

BREATHING IN THE OTHER: ENTHUSIASM AND THE SUBLIME IN
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

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Dedicated to Nicole, Audrey, Max, and Martha for being there every step of the way.

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INTRODUCTION

The central impulse behind the arguments put forward here is that we have more to gain by listening to sublime visionaries and wild enthusiasts than by understanding them too quickly. The encounters with literary and other texts in this dissertation are modeled on the possibility present in the sublime; that is, I want to squeeze as much as I can out of them before concluding anything. My preference for reading before understanding is an obvious part of any critical approach, but it is particularly important in the case of the sublime and enthusiasm because both of these related cultural formations bear on the very tenets of understanding. The visionary and the enthusiast are typically located on the other side of an epistemological gap; it is my goal to look across this gap, and to explain why it is there. It is also my goal to look back from the other side of this gap, to reverse the terms of the discourse and see in what ways the sublime and enthusiasm are *foundational* for the culture that casts them out.

The culture that rejects the visionary and the enthusiast is, in this dissertation, present day culture (in the form of academic analyses of these topics), but much more importantly, eighteenth-century culture. The sublime and enthusiasm play an important role in defining the period because they both represent contemporary reactions to experiences and claims that exceed the limits of reason. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that we should return to unproblematically labeling the period an “age of reason,” but the very volume of the discourses on the sublime and enthusiasm suggest that they should play a key role in defining it. Further, the eighteenth century is a vital point in the development of enthusiasm and the sublime, a moment whose transformations are still

felt today.¹ From heretics to mystics, from questers after mistaken beauties to would-be rhapsodic visionaries, from wise virgins to foolish Quixotes, this period bristles with figures whose claims to authority lie in a liminal space relative to reason, figures whose place in the world is always relative to the place of their observers. This dissertation revisits the period's ways of looking at enthusiasm and the sublime and tries to recover what is lost in its conclusions and our own. In short, my effort is a recovery of recovery, an attempt to renew the possibility of generating something new from our encounters with eighteenth-century discourses on encounters with the Other.

This dissertation brings together well-worn and nearly untrammelled topics. In the first category is the sublime, a subject that has been treated in so many different ways and from so many different angles that it threatens to buckle under the weight of analysis. In the second category is enthusiasm, a subject that runs through the eighteenth century as an illicit shadow of reason, but has not received a great deal of sustained critical attention thus far. In the case of enthusiasm, this study is justified on the grounds of novelty. In the case of the sublime, a further word is needed.

Another analysis of the sublime is in order at this moment precisely because so much has been said about it. A great deal of recent criticism on the sublime looks to reveal the ideological underpinnings or functions to which the aesthetic category has been put, or still is put. Two great camps are here: the first denounces the sublime as a tool of oppression; the second looks to rehabilitate the sublime, to reinscribe it as a force of liberation. The first camp, call them the critics of ideology, is populated by many clear insights and well-founded allegations that warn readers that more than aesthetics is at

¹ Obviously, critical attention paid to the sublime has blossomed in the past twenty-five years, and even current use of the word "enthusiasm" (now rendered almost exclusively emotional rather than religious) bears the stamp of eighteenth-century discourses on it.

stake in the discourse of the sublime. The second camp, represented most prominently by feminist revisions, works to recover the relationships between and among people (particularly those often left out of discourses on the sublime altogether) that the masculinist sublime crushes on its path to mastery. Typically, feminist revisions of the sublime would replace masculinist mastery with feminist respect for the Other. The trouble with both of these camps, from my perspective, is that they have both determined the purpose of the sublime. The critics of ideology show that the purpose of the sublime is subjugation while the revisionist critics show that it can be turned to kinder, more ethically sound purposes.

My intervention aims for the moment logically prior to the determination of the sublime's purpose. I hope that, through my analysis of the canonical texts of the discourse from Longinus to Barbara Claire Freeman and beyond, I can reopen the subjective possibility that is at the heart of sublime experience. Each day that passes sees further mechanization, further inscription of the substance of life (what Jacques Lacan calls *jouissance*) in the ever narrower canals of a pleasure principle that is no more than the other side of the death drive. The sublime represents a vital chance for the subject to take something back from the stultifying maze of signification through which *jouissance* must be squeezed. The ethics that I propose we take from the sublime does not rest on a fundamental respect for alterity issuing from it. That sort of fundamental respect already represents the narrowing or channeling of *jouissance* commanded by the *supe-ego*. Rather, I propose that the ethics of the sublime is rooted in the recognition that the Other is fundamentally unknowable, a hole in signification that can occasion many subjective responses. Respect for alterity may indeed emerge from the sublime experience, but to

prescribe it as the conclusion does no less violence to the uniqueness of individual experience than to prescribe the masculinist solution of domination over difference. In short, I take the sublime to be one way of refiguring the ethical relation between the subject and the Other, which brings me to my title.

The first half of my title, “Breathing in the Other,” conveys three points at once. First, it indicates that this dissertation is concerned with breath. The Greek-rooted “enthusiasm” is close to the Latin-rooted “inspiration;” in both cases, the breath that animates comes in from outside. I want to hold open several questions throughout this investigation. One of these questions is the relation of the subject to the world surrounding it, a relation most often thought of in terms of inside and outside. Keeping this question open is vital in considering enthusiasm and the sublime because these both represent exchanges between the subject and the Other that cannot be entirely accounted for. Second, the present progressive of “Breathing” is intentionally vague. One of the hallmarks of the sublime and enthusiasm is the loss of boundaries between the observer and the scene, between the poet and the muse. I intend “in” to be taken both as an adjunct to “Breathing” and as a preposition, because the subject always has to locate itself in and be supported by the Other. As much as I start from a consideration that seems to separate the two terms, subject and Other, I want to stress that the relation between them is not taken for granted here. Rather, I want to approach specific literary moments of the eighteenth century and current understandings of the period by re-opening the question of this relation. Finally, the capitalized “Other” indicates something of my methodology.

I rely on a Lacanian framework for re-opening these questions because this sort of re-opening is what is most useful in Lacan's work for literary critics. Throughout his teaching, Lacan preferred to revisit old terms rather than make up new ones, returning rather than innovating. The notion of the unconscious as a network that acts as the necessary context of the subject and within which the subject moves informs my approach from beginning to end. For Lacan, discursive networks are partly mechanistic; the pleasure principle wears grooves in signification that become the channels of repetition. Challenging that mechanism, or *automaton*, as Lacan calls it, is the *tuche*, the chance encounter with the real that lies beyond the network that it animates.² The whole practice of psychoanalysis lies in mediating between the mechanistic symbolic network and the possibly transformative encounter with the real that drives it. My investigation shares this aim of striking through the dead and deadening repetition of the known in favor of the encounter whose outcome cannot be predicted. I hope to use some of the paths Lacan laid to return to enthusiasm and the sublime to find what has been missed in previous encounters.

I look at these discourses in several different eighteenth-century locations. I chart the discourse of the sublime through Longinus and Edmund Burke to Immanuel Kant to locate what is missed in their accounts. I trace the contours of enthusiasm in the philosophical works of Henry More and John Locke and the literary criticism of John Dennis to recover possible meanings of inspiration and enthusiasm. I reassess mid-century poets Joseph Warton, William Collins and Thomas Gray to show how their approaches to the muse might signal something other than a debt to Milton, an

² For Lacan's treatment of *tuche* and *automaton* in the context of the unconscious as a network, see Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998) 53-66.

unrecognized allegiance to Augustan tastes, or a foreshadowing of Romanticism. Finally, I examine contemporary discourses on hysteria and Quixotism as branches of those on enthusiasm in Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote to see how gender might play a role in the period's thinking about inspiration and authority as well as desire and its interpretation. Throughout, my goal has been to conduct a genealogy of the conclusions reached in both contemporary and modern accounts of the extreme experiences grouped under the headings "sublime" and "enthusiasm."

In chapter one, "Jumping to Conclusions: Logical Time and the Sublime," I consider time and haste in the tradition of the sublime. The sublime experience, from its beginnings to its articulation in Kant's third Critique and beyond, has been more radically structured by time than is usually understood. Longinus introduces the temporal dimension of the sublime: his analysis of sublime tropes includes several that work by reducing the time the listener has to make up his mind, effectively demanding assent by robbing the audience of the time for judgment. The rush to conclusions has remained an invisible element of the sublime ever since. In the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke proved himself a careful student of Longinus, as his A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful is in part a performance of just the kind of time-deprivation that Longinus recommends. In a close reading of Part I of the Enquiry, I show that Burke effectively rolls a particular kind of pleasure, which he calls "delight," into the sublime experience by a rhetorical sleight of hand. The place of pleasure in the sublime is one of the central questions of the Enquiry, and Burke solves it by a recapitulation that actually introduces a new conclusion, unfounded in his arguments as they are introduced to that point. Thus, by presenting his argument as a process then

offering a hasty conclusion, Burke looks to rob his readers of their judgment, just as Longinus recommends.

Kant takes Burke's development of the tradition's preference for conclusions to processes to another level in his Critique of Judgment. There he forces the imagination's process of comprehension, which requires a succession of moments, to submit to reason's requirement that ideas be exhibited all at once. In using the sublime as a tool for proving the superiority of reason over the imagination, Kant is fulfilling Longinus's rhetoric of haste by removing the value of time altogether in favor of simultaneity. Psychoanalytic critic Thomas Weiskel reads this Kantian sublime as an instance of the superego reasserting its power in the life of the subject; the result of the sublime experience is the necessary recognition of the power of the father. In response to Weiskel's reading and this tradition of haste, I use Lacan's idea of logical time to force the sublime moments back apart so that I can consider them one by one, without the prejudice demanded by foregone conclusion. My approach accents the second logical moment, the time for understanding, during which the subject is not at all sure of the outcome of the sublime experience. I hope to recover the real terror of the sublime, which is not the fear of a mighty father, but the fear of his failure. In the second sublime moment, the subject is allowed a glimpse of the lack in the Other, the possibility that there is no universal order looking out for the subject, placing her somewhere.

Of course, this moment of anxiety almost always passes. The third logical moment is the time of conclusion; traditionally, that conclusion takes the form of the subject's exultation in some form of power over the sublime object. That exultation in power is the target of ideological critiques of the sublime offered by authors like Pierre

Bourdieu, Laura Doyle, Terry Eagleton, and Sara Suleri. From various perspectives, these authors analyze the tradition of the sublime in its contribution to several different forms of oppression. Several feminist authors, including Barbara Claire Freeman, Bonnie Mann, and Anne K. Mellor, have recovered a feminine sublime that would redress the imbalance of power perpetuated by the sublime tradition. Rather than a psychomachy that ends in the subject subduing and triumphing over difference and adversity, theirs is one that ends with a profound respect for difference. In short, the ideological critique of the sublime condemns its conclusions, and sometimes looks to substitute a more laudable outcome.

The emphasis laid on conclusions here is still in keeping with the tradition of the sublime, which I hope to interrupt. Building on William Cronon's and Christopher Hitt's work on the ecological sublime, I propose an ethics of sublimity that does not rely on respect replacing domination. Rather, the ethics we draw from the sublime should try to maintain that second-moment uncertainty as much as possible. All conclusions to the sublime experience are failures because they all try to bring the excessive point of the *tuche* back within the terms of the *automaton*. Rather than teaching us how to relate to nature or to one another, the sublime should teach us that however we envision that relation, there is always something of the Other that cannot be captured, something of our envisioning that does not measure up to the relation. This ethics of the sublime prescribes humility before knowledge and experience before understanding.

Chapter two, "Enthusiasm as a Cultural Fantasy," continues chapter one's task of working against understanding and back toward experience. In the eighteenth century, "enthusiasm" had not yet been reduced to emotion, but it was on its way. In this chapter I

analyze the discourse on enthusiasm to see what is lost by trying to comprehend it as mere emotion or passion. My analysis is a response to the work of J. G. A. Pocock, who has called enthusiasm the “anti-self” of enlightenment; John Morillo, who brings enthusiasm into his work on the place of the passions in the eighteenth century; and Jon Mee, whose work situates enthusiasm in the political landscape of the Romantic period. These varied approaches to enthusiasm present it as an alternative to reason; my response is to show that enthusiasm is actually logically prior to reason. In short, there is no rational system that can support itself without enthusiastic principles. Rigorously reasonable approaches to the world rest on unreasonable and improvable axioms.

To see how these axioms present themselves, I begin by looking at Henry More’s Enthusiasmus Triumphatus and John Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding, two important attacks on enthusiasm in the period. A close reading of these attacks reveals that enthusiasm is such a concern in part because its claims are no less plausible than those of philosophy, though it starts from different principles, a different initial relation between subject and Other. Next, I look at John Dennis’s Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, where he distinguishes between enthusiastic and vulgar passions in explaining the sublime. The point for Dennis is not that enthusiastic passion is a matter of emotion, but that its source is beyond what can be explained or understood. More than any other, Dennis is the figure who indicates that enthusiasm need not be reduced to emotion, and need not be thought of as arising within the subject. The inside-outside binary implied in much of the discourse on enthusiasm is a key target throughout this chapter.

I follow that binary through the history of enthusiasm, looking at it as a cultural fantasy. In Lacanian terms, looking at it as a fantasy means there it has real, symbolic, and imaginary components, and that it functions as a prop for the worldview for the reality that it serves. Looking back to the pre-Socratic Alcmaeon's notion of *isonomia* or balance of internal faculties as a definition of health, I trace the imaginary component of the discourse on enthusiasm. That imaginary component is a regime of bodily function that serves as a standard for propriety and health against which enthusiasm always comes up short. Aristotle furthers the imaginary component of the discourse in his Problems, where enthusiasm is accounted for as an imbalance of the faculties, like melancholy. I pick up the symbolic element of the discourse in Plato's Ion, in which the titular rhapsodist has his profession reduced to nothing by the fact that his knowledge cannot be articulated, made to matter, in the symbolic terms demanded by Socrates. Finally, my tour of the history of enthusiasm ends with Descartes' Discourse on the Method and Meditations. In Descartes' experience of subjective destitution brought on by systematic doubt, the real of enthusiasm (the fact that the Other does not in fact exist) is glimpsed, albeit briefly. In founding the cogito on the abyss of the Other, Descartes demonstrates the essential enthusiastic move from doubt to certainty. I hope that looking at enthusiasm as a cultural fantasy provides enough distance from it to allow me to outline the terms of the discourse without having to enter into it on one side or the other. As a result, it is possible to see that the enthusiast and the rational thinker are nearly identical in their reasoning, though they begin from different premises.

