment of themselves and other people than physical attributes such as skin color, shape of the nose, or texture of the hair.”<sup>44</sup> In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European representations, American Indians were often admired for their physical bearing, their warrior mien, and their diplomatic dignity, yet at other

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<sup>43</sup> P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2000*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Longman, 2002), 39.

<sup>44</sup> Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 7.

times they were portrayed as barbarous cannibals. Sometimes both these characterizations even appeared within a single text.<sup>45</sup>

The perceived warrior characteristics of the North American Indian were sometimes exalted, but in cases where tribes and settlers were at odds, the Native Americans were described derisively as “naturally addicted to war and Bloodshed.”<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, the “young bloods” who patrolled the London streets were accused of gruesome acts like slitting victims’ noses, evoking what Daniel Statt calls “the element of violence in aristocratic cultural norms.”<sup>47</sup> Just as Londoners circulated rumors about the horrific exploits of rakish clubs,<sup>48</sup> American exploration accounts and captivity narratives describe episodes of mutilation, “devil worship” and cannibalism among the Mohawk Indians.<sup>49</sup> One secondhand account of a settler’s captivity ordeal, for instance, explained that the victim had been “‘hem’d in with a ring of bare skinned morris dancers’ every morning while in captivity,”<sup>50</sup> an image that mirrors a description of a Mohock attack in *Spectator* 332, which contains a letter describing a secondhand account of a Mohock Club “sweating.” The *Spectator* correspondent relates, “It seems it is the Custom for half a dozen, or more, of these well-dispos’d Savages, as soon as they have inclos’d the Person upon whom they design the Favour of a Sweat, to whip out their Swords, and holding them Parallel to the Horizon, they describe a sort of Magick Circle round about

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<sup>45</sup> Alden Vaughan’s *Transatlantic Encounters: American Indians in Britain 1500-1776* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), provides a useful history of Spanish, French, and English accounts beginning in the 1500s. For example, Vaughan cites a late sixteenth-century sailors’ account of Baffin Island natives that varies from initial impression of a “very humane and civil” people to a disillusioned assessment of a “barbarous and uncivill” people” (18).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 135: the phrase is from a description of a Yamasee/Creek alliance in colonial South Carolina.

<sup>47</sup> Statt, 181.

<sup>48</sup> See Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*.

<sup>49</sup> Snow, Gehring and Starna, 77, 137.

<sup>50</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000), 48.

him with the Points” (No. 332). Clearly, accounts of both Native American and elite male British culture drew on a common store of violent imagery.

In fact, American Indians had informed the styles of elite English men even a century before the Mohock scare. In the early seventeenth century, Samuel Purchas, William Prynne and Roger Williams described - and in Prynne’s case denounced - a vogue for “lovelocks,” long strands of hair worn in imitation of Powhatan and other prominent native Virginians. Williams equated this vogue with rakish misconduct when he asked rhetorically, “Are not many degenerated into Virginians, Frenchmen, ruffians?”<sup>51</sup> Around the same time, a royal marriage was celebrated with a masque set in Virginia in which “[t]he principal masquers, the court’s most prominent aristocrats, took the parts of ‘Virginia Princes.’” Karen Ordahl Kupperman writes that in this masque, “Inigo Jones’s designs played on the correspondence between the noble English and the ‘noblest Virginians,’ the reality underneath the disguise.”<sup>52</sup> Positing nobility *as* the reality does not get us any closer to the subjective interiority of the masquer, but that is precisely the point. There is no attempt in the masque to produce an outer manifestation of any kind of essential, individual identity like that embraced by the private gentleman-citizen. The native Virginians provide a costume and a persona for Jacobean courtiers to display their status and their power, and the Mohawks serve a similar purpose for London rakes in the early eighteenth century.

At a diplomatic level, too, there are significant connections between Native American “Kings” and British royalty and elites. For example, in 1644, the Narragansett Indians of Rhode Island displeased the local colonists by composing an Act of

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<sup>51</sup> Kupperman, 74.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

Submission not to the Puritan authorities in New England but directly to “that worthy and royal Prince, Charles, King of Great Britaine and Ireland, his heires and successors forever.” The Narragansetts write that it would be unfit to “yield over ourselves unto any, that are subjects themselves in any case; having ourselves been the chief sachems, or Princes, successively, of the country, time out of mind.”<sup>53</sup> The Narragansetts thus group themselves not with the colonists occupying the same geographical space but rather with their British equivalents in rank. And to visibly cement the relationship between English and Indian “royalty” after the 1710 visit of the four Iroquois “kings” to the court of Queen Anne, the prominent Iroquois were given “twenty small pictures of the Queen, in silver, to be worn in necklaces by the leading warriors of each nation.”<sup>54</sup>

This kind of transatlantic diplomacy inspired writers to compose disquisitions on power and nobility using Iroquois figures as representative characters. For instance, in *The Tatler* no. 171, the periodical’s persona Isaac Bickerstaffe and his companions draw on stories of Native American “royalty” during a debate about “whence Honour and Title had its first Original.”<sup>55</sup> One of the assembled men argues that “in those Ages which first degenerated from Simplicity of Life, and Natural Justice, the Wise among them thought it necessary to inspire Men with Love of Virtue, by giving them who adhered to the Interests of Innocence and Truth, some distinguishing Name to raise them above the common Level of Mankind.” However, he notes, “Such a Name . . . without the Qualities which should give a Man Pretence to be exalted above others, does but turn him to Jest and Ridicule.” A second man, Urbanus, follows with an account of the honorable

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<sup>53</sup> *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America*, ed. Colin Calloway (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1994), 81-82.

<sup>54</sup> Vaughan, 130.

<sup>55</sup> No 171, 2:439. Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Clarendon Press, 1987). Subsequent issue number, volume number and page numbers refer to this edition.

conduct of the Indian Kings towards their London lodger. The Mohawks were so taken with their hospitality, says Urbanus, that they conferred a new title of honor upon their landlord in a naming ceremony. Yet after this glowing account, which seems to endorse a correspondence between virtue and rank, the fastidious and cynical Minucio enters the conversation to argue that these kinds of diplomatic encounters are the result of clever stage-management, not a natural expression of inherent goodness or nobility. He asks, “Will any Man . . .perswade me, that this was not from the Beginning to the End a concerted Affair? Who can convince the World, that Four Kings shall come over here, and lie at the Two Crowns and Cushion, and one of them fall sick, and the Place be called King-street, and all this by meer Accident?” (No. 171, 2:441). He allows that these events might not have been contrived by all four Kings together, but asserts that one “*Tee Yee Neen Ho Ga Row*, Emperor of the *Mohocks*, was prepared for this Adventure beforehand” (No. 171, 2:441). In this account, transatlantic diplomacy is, at every level, a staged affair centered on the terminology and visual trappings of royalty.

Minucio’s account of the “Emperor” as a diplomatic stage manager reflects a larger concern with English ability to discern the Native Americans’ true nature and motivations. The four Iroquois envoys were portrayed in print and on canvas as dignified representatives of their nations,<sup>56</sup> yet several years after their visit, a secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts lamented that the Iroquois had not assimilated England’s model of industry and civility. Disillusioned, he writes:

It might have been imagined that the Sachems . . . who were in England in the late Queen’s Time, should have been so strongly affected with seeing the grandeur, Pleasure and Plenty of this Nation, that when they came to their own Countries, they would have tried to reduce their People to a polite Life; would have employ’d their whole Power to expel their rude Barbarism, and introduce

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<sup>56</sup> See Bond, *Queen Anne’s American Kings*.

Arts, Manners, and Religion. But the contrary happened, they sunk themselves into their old brutal Life, and tho' they had seen this great City, when they came to their own Woods, they were all Savages again.<sup>57</sup>

This missionary is disappointed to learn that progress, as the Society defines it, is not the inevitable result of exposure to English civility. In his account, “savagery” exerts so strong a pull on the sachems that exposure to what the missionary considers the civilizing influence of Christian principles and European culture is for them only a temporary curiosity, not a model to be successfully imported to the North American “woods.” In fact, in the early eighteenth-century metropolis one needed only reflect on the Mohock scare to see the reverse of the missionary’s hoped-for scenario - that is, to see how attractive the Mohawk model was imagined to be for well-connected young Englishmen who know, but reject, the desired comportment of the modern, polite gentleman.

In approaching the questions raised by the similarities between accounts of North American Indians and London Mohocks, the model of circum-Atlantic performance put forward by Joseph Roach in *Cities of the Dead* provides a useful framework. Roach draws on numerous cultural practices that can broadly be defined as performances, including diplomatic gatherings of Iroquois Confederacy leaders, in which groups seek to define themselves and mark the continuity of their communities even amidst major historical change. Roach writes of the 1710 diplomatic visit of four Iroquois Kings to London and its aftermath in the popular imagination, “[t]he actual existence of the ‘Mohock Club’ is uncertain, but the very fact of its discursive life as an imaginary instrument of violence and political reprisal demonstrates that the Iroquois alliance had a symbolic impact that reached beyond diplomatic circles into the popular imagination of

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<sup>57</sup> Bond, 64.

the ‘Free-born.’<sup>58</sup> I would argue that the rakish London Mohock specifically engages in what Roach calls “the performance of waste” in which “ritual enactments involve the conspicuous consumption of nonutilitarian objects and forms of all kinds, including theatrical productions and other incarnations of excess.”<sup>59</sup> For example, unlike most petty criminals who prowled the streets of early eighteenth-century London, the Mohocks were not after their victims’ property. Their alleged attacks were not reported to be opportunities for theft but were rather portrayed as extensions of other forms of debauchery (mostly drunkenness) and as seemingly staged enactments and re-enactments of a common set of proceedings for approaching and attacking randomly-selected victims. A common thread to the Mohock reports is “that all the attacks seem to have been unprovoked,”<sup>60</sup> deepening the connection between their brand of violence and the ritualistic or “profitless,” in contrast to most early-eighteenth-century criminals who committed crimes against property.<sup>61</sup> In his poem, “Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London,” Gay refers to the rioters’ reported habit of throwing coins into a shop or residence whose windows they have broken: “His scatter’d pence the flying Nicker flings, / And with the copper show’r the casement rings. / Who has not heard the scowrer’s midnight fame? / Who has not trembled at the Mohocks’ name?”(III.323-

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<sup>58</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 163.

<sup>59</sup> Roach, 123.

<sup>60</sup> Guthrie, Neil. “‘No Truth or very little in the whole Story’? – A Reassessment of the Mohock Scare of 1712.” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 20.2 (1996: [33-56]), 44.

<sup>61</sup> For historical accounts of eighteenth-century criminality, see Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) and McLynn, Frank. *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-century England*. London: Routledge, 1989.

326).<sup>62</sup> In a reversal of the norm, the Mohocks actually *throw away* money as part of their manner of assault.

While Roach uses the framework of circum-Atlantic performance to analyze how cultures and nations define themselves broadly against others, then, I look specifically at the elite British male, who of all players in the early eighteenth-century Atlantic world has the greatest access to the kind of “superabundance” or “sense of having too much of everything”<sup>63</sup> that haunts and fascinates Britons on the cusp of empire. Their performance of waste is the inverse of the kind of consumption associated with women (as consumers) and merchants (as traders, distributors, and wealth-generators) in the early-eighteenth-century metropolis. The libertine male as imagined in the pages of the *Spectator* and in Gay’s drama, as we will see, resists pressure to reform and to conform to an emerging commercial culture centered on an ideal of politeness; he rather confirms his allegiance to his fellow libertines through ritual, through a performance of power on the streets of London, and, often, through violence. Thus, I extend Roach’s analysis of circum-Atlantic performance to the realm of gender studies, arguing that early-eighteenth-century conceptions of elite masculinity were articulated in part through this extended analogy between elite British and Native American men.

The sections that follow focus on representations of Mohocks, masculinity, and performance in Addison and Steele’s *Spectator* papers and John Gay’s published but unperformed play *The Mohocks* (1712). Addison and Steele’s *Spectator* project and Gay’s dramatic works incisively portray early eighteenth-century London from opposing ends of the political spectrum. The Whiggish *Spectator* authors write optimistically

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<sup>62</sup> John Gay, *Poetry and Prose* Vol. I., ed. Vinton Dearing (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

<sup>63</sup> Roach, 123.

about the promise of the new credit economy and its global reach, while Gay draws pessimistic parallels between capitalism, colonialism and underworld criminality, leading me to argue for a reading of *The Mohocks* alongside Gay's better-known works *The Beggar's Opera* and *Polly* as what I call a circum-Atlantic trilogy. These texts effectively illuminate the literary and cultural issues surrounding the Mohock scare from different political positions and in different genres, while providing insights into these writers' larger literary and cultural projects. *The Spectator's* complex engagement with the Mohock Club compels us to look more closely at Mr. Spectator's own attraction to performance and foreign disguise, while Gay's first play turns our attention to the *ancien regime* that surrounds the machinery of capitalist modernity which Gay is so famed for portraying.

### **Mr. Spectator and the Mohocks**

Throughout most of the *Spectator* papers, early-eighteenth-century London is a bustling center of commercial exchange where one can enjoy proliferating opportunities to consume goods from around the globe, and where coffee shops and chocolate houses provide outlets for discussing politics, theater, and any other subject of interest to the polite gentleman. The fictional personae that belong to the paper's Spectator Club hold conversations that strike a harmonious balance between the worldviews of entrepreneurial merchant Sir Andrew Freeport and amiable Tory squire Sir Roger de Coverly, mediated by the omnipresent Mr. Spectator himself. Critics have looked to *The Spectator's* portrayal of these and other contemporary characters for insights into early-eighteenth-century cultural values. Shawn Maurer argues that *The Spectator's* aim was

to universalize middle-class values by marginalizing women and aristocrats and designating the bread-winning, self-controlling, sentimental family-man as England's new moral center. Addison and Steele, writes Maurer, "implied that rational men might put aside their class differences, engage in free exchange of ideas, and thus arrive at a truth that would magically counterbalance aristocratic corruption."<sup>64</sup> Erin Mackie argues that in *The Spectator*, attainment of polite behavior and proper habits of consumption "depend not on the conventional prestige markers of wealth and title, but on the less socially exclusive, more generally human principles of modesty, decorum, moderation, generosity, common sense, and good taste,"<sup>65</sup> though she elsewhere warns against "being too positive about the public sphere" as an actually-existing realm of inclusive, democratic participation.<sup>66</sup> Other critics have also complicated the Habermasian view of *The Spectator* as an egalitarian enabler of democracy, arguing not only that women and lower-class Englishmen had limited access to the public sphere but also that traditional hierarchies were largely upheld in the pages of eighteenth-century periodicals.<sup>67</sup> Thomas

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<sup>64</sup> Shawn Lisa Maurer, *Proposing Men: Dialectics of Gender and Class in the Eighteenth-Century English Periodical* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998), 119. In emphasizing the exclusion of women that this move entailed, Maurer argues that "Despite its sentimentality, the ideology of masculinity that emerged in this period was no less rigid or destructive than the aristocratic code of honor – exemplified most brutally in the duel – that it supplanted" (2).

<sup>65</sup> Erin Mackie, *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998)

<sup>66</sup> Erin Mackie, "Being Too Positive About the Public Sphere," in Donald Newman, ed. *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 81-104.

<sup>67</sup> G.J. Barker-Benfield writes that in *The Spectator*, "[t]he pleasures of the imagination required clear social hierarchy." For example, Barker-Benfield writes, "*The Spectator* aggrandized 'pity,' 'love softened by a degree of sorrow....', but implicit in that aggrandizement was the need for social distance (63)." Brian Cowan argues that the goal of Addison and Steele was not to encourage a Habermasian free discourse in the public sphere but rather to narrowly channel coffeehouse exchange into a polite and consensual conversation that would uphold Whig principles during a politically contentious period. See Cowan, "Mr. Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 37.3 (2004): 345-366. Furthermore, Ann Dean argues that the content of eighteenth-century newspapers, "[r]ather than moving away from the court to the town, as in Habermas' account," actually "describe the public moving to the periphery of the court, where readers were invited to participate, at a distance, in politics as practiced by

King emphasizes the elite nature of Mr. Spectator's brand of civility and argues that his "ostensible disavowal of display was instead a displacement of male exhibitionism from the concrete places of a hierarchical society into the virtual and ostensibly egalitarian space of the text."<sup>68</sup> In other words, Mr. Spectator adapts social practices derived from court culture – in particular, the drive to visibly present oneself as being in close proximity to those who hold power – to the demands and opportunities of the print marketplace.

One way to organize these cruxes in *Spectator* scholarship is to state that a good deal of the dramatic conflict in *The Spectator* takes place over a battlefield of competing masculinities. Within the pages of *The Spectator*, Tory landholders and Whig merchants, fops and men of sentiment, state their cases directly (as letter writers and recorded speakers) or indirectly (as characters in interpolated tales) for what constitutes the proper early-eighteenth-century manly character. And today, critics continue to debate the relative merit accorded to an emerging middle-class model of comportment focused on reason, good taste, and decorum over and against an aristocratic or courtly model of theatrical self-presentation.

An overlooked thread in this patchwork of gendered discourse, however, is the recurring appearance in *The Spectator* of the Mohock Club, which correspondents portray as a blight on London's ostensibly democratizing urban landscape but which Mr.

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the king and his courtiers." The language of the newspapers, argues Dean, "shaped participation and knowledge around traditional expectations and relationships associated with alliance, loyalty, and patronage." See Ann Deane, "Court Culture and Political News in London's Eighteenth-Century Newspapers," *ELH* 73.3 (2006): 631-649.

<sup>68</sup> King, *The Gendering of Men*, 205. On the classed nature of civility King writes, "The civility that Anthony Fletcher has called '[t]he crucial new ingredient in English masculinity between 1660 and 1800,' like the heterosociality emphasized by G.J. Barker-Benfield, may be understood not as characterizing the quality of being *male*, but as a fully classed tactic for limiting membership in the political nation, potentially leveled by expanding claims to domesticity and privacy, to the elite" (204).

Spectator himself never straightforwardly condemns. Ideologically, of course, the Mohocks seem the antithesis of the Spectator Club. They replace rational discourse with orchestrated ritual. For a free gathering of private citizens in a public place, they substitute like-minded adherence to an “emperor.” Rather than encourage the public gathering of private citizens, they make private citizens afraid to venture out into public spaces at night. And in place of the economic rationality of Sir Andrew Freeport, the Mohocks embody the excessive spending –of money and blood – that characterize many elite characters in eighteenth-century literature.<sup>69</sup> Mackie argues that in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, rakish hooliganism, of which the Mohocks are a prime example, represents an antiquated allegiance to violent sport and spectacle derived from the “archaic, aristocratic code of honor” against which Addison and Steele “preached the new standards of politeness, civility and urbanity.”<sup>70</sup> While the modern polite gentleman is formed by civility, an essentialized gender identity, and “moral and affective capacities,” the rake is an overtly performed construct who inherits “the aristocratic ethos of competitive martial prowess.”<sup>71</sup> Yet there are also affinities between Mr. Spectator and the Mohocks that complicate the periodical’s allegiance to an emerging ideal of polite gentlemanliness, beginning with Mr. Spectator’s status as the son of a long-established landowning family.

According to the fictional biography Addison and Steele fashion for their periodical persona, Mr. Spectator was “born to a small Hereditary Estate, which, according to the Tradition of the Village where it lies, was bounded by the same Hedges

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<sup>69</sup> Clarissa’s description of Lovelace as “one of the greatest profligates in England, who had endeavoured to support his claim to me through the blood of my brother” succinctly captures this trope. Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady*. ed. Angus Ross. (London: Penguin, 2004), 193.

<sup>70</sup> Mackie, *Commerce*, 13, and “Boys Will be Boys,” 198.

<sup>71</sup> Mackie, “Boys Will be Boys,” 132.

and Ditches in William the Conqueror's Time that it is at present, and has been delivered down from Father to Son whole and entire, without the Loss or Acquisition of a single Field or Meadow, during the Space of six hundred Years" (No.1,1:2). Thus the true source of Mr. Spectator's stature and relative wealth is land. When he chooses a cosmopolitan, rather than rural, life after the death of his father, travelling through Egypt and the Continent and finally settling in London, the city becomes his new territory. Through his exceptional ability to permeate its spaces and observe its day-to-day life at the remove permitted by gentlemanly idleness, Mr. Spectator takes on a new, urban sense of territorial ownership that stands in for the hedges and ditches that marked the territory of his ancestors.

Mr. Spectator successfully permeates the city's streets and spaces by drawing on his chameleon-like ability to pass as various urban characters. He writes, "I have been taken for a Merchant upon the Exchange for above these ten Years, and sometimes pass for a Jew in the Assembly of Stock-Jobbers at Jonathan's" (No. 1, 1:4). Like a masquerader, Mr. Spectator teases the reader by stating, "I keep my Complexion and Dress, as very great Secrets, tho' it is not impossible but I may make Discoveries of both in the Progress of the Work I have undertaken" (No.1,1:6). This elusive narrator in fact makes very few such personal discoveries over the course of the paper's run. It is because of his own affinity for the "mask," I contend, that Mr. Spectator's discussions of the Mohocks, and masqueraders in general, are nearly always mediated through letters and manifestos supposedly written by correspondents. In *Spectator* 8, a reader who identifies himself as the Director of the Society for the Reformation of Manners describes the dangers of the "Midnight Masque," where "as all the Persons who compose this

lawless Assembly are masqued, we dare not attack any of them in *our Way*, lest we should send a Woman of Quality to *Bridewell* or a Peer of *Great-Britain* to the Counter” (No.8, 1:37). The reform society cannot confront the Peers and Ladies of Quality, even “accompanied with all our Guard Constables.” They hope, however, that Mr. Spectator can use his anonymous regulatory power to persuade masqueraders to supply their own internal regulation. Yet Mr. Spectator proves elusive on the subject, concluding the number by saying, “I design to visit the next Masquerade myself, in the same Habit I wore at *Grand Cairo*; and till then shall suspend my Judgment of this Midnight Entertainment” (No.8,1:38).

The Orientalist bent of Mr. Spectator’s preferred masquerade habit reveals a specific predilection he shares with the Mohocks. It is reported in a later number of *The Spectator* that the club draws on Eastern symbolism as well as Native American nomenclature: “The President [of the Mohock Club] is stiled *Emperor of the Mohocks*; and his Arms are a *Turkish Crescent*, which his Imperial Majesty bears at present in a very extraordinary Manner engraven upon his Forehead” (No. 324,3:187). Mr. Spectator, too, is drawn to what could be classified as Orientalist motifs. The stated purpose for Mr. Spectator’s trip to Grand Cairo is scientific, but one of the final *Spectator* papers recalls him traveling outside the bounds of dilettantish empiricism to consult an Egyptian fortune teller. In No.604 Mr. Spectator claims that he consulted this “sage” at the suggestion of “a good-natured Musselman” who expected to one day become his country’s Prime Minister (No, 604, 5:65). While waiting to consult this sage, Mr. Spectator falls asleep and has a dream—a phantasmagoria of turbans, caftans, dancing ladies and riches, as well as “Famine and Discontent.” This dream, records Mr. Spectator, compelled him to take

on the mantle and the reformatory purpose of Mr. Spectator (No. 604, 5:66). Thomas King's claim that "[i]n the space of market exchange Mr. Spectator could 'try on' various embodiments considered absolutely external to himself . . . without incorporating alterity"<sup>72</sup> thus underestimates the fundamental role cultural otherness plays in the constitution of Mr. Spectator's very purpose and persona.

In an earlier example of his interest in cultural "masks," Mr. Spectator had taken on the persona of an Iroquois in *Spectator* 50 as a means of commenting on masculine comportment. *Spectator* 50 presents an alleged translation of an Iroquois King's observations of London and its men, such as a disparaging description of the custom for English men to be carried around town in sedan chairs rather than under their own power. Here is the King's description of English masculine attire:

Their Dress is . . . very barbarous, for they almost strangle themselves about the Neck, and bind their Bodies with many Ligatures, that we are apt to think are the Occasion of several Distempers among them which our Country is entirely free from. Instead of those beautiful Feathers with which we adorn our Heads, they often buy up a monstrous Bush of Hair . . . and are as proud of it as if it was of their own Growth. (No. 50, 1:214)

In this particular manifestation of the de-familiarizing trope of the foreigner's observations upon the metropolis, English men's dress is seen as constricting and unnatural; Indian dress is seen as more physically liberating and more aesthetically pleasing. Later in the issue, the purported Iroquois author gives another example of the contrast between Native American customs and modern London pastimes that emphasizes the dearth of robust "great Men" in the metropolis:

We were invited to one of their publick Diversions, where we hoped to have seen the great Men of their Country running down a Stag or pitching a Bar, that we might have discover'd who were the Persons of the greatest Abilities among them; but instead of that, they conveyed us into an huge

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<sup>72</sup> King, 208.

Room lighted up with abundance of Candles, where this lazy People sat still above three Hours to see several Feats of Ingenuity performed by Others, who it seems were paid for it. (No. 50, 1:214)

The concern of both passages is that commercial capitalism and urban pleasures diminish the physicality and robustness of the English, and men in particular, in contrast to the American Indian warrior. Along similar lines, a pamphleteer wrote admiringly in 1710 of the Iroquois sachems, “the Marks with which they disfigure their faces, do not seem to carry so much Terror as Regard with them.”<sup>73</sup>

The Mohock Club, as described by *The Spectator*, aims to inspire not only terror but also just this kind of terrified regard for the Club’s anti-orthodoxy. According to the letter with which this chapter began, “the avowed Design of their Institution is Mischief, and upon this Foundation all their Rules and Orders are framed. An outrageous Ambition of doing all possible Hurt to their fellow-Creatures, is the great Cement of their Assembly, and the only Qualification required in the Members” (No. 324, 3:187). This anti-constitution recalls the charter of Thélème, the anti-monastery in Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel* that Geoffrey Ashe pegs as the prototype for the eighteenth-century Hell-Fire Clubs. Thélème’s one rule is “Do what you will,” and it is populated by socially elite men and women. Ashe writes, “Thélème is adventurous, creative, artistic; but always within itself, apart from people in general. It is an enclave, not a Utopia . . . It is aristocratic, even feudal.”<sup>74</sup> Rather than turning to various good and honorable pursuits once they are no longer tempted by forbidden fruit (nothing being forbidden in the anti-monastery), the Thélémistes “are so much in accord that they tend to

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<sup>73</sup> Qtd. in Bond, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Ashe, 21-22.

act as a group rather than as individuals. When a number of them are together, they are willing to let the whim of any one decide the programme for the whole party.”<sup>75</sup> What could be more different from the ideal of a bourgeois public sphere where polite gentlemen gather to discuss varying private points of view in a public forum? Even though, according to Philanthropos, the Mohocks have a sort of open admissions policy for anyone committed to trouble-making, the fact that the Mohocks’ “Design” leads people to stay in their homes at night out of fear, and thus out of the public sphere in its most literal sense, underscores the anti-democratic nature of their pursuits.

Still, Philanthropos, the letter’s author, expresses optimism that even the Mohocks are reformable through Mr. Spectator’s power of persuasion. He writes,

I have reason to believe, that some thoughtless Youngsters, out of a false Notion of Bravery, and an immoderate Fondness to be distinguished for Fellows of Fire, are insensibly hurried into this senseless scandalous Project: Such will probably stand corrected by your Reproofs, especially if you inform them, that it is not Courage for half a Score Fellows, mad with Wine and Lust, to set upon two or three soberer than themselves; and that the Manners of *Indian Savages* are no becoming Accomplishments to an *English* fine Gentleman (No. 324, 3:188).

Philanthropos fails to see the Mohocks in the larger context of elite performance, and these optimistic assertions are refuted even in other numbers of the *Spectator* papers. First, as indicated previously, the Mohocks’ “false Notion of Bravery” is not equivalent to generalized youthful bravado but is also a legacy of the aristocratic ethos of martial prowess. Whether or not each self-styled or imagined Mohock is a titled member of the nobility, the fact that the term Mohock has come to be used as a general term for elite debauchery<sup>76</sup> compels us to look at the notions of bravery and brutality put forth in

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>76</sup> Frank McLynn writes, “Behaviour that would not have been tolerated in the ‘lower orders’ was deemed to be merely letting off steam on the part of gentlemen. Brutal assaults, sometimes including rape, by

Mohock literature in relation to attitudes about aristocratic performance and aristocratic violence. Even Sir Roger de Coverly “fought a Duel upon his first coming to Town, and kick’d Bully Dawson in a publick Coffee-house for calling him Youngster “(No. 2,1:8). As historian Jonathan Powis writes, “Some link between aristocracy and coercive force is hardly to be denied. The nobilities of the West were heirs to the mounted warriors – the bellatores of the High Middle Ages . . . And the laws which over so much of Western Europe kept hunting a noble monopoly frequently made the military association quite explicit: in the chase, the gentlemen learned the dash and discipline necessary for battlefield command.”<sup>77</sup> Such a long-entrenched ethos is not easily dislodged. As I have been arguing, the commercial endeavors that lead to colonial contact actually provide new models and fresh outlets for this supposedly-outmoded aristocratic behavior.

Along these lines, just as some early colonial settlements were seen as sites of homosocial debauchery (at least until women were brought in to alleviate the situation), the Mohocks scorn the emerging ideal of domestic affections. The response to Philanthropos’ letter is another letter introduced so “that the Reader may observe at the same View, how amiable Ignorance may be when it is shewn in its Simplicities, and how Detestable in its Barbarities” (No. 324, 3:188-9). The letter is a declaration of love from an earnest country dweller to a Mrs. Margaret Clark, the woman he hopes to marry now that he has “come to my living, which is Ten Yard land and a House” (No. 324, 3:189). The private, domestic, companionate affections that send sparks of warmth from the letter

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gangs of idle youth from upper-class families were commonplace in the streets of eighteenth-century London. These so-called ‘Mohawks’ drew on a long tradition of aristocratic misbehaviours and gratuitous violence” (148).

<sup>77</sup> Jonathan Powis, *Aristocracy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 44.

to Mrs. Clark is the antithesis of the Mohocks' "scandalous" quest for fame, which Philanthropos characterizes with a disparaging attitude toward the courtly tradition of public performance.<sup>78</sup> The "spectacular courtly body" – which makes a public display of flattery, subjection, and proximity to the body of the sovereign – repels and fascinates the private citizen.<sup>79</sup> The connection Thomas King draws between the courtly body, the aristocratic body, and the sodomitical body could be illustrated by *Spectator* 332, which contains another letter about the Mohocks, this one describing a secondhand account of a Mohock "sweating." The correspondent relates, "It seems it is the Custom for half a dozen, or more, of these well-dispos'd Savages, as soon as they have inclos'd the Person upon whom they design the Favour of a Sweat, to whip out their Swords, and holding them Parallel to the Horizon, they describe a sort of Magick Circle round about him with the Points" (No. 332). Thus trapped, the victim is attacked when "that Member of the Circle towards whom he is so rude as to turn his Back first, runs his Sword directly into that Part of the Patient wherein School-boys are punished." The pattern is repeated while "every Gentleman does himself the same Justice as often as he receives the Affront." Afterwards the victim is "rubb'd down by some Attendants, who carry with them Instruments for that purpose, and so discharged."

Unpleasant as this experience sounds, the writer concludes the tale by saying its source claims to have "had the Honour to dance before the Emperor himself, not without the Applause and Acclamations both of his Imperial Majesty and the whole Ring; tho I dare say, neither I nor any of his Acquaintance ever dreamt he would have merited any

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<sup>78</sup> King argues that "the eighteenth-century's liberal public sphere consolidated itself through its representations of the gendered pleasures (or 'feeling') of private men and women – pleasures that originated in the intimacy of the domestic home space" (6).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-13. Also see King chapter 6 for an extended discussion of *The Spectator's* mode of constituting "the public articulation of private being."

Reputation by his Activity.” Like the man in colonial New York who reported that his Mohawk captors performed a “morris dance” around him, this self-identified Mohock victim sees the theatrical nature of the event intertwined with its threatening, violent nature, and the status of the Emperor puts it in that realm of the “theater of ‘greatness’” that continues to fascinate even the private citizen – even the victim himself.

The ambivalent tone the *Spectator* takes towards the idea of reforming the Mohocks continues fifteen issues later in no. 347,<sup>80</sup> which features the Mohocks’ “Imperial Manifesto” – a series of declarations supposedly written by the Emperor himself. The letter is prefaced by a consideration of the various speculations about the Mohocks – whether they are real, a piece of urban legend, or a fiction deliberately created by “prudent married Men, and Masters of Families, in order to deter their Wives and Daughters from taking the Air at unseasonable Hours.” Mr. Spectator gives his opinion that “For my own part, I am afraid there was too much Reason for that great Alarm the whole City has been in upon this Occasion; tho at the same time I must own that I am in some doubt whether the following Pieces are Genuine and Authentick...” The next two paragraphs imply a showdown between the Mohock Emperor and Mr. Spectator, the arbiter of urban print culture. Mr. Spectator says, “it was some time since I receiv’d the following Letter and Manifesto, tho for particular Reasons I did not think fit to publish them till now.” Then, the first paragraph of the letter states, “SIR, Finding that our earnest Endeavours for the Good of Mankind have been basely and maliciously represented to the World, we send you enclosed our Imperial Manifesto, which it is our Will and Pleasure that you forthwith communicate to the Publick, by inserting it in your next daily Paper. We do not doubt of your ready Compliance in this Particular, and

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<sup>80</sup> This number is attributed to Budgell.

therefore bid you heartily Farewell.” Of course we have already been told that Mr. Spectator delayed the letter’s publication for “particular” but unstated reasons. This act emphasizes the power of controlling the levers of print culture. But the Manifesto reads like a counter-map of *The Spectator*’s geography of exchanges and coffee-houses, satirizing Mr. Spectator’s didactic purpose while underscoring his own brand of territoriality, and undermining his superior ability to infiltrate the city’s spaces. In the manifesto, the Emperor specifies which of his “subjects,” and victims, are expected to operate in various places. For example: “It is our imperial Will and Pleasure, that our good Subjects the Sweaters do establish their Hummums in such close Places, Alleys, Nooks, and Corners, that the Patient or Patients may not be in danger of catching Cold.” Mr. Spectator has his disembodied and unencumbered presence throughout London, while the Emperor has his “Hunters,” specifying “that nothing herein contained shall in any wise be construed to extend to the Hunters, who have our full License and Permission to enter into any Part of the Town where-ever their Game shall Lead them.” And the Mohocks state their own reformatory purpose, to vie with the Spectator’s: we “have nothing more at our Imperial Heart” reads the Manifesto, “than the Reformation of the Cities of London and Westminster.” They advise “Husbands, Fathers, Housekeepers, and Masters of Families” to keep out of the streets at certain hours or be subject to “military discipline.” The Mohocks twist the idea of “reformation” to their own purposes. For them, reformation means reclaiming, through the use of force, the areas of London overtaken by merchants, financiers, aspiring politicians, and others striving for social mobility in the metropolis.

In *The Spectator*, then, The Mohock is imagined as an elite male who rejects the idea of the modern, polite gentleman, mocks the very idea of social reformation, and instead emulates Mohawk warriors, Turkish emperors, and his own fabled ancestry. His actions and his chosen guise gesture toward the violent and ceremonial aspects of the metropolitan-colonial as well as aristocrat-commoner relationship. The Mohocks demonstrate that, while mercantile exchange may be the central activity and politeness the primary mode of behavior for the new London gentleman, elite young rakes' contrary ideas of character, commerce and empire in fact spread and expand courtly performances over increasingly large geographical and imaginative territory. And, while the authors of the periodical present violent descriptions and condemnations of the Mohock Club along with calls for their reform, their periodical's persona, Mr. Spectator, shares the Mohocks' attraction to cultures considered exotic in the English imagination and shares their fixation on marking out territory, even in a supposedly public urban setting. The continued pull of these markers of elite masculinity indicate that the early-eighteenth-century project of the reform of male manners faced entrenched and complex obstacles.

### ***The Mohocks: John Gay and the Imperial Aristocrat***

Since the smashing success of *The Beggar's Opera* in 1728, John Gay has been known primarily for "what he exposes of corruption and hypocrisy" in metropolitan life generally and in Robert Walpole's political administration specifically.<sup>81</sup> In recent years, scholarship on John Gay has also been invigorated with fresh attention to the way race, nation, and colonialism intersect with the playwright's allegorical characterization of

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<sup>81</sup> Sven Armens, *John Gay, Social Critic* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), 12. Also see J.A. Downie, "Gay's Politics," in Lewis, Peter and Nigel Wood, eds., *John Gay and The Scriblerians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 53-55.

criminal subcultures.<sup>82</sup> Critics have consequently given increasing attention to *Polly*, the sequel to *The Beggar's Opera* that finds the highwayman Macheath leading a band of pirates on a quest for gold and glory in the West Indies. *Polly*, however, was not Gay's first attempt at invoking both the violence and the play of identity that marked Western accounts of the New World. His first dramatic work, the published but unperformed afterpiece *The Mohocks* (1712), follows a gang of London rakes as they initiate new members, swear allegiance to their Emperor, and venture into the streets to torment passersby and mock both polite gentlemen and members of early-eighteenth-century London's proto-police force, the "Watch."

*The Mohocks* remains obscure, but like *Polly*, it provides rich material for an analysis of Gay's dramatic engagement with class, crime, and transatlantic identities. If the moral center of *Polly* is the noble savage Cawwawkee, the anti-moral center of *The Mohocks* is a prime example of what James Turner calls the "savage noble" – the libertine rioter exemplified by the courtiers of Charles II.<sup>83</sup> Gay penned this farcical afterpiece a decade and a half before finding fame and fortune with *The Beggar's Opera*. Drury Lane rejected it for performance, possibly because of the potential the Mohock phenomenon had as an inflammatory political subject. Yet the play is not explicitly partisan. It anticipates themes of both *The Beggar's Opera* and *Polly* but concentrates on the kind of behavior associated specifically with elite debauchery.

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<sup>82</sup> Calhoun Winton, *John Gay and the London Theater* (Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 1993); Dianne Dugaw, 'Deep Play' – *John Gay and the Invention of Modernity* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001); Robert G. Dryden, "John Gay's Polly: Unmasking Pirates and Fortune Hunters in the West Indies," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34.4 (2001): 539-557; Clement Hawes, *The British Eighteenth Century and Global Critique* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>83</sup> Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 166.

In this section, I argue that *The Mohocks*, *The Beggar's Opera*, and *Polly* can be read as a circum-Atlantic trilogy that explores the opportunities for masculine performance and self-invention afforded by both London and the Americas. In *The Mohocks*, elite ruffians name themselves after an American Indian tribe and define their group identity through invented ritual; in *The Beggar's Opera*, Macheath, like all highwaymen, poses as a gentleman through speech, attire, and gaming; and in *Polly*, Macheath reinvents himself, and meets his death as, "Morano," a pirate of African descent who comes into contact with both English planters and with a native culture in the Indies. The "fake" Indians of *The Mohocks*, with their libertine philosophy, thus have a counterpart in the "real" Indians of *Polly*, who profess and act on the most just and virtuous philosophy of all Gay's characters but who are threatened with the irretrievable loss of their land and power. Together, then, these three plays about European, African, and American cultures as well as criminal subcultures (Mohocks, highwaymen and pirates) show how the circuits of outlawry in the Atlantic world ultimately work to shore up the power of the English elite.

From the very beginning, the London Mohocks in Gay's play are defined by their exclusivity, their veneration of a powerful leader, and their embrace of excess. *The Mohocks* opens with an initiation scene in which the gang christens a new member with the name "Cannibal." When "Cannibal" swears his allegiance to the Club, the Mohock Emperor declares, "henceforth thy Name / Be Cannibal – like them, devour Mankind" (i.36-37).<sup>84</sup> Immediately, then, Gay links his Mohocks to the darkest reaches of savagery and otherness impressed onto the European imagination in texts ranging from accounts

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<sup>84</sup> John Gay, *The Mohocks: A Tragi-Comical Farce in John Gay: Dramatic Works*, Volume I, ed. John Fuller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). Subsequent scene and line citations refer to this edition.

preceding European conquest of the Americas to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe is famously terrified of being devoured by indigenous residents of his surrounding islands. Even in his most desperate moments, Crusoe, as the archetypal middling-class Protestant individualist, maintains a strict sense of what constitutes the outer limits of appropriate consumption. The Mohocks, meanwhile, venerate hierarchy, submission, group loyalty and the free spending of money, wine, and blood. In Gay's opening scene, their paean to anti-social consumption culminates in the Emperor's declaration that "Wine conquers all things – all must Wine obey" (i.68).<sup>85</sup>

The "particularly aggressive culture of violence"<sup>86</sup> embraced by the London Mohocks can be linked both to rakish cultures of violence and to the often-bloody conflicts of the early-eighteenth-century circum-Atlantic world. John Smolenski writes that "the colonial encounter in the Americas was, from the beginning, a conflict between cultures of violence" involving, on the Europeans' part, "revulsion at Indian styles of warfare – and the resultant belief that this kind of unrestrained violence placed Natives outside the bounds of civilized society . . . Conceptions of violence thus helped reinforce boundaries of culture and law through the construction of what Michael Taussig has called 'the colonial mirror which reflects back onto the colonists the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savage or evil figures they wish to colonize.'<sup>87</sup> Joseph Roach, in explaining his theory of ritual violence as the performance of waste,

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<sup>85</sup> A similar initiation scene is recorded for the early eighteenth-century "Bugles," also a club of rakes, in which "the initiate put his dagger into a bottle of wine and while holding the pommel of his weapon made 'oath that he would aid and assist all other of his fellowship and not disclose their council.'" See Graves, Thornton S. "Some pre-Mohock clansmen." *Studies in Philology* 20 (1923 [395-421]), 399.

<sup>86</sup> Shoemaker, *London Mob*, 164.

<sup>87</sup> John Smolenski and Thomas J. Humphrey, eds. *New World Orders: Violence, Sanction and Authority in the Colonial Americas*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 12.

also uses the mirror metaphor. He writes, “[c]ognizant of ritual practices, like the taking of captives of the Aztec Flower Wars (the object of which was not to achieve victory per se but to obtain victims for sacrifice), Europeans depicted Native Americans as cruel prodigals.” Thus natives of the Americas (especially Mesoamerica, for Roach) have “played the roles of ethnographic provocation and hyperbolic mirror” for Europeans.<sup>88</sup>

In Scene One of *The Mohocks*, this cross-cultural mirror is held up not to European or British society as a whole but specifically to libertine rapacity. Abaddon, one of Gay’s invented Mohock Club members, speaks the following lines at the start of the play:

Thus far our Riots with Success are crown’d,  
Have found no stop, or what they found o’ercame;  
In vain th’embattl’d Watch in deep array;  
Against our Rage oppose their lifted Poles;  
Through Poles we rush triumphant, Watchman rolls  
On Watchman; while their Lanthorns kick’d aloft  
Like blazing Stars, illumine all the Air.

In these lines, Abaddon presents his club’s activities as a war in which the Mohocks break through the bounds of law and order that the Watchmen attempt to enforce. The “crowning” of the Mohocks’ success reinforces the superiority of rank they enjoy over the Watch, while the intensity of the rakes’ violent opposition renders the policemen impotent. “Moloch,” another Mohock, replies to Abaddon by declaring,

Such Acts as these have made our Fame immortal,  
And wide through all Britannia’s distant Towns,  
The name of Mohock ev’ry Tongue employs;  
While each fond Mother at the Sound grows pale  
And trembles for her absent Son (i.1-12).

Here the Mohocks claim to bring to the metropolis the admiring dread illustrated in colonists’ accounts of American Mohawk territory. Peter Linebaugh argues in his account

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<sup>88</sup> Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 131.

of eighteenth-century crime and criminal justice that the “communities of woodland and commons that surrounded London [where highwaymen plied their trade] are analogous to the colonial frontier zones;”<sup>89</sup> in *The Mohocks*, Abaddon and Moloch paint London and indeed “all Britannia” as such a zone, under siege by a formidable and violent force.

A group of elite men like the Mohocks is formidable and difficult to reform, if not wholly unreformable, in part because of their ability to stick together, maintaining a demarcation of “us” versus “them” even when - perhaps particularly when - they engage in “low” pursuits like drinking and assault.<sup>90</sup> The creative, even menacing, manipulation of principle defines the Mohocks’ translation of loyalty and martial valor to sinister ritual and street violence. Neil Guthrie describes *The Mohocks* as “whimsical and frivolous, but not without the serious message that society has sunk to the point where young members of the ruling class are criminals who mimic and mock, rather than uphold and direct, the forces of law and order.”<sup>91</sup> The gang’s mockery of the Watch reflects widespread distrust of this proto-police force, which was made up of men from lower socioeconomic strata and had a reputation for incompetence.<sup>92</sup> The Mohocks’ treatment of the Watchmen is an expression of disdain and disrespect borne of an inherited sense of

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<sup>89</sup> Linebaugh, 189.

<sup>90</sup> See James Grantham Turner’s analysis of the scowrer’s high/low dialectic, in which “the ‘mad tricks’ and drinking rituals of whore and rogue circulate through an economy of representation from plebian disorder (simulating rakish excess) to aristocratic condescension (simulating the abject with a lofty contempt for common humanity . . . The violence of the Sons of Belial in their ‘Courts and Palaces’ . . . asserts an aristocratic disdain for bourgeois restraints, and adapts the street-hooligan guise only to further their dissociation from ‘low obligations’” Turner, *Radicals and Libertines*, 225.

<sup>91</sup> Guthrie, ‘No Truth or very little in the whole Story’? 39.

<sup>92</sup> McLynn explains, “The dislike of police was part of a cluster of attitudes, including hostility to a standing army, that stood at the heart of English political culture . . . relying on habit, custom, tradition, hunch and intuition,” adding that “A corollary of this empirical culture is the aristocratic tradition and the cult of the amateur” (xvi). Watchmen are recurring characters in Mohock literature. See, for example, *The Town-Rakes: or, the Frolicks of the Mohocks or Hawkubites* (London: Printed for J. Wright, 1712, ESTC no. T008282): “The Watch in most of the Out-parts of the Town stand in awe of them, because they always come in a Body, and are too strong for them, and when any Watchman presumes to demand where they are going, they generally misuse them.”

superiority, entitlement, and immunity from common rules and regulations. However, the Mohocks' relationship to the North American Indians for whom they are named compels a separate explanation. The London Mohocks *mock* the Watchmen. They *mimic* the Mohawk Indians – or, their own re-imagined and culturally hybrid version thereof.

The antipathy Gay's Mohocks hold for modern, polite English order and sociability is expressed through their antagonism to wives, watchmen, and polite gentlemen. In a song in Scene One the Mohocks announce their intentions to terrorize London's law enforcers:

We will scower the Town,  
 Knock the Constable down,  
 Put the Watch and the Beadle to flight:  
 We'll force all we meet  
 To kneel down at our Feet,  
 And own this great Prince of the Night (i.78-83).<sup>93</sup>

As the Watchmen in Gay's play prepare for a night shift, they trade increasingly sensational stories about the exploits of the Mohocks – from breaking windows to slitting noses, to cutting off ears and “eat[ing] them up” (ii.20-70). Yet for all their bluster about the authority they are meant to have over these rakes, the Constable and his cohort immediately buckle when the Mohocks enter and give the order, “upon your Knees-worship the Mohocks and be damn'd to you” (ii.137-139). The Mohocks force the Constable to release two prostitutes in his custody, and the gang-member Moloch says, “Come, let's dispatch, cut, slash, and mangle, and pursue more noble Game” (ii.167-8). Here Moloch invokes the aristocratic pastimes of hunting, sport, and battle. His exhortation to “pursue more noble Game” in particular speaks to the continuing

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<sup>93</sup> Along similar lines, Philanthropos claims in *Spectator* 324 that “To put the Watch to a total Rout, and mortify some of those inoffensive Militia, is reckoned a *Coup d'eclat*.”

importance of inherited rights even as economic opportunities grow for larger segments of the population. The Game Act of 1671, whose provisions remained in effect until 1831, granted game-hunting rights according to landed property or rank. Donna Landry writes that “By limiting access to sporting privileges, the game laws succeeded in privileging inherited rank and land over mere financial clout, which was becoming increasingly a matter of capital investments other than landed property as the eighteenth century wore on” – thus “[a] final battle of the English revolution had been fought and won by the men of landed property against commercially successful tradesmen and artisans, stock-brokers and financiers, political office-holders and great urban merchants.”<sup>94</sup>

The Mohocks’ urban mode of combat is also inflected with that penchant for performance and masquerade that characterizes courtly masculinity in contrast to gentlemanly modesty and restraint. Thus it is significant when, immediately after Moloch’s direction to “slash, mangle, and pursue more noble Game,” the Emperor says, “Hold, hold, for once we’ll have a merry frolick. Since we have the Constable and Watch in our Power, we will divest our self of our Imperial Dignity, make them *Mohocks*, and our selves Constable and Watchmen” (ii. 169-172). The Mohocks then trade clothes with the terrified guardians of the law; thus clothed, they apprehend a passerby called “Gentle” and accuse him, too, of being a Mohock. They tie up Gentle with the Constable’s wife Joan, who has come looking for her husband and ends up getting apprehended as a “female Mohock.” First, though, Gentle pompously defends himself by saying, “’Tis a strange thing that the vulgar cannot distinguish the Gentleman – pray, Sir, may I ask you one Question – have you ever seen a Mohock? has he that

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<sup>94</sup> Donna Landry, *Inventing the Countryside* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 73-75.

softness in his Look? that sweetness of delivery in his Discourse?” (ii.226-232).

Unsurprisingly, the Mohocks-disguised-as- Watchmen give no weight to this specimen of the modern, fashionable gentleman, any more than they can brook the threat the Constable poses to their sovereignty. Gentle, as his name implies, is the kind of polite male suited to conduct conversation and commercial transactions in the bourgeois public sphere. In opposition to Gentle and the Watch, the Mohocks attempt to disrupt the flow of private, polite citizens throughout the city. And their performance is so convincing that it is Gentle who cannot “distinguish the Gentleman.”

Their status and their ability to pass make the Mohocks confident that “No Laws shall restrain” their “Libertine Reign” (i.76-77). When the Emperor finds a warrant for his gang’s arrest in the Constable’s pocket, he decides to cap the night’s adventures by taking his prisoners in front of the justices and turning *them* in as Mohocks. The courtroom proceedings go according to the Mohocks’ plan until the bailiffs bring in Joan Cloudy, the Constable’s wife. As Joan starts to talk, the Mohocks attempt an exit, but they are too late: their game is discovered. At this point, they ask for consideration based on their status (“We are Gentlemen, Sirs, ‘twas only an innocent Frolick”) to which Justice Wiseman replies, “Frolicks for Brutes and not for Men – Watchmen, seize your Prisoners” (iii.161-162). The justices promise a hearing the following morning, and the Mohocks finally concede that they will “submit, ask Pardon, or do any thing” (iii.180). The Constable orders up some music, saying, “Let us show the Emperor here, that we can Dance without his Instructions,” and the play concludes with the Watchmen singing, “*Mohock and Hawkubite*, both one and all,/Shall from this very Night date their Down-fall” (iii.189-190). In keeping with their performance-based identity, the Mohocks are

not unmasked even when they “discover” their status as gentlemen. Instead they have to face their downfall *as* Mohocks.

The promise of the Mohocks being brought to justice at the end of the play, and the heralding of their “downfall,” could be read as a signal that the law indeed puts boundaries on elite prerogative. But like *The Beggar’s Opera*, *The Mohocks* ends with a request for reprieve, this time for the playwright himself. The Epilogue, “Design’d to be spoken by the Person who should have play’d Joan Cloudy,” addresses the “Criticks scatter’d o’er the Pit” and labels them “Meer *Mohocks*, that on harmless Authors prey” (11,13). The epilogue concludes:

If you condemn him, grant him a Reprieve,  
Three days of Grace to the young Sinner give,  
And then –if his sad Downfal does delight ye,  
As witness of his *Exit* I invite ye (16-20).

The critics, analogized here as Mohocks, hold supreme authority over the playwright. In the end, with this epilogue, we are reminded not of the Mohocks’ need for a reprieve but of the power of the Mohock name to elicit awe from the Watch and the aspiring professional writer alike.<sup>95</sup>

*The Mohocks* features the kind of elite male character who is in many ways the absent center of *Polly* and *The Beggar’s Opera*. Macheath, the highwayman- hero of *The Beggar’s Opera*, emulates the upper classes. Highwaymen were famously called “Gentlemen of the Road” because of their fine attire (often acquired by stealing) and because they plied their trade on horseback, not on foot. Stolen-goods dealer Peachum

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<sup>95</sup> For the role of patronage in Gay’s career and his experience in “aristocratic circles” see Winton 73,96 and Brean S. Hammond, “‘A Poet, A Patron, and Ten Pound’: John Gay and Patronage” in Peter Lewis and Nigel Wood, eds. *John Gay and the Scriblerians* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 26-27.

illustrates this rhetoric when says of Macheath, “there is not a finer gentleman upon the road than the captain!” (I.iv.48-49).<sup>96</sup> Some highwaymen may actually have had roots higher than that of the typical petty criminal. Frank McLynn explains that “[t]here is abundant evidence that highwaymen were of a higher social and educational level [though for various reasons fallen from that status] than other criminals . . . Taking to the road was a calling a gentleman could turn to, since the virtues and accomplishments of the ‘officer class’ – horsemanship, daring, skill with weapons, etc. – could be brought into play.”<sup>97</sup> Asking “Is one to say . . .that Macheath is essentially an aristocrat in the disguise of a highwayman? Or is it more accurate to say that the highwaymen in the play disguise themselves as aristocrats?” Patricia Spacks concludes that in ideology, Macheath’s gang “are aristocrats indeed: honorable, loyal, governed by principle; and if the principles seem to partake largely of rationalization, surely this fact makes the gang seem no less aristocratic.”<sup>98</sup> However, what education and finesse Macheath possesses is not enough to make him truly elite. The Peachums, notes Spacks, “agree [that Macheath] keeps good company and associates with the gentry, but this tendency is a weakness: he cannot expect to win at the gaming tables without the education of a fine gentleman.”<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Peachum laments that “Marrabone and the chocolate houses are his undoing. The man that proposes to get money by play should have the education of a fine

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<sup>96</sup> John Gay, *The Beggar’s Opera*, *Broadview Anthology of Restoration and Early Eighteenth-Century Drama*. ed. Douglas Canfield. Ontario: Broadview, 2002.

<sup>97</sup> McLynn, 59.

<sup>98</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, *John Gay* (New York: Twayne, 1965), 148. Spacks’ question echoes the Beggar’s own observation, “Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen.” (III.xvi.19-24).

<sup>99</sup> Spacks, 149.

gentleman and be trained up to it from his youth” (I.iv.54-57). The Peachums “rip out the coronets and marks” of handkerchiefs stolen by their thieves and resell them to “a chap in the City” (I.iv.107-108, 110), but this recirculation of elite goods does not undo the distinction between those *acting* as fine gentlemen, such as Macheath, and those with “the education of a fine gentleman.” This distinction, while significant, is often lost in critical analysis of Gay’s “topsy-turvy” play of high and low forms.<sup>100</sup>

In *Polly*, the sequel to the *Beggar’s Opera* and the third installment in what I am calling Gay’s circum-Atlantic trilogy, Macheath escapes from England and evades a second threat of execution by disguising himself in blackface, becoming a pirate, and ultimately leading a failed rebellion by a maroon, or escaped slave, community, against a set of West Indian planters. A connection between the marronage invoked in *Polly*, the highway robbery of *The Beggar’s Opera*, and the predations of the London Mohocks hinges on terms related to land, as the “communities of woodland and commons that surrounded London [where highwaymen plied their trade] are analogous to the colonial frontier zones,” and “the communities of squatters in woods and forests of north London . . . were called ‘maroon villages’ after the liberated West Indian colonies founded by fugitive slaves.”<sup>101</sup> There is even a possible historical connection between the London Mohocks and the West Indies: Daniel Statt reports that a Tim Allyn, or Alleyne, had been

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<sup>100</sup> For example, in comparing Macheath’s gang to the Mohocks, and discounting the aristocratic status of some alleged Mohocks, Peter Lewis writes, “The effect of Gay’s mock-heroic incongruity is to narrow, even close, the gap between the high and low, thus creating an uneasy zone of indeterminacy. If the Mohock leader is a ‘Great Potentate’ and ‘our most High and Mighty Emperor,’ are potentates and emperors necessarily all that different from Mohocks? Are the high really any higher than the low, and vice versa? . . . here in embryo is the satirical method brought to full flower in *The Beggar’s Opera*, which features an underworld gang with its potentate and emperor, Macheath the great.” Peter Lewis, “The Beggar’s Rags to Riches and Other Dramatic Transformations,” in Peter Lewis and Nigel Wood, *John Gay and the Scriblerians* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 136.

<sup>101</sup> Linebaugh, 189.

identified not only as a Mohock but as the club's emperor, and that he had "had been at Oxford and had been admitted to the Middle Temple in 1706" but "may have retreated to the West Indies after the exposure of the Mohock Club."<sup>102</sup> Clement Hawes argues that "[f]or Gay, the whole project of colonial settlement merely enlarges the scope of criminal endeavor, enabling the petty criminal to aspire to a spurious 'greatness.'"<sup>103</sup> Gay's Mohocks had sung that "all Womankind is our booty," evoking the language of the pirate, and in *Polly*, the band of pirates led by "Morano" (who is actually Macheath in blackface disguise) plan to raid and conquer the English settlement on Jamaica as a first step towards gold, glory, and hemispheric domination.

Like the Mohocks who seek to "devour Mankind," the pirates ask, "What can be more heroic than to have declared war with the whole world?" (II.ii.28-29).<sup>104</sup> While the Mohocks feel themselves unrestrained by any law because of their elite status, the pirates feel they have only been kept from rising in the world as they deserve, until now, by their low rank and lack of ready cash. The pirate Hacker insists, "I had always a genius for ambition. Birth and education kept it under" (II.ii.26-27). Recalling Macheath's pastimes in *The Beggar's Opera*, Capstern says, "I was a drawer of one of the fashionable taverns . . . I had always my gallantries with the ladies that the lords and gentlemen brought to our house. I was ambitious too of a gentleman's profession and turned gamester. Though I had great skill and no scruples, my play would not support my extravagancies" (II.ii.56-66). Finally, there is Morano, who claims to have been a lady's page in England. His fellow pirates believe that he "had a genius too above

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<sup>102</sup> Statt, 191. Statt's evidence comes from testimony by Thomas Burnet, son of a Whig Bishop, and from the pamphlet *Who Plot Best*.

<sup>103</sup> Hawes, 102.

<sup>104</sup> John Gay, *Polly*. *Broadview Anthology of Restoration and Early Eighteenth-Century Drama*. ed. Douglas Canfield. Ontario: Broadview, 2002.

service and . . . ran into higher life” (II.ii.72-73). The pirates are more cash-hungry than the Mohocks, but just as the Mohocks did not take property from their victims, the pirates also see their quest in terms grander than plunder. When Jenny Diver, now Morano’s wife, tries to persuade her husband to take his share of the loot and return to England to live a life of luxury, he replies, “Where is the woman who is not fond of title? And one bold step more may make you a queen” (II.ii.3-5).

An important difference between the pirates and the Mohocks, though, is that the pirates disavow the idea that they are performing, or engaging in what Polly calls “the frauds of courts” – the kind of performance that marks the libertine masculinity of the London elite. Polly, dressed in male disguise, ingratiates herself with the pirates by singing the following air:

I hate those coward tribes,  
 Who by mean and sneaking bribes,  
 By tricks and disguise,  
 By flattery and lies,  
 To power and grandeur rise.  
 Like heroes of old,  
 You are greatly bold,  
 The sword your cause supports.  
 Untaught to fawn,  
 You ne’er were drawn  
 Your truth to pawn  
 Among the spawn  
 Who practice the frauds of courts (II.ii.159).

These lines reinforce the pirates’ stated conception of themselves as true warriors, destined for greatness, over and against courtly performers. It also marks the courtiers as “tribes,” using shared conventions of deceit, rather than courage, to attain and maintain status and rank.

Yet, while there is no sense that the Mohocks think of turning on one another, Morano's pirates ultimately fail the test of fraternal loyalty. Polly is able to persuade Capstern and Laguerre to release the Indian prince Cawwawkee from their custody by explaining that he will show them the location of his island's natural treasures. Capstern reasons, "The prince can give us places; he can make us all great men. Such a prospect I can tell you, Laguerre, would tempt our betters" (II.xii.19-21). Laguerre concurs: "Every man for himself, say I. There is no being even with mankind, without that universal maxim . . . If we conquered and the booty were to be divided among the crews, what would it amount to? Perhaps this way we might get more than would come to our share" (II.xii.26-33). Capstern replies, "Then, too, I always liked a place at court. I have a genius to get, keep in, and make the most of an employment" (II.xii.34-36). Just as Macheath will never be quite equal to the lords at the gaming table, Capstern and Laguerre will have to give up their pretence to imperial power and settle for serving the Indian prince. Polly compares Capstern and Laguerre's eagerness to serve the noble Cawwawkee with sporting animals' service to their aristocratic masters:

The sportsmen keep hawks, and their quarry they gain;  
 Thus the woodcock, the partridge, the pheasant is slain.  
 What care and expense for their hounds are employed!  
 Thus the fox and the hare and the stag are destroyed.  
 The spaniel they cherish, whose flattering way  
 Can as well as their masters cringe, fawn, and betray.  
 Thus staunch politicians, look all the world round,  
 Love the men who can serve as hawk, spaniel, or hound (II.xii.46-53).

Even Ducat, the planter, invokes the sportsman-animal relationship in his dealings with the Indians: when the Indian ruler Pohetohee says, after the initial battle, that he wishes Morano had been taken prisoner, Ducat replies, "A hare may escape from a Mastiff. I could not be a greyhound too" (III.ix.3-4).

Ultimately, the fate of Capstern, Laguerre, and Morano shows that there is a limit to the democratization of opportunity brought about through colonial ventures, even if such ventures do “enlarge the scope of criminal endeavor.” The pirates scorn the “frauds of courts” and plan to fight the Indians to pursue the power and fortune denied them by birth. The Mohocks embrace the courtly tradition of the masque and adopt the guise of the Indian warrior to reaffirm the power and fortune given them by birth. Even when empire becomes commercial, an aristocratic residual remains: the pirate can dream of ruling “the kingdom of Mexico” (II.ii.105-107), the bourgeoisie “can assert its interests everywhere,”<sup>105</sup> but the elite, even while practicing the “frauds of courts,” still rules.

## Conclusion

In the early twentieth century, Joseph Schumpeter argued that imperialism, viewed as a broad historical and transcultural phenomenon, cannot be explained by the economic interpretation of history alone. Whereas “neo-Marxist theory . . . views imperialism simply as the reflex of the interests of the capitalist upper stratum, at a given stage of capitalist development,” the drive towards imperialism can also be described as “atavistic in character,” containing “an element that stems from the living conditions, not of the present, but of the past.”<sup>106</sup> Schumpeter argued that some peoples, especially those from hereditary aristocracies, develop a habit of conquest and the will to dominate that takes a long period of relative peace to subside—in other words, war itself became a primary pretext, like hunting for sport.<sup>107</sup> In an analogy that could further underscore the

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<sup>105</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*. trans. Heinz Norden. (New York: Augustus Kelley, 1951), 123.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 8,84.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 36,44.

interconnected elements of Gay’s circum-Atlantic trilogy, Schumpeter writes, “Once upon a time it had been feasible to treat colonies in the way that highwaymen treat their victims” – ripe for plunder, not partners in free trade.<sup>108</sup>

Even the American colonies had titled men, before the new republic disavowed royalty and hereditary nobility, and at least one “American baronet,” William Johnson, was known for his affinity specifically for the Mohawk Indians. Johnson was born in Ireland; his father was an Earl’s tenant while his mother’s ancestors were reportedly ‘possessed of an estate . . . from the first arrival of the English in Ireland.’<sup>109</sup> Johnson left Ireland for North America, where he set up as an agent for his uncle, Peter Warren, a naval captain who had married into a wealthy merchant family in colonial New York. While overseeing land near Albany, Johnson reportedly positioned himself as a sort of “anachronistic” feudal landlord and protector of his settlers, while he also developed an affinity for the local Indian nations.<sup>110</sup> A friend of Johnson wrote that “[s]omething in his natural temper responded to Indian ways,” and he was eventually “adopted as a Mohawk” in a ceremony where he was given the name ‘Warraghiyagey,’ “which he translated as ‘a man who undertakes great things.’” He became adept at summoning Iroquois war councils, with all traditional ceremony and dress, in an ongoing quest to secure an alliance against the French and their Indian allies. In August of 1746, Johnson reportedly amassed and marched a group of Mohawk fighters to Albany, dressed and painted as a Mohawk himself. For these actions and accomplishments, and particularly

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>109</sup> James Thomas Flexnor, *Lord of the Mohawks* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 7.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 41.

for his role in the French and Indian War, Johnson became one of a very small number of American settlers to be given the title of baronet.<sup>111</sup>

The London Mohocks, and those colonial figures like William Johnson who were drawn to both older English social formations as well as the life and “costume” of the American Indian, represent an important identity in the context of transatlantic empire-formation. Robert Dryden cites as “the most poignant moment” of *Polly* the scene in which Morano chastises his pirates for trying to defeat one another at gambling and thus failing to honor the solidarity they have pledged.<sup>112</sup> Morano says, “We should be Indians among ourselves and show our breeding and parts to everyone else. If we cannot be true to one another and false to all the world beside, there is an end of every great enterprise” (III.vi.26-29). This statement echoes the ethos of the Mohocks – like the London gang’s emperor, Morano uses the figure of the Indian to appeal to his pirates’ sense of group identity, to an understanding of themselves as a tribe set apart from all others and living by a timeworn code of honor and brotherhood. Identification with the American Indian helps both groups express the disconnection and antagonism they feel towards the Watchman, the planter, the Constable, and the merchant. In the end the Mohocks, like Macheath’s pirates, fall significantly short of the ideal set by the Indian chiefs in *Polly*. They fail to thrive by their antiquated notions of liberty, honor, and imperium. But their quest to do so is significant. It shows that alongside the very real flow of capital throughout the Atlantic world, and despite the rise of an ideal of polite commerce, there exists a persistent literary turn towards the ceremonial and the clannish that harks back to an earlier world - even if that world existed only in the imagination.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 40,45,54,58.

<sup>112</sup> Dryden, “Unmasking fortune hunters,” 552.

In sum, writings about the Mohocks give us a set of texts with which to explore the seeming paradoxes that lie at the heart of eighteenth-century British endeavors overseas - the ideological conflict between Enlightenment and brutality, English liberty and Atlantic slavery – through the lens of concurrent tension over different models of masculinity. Earlier I discussed the contradictions between elite *libertinism* and the tradition of the free-born Englishman’s personal liberty. The debate about reconciling *empire* and liberty has a history reaching back centuries earlier, long before Britain began to establish a colonial presence in the Atlantic world. As David Armitage documents in *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, debates about how to reconcile liberty and “imperium” form a crux in the writing of Roman historians as well as Machiavelli, and seventeenth-century Englishmen read in these classical and Renaissance texts echoes of the questions facing the England of their day, namely, how to establish colonies while retaining liberty in the home country.<sup>113</sup> In the early eighteenth century, argues Armitage, the solution was to see the emerging British version of empire as historically unique in that it was “Protestant, commercial, maritime, and free” rather than centrally authoritarian and concerned primarily with the acquisition of territory.<sup>114</sup> But as the Atlantic or “first” British Empire receded in importance due to the loss of the American colonies and the abolition of the slave trade, a new era began in which Britain more readily embraced the ceremonial aspects of empire and the conquest of new lands that

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<sup>113</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 11, 125-145. Also, Brycchan Carey notes that “in *Spectator* 634, the penultimate paper, Thomas Tickell “all but concludes *The Spectator* with a discussion of Rome, the empire whose history informed all of Britain’s aspirations.” Brycchan Carey, “Accounts of Savage Nations’: *The Spectator* and the Americas, in Donald J. Newman, ed. *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 131.

<sup>114</sup> Armitage, 8.

encompassed Machiavelli's perception of the *grandezza* of imperial ambition.<sup>115</sup>

Addison, Steele, Gay, and others contribute to a portrait of the London Mohock as an imperial aristocrat: a harbinger of the ceremonial self-assurance that would mark a later period of the British Empire. The Mohocks demonstrate that, while mercantile exchange may be the central activity and politeness the primary mode of behavior for the new London gentleman, elite young rakes' contrary ideas of character, commerce and empire in fact spread and expand courtly performances over increasingly large geographical and imaginative territory.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Armitage refers to this as "the British Empire's late eighteenth-century period of aristocratic authoritarianism" (174). Also see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

## Chapter Two

### Schools for Scandal: Elite Education and Eighteenth-Century Narrative

While the Mohock scare itself was of short duration, the character type of the “well-dispos’d savage” was continually developed throughout the eighteenth century. Robert Lovelace, the fictional antagonist of Samuel Richardson’s novel *Clarissa* (1747-48) and the most prominent and infamous libertine villain in mid-eighteenth-century British literature, shares several traits with the Mohocks, such as calling himself the “emperor” of his group of libertine friends. The novel tells the tragic narrative of its title character, Clarissa Harlowe, who reluctantly agrees to abscond with Lovelace from her family home rather than submit to a family-brokered marriage with a man she abhors. This decision leads to tragedy, as Lovelace, unable to get Clarissa to voluntarily submit to his desires, rapes her. Clarissa subsequently withdraws from the world, languishes, and dies.

Furthering the parallel between Lovelace and the Mohocks (albeit unintentionally), Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse have argued that the particular form of persecution suffered by Richardson’s heroines has a parallel, and perhaps even an origin, in captivity narratives written by British settlers in North America.<sup>116</sup> Armstrong and Tennenhouse explicitly compare Richardson’s first novel, *Pamela* (1740), with the Puritan Mary Rowlandson’s late-seventeenth-century account of being held captive by North American Indians, on the grounds that Pamela and

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<sup>116</sup> Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Rowlandson both struggle to maintain their own “cultural identity” by writing accounts of their ordeals:

Rowland’s narrative demonstrates how an individual could acquire value quite apart from wealth and station simply because she was the source of writing. She emphasized her separation from her culture by organizing her account as a series of ‘removes’ or marches. Richardson capitalized on the popular appetite for such narratives when he separated Pamela from her parents and then filled her with a single-minded desire to return . . . To be sure, these removes expose her to the seduction of a wealthy landowner rather than the violence of heathens. Yet each remove takes her farther into a world bent on destroying her cultural identity, which she tries to maintain by writing letters.<sup>117</sup>

To further explicate the parallel between the texts’ respective Indian and aristocratic captors, Tennenhouse and Armstrong argue that each text alters notions of English identity and authority: “Rowlandson changed English identity by maintaining her own identity among the heathens,” while “Richardson made the [English] ruling classes appear unfit to rule because its members seemed incapable of ruling themselves.”<sup>118</sup> In a subsequent article, Armstrong extends the analysis to *Clarissa*: “Richardson’s second novel . . . argues that England must become a sanctuary for” virtuous women, but “[i]n contrast with the colonial situation . . . the ruling-class male [in England] is fundamentally unfit to perform this task, for the obvious reason that *he* resembles the threat posed by native Americans.”<sup>119</sup> Thus England offers Clarissa “virtually no sanctuary from a savage brand of masculinity bent on destroying the very qualities that define her as an English heroine.”<sup>120</sup> While Pamela and her letters and journals are able to effect the reform of her pursuer, Clarissa has no such success with Lovelace.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 208..

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>119</sup> Nancy Armstrong, “Captivity and Cultural Capital in the English Novel.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 31. 3 (Summer 1998 [373-98]), 377.

<sup>120</sup> Armstrong, “Captivity,” 377.

While Armstrong and Tennenhouse describe Lovelace as culturally foreign, in contrast to the virtuous English heroine, other critics have defined Lovelace as being chronologically out of place, embodying and espousing the outmoded views of a Restoration-era libertine-courtier. Terry Eagleton has influentially argued that “Lovelace is a reactionary throwback, an old-style libertine or Restoration relic who resists a proper ‘embourgeoisement.’”<sup>121</sup> Along these lines, Jocelyn Harris has observed that Lovelace shares the Earl of Rochester’s attraction to a Hobbesian worldview,<sup>122</sup> while Rachel Trickett notes Lovelace’s intimate familiarity with the work of Restoration playwrights.<sup>123</sup> Most recently, Erin Mackie has described Lovelace as a “distinctly atavistic character” in the context of mid-eighteenth-century England, “shrouded in all the menace and glamour of the libertine culture identified with the court of Charles II.”<sup>124</sup> Mackie reiterates the point that “[t]he mid-eighteenth-century Lovelace is emphatically anachronistic and all the more romantic for his association with the milieu of elite Restoration culture, its naughty sophistication and decadent elegance.”<sup>125</sup> These readings all in one way or another portray Lovelace as an anachronism in mid-eighteenth-century England; his behavior, his philosophy, and his cultural preferences tie him to the Restoration period rather than to his own. Eagleton perhaps goes furthest in tying Lovelace to the past when he argues that in Richardson’s view “the future of the English

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<sup>121</sup> Eagleton, 89.

<sup>122</sup> Jocelyn Harris, “Protean Lovelace.” *Passion and Virtue: Essays on the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, ed. David Blewett (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

<sup>123</sup> Rachel Trickett, “Dryden’s part in *Clarissa*.” *Clarissa and Her Readers: New Essays for the Clarissa Project*, ed. Carol Houlihan Flynn and Edward Copeland (New York: AMS Press, 1999), 175.

<sup>124</sup> Mackie, *Rakes*, 11.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

aristocracy lies not with him but with the impeccably middle-class Sir Charles Grandison,” referring to the virtuous titular hero of Richardson’s third novel.<sup>126</sup>

These analyses enrich our understanding of Lovelace by providing a genealogy for his self-aggrandizing behavior in the context of seventeenth-century philosophy and courtly mores. Yet important questions remain: if Lovelace is a relic, a thing of the past, why is he portrayed as such a looming and immediate threat within the world of the novel? And how did he acquire his “savage” traits in this post-Restoration period? Clarissa herself provides an avenue into exploring these questions when she writes of Lovelace, “I am afraid . . . that there must have been some fault in his education . . . He was instructed, perhaps (as his power was likely to be large), to do good and beneficent actions; but not from *proper motives*, I doubt.”<sup>127</sup> As we will see, this is not the only instance in which the novel raises the topic of Lovelace’s education. Critics including James Grantham Turner have discussed the quality of Lovelace’s intellect,<sup>128</sup> but the question of his actual schooling has not been addressed. Delving into the topic of how young men of wealth and power were educated in the mid eighteenth century, I will argue, provides a new avenue for insight into both the libertine behavior discussed by Eagleton, Mackie, Warner, and others, and the analogy Armstrong and Tennenhouse develop between Lovelace and the American Indian captors of Rowlandson’s narrative. This lens also provides a new way of exploring the gap between the ideal of domestic felicity sought in many eighteenth-century novels and the larger structures of power,

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<sup>126</sup> Eagleton 89.

<sup>127</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (New York: Penguin, 2004), 698. Subsequent in-text citations refer to this edition.

<sup>128</sup> James Grantham Turner writes that Lovelace, like Rochester, is “unable to reconcile the two components of . . . libertine character, intellectual brilliance and passionate sensuality.” Turner, “Lovelace and the paradoxes of libertinism,” *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 71.

often antithetical to such an ideal, embodied in institutions like the public school – a gap often explicitly or implicitly acknowledged in the novels themselves.

This chapter, then, is concerned with analyzing the aspects of Lovelace and other novelistic characters that resonate with debates very much alive among Richardson's contemporaries. In particular, I argue that *Clarissa* and other mid-eighteenth-century novels including Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, and Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, take part in an ongoing and contentious discourse about the values and dangers of elite education.

#### **“Distant great schools”: Public vs. Private Education in the eighteenth century**

In the mid eighteenth century, parents of young men whose “power was likely to be large” had to decide whether to educate their sons at home under the guidance of a private tutor, to enroll them in a small private boarding school, or to send them away to a “public school” where they would be lodged with other boys of rank and means as well as with local students awarded scholarships. Most of the endowed public schools were originally set up to increase enrollment at particular colleges within Oxford and Cambridge and thereby to fill the ranks of the clergy. They started largely with scholarship or “foundation” students interested in bettering their situations with a clergyman's benefice, but they also accepted some paying students as a corollary source of income.<sup>129</sup> Increasingly by the end of the eighteenth century, however, the schools became a popular choice for the aristocracy and families aspiring towards aristocratic

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<sup>129</sup> Edward Mack, *Public Schools and British Opinion, 1780-1860* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973), 8.

prestige.<sup>130</sup> Several possible factors may have contributed to this shift, including increasing ease of transportation; the effort of particular administrators such as Busby at Westminster; and increasing expenses combined with a decreasing availability of scholarships, which spurred a shift toward the enrollment of wealthier students.<sup>131</sup>

Scant records exist to help fully reconstruct a day in the life of an eighteenth-century public school, but we can get some sense of the classical curriculum and the way pupils spent their time both in and out of the classroom. Nancy Mace gives the following account of an Eton education in the early 1720s: “Boys in the upper school devoted their class sessions to three activities: construing and translating Latin and Greek authors, reciting what they had construed, and composing Latin and Greek themes and poetry.” Mace concludes that “the average public school boy knew a few classical masterpieces well: he memorized Virgil, Horace, Homer and Ovid, but only learned short selections from Cicero and the authors in the [standard] anthology.”<sup>132</sup> In the practical, physical sense, learning was split between large crowded classes held in a single room and private tutorials for which pupils paid an extra fee.<sup>133</sup>

In addition to academics, the public schools generally afforded time for recreation and structured play. As Martin Battestin writes of Eton in Henry Fielding’s time, “Tuesday was a whole holiday, Thursday a half-holiday, and Saturday a ‘play-at-four,’” and “diversions” for the pupils included “refreshing themselves with chums at the

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<sup>130</sup> Anthony Fletcher explains that “by 1820, seven ‘boarding schools’ were generally recognised as England’s leading schools: Eton, Winchester, Westminster, Harrow, Shrewsbury, Charterhouse and Rugby.” Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2008), 196.

<sup>131</sup> See Mack 19-23, V.H.H. Green., *A History of Oxford University*. (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1974), 109, and John Reed, *Old School Ties: The Public Schools in British Literature* (Syracuse UP, 1964), 4.

<sup>132</sup> Nancy Mace, *Henry Fielding’s Novels and the Classical Tradition* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 21.

<sup>133</sup> Martin Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 42.

Christopher Inn on the High Street, or at the local coffee-houses; swimming or boating in the summer and skating in the winter; harassing the bargemen on the river; watching cock-fights and bull-baiting; playing tennis or billiards, or cricket or football.”<sup>134</sup> In the period from 1600-1850, writes Anthony Fletcher, the public schools emphasized “endurance and self-reliance” in a “competitive environment” where “fighting and violence between themselves were tolerated pastimes.”<sup>135</sup> As we will see, this kind of competition attracted notice from public school supporters and critics alike.