At the end of chapter two, I turn the question back on my methodology to ask "is psychoanalysis enthusiastic?" I conclude that psychoanalysis could not exist without

enthusiasm, structurally speaking. More than most other discursive positions, that of enthusiasm avows its dependence on the Other, and psychoanalysis would not exist without the discourse of the Other. However, psychoanalysis is at the same time antithetical to enthusiasm. While it trades on the structure of transference, in the supposition that the Other knows something about the subject, the end of a psychoanalysis is the dissolution of the transference. So, the psychoanalyst is an enthusiast who fights against his own conclusions, always working to evacuate the position of the subject supposed to know.

Chapter three, “Enthusiasm as a Source of Authority,” treats some mid-century rhapsodic poets (Mark Akenside, William Collins, Thomas Gray, and Joseph Warton) whose work appeared mainly in the wake of Alexander Pope’s death. I argue that what links these poets, more than their obvious and shared debt to Milton (as explicated by Harold Bloom and his followers), their supposed Augustan identity (argued for by Patricia Meyer Spacks), or their nascent Romanticism (from Norman Maclean to Marshall Brown, the “pre-Romantic” tag persists), is the enthusiastic structure of their approaches to the muse. Rather than applying an Augustan model of imitation, in which great writers serve themselves as great examples, these poets follow an enthusiastic model of imitation, in which the lesser poet tries to enter into the same inspirational exchange with the muse as the great poet.

This model is most clearly apparent in Collins’s “Ode on the Poetical Character,” a close reading of which is the centerpiece of this chapter and of the tradition of mid-century rhapsodism that I am recovering. Personification is the trope where the differences between Augustan and rhapsodic practices are clearest. In short, the

rhapsodist's personifications do not tend toward univocality. Rather, they stretch signification, stuffing the signifier with too much meaning or emptying it altogether, leaving a space of opening onto the Other. Because of this practice of personification, I argue that these rhapsodic poets, when they are at their best, work in the field of enthusiasm, though they do not conclude the subject's relation with the Other in the way that a religious enthusiast typically does. Rather than assurance that the Other is looking out for the poet, poems like the "Ode on the Poetical Character" raise the question of the desire of the Other and dwell in the possibility of the muse's gift, not its guarantee.

Chapter four, "'The Blaze of Enthusiastic Bravery:' Genre and Hysteria in The Female Quixote," continues on with the question of desire. This time, I raise the question in the context of Charlotte Lennox's novel The Female Quixote. The protagonist of the novel, a rather imperious young beauty whose head has evidently been turned by too many French romances, gives the opportunity of looking at the discourses of hysteria, Quixotism, and enthusiasm, which are related but have not been treated together adequately. My approach here is to raise the question that is nearly always already settled by most of Lennox's readers, what is the Quixote's desire? I say that it is usually an already settled question because the common assumption is that Arabella is expressing her desire, exercising her power, through her Quixotic discourse. The matter of Arabella's power or powerlessness has been seized on by a host of critics, from Margaret Doody to Laurie Langbauer to Helen Thompson. Whether she is seen as a bold proto-feminist, a victim of her male-dominated culture, or a monster of desire, Arabella is nearly always thought of as transparently acting out her own desires and serving her own

interests. By returning to this very question, I hope to give Lennox's novel the chance to be something other than an attack on romance or a feminist flop.

Part of my return to the question of Arabella's desire is a return to the period's notions of hysteria, the classical locus of out of control female desire. The treatment of hysteria, like the treatment offered Arabella in the novel, amounts to discursive coercion. If there is a taming here, it is not a taming of wild, inappropriate desires. Rather, it is a demand that the hysteric (or the Quixote) give up her strange and unknowable relation the Other in favor of a more socially acceptable one. The period's treatment of hysteria and the novel's treatment of Quixotism have as their goal not the suppression of desire, but the expression and satisfaction of it in terms approved by the dominant discourse.

I take this understanding of desire in The Female Quixote and reflect it back into the book's commentary on literary genres. As an apparent criticism of romance, this novel is part of the larger contemporary conversation of the value of realistic fiction. Typically, it is understood in this conversation that romances are dangerous reading, filled with outlandish and impossible occurrences, while novels are at least potentially more wholesome because they present an accurate imitation of reality appropriate for the inculcation of wholesome values. I argue that Lennox's contribution to this discussion is complex. The Female Quixote is really about desire and its interpretation, the possibility of deducing what someone wants by looking and listening. The novel, as a genre, relies on a transparency of desire that provides a readerly index of the probability of character and action. The romance, on the other hand, relies on the mystery of desire, the deferral of its satisfaction, even of its articulation. The Female Quixote, both throughout its plot and in its conclusion, holds open the question of Arabella's desire in the style of the

romance. Far from being a simple anti-romance, the book is a careful consideration of the consequences of assuming that desire can be known.

The impossibility of finally knowing desire is at the center of all these chapters. In these diverse discourses on aesthetics, religion, poetry, novel, and romance, I have attempted to reverse the tide of assumption to see what is left when the usual axioms are suspended. I do not hope to have concluded the discussion on any of the topics I have covered, but I do hope to have established the possibility of reconsidering the premises on which seemingly rational judgments so often rest.

CHAPTER ONE: Jumping to Conclusions: Logical Time and the Sublime

One traditional function of art is transcendence, to bring something more than human into the field of representation. Whether it is the divine suffering of Michelangelo's *Pietà* or the excessive auditory gymnastics of Hopkins' "The Windhover," one measure of greatness in art is its ability to surprise its audience, to instill a sense of wonder at things beyond the everyday. The sublime functions as a rhetorical and aesthetic category to name and comprehend the overwhelming brilliance of art, or more often, of nature. The surviving writing on the sublime begins with Longinus's third-century treatise On Sublimity. The text, a sort of rhetorical primer, disappeared for centuries, and its popularity was revived by Boileau's 1674 French translation which had an immediate and lasting impact in England.³ The eighteenth century saw a great exchange of aesthetic ideas, as Longinus's rhetorical sublime evolved into a Burkean natural sublime and was later fitted into the Kantian critique. Of course, this thumbnail sketch of the evolution of writing about the sublime leaves out far more than it includes, which is fitting for a treatment of the sublime, a subject that always lies at the limits of all capacities of representation.

One remarkable element of the sublime is its ability to engender discourse. The discourse on the sublime is voluminous; it threatens to become sublime itself as it proliferates beyond comprehension. Of making many books there is no end: this remark could easily apply to books just on the sublime. The aesthetic category has been rewritten and re-thought in almost every imaginable context, and has had so many

³ For a dissenting view of Boileau's influence in Britain, see Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite, Weyerhaeuser Environmental Classics (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1997).

epithets attached to it that it threatens to give way as object to become an empty point around which discourses circle without ever approaching. However, an important part of the sublime has not been carefully explored, and that is its temporal dimension. It is surprising that the successive and ordered nature of the sublime has not been addressed more directly. After all, the sublime is, among other things, a category of experience, and experience is meaningless without reference to time.

Various authors have treated time as a potentially sublime object, usually relying on the tendency of the greatness of objects to create sublimity.⁴ There is certainly merit in this, and I do not intend to contradict the notion that a great stretch of time can be a sublime prospect. Instead of taking it as an aesthetic object, I will situate time within the experience of the sublime. The actual series of events that is the sublime experience has not been considered often (perhaps because it seems to be a given for most authors on the sublime, something too obvious to spend many words on), though it has been considered carefully by Thomas Weiskel in The Romantic Sublime, which is, among other things, a psychoanalytic account of the sublime to which I will respond. To survey the experience of time in the sublime, I return to Longinus, Burke, and Kant, not just because they are canonical, but because each of them has something to say about how the sublime unfolds in time. I will assess these accounts of the moments of sublimity and see what purpose they serve in their various discourses. In each case, time works as an axis on which the normative function of sublimity operates; this normative function has itself been the

⁴ See, for instance Gregory Sean O'Dea, "The Temporal Sublime: Time and History in the British Gothic Novel," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1991, Karl Kroeber, "Romantic Historicism: The Temporal Sublime," Images of Romanticism: Verbal and Visual Affinities, eds. Karl Kroeber and William Walling (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978).

object of feminist critiques of the sublime made by authors such as Barbara Claire Freeman.

Finally, I will offer an alternative approach to counting the moments of the sublime experience based on Lacan's concept of logical time. In taking these steps, I will reestablish the relationship between the subject and the Other dramatized by the sublime experience and return some of its danger to it. In contradistinction to the feminist approaches just named, I argue that the sublime poses a significant challenge to the operation of signification, not a platform for its triumph. The sublime, more than any other aesthetic category (particularly more than the beautiful), happens in time, and its temporal succession or pulsation lends itself to the forgetting of impasses and the creation of excellence in discourse, pleasure, and reason. By taking these challenges and impasses seriously, I raise the stakes of the sublime and enthusiasm. In both cases, what sometimes figure as mere moments of emotional excess are recognized as having a central place in responding to and participating in rational discourse. One of my central goals is to establish that the sublime and enthusiasm should not and cannot be relegated to an exotic realm of passion or reduced to a simple ethic of respect for difference. Instead, I argue that the sublime and enthusiasm exist as vital challenges to the authority of reason.

That the sublime presents a challenge to reason may seem too obvious a point to argue. Many accounts of the sublime begin with some sort of discursive irruption, some cause of wonder that stops reason in its tracks. However, most understandings of sublimity end by cutting wonder short and making a virtue of reason's victory over it. Addressing the tradition of the romantic sublime, Anne Mellor writes that the

concept of the sublime promoted by eighteenth-century theorists and the male Romantic poets, as well as by their myriad modern commentators, from Samuel Monk and Marjorie Hope Nicholson to Geoffrey Hartman and Thomas Weiskel, is distinctly, if unwittingly, gendered. The sublime is associated with an experience of masculine empowerment. (260)

Her assessment casts a broad net, and I largely agree with it. These sublime theorists share a narrative logic of the sublime which puts an experience of excess in the service of empowering reason. Across their accounts, the emphasis is on the triumphant subject who emerges from the sublime experience confirmed in his ontological calling, not the terrified subject who enters the Hell maw, often risking body and soul together. In short, the sublime has a long history of being pressed into ideological service. In part, I hope to answer the ideology application of the sublime by re-imagining its discursive functioning and purpose.

That the sublime carries ideological implications is another point perhaps too obvious to argue. It has been subjected to ideological critiques of many types. Critics like Mellor and Freeman have interrogated its gender ideology; Laura Doyle has considered the sublime's stake in the creation of racial difference; Sara Suleri and Pramod K. Nayar have analyzed its imperial ideological content, and Terry Eagleton has rooted out the sublime's function in perpetuating class difference.⁵ From myriad angles, the ideological applications of the sublime have been dissected. The critics largely agree that the sublime is put to work for the advantage of the strong over the weak, to subjugate the lesser and empower the greater. I do not intend to contradict any of these analyses,

⁵ See Laura Doyle, "The Racial Sublime," *Romanticism, Race, and Imperial Culture*, eds. Alan Richardson and Sonia Hofkosh (Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1996), Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1990), Barbara Claire Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995), Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992), Pramod K. Nayar, *English Writing and India, 1600-1920*, Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures (London: Routledge, 2008).

nor do I hope to add my own argument to this line of inquiry. Rather, I propose a closer look at the sublime, a reconceptualization that will restore the danger inherent to the sublime, rather than dissolving it in a salve for staggering reason. In the seemingly monolithic tradition of the sublime, a tradition that has long served power, there are the seeds of change.

Of course, I am not the first to argue that there is an alternative to the traditional understanding of the sublime. Freeman and Mellor, in particular, argue for a feminine sublime that does not participate in the masculine subjugation of otherness for its own ends. Reading the masculine sublime as a solitary fight with nature for dominance, Mellor sees the feminine sublime as “an experience of communion between two different people... *domesticated* sublimity” (103).⁶ The feminine sublime is a cooperative, not a competitive, affair, in which sublime nature stands for human moral capacity. Arguing along similar lines, Freeman writes that

[u]nlike the masculinist sublime that seeks to master, appropriate, or colonize the other, I propose that the politics of the feminine sublime involves taking up a position of respect in response to an incalculable otherness. (11)

Both of these theorists propose a different sort of sublimity, one which ultimately values the difference it finds between subjects or between the subject and the world. I think there is something fundamentally at odds between letting the other remain other and respecting that otherness. Put another way, I do not think we can adopt a “position of respect in response to an incalculable otherness” because respect is already a form of

⁶ More recently, Markus Poetzsch has taken up a similar argument for a “quotidian sublime.” See Markus Poetzsch, *“Visionary Dreariness:” Readings in Romanticism's Quotidian Sublime* (London: Routledge, 2006). Bonnie Mann has continued Freeman’s marriage of the sublime and feminism in Bonnie Mann, *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

calculation, a way of assigning the alterity of the other a value, even if it is only in one's own libidinal economy. As Gene Ray puts it, "the eventual theoretical assimilation of the traumatic sublime will not be able to recuperate its rupturing negativity as assured positive profit" (8). To maintain the transformative power of the sublime, we cannot try to determine the outcome of our encounters with it, to have "The Treasures of the Sun without his Rage," as James Thomson puts it in "Summer" (426).

What I propose as an ethics of the sublime is much closer to what Christopher Hitt has called an ecological sublime. Building on William Cronon's work, Hitt writes "[a]n ecological sublime would... restor[e] the wonder, the inaccessibility of wild nature" that are so often lost in the exultation the subject experiences in the traditional natural (e.g., Kantian) sublime (620).⁷ At the heart of the ecological sublime, for Hitt, is the knowledge that reason always ultimately fails in the face of nature. There is always something more in nature than humans can account for. I want to amplify Hitt's position, and argue that it is not just nature that always exceeds the human subject; it is the Other as such.