Older boys, whether they were educated at home or at public schools, also had the option to attend university at Oxford or Cambridge to train for a profession (primarily in the Church) or to acquire what was essentially a gentleman’s “finishing.” Like the public schools, the universities saw an increasing concentration of sons of the aristocracy among their student population, a statistic compounded by declining overall enrollment.<sup>136</sup> There were several avenues available to university matriculation, from private, home tutorials to the public schools.<sup>137</sup> But there was also a sense in which

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Fletcher, 196.

<sup>136</sup> J.V. Beckett writes, “Although it has been argued that the quality of teaching in eighteenth-century public schools was declining, and that as a result aristocrats favored private education at home, the weight of the evidence does not support this contention . . . of peers born before 1680, only 16% attended the major public schools of Eton, Westminster, Winchester and Harrow, but the proportion increased to 35% for those born in 1681-1710, to 59% for those born in 1711-40, and to 72% for those born after that date.” Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1600-1914* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 99. Similarly, Bartlett claims, “Against a background of declining attendance during the eighteenth century, the number of peers attending Oxford or Cambridge was on the increase, rising from 36% of those born before 1680, to 57% for those born after 1741” (101). Cannon also argues that “whatever the results of the theoretical discussion, the practice of the aristocracy increasingly favored public schools, until by the end of the century there was a remarkable cohesion in the educational experience of the peerage.” Cannon, John. *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 40.

<sup>137</sup> As Nancy Mace writes, “Because many parents did not want to expose their sons to the corrupting influences of the public schools or lacked the financial resources to send them there, other possibilities were available to those who wanted to prepare their children for the universities” (23).

public school and university life were intertwined, as, in Fletcher's words, "[t]here was a natural tendency for schoolboy alliances to continue" at the universities.<sup>138</sup>

Compared to the public schools, the university curriculum centered more on logic than linguistics,<sup>139</sup> but in general the universities had much less structured curricula, especially after the sixteenth century, when clergymen-in-training were increasingly joined by upper-class men studying for public careers or simply "finishing" their training as fashionable gentleman.<sup>140</sup> Henry Fielding, who attended the public school Eton but did not attend university, writes in *The Covent Garden Journal*, no. 42, "Some of our Lads . . . are destined to a further Progress in Learning; these are not only confined longer to the Labours of a School, but are sent thence to the University. Here if they please, they may read on, and if they please they may (as most of them do) let it alone, and betake themselves as their Fancy leads; to the Imitation of their elder Brothers, either in Town or Country."<sup>141</sup> Similarly, James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury, recalled of 1760s Oxford:

the discipline of the University happened . . . at this particular moment to be so lax, that a Gentleman Commoner was under no restraint, and never called upon to attend either lectures, or chapel, or hall. My tutor, an excellent and worthy man, according to the practice of all tutors at that moment, gave himself no concern about his pupils. I never saw him but during a fortnight, when I took into my head to be taught trigonometry.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Fletcher, 212.

<sup>139</sup> Mace, 23.

<sup>140</sup> Green, 30.

<sup>141</sup> Henry Fielding, *The Covent Garden Journal* no. 42. London: Dodd, 1752.

<sup>142</sup> *Reminiscences of Oxford, by Oxford Men 1559-1850*, ed. Lilian Quiler-Couch (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1892), 158.

Here we see the gentleman allowed – forced, really - to improvise his own schedule and course of study. The reputation of the universities suffered in the eighteenth century in part due to this lax attitude to student life and learning.<sup>143</sup>

Despite its real and perceived shortcomings, education at a public school, and subsequently a university, was one of the “external privileges” granted to elite men whose status as emblems of national honor was under heated dispute in the eighteenth century,<sup>144</sup> and writers and social critics were especially invested in uncovering the effects of educating sons away from home. Educational theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most notably John Locke, asserted that sending boys “abroad” to elite public schools (such as Eton and Westminster) and universities (Oxford and

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<sup>143</sup> Green, for instance, writes that “In the eighteenth century the examination system degenerated steadily into a farce. The exercises for the degree of bachelor of arts became near-meaningless formalities . . . the question and answers had become ‘ready-made strings of syllogisms which any candidate could buy’” (87). Lawrence Stone writes, “There were times, such as before 1570 and in the eighteenth century, when it was alleged that the students were largely neglected,” explaining “It seems at least possible that the incentive to a don to maximize earned income by serving as tutor to as many students as possible decreased in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as his unearned income as college fellow increased.” Stone, ed. *The University in Society, Vol. I* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974). John Brown’s 1757 *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (London: Printed for L. David and C. Reymers) makes a similar claim: “it must not be disguised; that an Abuse, through Time, hath insensibly crept upon the *Universities* themselves, and greatly impaired their Use and Credit” – namely, “the *Professorships*, founded as the Means of general Instruction, degenerated into gainful *Sine-cures*” and “the *private Lectures of College-Tutors* have usurped and occupied their Place. Thus the great Lines of Knowledge are broken, and the Fragments retained at all Adventures, by *every Member* of a College, who chuseth to erect himself into a *Professor of every Science*.” Brown concludes, “What can be the Consequence of this Practice, but a *partial and superficial Instruction*?” (32-33).

<sup>144</sup> Michael McKeon argues that a middle-ground “conservative ideology” espoused by Tory writers like Jonathan Swift, crucially enabled the continuation of aristocratic prerogative in the eighteenth century: “Swift’s point is that elevated birth affords opportunities for education, travel, and companionship which are otherwise not available, and that these will give the edge to noble youth, whose native ‘*Genius*’ may be no greater than that of the commoner . . . So the case to be made for aristocratic birth, fiercely rejected as an essentialist proposition, is readmitted on instrumental grounds. It is not that noble blood signifies internal merit but that it opens doors.” McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002), 170. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong adds a gendered layer to rise-of-the-novel criticism; revising Ian Watt’s thesis that the English novel grows out of the rise of Protestant individualism, she argues that the shift from the romance tradition (in which sexuality is refracted through collective class interests of fortune, property, and family name) to the novel (in which sexuality is a function of an individual’s psychologically-driven desires) results in the rise of the domestic middle-class woman as the new symbol of national honor, replacing the aristocratic male (5, 1-24).

Cambridge) estranged them from the civilizing influence of the home and bred vice, cruelty, and moral corruption. While the rise-of-the-middle-class narrative tends to portray corrupt aristocratic masculinity as increasingly marginalized and outmoded, the elite, cloistered, and “savage” nature of the schools designed to educate future leaders is depicted in the period’s literature as a very current problem. For example, Adam Smith claims in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) that “The education of boys at distant great schools, of young men at distant colleges . . . seems, in the higher ranks of life, to have hurt most essentially the domestic morals, and consequently the domestic happiness, both of France and England.”<sup>145</sup>

Conflicts over public and private education came to have special resonance in the novel, which increasingly centered on individuals’ relationship to the family and the domestic sphere. It is essential, then, to examine this discourse and its fictional manifestations in order to fully understand the way eighteenth-century novels address the question of gendered moral development against a backdrop of class hierarchy. In some senses education is seen as a problem for both men and women in eighteenth-century discourse. In Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), for instance, Pamela’s pursuer Mr. B laments, “We People of Fortune, or such as are born to large Expectations, of both Sexes, are generally educated wrong . . . We are usually so headstrong, so violent in our Wills, that we very little bear Controul.”<sup>146</sup> And Henry Fielding makes note in *The Covent Garden Journal* of “that Method so general in this Kingdom of giving no Education to the Youth

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<sup>145</sup> Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonsen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 260. Smith continues, “Domestic education is the institution of nature; public education, the contrivance of man. It is surely unnecessary to say, which is likely to be the wisest” (261).

<sup>146</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakeley (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), 444-445.

of both Sexes.”<sup>147</sup> The concerns noted above about sending boys “abroad,” however, are specific to the public schools and universities that served only men and separated those men from the influences of the domestic sphere.<sup>148</sup> We will see that a broad spectrum of writers evince concern with the ‘savagery’ and ‘wildness’ that results, with devastating results for elite male character formation. In sum, the public schools and universities together formed a strong “system of class and gender construction”<sup>149</sup> and as such were ripe targets for sociological debate. The sections that follow will trace this thread of discourse, starting with John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). The second half of the chapter will focus on novels by Fielding, Richardson, and Haywood that feature victims and villains bred by England’s elite education system.

### **Locke, educational theory, and social criticism**

In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), John Locke urges parents to choose a private over a public education for their sons. He initially concedes, “I confess both sides have their Inconveniencies. Being abroad, ‘tis true, will make him bolder, and better able to bustle and shift amongst Boys of his own age; and the emulation of School-fellows, often puts Life and Industry into young Lads.”<sup>150</sup> However, Locke quickly moves to warn parents of the disadvantages of a public school education:

But till you can find a School, wherein it is possible for the Master to look after the Manners of his Scholars, and can shew as great Effects of his Care of forming their Minds to Virtue, and their Carriage to good Breeding, as of forming their Tongues to the learned Languages; you must

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<sup>147</sup> Fielding, *The Covent Garden Journal* no. 56.

<sup>148</sup> For an overview of public school history and organization, see Mack, 4-25. Mack defines the Public School, from the eighteenth-century onwards, as “a non-local endowed boarding-school for the upper classes” (xiii).

<sup>149</sup> Fletcher, 219.

<sup>150</sup> John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yalton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 128. Subsequent in-text citations refer to this edition.

confess, that you have a strange value for words, when preferring the Languages of the Ancient *Greeks* and *Romans*, to that which made them such brave Men, you think it worth while, to hazard your Son's Innocence and Vertue, for a little Greek and Latin. (128)

Though Locke believes there is value in learning ancient languages, and that there is *some* benefit to having to shift for oneself in a competitive homosocial environment, he ultimately believes that “Vertue is harder to be got, than a Knowledge of the World, and if lost in a Young Man is seldom recovered” (129).

Locke compares the student body of a public school to a “herd” or a “flock” in order to reinforce the point that these schools neglect to develop their pupils as individuals and thus fail to develop their civil responsibilities and moral virtues. He writes, “how any one's being put into a mixed Herd of unruly Boys . . . fits him for civil Conversation, or Business, I do not see” (130). The kind of careful pedagogical cultivation Locke encourages is impossible in a setting where boys have as much opportunity to organize their own games as to engage in study with their tutors: “let the Master's Industry and Skill be never so great, it is impossible he should have 50. or 100. Scholars under his Eye, any longer than they are in the School together: Nor can it be expected, that he should instruct them Successfully in any thing, but their Books” (130-131). The headmaster of a school cannot cultivate students' manners according to their individual temperaments, as Locke advocates. Since “[t]he forming of [schoolboys'] Minds and Manners require[s] a constant Attention, and particular Application to every single Boy, which is impossible in a numerous Flock,” any effort “would be wholly in vain (could he have time to Study and Correct every one's particular Defects, and wrong Inclinations) when the Lad was to be left to himself, or the prevailing Infection of his Fellows, the greatest part of the Four and twenty Hours” (131).

Locke also combines tropes from horticulture and husbandry to argue robustly against what he sees as the dehumanizing effects of public schools, arguing that “Vice, if we may believe the general Complaint, ripens so fast now a-days, and runs up to Seed so very early in young People, that it is impossible to keep a Lad from the spreading Contagion; if you will venture him abroad in the Herd, and trust to Chance his own Inclination for the choice of his Company at School” (131). In other words, a boy’s struggle to simply survive the cruelty and privations of public schools obviates the Lockean ideal of individualized pedagogical cultivation. Thus Locke continues, “I cannot but prefer Breeding of a young Gentleman at home, in his Father’s sight, under a good Governor as much the best and safest way to this great and main End of Education [that end being ‘Vertue’]” (132). In contrast to the private, domestic, civilized education he advocates, Locke posits the distant, quasi-foreign (“venturing abroad”), contaminating public school. Locke further disparages the kind of masculine character forged in the public schools by comparing the schoolboys’ indulgence in petty criminality and competition to the more noble principles a proper education should inculcate: “’tis not the Waggeries or Cheats practiced among School-boys, ’tis not their Roughness one to another, nor the well-laid Plots of robbing an Orchard together, that make an able man; But the Principles of Justice, Generosity and Sobriety, joyn’d with Observation and Industry, Qualities, which I judge School-boys do not learn much of one another” (131).

Several of Locke’s predecessors and successors used similar rhetorical tropes of infection, corruption, and unchecked wild growth to express their unfavorable views of elite educational institutions. Jean Gailhard, author of *The compleat gentleman, or, Directions for the education of youth*, who advertised his resume as “Tutor Abroad to

several of the Nobility and Gentry,” writes in 1678, “As for Universities, there is often so much corruption, by reason of the great concourse of Scholars, who debauch one another, one alone being sufficient to corrupt many, that . . .when they should improve themselves in Vertue, Arts, and Sciences, they abjure all good manners, and become proficient only in Vices.”<sup>151</sup> Gailhard argues that schoolmasters cannot attend to individual needs and particularities the way a private tutor can: “He, who at once hath but one or two to mind, can better take his time, and hath more leisure to study his or their temper, and accordingly order to alter his method; but he who hath many to look to, hath generally one common way, which every one coming into his School is to submit to; and certainly this cannot be alike fit for every scholar.”<sup>152</sup> In 1698, Robert Ainsworth, then master of a private boarding school and critic of the educational practices of the prominent public schools, echoes the sentiments of Gailhard and Locke in giving advice to Sir William Hustler, MP, in favor of a private education for his son. He writes of the public schools, “Here Children of good, and bad *Education*, and good, and bad *Tempers*, being huddled promiscuously together, it may be rather fear’d the *bad* may infect the *good*, than hoped the *good* may reform the bad.”<sup>153</sup> And as author and clergyman Sydney Smith, alumnus of Winchester School and New College, Oxford, writes in an early- nineteenth-century *Edinburgh Review* article, “In a forest, or public school for oaks and elms, the trees are

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<sup>151</sup> Jean Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman, or, Directions for the education of youth as to their breeding at home and travelling abroad, in two treatises*. London Printed by Tho. Newcomb, 1678.

<sup>152</sup> Gailhard 31-32.

<sup>153</sup> Robert Ainsworth, *The most natural and easie way of instruction containing proposals for making a domestic education less chargeable to parents and more easie and beneficial to children*. London: Printed for Christopher Hussey, 1698. Ainsworth writes that he had initially declined to give Hustler written advice under his own name because his views were so dependent on Locke’s, but claims he is now, after further experience, ready to publicize his own thoughts on education more widely. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Ainsworth’s treatise was reissued in 1736, “probably with the intention of capitalizing on the success of Ainsworth’s Thesaurus, which was first published in that same year.” R.D. Smith, “Robert Ainsworth,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

left to themselves; the strong plants live, and the weak ones die: the towering oak that remains is admired; the saplings that perish around it are cast in the flames and forgotten. But it is not, surely, to the vegetable struggle of a forest, or the hasty glance of a forester, that a botanist would commit a favorite plant.”<sup>154</sup> Thus, as Locke had done in writing of vice “ripening” and “running up to Seed” outside the careful cultivation of the parent’s watchful eye, Smith likens public school education to wild, untrammelled growth, in implicit contrast to private, domestic education’s process of careful tending and pruning.

In narrative genres, too, writers drew on the topic of young men “venturing abroad” to school, and stories of a young man’s downfall at the hands of his classmates form a subgenre that parallels stories presenting London as a site of initiation into the period’s worst vices. Hack writers, anonymous pamphleteers and serious reformers alike told tales to illustrate the statement presented in *Spectator* 313 that “A private Education promises in the first place Vertue and Good-Breeding; a publick School Manly Assurance, and an early Knowledge in the Ways of the World.”<sup>155</sup> For example, an anonymous 1755 text, *The adventures of Dick Hazard*, tells the story of a boy who “[at] the age of seventeen . . . was judged to be thoroughly qualified for the university.”<sup>156</sup> There he falls in with a set of students with “more Art than Money” eager to manipulate

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<sup>154</sup> *The Works of the Rev. Sydney Smith, in three volumes* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859), 403. According to the ONDB, Smith’s years at Winchester were “painful”: “Discipline was poor and there was much bullying. Smith also had other complaints: the curriculum, with its virtually exclusive concentration upon the study of Latin and Greek, was tedious, the way of life monastic, and the food execrable.” Yet Smith “nevertheless did well, carrying off a number of prizes and becoming, in his last year, senior boy, known at Winchester as prefect of hall.” Peter Virgin, “Sydney Smith (1771-1845), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>155</sup> Eustace Budgell, *The Spectator* no. 313 (February 28, 1712). *The Spectator* Vol. III, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 132.

<sup>156</sup> *The Adventures of Dick Hazard*. London: printed and sold by W. Reeve, 1755, 5-6.

an innocent freshman.<sup>157</sup> Eventually, “seldom a night passed but he and his companions, scaling the college walls, sallied forth, and with unparalleled intrepidity assaulted every defenceless Person they met, and bestowed Wounds very plentifully to every unhappy wretch who was audacious enough to question the legality of their violent assaults.”<sup>158</sup> The university, in other words, turns the once-innocent though ominously-named Dick Hazard into nothing short of a scholarly Mohock, terrorizing defenseless citizens with unprovoked assaults. There is, however, one crucial difference: the college walls represent a class-demarcating boundary more solid than anything found in the London-based tales of Mohock terror. In the university tale, we see the protagonist being initiated into the very idea of elite prerogative.

Similarly, headmaster and conduct book writer Vicesimus Knox, despite his advocacy elsewhere for boarding-school education, reinforces the trope of matriculation-as-initiation-and-corruption. He tells a cautionary story via a correspondent named “Francis Hearty” who explains, “As I had an only son, I felt an ambition to improve the race by giving him a better education than ever fell to the lot of any of the family. I therefore resolved, after he had passed through the grammar school in the next town, to send him to Oxford.”<sup>159</sup> The father later regrets taking his son Jack “from a place where he was making daily improvement, and where his morals were in perfect safety, to settle him at the celebrated seat of the muses.”<sup>160</sup> Jack’s early letters from Oxford are frequent and polite, but his correspondence becomes sporadic and starts to consist mostly of

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<sup>157</sup> *Dick Hazard*, 7. The author notes, “lest the title *Freshman* should to the majority of readers prove a technical Term, it is incumbent on me to inform them, that every Scholar at his first Entrance is stiled a *Freshman*; which sarcastical Appellation continues ‘till his Gown undergoes the severe Discipline of several considerable Rents, ‘till the Wearer looks more like a Scarecrow than a Student” (8).

<sup>158</sup> *Dick Hazard*, 9-10.

<sup>159</sup> Vicesimus Knox, *Winter Evenings: or, Lucubrations on Life and Letters*, Vol. I (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972 [1788]), 300.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

“peremptory” demands for money. Eventually his letters become downright “saucy.”<sup>161</sup> When Jack returns home for his first holiday, his father reports, “He was entirely changed in his external figure. He had lost the complexion of health . . . His salutation was free and manly enough; but” devoid of “his former tenderness.”<sup>162</sup> Again, we see a narrative trajectory in which the “tender,” domesticated shoot is replanted in the rough homosocial terrain of the school. Furthermore, the time Jack has spent at school among lords and baronets makes him ashamed of his own family: “he had scarcely sat down in my parlour before he began to find fault with the cut and colour of my coat, and to express his astonishment that I could wear such a *quizzical* peruke. I laughed; but he gave the subject a serious turn; and vowed that such queer ways as I had, disgraced the family, and made him ashamed of himself among his brother Oxonians.”<sup>163</sup> Jack continues to treat his family poorly and to spend ever more riotous times with his schoolmates. Eventually he tells his father “that he has just taken his degree with great credit, and that, whatever I may think, he is greatly esteemed in the university, as a devilish good sort of fellow, a lad of spunk, a man of parts, and equally approved by the seniors and juniors.”<sup>164</sup> From the father’s point of view, by contrast,

He has lost his health, and the little school-learning he took with him to college; and I have lost the comfort of a good son, and a quiet contented house . . . And what has my son gained? A freedom from what are called the prejudices of education; that is to say, great libertinism in principles and practice, and a certain *knowledge*, as it is called, which is totally unconnected with *science*, properly so termed, and consists of an acquaintance with the bad and destructive practices and manners of the very worst part of fashionable life.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 306.

Here the father/narrator explicitly contrasts domestic contentment with what he perceives to be the deceptive freedom of libertinism. In the end, unsurprisingly, things turn out badly for Jack. His father dies, and the family estate fails to cover the wasteful son's debts. Knox drives home the moral that Jack, son of a solid English country squire, "owed his misfortunes and misconduct to the fear of ridicule and contempt, in a place of education . . . where false spirit, extravagance, horsejockeyship, and all its concomitants, were sure of gaining notice and esteem . . . where forms occupied the place of substance . . . and where a degree of pride and insolence is assumed with the cap and gown."<sup>166</sup>

According to the narratives and analyses above, beginning with Locke's treatise, the public schools and universities fail to cultivate the individual and thus fail to create a civilized community within school bounds – and, importantly, by extension, outside of them. Because students at public schools and the universities are being trained to wield various forms of power, such as in the church or the government, the schools' failures have potentially significant consequences for the nation at large. Thomas Sheridan, actor and teacher of speech and elocution (and father of playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan), makes such an argument in his 1756 treatise *British Education: or, the Source of the Disorders of Great Britain*.<sup>167</sup> Sheridan argues that "gentlemen, born to be legislators, to be the bulwarks of our constitution . . . if their education be defective or bad, the whole constitution is affected by it, the disease hath attacked the vitals, and must either be removed, or inevitable dissolution must follow."<sup>168</sup> Similarly, according to John Brown's oft-cited and contemporaneous *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the*

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>167</sup> Thomas Sheridan, *British Education: or, the Source of the Disorders of Great Britain*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1970.

<sup>168</sup> Sheridan, 19.

*Times*, the education of “the Youth of Quality and Fortune” is at the root many national problems, including a prevailing “*vain, luxurious, and selfish EFFEMINACY.*”<sup>169</sup> Brown writes, “’Tis odds, indeed, but the Prevalence of Fashion places him in some public School, where the learned Languages are taught” and where, “whatever be the Master’s Ability, the Scholar’s can in general reach no farther than to *Words.*”<sup>170</sup> Brown even defends France’s system of education at the expense of England’s. He writes of the French, “[t]heir effeminate Manners affect not their national Capacity, because their Youth are assiduously trained up for all public Offices, civil, naval, and military, in Schools provided at the national Expence.”<sup>171</sup> According to Sheridan and Brown, the defects in elite education infect the nation as a whole. Despite the exclusivity of the institutions, the consequences of the boys’ miseducation spill over the college walls.

Still, despite the weight of criticisms against the public schools and universities, these institutions continued to be the nexus of elite education. As one historian puts it, “[u]nimpressed by Locke’s arguments, the nobility seems to have come round to the opinion that the rough and tumble of a public school was the best preparation for public affairs.”<sup>172</sup> Sometimes, in fact, the same rhetorical trope used by a critic could be used by another arguing in *favor* of a public school education. For instance, Locke’s orchard-robbing trope reappears in a different light in *Spectator* no. 313, written by Budgell. The *Spectator*’s correspondent in that number cites Francis Osborn’s 1656 *Advice to a Son*: “One of the greatest Writers our Nation ever produced observes, That a Boy who forms Parties, and makes himself Popular in a School or a College, would act the same Part

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<sup>169</sup> Brown, 29.

<sup>170</sup> Brown, *Estimate*, 30-31.

<sup>171</sup> Brown, *Estimate*, 136.

<sup>172</sup> Cannon, 43.

with equal ease in a Senate or a Privy-Council; and Mr. Osborn . . . affirms that, the well laying and carrying on of a design to rob an Orchard, trains up a Youth insensibly to Caution, Secrecy, and Circumspection, and fits him for Matters of greater Importance.”<sup>173</sup>

Osborn and his Augustan admirer remind us why boys would be subjected to such a maligned form of education. Public schoolboys might be “herded together” like animals, but there were distinct advantages to being part of a particularly *elite* herd, so families continued to send sons to public schools and universities despite the criticisms.<sup>174</sup> The very attributes lamented by critics – intense peer interaction, student self-government – could even be seen as advantages for men looking to raise or maintain their places in England’s social hierarchy. In 1670, David Lloyd placed the academies at the center of the Renaissance statesman’s training: in a compilation of “State-worthies,” he described one Sir Richard Morisin being “brought up at Eaton, Cambridge and the Inns of Court” before serving as an ambassador under two kings. According to Lloyd, “Three things made a compleat man in those days.” Number one on his list is “[a] publick School, where their School-fellows Genius’s instruct much more than their School-masters pains; where a man attains at once to *Learning, Prudence*, and a *Spirit*.”<sup>175</sup> The political and professional advantages of the old school tie are also underscored in *Spectator* no 313, in which the correspondent iterates “[t]hat we very

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<sup>173</sup> *The Spectator*, vol. III, ed. Bond, 133.

<sup>174</sup> John Chandos writes that “despite criticism and divided feelings . . . a public school came to be widely accepted as the place where boys destined to be bred as gentlemen might most conveniently be initiated into the life of a community of their peers and contemporaries.” Chandos, *Boys Together Boys Together: English Public Schools, 1800-1864* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984), 28. Town/gown tensions in Oxford also reveal the sense of superiority those associated with the university could enjoy; according to Green “When, in 1641, the university repudiated certain claims made by the town it did so on grounds that it consisted ‘of the flower and nobility and gentry of the kingdom, which will not indure to be subordinate to mechanicall persons’” (*History of Oxford University* 79).

<sup>175</sup> David Lloyd, *State-worthies, or, The states-men and favourites of England since the reformation*. (London: Printed by Thomas Milbourne, 1670), 103.

often contract such Friendships at School, as are of Service to us all the following Parts of our Lives.”<sup>176</sup> The story that follows even opens on a note of insider knowledge: “Every one who is acquainted with *Westminster*-School, knows that there is a Curtain which used to be drawn across the Room, to separate the upper School from the lower.” When a student accidentally tears the curtain, “The Severity of the Master was too well known for the Criminal to expect any Pardon for such a Fault, so that the Boy, who was of a meek Temper, was terrified to Death at the Thoughts of his Appearance.” But “his Friend, who sat next to him, bad him be of good Cheer, for that he would take the Fault on himself. He kept his word accordingly.” This seemingly small episode takes on great significance in the boys’ later lives, when they end up on opposing sides in the English Civil War. After the Royalist party suffers a loss, “all the Heads of them, among whom was the Curtain Champion” are taken prisoner. Luckily for the “curtain champion,” “[i]t happened to be his Friend’s Lot at that time to go the Western Circuit,” and “when the Judge hearing the Name of his old Friend, and observing his Face more attentively, which he had not seen for many Years, asked him, if he was not formerly a *Westminster*-Scholar? By the answer, he was soon convinced that it was his former generous friend; and, without saying any thing more at that time, made the best of his Way to *London*, where employing all his Power and Interest with the Protector, he saved his Friend from the Fate of his unhappy Associates.”<sup>177</sup> In this narrative, the bond of male friendship created by the elite school proves to be a powerful force indeed.

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<sup>176</sup> *Spectator* vol III, ed Bond, 134.

<sup>177</sup> *Spectator* Vol III, 135.

## Elite Education and the Novel

The school-based narratives discussed above crucially inform the emerging genre of the realist novel. Citing *Tom Jones*, Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* and *The Man of The World*, and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, G.J. Barker-Benfield writes that novelists "presented the university as a site for a young man's 'entrance in the world,' to appropriate Frances Burney's *Evelina* subtitle. There innocent young lads were corrupted, introduced to drinking, gambling, and prodigal spending as well as sex."<sup>178</sup> The analogy between London as a site for a young woman's passage to adulthood and the university as a site for a young man's initiation is apt, but it is also important to point out the crucial difference that appeared in the previous section, when Dick Hazard and friends scaled the college walls: namely, unlike London, the university functions as an exclusive, elite, and homosocial training ground. *Evelina* comes to London with an innocence and a naïve view world of the world, but she is permitted to experience the pleasures of Vauxhall Gardens firsthand. By contrast, as we will see, female and non-elite male protagonists like Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, and Clarissa Harlowe are outsiders to the elite educational system whose values and hardships have shaped other characters they come across. This distance, combined with the idea of schoolboys as "brutes in human shapes,"<sup>179</sup> away from home, insufficiently supervised, and running wild, inscribes into the novel a version of foreignness and savagery that is based not on race or geography but on class privilege.

A brief look back at Locke will help to situate the novel specifically in the context of long-eighteenth-century educational debate. In *Plots of Enlightenment: Education and*

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<sup>178</sup> Barker-Benfield, 46.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. Benfield is citing an eighteenth-century newspaper account.

*the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, Richard Barney argues that writings on educational theory and practice, particularly by Locke, strongly influenced the content and narrative style of the eighteenth-century novel.<sup>180</sup> Barney argues that scholars have focused on Locke's epistemology at the expense of his more practical educational theory in exploring his effect on the development of the novel. Yet education, in Barney's words, "is precisely the place where epistemology and social theory converge during the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth century,"<sup>181</sup> as educational theorists wrestled with the imperative to balance a student's autonomy and interiority with the tutor's need for authority and responsibility to socialize and instill discipline. Barney discusses Locke's response to this problem by examining the previously mentioned "metaphor of husbandry or gardening . . . saturating the *Education's* pages."<sup>182</sup> Barney argues that

this language is pedagogically significant because it harbors two distinct attitudes toward natural agency: on the one hand, it celebrates spontaneous vitality and 'natural' growth, while on the other it recognizes the same spontaneity has an inherent tendency to produce noxious faults and, in the end, dangerous social evils. The compensating advantage of the analogy of husbandry, however, is that nature becomes satisfactorily *domesticated*, its impulses safely harnessed so education can take advantage of its native powers.<sup>183</sup>

The novels I examine below, beginning with *Joseph Andrews*, evoke through varying methods this struggle between wildness and domestication, which in individual terms often functions as a distinction between social assimilation and a feeling or experience of internal, intranational, or even international exile. *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones*, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, and *Clarissa* all, to some extent, implicate elite

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<sup>180</sup> Richard Barney, *Plots of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999).

<sup>181</sup> Barney 6.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

educational institutions in driving a wedge between the elite male and an ideal of domestic virtue and domestic happiness.

### ***Joseph Andrews***

In Book III of Henry Fielding's 1741 novel *Joseph Andrews*, Joseph serendipitously meets Mr. Wilson, the father (as he will learn later in the novel) from whom he was snatched by gypsies in infancy. Joseph, his love Fanny, and their traveling companion Parson Adams, stumble onto the Wilsons' isolated home as they seek refuge from the threat of bandits in the surrounding countryside. When the travelers arrive and settle into their refuge for the night, Mr. Wilson shares his life story with Parson Adams and a dozing Joseph (by sleeping through Wilson's narration, Joseph misses a point of information - a reference to a birthmark - that would have brought about the realization of his true parentage). Wilson begins his autobiographical narrative by declaring, "Sir, I am descended of a good Family, and was born a Gentleman. My Education was liberal, and at a public School, in which I proceeded so far as to become Master of the *Latin*, and to be tolerably versed in the *Greek* language"<sup>184</sup> (201-202). He explains that he "stay'd a little while at School" after the death of his father, that at the age of sixteen he was already "extremely impatient to be in the World," and he believed his "Parts, Knowledge and Manhood thoroughly qualified" him to enter it (202). Wilson reflects, "to this early Introduction into Life, without a Guide, I impute all my future Misfortunes" (202).

Wilson explains that his priority upon arriving in London was to accumulate the external trappings of a man of fashion: "The Character I was ambitious of attaining, was

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<sup>184</sup> Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*. Edited by Martin Battestin. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1967. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.

that of a fine Gentleman; the first requisites to which, I apprehended were to be supplied by a Taylor, a Periwig-maker, and some few more Tradesmen, who deal in furnishing out the human Body” (202). Exchanging academic seclusion for town life, Wilson also trades his immersion in Greek and Latin for a study of Town language, becoming “Master of all the fashionable Phrases” (203). Predictably, this dissipated course of life leads to the miseries of false friendships, venereal disease, debt, and finally a wretched imprisonment, from which Wilson is finally saved by the goodness and generosity of Harriet Hearty, the daughter of a distant relation, with whom he falls in love, marries, and retires to the country.

After Adams, Joseph, and Fanny leave the home of Mr. Wilson, Adams, after a period of reflecting on Wilson’s tribulations, cries out, ‘I have found it; I have discovered the Cause of all the Misfortunes which befell him. A public School, *Joseph*, was the Cause of all the Calamities which he afterwards suffered. Public Schools are the Nurseries of all Vice and Immorality. All the wicked Fellows whom I remember at the University were bred at them” (230). Joseph hesitantly counters that his former master, Sir Thomas Booby, “was bred at a public School, and he was the finest Gentleman in all the Neighbourhood.” Sir Thomas, continues Joseph, “used to say that the School itself initiated him a great way . . .for great Schools are little Societies, where a Boy of any Observation may see in Epitome what he will afterwards find in the World at large” (231). Thus Joseph defends the public schools by arguing that they give boys an early acculturation in the ways of the world outside of the family and the home, while Adams argues, “for that very Reason . . .I prefer a private School, where Boys may be kept in Innocence and Ignorance: for, according to that fine Passage in the Play of *Cato*, the only

*English Tragedy I ever read, If Knowledge of the World must make Men Villains / May Juba ever live in Ignorance*" (230).

The trajectory of Wilson's autobiographical narrative makes it seem, contrary to Parson Adams' assertion, that *leaving* school was the cause of his misfortunes. Wilson even declares as much, ascribing his travails to an "early Introduction into Life" following a premature journey from school to London. So what spurs Adams' "revelation" that "[a] public School . . . was the Cause of all the Calamities which he afterwards suffered" (230)? As mentioned earlier, Adams draws evidence for his claim from the fact that "all the wicked Fellows whom [he] remember[s] at the University were bred at them" (230):

Ah Lord! I can remember as well as if it was but yesterday, a Knot of them; they called them King's Scholars, I forget why – very wicked Fellows! *Joseph*, you may thank the Lord you were not bred at a public School, you would never have preserved your Virtue as you have. The first Care I always take, is of a Boy's Morals, I had rather he should be a Blockhead than an Atheist or a Presbyterian. What is all the Learning of the World compared to his immortal Soul? What shall a Man take in exchange for his Soul? But the Masters of great Schools trouble themselves about no such thing. I have known a Lad of eighteen at the University, who hath not been able to say his Catechism; but for my own part, I always scourged a Lad sooner for missing that than any other Lesson. Believe me, Child, all that Gentleman's Misfortunes arose from his being educated at a public School. (230)<sup>185</sup>

Adams here echoes, in comic fashion, Locke's critique of parents who value the acquisition of classical languages over the development of moral sensitivity. Of course, it would be a mistake to rate Adams' sagacity as highly as he rates it himself and to put too much stock in his assessment of the public schools. In fact, Ronald Paulson argues that Joseph, in his *rebuttal*, is expressing Fielding's views on education, and that Adams

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<sup>185</sup> Battestin notes that Adams' King's Scholars refer to "Scholars on the foundation at Westminster who attend either Christ Church, Oxford, or Trinity College, Cambridge" (230n).

is “expressing a naïve opinion.”<sup>186</sup> But as I will discuss below, there *is* a resonance between Adams’ speech and a conversation he shares with Wilson that amounts at the very least to a critique of the form of socialization offered by elite schools.

Adams’ attack on the public schools begins with a social observation – that a group of public school scholars entered the university together in a “Knot” and came across as “very wicked Fellows” (230). The knot of schoolfellows is a strong image, indicating a tight bond that can neither be entered nor broken easily. In addition, Adams’ unfamiliarity with the term ‘King’s Scholars’ further reveals his alienation from the exclusive club made up of public school allies. It is unsurprising, then, that Adams sympathizes with Wilson, who is similarly alienated from the bonds of ironclad male friendship. Wilson, discussing his marital felicity, tells Adams, “[a]s for my Woman, I declare I have found none of my own Sex capable of making juster Observations on Life, or of delivering them more agreeably; nor do I believe any one possessed of a faithfuller or braver Friend. And sure as this Friendship is sweetened with more Delicacy and Tenderness, so is it confirmed by dearer Pledges than can attend the closest male Alliance” (216). Wilson elevates the affective bond between husband and wife above the homosocial bond symbolized by Adams’ knot, and he prizes the domestic circle above all: Wilson explains, “I am neither ashamed of conversing with my Wife, nor of playing with my Children: to say the Truth, I do not perceive that Inferiority of Understanding which the Levity of Rakes, the Dulness of Men of Business, or the Austerity of the Learned would persuade us of in Women” (216). Yet, despite Adams’ giddy assertion upon leaving Wilson’s retreat that “this was the Manner in which the People had lived in

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<sup>186</sup> Ronald Paulson, *The Life of Henry Fielding, A Critical Biography* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 9.

the Golden Age” (229), the Wilsons pay a high social price for their intimate seclusion: according to Wilson, “We have here liv’d almost twenty Years, with little other Conversation than our own, most of the Neighbourhood taking us for very strange People; the Squire of the Parish representing me as a Madman, and the Parson as a Presbyterian; because I will not hunt with the one, nor drink with the other” (224). Again, Wilson is content to shun the activities and trappings of homosocial bonding, preferring the retirement of his own conjugal and familial knot, but he is not truly living “in a State of Bliss scarce ever equaled” (343) until he is reunited with Joseph at the end of the novel. Wilson is first alienated from family life when he goes off to a public school, then when he becomes “Master of [him]self at sixteen” upon his father’s death. Then, after settling down into married life, his son is abducted – the son who, being “the exact picture of his mother,” seemingly has no solid connection to his father at all until their ecstatic, long-delayed reunion scene.

Martin Battestin has argued that the Wilson episode “stands as the philosophic, as well as structural center of the novel,” because it contrasts the classical ideal of the retired country life against the vain affectations of the city while simultaneously “tracing Wilson’s spiritual degradation to its source in irreligion and a faulty education.”<sup>187</sup> And as Jill Campbell argues, this “strangely failed recognition scene” in which Joseph, who at birth was the “exact picture of his mother,” goes unidentified in the Wilson household, also illuminates the gender dynamics at work in the novel as a whole.<sup>188</sup> In *Natural*

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<sup>187</sup> Martin Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding’s Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews* (Middletown, Connecticut; Wesleyan UP, 1959), 123. Battestin further cites two numbers of the *Covent Garden Journal* written by Fielding that deal with the topic of education; I will discuss those essays below.

<sup>188</sup> Jill Campbell, “‘The Exact Picture of his Mother’” Recognizing Joseph Andrews.” *ELH* 53.3 (Autumn 1988, 643-664), 654. In this article and the extended discussion in *Natural Masques: gender and identity in Fielding’s plays and novels* (Stanford UP, 1995), Campbell argues that Joseph rejects the courtly,

*Masques: Gender and Identity in Fielding's Plays and Novels*, Campbell argues that “[e]ven as he deflates the notion of feminine virtue and feminine feeling that Richardson had exploited in *Pamela*” Fielding “interrogates traditional notions of the masculine hero in *Joseph Andrews*, suggesting that heroic roles may only aggrandize destructive aggression and may be as void of individual and spontaneous life as public effigies.”<sup>189</sup> In Wilson’s autobiographical tale, we can see not only the construction of individual masculine roles (courtier, hero, servant) but also the role of elite, all-male educational institutions in shaping masculine experience.

### ***Tom Jones***

In *Tom Jones* (1749), a subplot involving the eccentric “Man of the Hill” takes the narrative of the scholar’s downfall to even greater extremes in terms of the geographical reach of the character’s journey and in terms of his ensuing domestic isolation. The novel’s main plot also recalls and incorporates the contemporary debate over public and private education. Benevolent Squire Allworthy decides to have Tom, a foundling and his ward, and Bilfil, his nephew, educated at home after “having observed the imperfect institution of our public schools, and the many vices which boys there were liable to learn.”<sup>190</sup> The Man of the Hill, confirming the sagacity of Allworthy’s decision, leaves responsibility for his own downfall at the university’s doorstep, for it is there that he meets the young nobleman who will change the course of his life for the worse.