The signifier "nature" provides a good way to understand what I mean by the Other. As Cronon points out, and in keeping with the drift of thinking about language from the stoic philosophers to Saussure, wilderness "is a product of... civilization" (69). It is an arbitrary sign around which many meanings have accreted, some inducing a beneficial awe of nature's might, some inducing a dangerous mobilization against it. In calling attention to the artificiality of signs, writers like Cronon indicate something more important than this accretion of different, sometimes conflicting meanings. They indicate

⁷ Hitt is responding to and amplifying William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1996).

that the sum of these meanings still falls short of the actual referent of the term. There is always something more in nature, the actual world out there, than what can be indicated by the signifier “nature.” If we take the Other as the system of signification in all its complexity, what matters most about it is that it does not finally bite into its referent in an unambiguous way. As Lacan stated repeatedly, there is always a lack in the Other. Cronon and Hitt make this argument about nature, but I expand it to all signifiers under the term Other. I argue that the terror of the sublime is engendered by the subject’s glimpse into the abyss of the Other; it is not mortal (or even immortal) danger that arouses the sublime.⁸ Rather, it is the subject’s perception that the systems of signification that guarantee its existence lack the answer to fundamental questions about being. Lacan says that the “real can only be inscribed on the basis of an impasse of formalization” (Seminar XX 93). In other words, one limit of the Other is the real, the gap between signifier and signified that is not situated merely at a limit or in certain terms, but is in fact diffused throughout the system of signification which provides the subject its context. In this sense, the Other can be thought of as the sight of inscription, the slate on which all that can be written is written, but the real is always there to exceed it, to point toward what cannot be written.⁹ In expanding the potential sites of sublimity, my work builds on Neil Hertz’s. Jonathan Culler calls the Hertzian sublime the “brilliant conversion of the Longinian and Kantian sublime to an economy of the sublime that pervades the most trivial scenarios of the self” (977). Like Hertz, I argue not for a

⁸ In short, the Other is a system of formalization. It can take many guises, from an actuary’s tables that predict events to the certainty that Holy Writ can reveal the existence of God. The key point is that formalization always exhausts itself somewhere.

⁹ Of course, the unwritable *par excellence* for Lacan is the sexual rapport. See Jacques Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 20: Encore 1972-1973 on Feminine Sexuality : The Limits of Love and Knowledge, trans. Bruce Fink, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1998) 35.

quotidian sublime, but for a recognition that the gaps that engender sublime terror are never far away.

This move from “nature” or “wilderness” to “Other” as the term for thinking about the ways aesthetic phenomena situate the subject also provides a response to broad critiques of the tradition of aesthetics. By removing the specific content and context of the sublime, by arguing that the lack in the Other is distributed throughout discourse, I hope to put the focus that much more heavily on the operations of the subject of language rather than on any particular sociologically inflected subject. Of course critics like Pierre Bourdieu are correct in showing that taste functions as a marker of position in society.¹⁰ However, just because a tradition of high culture serves to reinforce class boundaries does not mean that the middling and lower orders lack taste and have no access to the sublime. In short, the Other is an equal opportunity failure, though its guises are many and the capacity to transmute the pain of its lack into positive pleasure may vary widely.

Insisting on the lack in the Other eradicates the basis for many traditional moral systems. Most religious moralities, for instance, are founded on the idea that the deity has a place for the subject; from that premise, an endless series of rules for maintaining the proper deity-subject relationship can issue. However, the lack in the Other can actually be a basis for an ethics, if it is understood that the Other’s lack means that the desire of the Other is always mysterious. This is the crux of Lacan’s ethics of psychoanalysis: to never give way as to one’s desire. This means not being satisfied with the substitutions that draw desire along while installing the subject in the fixity of the death drive. In relations with others, it means never assuming that one knows another’s

¹⁰ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1984).

desire. Opposed to Freeman's notion of respect for the other, I propose a more absolute non-knowledge of what the other wants. The beginning of subjugation is the mistake, often intentional, of thinking one knows what is best for the other, putting oneself in the position of the subject-supposed-to-know, the position in the transference that always has to be liquidated at the end of analysis.

Against Kant, I argue that the sublime threatens the subject where it is represented. It annihilates the subject, while leaving the body intact (rather than threatening the body while maintaining the subject, as in the dynamically sublime). What Burke and Kant share with and Freeman is the third-moment imaginary reinscription of the subject in regard to the Other. Whether the strategy is to establish superiority through feeling or reason, or to deny superiority through respect, the end result has a structural similarity. The subject ends the impasse of the sublime by re-establishing order, re-presenting itself in the field of signifiers. Opposed to this, I imagine a sublime that is free of this need for a return to the same place. Rather than re-instating the subject in its comfort zone, so to speak, the sublime should challenge the subject to take up a new place in its libidinal economy.¹¹ In other words, the real effects of the sublime can, and sometimes should, take place beyond the substitutions of desire, which leave the subject untouched. The encounter with undifferentiated Otherness is an opportunity. The encounter is almost always a missed encounter, but it does not always have to be a wasted one. While the sublime has been, at least since the eighteenth century, a discursive mode for handling disruptions without challenging the authority of the subject

¹¹ One is reminded here of the turn Rilke's sonnet "Archaischer Torso Apollos," "Du mußt dein Leben ändern." See Rainer Maria Rilke, *Neue Gedichte* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1942) 14.

derived from its identifications, it is ripe to be recast as a more terrifying and libratory discursive mode for moving subjects in their representations in the Other.¹²

In considering the time-based experience of the sublime, Weiskel's psychoanalytically informed work marks another essential starting point because his argument works from structure, a key term for my method. In The Romantic Sublime, Weiskel proposes a three-phase rendering of the sublime experience that subtends (at least) eighteenth-century approaches to the category.¹³ What is most valuable in Weiskel's approach, and the impulse that most animates this dissertation, is the willingness to investigate a structure that underlies the sublime, regardless of whose sublime it is and what peculiarities it brings with it. In Weiskel's words: "The challenge is to find the structure that is immanent in a vast and eclectic theory and practice in the conviction, not here to be disguised or much argued, that the structure still undergirds our imaginative intellection" (5). My argument is that such a structure is describable, and that it holds true now as it did in the eighteenth century. Weiskel's scheme provides an insightful and useful reading of the tradition, but we need a strong misreading, in Bloom's sense, which will reopen the possibilities of the sublime, and allow us to peer into the abyss for which the superego is but an alibi. By returning to and reconceptualizing the moments of the sublime experience, particularly the second moment, we will confront the possibility of exceeding the ideological bounds usually erected by discourse, which might be offered as a working definition of one of the goals of psychoanalysis. The sublime is a topic for locating the modern subject, a subject which is located in a discourse, represented by signifiers, and at the same time, excluded

¹² A discursive mode we might call an insurance policy on missed encounters.

¹³ I return to Weiskel's three-phase sublime after my treatment of Longinus, Burke, and Kant.

from finding itself solely in signification. In other words, the subject is found in a structure, and the sublime helps account for that structure and the subject's place in it. It is of particular value to subject the sublime to this sort of potentially reductive schematization precisely because the discourse on it has tended to multiply sublimates to the point of categorical incoherence.

This insistence on continuity throughout a discourse motivated by a recurring, "deep" structure may be surprising. It seems that the drift of criticism has been, at least since critics have considered themselves done with structuralism, toward multiplicity, the consideration of each author or work or cultural trend in its particular rather than its shared elements. While there is certainly value and even a cold comfort in insisting that difference makes it at best impossible and at worst merely ideological to find grand narratives animating periods, themes or approaches, I hold there is still value in narratives, grand or not. That these narratives can be abusive, that they can do violence to important differences by forcing discrete and disparate elements together, is a charge that is well received. However, that charge does not mean that such narratives ought to be abandoned entirely. Rather, we should search for these narratives or schemata carefully, and reduce them as much as possible to their constants. In the case of the sublime, one of these elementary constants is the temporal nature of the experience. Before I present my re-reading of the chronology of sublime experience, a review of Longinus, Burke, and Kant on time and the sublime is in order. In these disparate texts, I show that time (or more specifically, haste) is a structuring principle and necessary element of the sublime.

Longinus: the time of the utterance

Longinus's On Sublimity makes a problematic starting point for the discourse on the sublime primarily because he presents a thoroughly rhetorical sublime in contrast to the later, more familiar development of the natural sublime we meet in the paintings of Salvator Rosa or Caspar David Friedrich. Longinus's treatise is didactic rather than descriptive: he aims to teach Postumius Terentianus the ways to produce sublimity in discourse, though appreciation for sublimity is a requirement for its production.

Longinus instructs that "literary judgment comes only as the final product of long experience," and an appreciation for the sublime is necessary to avoid the failures that can deflate it (148). There are two problems with trying to integrate Longinus into a history of the sublime: one is that his interest is rhetorical rather than more broadly psychological (as in a Burkean or Kantian approach that aims at the natural sublime), and the other is that he aims to teach both appreciation *and* production of sublimity, unlike later contributors to the discourse, whose interest is primarily or exclusively in its appreciation.¹⁴

However, Longinus's focus on the rhetorical sublime need not be such an obstacle. Because his focus is on speech, his observations on the sublime are given a time line: the single dimension of the utterance. This is why, again and again, his text insists that forcing things together, or getting language to serve more than one task in an instant, is a source of sublimity. An example of this is Longinus's inclusion of

¹⁴ Another element that marks Longinus as different is the scope of his teaching. It could be said that Longinus's concerns are of form, not of content. This is why On Sublimity is refreshingly free of any ethical or moral standards (note that there is no section instructing the student when it is licit to use the techniques of sublimity). The Longinian speaker's guide is his desire to exercise control over his listeners, which aligns Longinus with the sophists rather than the philosophers, though by this I mean no disparagement. Longinus is the most honest writer on the sublime.

asyndeton, the deliberate omission of conjunctions, in his treatment of the tropes that produce sublimity. Leaving the conjunctions out “convey[s] the impression of an agitation which both obstructs the reader and drives him on” (165). Asyndeton compresses time and strikes the listener with ideas faster than she may be ready for them, producing a discourse which aims more at overwhelming emotions than convincing reason. I argue that Longinus’s intervention on time and the sublime comes in the subtle form of the time of the utterance. For Longinus, there can be no understanding of the power of the sublime without the unifying power of the moment of speech; the time of speech is the unit by which the fragmentation of the sublime can be measured.

A further, more complex example of the compression of time in Longinus’s On Sublimity is his reading of Sappho’s fragment 31, which comes in the section on selecting and arranging materials to form a discourse. Commenting on the poem, he asks “Do you not admire the way in which she brings everything together—mind and body, hearing and tongue, eyes and skin” (154)? It is easy to read this as meaning that sublimity is achieved through the motivated reunification of disparate parts, as does Barbara Claire Freeman in *The Feminine Sublime*. Freeman’s book is, in part, a feminist critique of the sublime, which she sees as a device to control feminine excess through a masculine discourse. Regarding Longinus’s reading of Sappho, she says “his is a paradigmatic response to the irruption of a threatening and potentially uncontainable version of the sublime, one that appears to represent excess but does so only the better to keep it within bounds” (15). She sees Longinus’s focus on the unifying function of the poem as more compelling than his recognition that Sappho demonstrates excess through bodily fragmentation. This is certainly a persuasive reading, and it is supported by

Longinus's later summation in which he says that "one might say that these writers have taken only the very best pieces, polished them up and fitted them together" (Longinus 155). At this point, it does indeed sound as if Longinus is saying that a sublime discourse must be like a well-wrought urn, and that his take on sublime excess requires that it be maintained within a symptomatic unity.¹⁵

However, to conclude that the sublimity of the passage comes *only* from the fitting together of the pieces to form a unity, or that Longinus's goal is to control difference through discourse, is to misread the text. When the context of the rest of his work (itself deliciously fragmented) is brought to bear on this reading of symptomatic unity, we are forced to look elsewhere for the source of sublimity in the section on selection and organization of material. First of all, Longinus repeatedly presents the sublime as something that rends rather than something that knits: opposing it explicitly to "[e]xperience in invention and ability to order and arrange material," (certainly useful possessions for the orator, but sufficient only for persuasion, not for the production of sublimity) he says that "Sublimity... tears up everything like a whirlwind, and exhibits the orator's whole power at a single blow" (Longinus 143-4). Here it is clear that sublimity is produced in moments, not by the whole of a text (though this does not mean that arrangement does not matter). The "amazement and wonder" produced by sublimity, unlike persuasion, cannot be controlled, and "they exert invincible power and force and get the better of every hearer" (143). Running through the text are many such comments suggesting that the effect of the sublime is to disorganize and wrest control from the listener.

¹⁵ I use 'symptomatic' here only to indicate that Longinus's supposed preference for unity over excess in discourse points, for Freeman, toward a larger masculine program of control.

On the other hand, there are passages such as the following:

The beauty of the body depends on the way in which the limbs are joined together, each one when severed from the others having nothing remarkable about it, but the whole together forming a perfect unity. Similarly great thoughts which lack connection are themselves wasted and waste the total sublime effect, whereas if they co-operate to form a unity and are linked by the bonds of harmony, they come to life and speak just by virtue of the periodic structure. (182)¹⁶

Here it sounds again like Longinus prescribes a beautiful form for the discursive sublimity, favoring the certainty of the given over the uncertainty of the unknown or strange. Bringing these passages together leaves us in something of a quandary. Does the sublime proceed from unity or from disruption? It might suffice simply to say that a unified discourse leads to disruption of the listener's judgment, the production of wonder. Such a solution cuts the Gordian knot by locating the harmony and discord on the opposing sides of speaker (or text) and listener (or reader). I could also suggest that Longinus's references to building a beautiful discourse, unified and polished, are mere lip service to the tradition within which he works. Following this line of thought, I could propose that we read Longinus for what is new in his treatise, and ignore those passages that essentially repeat what other authors have said before him, though such a reading might raise more problems than it solves.

There is a more interesting way to answer the problem, and it lies with the artful manipulation of time in the delivery of a discourse, or the reading of a poem. If we consider the unity of Sappho's fragment to come from the fact that the various parts, body parts in this case, are brought together more or less in a single utterance, "at a single

¹⁶ Neil Hertz reminds that Grube's translation renders the last line as "in the rounded structure of the whole they find their voice" Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line : Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 5. Grube's take on these lines may be more suggestive for my contention that the unit for Longinus is the unit of speech.

blow,” then we pose a different approach to unity. The point is not that Longinus’s reading puts the speaker’s body back together and suppresses the poem’s bodily fragmentation (the masculine paradigm of control over difference), but that his reading underlines the fact that all of these parts are placed next to one another without needing to be ordered. In other words, even disorder is a sort of organization, and part of the sublime effect comes from selecting the right pieces. Sappho’s bodily fragments only exist as fragments because they are united by the utterance, a unity of time. Given that one of Longinus’s goals is to mark the line between which skills of oratory are inborn and which are taught, it makes perfect sense that he would want to find the order of disorder, to account rhetorically for an impression that runs counter to expectations for discourse. Rhetorical sublimity works on the listener in part as a surprise, and in the organization of materials, it is possible (and even necessary) to work within a unity to establish unexpected relations among the parts.