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aristocratic identity based on performance, but that Fielding does not naturalize Joseph’s gender identity either – rather he contrasts it to Richardson’s naturalization.

<sup>189</sup> Campbell, *Natural Masques*, 115.

<sup>190</sup> Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed. John Bender and Simon Stern (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 116. Subsequent in-text citations refer to this edition.

The “Man of the Hill” appears in Book 8 Chapter 10, when Tom is doing his own wandering in the wilderness. Tom has been expelled from Allworthy’s estate as the result of Bilfil’s perfidy, and he is on the lam after having assaulted an ensign (Jones had been attempting to join the army in its fight against the Jacobites). Partridge, Tom’s traveling companion, is terrified by “the wildness of the place” (384) in which they find themselves, and he is relieved when the housekeeper of an isolated dwelling nearby accepts a half-crown bribe to let the travelers inside. The housekeeper describes the owner of the house as follows: “he is a strange man, not at all like other people. He keeps no company with anybody, and seldom walks out but by night, for he doth not care to be seen; and all the country people are as much afraid of meeting him; for his dress is enough to frighten those who are not used to it. They call him *the Man of the Hill* (for there he walks by night), and the country people are not, I believe, more afraid of the devil himself” (386). The superstitious Partridge never entirely gives up the idea that the Man of the Hill may, in fact, be the devil. When he retells the story of their encounter later in the journey, an interested innkeeper responds, “I’ll be hanged . . . if it was not the Man of the Hill, as they call him; if indeed he be a man; but I know several people who believe it is the devil that lives there” (446). Partridge concurs, and asserts many chapters later that “that could never be a man, who dresses himself and lives after such a strange manner, and so unlike other folks” (547).

The Man of the Hill’s physical presence signals his identification with the wild, if not the otherworldly: “This person was of the tallest size, with a long beard as white as snow. His body was clothed with the skin of an ass, made something into the form of a coat. He wore likewise boots on his legs, and a cap on his head, both composed of the

skin of some other animals” (388). He fits in well, in other words, with the wildness of the place that had so terrified Partridge. And Partridge’s reaction iterates, in comically exaggerated fashion, the distinction even superstitious folk make between civilization and savage wildness.<sup>191</sup>

The Man of the Hill connects his current life in the wilderness to an unfortunate acquaintance he made at the university. The ‘Man’ describes himself as the son of a gentleman farmer. He attended Exeter College, Oxford for four years, “at the end of which,” he says, “an accident took me off entirely from my studies; and hence I may truly date the rise of all which happened to me afterwards in life” (390-392). The cause of his calamity was a fellow collegian, Sir George Gresham, “a young gentleman who was entitled to a very considerable fortune” (392). “This young fellow,” explains the Man of the Hill, “among many other tolerable bad qualities, had one very diabolical. He had a great delight in destroying and ruining the youth of inferior fortune, by drawing them into expenses which they could not afford so well as himself; and the soberer any young man was, the greater pleasure and triumph had he in his destruction. Thus acting the character which is recorded of the devil, and going about seeking whom he might devour” (392). Here Gresham plays out Sydney Smith’s warning that, in the elite schools, the strong will thrive while the weak will suffer. Specifically, the strong in fortune, wit, or recklessness triumph, or become the tyrants, while the morally strong but financially or physically

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<sup>191</sup> In his “archaeology” of the idea of the “Wild Man,” Hayden White argues that “The notion of ‘wildness’ (or, in its Latinate form, ‘savagery’) belongs to a set of culturally self-authenticating devices which includes, among many others, the idea of ‘madness’ and ‘heresy’ as well. These terms are used not merely to designate a specific condition or state of being but also to confirm the value of their dialectical antitheses ‘civilization,’ ‘sanity,’ and ‘orthodoxy,’ respectively” (151). Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 151.

weak are victimized. Furthermore, the Man of the Hill ascribes to Gresham the diabolical nature that Partridge and others later ascribe to *him*.

The Man of the Hill was especially susceptible to Gresham's schemes because, while studious, he also "had a violent flow of animal spirits, was a little ambitious, and extremely amorous" (392). These negative tendencies are cultivated by Gresham, and soon the susceptible scholar becomes embroiled in "riots and disorders," even being mistaken for "the ringleader and promoter of all the mischief" (393). Deep in debt, he ends up stealing from a more frugal friend and, being warned that there is a warrant against him for the theft, he leaves Oxford for London. There he runs into a former classmate who introduces him to a life of trickery and gaming: "My fellow collegiate had now entered me into a new scene of life," he narrates. "I soon became acquainted with the whole fraternity of sharpers, and was let into their secrets" (404). Here, the knot of collegiate companions blends easily into the urban "fraternity" of gamblers and swindlers.

After a long series of further criminal adventures, the Oxonian who would become The Man of the Hill reconciles with his father and retreats to a life of study and, finally, to a life of solitary wandering. After a final ordeal of trying to join the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion, he relates, "At last, after rambling several days about the country, during which the fields afforded me the same bed and the same food which nature bestows on our savage brothers of the creation, I at length arrived at this place, where the solitude and wildness of the country invited me to fix my abode" (416).

The 'Man' elaborates on his preference for wildness and his affinity for those "savage brothers of the creation" when he discusses his travels. He says pointedly, "of

all the people I ever saw, heaven defend me from the French. With their damned prate and civilities, and doing the honour of their nation to strangers (as they pleased to call it) but indeed setting forth their own vanity, they are so troublesome that I had infinitely rather pass my life with the Hottentots than set my foot in Paris again. They are a nasty people, but their nastiness is mostly *without*; whereas in France, and some other nations that I won't name, it is all *within*, and makes them stink much more to my reason than that of Hottentots does to my nose" (418). Honor and civility are, for the Man of the Hill, external trappings that mask moral decay. He would, he says explicitly, prefer the company of the African Hottentots to that of the French across the Channel, but in fact he does not even need to travel outside of England to find the wild, isolated life he desires. He says of his current situation, "The retirement has been so complete, that I could hardly have enjoyed a more absolute solitude in the deserts of the Thebaïs than here in the midst of this populous kingdom . . . As my walks are all by night, I am pretty secure in this wild, unfrequented place from meeting any company. Some few persons I have met by chance, and sent them home heartily frightened, as from the oddness of my dress and figure they took me for a ghost or a hobgoblin" (418-419).<sup>192</sup>

These external trappings provide an intertextual test case for another fictional traveler, Robinson Crusoe's, conjecture that with his long beard and goatskin clothes and "Mahometan whiskers" "had anyone in England been to meet such a man as I was, it must either have frightened them or raised a good deal of laughter."<sup>193</sup> Rajani Sudan reads

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<sup>192</sup> To an extent, the Man of the Hill embodies what White refers to as the "despatialization" of wildness – that is, a progression past the Wild Man's association with "those parts of the physical world that had not yet been domesticated or marked out for domestication in any significant way." See *Tropics of Discourse*, 153. Yet his wildness is not wholly interiorized, either, as his external trappings reveal his attraction to wildness quite clearly.

<sup>193</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. John Richetti (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 118.

this scene, and Crusoe's obsession with his skin, clothes, and other outward signifiers of identity, as marking Crusoe's need to distance himself from the foreign and savage Other who may, simultaneously, hold a forbidden allure for him.<sup>194</sup> Sudan argues that "clothes . . . mark the difference between Crusoe's sense of himself as British and the great mass of naked savages he encounters in his many travels."<sup>195</sup> To justify his use of unnecessary clothing, "Crusoe falls back on a naturalized physical inability to withstand the intensity of the sun, which we can read as a fairly clear ideological inability of an Englishman to be a 'savage.'"<sup>196</sup> Interestingly, the Man of the Hill blurs this boundary. After a life of mixed adventures beginning with his initiation into the ways of Gresham at Oxford, he has come avowedly to prefer the Hottentots to the French and the Turks to the Christians (418). And he indeed frightens his fellow Englishmen so much that some of them even wonder if he is human, a spirit, or the devil himself. Tom Jones, the novel's hero, discounts this superstitious belief and disagrees with the Man of the Hill's misanthropic views (420-421). Based on the parallel narratives of Wilson and the Man of the Hill, Jones may have Squire Allworthy to thank for educating him at home, thus sparing him exposure to the herd, the gauntlet, and the seeds of vice symbolized by the university and the public school.

### **Heroines, Villains, and the Herd: *Clarissa* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless***

Robert Lovelace, the aristocratic villain of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, shares many traits with Sir George Gresham, the collegian responsible for corrupting the Man of

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<sup>194</sup> Rajani Sudan, *Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 5.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

the Hill. *Clarissa* is the story of Lovelace's seduction of the virtuous Clarissa Harlowe, but the villain's association with the Harlowe family predates his first meeting with the heroine. The root of the relationship between Lovelace and the Harlowes lies in the school Lovelace attended with Clarissa's older brother, James Harlowe Jr., and the "college-begun antipathy"(49) between Lovelace and James is a major (though overlooked) driving force of the plot.

Richardson establishes the role of the university in the plot early on. As the novel begins, the Harlowes are pressuring their younger daughter Clarissa into a marriage with Mr. Solmes, who promises to shortchange his own relations in order to augment the Harlowe fortune. Meanwhile, Lovelace is pursuing Clarissa after a brief, broken courtship with her sister Arabella. Arabella, James Harlowe, Jr. and the Harlowe parents join in an uneasy but formidable alliance against Lovelace's intrusion into their plans. They all explain their antipathy to Lovelace by pointing to his reputation as a rake, but James goes further by drawing on the personal knowledge he had of Lovelace at school. Clarissa tells her best friend and confidant Anna Howe that James "justified his inveteracy" toward Lovelace "by common fame and by what he had known of him in college," and she describes a rivalry in which Lovelace's "general character at the university . . . gained him many friends among the more learned youth, while those who did not love him feared him" (49). She explains that James' "native haughtiness could not bear a superiority so visible . . . so that they never met without quarreling. And everybody, either from love or fear, siding with his antagonist, he had a most uneasy time of it, while both continued in the same college" (49). Clarissa's relationship with Lovelace, then, begins at her family estate, symbolic of the problems of inheritance and

patriarchal authority, but the conflict between Lovelace and the Harlowe family begins in an elite-school setting, symbolic of a rivalry between elite men.<sup>197</sup>

This narrative strategy, of bringing the heroine into contact with the vice and corruption of the male educational system, is not isolated to *Clarissa*; in Eliza Haywood's 1751 novel *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, the title character becomes enmeshed in the machinations of university men while visiting her brother Francis at Oxford. Betsy is at first highly taken with the beauty and majesty of the university and the bearing of its students. She and her traveling companion, Flora, "found, on their arrival at that justly-celebrated seat of learning, that Mr. Francis had given no greater eulogiums on it than it merited: they were charmed with the fine library, the museum, the magnificence of the halls belonging to the various colleges . . . but that which, above all the rest, gave the most satisfaction to Miss Betsy, as well as to her companion, was that respectful gallantry with which they found themselves treated by the gentlemen of the university."<sup>198</sup> Shortly after their arrival, however, Flora and Betsy take a tour of the town with two Oxonians who regale and flatter them and eventually manage to separate them from each other. Betsy realizes that the "gentleman commoner" she is now trapped in a room with "was about to take greater liberties than any man before had ever taken with her" (47). When she tries to leave the room he bars her exit, "stop[s] her mouth with kisses, and force[s] her to sit down in a chair" (47). The narrator relates that "her ruin had certainly been completed, if a loud knocking at the door had not prevented him from prosecuting his

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<sup>197</sup> As mentioned previously, education at elite institutions was central to aspiring families' hopes that their sons could one day join the aristocracy. See Beckett, 99; among Beckett's examples is Sir Stephen Fox, who, in the late seventeenth century, "projected the two sons of his second marriage into dazzling social careers via education at Eton, Christ Church (Oxford) and the Grand Tour." Also see Cannon, 34-35, 40-41.

<sup>198</sup> Eliza Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2986), 51.

design” (47). The knock comes from Betsy’s brother Francis, who ends up in a duel with the offending gentleman, thus making both him and Betsy objects of local scandal.

In the aftermath of this incident, Betsy and Flora become the victims of both schoolboy pranks and local ladies’ gossip. According to the narrator, “[t]he ladies of Oxford are commonly more than ordinarily circumspect in their behavior; as indeed, it behoves them to be, in a place where there are such a number of young gentlemen, many of whom pursue pleasure more than study, and scruple nothing for the gratification of their desires” (56). Francis indicates that such ladies exaggerate the students’ vices – he writes that Oxford is “a very censorious place” and “a town of the most scandal, and least sin, of any in the world” (59). What is certain from the narrative is that the Oxonians use the event of Betsy’s predicament to engage in games and to exercise their wit: “the younger students . . . having got the story, thought they had a fine opportunity of exercising their poetick talents: satires and lampoons flew about like hail. Many of these anonymous compositions were directed to Miss Betsy, and thrown over the rails into the area of the house where she lodged; others were sung under the windows by persons in disguise, and copies of them handed about throughout the whole town, to the great propagation of scandal, and the sneering faculty” (57).

The idea of mischief and games as concomitants of formal education emerges as well in the pages of *Clarissa* when Anna Howe states that “the same dispositions” Solmes, Lovelace, and her own suitor Hickman developed as schoolboys “have grown up with them, and distinguish the men, with no very material alteration” (210). She reminds Clarissa, “You and I have often *retrospected* the faces and minds of grown people; that is to say, have formed images from their present appearances, outside and in (as far as the

manners of the persons would justify us in the latter), what sort of figures they made when boys and girls. And I'll tell you the lights in which Hickman, Solmes, and Lovelace, our three heroes, have appeared to me, supposing them boys at school" (209). Anna gives the schoolboy-Solmes a singularly unflattering portrait as "a little, sordid, pilfering rogue, who would purloin from everybody, and beg every boy's bread and butter from him; while . . . he would in a winter morning spit upon his thumbs, and spread his own with it, that he might keep it all to himself" (209-210). She imagines Hickman as "a great over-grown, lank-haired, chubby boy, who would be hunched and punched by everybody; and go home with his finger in his eye, and tell his mother" (210). Finally, Anna gives Lovelace-the-schoolboy his own descriptive paragraph: "Lovelace I have supposed a curl-pated villain, full of fire, fancy, and mischief, an orchard-robber, a wall-climber, a horse-rider without saddle or bridle, neck or nothing: a sturdy rogue, in short, who would kick and cuff, and do no right, and take no wrong of anybody; would get his head broke, then a plaister for it, or let it heal of itself; while he went on to do more mischief, and if not to get, to deserve broken bones" (210). Lovelace would clearly be at the top of the herd's hierarchy, directing and probably provoking student rebellions. Richardson here uses the trope of orchard-robbing that had been used by Locke, Budgell, and others to argue both for and against the merits of the public school system. In *Clarissa*, of course, Lovelace's bold leadership qualities are put almost exclusively to villainous purposes.

In addition to his schoolboy antics both confirmed (by James) and imagined (by Anna), Lovelace is also a distinguished scholar, though not of the kind advocated by Locke. Clarissa writes that during his school days, Lovelace "was always noted for his

vivacity and courage; and no less, it seems, for the swift and surprising progress he made in all parts of literature; for diligence in his studies, in the hours of study, he had hardly his equal” (49). Clarissa recognizes Lovelace’s education as itself a source of danger. After Lovelace tricks her into running away with him to London, she writes to Anna Howe, “I am afraid, my dear, that there must have been some fault in his education. His natural bias was not, I fancy, sufficiently attended to. He was instructed, perhaps (as his power was likely to be large), to do good and beneficent actions; but not from *proper motives*, I doubt” (698). The idea of attending to a student’s “natural bias” or individual temperament is a hallmark of Locke’s theories of education. In addition, Locke places virtue at the top of his hierarchy of educational aims, and academic learning at the bottom (the latter is not unimportant to Locke, but it is certainly not paramount). According to Clarissa, then, Lovelace succeeds academically in the kind of setting that is precisely antithetical to the Lockean ideal.

Lovelace himself recalls his own indulged upbringing, asking, “Why was I so educated as that to my very tutors it was a request that I should not know what contradiction or disappointment was?” (1431). Lovelace’s pedagogical history, though, reaches beyond the private tutorial into the realm of elite educational *institutions*: just as “Rochester first ‘grew debauch’d’ at Oxford,”<sup>199</sup> Lovelace muses after deciding not to seduce a young rustic girl that he “never was so honest for so long together since my matriculation” (162). Lovelace is a university man, and thus part of that small group whose activities and moral character we have seen dissected and chronicled with great skepticism by novelists and educational theorists alike. At one point, Clarissa insinuates that a morally-dubious educational system played a part in her brother’s development as

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<sup>199</sup> Barker-Benfield, 46.

well. She says to James, “Give me leave to tell you sir, that if *humanity* were a branch of your studies at the university, it has not found a genius in you for mastering it. Nor is either my sex or myself, though a sister, I see, entitled to the least decency from a brother who has studied, it seems, rather to cultivate the malevolence of his natural temper, than any tendency which one would have hoped his parentage, if not his education, might have given him a tolerable politeness” (219). According to the critics, of course, elite educational institutions do anything *but* foster masculine politeness, but Clarissa’s knowledge lies entirely outside the walls of the university, and part of her experience in the novel results from coming into violent contact with the products of the “unreformed” eighteenth-century elite school system.

As her misfortunes begin to pile up, Clarissa also becomes a spokesperson for the common critique that elite schools fostered tyrannical behavior. She exclaims, “Let me take the liberty . . . to observe that the principal end of a young gentleman’s education at the university is to learn him to reason justly, and to subdue the violence of his passions” (137-138), but in practice, she observes, “what, according to [James’s] account, are colleges, but classes of tyrants, from the upper students over the lower, and from them to the tutor?” (139)<sup>200</sup>

The word *tyranny* was used throughout the eighteenth century to describe students and schoolmasters alike. In *Spectator* No. 168, a correspondent complains of “those licensed Tyrants the School-masters.” He writes, “I was bred my self, Sir, in a very great School” whose headmaster was “so very dreadful . . . that altho’ it is above twenty Years

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<sup>200</sup> Tyranny, of course, was more associated with the public schools than with the more laxly-supervised universities. This kind of confusion perhaps stems from Richardson’s own, very different educational background (he, like Clarissa and unlike Fielding, was an outsider to the system), but he is certainly not alone in blurring the boundaries between public school and university and in condemning the system as a whole.

since I felt his heavy Hand, yet still once a Month at least I dream of him, so strong an Impression did he make on my Mind.”<sup>201</sup> Sydney Smith writes, “At a public school (for such is the system established by immemorial custom), every boy is alternately tyrant and slave. The power which the elder part of these communities exercises over the younger, is exceedingly great – very difficult to be controlled – and accompanied, not unfrequently, with cruelty and caprice.”<sup>202</sup> Eton “fagging” was the subject of an anonymous *Edinburgh Review* critique in 1830: “Corrupting at once and corrupted, the little tyrant riots in the exercise of boundless and unaccountable power.”<sup>203</sup> Although “[r]easonable obedience is extremely useful in forming the disposition,” writes Smith in the earlier *Review* article, “[s]ubmission to tyranny lays the foundation of hatred, suspicion, cunning, and a variety of odious passions.”<sup>204</sup>

Students and masters engaged in struggles for authority centered on these terms of liberty and tyranny. One mid-eighteenth-century Eton schoolboy, Pierce Joseph Taylor, writes home in a series of subsequently-published letters about a student rebellion provoked when “Dr. Foster whipp’d Webster a Sixth Form Boy for keeping Noise in the Chapel.”<sup>205</sup> Pierce defends the student by claiming, “to be sure he did make a noise, but it was in keeping the lower School quiet, which it was his Business to do.”<sup>206</sup> The following year, Pierce writes that he has “great reason to expect another open war in

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<sup>201</sup> Richard Steele, *The Spectator* vol. II, ed. Donald F. Bond. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, 160-161. Bond’s note on the headmaster states, “Nichols identifies this as Eton, the master of which was Dr. Charles Roderick, afterwards provost of King’s College, Cambridge.”

<sup>202</sup> Smith, *Works*, 396.

<sup>203</sup> Fletcher, 200. Chandos writes of Eton, “the government of the school was conducted on principles of delegation of authority to selected senior boys and of performance of approved services by junior boys, a system known as ‘fagging’” (25).

<sup>204</sup> Smith, *Works*, 397.

<sup>205</sup> *The Letters of Eliza Pierce 1751-1775: With Letters From Her Son Pierce Joseph Taylor, A Schoolboy at Eton*. (London: Frederick Etchells & Hugh Macdonald, 1927; reprinted by Kessinger Publishing), 111.

<sup>206</sup> *Letters of Eliza Pierce*, 111.

defence of our liberty” after a confrontation between “a Certain Nobleman (Ld Petersham)” and a teacher. The teacher “called up several boys to repeat their Homer to him . . . and if any boy missed a word I will not say he Whipped them, but he butchered them.”<sup>207</sup> One day Pierce has a “curious dialogue” with his own tutor about the school’s lines of authority: “I said, some boys had been punished without reason . . . my Tutor Said, let that be as it will we will be masters but – here I stopped I had almost said not tyrants.”<sup>208</sup> University students, of course, were not subject to the same kind of personal tyranny at the hands of their schools’ Fellows, but public schools fed directly into the universities, and the “particular form of masculinity” constructed there, including the need for “endurance and self-reliance” in a “competitive” and sometimes violent environment<sup>209</sup> (in other words, a masculinity antithetical to a reformation toward polite manners) found its way to the colleges as well.

Clarissa is desperate to defend her independence from Lovelace’s tyrannical world, but her brother is equally desperate to join it. James hopes that consolidating the family’s estates and making the right connections “would make such a noble fortune and give him such an interest as might entitle him to hope for a peerage” [a position Lovelace is poised to inherit from his uncle, an earl]. In fact, “[n]othing less would satisfy [James’s] ambitions” (77). But James fails at making the proper school-tie connections. When he confronts Lovelace at the Harlowe’s door, Lovelace “told him he would answer the gentleman *any* question, but he wished that Mr. James Harlowe, who had of late given himself high airs, would remember that he was not *now* at college” (51). Lovelace tells Clarissa, “I know your brother well. When at college he had always had a romantic

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>209</sup> Fletcher, 196-197.

turn. But never had a head for anything but to puzzle and confound himself: a half invention and a whole conceit, and without any talents to do himself good or others harm, but as those others gave him the power by their own folly built upon his presumption” (488-489).

Lovelace, on the other hand, has such an aptitude for invention that he presents a series of disguises and level of skill at play-acting that Anna Howe, Lovelace himself, and others interpret as bordering on the diabolical.<sup>210</sup> When Lovelace gains access to Clarissa’s Hampstead lodgings by posing as a runaway wife’s elderly husband, he describes his unmasking in Miltonic terms: “I unbuttoned my cape; I pulled off my flapped, slouched hat; I threw open my great-coat and, like the devil in Milton (an odd comparison, though!),

I started up in my own form divine  
Touched by the beam of her celestial eye,  
More potent than Ithuriel’s spear!” (772)

According to Lovelace, an onlooker at the house has a similar reaction: “having let in a cursed, crabbed old wretch, hobbling with his gout and mumbling with his hoarse broken-toothed voice, was metamorphosed all at once into a lively gay young fellow, with a clear accent and all his teeth, and she would have it that I was neither more nor less than the devil, and could not keep her eye from my foot, expecting, no doubt, every

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<sup>210</sup> William Warner, Margaret Doody, and other critics have addressed Lovelace’s penchant for play-acting. In Warner’s deconstructive reading, Lovelace, through his performances, “empties the self, he makes it a surface, a mask, a series of folds . . . Lovelace’s activity implies the absence of any ground upon which to posit a nature or identity for the self.” *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 32-34. Doody argues that while disguise is pervasive in *Clarissa* it does not always carry a negative connotation – disguise, impersonation, and masquerade allow characters (not just Lovelace but Clarissa, too) to experience and express a consciousness beyond the legal definition of accountable personhood. “Disguise and Personality in Richardson’s *Clarissa*. *Eighteenth-Century Life* 12.2 (May 1998): 18-39.

minute to see it discover itself to be cloven” (772-773). Later, when a messenger is drawn into another of Lovelace’s deceptions, Anna writes,

I am astonished that the vile wretch, who could know nothing of the time my messenger . . . would come, could have a creature ready to personate you! . . . I never had any faith in the stories that go current among country girls, of spectres, familiars, and demons; yet I see not any other way to account for this wretch’s successful villainy, and for his means of working up his specious delusions, but by supposing (if he be not the devil himself), that he has a familiar constantly at his elbow. (1014)

Like The Man of the Hill, Lovelace is so astonishing in his appearance here that unsophisticated spectators (and, hesitatingly, even more-sophisticated ones) concludes that he must fall somewhere outside the bounds of the human.

Clarissa, however, speaks of Lovelace’s antics in terms of class prerogative, not supernatural agency. She says to Captain Tomlinson (according to Lovelace’s report), “How Mr. Lovelace found me here [in Hampstead] I cannot tell. But such mean devices, such artful, such worse than Waltham disguises put on, to obtrude himself into my company; such bold, such shocking untruths . . . In order to support a right which he has not over me!” (822) As noted in Chapter One, “Waltham disguises” refer directly to disguise as a class prerogative; the “Waltham blacks” were lower-class men accused of illegally disguising, or “blackening,” their faces to gain access to hunting grounds reserved for royalty and nobility. Here Clarissa reverses the terms somewhat. Lovelace is an elite male but his intrigues place him *beneath* the Waltham intruders. No one, according to Clarissa (echoing Pamela’s assertions to Mr. B in Richardson’s first novel) has a right to take away the property inherent in an Englishwoman’s body. Yet, ever the alpha member of the Lockean herd, Lovelace breaks all bounds of civilized behavior and dishonors the English devotion to liberty. When Clarissa implores him to let her leave the house of ill

repute in London to which he has taken her, she asks “whether it be, or be not your intention to permit me to quit it? – To permit me the freedom which is my birthright as an English subject?” (934) Lovelace, of course, does not comply with her request for freedom. And after he has raped Clarissa, his confidant Belford advises him “to trumpet forth everywhere how much in earnest thou art to marry her, whether thou art or not” (1051). Belford argues for this course of action by using a language of wildness, foreignness and animal herds that echoes Locke and Smith: “Thou mayest *safely* do it [announce the intention to marry]. She will not live to put thee to the trial; and it will a little palliate for thy enormous usage of her, and be a means to make mankind, who know not what I know of the matter, herd a little longer with thee, and forbear to hunt thee to thy fellow-savages in the Libyan wilds and deserts” (1051).

Belford’s vision of Lovelace being “hunted to his fellow-savages in the Libyan wilds” echoes Armstrong and Tennenhouse’s assessment, noted at the outset of the chapter, that England offers Clarissa “virtually no sanctuary from a savage brand of masculinity bent on destroying the very qualities that define her as an English heroine.”<sup>211</sup> However, Clarissa at one point makes the issue more complex, when she states, “This one consideration, however, remains: he is not an infidel, or unbeliever. Had he been an *infidel*, there would have been no room at all for hope of him, but (priding himself as he does, in his fertile invention), he would have been utterly abandoned, irreclaimable, and a savage” (698-699). Lovelace exists, in this statement, at the boundary between savagery and Christian civilization. He is the product of English institutions that paradoxically inculcate wildness in the future stewards of the nation.

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<sup>211</sup> Armstrong, “Captivity,” 377.

## Conclusion

In historical terms, anti-public school and anti-university rhetoric failed to put much of a dent in the armor of the venerable institutions. By the end of the eighteenth century, “the practice by the nobility and gentry of sending their sons to one of the ‘great public schools’” had “set into a prevailing fashion” and the schools became even more socially elite.<sup>212</sup> John Chandos sums up the confrontation between conservative and progressive forces over the fate of the schools: “the new order denounced the old and called for reform, while the old order scorned the new and stood contemptuously aloof. The two were already, when the curtain rose upon the nineteenth century, worlds apart.”<sup>213</sup>

Ian Watt defends Richardson from some of the “grosser charges against the credibility of his creation” by explaining that “Lovelace belonged to an age before the public schools had enforced a code of manly reticence upon even the most hypertonic of aristocratic cad[s].”<sup>214</sup> During the nineteenth century, schools did start to undertake reforms. Schools instituted more structured programs of athletics, standardized examination practices, created new scholarships, and removed barriers to admission

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<sup>212</sup> Chandos, *Boys Together* 22, 25. Chandos writes, “By the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, through exploiting the clause of admitting paying pupils, the character of both Harrow and Rugby had changed. From being local schools serving the needs of local inhabitants, and especially the children of the poor, which had been the founders’ intention, they had become schools designed to provide a classical education for the sons of the higher ranks of society drawn from all parts of the British Isles” (25). Also during the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> c, the percentage of Oxford undergraduates drawn from the ranks of sons of esquires and above rose while those drawn from plebian backgrounds fell significantly (Stone 38-39). Stone writes, “In the first place, it was getting more and more expensive to obtain the necessary minimum of classical training to gain admittance. If the Cambridge evidence is at all typical, the number of private teaching establishments run by parish clergymen feeding students into the university was sharply curtailed in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century . . . This meant that in order to learn Latin, many students now had to leave home and attend one of the few active grammar schools as a boarder – an expense that poor parents simply could not afford” (40).

<sup>213</sup> Chandos, 29.

<sup>214</sup> Ian Watt *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 214.

based on religious affiliation.<sup>215</sup> Anthony Fletcher writes that “[m]ale prescriptive ideology in Victorian and Edwardian England was rigid and sharply demarcated. In no sense did it put emphasis on self-expression, creativity or the realization of emotional and spiritual identity. On the contrary, all of its governing assumptions were about repression and self-control. Manliness, indeed, throughout this period, was about checking the will, the imagination, passion, impulse and self-indulgence.”<sup>216</sup> In mid-eighteenth-century narratives, on the other hand, elite collegians are shown to thrive best in the school environment when they are imaginative, ruthless, even savage or diabolical. Fielding’s Parson Adams may be an eccentric with a penchant for exaggeration, but the many echoes of his diatribe against the public schools throughout the long eighteenth century prove that his was not, so to speak, a voice in the wilderness.

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<sup>215</sup> Hodgkin R.H. *Six Centuries of an Oxford College: A History of Queen’s College 1340-1940* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949), 164-177.

<sup>216</sup> Fletcher, 21-22.

**Chapter Three**  
**Command Performance: Military Masculinity, Military Costume, and Boswell's  
 Libertine Diplomacy**

“Amidst the splendid honours which you bear,  
 To save a sister island be your care:  
 With generous ardour make us also free:  
 And give to CORSICA, a noble JUBILEE!”<sup>217</sup>

James Boswell composed these lines in 1769 intending to recite and distribute them at the Stratford Jubilee, the event conceived by actor-manager David Garrick to honor Shakespeare as native genius and national Bard. And he intended to do so while dressed in costume as a Corsican soldier.

Boswell's verse can be read as a companion piece to the original poetry Garrick himself recited at the event. Garrick's *ode upon dedicating a building, and erecting a statue, to Shakespeare, at Stratford upon Avon*, for example, calls on the audience to enjoy and celebrate the blessings of their “isle” and to honor its “genius” with their native sympathy and generosity:

Do not your sympathetic hearts accord,  
                   To own the ‘bosom’s lord?’  
 ‘Tis he! ‘tis he! – that demi-god!  
 Who Avon’s flow’ry margin trod,  
                   While sportive *Fancy* round him flew,  
 Where *Nature* led him by the hand,  
                   Instructed him in all she knew,  
 And gave him absolute command!<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> See Martha England, *Garrick's Jubilee* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), 60.

<sup>218</sup> Garrick, *An ode upon dedicating a building, and erecting a statue, to Shakespeare, at Stratford upon Avon* (London, 1769), qtd. in Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 216-217. In Dobson's exegesis of the ode, “Shakespeare is thus summoned to serve as Prospero (attended by sportive *Fancy* as *Ariel*) to the grateful enchanted island of Britain, his *Nature*-given ‘absolute command’ (an internalized descendant of *Divine*

While Garrick positions himself as Shakespeare's envoy to the English people, stoking their national pride in the fact of Shakespeare's English birth, Boswell presents himself as go-between for another "commander," in this case the Corsican General Pascal Paoli.

Boswell had developed a passion for advocating the cause of Corsican freedom on a 1765 trip to the Mediterranean island. There he befriended and began to emulate the Corsican leader General Pascal Paoli.<sup>219</sup> Upon his return to London, Boswell aimed to bring British attention to Corsica in a variety of ways. He corresponded and even met in person with William Pitt to, in Boswell's words, "acquaint [him] with some things which passed between Signor de Paoli and me" (Pitt expressed interest and sympathy but explained that his then-position as Privy Councilor precluded his acting on the matter).<sup>220</sup> Boswell founded a Corsican Club and raised money to send to the island for the purchase of arms.<sup>221</sup> His written account of Paoli and the tour, first published in 1768, went on to achieve wide popularity. And as we see here, Boswell served as an embodied advertisement for the cause. It was at the Jubilee's masquerade ball that Boswell planned to make his grand entrance in costume as a Corsican soldier. In a letter composed at the

Jubilee for his bride-to-be, Margaret Montgomerie, Boswell wrote, "I assure you my Corsican dress will make a fine, striking appearance. My gun slung across my shoulder,

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Right?) sanctioned, as in *Florizel and Perdita*, by that quintessentially mid-century cement of enlightened society, sympathy" (217).

<sup>219</sup> Paoli was elected "General of the Nation" in 1755 at age 30, when the island was caught in an ongoing struggle for power between France, Genoa, and Corsican rebel groups; he brought a new sense of discipline to both the military and civil government, and "France's attitude to Paoli was largely to tolerate his rule, provided only he made no trouble and did not ally himself with her enemies." See Desmond Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1985), 30-32. As Frank Brady explains it, "The executive power of Corsica rested in a nine-man Council, and a General, President of the Council . . . The power of the General was limited, but the power of Paoli as a person seemed to have no bounds; it was a species of despotism founded on love." Frank Brady, *Boswell's Political Career* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1965), 38. Gregory writes, similarly, that Paoli "proved someone able to inspire his countrymen with a kind of devotion that was almost religious" (30-31).

<sup>220</sup> Moray McLaren, *Corsica Boswell: Paoli, Johnson, and Freedom* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), 143-144.

<sup>221</sup> Brady, *Boswell's Political Career*, 42.

my pistol at one side and stiletto at another, with my bonnet or kind of short grenadier cap, black, with *Viva la Libertà* (that is, “Long live liberty,” or, as the English say, “Liberty for ever”) embroidered upon its front in letters of gold, will attract much notice.”<sup>222</sup>

In a similarly self-aggrandizing vein, Boswell submitted an account of his appearance (written in the third person) to the *London Magazine*, declaring that “One of the most remarkable masks on this occasion was James Boswell Esq. in the dress of an armed Corsican Chief.”<sup>223</sup> In these journalistic and epistolary self-portraits, Boswell stars as a Corsican soldier in a self-produced theatrical performance amidst the larger dramatic phenomenon of Garrick’s Jubilee.

Boswell published his *Account of Corsica; The Journal of a Tour to That Island, and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* in 1768, and the work met with commercial, if not political, success. Frederick Pottle and Frank Brady write, in the introduction to the group of writings collected under the title *Boswell in Search of a Wife, 1766-1769*, that “[h]is ‘little monument to liberty,’ as Boswell called it, made a strong impression on the public” and that while the British government did not end up interceding on Corsica’s behalf in its struggles against rule by Genoa and France to the extent that Boswell would have liked, the work highly influenced Boswell’s image and popularity. “His identification with the Corsican cause was so complete,” Pottle and Brady write, “that he was still known as ‘Corsica Boswell’ twenty-five years later.”<sup>224</sup>

Despite the success of the *Account of Corsica* and the centrality of “Corsica Boswell” to Boswell’s public reputation in the late eighteenth century, this aspect of

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<sup>222</sup> James Boswell, *Boswell in Search of a Wife*, ed. 1766-1769 Ed. Frank Brady & Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), 278.

<sup>223</sup> McLaren, 160.

<sup>224</sup> *Boswell in Search of a Wife*, xv.

Boswell's life and works has been underexplored in literary criticism. While biographical accounts and studies focusing on Boswell's political affiliations have drawn on the Corsica episode (Moray McLaren literally followed in the footsteps of Boswell's journey to write *Corsica Boswell: Paoli, Johnson, and Freedom*, for example),<sup>225</sup> traditional literary accounts of Boswell have focused on *The Life of Johnson* while more recent criticism draws largely on the 1762-63 writings collected as *The London Journal*. While *The London Journal* is a vital and engaging portal into Boswell's sentiments and self-fashioning, it would be better understood within the larger context of Boswell's writings throughout the 1760s and 70s. In fact, Boswell's Corsican persona was better known to a larger public in the eighteenth century than the personae he fashioned in his early forays in London; the manuscript that would become *The London Journal* was rediscovered and printed for the first time in the mid twentieth century,<sup>226</sup> while the *Account of Corsica* was successfully published and promoted in the late 1760s.

In particular, attention to the personae Boswell emulates and constructs over this longer period puts in clearer perspective the interrelated preoccupations with masculinity and social status revealed in *The London Journal*. In the context of these concerns, the Corsican gun-slinging-soldier persona serves several interrelated purposes for Boswell and can be seen as a combination and culmination of many different roles he had tried out and described in his journals over the years. First, the Corsican costume gives the impression of a soldierly masculinity that Boswell encounters and emulates in a variety of venues. Second, by "attract[ing] much notice," the Corsican dress fulfills Boswell's

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<sup>225</sup> Moray McLaren, *Corsica Boswell: Johnson, Paoli and Freedom* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966). Also see Roger Hutchinson, *All the Sweets of Being: A Life of James Boswell* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1995), which contains a chapter on "Corsican Boswell," and Brady, *Boswell's Political Career*.

<sup>226</sup> See Christopher Morley's preface to the first printed edition of 1950, reproduced in *Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763*, ed. Frederick Pottle (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004), xxx-xxxii.

ongoing desire to be at the center of a visual field, to seize the kind of spotlight afforded the “favorite” of persons of high rank and of the popular imagination. Finally, the ambassadorial persona through which Boswell asks the British public to embrace the cause of Corsican liberty serves as a means of channeling his aggressive and unsocial *libertine* tendencies. Merging the theatrical self-presentation and untethered cosmopolitanism of the libertine with the disciplined self-display of the soldier, he improvises a method of diplomacy in which, rather than positioning himself as a neutral envoy, or a British or even Scottish envoy, Boswell fully inhabits the character of the soldier he pretends to be.<sup>227</sup>

This chapter examines the evolution of Boswell’s soldier-persona alongside mid-to-late eighteenth-century discussions of masculinity and sensibility. Most analyses of Boswell’s obsession with his own masculinity have focused on the *London Journal*; in this chapter I use the *London Journal* as a jumping-off point for further exploration of Boswell’s complex self-presentation in journals and correspondence stretching into the following decade. This extended archive gives us a fuller understanding of Boswell’s quest for both sympathy and “manliness,” as manifested in his ongoing interest in the figure of the soldier.

### **Boswell’s Journals and Eighteenth-Century Discourses of Masculinity**

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<sup>227</sup> In the letter to Margaret, for instance, Boswell translates the slogan on his cap from the point of view of a Corsican explaining the phrase “Viva la Liberta” to an English audience (“or as the English say, ‘Liberty for ever’”). He implores the English audience in the opening verse to “make *us* also free,” thus speaking to the English (“Amidst the splendid honours which *you* bear / To save a sister island be “*your* care”) in the voice of a Corsican and on behalf of a foreign, Corsican “us.” This is a potentially risky strategy at the Jubilee: as Michael Dobson has noted, “one of the central contradictions inherent in Shakespeare’s deification at the Stratford Jubilee” is that while “[s]upposedly celebrating the limitless inclusion of Shakespeare’s genius, the Jubilee is in fact premised on the exclusion of mere prejudiced foreigners (or quasi-foreigners, such as [actor Thomas] King’s caricatured aristocrat [planted in the audience while Garrick recited his ode]).” Dobson, *National Poet*, 219.

While Boswell has long been known primarily as protégé to and biographer of Samuel Johnson, recent years have seen a rise in scholarship dedicated to studying Boswell on his own terms, as a figure with complex affiliations of nationality (he is sometimes proud, sometimes ashamed of his Scottish heritage) and rank (the son of a laird with an ancestral home who views himself as a future landlord but who lacks wealth and a true aristocratic title). Most recently, Boswell has been a focus of inquiries into eighteenth-century models of masculinity. As Erin Mackie observes, Boswell's *London Journal*, chronicling the years 1762-1763, "constitutes a kind of source book for stock masculine characters current in mid-eighteenth-century Britain."<sup>228</sup> Boswell's writings contain a profusion of observations and anecdotes related to sexual prowess, romantic distress, sensibility, soldiering, and a desire to reform from the rake to the "retenu," or restrained gentleman, and this self-conscious archive of masculine experience has sparked several useful strands of critical inquiry into what Boswell can tell us about shifting models of masculinity in mid-to-late eighteenth-century Britain.

In *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800*, Philip Carter employs Boswell as a case study of male self-presentation in the period and notes that readers of Boswell "are faced with a range" of identities, such as "libertine, drunk, blackguard, man of sense or feeling," and "polite or 'pretty gentleman.'"<sup>229</sup> These labels run the gamut from characteristics associated with aristocratic debauchery (drunkenness, libertinism) to characteristics (politeness, sensibility) associated with emerging articulations of gender as embodied in the person of the polite gentleman. Carter argues that Boswell ultimately "placed considerable emphasis on the latter [polite, gentlemanly]

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<sup>228</sup> Mackie, 84.

<sup>229</sup> Carter, 196.

identities in cultivating a manly reputation.” In Carter’s view, Boswell’s struggle to renounce his libertine tendencies reflects the development of a polite culture which defined itself against “elitism, violence or boorishness.” This cultural movement, Carter argues, had a democratizing influence on accepted definitions of “manliness” and “gentlemanliness,” signaling “[a]n end to the traditional association of gentlemen with members of a social elite engaged in responsible and traditionally male roles such as politics, law, landholding or warriorship” and a resultant “conferring of gentlemanly status on the many rather than the few .”<sup>230</sup> By contrast, Thomas King argues that Boswell’s chronicles of his sexual exploits and his retelling of conversations held with men of status and distinction emerge from the tradition of courtly display, in which one’s value is dependent on being seen in proximity to powerful figures. King writes that in chronicling his experiences in aristocratic circles, and even in “insist[ing] on his visibility as Samuel Johnson’s favorite,” “Boswell performed a manliness differentiating the status-bearing body from the emergent classed body under capitalism” – an act King terms a “masquerade of superiority.”<sup>231</sup>

We might see Erin Mackie’s *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* as finding an overlap between Carter’s and King’s conceptions of Boswell’s status-based model of masculinity. Mackie draws on Boswell in support of her larger argument that the emergent eighteenth-century figure of the modern gentleman ironically gains assent to his asserted patriarchal privilege by emulating outlaw figures. Such figures, like the highwaymen and rakes of Mackie’s title,

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<sup>230</sup> Carter, 6.

<sup>231</sup> Thomas King, “How (Not) to Queer Boswell,” in Chris Mondsey and Caroline Gonda, eds., *Queer People: Negotiations and Expressions of Homosexuality, 1700-1800* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2007), 115-117.

may subvert, satirize, and question the very institutions (such as the family, the state, and the constabulary) that provide order and stability in the gentleman's world. Yet they are revered for their gallant manliness, and the polite gentleman wants the same kind of reputation for heterosexual self-assurance to adhere to him. In this context, Mackie "see[s] the *London Journal* laying bare the ways in which the rakish man of pleasure and the dignified gentleman are mutually constitutive positions more or less simultaneously available in Boswell's psyche."<sup>232</sup>

Mackie joins other critics in noting the centrality of the soldier figure to Boswell's meditations on masculinity. She writes that his "preoccupation" with his own manliness "takes shape in large part around Boswell's dogged attempts to secure a place in the Guards, a smart martial occupation that conforms nicely to his emulation of Captain Macheath."<sup>233</sup> David Weed historicizes this preoccupation in arguing that Boswell's "vision of himself as a member of the Guards connects him in particular to the model of 'Cavalier' masculinity inherited from the Stuart Restoration" and that is generally embodied in the mid-eighteenth century as "an army officer, a man of condition, and a sexual adventurer."<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Mackie, *Rakes*, 85.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>234</sup> David Weed, "Men of pleasure" *ELH* 72.2 (Summer 2005, 215-234), 223. Christopher Loar, meanwhile, argues that in Boswell's correspondence with his friend John Johnston, written contemporaneously with the *London Journal*, we see Boswell drawing nostalgically on "the rhetoric of a Scottish past" that is imagined to have "contained a plenitude, a spontaneity, and an unforced masculinity no longer available to a Scotsman or to anyone" (596). Like Weed, Loar uses the term "cavalier" to describe this model of "unforced masculinity," though he uses it in the broader, lowercase sense of confident swagger: "If Boswell's *London Journal* is in part a response to problematized masculinity," argues Loar, "then his letters to his intimate friend Grange complicate that response by commemorating and mourning an absent Scottish manhood that is imagined as authentic, spontaneous, and sentimental without losing more cavalier virtues such as physical prowess and virile authority" (598). Christopher Loar, "Nostalgic Correspondence and James Boswell's Scottish Malady," *SEL* 44.3 (Summer 2004: 595-615).

This critical focus on soldierly aspirations is well-supported by the journals. In fact, Boswell retains a keen interest in soldiering, and in connections between militarism and social rank, even long after he gives up on getting a commission in the Guards. In *The Journal of A Tour to the Hebrides*, Boswell describes himself as “a gentleman of ancient blood, the pride of which was his predominant passion” and writes that his father, “a respectable judge,” opposed his desire to be a soldier, a position that would underscore Boswell’s pride in his ancient blood in a more overt and visible way than respectable lawyering (the profession his father prefers for him) ever could.<sup>235</sup> In the readings that follow, I trace Boswell’s fascination with soldiering and his rhetorical use of military imagery and metaphors both within and beyond the *London Journal* as a means of examining and channeling his class pretensions, libertine tendencies, and concern for achieving “manliness.” In doing so, I aim to avoid relying too heavily on a teleological narrative of cultural change from a celebration of aristocratic bravado to an embrace of gentlemanly politeness that many scholars see in operation at both a national and an individual level. Rather, I hope to demonstrate that Boswell is constantly absorbing models of masculinity from men of different ranks and different cultures in an open-ended and improvisatory way that channels rather than fully renounces his libertine tendencies.

### **Metaphors of Manliness in the *London Journal***

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<sup>235</sup> James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (London, 1785), 46-47.

Carter writes that the “manly reputation” Boswell seeks is “closely bound up with his life in London, a place where Boswell found men and manners displayed to their best advantage.”<sup>236</sup> More specifically, however, Boswell’s London life is closely bound up with his complicated and often frustrating attempt to attain a specifically *soldierly* manliness, a quest that makes him feel alternately heroic and debased, advantaged *and* disadvantaged within the system of aristocratic preferment on which his desired commission depends. Even the way Boswell states his plan to keep the diary that would become known as the *London Journal*<sup>237</sup>, chronicling his first two years in the metropolis, draws on a battlefield analogy that expresses trepidation: he writes, “I was observing to my friend Erskine that a plan of this kind was dangerous, as a man might in the openness of his heart say many things and discover many facts that might do him great harm if the journal should fall into the hands of [his] enemies” (*LJ* 74). The openheartedness of the man of sensibility jostles in this scenario with the soldier aiming to keep up his guard.

From the moment Boswell arrives in London in 1762 amidst the public pageantry and private debates surrounding the Peace negotiated to end the Seven Years’ War, such battlefield philosophizing was widespread. The war gave Britain significant gains in colonial territory in both North America and South Asia and a distinct edge over France in the competition for a new global hegemony, yet some thought Britain should have pushed for possession of even more territory as part of the terms of the Peace.<sup>238</sup> This

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<sup>236</sup> Carter 196.

<sup>237</sup> James Boswell, *London Journal, 1762-1763*. Ed. Frederick A. Pottle. Yale UP, 2004. Subsequently referred to as *LJ*.

<sup>238</sup> See Frank McLynn, *1759: The Year Britain Became Master of the World*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004.

debate provides the topic for the first “Dialogue” Boswell writes in his journal in imitation of Addison and Steele’s *Spectator*. The dialogue’s cast of characters consists of Boswell himself, two unnamed “citizens” and an elder physician:

1 Citizen: Pray now, what do you really think of the Peace?

2 Citizen: That it is a damned bad one, to be sure!

Physician: Damned bad one? Pray what would you be at? . . . Did you not begin the war to settle your boundaries in North America? And have you not got that done . . . better than could have been expected?

At this point Boswell jumps into the conversation with an analogy questioning the physician’s satisfaction with the restraint Britain showed in accepting the terms of the Peace:

Boswell: Suppose, Sir, I went a-hunting with the intention to bring home a hare to dinner, and catch three hares. Don’t you think that I may also bring home the other two? Now, Sir, I grant you that we began the war with intention only to settle our boundaries in America . . . But, Sir, we have had uncommon success. We have not only got what we intended, but we have also picked up some other little things, such as the Havana, Guadeloupe, &c. I should be glad to know why we are to part with them? (*LJ* 74)

Here Boswell presents himself as both a rational and an imaginative participant in the coffeehouse debate. He contends that hunting prowess (catching three hares), in excess of that which satisfies bodily need (one dinner-ready hare), is an achievement that should be rewarded by allowing the hunter to take possession of the excess, adding to his physical store as well as, one can assume, his reputation for skilled pursuit. For Boswell it is only a small figurative step from the individual hunter to the collective British ‘we.’ The two are equally triumphant and deserving of the right to maintain possession over acquisitions in excess of need and beyond the goals of the original pursuit.

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Boswell's reasoning does not go unquestioned in the Dialogue; in his riposte, the Physician sharply challenges Boswell's imagery of military masculinity. The Physician answers in practical terms that Britain "cannot carry on the war another year" and questions the validity of the coffeehouse clientele's imaginative rendering of British military prowess. He observes that "it is easy for a merchant to sit by his warm fire and talk of our army abroad. They imagine we have got a hundred thousand stout soldiers ready to march up against the enemy. Little do they know what the severities they have suffered produce. Indeed we have a very thin army. And those that remain, what are they? Why, like Jack Falstaff's scarecrows" (*LJ* 75). In place of the hearty huntsman the physician offers a picture of weakness and diminishment-- an army "thin" in both numbers and stature. In fact, in the physician's description, there is really no representative of the kind of ideal, balanced masculinity described by Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [discussed in greater detail below] or in Boswell's hunting anecdote. For the physician there are the merchants indulged in comfort in London and the soldiers diminished by hardship in the field. The London men may attempt a sympathetic imaginative response to the soldiers, but their imaginations do not sufficiently apprehend the reality of the battlefield.

Boswell presents the Physician's critique of his position, but, as the one committing the discussion to paper, Boswell gets to reframe the conversation by returning at the end of his section on the Dialogue to his hunting metaphor. Reflecting on the conversation, Boswell writes, "My simile of the hares (my metaphor, rather) is pretty well. They might have answered me, 'Suppose a man went out to shoot a hare for dinner, and not only shot that but a brace of partridges. The lord of the manor sees him and is

offended at him, and wants to take them all from him. Don't you think he is very well off if he gives the lord the partridges and trudges peaceably home with his hare on his shoulders, which is all that he wanted?" (*LJ* 76). This second metaphor is more nuanced than the first. It is unlikely that Boswell means to posit (or means for his imaginary adversary to posit) France as the lord of the manor and the British forces as its tenants; rather, he is searching for a better way to manage the concept and image of excess (here, the serendipitous capture of the partridges) within the same field of signification – in this case, the actual fields of hunting and sport watched over by the rural lord and gentleman. This attempt is significant because Boswell thinks of himself throughout the journal variously as a refined Londoner, as a London libertine, as an aspiring soldier *and* as the future laird of Auchinleck, heir to his father's Scottish title and estate. The Physician's scarecrows, physically diminished, stripped bare, and preyed-upon, represent a nightmarish inversion of Boswell's lord and hunter. By returning to the same setting, backdrop, and characters of his original analogy, Boswell eschews the Physician's call to recognize the soldier's reality. Rather, he indulges in what Penelope Biggs, in an essay on the use of hunting and military metaphors to describe the behavior of the rake, calls the "license . . . to invest his 'exploits' with an aura of gallantry and glamour."<sup>239</sup>

Furthermore, the structure and content and Boswell's initial metaphorical offering, followed by his reworked and self-correcting second one, exemplifies a pattern throughout the journals in which Boswell indulges and then retreats from embracing the kind of unrestrained drive to accumulate trophies and conquests that marks the libertine and the rake. The hunter in Boswell's first scenario has free reign; there is no barrier to

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<sup>239</sup> Penelope Biggs, "Hunt, Conquest, Trial: Lovelace and the Metaphors of the Rake." *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 11 (1982 [51-64]), 51.

his ability or desire to retain unto himself all the excess he can accumulate. In the second scenario, however, both the hunter and the lord of the manor have obligations that result from being part of a larger social hierarchy. The second scenario becomes a necessary formulation for Boswell when he is forced to contemplate the condition of the “real soldier” who pierces his most unrestrained flights of metaphorical and imaginative fancy. At that point Boswell is forced to modify his appetite for unrestrained pleasure in the face of social and intersubjective demands on his capacity for sympathy and sacrifice.

In London, as glimpsed in this coffeehouse Dialogue, Boswell hopes to forge a new life and cultivate a new social circle. He strives to write his journal, meanwhile, in the character of the impartial spectator for, as he writes in its introduction, “A man cannot know himself better than by attending to the feelings of his heart and to his external actions, from which he may with tolerable certainty judge ‘what manner of person he is’” (*LJ* 39). At the same time, it is the “character” of the gentlemanly soldier, important associate of the nobility, after which Boswell quests. He specifically hopes to get a commission in the Guards, a post that would provide a level of gentlemanly prestige while allowing him to continue living as a man of fashion in London.<sup>240</sup> He tells his friend Eglinton, “my great plan in getting into the Guards was not so much to be a soldier as to be in the genteel character of a gentleman” (*LJ* 169). For Boswell, then, to be a man of his desired social position in London is to take on traits of both the soldier and the courtier.

Inevitably, Boswell’s quest for the commission makes him reflect on aristocratic models of flattery that threaten his manly independence. On December 5, 1762 he

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<sup>240</sup> See Weed, “Men of pleasure,” 216.

reports, “I waited on General Douglas, who told me that the Duke told him that he thought it would not be in his power to get me a commission. This was a discouraging piece of information. I left him in a bad humour, cursed a state of waiting for anything from great men” (*LJ* 69). He writes that since coming to London, “I have resolved to preserve my own dignity and pay court to nobody, and rather have no communication with people than in any degree cringe to them” (*LJ* 70), but this philosophical attitude belies the reality of Boswell’s social position in London. He has access to “great men” and indeed wants something from them (his commission) but is at a remove from those, like the Duke, who could ensure his elevation.<sup>241</sup> As time goes by and no commission is forthcoming, Boswell’s frustration increases. On December 26, 1762, he writes,

I this day received a letter from the Duke of Queensberry . . .telling me that a commission in the Guards was a fruitless pursuit, and advising me to take to a civil rather than a military life. I was quite stupefied and enraged at this. I imagined my father was at the bottom of it. I had multitudes of wild schemes. I thought of enlisting for five years as a soldier in India, of being a private man either in the House or Footguards, &c. At last good sense prevailed, and I resolved to be cheerful and to wait and to ask it of Lady Northumberland. (*LJ* 107)

This letter doubly sparks Boswell’s imagination. First, he “imagine[s his] father was at the bottom of it,” trying as he often did to bring his son into line both literally and figuratively as a lawyer/jurist following in the elder Boswell’s footsteps. Second, he hatches “multitudes of wild schemes” that reveal his desperation to be a soldier of *some* sort. Yet he ultimately decides to continue trying to impress upon his social superiors both his readiness and suitability for a post. He writes to Lady Northumberland the following day, pleading, flattering, and appealing both to her generous sensibility and to

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<sup>241</sup> Frederick Pottle notes that “Boswell had been told before leaving home that the Lieutenant-General Archibald Douglas, an officer with a distinguished military record and a relative of the Duke of Queensberry, could help him in getting a commission.” *London Journal* 50n.

the philosophical balm of sympathy in general: “Your kindness to me upon many occasions,” he writes, “makes me freely tell you anything that vexes me. Sympathy is the greatest cordial we can have.” He asks, “Have I not spirit? Ought I not to be a soldier? Ought I not to have the honor of serving George the Third?” (*LJ* 108)

As Boswell continues to consider his military ambitions in the context of aristocratic preferment, he increasingly embraces the role of Lady Northumberland’s “favourite” – object of her affection and attention. At a rout given by the Northumberlands, he reflects, “I felt a little awkward this night, as I scarcely knew anybody in the room. I told my Lady so. She said that would go off by degrees. I could observe people looking at me with envy, as a man of some distinction and a favourite of my Lady’s. Bravo! thought I. I am sure I deserve to be a favourite” (*LJ* 71). As the “favourite” judging his success by the extent to which he is the center of attention, the object of the crowd’s envious gaze, Boswell recalls the courtly model of performance described by Thomas King.

Boswell’s position vis-à-vis Lady Northumberland is vexing; he must gain proximity to her circle to secure a commission that will prove his manly “spirit” and his affinity to other soldierly men, but to do so he must act the courtier in a way that can be seen as debasement. For example, he expresses gratitude to Lady Northumberland for an invitation to a private party by exclaiming, “I could not think how I deserved all this, but that I hoped we should be better acquainted, and that I should run about the house like a tame spaniel” (*LJ* 73). Here Boswell taps into a tradition in English letters of expressing one’s subordinated position through the metaphor of pethood. Some notable dramatic characters express their simultaneous longing and frustration similarly. In *A Midsummer*

*Night's Dream*, for instance, when Demetrius asks Helena, “Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair? Or rather do I not in plainest truth Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?” she replies:

And even for that do I love you the more.  
I am your spaniel, and Demetrius,  
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.  
Use me but as your spaniel – spurn me, strike me,  
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,  
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.  
What worse place can I beg in your love-  
And yet a place of high respect with me-  
Than to be used as you use your dog? (II.I.199-210)

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this metaphor of pethood took on a new tenor, as a way of expressing cultural as well as class and gender hierarchies. Srinivas Aravamudan argues that African subjects, especially children, were “prized as flesh-and-blood status symbols among those who could afford them”<sup>242</sup> and that in prose and paintings “[a] variety of cultural mechanisms collocated Africans with domestic pets” (“brandings and ornamental collars,” for instance, “became markers that exhibited the subject’s special status as aristocratic property”).<sup>243</sup>

Interestingly, this discourse of pethood, according to Aravamudan, can coexist in certain instances with a glorification of the “pet”’s martial prowess. He argues that in Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko*, depictions of the African prince-turned-slave Oroonoko’s bravery and heroism “show that perceptions of African pethood overlap the chivalric

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<sup>242</sup> Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804*. (Durham: Duke UP, 1999), 34.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.* 38-39.

discourse around Oroonoko as Herculean hero.” Additionally, Oroonoko, as both pet and gallant, curries favor with the ladies of high rank in Surinam: “[s]laying beasts such as marauding tigers, but not dragons or rival knights, Oroonoko . . . gently insinuates his pethood into his flirtation: [Oroonoko asks] *‘What trophies and Garlands, Ladies, will you make me, if I bring you home the Heart of this Ravenous Beast, that eats up all your Lambs and Pigs?’* [to which the female, English narrator replies] We all promis’d he shou’d be rewarded at all our hands.”<sup>244</sup> Here Oroonoko is simultaneously a brave warrior and a courtier well-versed in flattery.

In bringing up the example of Oroonoko, and Aravamudan’s analysis of his pethood, I do not wish to imply that Boswell is in the same position as an enslaved prince, but rather that the description of his relationship to Lady Northumberland partakes in a larger cultural discourse that allows men simultaneously to be in positions of glorified bravery and hierarchical debasement, even amidst the polite urbanization of Boswell’s London. In the longstanding manner of the courtier, Boswell wants to be seen as a favorite and a center of attention, but he recognizes how difficult it is to maintain that position. Using recourse again to military metaphor, Boswell writes of Lady Northumberland’s rout, “It was curious to find how little consequence each individual was in such a crowd. I could imagine how an officer in a great army may be killed without being observed” (*LJ* 71). The officer, in Boswell’s imagination, can both attract attention and fall into anonymity. To avoid the latter, he must stay within sight of and prove his mettle to patrons like Lady Northumberland.

Whether Boswell can achieve the kind of martial prowess admired in Oroonoko or in an army officer is a constant source of doubt. While he claims that he would accept

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<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 39

an alternate commission that required going abroad if that was his only option, Boswell often questions his ability to endure the accompanying hardships. For example, he recalls his conflicted, uneasy thoughts during a visit to an acquaintance named Colonel Gould at the colonel's comfortable London residence, as follows: "I found him a sensible, genteel, obliging little man . . . Yet . . . I thought to myself how curious it was that the master of this fine house, who lives in such warmth and splendour, might be called out to endure all the hardships of hunger and cold and confusion, and perhaps suffer the severest wounds or most violent death" (*LJ* 66). Boswell is somewhat encouraged when the colonel later admits that he did not always enter into the field with a stoic resignation: "He told me that his spirits kept up very well, but that sometimes he was in such a humour that fighting would have been very disagreeable to him. Here he spoke like a man of candour and a man of feeling. For the human mind even in the bravest is very variable" (*LJ* 67). Such "variability" is, for Boswell, both a mark of the man of feeling's humanity and, in its extreme form, an emblem of Boswell's own particular weaknesses - his struggles with "hypochondria" and various phobias, all of which may, as he admits and others point out, make him an unsuitable soldier. For instance, a conversation Boswell records with his friend Erskine reveals his constitutional aversion to deprivation: "I told him that if the Guards could not be got for me, I would just take a cornetcy of Dragoons. 'I beseech you,' said he, 'never think of that. You would grow melancholy. You would destroy yourself. If you was sent by yourself to country quarters, I would not trust you with a basin of cold water to wash your hands, nor with the most awkward imitation of a penknife'" (*LJ* 103). Several months after this conversation takes place, Boswell spends the night with Erskine after his evening

companions spend the evening trading stories of “theft, robbery, murder and ghosts.,” making Boswell too afraid to sleep alone. He reflects that the next morning, “I got up rather out of order. I am very easily disconcerted. I could never submit with patience to the inconveniencies of a marching corps. The want of my own bed and nightcap, and being confined to stretch myself in a small space, hurt my cogitations” (*LJ* 214).

If such reflections on the realities of training and battlefield life force Boswell to question his suitability as a soldier, however, his pursuit of women lead him to heights of confidence expressed figuratively in the language of power and conquest. As we will see, intertwined with Boswell’s quests to court powerful connections in aristocratic, Parliamentary, and military circles is his libertine pursuit of sexual adventure. Libertines often expressed their sense of conquest in military, as well as hunting, terms, and Boswell indeed feels a sense of power after his sexual conquests that in some ways counterbalances his status as a pet to the Northumberland. While he awaits the decision of “great men” on the fate of his commission, Boswell enters into a relationship with Louisa, an actress he initially takes to be a woman of higher status and more exalted virtue than turns out to be the case. After his first night with Louisa, he writes, “I patrolled up and down Fleet Street, thinking on London, the seat of Parliament and the seat of pleasure, and seeming to myself as one of the wits in King Charles the Second’s time” (*LJ* 140). Boswell creates a parallel structure out of “the seat of Parliament and the seat of pleasure” that links official power to sexual delight in a perfect coincidence of his desires as a young man in London. Here and elsewhere, his supremely satisfying relations with Louisa counteract the debasement of having to act as Lady Northumberland’s spaniel in the hopes of receiving a commission. Earlier he had

written, for example, “Indeed, in my mind, there cannot be higher felicity on earth enjoyed by man than the participation of genuine reciprocal amorous affection with an amiable woman. There he has a full indulgence of all the delicate feelings and pleasures both of body and mind, while at the same time in this enchanting union he exults with a consciousness that he is the superior person. The dignity of his sex is kept up” (*LJ* 84). Again, superiority and dignity – specifically “the dignity of his sex”- are traits he does *not* feel assured of in his dealings with the London nobility. Further underscoring his renewed confident masculinity, Boswell congratulates himself for having “conducted this affair [with Louisa] with a manliness and prudence that pleased me very much” (*LJ* 140), and he recalls that the first night with her, “[s]obriety had preserved me from effeminacy and weakness, and my bounding blood beat quick and high alarms” (*LJ* 139).

After two months with Louisa, however, Boswell contracts a venereal disease, and this turn of events makes him confront the fact that what once seemed a “conquest completed to [his] highest satisfaction” (*LJ* 140) now leads him to “own” his situation to his friends Dempster and Erskine “and ask their advice and sympathy” (*LJ* 153). He is forced to wonder, “Am I, who have had safe and elegant intrigues with fine women, become the dupe of a strumpet? . . . And shall I no more (for a long time at least) take my walk, beautiful and spirited, round the Park before breakfast, view the brilliant Guards on the Parade, and enjoy all my pleasing amusements” (*LJ* 156)? His condition threatens to undo the feelings of both pleasure and power in which Boswell exulted that first morning in his walk along Fleet Street and specifically to deprive him of the opportunity to view the “brilliant Guards on the Parade,” a display that reinforced and reflected his own feelings of dignity and superiority. Yet Boswell remarks that when he

finally confronts Louisa, “I really behaved with a manly composure and polite dignity that could not fail to inspire an awe, and she was pale as ashes and trembled and faltered” (*LJ* 160), despite penning the conjecture several lines later in his journal that Louisa “is in all probability a most consummate dissembling whore” (*LJ* 160). Boswell even finds a way to frame the experience by clothing himself in the rakish brand of metaphorical military conquest; he reflects, “I really did take care. However, since I am fairly trapped, let me make the best of it. I have not got it from imprudence. It is merely the chance of war” (*LJ* 161).

This experience constitutes part of a repeated series of events throughout Boswell’s journals and letters of contracting a venereal disease, swearing off sex with “low” women because of it, and then reneging on his resolution. He writes to Temple in March 1767, for instance, that one evening he “gave a supper to two or three of my acquaintance, having before I left Scotland laid a guinea that I should not catch a venereal disorder for three years, which bet I had most certainly lost and now was paying. We drank a great deal till I was so much intoxicated that instead of going home, I went to a low house in one of the alleys in Edinburgh where I knew a common girl lodged, and like a brute as I was I lay all night with her. I had still so much reason left as not to ‘dive into the bottom of the deep,’ but I gratified my coarse desires by tumbling about on the brink of destruction” (*In Search of a Wife* 37). Here, in the manner of the libertine, Boswell in his own words eschews rational plans in order to gratify a deeper instinctual drive.

The link between Boswell’s self-image as a soldier and his penchant for sexual adventure -and, more darkly, a sense of prerogative that can slide into sexual violence<sup>245</sup> - comes to the fore on 4 June 1763, “the King’s birthnight.” That night, Boswell records,

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<sup>245</sup> See Bigges, 51-52.

he dressed in shabby clothing and wore a “little round hat with tarnished silver lace belonging to a disbanded officer of the Royal Volunteers. “ He continues, “I had in my hand an old oaken stick battered against the pavement. And was not I a complete blackguard?” (LJ 272)<sup>246</sup> Boswell’s blackguard adventure involves an encounter with a prostitute, costing sixpence, in which he “dipped [his] machine in the Canal and performed most manfully” (LJ 272). Then he goes “roaring along” to a drinking rendezvous and picks up a second prostitute who “allowed...entrance” but “refused...performance” (LJ 272). Boswell recalls, “I was much stronger than her, and *volens nolens* pushed her up against the wall. She however gave a sudden spring from me; and screaming out, a parcel of more whores and soldiers came to her relief” (LJ 273). The construction “*more* whores and soldiers” syntactically places Boswell among the military men who come to the woman’s aid, and the next part of his performance reinforces this impression: “‘Brother soldiers,’ said I, ‘should not a half-pay officer r-g-r for sixpence? And here she has used me so-and-so.’” Boswell claims, “I got them on my side, and I abused her in blackguard style, and then left them” (LJ 273). He then removes to Whitehall where, he recalls, “I picked up another girl to whom I called myself a highwayman and told her I had no money and begged she would trust me. But she would not” (LJ 273).

At the end of the evening, he writes, “[m]y vanity was somewhat gratified tonight that, notwithstanding of my dress, I was always taken for a gentleman in disguise” (LJ 273) - yet in this episode, Boswell comes close to taking the sexual prerogative his rank

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<sup>246</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “blackguard” referred to “A guard or soldier black in person, dress or character” from at least the mid-sixteenth through mid-eighteenth centuries. Three eighteenth-century usages are also given as illustrations of the definition of blackguard as “one of the idle criminal class; a ‘rough’; hence, a low worthless character addicted to or ready for crime; an open scoundrel.” “blackguard,” *n.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989. *OED online*

(or perceived rank) gives him to the most brutal end; he is on the verge of raping the prostitute when he is interrupted. The pair of sentences describing this moment are couched between scenes of stage business, beginning with Boswell assembling his blackguard costume and ending with his attempt to pass as a highwayman. At the very beginning and end of the journal entry, Boswell is a gentleman; he breakfasts, dines, and drinks tea before turning into the blackguard (*LJ* 272), and he affirms at the end that despite his ensemble he was “always taken for a gentleman in disguise.” Furthermore, the king’s birthnight is the occasion for the evening’s revelry, wrapping the whole episode in an aura of monarchical privilege that aligns with Boswell’s attraction to the powers and pleasures of the court. In both structure and content, this scene is another emblematic example of Boswell’s pattern of channeling moments of mortification, excess, and even incipient criminality through a larger framework of social relations between gentlemen and their official superiors (in this case, the king himself). The scene is a turning point within the *London Journal*; exactly two months to the day from this episode, Boswell records his last day in London before leaving for his travels on the continent “upon a less pleasurable but more rational and lasting plan” (*LJ* 333). He expresses some wistfulness at leaving Britain, musing, “How strange must I feel in foreign parts.” Yet he considers that “I shall be happier for being abroad, as long as I live” (*LJ* 333). As David Weed writes, “Boswell tries to fashion the materials of his life in London . . . into a tale of his conversion into the retenu, but the man of pleasure repeatedly haunts his text as a reminder that the victory is neither complete nor wholly successful.”<sup>247</sup> In other words, Boswell’s journals do not recount a straightforward

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<sup>247</sup> Weed, 218.

narrative of reformation; rather they chronicle a repeated series of reinventions, which we can see in fuller context by continuing beyond the confines of the *London Journal*.

### **Sensibility, Stoicism, and Soldierly Masculinity**

In the practical sense, Boswell abandons his quest to be a soldier in 1763, but he never gives it up as an ideal self-image. Carter notes that Boswell's ongoing admiration for soldiers and other men who exhibit restraint and self-command even under conditions of duress "suggests the ongoing importance of traditional styles of stoical and hardy manhood", and he argues that Boswell "saw self-command both as facilitating sympathetic exchange and as saving him and his contemporaries from its excesses."<sup>248</sup> In order to further contextualize Boswell's attentions to the figure of the soldier, then, it is important to look at the gendered notions embedded in the eighteenth-century discourse of sympathy and sensibility.

*Sensibility* has been a gendered concept since at least the late seventeenth century. Even while dealing with most basic definition of sensibility as physical sense perception (sight, sound, touch), early Enlightenment thinkers gendered the concept by putting forth the idea that women's nerves were more delicate than men's.<sup>249</sup> As the parameters of inquiry expanded to include the relationship between physical sense perception and more abstract concepts like taste and emotion, sensibility continued to be studied and understood in gendered terms. According to G.J. Barker-Benfield, for example, "[b]y 1734, Hume had absorbed the view that men and women had different nervous

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<sup>248</sup> Carter, 193.

<sup>249</sup> Barker-Benfield, 23-36.

systems.”<sup>250</sup> Most notably for our current purposes, Adam Smith, a one-time teacher of Boswell (Boswell met and heard lectures by Smith at the University of Glasgow in the late 1750s, right around the time Smith published his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and Boswell found his lectures “truly excellent” . . . with ‘Sentiments [that] are striking, profound and beautiful’<sup>251</sup>)<sup>251</sup> posits a gendered model of sensibility in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, first published in 1759. While discussing men’s and women’s differing reactions to calamitous events, Smith writes, “in the irreparable misfortune occasioned by the death of children, or of friends and relations, even a wise man may for some time indulge himself in some degree of moderated sorrow. An affectionate, but weak woman, is often, upon such occasions, almost perfectly distracted.”<sup>252</sup> The reactions here are gendered in degree if not in kind. It is natural, according to Smith, for men (even “wise” ones) to allow themselves to feel pain and sorrow, but the wise man “moderates” his “indulgence” of the feeling. The woman in this example, meanwhile, is “affectionate, but weak,” losing touch with reason and “becom[ing] almost perfectly distracted.” Though Smith concludes that “[t]ime . . . in a shorter or longer period, never fails to compose the weakest woman to the same degree of tranquility as the strongest man” (*TMS* 175), the basic scenario he presents, in which women tend toward weakness and an excessive display of emotion, threatens to equate sensibility itself with effeminacy.

While the “weakness” and “effeminacy” of excessive sensibility is to be avoided, however, Smith’s ideal man must not veer toward the opposite extreme and adopt an

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>251</sup> Peter Martin, *A Life of James Boswell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 64.

<sup>252</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge UP, 2004), 175. (Hereafter cited parenthetically as *TMS*).

unfeeling stoicism. Smith decries the “perfect apathy” of the Stoic’s ancient philosophy, which disallows “even the sympathetic and reduced passions of the impartial spectator” (*TMS* 345).<sup>253</sup> In fact, acceptable displays of sensibility are one of the elements that characterize an advanced stage of civilization according to the broader stadial theory of the Scottish Enlightenment, in which human societies are seen to pass through a common set of stages in economic and social development, though at widely divergent paces. According to stadial theory, sensibility distinguishes modern, civilized, commercial man from social primitivism. Less economically-advanced populations, so the theory goes, are too occupied with attaining a basic level of subsistence to attend to intersubjective states like sympathy, benevolence, and compassion. Thus, while Smith frequently expresses admiration for the Stoical virtue of self-command and for the “savage’s” capacity for self-denial, he also argues that extreme self-denial and emotional apathy run contrary to the proper and natural development of human nature (*TMS* 344).

To underscore the distinction between ideal manliness and apathetic stoicism, Smith assures his reader, “Our sensibility to others, so far from being inconsistent with the manhood of self-command, is the very principle upon which that manhood is founded.” He explains that “[t]he very same principle or instinct which, in the misfortune of our neighbor, prompts us to compassionate his sorrow, in our own misfortune, prompts us to restraint the abject and miserable lamentations of our own sorrow” (*TMS* 176). In other words, we witness the sufferings of others with an empathetic imagination (we imagine what they must be going through, and therefore we have compassion), and we use this same imaginative faculty to see ourselves from the position of an outside

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<sup>253</sup> The “impartial spectator” is Smith’s term for that imagined observer through whose eyes we try to regulate our public conduct.

spectator and thus, when grappling with our own misfortunes, spare our friends the discomfort of an excessive show of sorrow. Returning to the original statement, we are reminded that this process of using the imagination for the purposes of restraint is gendered to the point of equating the process with manhood itself –sensibility is “the very principle upon which that manhood [of self-command] is founded.” Smith’s ideal ‘impartial spectator,’ in sum, expresses feeling without being indulgently “womanish” and shows restraint without being savagely apathetic.

Yet Smith does not make a simple value judgment on the qualities of ‘savage’ versus ‘civilized’ manliness. He writes that “[t]he hardness demanded of savages diminishes their humanity,” but immediately follows this statement by musing that “perhaps, the delicate sensibility required in civilized nations sometimes destroys the masculine firmness of the character” (*TMS* 245). Thus, Smith’s elusive masculine ideal is something of a cultural hybrid. He inhabits an advanced or civilized society, far beyond the subsistence level of the apathetic savage, but he resists falling prey to the effeminizing corruptions of luxury.<sup>254</sup>

For Smith, then, extreme stoicism is a cultural as well as a gendered state of mind. Specifically, he points to the figure of the American Indian as a contemporary embodiment of classical Stoicism. As an example of the kind of extreme stoicism mentioned above, Smith writes, “The savages in North America, we are told, assume

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<sup>254</sup> In using the term “effeminizing,” I follow E.J. Clery’s distinctions in *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Noting previous critics’ conflation of terms, as well as a tendency toward a too-strong and anachronistic correlation between effeminacy and sexual proclivity, Clery distinguishes “feminization” from “effeminization” and provides a clear definition for each. “Feminization” in Clery’s study refers to ‘representations that approve or even advocate the acquisition of certain characteristics gendered ‘feminine’: sociability, civility, compassion, domesticity and love of family, the dynamic exercise of the passions, and above all, refinement, the mark of modernity” (10). “Effeminization” refers to “a complex of derogatory ideas also gendered ‘feminine,’ including corruption, weakness, cowardice, luxury, immorality and the unbridled play of passions” (10).

upon all occasions the greatest indifference, and would think themselves degraded if they should ever appear in any respect to be overcome, either by love, or grief, or resentment. Their magnanimity and self-command, in this respect, are almost beyond the conception of Europeans” (*TMS* 239-240). This statement puts forth the idea of a self-command so profound and so embedded within a particular culture that Europeans can barely wrap their minds around it – a significant statement given the fact that Smith’s central figure, the impartial spectator, is built on the capacity for imaginative sympathy. But because Smith’s theories are also based on the premise that there are *universal* human emotions, it follows that the stoicism displayed by “the savages in North America” is an act. Smith writes that “[b]arbarians . . . being obliged to smother and conceal the appearance of every passion, necessarily acquire the habits of falsehood and dissimulation.” As proof, Smith notes that they display a “sanguinary and dreadful” anger on the rare occasions when their long-repressed emotions can no longer be held in check (*TMS* 244).