The question hinges on the idea of the unit. If Freeman is right, Longinus prescribes a textual unity that aligns itself with an ideal of beauty in which all parts are ordered according to established norms, something like a new critical unity of the text, where a work functions as a whole unit. It does not seem to me that this image of a tame, frozen work of art fits with Longinus’s ideals in On Sublimity. Indeed, if the perfection of form were the first standard for the sublime, it would be impossible for Longinus to prefer the work that is sublime at points and dull in others to the one that is cautiously perfect, as he does. Longinus’s text vacillates on the question of unity. Concluding the above-quoted section in which he gives the familiar biological metaphor for the unity of the text, he says: “It is indeed generally true that, in periods, grandeur results from the

total contribution of many elements” (182). Here, clearly, sublimity comes from the parts, the many units that make up a discourse. The metaphor of unity, the concept of the unit that I will put forward, contrary to Longinus’s own bodily metaphor and Freeman’s textual metaphor, is drawn from set theory.

In the mathematical conception of a set, all that is required to bring things together is to define them in some way and represent the collection with a letter. For example, I could define all the things in my pockets as a set, and call it P. For being a set, there is no guarantee of unity made (and indeed, in a mathematical set, there can be no certainty that the contents will even be countable). I hold that Longinus’s unity requirement is weak (or at least quite ambivalent), akin to the unity of a mathematical set, rather than strong, as in Freeman’s feminist critique. If there is a repressive element in Longinus, it applies more to the listener (robbing her of her judgment) than to the discourse. Following this line of thought, not all pocket contents are bound to be sublime. Longinus advises that not just anything can be thrown together to produce a sublime effect: Hesiod’s “Mucus dripped from her nostrils,” for instance, has no place in a sublime discourse because it “gives a repulsive picture, not one to excite awe” (150). In order to be sublime, the materials must be appropriate, and they must be brought together with a certain density (154). I hold that what matters more for the Longinian sublime than an organic organization that would tame heterogeneity is the rapid succession of sublime materials, which gains its power in part from heterogeneity. The question of their unity is less important than the fact that the elements be properly selected and presented together in time.¹⁷

¹⁷ For a reading of Longinus that emphasizes fragmentation over unity, see Hertz, [The End of the Line : Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime](#) 1-20.

My concern here is not whether Longinus reinforces gendered norms through his ideas of sublimity (although I do not think his reading of the Sappho fragment necessarily indicates this). It is, rather, to emphasize that several of the sublime effects of speech accounted for in this text are based in time. The sublime orator compresses time in order to assault his listeners more quickly than they can defend themselves. In Fragment 31, Sappho uses the space of an utterance to bring together the disparate body parts, which jealously tremble to impart some of that emotion to her hearers or readers. This is important because I will argue that the state of wonder characteristic of the sublime throughout the discourse on it is predisposed to the compression of time caused by the anticipation of certainty. In short, sublimity in discourse suspends certainty, and rushes the listener on to a point of conclusion.

On the issue of control, I agree with Freeman that Longinus does create a paradigm, but I argue that the paradigm is temporal. Sublime rhetoric works, at least in large part, by not giving the listener time to regroup, to question what has been heard; it overwhelms the listener not only at the limits of her imagination, but also in her temporal existence. The unity of sublime rhetoric is primarily temporal. Longinus's ambivalence on textual unity reflects something deeper about the role of certainty in the rhetoric of the sublime. Longinus's imagined listener rushes forward, pushed on by the striking thoughts, words, and arrangement heard, to a conclusion reached not by judgment, but by the emotions. I say that this establishment of haste in the sublime is paradigmatic and that it lends itself to a symptomatic forgetting of time because we will see something similar in both Burke and Kant. I would not say, however, that Longinus's haste is to move past the impasse of the sublime to a conclusion whose benefits are primarily

ideological. Rather, I would say that Longinus, more than any other writer in the sublime tradition, recognizes the haste brought on by the sublime and uses it to the advantage of the speaker. The sublime robs the listener not only of reason and freedom, but also of the time to reflect. Its gift, and here is where I agree again with Freeman, is a certainty that comes at some cost.¹⁸

I stated earlier that Longinus, among the authors I review, is the least interested in controlling the sublime. Longinus's motivation is to teach the methods of producing greatness in discourse, but there is also a goal here that goes beyond persuasion. Unlike Burke and Kant, who, as we will see, place great importance on the third moment (which Weiskel reminds us is determined ideologically), Longinus is not concerned with the end of the sublime impasse. For him, if the speaker can animate the crowd through discursive violence to do what he wants them to, he has succeeded. The audience has reached its hasty conclusion (indeed, putting the sublime beyond persuasion indicates that it is all the more ripe for abuse), and the speaker goes on his way, without regard for any further result. For Longinus, there is no ideological goal, and his subjects do not need to recover themselves with reference to any greater power, as Weiskel would have us look for in his third moment. Longinus does not hide the error-inducing haste on which sublime rhetoric rests. His recommendation of tactics to work a crowd and produce something beyond the powers of persuasion might function as a fair description of much writing on the sublime, which works to enjoy the fruit of its conclusion, regardless of the haste required to reach it. In Burke and Kant, we will see an enactment of this very sort of discourse, whose goal is other than the one ostensibly presented. My reading of

¹⁸ The gendered implications of this cost are beyond my present scope, and could easily be the basis for another scholarly work.

Longinus warns readers that writers may be up to more than they are willing to countenance, and that the sublime is particularly useful for forcing hasty conclusions. Longinus exposes the form of ideological abuse present in the sublime, but it is up to Burke and Kant to apply it.

Burke: the performance of haste

Edmund Burke gives a different account of the sublime in A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, one often distinguished as natural from Longinus's rhetorical sublime. No longer can the sublime be bound by discursive limits, in which an utterance can function as a unit. Now we must imagine the subject standing before some terror-inducing object, but not so close that he is in direct physical danger. The limits here are those of perception and understanding, though there is still a pulsative, temporal structure to the Burkean sublime, just as there is with the Longinian. The subject experiencing the sublime is not Longinus's hearer or reader, subject to passions, but a physically present body and mind, as Burke presents an aesthetics informed by scientific investigation. In this section, I argue that a close reading of Burke's Enquiry reveals the appearance and subsequent disappearance of uncertainty in the experience of the sublime. The under-examined shift between Burke's initial statements about the pleasure of the sublime and their recapitulation represents an enactment of precisely the haste that Longinus teaches his pupil to affect through the sublime.

One of Burke's research questions in the Enquiry, if we can risk such an anachronistic usage, is "why and how do people derive pleasure from what should be merely terrifying?" To answer this question, Burke carefully distinguishes between

positive pleasure and delight. For him, delight is “the sensation which accompanies the removal of pain or danger” (Burke 37). It is not a positive pleasure that arises of its own causes, but a privation of positive pain, which becomes important in the *Enquiry* when Burke considers how something terrifying, such as the sublime, can give rise to any sort of pleasure.

Burke’s notion of delight highlights two important elements of his text. The first is the concentration on the aesthetic subject over the aesthetic object. In part because of his emphasis on the subject, Burke prefaces the second edition of the *Enquiry* with his “Introduction on Taste,” which seeks to define its key term and explain why there are differences in matters of taste, using a Lockean machinery to do so. The “Introduction,” as well as many other sections of the *Enquiry*, shows Burke’s commitment to Enlightenment rationality, as he strives to bring reason to a field that seems murky because “the laborers were few or negligent” (11). Burke says taste is made up “of the primary pleasures of sense, of the secondary pleasures of the imagination, and of the conclusions of the reasoning faculty,” and his purpose clearly rests primarily with the conclusions, which is a point we shall take up again in connection to his analysis of the pleasure of the sublime (23).¹⁹ Burke’s division seeks to abridge the infinity of individual response by setting it in the bedrock of sense perception and accounting for difference as a matter of habit:

A man frequently comes to prefer the Taste of tobacco to that of sugar, and the flavour of vinegar to that of milk; but this makes no confusion in Tastes, whilst he is sensible that the tobacco and vinegar are not sweet, and whilst he knows that habit alone has reconciled his palate to these alien pleasures. (14)

¹⁹ I return to the role of faculty psychology in the critique of enthusiasm in chapter two. The sense/imagination/reason model applied here as a basis for understanding the sublime already indicates where Burke’s motivations lie.

The “Introduction on Taste” introduces us to a subjectivity that is largely shared (we are all born liking sugar and milk, apparently), and only modified at the edges by education (which promises “alien pleasures”). This naturalization of pleasure and preference raises concerns, but it also marks the *Enquiry* as a text of its time. The “Introduction” situates Burke’s work as one of the most thorough eighteenth-century attempt to comprehend taste and aesthetics within available philosophical systems. It is telling that Burke has to treat the entirety of perception and consciousness before he can treat the sublime and the beautiful. The text’s later concentration on pleasure and delight is also characteristic of the need to start from the subject, rather than the object, to explain aesthetics. This emphasis on the subject can be read as a major break between Longinus’s didactic treatise on the rhetorical sublime and Burke’s more reflective approach. Of course, Burke’s fame and success as an orator might give one pause; his speeches no less than his writing may indicate that he understood Longinus’s rhetorical sublime quite well.

The other important element of Burke’s notion of delight is that it has a temporal structure built into it. In addition to being a highly naturalized subject (recall that Burke assumes we all naturally like certain things, then learn to like others), the subject of the Enquiry, and his reactions to objects, are always located in time. In order for there to be delight, there must be some moment at which the positive pain or danger is present, and some later moment at which it is relieved. I argue that it is characteristic of discourses on the sublime to obscure the passage of these moments, or at least to favor the final moment of certainty over the earlier moment of uncertainty (just as Burke favors the final exercise of reason to the initial pleasure of sense and the secondary pleasure of

imagination). This characteristic obscurity manifests itself in Burke's text in the uncertainty of the relation between the sublime and delight.

The question is, is delight part of the sublime, or is it an emotional response that comes afterward? This might seem like a hair-splitting question best left to the schoolmen, but it is of vital importance in determining the status of Burke's take on the sublime.²⁰ If delight is merely a response to sublime terror, and not part of the total complex named by the term, then it is hard to see that there is any difference between the sublime and simple abject terror. However, if delight is a part of the sublime experience, and not just an adjunct to it, then the sublime has a coherence of its own and provides a narrative structure for experiences of terror, which is obviously one goal Burke wants to achieve in his text, and one way his take on the sublime has been used.

The question of delight's place in the sublime is not so easily settled by the text, despite reader expectations, and even recollections, of the text. A close reading of a few key passages reveals a certain equivocation by Burke on this matter. Introducing the sublime, he says, "[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger... whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*." He goes on to identify the sublime with "the strongest emotion the mind is capable of feeling" (39). That Burke sees a greater range of pain than pleasure in the mind's capabilities is instructive, and it makes sense within his system since pain is allied with death, the inevitable absolute. He holds that "if danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain

²⁰ Burke's fine distinctions in the text (such as the one between pleasure and delight) also signal that the question of delight's place in the sublime is not amiss here.

modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we everyday experience” (40).

The sublime is terrible, and so are pains and dangers that press too nearly; the possibility of delight comes second, logically and temporally, to the presence of terror. It would seem at this point that delight is not a necessary part of the sublime, but a reaction to it. Without delight as part of the scheme of the sublime, the subject is left with the potential of unending terror uncushioned by delight, a point to which I will return later.

However, by the recapitulation of section one, Burke states:

The passions which belong to self-preservation, turn on pain and danger; they are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger without being actually in such circumstances... Whatever excites this delight, I call *sublime*. (51)

At this point, it is clear that delight, and not terror, is the mark of the sublime. Burke has made a subtle and important move here that is paradigmatic of discourses on the sublime: he has moved away from the temporal movement that initially characterizes the sublime and gained the certainty of his delightful conclusion. Delight is the result of the Burkean sublime, just as loss of control, overwhelming of judgment (leading to a rhetorically advantageous and hasty conclusion) is the result of the Longinian sublime. In both cases, there is a move to get past the impasse initially met in the subjective experience, to put an end to the uncertainty introduced by the sublime.

Burke himself recognizes the place of haste in the sublime: of the sublime, he says “it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force” (57). The sublime does not leave time for reflection, and from its incitement to haste come(s) at least a part of its powers. However, just before that, referring to astonishment as the most powerful effect of the sublime, he states that “astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror” (57). In this section,

Burke highlights the two-moment structure and shows his preference for the conclusion, accompanied by delight, over the moment of suspension, marked by astonishment.

Burke's preference for the concluding moment is paradigmatic because discourses on the sublime deal with a temporal structure of experience, but they often work to erase the very temporality upon which they are based. For Burke, delight already encompasses at least a two-moment structure: initially, there is the fear of pain or death, then there is the delight that arises from the realization that the feared event will not arrive. By the time Burke recaps section one of the *Enquiry*, the emphasis has shifted from the upsetting nature of sublime terror (characterized by a *temporal* vacillation in the mind) to the delight felt at the removal of the danger. Indeed, though Burke claims that safety is not a cause of delight, but only a necessary condition for its enjoyment, it could easily be argued that the recapitulation shifts the sublime from a play of terror to a play of safety; the subject who experiences the sublime must initially be safe, have this safety challenged, then enjoy the terror from his safe distance. While this may seem like a pedantic insistence, still I insist that this shift from terror to safety matters.²¹ By reconceptualizing his sublime in the recapitulation of section one, Burke reinstates the subject in his certainty about his place in the Other, his safety in the world.²² The crystallization of the sublime offered in the recapitulation represents a spatialization of a temporal process; Burke exchanges a perfected (in the sense of 'already completed') schema of delight for the process of moving from terror to delight. The progress of Burke's discourse mirrors the progress of the sublime as conceived in many such

²¹ Indeed, this tension between uncertainty and certainty appears in several sections of Burke's text.