Maureen Harkin has argued that these passages in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* concerning the “savage” or “primitive,” and the American Indian in particular, magnify Smith’s hesitation to explicitly affirm the superiority of commercial civilization and confidently declare it the “highest stage” of human society.<sup>255</sup> Harkin argues that “[t]he savage offers what is clearly an attractive alternative to modern forms of subjectivity for Smith,”<sup>256</sup> that “the savage in Smith’s account begins to appear as the bearer of ‘self-commanding reason’ which is not only positioned as a value in Smith’s ethics, but also might be said to define the Enlightenment ideal of the self.”<sup>257</sup> Harkin

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<sup>255</sup> Maureen Harkin, “Natives and Nostalgia: The Problem of the ‘North American Savage’ in Adam Smith’s Historiography.” *Scottish Studies Review* 3.1 (Spring 2002) 21-32.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

illustrates her claim by pointing to a passage in which Smith describes an Indian warrior taken captive by an enemy (“When a savage is made prisoner of war,” he writes, “and receives, as is usual, the sentence of death from his conquerors, he bears it without expressing any emotion, and afterwards submits to the most dreadful torments, without ever bemoaning himself, or discovering any other passion but contempt of his enemies” [TMS 240-241]). Harkin argues that in this and similar passages, “the determinedly *anti-theatrical* social space of the savage,” his refusal to express pain and suffering before an audience, ultimately offers “escape from that theatricality which permeates [*Theory of Moral Sentiments*] and its spectacles of sympathy.”<sup>258</sup> Harkin acknowledges that Smith does not wholly approve the extreme self-denial of the Indian prisoner of war and that he calls that form of extreme stoicism, with its denial of basic human feeling, its own kind of “falsehood and dissimulation.” But this figure’s stoicism, argues Harkin, is crucial in helping Smith fill out the edges of his “impartial spectator,” specifically in “establishing limits to the potentially excessive workings of sympathy.”<sup>259</sup>

Smith’s choice of a “warrior” to illustrate the “savage” mentality is also part of a larger pattern in Enlightenment writings. In a discussion of the “militaristic strand in Scottish Enlightenment conceptions of civilization,” Bruce Buchan argues that Hume, Ferguson, Smith, and others were more concerned with the question of comparative military capability than is usually acknowledged. He argues that “the theories of civilization that emerged from their work . . . shared a representation of the development of a state monopoly of violence not simply as an effect of civilization, but as one of its foundations. Civilization thus appeared not simply as a process of refinement and

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<sup>258</sup> Harkin 27, 29.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

domestic pacification, but of state formation, military power, and the perils of empire in the emergence of ‘Europe’ and its seemingly inexorable rise to global supremacy.”<sup>260</sup> In fact, as well will see in the following paragraph, refinement and military power themselves sometimes went hand in hand in Smith’s philosophy.

We can see the larger importance of military masculinity for Smith by turning to the way he explains why some men acquire the appropriate balance between sensibility and self-restraint while others do not. He explains, “The man of the most exquisite sensibility is naturally the most capable of acquiring the highest degree of self-command. He may not, however, always have acquired it, and it very frequently happens that he has not. He may have lived too much in ease and tranquility. He may have never been exposed to the violence of faction, or to the hardships and hazards of war” (*TMS* 177). Just as the savage stoic must, for cultural reasons, practice a greater restraint than ‘civilized’ man, so must the military officer practice a different form of restraint from the civilian: “A parent in private life might,” writes Smith, “upon the loss of an only son, express without blame a degree of grief and tenderness, which would be unpardonable in a general at the head of an army, when glory, and the public safety, demanded so great a part of his attention” (*TMS* 237). Nor is this form of manly restraint restricted to the officer ranks:

When the happiness or misery of others depends in any respect upon our conduct, we dare not, as self-love might suggest to us, prefer the interest

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<sup>260</sup> Bruce Buchan, “Enlightened Histories: Civilization, War and the Scottish Enlightenment.” *The European Legacy* 10.2 (2005 [177-192]), 180, 178. Buchan clarifies that “While Scots philosophers were hardly unanimous in support of empire, they each followed Hume in attempting to provide some explanation of why it was that Britain, before all other nations, found itself after 1763 at the apex of civilization and the apogee of a global empire” (181). The common thread, as stated above, that Buchan finds is the emphasis on a relationship between the peaceable development of commerce at home and military success abroad; thus Hume, for example, explained that Britain’s accomplishments “rested not simply on the diffusion of ‘civility’ or ‘civilized’ ideas, but on the development of an unchallengeable state monopolization of violence” (178).

of one to that of many. The man within [i.e. the “impartial spectator”] immediately calls to us, that we value ourselves too much and other people too little and that, by doing so, we render ourselves the proper object of the contempt and indignation of our brethren. Neither is this sentiment confined to men of extraordinary magnanimity and virtue. It is deeply impressed upon every tolerably good soldier, who feels that he would become the scorn of his companions, if he could be supposed capable of shrinking from danger, or of hesitating, either to expose or to throw away his life, when the good of the service required it. (*TMS* 159)

While, Smith notes, soldiers sometimes acquire a reputation for dissipation because of their need to turn away from constant exposure to hardship and death and find other amusements for the mind, he also reminds the reader that “[t]he man whose feeble and delicate constitution renders him too sensible to pain, to hardship, and to every sort of bodily distress, should not wantonly embrace the profession of a soldier” (*TMS* 289). Just as the Indian warrior prepares his ‘death song’ and faces imprisonment and even death with equanimity, war in general according to Smith “is the great school both for acquiring and exercising this species of magnanimity . . . In war, men become familiar with death, and are thereby necessarily cured of that superstitious horror with which it is viewed by the weak and unexperienced . . . They learn from experience, too, that many seemingly great dangers are not as great as they appear” (*TMS* 281-282). Military experience, in other words, not only gives men practice in self-command but also brings them out of the kind of “superstition” associated with primitive and provincial cultures.

Boswell himself occasionally blames his Scottish upbringing for a superstitious nature that he strives to “command” with reason. As he takes leave of Scotland to travel to London to secure a commission in the Guards, Boswell is continually reminded of his tendency towards excessive imagination and superstition. On November 15, 1762, before leaving Scotland, as he takes leave of Arthur’s Seat and Holyroodhouse, Boswell reflects,

“I have a strong turn to what the cool part of mankind call superstition” (*LJ* 42). He explains that “this proceeds from my genius for poetry” and that “I have now by experience and reflection gained the command of it so far that I can keep it within just bounds by the power of reason, without losing that agreeable feeling and play to the imagination which it bestows” (*LJ* 42). Several days later, on the road to London, Boswell writes that during the night’s travel he “was a good deal afraid of robbers,” that “a great many horrid ideas filled [his] mind,” but that he “affected resolution” and made it through without harm. The next night, Boswell again reflects on his lack of real (rather than “affected”) fortitude, and writes that Stewart, his travelling companion who is about to embark on a stint with the East India Company, “was as effeminate as I,” shivering in the cold. He writes, “I asked him how he, who shivered if a pan of glass was broke in a post-chaise, could bear the severe hardship of a sea life. He gave me to understand that necessity made anything be endured. Indeed,” reflects Boswell, “this is very true. For when the mind knows that it cannot help itself by struggling, it quietly and patiently submits to whatever load is laid upon it” (*LJ* 43). Here on the road to London, Boswell reminds himself that resolved manliness and superstitious effeminacy are not unchangeable conditions but can be “affected,” practiced and embodied based on the situation and the intent of the man.

In another echo of Smith’s broad analysis, Boswell gets to give his own comparative cultural analysis of a military leader in the pages of *The London Magazine* in July 1776. His “Account of the Chief of the Mohock Indians, who lately visited England” centers on “[t]he grandson of the chief who visited England in Queen Anne’s reign.” This current chief, reports Boswell, “has seen a good deal of service along with

the late Sir William Johnson.”<sup>261</sup> In 1776 the chief is caught in a diplomatic conundrum, courted by both sides of the conflict between Britain and the colonists, and so, writes, Boswell, “Before coming to a decisive resolution, he resolved to go himself into the presence of THE GREAT KING, as the British Sovereign is styled amongst the American Indians.” Boswell writes that though the exact reasons are unknown, the Mohock chief, accompanied on his mission by “an officer of English extraction born in America,” has been “convinced of the justice of the demands of Great Britain upon her colonies” and “has promised to give his assistance to government, by bringing three thousand men into the field.” As we saw in Chapter One, accounts of Indian fealty to the British crown magnify the importance of the monarch or “GREAT KING.” This instance of transatlantic diplomacy allows Boswell to indulge in such a magnification while including some of his own cultural analysis. Boswell writes that when the Mohawk Kings visited Queen Anne’s court 1711, “At that time the Mohocks were a very rude and uncivilized nation.” He notes that “The periodical essays of the Augustan age . . . shew us the very name of Mohock was then terrible in London.” “But,” he continues, somewhat more than half a century has made a very great change upon the Mohock nation. They are now so well trained to civil life, as to live in a fixed place, to have good commodious houses, to cultivate land with assiduity and skill, and to trade with the British colonies,” in addition to converting to Christianity.

These “civilizing” developments lead to something of a diminution of the chief’s fearsomeness. According to Boswell’s description, “[t]his chief had not the ferocious dignity of a savage leader; nor does he discover any extraordinary force either of mind or body.” In order to forestall any readerly disappointment, Boswell notes, “[w]e have

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<sup>261</sup> See chapter one for an account of Johnson, titled by some in England as “The Mohawk Baronet.”

procured for the satisfaction of our readers, a print of him in the dress of his nation, which gives him a more striking appearance; for when he wore the ordinary European habit, there did not seem to be any thing about him that marked preeminence.” Indeed, writes Boswell, “[h]is manners are gentle and quiet; and to those who study human nature, he affords a very convincing proof of the tameness which education can produce upon the wildest race.” The language of the “striking appearance” that brings back some little sense of wildness and ferocious dignity exactly echoes Boswell’s description of himself in the guise of the Corsican soldier. In both cases the modern man is transformed into a more powerful figure with a military costume, one that the average British reader or viewer may deem of special interest for its exoticism.

### **“Take your post”: Boswell on the Continent**

In 1763, after giving up on the idea of gaining a commission in the Guards, Boswell goes to Holland “with a manly resolution to improve.”<sup>262</sup> He tells himself, “this is your winter to get rid of spleen and become a man” (*Holland* 22) and continually reminds himself of this mission, especially when faced with the temptations of civilization’s luxuries. At one point, for example, he writes, “A warm bath is, I confess, a most agreeable kind of luxury, but luxury is very dangerous . . . Above all things a young man should guard against effeminacy” (*Holland* 46).

Despite giving up on a commission in the Guards, though, Boswell continues to equate masculinity with soldiering. One day he writes, “Yesterday you was better . . .

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<sup>262</sup> James Boswell, *Boswell in Holland, 1763-1764*. Ed Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 4. Referred to in subsequent parenthetical citations as *Holland*.

You grew well at night. This day show that you are Boswell, a true soldier. Take your post. Shake off sloth and spleen, and just proceed” (*Holland* 192). By embracing the character, if not the title, of a soldier, Boswell views himself as being on the right path to the kind of manliness worthy of his rank. He writes to Temple, “I am a worthy, an amiable, and a brilliant man. I am at a foreign university town. I am advancing in knowledge. I am received upon the very best footing by people of rank in this country. My days of dissipating and absurdity are past . . . I am forming into a character which may do honour to the ancient family which I am born to represent” (*Holland* 225).

As his continental travels continue, Boswell continues to think of even the *simulation* of soldierly hardships as a masculine rite of passage. In Germany, he stays at an inn where he believes a noted French officer had once stayed and reports, “A dreary inn it was. I was laid upon a table covered with straw, with a blanket and a sheet; and above me I had a sheet and a feather bed. Thus was I just in the situation of a bold officer. Thus did I endure the very hardships of a German campaign which I used to tremble at the thoughts of when at Auchinleck.”<sup>263</sup> At one point, Boswell seizes the opportunity to literally act in the character of an officer; visiting the court at Dresden, he “beg[s]” to be “present[ed] . . . as a British officer,” and his wish is granted. He writes, “I accordingly put a cockade in my hat and tied a crape round my arm, and was presented at the Court of Saxony as ‘an officer in Loudon’s regiment.’” Boswell reports that he “was diverted at the conceit of being an officer for a day” (*Grand Tour GS* 136-137). Pleasure once again mingles with the “masquerade” of power and manliness.

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<sup>263</sup> James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand our: Germany and Switzerland*, 1764.(hereafter *Grand Tour GS*), Ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 9.

Boswell's fascination with military masculinity deepens as he becomes an observer of continental customs. In July of 1764, he attends a Prussian military parade led by King Frederick and, in his journal, describes the parade as "a glorious sight":

[The King] was dressed in a suit of plain blue, with a star and a plain hat with a white feather. He had in his hand a cane . . . He stood before his palace, with an air of iron confidence that could not be opposed. As a loadstone moved needles, or a storm bows the lofty oaks, did Frederick the Great make the Prussian officers submissive bend as he walked in the midst of them. I was in noble spirits, and had a full relish of this grand scene which I shall never forget." (*GS* 24)

Boswell cannot help but imagine himself in the place of the Prussian commander, recalling later, "I have really a little mind, with all my pride. For I thought one might well endure all the fatigues of war, in order to have an opportunity of appearing grand as this monarch" (*GS* 24). Later Boswell visits the "great hall" of "Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Dessau," once "a great warrior," who shows him his collection of "brave grenadiers" of whom he has "a complete company . . . painted from the life." Boswell observes the aesthetic effect of the grenadier's depicted costume: "They are drawn with long blue cloaks, which was formerly the Prussian uniform, and with their arms and accoutrements. I was much pleased with this idea. It has a most singular effect" (*GS* 116). Boswell is vague as to the precise nature of this effect, but he is clearly taken with the military prowess and aesthetics of Prussia and the German princely states.

In fact, Boswell was far from alone in being visually impressed with the sight of the Prussian army. In an article on the figure of the Prussian soldier in both eighteenth-century "tactical" and "fashionable" visual fields, Daniel Purdy writes that throughout the course of the century, "Prussia had been famous for its well-drilled, uniform troops. The sight of an elite unit marching mechanically across an open field with bayonets drawn

was meant to terrify Prussia's potential enemies."<sup>264</sup> The Prussians felt a need to design and regulate this spectacle with attention to gender boundaries, lest the soldiers be seen as too fashionable and therefore effeminate: "for all their attention to military dress and drill," writes Purdy, the Prussians "were adamant that their soldiers not become dandies and fencing masters in the French manner . . . Uniforms were not meant to appeal; they were supposed to increase the army's control over the soldier's body."<sup>265</sup> But the visual field cannot be entirely regulated, thus "the more the young men insisted that they were dressing solely for the sake of some higher principle, the more dashing they were in the eyes of desirous spectators."<sup>266</sup> Purdy notes that while women have always been seen as the object of the gaze in feminist psychoanalytic theory, this "example of the Prussian soldiers shows how the army functions first as a circuit of male-male observation which then becomes integrated into a second circuit of viewing when it comes into contact with fashionable society."<sup>267</sup> It is fitting, then, that Boswell, who is fascinated by and wishes to in some way be a part of both military and fashionable society, is drawn to the aesthetic of the continental military uniform as a symbol of manliness that puts the wearer at the center of a powerful visual field.

Temple responds to Boswell's description of the military parade by emphasizing Boswell's attraction to monarchical figures. "Indeed, Boswell," he observes, "you have a loyal heart. A king with you is everything . . . When you saw Frederick the Great (for I must own he deserves that name), instead of being struck with the majesty of his presence

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<sup>264</sup> Daniel Purdy, "Sculptured Soldiers and the Beauty of Discipline: Herder, Foucault, and Masculinity," in Marianne Henn and Holger Pausch, eds., *Body Dialectics in the Age of Goethe* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 25.

<sup>265</sup> Purdy, 25.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

and the splendour of his actions, you should have recollected with abhorrence his ruinous ambition, his perfidy and want of principle” (*Grand Tour GS* 276). Boswell’s feelings on Frederick do, in fact, vary. About a month after viewing the Prussian military parade, Boswell visits the court at Brunswick and speaks with a baron who had served as aide-de-camp to Prince Ferdinand. The baron extols the virtue of Ferdinand in contrast to the inhumanity of Frederick, telling Boswell, “During the war he [Ferdinand] did all he could to alleviate the inevitable suffering, whereas the King of Prussia had no human feeling.” To illustrate his claim, the baron notes, “I have seen him pass by a group of poor wounded men and turn his eyes the other way” (*GS* 53). Shortly thereafter, Boswell himself sees evidence of the king’s reported inhumanity when he visits Dresden, which Frederick had devastated upon retreat. Boswell writes that it gave him “great pain to see the ruins made by the Prussian bombardments”, concluding at that moment, “I hated the barbarous hero” (*GS* 133).

Boswell’s use of the term ‘barbarous’ to describe the commander he once admired, and even wanted to emulate, but whom he now finds to be devoid of human feeling, utterly bereft of sensibility, and displaying the ‘perfect apathy’ of the Stoic, harks back to Adam Smith’s linking of the terms ‘stoicism’ and ‘savage’ to describe the outer limits of acceptable masculinity. Boswell assures Temple that he “abhor[s] a despotic tyrant” (297), and the Dresden episode illustrates this point. Yet, days before receiving Temple’s letter, Boswell had told Rousseau, “I have leanings toward despotism, let me tell you. On our estate, I am like an ancient laird, and I insist on respect from the tenants” (*Grand Tour GS* 260). Thus he continues to look toward the nobility for models of deportment. As his travels continue, Boswell befriends a Lord Mountstuart, through

whom he can again express his proximity to rank and prestige while examining the nobleman's expression of those traits – nerves, deportment, self-command – that help define manliness according to the rubric of sensibility. He writes in an unsent letter composed to Rousseau,

I formed a close connection with Lord Mountstuart, eldest son of the worthy Lord Bute, intimate friend of our King. My Lord Mountstuart is a young nobleman who merits his being of the blood of the ancient kings of Scotland . . . He is handsome, has elegant manners, and a tempestuously noble soul. He has never applied himself earnestly to anything, but he is not without knowledge and has an excellent mind. He has, though to a lesser degree, the same defect that I have, weak nerves; but he does not suffer from them, for although he is no metaphysician, he is a practical philosopher . . . He enjoys his real advantages without worrying about imaginary ills.<sup>268</sup>

Boswell goes on to tout Lord Mountstuart as a representative of modern man, turning what may be perceived as physical shortcomings into proof of civilization's advances:

His money is for him in civilized society what physical strength is to a savage. His servants are his arms, his horses his legs, and he can count as surely on them as the savage on the parts of his body – more, even, for he can replace them when they fail, which savages cannot do (*ICF* 9).

Like Smith, Boswell is ambivalent about the merits of such a luxury. Travelling with Mountstuart through Italy, he writes, “I found myself in my Lord's suite, and when I heard him hold forth on the pleasures of grandeur I began to wish for employment at Court. I thought of his great interest. Insensibly I tried to please him and was afraid of offending him . . . I was highly shocked by it. What! Boswell, *the man of singular merit!* The friend of Rousseau! Is Boswell so far overcome by vile interest as to depend on the moods of a young Lord?” (*ICF* 9-10).

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<sup>268</sup> James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France, 1765-1766*. (hereafter *ICF*), ed. Frank Brady and Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), 8-9.

It must be noted, though, that despite his misgivings Boswell continues to be fascinated by men of high rank in addition to military men. The next section will trace Boswell's relationship to the Corsican General Pascal Paoli, a meeting that leads to the development of the Corsican soldier persona described in the chapter's opening section. As we will see, throughout the Corsican journal, Boswell continues to expound on the contradictions and complexities of trying to define men along a continuum of savagery and civilization and simultaneously in terms of stoicism and sensibility.

### **Corsica Boswell: At the Courts of Paoli and Garrick**

A sojourn in Corsica towards the end of his European tour gives Boswell yet another opportunity to place himself into a military context and provides the foundation for both the public persona of "Corsica Boswell" and the eventual publication of the *Account of Corsica*. Boswell writes to his friend Temple in May 1766, "as I was but five weeks in Corsica, I cannot be expected to have materials enough to furnish anything like a complete account of it. But that I hope to tell my countrymen so much concerning the brave islanders and their glorious leader that all the true lovers of liberty must admire them and be interested for them" (*In Search of a Wife* 10-11). In the opening of his account, Boswell frames Corsica as an enticing discovery heretofore only known to a select group of British seamen. He writes, "I recollect with astonishment how little the real state of Corsica was known, even by those who had good access to know it" (*ICF* 149). Corsica's relatively primitive state allows Boswell to present himself as a courageous explorer, even in contrast to the British military men who had previously visited the island: "An officer of rank in the British navy, who had been in several ports

of the island,” he records, “told me that I run the risk of my life in going among these barbarians; for that his surgeon’s mate went ashore to take the diversion of shooting and every moment was alarmed by some of the natives who started from the bushes with loaded guns and, if he had not been protected by Corsican guides, would have certainly blown out his brains.” (*ICF* 149). In contrast, Boswell relishes his experience: “My journey over the mountains was very entertaining. I passed some immense ridges and vast woods. I was in great health and spirits, and fully able to enter into the ideas of the brave, rude men whom I found in all quarters” (*ICF* 160). Here, Boswell presents himself as exceeding the surgeon’s mate in both bravery and cosmopolitan curiosity. Instead of fearing for his life among the “barbarians,” he aims to sympathetically “enter into the[ir] ideas.”

Boswell specifically comes to emulate the soldierly leader of the Corsicans, General Pascal Paoli. Boswell gives a detailed physical description of Paoli as “tall, strong, and well made; of a fair complexion, a sensible, free, and open countenance, and a manly and noble carriage” (*ICF* 162). The term “manly,” which we have already seen recurring throughout Boswell’s writing, is used here in tandem with “noble” to conclude the description of Paoli as both physically imposing (tall, strong, and well-made) and sympathetic (sensible, free, and open). Additionally, in his self-presentation, Paoli is careful to position himself as both a national leader and a diplomat. Boswell writes that Paoli “used to wear the common Corsican habit, but on the arrival of the French he thought a little external elegance might be of some use to make the government appear in a more respectable light” (*ICF* 162).

Boswell uses the word “restraint” to describe his demeanor upon meeting Paoli’s inner circle. Specifically, he writes, “I felt myself under restraint in such a circle of heroes” (*ICF* 163). As we have seen, “restraint” (or “retenu”) is a state of being Boswell alternately aims for and eschews in his uneven quest to be “manly” and cast off his “gross libertinism.” In this case, “restraint” takes on connotations of shyness or hesitancy as Boswell self-consciously compares himself to the “heroes” surrounding Paoli. Eventually, however, he becomes more comfortable in Paoli’s exalted circle. When the group “retired to another room to drink coffee,” he writes, “[m]y timidity wore off. I no longer anxiously thought of myself; my whole attention was employed in listening to the illustrious commander of a nation” (*ICF* 163). In a sense, the unease Boswell felt at Lady Northumberland’s ball, of being on the thin line between favorite and anonymous among an elite throng (like “an officer in a great army”), transforms into the comforting feeling of being in the proximity of, and having an audience with, a flesh-and-blood General.

In Corsica, Boswell’s status as the leader’s “favorite” takes on a new cast, as he is believed to occupy an official diplomatic position. He reports, “[p]articular marks of attention were shown me as a subject of Great Britain, the report of which went over to Italy and confirmed the conjectures that I was really an envoy” (*ICF* 164). This circumstance materially benefits Boswell: “In the morning,” he writes, “I had my chocolate served up upon a silver salver adorned with the arms of Corsica. I dined and supped constantly with the General. I was visited by all the nobility, and whenever I chose to make a little tour I was attended by a party of guards.” Temporarily assuming a stance of modesty, Boswell continues, “I begged of the General not to treat me with so much ceremony, but he insisted upon it” (*ICF* 164). Boswell even gets to imagine being

in the position of Paoli himself: “One day when I rode out, I was mounted on Paoli’s own horse with rich furniture of crimson and velvet, with broad gold lace, and had my guards marching along with me. I allowed myself to indulge a momentary pride in this parade. I was curious to experience what could really be the pleasure of state and distinction with which mankind are so strangely intoxicated” (*ICF* 164). This episode recalls Boswell’s reaction to Frederick’s Prussian military parade as well as his own intoxicating feeling of pleasure and power while ambling by Parliament after a night in London with Louisa. In each instance, Boswell inserts himself imaginatively into a visual field that, as Purdy explains, is meant to convey an aura of disciplined manliness while engaging the viewer’s aesthetic pleasure. Boswell positions himself as both observer and participant in these scenarios, stage managing his self-made role in international diplomacy as a liaison between the brave Corsican general and the British political establishment and thereby fashioning himself as a manly and visually-engaging advocate for liberty.

On his return trip through the Continent, Boswell began to send “reports” presenting himself as a diplomatic figure in Corsica to the editor of the *London Chronicle*, who obliged in printing them. The following appeared on 9 January 1766:

You have been amused with reports of Britain’s sending an embassy to the island of Corsica . . . I can, however, inform you for certain that a British subject has actually been there. About the middle of October Mr. Boswell, a Scots gentleman upon his travels over Europe, sailed from the port of Leghorn for the island of Corsica, with a very ample and particular passport . . . He found Signor di Paoli in one of the provinces on the other side of the great range of mountains which divides the island. He, no doubt, presented to that chief very sufficient recommendations, for he was received by him with every mark of distinction, was lodged in a palace of the noble family of Colonna, and whenever he chose to make a little tour, was attended by a detachment of guards . . . Mr. Boswell gave it out at Leghorn that he went to Corsica merely for curiosity, but the politicians of

Italy think they can see more important reasons for his visiting that island.<sup>269</sup>

Boswell's "reporting" underscores the theatrical nature of his diplomatic endeavor.

Even amidst the splendor of Paoli's court, however, Boswell, recalling Smith's interest in Stoicism, also remains intrigued by the "brave" and "rude" Corsicans who are *led* by Paoli. In one conversation with the general, Boswell records, "I asked him how . . . he could bear to be confined to an island yet in a rude and uncivilized state . . . He replied in one line of Virgil: 'Vincent amor patriae laudumque immensa cupido'" ["The love of country will prevail, and the overwhelming desire for praise"] (*ICF* 165).<sup>270</sup> Back in Britain, Boswell finds a passage in Dr. Gregory's *Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with Those of the Animal World* "which," he finds, "may well be applied to the Corsicans." He quotes from Gregory: "'There is a certain period in the progress of society in which mankind appears to the greatest advantage. In this period, they have the bodily powers and all the animal functions remaining in full vigour. They are bold, active, steady, ardent in the love of liberty and their native country. Their manners are simple, their social affections warm, and though they are greatly influenced by the ties of blood, yet they are generous and hospitable to strangers'" (*ICF* 171).

Just as Smith had analyzed Native American cultures largely through their perceived attitudes to war and militarism, Boswell pays particular attention to military masculinity when describing the brave Stoicism of Corsican culture. In the conversation described above, Boswell recalls Paoli saying that "[t]he French objected to him that the Corsican nation had no regular troops. 'We would not have them,' said Paoli. 'We

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<sup>269</sup> Qtd. in Brady and Pottle, eds. *Boswell on the Grand Tour Italy, Corsica, and France*, Appendix D (323).

<sup>270</sup> *Italy, Corsica, France* 165n (quote is from the Aeneid vi. 823

should then have the bravery of this and the other regiment. At present every single man is as a regiment himself. Should the Corsicans be formed into regular troops, we should lose that personal bravery which has produced such actions among us as in another country would have rendered famous even a marshal” (*ICF* 164). To further illustrate the point that militarism pervades Corsican society, Boswell describes being entertained one night by four “guards of the magistracy” performing a Corsican dance. As Boswell describes it, the dance “was truly savage. They thumped with their heels, sprung upon their toes, brandished their arms, wheeled and leaped with the most violent gesticulations. It gave me the idea of an admirable war dance” (*ICF* 191).

Boswell implicitly compares his own interest in such masculine spectacles to the disdain of a “young French marquis, very rich and very vain,” who “came over to Corsica” around the same time. The marquis “had a sovereign contempt for the barbarous inhabitants, and strutted about with prodigious airs of consequence. The Corsicans beheld him with a smile of ridicule and said, ‘Let him alone, he is young’” (*ICF* 174). Boswell writes to Temple in 1767, “You are tempted to join Rousseau in preferring the savage state. I am so too at times. When jaded with business or when tormented with the passions of civilized life, I could fly to the woods; nay, I could be the whitstone on the face of a mountain, were it possible for me to be conscious of it and to brave the elements by glorious insensibility. But these are the sallies of desperation. Philosophy teacheth us to be moderate, to be patient, to expect a gradual progress of refinement and felicity” (*In Search of a Wife* 22). In a conversation Boswell records between himself and Monsieur Deleyre, a friend of Rousseau, he recalls, “I disputed against Rousseau’s notion that the savage life is the least unhappy, for the savages have none of the elegant pleasures of

polished society to counterbalance their pains, and the quantity of enjoyment in an Indian tribe is hardly worth existing for” (*ICF* 111-112). And yet later in the same entry he laments, “My sensibility is so delicate that I must fairly own it to be weak and unmanly. It prevents me from having a decent and even conduct in the course of ordinary human life” – let alone, one might add, on the field of battle. With optimism tempered by caution, Boswell concludes with a reference to his former teacher and fellow theorist and observer of manly character: “I would hope to be more firm as I grow older, though the ingenious Mr. Adam Smith is at the age of forty as tender as ever” (*ICF* 112).

We can now return to the scene that opened this chapter – Boswell’s participation in David Garrick’s 1769 Stratford Jubilee – and view it more fully in the context of Boswell’s ongoing use of military and ambassadorial costume and personae to convey manly restraint while still indulging in a pleasing theatricality that puts him at the center of a public visual field. At the Jubilee’s masquerade, Boswell stands in his uniform-costume, an emblem of soldierly masculinity, at the center of the crowd’s gaze, and he writes to Margaret to express how much this pleases him: “I have that kind of weakness that, when I looked at myself last night in my Corsican dress, I could not help thinking your opinion of yourself might be still more raised: ‘She has secured the constant affection and admiration of so fine a fellow’” (*In Search of a Wife* 278). Though he uses the term “weakness,” which we have seen Boswell equate with both “effeminacy” and with his own overly imaginative, vain, or superstitious tendencies, he reflects philosophically to Margaret, “Do you know, I cannot think there is any harm in such a kind of weakness or vanity, when a man is sensible of it and it has no great effect upon

him. It enlivens me and increases my good humour” (In *Search of a Wife* 278). Here Boswell views himself to some extent in the mode of Smith’s “impartial spectator,” judging objectively but sympathetically his joy at being a “favorite” at the masquerade.

Boswell’s account of his proximity to Garrick at the Jubilee further underscores the way his self-appointed ambassadorship gratifies Boswell’s courtier-like desire to be seen as an associate of those in power (no matter the scale or scope of that power within a larger political context). Boswell writes that he received a brief private audience with Garrick in the midst of the Jubilee: “At last Mr. Garrick observed me,” he recalls. “We first made an attitude to each other and then cordially shook hands. I gave him a line I had written to him to let him know I was incognito, as I wished to appear in the Corsican dress for the first time they should know me” (In *Search of a Wife* 280). Here Boswell establishes his proximity to Garrick, above the assembled “they” who have yet to be let in on the secret of Boswell’s true identity. According to his account, “[m]any of those who had stared, seeing that I was intimate with the steward of the Jubilee, came up to him and asked who I was. He answered, ‘A clergyman in disguise’” (In *Search of a Wife* 280). Garrick thus confirms the privileged nature of the relationship by keeping the shared secret. In sum, Boswell concludes that “My Corsican dress attracted everybody,” steward and spectator alike: “I was as much a favourite as I could desire” (In *Search of a Wife* 283).<sup>271</sup>

Finally, the masquerade in general and the Corsican soldier-ambassador costume in particular give Boswell another chance to channel his libertine propensities into what

<sup>271</sup> Pottle notes that in his account of the scene printed in *The London Magazine*, Boswell wrote, “The novelty of the Corsican dress, its becoming appearance, and the character of that brave nation concurred to distinguish the armed Corsican chief” (In *Search of a Wife* 283n).

he sees as a productive campaign for Corsican liberty. Even before the Jubilee, Boswell had begun to channel familiar anxieties about women and sex through his Corsican-soldier persona. Earlier in the group of writings collected with the Jubilee episodes, Boswell had written to Temple that a certain woman he was conducting an affair with “is now mine, and were she to be unfaithful to me, she ought to be pierced with a Corsican poniard” (*In Search of a Wife* 24). Reflecting later on the same woman, he writes in his journal, “This evening I thought with astonishment, ‘Is it really true that a man of such variety of genius, who has seen so much, who is in constant friendship with General Paoli, is it possible that he was all last winter the slave of a woman without one elegant quality?’” (*In Search of a Wife* 44). By the time of the Jubilee, Boswell has committed to marriage with Margaret Montgomerie, yet he is so taken with one “Mrs. Sheldon, an Irish lady, wife of Captain Sheldon,” in attendance at the Jubilee, that he fears the temptation of cheating on Margaret. He writes, “I recollected my former inconstancy, my vicious profligacy, my feverish gallantry, and I was terrified that I might lose my divine passion for Margaret, in which case I am sure I would suffer more than she” (*In Search of a Wife* 282). But according to his account Boswell manages to introduce his Corsican character with dignity at the Jubilee ball. In his entry of 6 September 1769, “the night of the ball in mask, when I was to appear as a Corsican chief” (*In Search of a Wife* 282) Boswell writes that he dances a minuet with the “pretty Irish lady, who no longer disturbed [him]” while dressed “in complete armour” and then takes part in a country dance after “la[y]ing aside [his] arms” (*In Search of a Wife* 283).

Boswell’s ability to resist giving in to his sexual desires at the masquerade ball is a special victory, since as a cultural phenomenon the masquerade was marked by what

Terry Castle terms an “air of universal *libertinage*.”<sup>272</sup> Castle writes, “if only for a shimmering, liquid moment - the time perhaps of its own duration – the ‘Midnight Masquerade’ produced a compelling, often exquisite image of human freedom.”<sup>273</sup> Moralists and religious authorities saw this freedom as dangerous, of course; they believed the popularity of masquerades “indicated the degree to which national taste had succumbed to perverse foreign fashion, and signaled an imminent giving over of the population – male and female – to ‘Luxury and Prophaneness.’”<sup>274</sup> The bishop of London himself “spoke of the power of the amusement to enfeeble ‘true Englishmen’ by encouraging them in ‘Licentiousness and Effeminacy.’”<sup>275</sup>

At the Jubilee ball, however, Boswell crafts a mission for himself in which he can turn the *libertinage* and the threatened effeminacy of the masquerade to his own “manly” advantage. First, he eschews one of the traditional masquerade costumes that would have allowed him to blend into the crowd; one historian of the Jubilee writes that “[a]mid the familiar crowd of Dutchmen, Chinese Mandarins, Pierrots, Foxhunters, Highlanders, Sailors, and other unoriginal costumes, the armed Corsican chief stood out as a striking exception.”<sup>276</sup> Second, he doesn’t wear the traditional mask, leaving no secret of his identity for those who recognize his face. Boswell’s explanation for this decision was “that the enemies to tyranny and oppression should wear no disguise, and need not be ashamed to show their faces.”<sup>277</sup> Of course, Boswell *is* technically in disguise; he is not actually a Corsican soldier or an official diplomatic liaison between Britain and Corsica.

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<sup>272</sup> Terry Castle, “Eros and Liberty at the English Masquerade, 1710-1790.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17.2 (Winter, 1983-1984) 156-176), 156.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>274</sup> Castle, 158.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>276</sup> Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee* (London: M. Joseph, 1964), 247.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 248

The statement, though, is a powerful expression of Boswell's claim to have traded the personal shame of libertinism for a pride in advocating for *political* freedom for the Corsicans as a people. It is the closest Boswell comes to fully embodying the brave yet sympathetic soldierly masculinity that he and Adam Smith valued as an ideal middle ground between savage stoicism and civilized, effeminized refinement.

In his journals of the 1760s and 70s, then, Boswell never wholly abandons or overcomes the more aggressive and competitive aspects of libertinism. His attentions to the "pleasures of sentiment" (*LJ* 139) are always intermingled with what Thomas King refers to as a courtly "masquerade of superiority,"<sup>278</sup> a need to perform for and to be seen as an associate of powerful~~important~~ people. From London to the continent to Corsica and back to England for the Jubilee, Boswell continually invents and reinvents an elite masculinity based variously on the man of sentiment, the libertine, the courtly favorite, the ambassador, and the soldier.

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<sup>278</sup> King, *Gendering of Men*, 117.

**Chapter Four**  
**A “Strong Transition of Place”: Cultural Encounter and the Reform Plot**  
**in Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl***

*The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) by Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, is one of the founding texts in the genre known as the Irish “national tale” that flourished following the dissolution of the Irish Parliament and the subsequent political Union of Ireland with Great Britain in 1801. Owenson inaugurated tropes that would come to characterize the national tale as a discrete genre. These include a metropolitan visitor (the rake-hero in the case of *The Wild Irish Girl*) who seeks to discover “the real Ireland” (a quest that allows for digressions into history, ethnography, musicology, and other antiquarian pursuits) and a native heroine who embodies national characteristics, complicates stereotypes of Irish “barbarity,” and enters into a romance with the metropolitan hero.<sup>279</sup> In its broad outlines, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) also follows the reform-of-the-rake narrative employed in Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* and countless other eighteenth-century tales. The novel thus draws simultaneously on a familiar narrative of reformation and a burgeoning new interest in antiquarianism, as it responds to the social, political and economic changes marked by the new composition of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.<sup>280</sup> Owenson herself was the product of a series of Anglo-Irish unions

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<sup>279</sup> Francesca Lacaita defines the national tale as the genre “which came into being in the peripheries of the United Kingdom in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, and out of which the Scottish historical novel would emerge and develop.” Lacaita, “The Journey of the Encounter: The Politics of the National Tale in Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* and Maria Edgeworth’s *Ennui*” in *Critical Ireland* ed. Allan A. Gillis and Aaron Kelly (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 148.

<sup>280</sup> Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale* ed. Kathryn Kirkpatrick (Oxford UP, 1999). In order to contextualize *The Wild Irish Girl* within the political economy of early-nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland, it is important to acknowledge the uniquely liminal position of Ireland, and Irish letters, in the British imperial world. There is a great deal of debate whether to classify Ireland as a colony, as the western neighborhood of the imperial metropole, or something in between or altogether

(her mother was English and her father was the son of an Irish farmer who eloped with the daughter of a family of landed Protestants<sup>281</sup>), and she expressed her support for Ireland not only in her writings but also by embodying, through dress and performance at social gatherings, the kind of Irish heroine her most famous novel created.<sup>282</sup> My reading of *The Wild Irish Girl*, then, examines the effect of Owenson's interest in Irish culture on the way she reworks the generic contours of the reform-of-the-rake narrative into a narrative of the libertine hero's moral and cultural "awakening."

Horatio M--, the novel's hero, is an English libertine commanded by his father, the Earl of M--, to leave London, abjure its temptations, and journey to the family estate in the west of Ireland to reflect on his misdeeds and prepare for his future. When Horatio reaches his destination in Connaught, he begins to shed his metropolitan skepticism as he becomes enchanted with the Irish countryside and with two remaining members of the family of Inismore - Irish chieftains his own ancestors had dispossessed during Cromwell's reign. The plot turns to romantic intrigue as Horatio falls in love with Glorvina, the dispossessed Irish princess and titular wild Irish girl. Horatio's father, the English earl, blesses their eventual marriage by stating, "In this the dearest, most sacred,

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different. W.J. McCormack, in a study of Anglo-Irish literary history argues that "In relation to the Empire overseas – the army in India is an instance in point – Ireland was part of the metropolitan 'home country;' in relation to that home *economy* it was in significant ways itself colonial." See McCormack, *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History from 1789-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 7. Ina Ferris writes that "the very name" of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland "adumbrates a dilemma: Ireland is at once part of the kingdom (a political subject) but not a part of Great Britain (not a national subject) . . . Ireland stands within the union but outside the unity, ambiguously attached through vague coordination." Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (Cambridge UP, 2002), 1. And Julia Wright notes that "Irish writers could . . . participate in the print culture of the metropole . . . on terms that often vex any simple division between colonizer and colonized" (2), with the result that "[t]he irreducibility of Ireland to a binary model of imperial domination is a recurring concern in Irish studies today." See Wright, *Ireland, India and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge UP, 2007), 3.

<sup>281</sup> See James Newcomer, *Lady Morgan the Novelist* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1990), 16.

<sup>282</sup> See Julie Donovan, *Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan and the Poetics of Style* (Dublin: Maunsel & Company, 2009), 2-3.

and most lasting of all human ties, let the names of Inismore and M----- be inseparably blended, and the distinctions of English and Irish, or protestant and catholic, forever buried” (250). By the time the marriage takes place, Horatio has acquired a deep admiration for Glorvina’s Irish culture, allowing for an optimistic reading of the marriage plot as an allegory pointing to a new direction in English-Irish relations, albeit one in which the basic structure of power between English landowner and Irish dependent is largely unaltered.

Thus far, the bulk of criticism on *The Wild Irish Girl* has centered on the resonant symbolism of Horatio and Glorvina’s marriage.<sup>283</sup> Robert Tracy, in a foundational study of Irish literature as a colonial literature, argues that the marriage concluding *The Wild Irish Girl* narratively resolves longstanding political tension by intertwining “legality” – Horatio’s property rights - and “legitimacy”- the Inismores’ original, usurped position as rightful rulers. In Tracy’s words, Glorvina and Horatio “will rule . . . together with a double right: to his legal right she adds her own traditional right, and from her he will learn respect for Irish history, Irish ways, and Irish tradition.”<sup>284</sup> Subsequent critics, such as Lisa Moore, have similarly read the novel’s conclusion as an optimistic allegorical unification of English and Irish interests. Moore even conflates the fictional Earl’s pronouncement with Owenson’s authorial voice, claiming that “[f]or Owenson,” marital

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<sup>283</sup> See Mary Jean Corbett, *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790-1870* (Cambridge UP, 2000), 52-54.; Julia Anne Miller, “Acts of Union: Family Violence and National Courtship in Maria Edgeworth’s *The Absentee* and Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* in Kathryn Kirkpatrick, ed. *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities* (University of Alabama Press, 2000), 13-37; Ferris; 48. Corbett writes that “[t]hroughout post-Union fiction, the marriage plot operates as a rhetorical instrument for promoting colonial hegemony in making the private relations of romance and reproduction central to the public and imperial good” (53).

<sup>284</sup> Robert Tracy, *The Unappeasable Host Studies in Irish Identities* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1998), 30.

and political union “is the aim of ‘every liberal mind, every benevolent heart.’”<sup>285</sup> In Julia Wright’s analysis in *Ireland, India and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Owenson draws on literary conventions in order to sanitize the darker aspects of Irish political history. Wright argues that “[t]he marriage metaphor . . . appropriates the personification of Ireland [in the figure of the wild Irish girl] . . . as well as the conventional feminization of the colonized to develop a reassuring trope in which the ‘feminine’ colonized is united by love, rather than force, with the ‘masculine’ colonizer, erasing the violence of colonization but not, given patriarchal mores, the ascendancy of the colonizer over the colonized.”<sup>286</sup> In other words, Wright argues that Owenson employs a feminized-native trope that she and her contemporaries applied to India, Ireland, and other realms brought into the British imperial sphere, in order to romanticize the union of England and Ireland and relegate historical violence to the footnoted prehistory of Horatio and Glorvina’s conjugal alliance.<sup>287</sup>

While the relationships among the novel’s primary *male* characters have largely been marginalized by this focus on the Glorvina-Horatio romance plot, they have not been entirely ignored. Mary Jean Corbett, in her work *Allegories of Union*, has noted that “the work of union that *The Wild Irish Girl* seeks narratively to accomplish is more

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<sup>285</sup> Lisa Moore, “Acts of Union: Sexuality and Nationalism, Romance and Realism in the Irish National Tale,” *Cultural Critique* 44 (Winter 2000:113-144), 115.

<sup>286</sup> Wright, 64.

<sup>287</sup> In an interesting recent analysis that diverges from these conclusion-as-conciliation readings, Bridget Matthews-Kane, looking at the text through its Gothic rather than its realist or domestic literary influences, argues that “the Gothic components [ruined castles, ghostly legends, veiled figures, mysterious music] framing the sentimental and traditional marriage plot allow Owenson to articulate the troubled colonial status of Ireland in a style that masks the subversive nature of speaking . . . political truths.”<sup>287</sup> Gothic genre motifs, in other words, signal the darker aspects of Anglo-Irish history, encompassing murder, usurpation, and dispossession, without calling attention to themselves as anything other than literary convention. “Gothic Excess and Political Anxiety: Lady Morgan’s *The Wild Irish Girl*,” *Gothic Studies* 5.2 (November 2003), 8.

complexly gendered than [previous] critics of the novel have perceived.”<sup>288</sup> “To some extent,” she argues, “Horatio repudiates his lineage...in favor of attaching himself to and identifying himself with the prince, ‘the adored chieftain’ whose very name commands respect and affection from his people.”<sup>289</sup> Corbett makes an important point here: Horatio’s eventual attachment to Ireland is not only the product of his falling in love with Glorvina but also the result of his affinity for the ceremony and power, albeit sentimental and affective rather than legal, surrounding the prince.

Corbett still, however, characterizes the primary mechanics of the plot as “resolution” and “reformation.” As she puts it, “the heterosexual relations of the marriage plot are primarily mobilized to resolve homosocial relations of property and power between men, in keeping with the dictates of the imperial family romance.”<sup>290</sup> Continuing this line of reasoning, Corbett notes that both *The Wild Irish Girl* and Maria Edgeworth’s 1812 *The Absentee*, which contains a similar Anglo-Irish romance plot, “emphasize effecting change and reformation within the male partners to union as a prerequisite to its achievement.”<sup>291</sup> In the reading that follows, I expand on Corbett’s argument that homosocial relations are of great, and often overlooked, significance, in *The Wild Irish Girl’s* exploration of English-Irish connections, but I reframe the topic by questioning the extent to which “reformation” is the right term to employ in characterizing the hero’s transformation.

In sum, this chapter expands the critical lens outward from the romance plot to encompass the broader cultural and political dynamics of power not only between

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<sup>288</sup> Corbett, *Allegories of Union*, 66.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.* Corbett argues that in *The Wild Irish Girl*, Horatio must be “[c]onfronted with his family’s bloody legacy” (59) thus “recognizing the fact of conquest” from a “new perspective” (59).

Horatio and Glorvina but also between Horatio, the young English traveler; his father, the English earl; and Glorvina's father, the dispossessed Irish prince of Inismore. I examine how a plot of intersecting and competing masculinities -- English, Irish, libertine, patriarchal, sentimental -- parallels the romance plot, offering a second framework through which to read Owenson's elaborate narrative of cultural encounter. Through this reading I contest Lisa Moore's characterization of *The Wild Irish Girl* as a work "organized by the single-action courtship plot typical of nineteenth-century realism."<sup>292</sup> I argue that Owenson reworks the rake's courtship-and-reform plot from a reform-of-manners narrative to a narrative tracing an awakening of sensibility inspired not by the kind of English, Protestant virtue embodied by the domestic heroine but by its perceived opposite -- Irish "wildness" -- as embodied by the Irish prince as well as the wild Irish girl. I contend that defining the narrative primarily in terms of the reconciliation brought about through the marriage plot has led critics to overlook the recurring language of "awakening" and "regeneration" that Owenson uses to mark Horatio's transformation and to bring together not just a romantic union between English heir and Irish heiress but also a concordance between elite English and Irish models of masculinity.

### **Transforming the Libertine Plot**

The reformation-of-the-rake narrative, in which a dissolute young man renounces his life of indulgence and excess and accepts the importance of religion, domestic felicity, and/or a productive career, is a familiar one in the literature of the long eighteenth century. Moralistic readers of the later Restoration period embraced narratives like Gilbert Burnet's *Life of Rochester* (1680; discussed in the introduction) as counter-

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<sup>292</sup> Moore, "Acts of Union," 128.

weights to the perceived excesses of the Stuart court. A half century later, the 1740s witnessed the extraordinary popularity of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), which tells the story of a fictional libertine, Mr. B, who is reformed by a bewitchingly beautiful but demonstrably pious servant who refuses to become his mistress but eventually agrees to become his wife. As I have discussed previously, Nancy Armstrong influentially argued in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* that Pamela's triumph signaled the ascendancy of a middle-class system of value emphasizing individual virtue over an antiquated aristocratic system of value emphasizing membership in exclusive social and political circles predicated not on merit but on birth.

*The Wild Irish Girl's* Horatio shares some of Mr. B.'s characteristics and plot functions. For example, through his epistolary correspondence we witness Horatio undergo a transformation from dissipated libertine to devoted betrothed. Like Mr. B., he is transformed in part through the influence of a virtuous woman. Yet Horatio's journey takes him outside of England, on a geographical as well as emotional journey. From the novel's earliest pages, Horatio's journey is presented less as a before-and-after narrative of reformation and more as a tale of "awakening" (a term used many times in the novel) that rouses not only Horatio's "sense" of virtue but also rouses the very physical senses that had been palliated by his life as a London libertine, in which he was constantly consuming and spending his way into a state of financial debt and spiritual depletion. Rather than adapt to English conceptions of virtue or politeness, Horatio awakens to the reinvigoration effected by a romanticized Ireland.

Owenson establishes the facts of Horatio's libertine life through an epistle from his father, the Earl of M---. In the first of the novel's introductory letters, the earl reveals

that Horatio's dissipation and resulting indebtedness has created a deep rift between father and son. He writes, "If there are certain circumstances under which a fond father can address an imprisoned son, without suffering the bitterest heartrendings of paternal agony, such are not those under which I now address you" (3). The father claims that his son possesses an inner virtue which defines his true character, but that this virtue has been corrupted. He recalls Horatio at an earlier period, with a "character indeed tintured with the bright colouring of romantic eccentricity, but marked by the indelible traces of innate rectitude, and ennobled by the purest principles of native generosity, the proudest sense of inviolable honour" (3). The earl thus makes a distinction between "tincture" of character - in this case, bright, romantic, eccentric, terms that describe Horatio's zest for aesthetic pleasures and taste for the unusual - and that which "marks" character at a deeper, "innate" and "inviolable" level.

It follows logically from this conception of character, then, that the earl describes Horatio's current vices as "exotic" to his true nature. He writes that Horatio "fell an early victim to the successful lures" of vice, recalling that "[t]he growing influence of his passions kept pace with the expansion of his mind, and the moral powers of the *man of genius*, gave way to the overwhelming propensities of the *man of pleasure*" (3). "Yet," he continues, "in the midst of these exotic vices (for as such even yet I would consider them), he continued at once the object of my parental partiality and anxious solicitude" (3). The earl thus reiterates that "even yet"- despite the empirical evidence of mounting debts and the emotional exhaustion of continuous debauchery- vice is "exotic" for Horatio. It "tint[s]" his character but does not permanently "mark" it.

The earl's description of Horatio's "inviolable honour" is reminiscent of what Michael McKeon has called the "aristocratic ideology," in which inner virtue corresponds to outward rank.<sup>293</sup> Indeed in the same letter, the earl's words uncover the foundation of elite power and privilege that underpins both Horatio's libertinism *and* the more productive path he is expected to take. The earl reminds Horatio,

You may recollect that during your first college vacation, we conversed on the subject of that liberal profession I had chosen for you, and you agreed with me, that it was congenial to your powers, and not inimical to your taste; while the part I was anxious you should take in the legislation of your country, seemed at once to rouse and gratify your ambition; but the pure flame of laudable emulation was soon extinguished in the destructive atmosphere of pleasure, and while *I* beheld you . . . invested with the crimson robe of legal dignity . . . *you* were idly presiding as the high priest of libertinism at the nocturnal orgies of vitiated dissipation, or indolently lingering out your life in elegant but unprofitable pursuits. (4)

There is a parallelism at work in this passage that uses similar language to describe the "powers," "tastes," and ritual trappings of the irresponsible libertine and the responsible legislator. The ceremonial trappings of the court, "the crimson robes of legal dignity," mirror the depiction of Horatio ritualistically "presiding as the high priest of libertinism," and according to the earl's reasoning, both the life of political power and the life of pleasure have the potential to "rouse and gratify" Horatio. There is no solid boundary separating the libertine's life from that of the aristocratic barrister; rather there are variously respectable and legitimate, or dissipated and incriminating, outlets for such propensities as ritual, theatricality, and passionate study. Both could be considered "elegant" but only one path earns the distinction of being "profitable."

Thus, when the earl sends Horatio to Ireland in the hopes of his becoming a lawyer and perhaps a future landlord, he posits the move as a re-framing of pleasure in a

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<sup>293</sup> McKeon, 131.

new, more profitable and productive, context rather than as a wholesale reformation of character. He writes, “I expect your undivided attention will be given up to your professional studies; that you will for a short interval resign the fascinating pursuits of polite literature and belles lettres, from which even the syren spell of pleasure could not tear you” (6). He acknowledges how difficult it may be “to exchange your duodecimo editions of the amatory poets for heavy tomes of cold legal disquisitions,” but argues that “happiness is to be purchased, and labour is the price” (6). Here, the earl reframes pleasure and leisure as byproducts of successful industry rather than as a means and ends in themselves, as they are in the libertine philosophy. While the libertine may view happiness, no matter how fleeting, as a sensual or aesthetic experience to be pursued for its own sake or to thumb his nose at the very institutions the earl seems to revere, the earl, adopting the language of commercial capitalism, turns happiness into a commodity “purchased” for a “price” and earned through labor.

In underscoring the point that happiness can be earned through labor, however, the earl inadvertently presents two conflicting geographical images that will come to characterize the divide between his conception of responsible productivity and Horatio’s inclination towards the wild and “exotic.” The earl declares, “it is to my estate in Ireland I *banish* you for the summer . . . I see no cause why *Coke upon Lyttleton* cannot be as well studied amidst the wild seclusion of Connaught scenery, and on the solitary shores of the ‘steep Atlantic,’ as in the busy bustling precincts of the Temple” (6). In the concluding paragraph of the letter, he reiterates the point by writing that “the elegant enjoyments of literary leisure are never so keenly relished as when tasted under the shade of that flourishing laurel which our own efforts have reared to mature perfection” (6). While

this admonition seems at first glance to echo the previous statement that one can effectively study one's legal books "amidst the wild seclusion of Connaught scenery, and on the solitary shores of the 'steep Atlantic,'" the substantive difference (seemingly unnoticed by the earl himself) between the image of a wild Irish landscape and the image of a cultivated laurel brings to mind Locke's distinction [discussed in chapter 2] between the careful cultivation of young gentlemen's minds under the watch of a tutor and the anarchic vice that marks the wildness of the public schoolboy. Despite the earl's optimism, Owenson seems to be reminding us that Horatio's prerogatives, affinities, and tastes as a young elite Englishman are likely to lead him down a more "wild," less virtuous path.

Horatio does, however, seem to have some desire to change, as evidenced in letters to his primary epistolary correspondent, a friend referred to throughout the novel as "J.D. Esq. M.P." Horatio explains that in his last days in London he had become "sick of pursuits I was too indolent to relinquish, and linked to vice, yet still enamoured of virtue" (8). This statement puts an interesting twist on the earl's characterization of Horatio as "marked" by an "innate rectitude" but tempted by "exotic" vices. Horatio here describes himself as being "enamoured of virtue" as if virtue were an object outside of himself, not, as the earl believes, his innate or defining characteristic.

Horatio uses the language of appetite and the senses as he continues to characterize the effects of his recent behavior and his pursuit of an increasingly elusive high: "my taste impoverished by a vicious indulgence, my sense palled by repletion, my heart chill and unawakened, every appetite depraved and pampered into satiety, I fled from myself, as the object of my own utter contempt and detestation, and found a

transient pleasurable inebriety in the well-practised blandishments of Lady C---“ (8). In his “unawakened” state Horatio feels estranged not only from the virtue of which he is enamored but also from his own self.

In his correspondent “J.D.’, Horatio has both a foil and a model for the kind of controlled pleasure-seeking advocated by his father and which Horatio himself seems to desire. He writes to J.D., “You who alone know me, who alone have *openly* condemned, and *secretly* esteemed me, you who have wisely culled the blossom of pleasure, while I have sucked its poison, know that I am rather a *mechant par air*, than from any irresistible propensity to indiscriminate libertinism” (9). While his friend’s title, “J.D. ESQ. M.P.,” denotes the trappings of formal education, a profession, and official Parliamentary power, Horatio signs his letters with the simple initials “H.M.,” which carry no official weight and underscore his unrooted state. In Ireland, Horatio even invents a new name out of those initials in order to pass as an itinerant artist and to disguise his identity as an absentee landlord’s son.

While he feels the stirrings of a desire to reform, in Ireland Horatio or “H.M.” will not gladly submit or resign himself to domestic cultivation in the manner of Mr. B and the laurel tree. Rather, amidst the “wilds of Connaught,” he will find kindred spirits in both his “wild” future wife and in her declining, dispossessed aristocratic father. The following section will contextualize Horatio’s journey within early modern and Enlightenment distinctions between cultivated civilization and wildness or barbarism as these distinctions pertain specifically to English conceptions (and misconceptions) of Ireland.

### The Discourse of Irish Barbarism

*The Wild Irish Girl*'s early epistolary exchanges make it clear that Horatio does not think Ireland will be a suitable place for a cosmopolitan "man of pleasure." In his first letter he explains, "I cannot recollect that in its fabulous or veracious history, Ireland was ever the mart of voluntary exile to the man of pleasure; so that when you and the rest of my precious associates miss the track of my footsteps in the oft-trod path of dissipation, you will never think of tracing its pressure to the wildest of the Irish shores" (7). Horatio is aware here that there may be a discrepancy between reality and legend when it comes to conceptions about Ireland, but he does not at this point discern any affinity he may have for Irish experience.

This idea of Ireland as a barbarous outpost has a long history in English writing. Sir Thomas Smith, a mid-sixteenth-century Cambridge humanist who attempted to start a settlement in Ireland, has been credited with attaching the term "colony" to Ireland, in the context of arguing that colonizing the country, in the sense of establishing plantations there, would lead to the cultivation of the people as well as the land. Smith assured prospective settlers that a "'common profite'" would arise in an Ireland where civility could be made to triumph over barbarism.<sup>294</sup> In *The Wild Irish Girl*, Horatio cites Fynes Moryson, a contemporary of Smith, in one of his early letters: "I remember when I was a boy, meeting somewhere with the quaintly written travels of *Moryson* through Ireland, and being particularly struck with the assertion, that so late as the days of Elizabeth, an Irish chieftain and his family were frequently seen seated round their domestic fire in a state of perfect nudity" (13). The hero's encounter with Ireland, then, is not an unmediated experience; his preconceptions include an image of the Irish chieftain and his

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<sup>294</sup> Armitage, 48-50.

circle, precursors to Inismore and Glorvina, as unclothed primitives. He continues, “This singular anecdote (so illustrative of the barbarity of the Irish at a period when civilization had made such strong progress even in its sister countries), fastened so strongly on my boyish imagination, that whenever the *Irish* were mentioned in my presence, an *Esquimaux* group circling round the fire which was to dress a dinner, or broil an enemy, was the image which presented itself to my mind” (13). He admits to holding “erroneous principles” about Ireland from these childhood prejudices, but, at least initially, Horatio still “feel[s] the strongest objection to becoming a resident in the remote part” of a country wracked by political discord, a country “formerly destitute of arts, letters, or civilization, and still but slowly submitting to their salutary and ennobling influence” (13). Even after he has come to love and appreciate Ireland, he reverts to the discourse of barbarism when he is upset at the thought of having to leave Glorvina. At one point the Inismore’s resident priest admonishes him, “When you talk of our *barbarity* . . . you do not speak as you *feel*, but as you *hear*”; to which Horatio notes, “I blushed at this mild reproof, and said, ‘what I *now* feel for this country, it would not be easy to express, but I have always been taught to look upon the *inferior* Irish as beings forming a humbler link than humanity in the chain of nature’” (176).

Horatio’s attitude to “semi-barbarous, semi-civilized” Ireland reflects the Enlightenment stadial theory that all societies progress through standard phases of development from primitivism to commercial civility, though at different times and at different paces. To Horatio’s mind, Ireland is stuck in a liminal position between definable phases of progress, which gives the country in its modern form a frustratingly

lackluster quality.<sup>295</sup> He opines that Ireland “has lost the strong and hardy features of savage life, without acquiring those graces which distinguish polite society” (10). As such, Horatio imagines that Ireland will neither cater to his metropolitan tastes nor remedy the overly satiated, depleted feeling he had described to J.D. in characterizing his urban libertinism. He writes at the outset of his journey,

Had [my father] banished me to the savage desolations of Siberia, my exile would have had some character; had he even transported me to a South-Sea Island, or thrown me into an Esquimaux hut, my new species of being would have been touched with some interest; for in fact, the present relaxed state of my intellectual system requires some strong transition of place, circumstance, and manners to wind it up to its native tone, to rouse it to energy, or awaken it to exertion. (10)

The language Horatio uses in this passage reveals his desire, not to be *reformed*, but to be *revived*. Horatio does not feel that he needs to relax at an Irish estate. He needs his senses to be re-awakened, and in this passage he suggests that Ireland, while not civilized enough to gratify his cosmopolitan tastes, is also not primitive or “savage” enough to shake him out of his cosmopolitan torpor.

The framework of the novel, however, allows the reader to foresee Ireland’s potential to awaken Horatio’s senses. The opening epigraph, from a 14<sup>th</sup>-century Italian traveler’s account of Ireland, reads: “This race of men, tho’ savage they may seem, / The country, too, with many a mountain rough, / Yet are they sweet to him who tries and tastes them.” This brief verse portrays geographic and cultural discovery as a sensual experience, figuring acculturation as a “tasting,” as it charts a foreign traveler’s initial impression of Ireland and the Irish from initial aversion to subsequent delight.

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<sup>295</sup> Thomas Tracy has argued that “Horatio and Glorvina’s union represents a moral and psychological breakthrough for each partner, particularly Horatio, whose development continues throughout the novel in historical time. Owenson implies that Ireland will enter a new developmental stage at the commencement of such a union.” “The Mild Irish Girl: Domesticating the National Tale” in *Éire-Ireland* 39.1-2 (Spring/Summer 2004: 81-109), 90.

Horatio's first encounter with this "savage race of men" engages his visual senses and moves him to recall lore about the physical prowess of the primitive "Irish giant."

Upon reaching Dublin Bay, he describes a set of robust Irish rowers who meet the boat he has travelled on from England:

As we had the mail on board, a boat was sent out to receive it, the oars of which were plied by six men, whose statures, limbs, and features, declared them the lingering progeny of the once formidable race of Irish giants. Bare-headed, they 'bided the pelting of the pitiless storm,' with no other barrier to its fury, than what tattered check trowsers, and shirts open at the neck, and tucked above the elbows afforded; and which, thus disposed, betrayed the sinewy contexture of forms, which might have individually afforded a model to sculpture, for the colossal statue of an Hercules, under all the different aspects of strength and exertion. (14)

In this passage, Horatio translates the elemental, bare physicality of the Irish men into the language of culture and aesthetics: the un-ornamented, "sinewy" bodies of the rowers and the "aspects of strength and exertion" they display call to Horatio's mind models for classical sculpture. Despite this process of familiarization, however, there remains an element of fundamental difference between writer and subject in the description. First, the passage romanticizes, almost eroticizes, the *working* body, whose "strength and exertion" mark its divergence from the aristocratic indolence described in Horatio's epistolary self-portrait. There is a tone of admiration in Horatio's poetic evocation of the rowers "'bid[ing] the pelting of the pitiless storm' with no other barrier to its fury" than their frayed clothes. Second, the daunting physical stature of the rowers marks them as "the lingering progeny" of a "race of Irish giants," making them sound almost distinct from the human race, and certainly, like the "Esquimaux" evoked earlier, distinct from the elite metropolitan English form of aristocratic masculinity symbolized by Horatio's debauched indolence.

In the shadow of the novel's epigraph, Horatio is still in an initial phase of viewing the Irishman as "rough," but there is admiration, not just condescension, in his description of them. In contrast, Horatio's fellow-travelers on the boat use the Enlightenment language of civility and savagery to describe the Irishmen, privileging the former and disparaging the latter. One passenger explains of the Irish, "you will find them on a further intercourse, civil even to *adulation*, as long as you treat them with apparent kindness, but an opposite conduct will prove their manner proportionably uncivilized" (15). The traveler thus paints the Irish as being only shallowly and conditionally civilized. Horatio, however, is especially keen to know the *uncivilized* side of the Irish. He does not wish to remain among an insular Anglo-Irish circle in the city. He writes, "It is not . . . in Dublin I shall expect to find the tone of national character and manner"; rather, he looks forward to travelling to "the north-west coast of Connaught" where he "shall have a fair opportunity of beholding the Irish character in all its *primeval* ferocity" (17, emphasis in the original). Unlike his fellow traveler, Horatio is seeking the kind of Irish difference he gets a glimpse of in the rowers, even if he must still use a metropolitan lexicon of aesthetics to articulate his observations. Horatio's desire to "behold the Irish character in all its primeval ferocity" seems out of line with his father's plan to effect Horatio's libertine-to-lawyer reformation. Horatio's path for *himself* is unclear, except for being guided by his awakening interest in "the Irish character."

Despite this guiding interest, however, Horatio quickly experiences a sense of displacement, dislocation, and even emasculation on Irish soil. At an early point in his journey toward Connaught, Horatio stumbles upon a "ruinous barn" occupied by a women's sewing circle. He writes that when the women noticed his presence, their work

stopped and “the girls looked down and tittered –and the old woman [at the center of the circle] addressed me *sans ceremonie*, and in a language I now heard for the first time” (21). This statement marks Horatio as occupying two worlds simultaneously: his casual use of French displays his cosmopolitanism, but he is also a stranger and an outsider unfamiliar with the local language and unrecognized for his elite social standing. The linguistic deficit and the lack of deference make Horatio decidedly uncomfortable. He writes, “[t]he old woman looked up in my face and shook her head; *I* thought contemptuously – while the young ones, stifling their smiles, exchanged looks of compassion, doubtlessly at my ignorance of their language” (21). In this moment, *Horatio* becomes the exotic, even comic, object of a gendered cultural encounter, looked down upon by the group of female laborers. Ina Ferris calls the women’s gaze here “emasculating”: “Having gone [into the barn] for a look, Horatio is now himself subjected to an emasculating look, suddenly made aware of the existence of another world in which his usual (English, masculine) identity no longer quite sustains itself.”<sup>296</sup> Indeed, Horatio directly ties the experience in the barn to his conception of his own masculinity when he recalls, “‘So many languages a man knows,’ said Charles V, ‘so many times is he a man,’ and its certain *I* never felt myself less invested with the dignity of one” (21). One of the ways Horatio defines masculinity, then, is as a measure of education, cosmopolitanism, and linguistic prowess, as well as the status that follows from these attainments and entitlements. This instance of unsettling cultural contact strips Horatio of such markers and thus dislocates his sense of himself as an elite Englishman.

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<sup>296</sup> Ferris, 53.

As his travels resume, Horatio's sense of dislocation and displacement begins to give way to more pleasant experiences of discovery that continue to expose his fascination with Irish customs and with Irish expressions of masculinity in particular. He is rescued from the barn scene by "a sturdy looking young fellow, with that boldness of figure and openness of countenance so peculiar to the young Irish peasants" (21-22). At the home of one of this new guide's fellow peasants, Horatio hears a plaintive Irish song that he discovers is "the lamentation of the poor Irish for the loss of their *glibbs*, or long tresses, of which they were deprived by the arbitrary will of Henry VIII" (28). The "glibbs" refer to the long locks of hair worn by the Irish in a manner that comes to symbolize their difference from and resistance to English colonization; Horatio learns the lore that "[w]hen the English had drawn a pale round their conquests in this country, such of the inhabitants as were compelled to drag on their existence beyond the barrier, could no longer afford to cover their heads with metal, and were necessitated to rely on the resistance of their matted locks. At length this necessity became 'the fashion of their choice'" (29). Horatio notes that "[t]he partiality of the ancient Irish to long hair is still to be traced in their descendants of both sexes" (29). His fascination with the *glibbs* recalls the London Mohocks' association with Native American "lovelocks," a style condemned by writers like William Prynne for their associations with foreignness and effeminacy [see ch.1]. Both instances reveal an affinity of elite Englishmen for customs that other English writers and travelers use to establish dividing lines between the civil and the uncivil, the English and the exotic, and (as in the case of lovelocks) the masculine and the feminine.

By the time he reaches M--- House, his family's estate in the west of Ireland, Horatio has developed a vocabulary with which to distinguish men according to origin, manner, physical stature, and class status. He is immediately disgusted at what he terms the "fawning civility" of his father's steward as compared with the "manly courteousness" of the Irishmen he has met along the way (31). He describes the petty vindictiveness of the steward by opining, "[i]t is certain, that the diminutive body of our worthy steward, is the abode of the transmigrated soul of some *West Indian* planter" (34). The "diminutive" steward at his destination represents a stark contrast to the rugged boatmen Horatio encounters in Dublin bay, to the "sturdy peasants" who guide him along, and to the historical Irishmen who defied English authority by wearing their glibbs. The epithet "transmigrated soul of some *West Indian* planter" argues for the transportability of a certain kind of masculinity, undesirable in Horatio's eyes, which is borne of occupying a middle station, emulating authority and grasping for a kind of wealth and power that is mostly out of reach for those not born to wealth or title.

There is a second model of masculinity at M---house, present in its absence when Horatio arrives, and that belongs to his father the Earl. Horatio believes his aristocratic father to be something of a libertine at heart, despite his morally-upright exterior. When Horatio finds out that his father has been using a lodge on the estate for some unknown purpose, for example, he surmises, "O! what arms of recrimination I should be furnished with against my rigidly moral father, should I discover this remote" location "to be the *harem* of some wild Irish *Sultana*" (34). When Horatio finds the lodge, he sees it is not a harem – it is an antiquarian's study, with much of its furnishings removed. Horatio, suddenly realizing that his developing fascination with Ireland is

shared by his father, writes, “you see, in fact, my father’s *Sultana* is no other than the *Irish Muse*; and never was son so tempted to become the rival of his father” (37).

This moment of discovery alters the terms of conflict between Horatio and his father. Whereas earlier there seemed to be a basic conflict of divergent sensibilities between the virtuous earl and the libertine son, there is now a more complicated, competitive convergence of interest. Horatio finds his senses and his interest piqued by the prospect of a cache of Irish curiosities, and he realizes that his father, because of this shared attraction to Irish culture, has anticipated this turn of events. He writes, “at a moment when my taste, like my senses, is flat and palled, nothing can operate so strongly as an incentive, as novelty. I strongly suspect that my father was aware of this, and that he had despoiled the temple, to prevent me becoming a worshipper at the same shrine” (37). This language of worshipping at a shrine of antiquities recalls the Earl’s lament at Horatio “idly presiding as” a “high priest of libertinism” in London (4). But now the Earl himself is painted with a similar brush as a fellow worshipper of the curious and the exotic.

In the wild western region of Ireland, then, Horatio continues to disdain his law books as he finds a new outlet for his quest after novelty, pleasure, and freedom. When his father writes to say that he must postpone his own journey to Ireland, Horatio is grateful for the continued freedom this affords him to explore the country on his own terms. He writes, “It is a weight off my shoulders; I would be savagely free” (35). With this declaration we come full circle back to the novel’s epigraph. While the foreign traveler may at first be put off by the seeming “savageness” of the Irish, this particular traveler now wishes to *become* “savagely free,” unrestrained by the rules and institutions

of the metropolis and freed from the expectation to develop and display politeness, professional respectability, and a creditable reputation.

After clearing this narrative space in which Horatio can continue his Irish odyssey and experience the feeling of being “savagely free,” Owenson continues to present him with novel and appealing models of Irish masculine identity. An old man on the Earl of M—’s Irish estate explains to Horatio that “a great Prince of Inismore, in the wars of Queen Elizabeth, here had a castle and a great tract of land on the *borders*, of which he was deprived, as the story runs, because he would neither cut his *glibbs*, shave his upper lip, nor shorten his shirt: and so he was driven with the rest of us beyond the *pale*” (38). The Irish Prince of this tale refuses to adopt an English style of self-presentation, choosing instead to keep his long hair and other visual markers of Irish masculine identity. Owenson underscores the historical significance of these sartorial choices in a footnote, remarking that “[f]rom the earliest settlement of the English in this country, an inquisitorial persecution had been carried on against the national costume. In the reign of Henry V, there was an act passed against even the English colonists wearing a whisker on the upper lip, like the Irish” (38). Here power is intertwined with a culturally-specific form of masculine presentation. In the context of English-Irish conflict, dress and grooming are not superficial vanities or mere antiquarian curiosities. They are markers meant to form a boundary between Englishmen and Irishmen.

The historical account of these Irishmen becomes personal for Horatio when he learns that among the “cold-hearted Presbyterians” who returned to battle the Irish under Cromwell was one of his direct ancestors, an English General who killed the ancestor of

the current, dispossessed Prince of Inismore (38). Horatio chronicles the way hearing this story from an Irish perspective stirred him:

It would be vain, it would be impossible, to describe the emotion which the simple tale of this old man awakened! The descendant of a murderer! . . . Why this, you will say, is the romance of a novel-read schoolboy. Are we not all, the little and the great, descended from assassins, was not the first born man a fratricide? . . . Yes, yes, 'tis all true; humanity acknowledges it and shudders. But still I wish *my* family had never possessed an acre of ground in this country, or possessed it on other terms. I always knew the estate fell into our family in the civil wars of Cromwell, and in the world's language, was the well-earned meed of my progenitors' valour; but I seemed to hear it now for the first time. (42)

In noting the indescribable emotion accompanying his newly “awakened” state, the first sentence of this passage distinguishes Horatio from his “cold-hearted” ancestors, even while the cold hard facts (“The descendant of a murderer!”) link them together as a matter of historical record. The passage goes on to distinguish “the world’s language,” by which Horatio seems to mean English or metropolitan language (since it implies the fairness or rightness of English possession of Irish lands) from the Irish narrative. He is literally hearing the Irish side of the story for the first time and thus “seemed” to hear the narrative as a whole “for the first time.” From the first Horatio has questioned what it means to “earn” something – his father had wanted him to learn how to “earn” happiness through labor rather than chase after it as a novelty. Now Horatio questions whether his family’s status and possessions in Ireland were in fact “well-earned.”

At this point Horatio’s desire to experience an unbridled sense of freedom, to be “savagely free,” is thwarted when he “awakens” to his inherent attachment to the historical reality of Anglo-Irish conflict. As Francesca Lacaita notes, “Horatio . . . is not allowed the escapist solution of ‘going native’, or just abandoning himself to the charms of Ireland and of the wild Irish girl, forgetting about the legacies of the past, his own

personal and historical identity.”<sup>297</sup> Horatio attempts to mitigate his newly-stirred feelings of guilt by reverting to the language of stadial theory and assuming that the living descendants of the dispossessed chiefs are of an inferior disposition. Again employing the term “awakening,” he writes, ‘I am glad, however, that this old Irish chieftain is such a ferocious savage; that one pity his fate awakens, is qualified by aversion for his implacable, irascible disposition’ (42-43). Here Horatio returns the word “savage” to its negative connotations, after he himself had written of wanting to be “savagely free.” And of the prince’s daughter, Horatio writes, “I am glad [she] is *red-headed*, a pedant, and a romp . . . that she avoids genteel society, where her ideal rank would procure her no respect, and her unpolished ignorance, by force of contrast, make her feel her real inferiority” (43). It is at this juncture - where Horatio is caught between wishing to abjure the violence of his lineage and drawing on its prestige to justify a sense of superiority towards the living Irish ancestors of the Inismores – that he encounters the Prince of Inismore and his daughter Glorvina in the flesh.

### **“Lord of these beautiful ruins”: Horatio and the Prince of Inismore**

Despite the ambivalence he occasionally expresses about Ireland during the course of his westward journey, Horatio’s physical senses, previously palled by his indolent metropolitan life, cannot help but become fully engaged when he encounters the decaying castle of the Inismores and the rugged surrounding landscape. As he describes it in his letter to J.D., “Towards the extreme western point of this peninsula, which was wildly romantic beyond all description, arose a vast and grotesque pile of rocks, which at once formed the site and fortifications of the noblest mass of ruins on which my eye ever

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<sup>297</sup> Lacaíta, 152.

rested. Grand even in desolation, and magnificent in decay – it was the Castle of Inismore” (44). Again (as with the “indescribable” emotion he felt at hearing the story of the Inismores), Horatio must attempt to articulate the indescribable – in this case, the towering presence of the decaying castle. The visual image is sublime; it escapes Horatio’s ability to describe it accurately even with his arsenal of superlatives (“extreme,” “wild,” “romantic,” “noble,” “vast,” “grotesque,” “magnificent”). It is clear that whatever transformation Horatio undergoes here will not be one entirely guided by abstract reason or principle. It will be a sensual experience.

After this initial encounter with the castle and the Irish landscape, Horatio surreptitiously catches his first glimpse of the Prince of Inismore, whose presence fascinates him. Physically, according to Horatio’s description, the Prince is both imposing and enervated. He is “almost gigantic in stature, yet gently thrown forward by evident infirmity; limbs of Herculean mould, and a countenance rather furrowed by the inroads of vehement passions, than the deep trace of years,” with “[e]yes still emanating the ferocity of an unsubdued spirit, yet tempered by a strong trait of benevolence” (47). This portrait draws on the lore of Irish prowess – “gigantic” and “Herculean” recall Horatio’s earlier description of the Irish rowers as being “descendants of a race of Irish giants.”

The Prince continues to wear the markers of a defiant Irish chieftain despite his weakened physical state and his impoverishment (he is “not worth one guinea” (38) and retains only a sliver of land derived from his family’s once-vast holdings). His mouth is “shaded by two large whiskers on the upper lip, which still preserved their ebon hue”; Owenson’s footnote explains that this indicates “the *prohibited* Irish mode” of male facial

hair alluded to earlier by the old man on the M--- estate. Furthermore, the “drapery which covered” his “striking figure” was “strictly conformable to the ancient costume of the Irish nobles” – specifically, “[a] triangular mantle of bright *scarlet* cloth, embroidered and fringed around the edges, fell from his shoulders to the ground, and was fastened at the breast with a large circular golden broach” (47-48). Finally, “round his neck hung a golden collar, which seemed to denote the wearer of some order of knighthood, probably hereditary in his family,” while “a dagger, called a *skeine* . . . was sheathed in his girdle, and was discerned by the sunbeam that played on its brilliant haft” (48). This self-presentation, including the prohibited facial hair, the long mantle, and the trappings of Irish nobility, indicates resistance to English decorum.

The Prince represents a masculinity that is both elite and distinctly Irish - thus Robert Tracy refers to the Prince’s “aristocratic but not English manners.”<sup>298</sup> Horatio writes that the Prince:

seems not so much to speak the English language, as literally to translate the Irish . . . there is indeed in the uncultivated mind of this man, much of the *vivida vis anima* of native genius . . . his memory is rich in oral tradition, and most happily faithful to the history and antiquities of his country, which, notwithstanding peevish complaints of its degeneracy, he still loves with idolatrous fondness. (63)

According to this passage, the Prince is literally in a constant state of mediation between two cultures and language systems, “translat[ing]” from one to the other in a way that betrays rather than elides their differences. The Prince, too, evinces traces of that “uncultivated” savage or “native” quality that Horatio had explicitly hoped to find in the west of Ireland. And the last part of this description – that the Prince “loves [his country] with idolatrous fondness” joins him in spirit if not in substance to Horatio, who, as we

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<sup>298</sup> Tracy, *Unappeasable Host* 33.

have already seen in the Earl's description of Horatio as a "high priest of libertinism" (4), was noted for his idolatrous devotion to pleasure.