²² Here I must agree again with Freeman, who takes Burke to task for his reinscription of aesthetic experience in terms of gendered norms. See Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction* 47-55.

discourses: there is an initial moment of uncertainty, as when Burke introduces the sublime without a clear relation to delight, but this uncertainty is swept away by the concluding, recuperative moment which assigns delight unquestionably to the sublime and in which all is found to be well again. In Kant's approach to the sublime, there is a similar preference for the final state of the subject who has experienced the sublime, though his elucidation of it partakes less of Burke's performative style than of the rigorous style expected of systematic philosophy. In short, where Burke's texts acts out the phases of the sublime, Kant's text attempts to remove them all together, and present only the product of the sublime, the subject re-fortified in his ontological calling.

Kant: metaphysical forgetting

It is persuasive, if not uncontroversial, to see in Kant's Critique of Judgment the culmination of the eighteenth-century discourse on the sublime. This is the perspective adapted by S. H. Monk in his The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England, a work which is still arguably the most comprehensive and thorough account of the category. Kant's critical scheme has done at once with empirical and fanatical or mystical accounts of the sublime, as the faculty of judgment is brought in to bridge the gap between knowing and willing. His rendering of the sublime comprehends what came before it and makes it part of an impressive philosophical system. Indeed, Weiskel says that "Kant is as important for any theory of the sublime as Aristotle is for any theory of tragedy" (38). No longer must the inquirer after explanations of sublimity be satisfied with vague notions of the expansion of the imagination, as with Addison's claim in The Spectator, issue 412, that "Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its Capacity" (Morley et al. 717). Nor need she

be hindered by speculations about the role of bodily functions (as with Burke's passages on the functioning of the eye, for instance). Kant's analytic of the sublime can be seen as a culmination of Francis Bacon's scientific project of exercising control over nature, for through the sublime Kant asserts the power of humans in the face of nature. In this section I will argue that, through the culmination of this program of control, Kant builds on Burke's preference for the conclusion of the sublime impasse, and achieves a spatialization of the sublime that would obliterate its temporal experience altogether.

Commentary on Kant is, of course, so voluminous that there is no need here to enter into a discussion of all the particulars of his theory of the sublime; a brief sketch will do. Kant splits the sublime (which can only be aroused—not to say caused—by objects of nature), into the mathematical and the dynamic. In both cases, the judgment of sublimity is referred to the subject, rather than the object, because the sublime ultimately refers the subject to its supersensible substrate, its attachment to a principle that goes beyond any mere object of nature.

The mathematically sublime challenges the imagination (the power of sensuous exhibition) to represent an object of sense (as opposed to the beautiful, which leaves the imagination in a restful, harmonious—and purposive—relationship with an object). We can think of the imagination as a sort of holding tank, in which perceptions are brought together and made to cohere through mathematical measurement. So, gazing on a lake, the imagination estimates the size of the lake in mathematical units, or in comparison to other similar objects, and a pleasurable, purposive outcome (one which does not upset the subject) may be reached. On the other hand, the object presented to the imagination may be too large to be represented, which is to say it exceeds the capacity of the imagination.

The expansion of the imagination to its limits even carries its own kind of pleasure, though Kant's text favors the painful (and contrapurposeful) failure of the imagination over the pleasure of its initial expansion. Reason demands that the imagination exhibit the object all at once: "reason... knows no other determinate measure that is valid for everyone and unchanging than the absolute whole" (Kant 114). In other words, imagination can be satisfied with a process of *apprehension*, in which a certain measure can be repeatedly applied to an object in order to represent it, while reason requires *comprehension*, which happens all at once and includes the totality of the object: "our imagination strives to progress toward infinity, while our reason demands absolute totality as a real idea, and so [the imagination,] our power of estimating the magnitude of things in the world of sense, is inadequate to that idea" (Kant 106).

From this failure of the imagination arises the feeling that the mind has a power that passes all sense, and this is the real pleasure of the sublime, which Kant calls "RESPECT" for "our rational vocation" (114).²³ On this point, Weiskel rightly points out that reason's gain comes only at the expense of phenomena and the imagination's ability to apprehend them, a point where Weiskel detects something of Kant's ideological motives (41).²⁴ The opposition between apprehension and comprehension is of great importance here. Just as Burke presents the sublime first in a process of terror, then crystallized in delight, here we see first the imagination in process, followed by reason's demands, which issue from outside time. I will return to Kant's treatment of time in his analysis of the sublime after glancing at his dynamic sublime.

²³ This rational or supersensible vocation is the center of the Kantian subject's being, what marks the human as human in Kant's account.

²⁴ If we consider Althusser's definition of ideology as the imaginary relationship to the real conditions of existence, then it does indeed seem that Kant's aggrandizement of reason is explicitly ideological.

The other type of sublimity for Kant is the dynamic sublime. The dynamic sublime finds the subject confronted not with nature's magnitude, but with its might. The imagination is not on trial here; instead, the faculty in question is desire.

[T]hough the irresistibility of nature's might makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical impotence, it reveals in us at the same time an ability to judge ourselves independent of nature, and reveals in us a superiority over nature that is the basis of a self-preservation quite different in kind from the one that can be assailed and endangered by nature outside us. (Kant 120-1)

One is reminded of Pascal's consolation that man is a thinking reed: even if we can be physically crushed by nature, and our bodies destroyed, we are still connected to a greater vocation that will not be at all affected by our corporal demise, though for Pascal the fragile human is superior to nature through knowledge, while for Kant, it is through his ontological vocation.

Regarding this vocation, the section of The Critique of Judgment that treats the dynamically sublime ("On Nature as a Might") seems to play a kind of shell game. The progression of events in the dynamically sublime seems like it should be terror aroused by nature, followed by the reflection that our vocation places us (or at least some part of us—Kant's subject here is split between the physical and the vocational) "sublimely above nature" (Kant 123). However, looking closely at Kant's narration of the experience of the dynamically sublime, that is not how I find the moments ordered. The sublimity of the all-powerful and awful deity (a prime locus for sublimity from Longinus onward) poses a problem for Kant, as the human is supposed to be elevated above nature, not left cowering before a wrathful God. About the subject before God, Kant says:

Only if he is conscious that his attitude is sincere and pleasing to God, will these effects of might serve to arouse in him the idea of God's sublimity, insofar as he recognizes in his own attitude a sublimity that conforms to

God's will, and is thereby elevated above any fear of such natural effects, which he does not regard as outbursts of God's wrath. (122-3)

In this passage, we see a version of what I am calling the shell game. In this instance, the trick is identifying the sublimity of God with the sublimity of the subject, which is also here the mechanism of distinguishing between the natural, above which the subject is raised by the sublime, and the divine, to which the subject is (almost) raised in the experience.²⁵ In the next paragraph, Kant highlights the importance of a presupposition that his analytic makes necessary:

And it is only by presupposing this idea within us, and by referring to it, that we can arrive at the idea of the sublimity of that being who arouses deep respect in us, not just by his might as demonstrated in nature, but even more by the ability, with which we have been endowed, to judge nature without fear and to think of our vocation as being sublimely above nature. (123)

Here it is apparent that the sublime, as a mechanism for raising the human above the constraints and dangers of the natural world, is dependent on an assumption, which turns it into a logical circle. The only way to experience the dynamically sublime is to know already that there is a vocation within that already puts the subject above nature, which sounds more like an antidote to the fear raised by the sublime than an explanation of its causes. More than introducing a logical impasse, this assumption makes it sound like the point of the sublime is not to discover the power of desire (the connection to the supersensible substrate), but simply to celebrate and re-assert it. Kant's dynamic sublime takes the same path I charted for Burke's sublime in the previous section: it starts out looking like a description and explanation of a dangerous experience (a vacillation between the pain and pleasure of danger and release), but ends up being a description and

²⁵ This subject/object confusion permeates the discourse on the sublime, and is one of its structural components to which I will return.

explanation of the ideologically motivated position of the subject (for Burke, the play of safety, for Kant, the already-decided drama of the discovery of the supersensible substrate). From this perspective, the analytic of the sublime sounds more like an exercise or an apology for Kant's critical system than an integral part of it that bridges between reason and desire.

Like Burke, Kant removes much of the danger of the sublime: physical danger renders the experience impossible, and any real anxiety that arises from the sublime is a simple mistake (either the failure to recognize the power of reason over the imagination, or an incorrect "frame of mind" which does not already assume there is a supersensible vocation). Also like Burke, though in a more refined way, Kant accounts for the temporal succession of events in the sublime experience. That the subjective (even if universal) experience of the sublime should be considered in terms of time is in perfect accord with Kant's system, for time is a form of intuition, according to Kant, which means that it is an *a priori* given which structures the human experience of the world (Kant xxxiii). This is important because it shows first that Kant is more thoroughly systematic than either Longinus or Burke and because it situates time very specifically, prescribes a certain role for it, and leaves open a space for something that exists outside of time, which will be key in the analysis of what Kant has to say about the sublime as it happens, structured by time. Time is a form of sensation, and the sublime rests on the supersensible or rational vocation. The very supersensibility of this vocation means that it stands outside of time (which it must, since it is given *a priori*).

For Kant, apprehension must give way to comprehension, which is as much as to say that the sublime collapses time:

Measuring (as [a way of] apprehending) a space is at the same time describing it, and hence it is an objective movement in the imagination and a progression. On the other hand, comprehending a multiplicity in a unity (of intuition rather than of thought), and hence comprehending in one instant what is apprehended successively, is a regression that in turn cancels the condition of time in the imagination's progression and makes *simultaneity* intuitable. (116)

Intuiting simultaneity is a problem in Kant's scheme because time is a form of intuition, which means intuitions have a temporal component. There is more at stake in Kant's sublime than a quirk of forcing the temporal into the a-temporal (or vice versa). The mathematical sublime and the possibility of intuiting simultaneity are inherently linked. For the subject to even be able to think simultaneity there must be a sublime, which operates the way Kant describes. It is interesting that, given the passage quoted above, it is impossible to establish temporal priority between the sublime and the possibility of intuiting simultaneity. Kant has pointed out, with the utmost accuracy, a key problem of the sublime (the resolution of its temporal movement). However, he makes the problem useful by conflating it with another problem (just as the deity gains sublimity through our proper mental attunement to our rational vocation and we gain a sense of our own sublimity through our attention to the deity): the sublime becomes the answer to the problem of intuiting simultaneity. Juxtaposing the problem of simultaneity and the sublime leaves us with an image that might be well applied to the Lacanian imaginary, characterized as it is by misrecognition: A person gazing at her image in the mirror, seeing a God gazing back, each edified by what she sees. This misrecognition is all that lets the concepts of reason into the human sphere through intuition. Lyotard treats the problem of simultaneity and succession, and he concludes that Kant's approach makes it "very difficult to classify Kantism among philosophies of the subject," because the twin

sensations of the sublime (the “departure” of the imagination and the “exultation” of reason) “cannot be related to the unity of an ‘I think’ ” (Lyotard 144-46). I would say that, quite the contrary, the split between the perceived failure of imagination and the supposed exultation of reason is in fact precisely indicative of the split subjectivity I am pursuing here. The subjective incoherence that arises between the two opposed sensations is a result of Kant’s attempt to suture close the aporia opened by the sublime. Further, Lyotard’s evident requirement that any subject be united by an “I think” is simply false.²⁶ Kant is indeed a philosopher of the subject, maybe even more than he realizes.

Access to the concepts of reason through intuition is of great importance to the Kantian system because his subject is much more at home in the fields of reason than in those of the imagination. Kant says “we soon come to realize that nature in space and time [i.e., phenomenal nature] entirely lacks the unconditioned, and hence lacks also that absolute magnitude [i.e., totality] which, after all, even the commonest reason demands” (128). The demand of the supersensible vocation is to abandon the phenomena and hew to the ideas of reason.²⁷ The analytic of the sublime exchanges the experience of the sublime for the idea of the sublime, freezing the subject in the timeless world of reason. Indeed, considered from a Lacanian perspective, this freezing, this insistence on the primacy of the unconditioned absolute, is nothing short of the destruction of the subject.

²⁶ One of Lacan’s greatest contributions is his concept of the subject, which allows for heterogeneity instead of unification.

²⁷ On the impact of Kant’s division of mental images from objects, Frances Ferguson writes “though the Kantian separation of the aesthetic has repeatedly been seen as an escapist attempt to make reality less real, it seems to me that the Kantian boundaries achieve precisely the opposite effect” Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (London: Routledge, 1992) 3. She is right, of course, about the effect of Kant’s aesthetics on reality, but only if reality is identified with the noumena. In other words, Kant’s aesthetics serves, in part, to reinforce his (ideologically motivated) split between the phenomena and the noumena.

For reasons I return to in the following section, Kant's totalizing scheme of signification, his edification of reason via the sublime, leaves no room for the dialectic that characterizes the split subject. This is one of the great paradoxes of the sublime: it is certainly a subjective response, but its tradition has tended toward the evacuation of the subject to be re-inscribed elsewhere. The Kantian subject gains great certainty at the cost of cheapening representation—the noumena will never be sensibly grasped, and the phenomena will always be shadows.

The question of haste, time's passage and the erasure of its passage, is central to my argument. What does it mean to base any theory of the sublime, a temporal and even chronological experience, on a principle that stands outside of time? For my purposes, it means that Kant has evaded the real problem of the sublime, and covered it up by recourse to all-powerful reason. I do not mean simply to critique Kant for supplying a gendered reading of sublimity which celebrates the power of masculine reason over feminine imagination: I mean to point out that Kant's critique makes the move that writers on the sublime since Longinus consistently make. That is to say, he removes time from the sublime in its third logical moment, and replaces it with an eternal verity, in order to maintain the integrity of his philosophical position. Kant, even more than Burke, discounts the momentary and successive nature of the sublime, and destroys its possibility by enslaving it to reason.²⁸ The question I pose at this point is, what happens to the sublime if it is not used to resolve a philosophical problem, or to support a certain

²⁸ Both Jean-Francois Lyotard and Paul de Man note the narrative quality of Kant's analytic of the sublime. They both cite the personifying and gendering of Reason and Imagination that makes Imagination's sacrifice in the sublime experience so clearly violent. See Paul De Man, "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant," *The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and Its Differences*, eds. Hugh J. Silverman and Gary E. Aylesworth (Albany: State U of New York P, 1990) 104-05. See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics, eds. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994) 187-90.

subjective position? What happens to the sublime if we subject the third moment (to use Weiskel's terminology once again) to a rigorous re-reading, deprived of its circular connection to a Kantian supersensible substrate or its Burkean defensive (in the Freudian sense) posturing against a dangerous feminine sexuality? To answer these questions, I will turn to a Lacanian account of the sublime, built around his idea of logical time.

Before offering a Lacanian account of the temporality of the sublime experience, I need to review a few points from Weiskel's The Romantic Sublime. This short detour is necessary because his approach is both structural and psychoanalytic, as mine is, and so it is necessary to distinguish my argument from his.

Taking a Freudian approach and applying Kantian and structuralist terminology, Weiskel splits the sublime confrontation of subject and object into three phases as follows. The first phase is "the state of normal perception or comprehension, the syntagmatic linearity of reading or taking a walk or remembering or whatnot" (23). This is the state we should find ourselves in most of the time, signifiers and signifieds cooperating nicely to keep us on track. Its lack of novelty (Weiskel even mentions a certain boredom associated with this phase) suggests there is nothing sublime about the first phase; it is a mere prelude, though necessary in Weiskel's scheme. "In the second phase, the habitual relation of mind and object suddenly breaks down. Surprise or astonishment is the affective correlative, and there is an immediate intuition of a disconcerting disproportion between inner and outer" (24). Here is where the real interest in the sublime lies, in its potential to upset boundaries and realign consciousness. Weiskel says the second phase is marked by a failure or an excess of signification: "[w]e are reading along and suddenly occurs a text which exceeds comprehension, which seems

to contain a residue of signifier which finds no reflected signified in our minds” (24). It is important that Weiskel imagines a residue of signifier here overpowering the mind’s ability to provide a signified. This is a point to which I return.²⁹

In the third, or reactive, phase of the sublime moment, the mind recovers the balance of outer and inner by constituting a fresh relation between itself and the object such that the very indeterminacy which erupted in phase two is taken as symbolizing the mind’s relation to a transcendent order. (24)

For Kant, this transcendent order is man’s vocation, his participation in the supersensible. For Longinus, this would be the moment that fills us with pride, and makes us feel as if we are responsible for the greatness of the discourse we have just heard. For Addison, this is the moment of the delightful expansion of the imagination. The canonical writers on the sublime all agree that the sublime benefits people, in a more or less calculated way, depending on which writer is in question. Weiskel recognizes that the third moment, the conclusion, is ideological: “What happens to you standing at the edge of the infinite spaces can be made, theoretically, to ‘mean’ just about anything” (28). While I am not sure we should heartily embrace this degree of freedom in the concluding move of the sublime, I agree that the third moment is characterized by various ideological motivations. It is certainly valuable to examine any account of the sublime for the ideological implications of the third moment. After this point, the sublime subsides, and the experience is over.

As a narrative of the sublime broken into specific moments, Weiskel’s take charts the waters admirably and clearly. It “renders the sublime moment as an *economic* event,” one which serves to dispel “mystical” explanations for the sublime (25). The schema

²⁹ Suffice it to say for now that Weiskel never countenances the possibility of there being something beyond the power of signifiers or of the superego.

works well with his Freudian reading (in which the second and third moments are the fear of and subsequent love for the father as superego) and fits in smoothly with the received account of the sublime. In fact, I argue that it fits too well. To write about the sublime poses an obvious problem: how is one to write coherently about a category that deranges the subject who experiences it? How to avoid the *mise en abîme* of sublime writing that, itself, becomes sublime—recall that Pope, in his Essay on Criticism, says Longinus “is himself that great sublime he draws” (680)? We can conceptualize this problem as one of exerting control, keeping the discourse from getting off course by imposing certain bounds, defining key terms (Burke’s separation of the sublime and the beautiful) or creating a complex apparatus to explain the workings of the mind (Kant’s account of the faculties). In each case, including Weiskel’s, we see an author acting out the sublime drama of confronting excess, and in each case (least so with Longinus, I will argue) we see excess turned toward a purpose without concern for the residue of that excess which cannot be accounted for by the newfound purpose. By breaking the sublime experience into moments, by paying close attention to what canonical authors say (or leave unsaid) about time in the sublime, we can isolate those points which Weiskel would call reactive, and which we (along, perhaps, with Freeman) might call defensive.

The other element of Weiskel’s work that I take issue with is his application of structuralist linguistic terminology (signifier and signified) to the sublime. For Weiskel, objects are signifiers, and the mind is the container of signifieds (26). The sublime is a rupture in discourse, which can come from an excess either on the side of the signifier (in which case it leads to what he calls the metonymical or negative sublime) or on the side of the signified (the metaphorical or positive sublime). It is surely an elaborate scheme

built here, finding either the poet or reader as the one experiencing the sublime, and asserting the differences in terms of metaphor and metonymy, similarity and contiguity.

It provides the kind of heuristic for which structuralism is so deservedly famous.

Weiskel recognizes the potential of building too nice a system, and he questions the division between positive and negative sublimes: “we ought to be wary of the tendency in structuralist thinking to turn a preliminary heuristic into a deduction. The structures elucidated in this book may all be considered instances of *sublimation*” (31).

Sublimation collapses the distinction between the positive sublime (the lack of meaning) and negative sublime (the presence of too much meaning) because it creates a structure in which presence and absence vacillate. Sublimation is one of the mechanisms of the unconscious, which tends to both destroy and multiply meanings, combining elements of the positive and the negative sublime.³⁰ A psychoanalytic reading of the structure of the sublime provides a context for understanding Weiskel’s negative/positive distinction, and brings it into a logical order. We can be more careful and thorough than Weiskel with the application of signifier and signified to experience. To state that objects are signifiers strikes me as an over-simplification that obscures a fundamental part of the sublime. One will not find such an equation in Saussure, and certainly not in Lacan. Particularly for the latter, and for the reading of the sublime I put forth, the difference between the signifier and the object is of the greatest importance, and is concerned directly with the founding of the subject.

Rather than locating the signified on the side of the subject, or Weiskel’s “mind,” and putting the signifier on the side of things in the world, Lacan holds that the subject is

³⁰ This is precisely the psychoanalytic take on jokes: they provide first a paucity of meaning, followed by too much meaning. The unconscious works to put holes in language.

made only of signifiers. A phrase found repeated across Lacan's work is "the signifier represents the subject for another signifier." This phrase makes at least two important points that concern us here. First, it highlights the importance Lacan puts on the signifier over the signified. Questioning the Saussurean writing of the sign (the capital S of the signifier separated by a horizontal bar from the lower case s of the signified) that would seem to provide meaning through the conjunction of the two terms, Lacan reminds us that the signifier can only hope to find meaning in reference to another signifier. As an illustration, consider the dictionary. The words (signifiers) in the dictionary can only be defined by other words (the greater problems posed by Locke's ideal lexicon which would align each word with a picture need not be entered into here); each definition refers only to the others to generate its meanings. Thus the signifiers are reduced to "ultimate differential elements," which means they only exist insofar as they are different from one another (Lacan Écrits 418). The relation of signifier to signified cannot be solidly established, but there are chains of signifiers which can be followed. For Lacan, this chain-like structure of signifiers is what matters in language, and it accounts for the anticipatory nature of meaning making in speech. " 'I'll never...,' 'The fact remains...,' 'Still perhaps... ' Such sentences nevertheless make sense [despite the fact the meaning is interrupted], and that sense is all the more oppressive in that it is content to make us wait for it" (Lacan Écrits 419). Lacan's examples highlight the anticipation of meaning that the structure of signifiers, each depending on the next for its meaning, gives to language. Anticipation plays a key role in my alternate model of the moments of the sublime event.

The other important point for my purposes made by the Lacanian dictum "the signifier represents the subject for another signifier" is that the subject is caught up in this

anticipatory (and retroactive) play of the signifier. Unlike Weiskel's subject/object scheme, the Lacanian subject is not a mind that perceives, providing meaning to the objects of the world it contacts. Rather, it is a lack-in-being (the famous *manque-à-être*) affected by signification. It is a lack-in-being because it has been cut by the signifier. To put it in Oedipal terms, the unity of the child and mother is severed through the intervention of the father, the phallus, which Lacan calls the signifier of pure difference. The essential problem of the subject is that it can only be represented by signifiers (which Lacan writes as the S of the signifier over the barred \$ of the subject, which can be read as a revision of the Saussurean schema mentioned in the previous paragraph), for this is the cost of the intervention of the Name/No of the Father³¹, but these signifiers cannot completely represent the subject. Because of the failure of representation, the subject is left to the famous Freudian parapraxes (dreams, slips of the tongue, and so on) that express themselves in spite of the subject. Far from being a simple matter of connecting signifiers "out there" to signifieds "in here," Lacan's picture of signification provides rigor that Weiskel lacks on this point. The signifier is of far greater importance than the signified, according to Lacan, and this conception of the network of signification and the subject's problematic place in it (it functions as a gap) gives us a richer system within which to consider the sublime than Weiskel's.

The point of the foregoing review of three key moments in the history of the sublime is to underline the tendency in it to reduce temporal experience as much as possible to a concluding, singular point. In Longinus, subjective uncertainty is

³¹ The *Noms* in *Noms du Père* does double duty as name and no because of a homophony that English lacks. Note the importance of signification here: it is the *name* of the father that makes the third member of the Oedipal triangle for Lacan, not merely the father. The Name serves among other purposes to isolate the symbolic function of the third term, which is castration.

manipulated in order to gain a conclusion that goes beyond persuasion's power.³² In Burke, the vicissitudes of terror are exchanged for a solidified delight. In Kant, even more explicitly, changeability, the mode of experience of the imagination, is exchanged for the certainty of reason's eternal ideas. The latter we might call a spatialization of time, as the events that unfold in time only gain meaning for Kant when they are divested of any further chance of change: they are installed in the unchanging "space" of reason. In Weiskel, the sublime cannot happen without its resolution through identification with the superego, or what he calls the participation of "god terms" (37). As an alternative, we need a discourse that does not follow the tendency to reduce experience to nothing.³³ Instead, our discourse needs to account for experience at precisely the moments it is shut out of these accounts. Lacan's idea of logical time is just such a formula. The essential point that Lacan makes by introducing the concept is that classical logic (and I will add, the sublime as we know it *even today*) presents its solutions in the eternal space of reason, and there are logical problems which the spatial mode cannot answer.³⁴ A further question, to be taken up after looking at the implications of logical time for the sublime, will be, how does this schema of the sublime in time differ from the one offered by Weiskel? At the root of these interrelated questions is the value of the concluding moment.

³² Longinus doesn't hide haste from his student: he instructs him in how to use it. In this way, we could say that Burke and Kant are great students of Longinus, despite the fact that neither relies on his treatise outwardly.

³³ Indeed, the category of experience, particularly as explored by its greatest proponent, Michel de Montaigne, could be said to deflate the signifier's powers of mortification. See "On Experience," among others, in Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. M. A. Screech (New York: Penguin, 1993).

³⁴ Even if a syllogism, for instance, can be presented as a sequential unfolding of premises, the goal of classical logic is crystallization, the kind of formalization represented by truth tables, where premises and conclusions are laid out all at once.

Lacan first discusses logical time in “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty,” first published in 1945 in Les Cahiers d’Art, then updated for his 1966 Écrits. First, we should consider the title. Lacan’s argument would hold that “logical time” is already a strange idea, if approached from the classical standpoint. Consider the truth tables created by classical logic. If one wants to know if the sentence “A or B is true” when A is false, one need look no further than the proper table to find out. The truth-value of the statement has already been decided, and there is no temporal element to its decision. According to Lacan, his

sophism... presents itself as an aporia for the forms of classical logic, whose ‘eternal’ prestige reflects an infirmity which is nonetheless recognized as their own—namely, that these forms never gives us anything which cannot already *be seen all at once*.” (Écrits 166)

Lacan argues that classical logic excludes time as a deciding factor in determinations of truth, preferring a method in which a single instant of sight is the guarantor of truth. As we shall see, Lacan will elevate the place of the unseen over the seen in the assertion of certainty, as he presents a case in which time is an ineluctable modality.

The second half of the title, “the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty,” indicates that there will be something of a recursive structure in place here. I argue that it is just this recursive step, the forward and backward movement of the subject in determining a certainty that is anticipated (and which could not be reached without this anticipation), that Lacan refuses to spatialize. In other words, Lacan will not do as Burke and Kant have done, re-conceiving the whole affair of certainty from the perspective of final certainty. Rather, central to his argument, and to my re-reading of the moments of the sublime, is the value of their unfolding. The conclusion cannot be understood outside of

the logical moments understood to reach it, and the logical moments cannot happen without the anticipation of the conclusion.

To illustrate his point about logical time, Lacan uses a puzzle of the sort one is accustomed to seeing in philosophy. The puzzle is precisely calculated to be insoluble by spatial, classical logic, but to illustrate the unique possibilities of logical time. The situation is as follows: a jailer must free one of his three prisoners. To determine which one should be freed, he has set up a little game. The jailer informs the prisoners that he has five discs, three white and two black. Each prisoner will have a disc affixed to his back (so he cannot see it), and the goal of the game is to determine the color of one's own disc, and demonstrate the conclusion "on logical and not simply probabilistic grounds" (Lacan Écrits 161). The rules (and self-interest) prohibit any verbal communication between the prisoners during the game, and the prisoners have no physical means of determining (through mirrors, for example) the color of their discs.

Given these parameters, there are three possible combinations of discs: two black, one white; one black two white, or three white. Within the bounds of classical logic, only one of these situations gives rise to a solution (that is to say, only one of these possibilities has a definite truth-value at first glance): two black and one white. If any prisoner looks and sees two black discs, he can immediately break for the door. The other two possibilities yield no solution at a glance (that is, they cannot be distinguished if the prisoners are supposed to apply a static logic), and classical logic would leave the three prisoners forever trapped.