It is after this description of the prince that Horatio describes Glorvina, the prince's daughter, who is supporting her infirm father: the prince "seemed to claim support from a form so almost impalpably delicate, that as it floated on the gaze, it seemed like the incarnation of some pure ethereal spirit, which a sigh too roughly breathed would dissolve into its kindred air" (48). This purely visual encounter with Glorvina is a pivotal moment for critics aiming to interpret the novel's cultural politics and poetics. Ina Ferris sees this scene "as an instance of what Certeau, in his account of the eroticism of ethnological encounter, calls 'ravishment,'" that is, "a moment of excess implicating the body and suspending (for the moment) linear and cognitive structures of temporality, language, and thought."<sup>299</sup> In other words, Horatio is so overcome simultaneously by the allure of Glorvina's beauty and the curiosity of her difference that his reason is put on hold.

As we have seen, however, Horatio's moment of "ravishment" and disorientation is brought on by the scene he witnesses at Inismore as a whole, including his awe at the castle and the prince, and not solely by physical attraction to Glorvina. I do not wish to diminish the significance of Horatio's attraction to Glorvina (she is, after all, the novel's eponymous heroine), but in order to understand fully the conflation of person and place embedded in the novel's title and epigraph, and thus to get at the full scope of Horatio's transformation, it is important to look at Horatio's encounter with wild Irish masculinity in the character of the prince as well as with wild Irish femininity in the character of Glorvina.

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<sup>299</sup> Ferris, 60.

M.A. Mossman, reading the scene of Horatio's encounter with the Inismores through the lens of disability studies, provides one of the rare critical interventions that focuses on the prince.<sup>300</sup> Mossman reads the physical description of the prince, together with the description of Glorvina supporting him, as a double analogy for Ireland or, as Mossman puts it, for "the novel's two versions of Ireland contrasted": "[p]erceived by Horatio initially from a distance, and as a stationary object,[the prince's] is a body with dignity and 'Herculean' greatness, a kind of super-body read by the Englishman as the embodiment of the historical grandeur of Ireland," while "Glorvina is the new, barely visible, deeply ethereal vision of the future Union, a vision that is the embodiment of hope, and that is at the start of the narrative delicate and fragile and has the substance of air, the tangibility of an idea."<sup>301</sup> So while Ferris, via Certeau, reads this moment as overwhelming, akin to an encounter with the sublime in being impossible to process fully, Mossman reads the scene as an historical panoply that can be objectively broken down into visions of the past and the future, even if that future can only be seen inchoately.

In Mossman's analysis, Horatio represents the "normalized English gaze" peering at this historical tableau.<sup>302</sup> Mossman writes, "[b]ecause Horatio is the possessor of the normal gaze, it is not surprising that throughout the text he is constantly categorizing Ireland, holding it in place, framing it as a static picture rather than a dynamic, fluid cultural process. In this way, even in the narrative's surface-level advocacy, even in Horatio's marriage with Glorvina, Ireland/the Prince is ultimately still made monstrous,

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<sup>300</sup> M.A. Mossman, "Disability, Ireland and *The Wild Irish Girl*," *European Romantic Review* 18.4 (October 2007): 541-550.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* 548.

an abnormal type and a disruptive agent” (548). While Mossman’s analysis focuses on the prince to a greater extent than do most critics, then, this analysis still argues for the *novel*’s marginalization of its main Irish male figure: “the Prince is, and always will be, the marginalized, abnormal body, the body that does not fit the standards of the state, the body that is designated as abnormal and needs to be ‘cured’” (547). In this analysis, Horatio symbolizes the Enlightenment urge to label and categorize as well as the colonial urge to subordinate and marginalize; in the figure of the prince, Mossman argues, these habits of mind collide as Horatio, possessor of the “normalized English gaze,” dissects the “monstrousness” of the prince.

Mossman’s analysis fails to take sufficient account of Horatio’s affinity for Ireland generally and his identification with and emulation of the Irish prince specifically. When he reaches the castle of Inismore, Horatio feel less alienated from himself than he had at the start of the novel, even as he recognizes himself as technically a cultural alien in Ireland. He writes, “suddenly withdrawn from the world’s busiest haunts, its hackneyed modes, its vicious pursuits, and unimportant avocations –dropt as it were amidst scenes of mysterious sublimity – alone – on the wildest shores of the greatest ocean of the universe . . . I felt like the being of some other sphere newly alighted on a distant orb . . . My soul, for the first time, had here held communion with herself” (51-52). It is clear that Horatio has achieved that “strong transition of place” he felt he needed in order to shake himself out of his torpor. It is also clear that this transition is not the kind originally envisioned by his father. Instead of embracing his English law books and “earning” a new sense of happiness, Horatio is “suddenly” transported to another life altogether, one that mysteriously makes him feel more “at home” with himself.

The final moment of the encounter scene firmly underscores the sense of affinity Horatio feels for the Prince, as Horatio admits to wishing himself in the Irish chieftain's place: "[s]lowly departing, I raised my eyes to the Castle of Inismore, and sighed, and almost wished I had been born the Lord of these beautiful ruins, the Prince of this isolated little territory, the adored Chieftain of these affectionate and natural people" (52). Here Horatio, rather than looking condescendingly on the Prince's infirmities and abnormalities, focuses his rapt attention on the Prince's position of ceremonial, if not legal, power, and on his romantic attachment to his native land.

Ironically, as he starts to feel this sense of being "in communion" with his soul and his surroundings, Horatio needs to disguise his identity in order to gain entry to the inner circle of the Inismores. "[A]fter the ideal assumption of a thousand fictitious characters," he writes, "I at last fixed on that of an itinerant artist, as consonant to my most cultivated talent, and to the testimony of those witnesses which I had fortunately brought with me, namely, my drawing book, pencils, etc., etc." (55). He uses his artistic talents to pose as one who relies on his work and his merits to survive, in contrast to the indolent heir he has been: "I briefly related my feigned story, and in a few minutes I was a young Englishman, by birth a gentleman, by inevitable misfortunes reduced to a dependence on my talents for a livelihood, and by profession an artist" (56). Horatio, under the guise of "Henry Mortimer" the itinerant artist (he retains his own initials to match the monogrammed linen he still carries) is hired by the prince to serve as a tutor for Glorvina. When Horatio finds that the prince wishes to find a means of compensating him, he is amused to think of himself as "a hireling tutor," writing, "Faith, to confess the truth, I know not whether to be pleased or angry with this wild romance: this too, in a

man whose whole life has been a laugh at romances of every description . . . What, if my father learns the extent of my folly, in the first era too of my probation!” (83)

Once he gains his foothold, Horatio quickly abandons the language of work, merit, and professionalism and in its place adopts the language of the courtier. We quickly see that he is undergoing not a polite reformation but an immersion in Irish court culture. While playing at being a “hireling,” Horatio, like Boswell in his quest to become a favorite of the Northumberlands, adopts the language of the court in describing his entrée into the Prince’s good graces. Describing his induction as a ‘royal’ tutor, he writes, “I was permitted to kiss his Highness’s hand, on my installment in my new and enviable office” (83), and goes on to explain that “[l]ike most other Princes, *mine* is governed by *favouritism*; and it is evident that I already rank high on the list of partiality” (87).

Horatio recognizes that this foray into the court of Inismore, and concomitant exploration of Irish history and customs, contradicts the intended purpose of his voyage to Ireland, which was to immerse himself in his English law books and develop a sense of polite, professional responsibility. Anticipating his confidant J.D.’s objections, Horatio writes, “‘while your days and nights are thus devoted to Milesian literature,’ you will say, ‘what becomes of Blackstone and Coke?’” (92) He responds to his own hypothetical question: “Coke is to me a dose of ipecacuhana; and my present studies, like those poignant incentives which stimulate the appetite without causing repletion” (92). Here again Horatio returns to the language of the senses, to their oversatiation in London and their stimulation in Ireland. While his libertine life in London left Horatio palled and depleted, his new experience in the west of Ireland awakens his appetite. He connects this new sense of awakening directly to the “strong transition of place” Ireland has

provided him, writing in concluding this letter, “Like the spirit of Milton, I feel myself, in this new world, ‘vital in every part’” (92).

Again, because this new vitality involves embracing the “Milesian” at the expense of “Blackstone and Coke,” the transformation is empathically *not* an embrace of polite, commercial gentlemanliness. Horatio underscores this point by reiterating his resistance to the course his father has planned for him: “It is in vain to force me to a profession, against which my taste, my habits, my very nature, revolts; and if my father persists in his determination, why, as a *dernier resort*, I must turn *historiographer* to the Prince of Inismore” (92). Here Horatio sets up a divide between two aristocratic father figures – his actual father, the earl, who, despite his shared affinity for Irish curiosities, says he wants Horatio to settle down to marriage or a legal career, and the Irish prince, who embodies that exotic vitality that has reawakened Horatio’s senses and sense of purpose.

### **The regeneration of the rake**

The second half of the novel chronicles an assortment of alliances that inform and undergird the regenerative rather than reformatory nature of Horatio’s transformation. First, the correspondence between Horatio and his father reveals the offstage existence of a marriage plot that serves as a contrast to Horatio’s eventual alliance with Glorvina. The earl tells Horatio of the impending marriage between Horatio’s brother and the daughter of a family that has generated new wealth in London’s emerging financial networks. The earl “informs me,” writes Horatio, “that his journey to Ireland is deferred for a month or six weeks, on account of my brother’s marriage with the heiress of the richest banker in the city” (131). This union promises to maintain the brother’s elite social status while

making him more financially secure, adding material wealth to family name. The earl's happiness at this prospect helps to soften his outlook on Horatio, as Horatio's description of the letter confirms: it "is written in his best style, and a brilliant flow of spirit pervades every line. In the plenitude of his joy, all *my* sins are forgiven" (131).

The brother's conventional marriage plot remains marginal to the novel's central narrative, however, which quickly turns back to Horatio. The earl includes in his letter this teasing allusion to a marriage prospect for Horatio: "I have a connexion in my eye for you, not less brilliant in point of fortune than that your brother has made; and which will enable you to forswear your Coke, and burn your Blackstone" (131). The potential marriage plots multiply as Horatio wonders if his father is considering nuptials for himself: "it would by no means surprise me though he were on the point of sacrificing at the Hymeneal altar himself. You know he has more than once, in a frolic, passed for my elder brother, and certainly has more sensibility than should belong to *forty-five*" (131).

These three marriage prospects reveal a set of alliances and tensions between the men of the "M" family that further illuminate similarities between Horatio and the earl. Horatio notes that his father "seemed . . . to lament that disparity of character between my brother and him, which prohibited that flow of confidence his heart seems panting to indulge in. You know Edward [the elder, affianced brother] takes no pains to conceal that he smiles at those ardent virtues in his father's character, to which the phlegmatic temperament of his own gives the name of *romance*" (228). Earlier, the earl had written with misgivings about Horatio's "tincture of romantic eccentricity;" here is revealed another point of affinity between Horatio and his father, in distinction to the practical Edward readying to marry into commercial wealth and take a place in polite society.

These homosocial bonds and tensions continue to be a focus of the narrative, revealing that a true reconciliation between the English and Irish families, and between Horatio and his own family, cannot be achieved through a union of Horatio and Glorvina alone; conjugal affection cannot entirely subsume the cultural, historical, and generational barriers to peace between and within the families of M—and Inismore. In this context, Horatio comes to think of himself less as a future husband and more as a future mediator between the prince and his father. He writes, “when in some happy moment of parental favour, when all my past sins are forgotten, and my present state of regeneration only remembered – I shall find courage to disclose my romantic adventure to my father, and through the medium of that strong partiality the son has awakened in the heart of the Prince, unite in bonds of friendship these two worthy men” (122). Horatio’s phrasing – he begins by writing about his father and then transitions to the “strong partiality the son has awakened in the heart of the Prince” – syntactically implies that Horatio is as much the son of the Prince, sentimentally, as he is the son of the earl, legally and biologically. The term “regeneration” takes on a new resonance in this context, as Horatio seems to place himself within the generational lineage of the Inismores as well as the M---’s.

Horatio does not speak in this moment of being reformed by Glorvina’s virtue but of being “regenerated” and “awakened” by his immersion in Irish court life and of thus being able to realign the relationship between the English earl and the Irish prince. Reiterating the difference between his actual Irish experience and the one his father had intended for him, Horatio foresees that when his father and the prince are “united in bonds of friendship,” “then I shall triumph in my impositions, and, for the first time,

adopt the maxim, that good consequences may be effected by means not strictly conformable to the rigid laws of truth” (122). In other words, by disavowing his identity as the absentee landlord’s son, Horatio has been able to accrue enough goodwill with the prince of Inismore to bring about a reconciliation between the English and Irish families. As Mary Jean Corbett puts it, “[h]eralding the cause of reconciliation, Horatio undertakes the work of creating union, here represented as a matter of homosocially bonding one aristocratic man to another, the English conqueror to the Irish subject.”<sup>303</sup>

At this point, Horatio is primarily concerned with the reconciliation of the familial patriarchs, and rather than focusing in any way on his own potential marriage plot, Horatio tries to resist any sentiments of romantic love or conjugal affection. He wonders, “[w]as it possible that my chilled, my sated misanthropic feelings, still send forth one sigh of wishful solicitude for woman’s dangerous presence!” but quickly answers, “[n]o, the sentiment the daughter of the Prince inspired, only made a *part* in that general feeling of curiosity, which every thing in this new region of wonders continued to nourish into existence” (60). Horatio frames Glorvina as one more object in the Irish cabinet of curiosities that has roused him from his apathy, claiming to maintain a philosophic distance from her. He claims, “If I am less an apathist, which I am willing to confess, trust me, I am not a whit more the lover. – Lover! – Preposterous! – I am merely interested for this girl on a philosophical principle. I long to study the purely national, natural character of an Irishwoman” (65).

Though he continues to claim throughout several chapters that “this little Irish girl, with all her witcheries, is to me a subject of philosophical analysis, rather than amatory discussion,” Horatio’s language elsewhere betrays the importance of Glorvina to

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<sup>303</sup> Corbett, 64.

his sensual awakening and reconnects him with the sort of lustful vocabulary he was supposed to have left behind. In one passage, for instance, he describes Glorvina's hair in language reminiscent of those "duodecimo editions of the amatory poets" that Horatio once enjoyed and that the earl had wished him to put aside:

A thousand times she swims before my sight, as I last beheld her, her locks of living gold parting on her brow of snow, yet seeming to separate with reluctance, as they were lightly shaken off with that motion of the head, at once so infantine and graceful; a motion twice put into play, as her recumbent attitude poured the luxuriancy of her tresses over her face and neck, for she was unveiled, and a small gold bodkin was unequal to support the redundancy of that beautiful hair, which I more than once apostrophized in the words of Petrarch. (66)

Far from being a detached philosopher in this passage, Horatio reverts to the language of amatory poetry he was supposed to exchange for his law books.

Subsequent to this passage, Horatio admits to being transported by the combination of courtliness and wildness in Glorvina's presence: "I cannot divest myself of a feeling of inferiority in her presence," he writes, "as though I were actually that poor, wandering, unconnected being I have feigned myself" (69). Glorvina, like the castle in a previous passage, puts Horatio in a state of awe. In part, he is bemused by the way Glorvina seems both wild and refined: "Where can she have acquired this elegance of manner!" he wonders, "reared amidst rocks, and woods, and mountains! . . . while she speaks in the language of the court, she looks like the artless inhabitant of a cottage" (69). Horatio both relates to Glorvina's aristocratic manner and feels a new and strange affinity for the rough artlessness of her surroundings.

As a result, Horatio grows attached and attracted to Glorvina as a living embodiment of an ancient and aristocratic tradition as much, and perhaps more than, as a refined, modern individual. He describes her, for example, as integral to the ritual

atmosphere of music and storytelling the family engages in each evening in the castle hall: “Nothing can be more delightful than the evenings passed in this *vengolf* – this hall of Woden, where my sweet Glorvina hovers round us, like one of the beautiful *valkyries* of the Gothic paradise, who bestow on the spirit of the departed warrior that heaven he eagerly rushes on death to obtain” (103). Horatio also relates to the reader that Glorvina sees herself as part of a noble tradition. He records a conversation in which she cites the French writer Marmontel to justify the legitimacy of a hereditary aristocracy:

“Marmontel elegantly observes,” he records her saying, “nobility of birth is a letter of credit given us on our country, upon the security of our ancestors” (118). “Observe,” writes Horatio, “that this passage was quoted in the first person, and not, as in the original, in the second, and with an air of dignity that elevated her pretty little head some inches” (118). Glorvina continues her defense of nobility: “Since . . . we are all the beings of education, and that its most material branch, example, lies vested in our parents, it is natural to suppose that those superior talents or virtues which in early stages of society are purchased by elevation, become hereditary, and that the noble principles of our ancestors should descend to us with their titles and estates” (118). Horatio replies, “Ah . . . these are the ideas of an Irish Princess, reared in the palace of her ancestors on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean” (118); he concludes the letter by reiterating the point that Glorvina’s character is “both *natural* and *national*” (120, emphasis in the original); she is marked not only by a personal quality of virtue but by her attachment to the Irish culture, court, and countryside that continues to fascinate Horatio.

When Horatio finally admits that he has fallen in love with Glorvina, he phrases the discovery in the now-familiar terms of “awakening”: “Suffice it to say, that I am now certain of at least being understood; and that in awakening her comprehension, I have roused my own. In a word, *now* feel I love!! – for the first time I feel it” (160). He contrasts his feelings for Glorvina with his previous manipulative, libertine behavior: “Once I used to fall at the feet of the ‘*Cynthia of the moment*,’ avow my passion, and swear eternal truth. Now I make no genuflection, offer no vows, and swear no oaths, and yet feel more than ever – More! – dare I then place in the scale of comparison what I now feel with what I ever felt before? The thought is sacrilege!” (160).

Horatio then reframes the past by asserting that whatever antics he engaged in (whatever has “tinctured” his character, as the earl might say), he has never abandoned some kind of ideal of honor. He writes to J.D., “You say my *wife* she *cannot* be – and my mistress! – perish the thought! What! I repay the generosity of the father by the destruction of the child! . . .No; you do me but common justice when you say, that though you have sometimes known me *affect* the character of a libertine, yet never, even for a moment, have you known me forfeit that of a man of honour” (165).

Furthermore, while eschewing the dark motives of libertinism, Horatio continues to elevate pleasure as a worthy goal. He claims that he now finds pleasure in virtue and in a moderation of appetite, yet he continues to use an evocative language of the senses even in aiming to diminish the importance of their “gratification.” He writes to J.D.,

It is certain, that you men of the world are nothing less than men of *pleasure*: - would you taste it in all its essence, come to Inismore. Ah! no, pollute not with your presence the sacred *palladium* of all the primeval virtues . . . here we are taught to feel . . . that the happiness of mankind consists in *pleasure*, not such as arises from the gratification of the senses, or the pursuits of vice – but from the enjoyments of the mind, the pleasures of the imagination, the affections of the

heart, and the sweets of virtue. And here we learn . . . that the summit of human felicity may be attained . . . by curbing and governing the passions . . . and by borrowing from temperance, that zest which can alone render pleasure forever poignant, and forever new. (167)

In a sense, Horatio, in trading his previous London life of libertinism for an Irish sojourn, has ironically attained the libertine's ultimate goal: unending novelty and constantly renewable pleasure. The virtue he has found is not polite or Protestant but "primeval" – primitive and rooted in a "savage" landscape made "sweet" by the pageantry and exoticism of the court of Inismore.

At the same time that Horatio finds this sense of regeneration and pleasure in Ireland, he conveys the idea that his presence similarly reenergizes the Inismore circle. "If, in the refined epicurism of my heart," he writes, "I carelessly speak of my departure for England in the decline of summer, Glorvina changes colour . . . and the Prince replies by some peevish observation on the solitude of their lives, and the want of attraction at Inismore to detain a man of the world in its domestic circle" (168). Of the prince, he writes, "I behold him collecting all the forces of his mind, and asserting a right to a better fate, I feel my own character energize in the contemplation of his, and am almost tempted to envy him those trials which call forth the latent powers of human fortitude and human greatness" (169). Once again Horatio looks at the prince in emulation; he is "energized" by his immersion in the Irish court.

The fantasy that Horatio will one day officially join this circle, however, seems to become doomed when he finds out that Glorvina has another suitor. Horatio comes across a private letter in Glorvina's boudoir and notes, "the hand writing was a man's – but it was not the priest's – it could not be her father's" (170). Returning to the language of idolatry that the earl had used to describe Horatio's libertinism and that Horatio had

used to describe his father's antiquarianism, he writes, "[t]he fact is, when my heart erects an idol for its secret homage, it is madness to think that another should even bow at the shrine, much less that his offerings should be propitiously received" (172).

Finally he hears the story of Glorvina's mysterious suitor, whose narrative mirrors Horatio's:

I found that this mysterious visitant was some unfortunate gentleman who attached himself to the rebellious faction of the day, and who being pursued nearly to the gates of the castle of Inismore, had thrown himself on the mercy of the prince; who, with that romantic sense of honour which distinguishes his chivalrous character, had not violated the trust thus forced on him, but granted an asylum to the unfortunate refugee; who, by the most prepossessing manners and eminent endowments, had dazzled the fancy and won the hearts of this unsuspecting and credulous family; while over the minds of Glorvina and her father he had obtained a boundless influence. (214)

Like Horatio, the mysterious visitor arrives at Inismore in a state of disquiet, insinuates himself into the court circle, and forms a strong attachment to Glorvina and the prince. The suitor even seems to possess a similar wealth; the old nurse who tells Horatio the story relates that the stranger "seemed to have money enough, *for he threw it about like a prince*" (215, emphasis in original).

Horatio's departure from the castle subsequent to this discovery underscores not only the romantic bond he has formed with Glorvina but also the nearly filial bond he has formed with the Irish prince. The prince gives him a short letter, a bank-note and a "plain gold ring which he constantly wore" (220) as parting gifts. The note reads, "'Young and interesting Englishman, farewell! Had I not known thee, I never had lamented that God had not blessed me with a son'" (220). The gift increases Horatio's sense of guilt at having failed to reveal his true identity as the earl of M---'s son, and he drafts a letter to the prince admitting that he has been an "*Impostor*." He writes, "Your money therefore,

I return, but your ring- that ring so often worn by you- worlds would not tempt me to part with.” Horatio has now fully split his filial affections and allegiance between his actual English father and the Irish prince. He confides to the prince, “I have a father, sir; this father once so dear, so precious to my heart! but since I have been your guest, *he*, the whole world was forgotten. The first tie of nature was dissolved; and from your hands I seemed to have received a new existence” (221).

The father-son rivalry comes to a head when Horatio returns to Inismore, having heard that the prince was jailed for debt, then learning that he was bailed out by Glorvina’s secret admirer. Finally, he learns that that secret admirer and financial savior is none other than his actual, English father, the earl of M--- who had, like Horatio, assumed a fictional persona to gain admittance to the prince and his daughter.

Asking why “Owenson constructed a narrative in which father and son are sexual rivals” and why there is “a surplus of fathers in this story,” Lisa Moore concludes that the late plot twist revealing the earl to be Glorvina’s mysterious suitor “allows for the reintroduction of just those aristocratic values represented as fortunately departed with the dead Irish Prince.” When the Irish claims to territorial rights die with the Milesian patriarch (as we will see), Moore argues, “the conventions of the courtship plot, which dictate that individual affection and desire conquer political differences, also support the agenda of the historical plot, which urges the resolution of English-Irish struggles in an ‘act of union’ that is simultaneously political and sexual.”<sup>304</sup> In Moore’s reading, the novel’s conclusion purposely conflates the literary conventions of the marriage plot with the political wish-fulfillment narrative of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, in which national

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<sup>304</sup> Moore, “Acts of Union,” 133.

tensions are resolved through personal relationships between (current) English and (past) Irish nobility.

While this and most other critical accounts of the novel's conclusion have centered on the conciliatory nature of the marriage plot, it is in fact the Prince of Inismore who becomes the central mediating figure at the climactic moment of crisis. The prince, debilitated by his ordeal in prison, is on the verge of death when he rouses himself one last time to become a mediator between the absentee English landlord and his son: “”At last,” the narrator<sup>305</sup> records, “with an effort of expiring strength, he raised himself in his seat, entwined his arm round his child, and intimated by his eloquent looks, that he wished the mysterious father and his rival to approach.” The narrator specifies in this description that “all the native dignity of his character now seemed to irradiate the countenance of the prince of Inismore.,” while “[w]ith a deep and hollow voice he said: ‘I find I have been deceived, and my child, I fear, is to become the victim of this deception. Speak, mysterious strangers, who have taught me at once to *love* and to *fear* you’ (240). After a silence, the Earl tells the prince that his purpose in infiltrating the court in the disguise of a political rebel and marrying Glorvina was “[t]o restore you [the prince] to the blessings of independence; to raise your daughter to that rank in life, her birth, her virtues, and her talents merit, and to obtain your assistance in dissipating the ignorance, improving the state, and ameliorating the situation of those of your poor unhappy compatriots, who . . . would best be actuated by your counsel” (240). In response, the prince, “[w]ith an indefinable expression . . . directed his eyes alternately from the father to the son, then sunk back, and closed them: the younger M. clasped his hand, and bathed it with his tears: his daughter, who hung over him, gazed intently on his face . . . the Earl

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<sup>305</sup> The novel shifts from epistolary mode to third-person narration in the Conclusion.

of M, leaned on the back of the prince's chair, his face covered with his hand" (241). This tableau, which serves as the backdrop for the prince taking his final breath, reveals the intergenerational nature of the narrative's resolution. The death of the Irish prince leaves a void that reconfigures the relationship between the English father and son. The narrator states that "[t]he elder M. had loved the venerable prince as a brother and a friend; the younger as a father. In their common regret for the object of their mutual affection, heightened by that sadly affecting scene they had just witnessed, they lost for an interval a sense of that extraordinary and delicate situation in which they now stood related towards each other" (242).

This moment of pathos centered on the death of the Irish prince leads the earl to cede his right to marry Glorvina to Horatio, while underscoring the importance of Ireland to the betrothed couple's future. He states the marriage settlement thus: "During my life, I would have you consider those estates as your's which I possess in this country; and at my death such as are not entailed. But this consideration is to be indulged conditionally, on your spending eight months out of every twelve on that spot from whence the very nutrition of your existence is to be derived; and in the bosom of those from whose labour and exertion your independence and prosperity are to flow....." (250). The earl here uses a language of nourishment that aligns well with Horatio's ongoing descriptions of the way his senses have been stirred and developed by the Irish landscape and the Irish people. He writes further, "Remember that you are not placed by despotism over a band of slaves . . . but by Providence over a band of men, who, in common with the rest of their nation, are the descendants of a brave, a free, and an enlightened people" (250-251). These instructions and predictions differentiate Horatio from his brother, whose financial

independence will derive from the banking system rather than the “labour and exertion” of Irish tenants, and it distinguishes him from the “diminutive” steward who Horatio had characterized as a despotic slave-master with no regard for the humanity of those tenants.

Where does this leave the delicate relationship between English and Irish interests at the end of the novel? Robert Tracy refers to the influence of Shakespeare’s *Henriad* on Owenson (the name Henry Mortimer, he points out, seems to derive from it) and argues that “Owenson . . . argues a middle way between Shakespeare’s Mortimer [dangerously seduced and distracted by the daughter of the Welsh Owen Glendower] and Hal [who “masters” his French wife “by means of ‘Englishing’ her] – that is, between capitulating, or ‘going native,’ (and with it completely renouncing dutiful nation-building), and conquest and subjection. Glorvina becomes Horatio’s partner and equal, not his colonial subject” (95-96).<sup>306</sup> Julia Wright uses the term “reformation” to argue that the novel shows Horatio undergoing a kind of reverse-assimilation process: “The reformation of [Horatio’s] sensibility, given the identification of Irishness with sensibility, is implicitly a form of assimilation. Horatio becomes not only better-informed and sympathetic to the Irish; he also becomes *like* the Irish, in a reversal of the mimicry described by Bhabha that is made possible by the valorization of moral sentiments over imperial power.”<sup>307</sup> Meanwhile, Heather Braun argues: “Glorvina, who is intricately connected to the captivating, picturesque landscape of the Irish pastoral cannot simply be absorbed into Mortimer’s English hierarchy of rigid class distinctions . . . Not only does the hero

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<sup>306</sup> Tracy’s larger argument in the article is to contrast the feminist agenda of Owenson’s “wild Irish girl” image with what he refers to as Edgeworth’s “mild Irish girl” image. He writes, “Owenson’s idealized transformation [of English-Irish relations] extends to, indeed hinges upon, the realm of gender relations. . . . Perhaps because Owenson’s heroines have long been recognized as thinly veiled embodiments of herself, they have sometimes been dismissed as arguing for the empowerment of women, but for the aggrandizement of Sydney Owenson. However . . . *The Wild Irish Girl* argues for increased equality both between Britain and Ireland and between women and men” (91).

<sup>307</sup> Wright, 66.

become the effeminate prey of his cunning seductress but Glorvina's shape-shifting powers continue to inspire the novel's vision of a contemporary Ireland that remains open to change rather than eager to resolve ambivalence."<sup>308</sup>

In my new reading of *The Wild Irish Girl*, which focuses as much on the novel's models of masculinity as on its models of heterosexual affection, and as much on Horatio's seemingly innate affinity for "wild Irishness" in its myriad forms as on his romantic attraction to Glorvina, the courtship plot alone lacks the power to "conquer" difference, to force assimilation, or to "effeminize" Horatio. Owenson shows that Horatio's deep affinity for the western Irish landscape and the regal though ruined court of Inismore (where his "soul" finally finds "communion with itself") easily overcomes his schoolboy prejudices about Irish barbarism. The marriage legalizes the new relationship between M—and Inismore in a powerfully symbolic way, but reform and reconciliation in *The Wild Irish Girl* are predicated on repeated occurrences of "awakening" and "regeneration" that reveal to the tired libertine a whole new array of pleasures and novelties in addition to and in excess of domestic, conjugal affection.

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<sup>308</sup> Heather Braun, "The Seductive Masquerade of *The Wild Irish Girl*: Disguising Political Fear in Sydney Owenson's National Tale." *Irish Studies Review* 13.1 (2005), 35-36.

## Conclusion

In an 1812 speech to the House of Lords, Lord Byron used a much less sentimental formulation than we find in *The Wild Irish Girl* to describe England's post-Union relationship to Ireland. "If it must be called an Union," Byron argued, "it is the union of the shark with his prey, the spoiler swallows up his victim, and thus they become one and indivisible"<sup>309</sup> Daniela Garofalo has argued that Byron, "often . . . read as the most masculinist" of the Romantics, eventually sought to undermine the appeal of the very Byronic hero he created and was thought to embody as he became increasingly wary of "the political consequences of hero worship."<sup>310</sup> The libertine figures I have discussed throughout this study are more often presented as villains than as heroes, but they remind us that the eighteenth-century reading public had long been eager to consume narratives about elite male rebels and rogues. The metaphor of predator and prey, for example, brings us back to where the dissertation began, with the London Mohocks, who were portrayed as metropolitan predators granting themselves "full License and Permission to enter into any Part of the Town where-ever their Game shall Lead them."<sup>311</sup> While Addison and Steele do not laud the Mohocks for their exploits, neither, as we saw in Chapter One, do they conceive a forthright plan for their reformation.

Throughout this dissertation I have examined a pattern of similar examples, where the elite male figure (Lovelace, Boswell, Horatio, Wilson, and so on) does not definitively change in reformist ways. Lovelace, for instance, comes to regret some of

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<sup>309</sup> Qtd. in Ferris, 4.

<sup>310</sup> Daniela Garofalo, *Manly Leaders in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 53.

<sup>311</sup> *Spectator* 347.

his actions, but the novel leaves us with little faith that he has been thoroughly reformed or redeemed by Clarissa's self-sacrifice, and he dies in that ultimate symbol of aristocratic bravado, the duel. Boswell continually aims to model himself after the restrained gentleman or "retenu," but his appetites and his attraction to powerful figures like Frederick of Prussia and Pascal Paoli lead him to new pathways in which to channel, rather than outright reject, his libertine tendencies. Horatio undergoes a profound change in Ireland, but it is an "awakening" of the senses to an Irish "wildness," not a reformed resignation to the life of a respectable English barrister. This pattern is not fixed or static, of course; the discourse of sensibility causes it to take new forms in Boswell's journals and in *The Wild Irish Girl*. The texts' similarities, however, reveal widespread literary attention to the obstacles and resistance to the ascendancy of a polite and commercial middle-class culture, not to the inevitability of its rise.

Gender is central both to analyses of polite culture and to my argument that the eighteenth-century public's fascination with elite society remained vivid and significant. I agree with Garofalo's assessment that despite the rise of sensibility and the popularity of the domestic novel, "eighteenth- and nineteenth-century masculinity cannot be characterized as simply more gentle, more in harmony with women, and more domesticated than earlier forms."<sup>312</sup> There is a range of masculinities in eighteenth-century British culture, and, as I have argued, status plays a crucial role in forming gender models for men as well as for women. I have focused specifically on libertine figures because their often paradoxical status as holders of power in Parliament, the Church, and other powerful institutions, and simultaneously as cultural and even religious

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<sup>312</sup> Garofalo, 7.

“others” (savage, Francophilic, diabolical), structures many representations of elite masculinity as imaginative attempts to infiltrate a secretive and quasi-foreign culture.

Thus, imaginative literature across genres in the eighteenth century does not simply, or even primarily, inculcate the values of the middling class over and against aristocratic vice. Rather, first, second, and even third-hand accounts of aristocratic exploits serve to both expose and reinforce the class barriers that pique readerly interest and make the Hell-fire Club, the noblewoman’s ball, the university, and other exclusive spaces ripe for imaginative rendering. As we have seen, both canonical and lesser-known texts open up such spaces for the reader, though they may also reveal the limits to a given character’s ability to permeate class and gender boundaries. Take as a brief example *The genuine history of Mrs. Sarah Prydden, usually called, Sally Salisbury, and her gallants* (1723), which tells a story about the prostitute Sally Salisbury and her adventures in London among a group of rakes who identify themselves as Mohocks. The author of *The genuine history* reports that Sally, according to rumor, “learn’d her bullying way, by going out a-nights among the *Mohocks*, drest like a beautiful Youth.” She playfully disrupts class and gender boundaries by joining the men in their exploits. But the Mohocks eventually assert their prerogative to direct the amusements by playing a trick on Sally, promising her a rendezvous with “a certain nobleman’s eldest Son” but putting someone much less desirable in his place. Sally is humiliated, “her Wonder, her Surprise, her Curiosity” mixing with the perpetrators’ “loud Peals of Laughter in the Withdrawing Room.”<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> *The genuine history of Mrs. Sarah Prydden, usually called, Sally Salisbury, and her gallants* (London: Printed for Andrew Moor, 1723), 33-35. ESTC no. T040763.

Sally Salisbury's almost-but-not-quite-successful attempt to blend in among the Mohocks recalls Peachum's observation in *The Beggar's Opera* that "[t]he man" like Macheath "that proposes to get money by play should have the education of a fine gentleman and be trained up to it from his youth" (I.iv.54-57). While Peachum refers satirically to "the education of a fine gentleman" as an acculturation in deception and debauchery, we have seen how discourses about the actual schooling of elite men underscore persistent interest in the strangeness of elite male culture. We can again return to the *Spectator* for a brief concluding example of how the separateness of the elite schools produces comparisons between elite English masculinity and foreign cultures. *Spectator* No. 17 opens with a parallel between University societies (specifically, an "Ugly Club" based at Oxford) and African tribesmen: correspondent "Alexander Carbuncle" writes, "Having been very well entertained, in the last of your Speculations that I have yet seen, by your Specimen upon Clubs . . . I shall take the Liberty to furnish you with a brief Account of such a one as perhaps you have not seen in all your Travels, unless it was your Fortune to touch upon some of the woody Parts of the *African* Continent, in your Voyage to or from *Grand Cairo*." Carbuncle explains that the Ugly Club boasts "a President and twelve Fellows," has composed an *Act of Deformity* as its charter, and came about as a "Burlesque" of the existing "Handsom Club" by "a certain merry Species, that seem to have come into the World in Masquerade" (No. 17, 1:76). The members of this Oxford club are so curious and eccentric, so different, according to the letter, from what one would expect to encounter on English soil, that they seem to be of a different species altogether; they are a more lighthearted version of the strange Man of the Hill in *Tom Jones* in his post-collegiate sojourns and travails.

Finally, the topic of schooling brings us back to Gilbert Burnet's account of Rochester that opened the introduction. The intellectual attributes of the libertine have been discussed by previous critics; according to James Grantham Turner, for instance, "the two [for Turner, irreconcilable] components of" the "libertine character," possessed by both the fictional Lovelace and the historical Earl of Rochester, are "intellectual brilliance and passionate sensuality."<sup>314</sup> In this study, I have endeavoured to redress the lack of critical attention given to the place of elite schools themselves in the period's literature. The subject of schools is significant because they are a world unto themselves and thus provide a counter-space and counter-narrative to reform efforts centered on male manners and on the beneficial effects of the domestic sphere. Paul Elledge has recently written a study of Byron, for example, which focuses entirely on the poet's experience at Harrow School and traces the roots of Byron's aptitude for drama and self-dramatization to his school days (at Harrow, Byron declaimed the roles of King Latinus from Virgil's *Aeneid*, Shakespeare's *Lear*, and the "show-stealing, scene-chewing villain" Zanga from Edward Young's *The Revenge*).<sup>315</sup> And Gilbert Burnet, in the account of Rochester's life that opened this dissertation, writes that "at School" Rochester "was an extraordinary Proficient at his Book" and "acquired the *Latin* to such perfection, that to his dying-day he retained a great relish of the finess and Beauty of that Tongue."<sup>316</sup> However, "[w]hen he went to the *University*, the general Joy which over-ran the whole Nation upon his Majesties Restauration, but was not regulated with that Sobriety and Temperance . . . produced some of its ill effects of him." At the University, "[h]e began to love . . .

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<sup>314</sup> Turner, "Lovelace and the paradoxes of libertinism," 71.

<sup>315</sup> Paul Elledge, *Lord Byron at Harrow School* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000), 129. Zanga, writes Elledge, "is a patently juicy role, offering numerous openings for stagy exhibitionism, overstated devilry, especially to a boy prone to and notorious for mischief-making himself."

<sup>316</sup> Burnet, 3

disorders too much.”<sup>317</sup> In his *Lives of the English Poets*, written nearly a century later, Samuel Johnson similarly noted Rochester’s precocity, recording that “he entered a nobleman into Wadham College in 1659, only twelve years old; and in 1661, at fourteen, was, with some other persons of high rank, made master of arts by Lord Clarendon in person.”<sup>318</sup> Johnson goes on to explain that “in a course of drunken gaiety and gross sensuality, with intervals of study perhaps yet more criminal, with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, a total disregard to every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation, he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness.”<sup>319</sup>

Johnson goes on to praise Burnet’s account, urging the reader to seek out Burnet’s full text because “[i]t were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgement.”<sup>320</sup> While many readers over the course of the long eighteenth century indeed sought out and praised such accounts, the reform and repentance narrative was far from the only narrative of eighteenth-century libertine life. As I noted in the introduction, Burnet withheld potentially “remarkable and useful” information so as not to corrupt the reader with scandalous accounts of Rochester’s adventures. But many other writers over the course of the century used the literary tools at their disposal to fill in the gaps – to record and imagine multiple narratives, characters, and spaces that together constructed a popular vision of elite masculinity as secretive, violent, imperious, strange, repellent, foreign, and remarkable.

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<sup>317</sup> Burnet, 4

<sup>318</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill (1905), qtd. in *Rochester: The Critical Heritage*, ed. David Farley-Hills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 203.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.* 204

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

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