Contrary to this reasoning, Lacan provides what he calls "the perfect solution" which progressively moves through the three possibilities : "After having contemplated

one another for *a certain time*, the three subjects take *a few steps* together, passing side by side through the doorway” (Écrits 162). The logic that structure this solution depends on has three moments: the instant of the glance, the time for understanding, and the moment of conclusion. Upon striding out together, each offers this reasoning for his conclusion:

“I am a white, and here is how I know it. Since my companions were whites, I thought that, had I been a black, each of them would have been able to infer the following: ‘If I too were a black, the other would have necessarily realized straight away that he was a white and would have left immediately; therefore I am not a black.’ And both would have left together, convinced they were whites. As they did nothing of the kind, I must be a white like them. At that, I made for the door to make my conclusion known.” (Écrits 162)

The instant of the glance suffices to eliminate the combination two blacks one white. The next moment, based on the hesitation of his fellow prisoners, allows the elimination of the combination of one black and two whites. This leaves only the moment to conclude that all three must be white.

This is a tidy solution to the quandary, but it introduces some problems of its own that become necessary parts of the process. Let us call the prisoners A, B, and C, where A is “the real subject who concludes for himself and ‘B’ and ‘C’ [are] those reflected subjects upon whose conduct A founds his deduction” (Écrits 163). If A can only rely on B and C’s behavior to figure out his own color, and B and C are in a reciprocal relationship, then the whole affair can be brought to a halt by any combination other than two blacks, one white. If A assumes that he is black, then B and C, each seeing one white and one black, could be caught in an infinite hesitation, each waiting for the other to be first to move for the door and provide certainty (Lacan calls this the “spatialized conception that... constitutes the only object the solubility of the problem”) (Écrits

166).³⁵ Lacan turns this objection on its head by first pointing out that “B and C’s whole cogitation is *falsely* imputed to them” (because no one sees a black disc) but goes further to give hesitation itself a value. Even if the combination were one black, two whites, the hesitation would not have to be infinite: “it is the fact that neither of them *left first* which allows each to believe he is a white, and their hesitation for but one instant would clearly suffice to reconvince each of them... that he is a white” (Écrits 164).

At first glance, this sophism (as Lacan calls it) seems overwrought and complex for its own sake. However, the importance of hesitation is at the crux of Lacan’s argument, and it sets logical time apart from classical logic. Once hesitation (an inaction that can only be located in the passing of time) is brought into the game as evidence to be used by the players, the previous logical objection disappears. The subjects of the game are not smuggling in “extra-logical” materials by observing the hesitations; it is as strictly logical subjects that they would all walk out of the cell together (Écrits 166). In the game, there are in fact two hesitations necessary if all three prisoners wear a white disc. The instant of the glance suffices to show all that there are not two black discs present. At that moment, a hesitation begins. A considers that he may be a black (an anticipation without which this moment could not move forward), but he sees B and C both hesitating. This hesitation is enough for B and C to conclude that they wear white discs (for B and C, this is the time for comprehending). In A’s imputed cogitation, he must realize at this point that he has set himself back by taking the time to consider that he might be a black, which B and C did not have to do. Seeing them head for the door,

³⁵ It is most decisively in this moment that one can see this article as a response to Sartre’s play No Exit, with its famous line “hell is other people.”

logical necessity demands that he move to catch up with them (this is his moment for concluding). Each of these logical movements is motivated by the passage of time.

What do we gain from this logical game? Leaving some of the finer points to the side, Lacan's article professes to contribute to "the logical notion of collectivity" and to provide a model for "*collective logic* with which one could complete classical logic" (Écrits 174).³⁶ Knowing that Lacan takes Hegel as a starting point for the foundation of the subject's identity in the mirror stage, this so-called "collective logic" takes on a different character than it would if Lacan were a thinker interested in "genuine intersubjectivity" or "I/Thou" relations. Logical time is actually much closer to the functioning of the subject than it may seem here. A final footnote, added in 1966, concludes "the collective is nothing but the subject of the individual" (Écrits 175). The drama of the three-prisoner game is not to be read literally, as making a point about subjects working together (recall that the only relation between the subjects consists of false imputations of cogitation, a forerunner of the famous Lacanian *méconnaissance*, which characterizes the false mirror stage assumption of corporal wholeness engendered by the reflected image). Rather, it explains the logical function of time in identification (note that each prisoner tries to answer at least a version of the question "what am I?") and the unconscious (the prisoners have to find their identities within a given limited symbolic matrix: the last four words could work as a definition of the unconscious from a Lacanian perspective).

³⁶ Those interested in the numerous complexities and subtleties of Lacan's article should consult Bruce Fink, "Logical Time and the Precipitation of Subjectivity," Reading Seminars I and II : Lacan's Return to Freud : Seminar I, Freud's Papers on Technique, Seminar II, the Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, eds. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink and Maire Jaanus (Albany: SUNY P, 1996).

Lacan makes this connection between logical time and the unconscious more explicit in his Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, given in 1964. Building on Freud, Lacan says the unconscious is pre-ontological: “neither being nor non-being, but the unrealized” (Lacan Four 30). Lacan likens the unconscious to a slit that opens and closes in rhythmic fashion, which gives the unrealized a temporal dimension: it appears at one moment, and disappears at another. In everyday experience, a slip of the tongue is an opening of this slit, most often quickly closed. The illicit meaning that comes through in speech is taken back up into the licit meaning of every day discourse.

“The appearance/disappearance takes place between two points... between the instant of seeing, when something of the intuition itself is always elided, not to say lost, and that elusive moment when the apprehension of the unconscious is not, in fact, concluded, when it is always a question of ‘absorption’ fraught with false trails.” (Lacan Four 32)

Thus Lacan mentions logical time in the unconscious. It is a typically impressionistic mention, but it is tantalizing nonetheless. It suggests that the opening and closing of the unconscious is structured by three moments: a moment of seeing, a time for understanding, and a moment to conclude. In the passage above, the important point for my purpose is that “the unconscious is not, in fact, concluded.” The third logical moment, based as it is on an error (in the 1945 article, recall that the anticipated certainty is only based on the false premise made by A “my disc is black”), does not conclude anything. The assertion that the unconscious is not closed by the conclusion reached about it applies as much to the denied or forgotten slip of the tongue in everyday speech as to speech given under the conditions of free association in analysis. Regardless of our intentions in coming to a conclusion about the unconscious, the Freudian category of the

primary repressed (*Überdrängt*) stands as a limit to interpretation. In structuralist terms, there is a point beyond which there may be signifying material, but it has not context that can provide it meaning. “Non-communativity,” Lacan says, “is a category that belongs only to the register of the signifier” (Four 40).³⁷ The third moment conclusion, then, must always be good enough to ensure the subject’s purposes (or to satisfy the jailer’s demand for logical explanation), but can never be the final word. The weakness of the third moment will be critical in our re-appraisal of the sublime and our response to Weiskel.

Let us return to Lacan’s statement “a signifier represents a subject for another signifier.” Considered in terms of logical time, the first moment is marked by the appearance of a signifier. Something appears to the subject, and it is enigmatic because this signifier has not found a place in the signifying order. I choose the word enigmatic because the signifier may present several alternative, even contradictory meanings, or no meaning at all.³⁸ The second logical moment is the time of suspension. In the game of three prisoners, the second logical moment appears, for instance, in A’s hesitation over whether his disc is black. The subject considers ways in which this newly arisen signifier may fit into the Other, understood here as the limited symbolic matrix that pre-exists the subject. The third logical moment, the time of the closing of the unconscious, is the time when the subject reaches a decision about the meaning of the signifier by putting it in

³⁷ This is a point often illustrated by Freud’s joke about the two Jews who “met in a railway carriage at a station in Galacia. ‘Where are you going?’ asked one. ‘To Cracow,’ was the answer. ‘What a liar you are!’ broke out the other. ‘If you say you’re going to Cracow, you want me to believe you’re going to Lemberg. But I know that in fact you’re going to Cracow. So why are you lying to me?’ ” Sigmund Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. VIII (London: The Hogarth P, 1960) 115. According to Lacan, the signifier is responsible for the human ability to lie by telling the truth.

³⁸ This flexible understanding of the signifier’s relation to meaning frees us of Weiskel’s split between the positive and negative sublime, because it short circuits the question of the lack of the signifier or of the signified.

relation to at least one other signifier (thus completing the sentence that starts this paragraph). The subject is neither more nor less than the lack found between the signifiers, the part of the world that cannot be covered by signification. This is what I have been calling the fundamental problem of the subject: it is at once barred from the field of signification (because signification always leaves something over) and required to represent itself there (because there is no other way to be noticed). The cost for the subject is the loss of *jouissance*, but the reward is dialectically constructed meaning, and desire that can be satisfied, at least momentarily, in the symbolic. These third-moment conclusions, these meanings and identifications that are enough to get the subject through her day, are always in some part false because the circuit of repetition (which is nothing but the insistence of signifiers and the representation of the subject) will bring them around again. Again, the key to this system of signification and time is that it always misses something; the difference introduced by the signifier cannot completely cover the real.

The sublime can be considered as an instance of the sort of discursive irruption we have been discussing. It is an event that stops the subject, which presents something more than the everyday, something that the battery of signifiers (the Other) is not prepared to assimilate.³⁹ On the whole, a very recognizable first moment. The second moment is characterized by the oft-cited vacillation between attraction and repulsion associated with the sublime. It is the struggle between the subject and nature to find meaning. It is also the subject suffering the fact that the Other lacks. The lack in the Other is a source of anxiety for the subject because it lays bare the reality that the Other

³⁹ I offer this as an explanation of the inclusion of novelty in the criteria of the sublime—novelty suggests something that the order of signification is not ready for.

does not have a place for the subject. The object that arouses the sublime in the subject cannot be named by the Other any more than the subject can be. This is why I would say that the second moment is, paradoxically, the real moment of certainty. Lacan aligns anxiety with certainty because it is not based in the dialectic of doubt; it is based in the failure of identification to maintain a place for the subject in the symbolic and imaginary. It is no wonder that the discourse of the sublime has largely glossed over this moment of suspension. The subject of the sublime does not gaze merely into a geological abyss, but also into the abyss of the Other. *Contra* Weiskel and Kant, the sublime is not a failure of the mind or imagination, it is a failure of the father's name, the guarantee of completeness in the symbolic order of signifiers. My reading of the sublime reverses the meaning of the second moment; to put it in Kantian terms (which are not a perfect fit, but are illustrative), it is not a failure of the imagination, it is a failure of the ideas of reason (signifiers) to live up to their promise of superseding all sensory experience. Finally, the third moment is there to satisfy the subject, to calm him down by retying bonds of identification. The very fact that identification is the solution of the sublime points to the failure of signification to cover experience because identification is a structure that always makes up for a lack.⁴⁰ The third moment, the conclusion of the sublime experience, is an imaginary solution to a problem in the symbolic and real.

Another venue for the play of the subject and Other is found in enthusiasm. There the question is again one of authority and the subject's particular relation to it. In the next chapter, I will treat enthusiasm as an encounter with the Other that sparks the subject to re-position itself in a way that breaks with the established tradition. In both cases,

⁴⁰ For instance, if there were a "native" identity, there would be no need for the complex relations between the ego and its ideals detailed by psychoanalysis.

there is a chance for innovation, but it has been more (though not completely) recognized in the case of enthusiasm than in the sublime.

CHAPTER TWO: Enthusiasm as Cultural Fantasy

Or do the gods inspire/ This warmth, or make we gods of our desire?

Dryden's Aeneid

When therefore a poet is able by the force of genius, or rather of imagination, to conceive any emotion of the mind so perfectly as to transfer to his own feelings the instinctive passion of another, and, agreeably to the nature of the subject, to express it in all its vigour, such a one, according to a common mode of speaking, may be said to possess the true poetic enthusiasm, or, as the ancients would have expressed it "to be inspired; full of the God:" not however implying, that their ardour of mind was imparted by the Gods, but that this extatic impulse became the God of the moment.

Bishop Lowth's Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews

Enthusiasm and fanaticism have no more to do with the dispositions or affections of the human mind, than they have to do with the human will or the human memory.

Thomas Ludlam's Four Essays on the Ordinary and Extraordinary Operations of the Holy Spirit

This series of epigraphs, stretching from Virgil to the end of the eighteenth century, serves to set the terms for this chapter's discussion of enthusiasm. In Book IX of the Aeneid, Nisus asks Euryalus his question about the source of inspiration: is it the presence of a god, or is desire the god within, the god of the moment? Inspiration and its source are the matter of this chapter. It is no surprise that eighteenth-century critics took a variety of positions on this matter; the question of inspiration touches a vital center of contemporary thought, the division between reason and fancy. Bishop Lowth's position is indicative of one of the most common; he interprets Nisus' question as rhetorical, because the source of inspiration is unquestionably internal and emotional, not external and divine.⁴¹ His epigraph says as much and more when he reduces enthusiasm to an "extatic impulse." Lowth is representative of the century's tendency to reduce enthusiasm to a matter of disposition or emotion, which I call the emotional hypothesis. Thomas Ludlam, a preacher and follower of John Locke, offered his take on the matter in 1797, boldly contradicting the predominant emotional hypothesis. Ludlam proceeds, like Locke, to take stock of the logical value of the claims of enthusiasts rather than simply dismissing them as the products of an overwrought sensibility. However, Ludlam is left at that point, again like Locke, poorly armed in the confrontation with the claims of the enthusiast. My method in this chapter is to analyze important texts in the discourse on enthusiasm for their moments of openness, the times when the emotional hypothesis lifts, however momentarily, and allows the question of cause, which is the deeper problem raised by enthusiasm, to come in.

⁴¹ D. C. Feeney disagrees. He claims that Nisus is not questioning "the *modus operandi* of the epic," but that his question points to the "problem of the awareness of the divine" for the "human characters... the reader... and the poet" D. C. Feeney, The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1991) 181. I prefer Feeney's approach to Lowth's; one purpose of this chapter is to investigate the status of enthusiastic claims rather than dismissing them.

The Oxford English Dictionary provides a convenient heuristic for the progress of the discourse on enthusiasm. The first definition, marked obsolete, is “Possession by a god, supernatural inspiration, prophetic or poetic frenzy; an occasion or manifestation of these.” The illustrative quotes for this usage indicate that sense one appears primarily in translations, descriptions of ancient Greek life, and attacks on nonconformists. Nonetheless, this obsolete definition indicates that at some moment “enthusiasm” referred primarily outward, to a relationship between the enthusiastic subject and his deity. Definition two, which is merely archaic, runs “Fancied inspiration; ‘a vain confidence of divine favour or communication’ (J.). In 18th c. often in vaguer sense: Ill-regulated or misdirected religious emotion, extravagance of religious speculation.” Here emotion enters the scene, and the fancy accompanying the “confidence of divine favour” shares importance with the confidence itself. The movement in meaning affected by the proponents of the emotional hypothesis is underway. Finally, definition three gives “The principal current sense: Rapturous intensity of feeling in favour of a person, principle, cause, etc.; passionate eagerness in any pursuit, proceeding from an intense conviction of the worthiness of the object.” By this definition, any sense of enthusiasm arising from outside the subject is gone; the fundamental interaction between a subject and a deity suggested by definition one has been replaced by a subject’s relation to his own estimation of the worthiness of an object.

It would be easy to explain this progression in the meaning of enthusiasm as a symptom of the secularization of the world or the inward turn we are all supposed to share with and since Descartes. Today, we are simply more likely to find the cause of intense passion within than without; the neurotransmitter’s interaction with the central

nervous system has replaced the poet's interaction with the muse. However, it is important not to accept this change in meaning as a result of inevitable progress because to do so is to accept the frame of meaning imposed by the imaginary dimension of culture without first examining it.⁴² This chapter, then, is an examination of the imaginary frame that reinscribed enthusiasm, slowly evacuating it of its connection to the Other and transforming it into a relation of the subject to itself in terms of its stakes, its motivations, and its results.

My epigraphs indicate the durability of the problem of inspiration and its source and something of the range of positions taken toward it. My purpose in this chapter is to investigate this question of the source of inspiration and to assess the meaning of the differences raised therein. Far from being a trivial matter of concern only to writers of epic, apologists for Hebrew poetry and secretaries to the Holy Spirit, the problem of the source of inspiration or enthusiasm connects to the principles underlying enlightenment epistemology as well as our own. In addition to influencing how we think about knowledge, the discourse on enthusiasm highlights serious and oft-ignored problems of subjectivity and the body. The discourse on enthusiasm carries with it its own concept of proportion and bodily function that we must be careful not to accept at face value.

In chapter one, I showed that the sublime can be read as an encounter between the subject and the Other at the point of lack, and the tradition on the sublime can be read as a series of answers to this lack in the Other often characterized by the haste engendered by the encounter. This chapter's subject, enthusiasm, is another key eighteenth-century site at which we can observe the interaction of subject and Other. Indeed, enthusiasm is a term connected to the sublime in the long eighteenth century, particularly by John

⁴² I use "imaginary" in the Lacanian sense here. I return to the meaning of this term below.

Dennis, to whom I will return. Just as I approached various texts on the sublime to see what they hide in terms of haste, here I approach texts on enthusiasm to see what they hide in terms of cause. It may seem odd that a period so stamped by the supposed progress called enlightenment should also be characterized by ongoing discourses on subjects such as the sublime and enthusiasm, two decidedly unreasonable topics of investigation. It is not shocking that the period's writing on the latter is composed almost exclusively of attacks on it. The problematic relationship between enthusiasm and enlightenment has led J. G. A. Pocock to call enthusiasm the "anti-self" of enlightenment.⁴³

It seems right to say that enthusiasm, often defined in the eighteenth century as (false) divine inspiration, is the opposite of enlightenment reason, which might be characterized by strictly explainable and repeatable processes for advancing knowledge. Obviously, any *Aufklärer* worth his salt will have no recourse to divine explanations or inspirations in describing the world. Clement Hawes argues that the manic style, which he identifies with enthusiasm, presents a challenge to reason, a "breakdown of dialogue" (14). However, I argue that enthusiasm's status as the "anti-self" of enlightenment goes much further than mere antagonism or exclusion suggests. Johann Gottfried von Herder is on the right track when he says that *schwärmerei* (the German term that comes closest to the English use of "enthusiasm") and philosophy are "brothers and sisters in spirit," but the family relation between them is even closer than that (qtd. Klein and LaVopa 90). It is not enough to say that enthusiasm is excluded by enlightenment, or to note that they have an agonistic relationship as Herder's "extremes of the human spirit" (qtd. Klein and

⁴³ Pocock titles his contribution to *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1800* "Enthusiasm: the Antiself of Enlightenment."

LaVopa 90). Enthusiasm is actually at the heart of enlightenment reason. The family relationship between the two is not as of siblings, but of parent and child. In other words, without enthusiasm, there is no possibility of reason.

I am not making a facile argument that would suggest that too much cold reason leads to a desire for something more, something emotional. The realm of the passions, often equated with the realm of enthusiasm, does not return out of mere boredom or in order to balance some cosmic scales, despite the narrative of the dialectic of boredom and exotic entertainment that Irlam sees in the early eighteenth century.⁴⁴ Indeed, such an account would suggest that reason precedes passion, logically if not chronologically. I argue that the repressed returns not to provide an alternative to the licit, a stay against boredom, but because the repressed is fundamentally necessary to the licit. This is one way to understand Lacan's repeated claim that the Other lacks. Reason's advance is made possible only by the forgetting of the first, enthusiastic step, which makes a lacuna in the Other, a point that cannot be represented by the treasury of signifiers. The lack in the Other, the hole in the universe of discourse, is the reason why reason cannot provide an answer to the question of cause. In this chapter, enthusiasm is transformed from a marginal concern, a way to name an amorphous set of emotions or a religious dispute, into a lens through which the fundament of reason is laid bare.

The discourse on enthusiasm in the eighteenth century

The eighteenth-century discourse on enthusiasm remains largely within the wake of Henry More and John Locke. More's Enthusiasmus Triumphatus [1662] provides a thorough reading of enthusiasm as a humoral problem while Locke's Essay Concerning

⁴⁴ See Shaun Irlam, Elations : The Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-Century Britain (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999) 31.

Human Understanding [1690] looks to unseat the enthusiast's claim by demonstrating his lack of reason. Locke's treatment of enthusiasm points the way for the development of the moral sense by the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Frances Hutcheson and David Hume, among others; their regime challenges the claims of enthusiasm while harnessing its energy. Throughout this development the humoral model, or the emotional hypothesis, runs alongside a more reasoned response to enthusiasm. More interesting than the schemes deployed by these authors to dispute or to harness enthusiasm are their moments of failure or inconsistency; the very existence of multiple arguments against reason, sometimes appearing successively in one text, suggests these arguments cannot stand on their own.

In this long running critique of enthusiasm, there are moments when the fence that would keep the enthusiast out of the fields of reason is down, however momentarily. Here and there are glimpses of the possibility that enthusiasm cannot be resolved into a matter of emotion, that there may be something more behind it, which is not quite so much as to say something divine, but it also is not to stop all that far short of it, either. To put it another way, there are occasional moments when the imaginary scheme that keeps reason upright teeters, or even threatens to disappear altogether.⁴⁵ As in my readings of the discourse on the sublime, where I try to locate moments of haste, here I try to locate moments when the finished picture of enthusiasm shows a stray mark, a hair out of place. To understand the attack on enthusiasm and its stakes, one must put texts in motion, and see how their repeated structural elements develop.

⁴⁵ John Dennis's writings on enthusiasm, which I treat in the next section, represent just such a teetering point.

Of course, there are historical links among the authors who write against enthusiasm in this period and therefore, shared interests. In post-revolutionary England, there was a strong distrust of any fervent belief that bore even a passing resemblance to Puritanism. The connection of enthusiasm to melancholy (the former often appears as a species of the latter) places the topic squarely in the interest of those who study literature and science. Thematically, enthusiasm is connected to that fleeting breath of fame usually called vanity whose critique haunts the soberest poets of the century (Pope and Johnson, for instance). The question of enthusiasm's place in the rapidly growing eighteenth-century industrial economy, and its accompanying disciplines of time- and labor-management is certainly one that should be asked. As a term that upsets boundaries, enthusiasm has much to contribute to discussions of sensibility, particularly those that gender sensibility feminine and reason masculine. These are but a few touchstones in the discourse on enthusiasm that should be (and in some cases is) happening about the eighteenth century. Because the term intersects with so many established parts of the discourse on eighteenth-century literature and culture, and because it is multivalent and evanescent, a clear definition of enthusiasm must be established in any project that deals with it.

Jon Mee's Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period makes a strong case for a particular understanding of enthusiasm, reading it as a discursive formation and taking a Foucauldian approach to its application in regulation. Such an approach is valuable for the nuanced picture it creates of the discursive appropriation and cultural use of enthusiasm in the period. The texture of discursive change and exchange is well presented in the book. However, and this is a

point I shall develop throughout the chapter, there is an important subjective dimension that such a Foucauldian approach misses. Because, like many structuralist approaches, this one concentrates on the discursive matrix of the culture, one is left to conclude that there are no subjects, but only different positions that can be adopted, dependent on a whole host of discursive factors (race, class, gender, and so on) determined within the culture. This Foucauldian approach can give a detailed and persuasive picture of what Lacan calls the Other, but it is not concerned with the lack in the Other or the place of the subject. This elision of the subject and the Other's lack means that there may be a powerful description, but little in the way of motivation. In other words, Mee's Foucauldian approach addresses the question of *how* enthusiasm was constructed, and the way it was deployed within various interconnected discourses, but it does not address *why* it was constructed in the first place. I hope that my approach will propose an alternative that does not end up writing the history of the discourse merely as a set of responses to other discourses. To put it another way, I propose an investigation of enthusiasm that accounts for the place of the subject (understood as a privileged point both inside and outside the system of representation that makes discourse possible) in key moments presented by Alcmaeon, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, and More.⁴⁶

In order to understand a massive cultural phenomenon such as enthusiasm and the discourse on it, a structure is indispensable. Enthusiasm (or more specifically, the discourse on it) is a cultural fantasy. By calling it a fantasy, I do not mean to imply it has no effect on subjects or the discourses in which they are constructed. In fact, to call it a fantasy is to situate enthusiasm as one of the structures that supports the reality of the

⁴⁶ Of course there are other moments in the history of this discourse, but these are particularly well-suited to establishing my scheme of enthusiasm as cultural fantasy and they have been chosen for their importance to eighteenth-century applications of enthusiasm.

period in question. Lacan refers to “the scant reality on which the pleasure principle is based, which is such that everything we are allowed to approach by way of reality remains rooted in fantasy,” which indicates the cultural importance of the fantasy I seek to explore here (Seminar XX 94-5). Recall that, according to Freud, the pleasure principle seeks to hold the subject at the minimum level of excitation. This minimum level, taken as the index of discursive reality (I, along with Lacan, would argue there is no pre-discursive reality; reality is a product of discourse), shows the cultural function of the fantasy in creating a normative reality (a process similar to what Mee calls “regulation”). In other words, without cultural fantasies, there would be no cultural realities. The fantasy establishes a stopping point for all investigations; like an axiom, its validity derives not from proof, but from necessity. As Jacques-Alain Miller says, “to say that [the fantasy] is an axiom is, indeed, to say that it resists the operation, the interpretative mutation, which supposes that one can add a signifier which makes sense” (Miller "Presentation" 29). When that minimum index of discursive reality is reached, there can be no further questions. The axiom, understood as the cornerstone of the symbolic order which nonetheless does not play by its rules, is a key concept for this chapter. Like any fantasy, the discourse on enthusiasm functions well enough until it tries to distinguish between enthusiasm and reason on the basis of axiom, or principle, a point to which I will return.

To analyze enthusiasm as a fantasy means that it has a symbolic component (the mass of writings and changing conceptions of the meaning of enthusiasm) as well as an imaginary component (the concomitant structures of identity and formations of the body that accompany the term). So far, this approach sounds much like the Foucauldian one

described earlier (though I think there is already a certain benefit in dividing the symbolic from the imaginary effects of a discourse). Lacan's logic of the fantasy would insist that there is a third part to the fantasy, the real part. The real of the fantasy is the point where meaning breaks down, where interpretation becomes impossible, identities are questioned, and bodies fall to pieces. As much as fantasy props up a certain reality, it always brings with it a failure point at which the fantasy becomes illegible or unlivable. Reading the discourse on enthusiasm as a fantasy yields a picture of enthusiasm that situates the problematic points where cause must always lurk in any signifying system. It will also further upset any possible binary opposition between terms such as reason and enthusiasm precisely by raising the question of the cause, the first principle.

For Henry More, enthusiasm "is nothing else but a misconceit of being *inspired*. Now to be *inspired* is, *to be moved in an extraordinary manner by the power or Spirit of God to act, speak, or think what is holy, just, and true*" (2). In offering this definition, More lays the groundwork for the fantasy of enthusiasm. He makes a distinction between inspiration and enthusiasm, because he cannot do wholly without the possibility of God than can the enthusiast. There is a symbolic principle there, an axiom, but it has to be tempered. I call inspiration an axiom because it is precisely a source of statements about the world that need no justification and indeed cannot be justified outside the circle established by belief in them. The eighteenth-century discourse on enthusiasm is grounded axiomatically on the notion that there *might* be divine revelation, but that the enthusiast is certainly not experiencing it. This distinction between inspiration and enthusiasm is found almost everywhere in the contemporary discourse on it.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ For instance, this distinction appears in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Meric Casaubon's *Treatise Concerning Enthusiasme* before More's work, and continues in John Byrom's "Enthusiasm: A

By making this distinction, More has pushed the question of cause back a little further than he might have by, for instance, claiming enthusiasts were simply hearing the voice of the devil.⁴⁸ If a person can be subject to inspiration or enthusiasm, there has to be some explanation of how we are to know which is which. Here the imaginary part of the discourse appears. More searches for the causes of enthusiasm in the “faculties of the soul,” stating that “[w]e shall now enquire into the *Causes* of this Distemper, how it comes to passe that a man should be thus befooled in his own conceit” (2). More’s word “Distemper” already indicates that there is a temper in this fantasy, a proper arrangement of the faculties of the soul. He goes on to enumerate the faculties of the soul, organized from the lowest, outermost and least under our control to the highest, innermost and most under our control. There are three faculties: the outward senses, the imagination, and reason or understanding. Reason and understanding alone are free to act under the direction of the will; the senses and the imagination are subject to sensation, whether it be in the case of the senses engaged by objects around them or in the case of imagination beholden to produce dreams. More’s very organization and particularly the values assigned to these faculties should make a reader suspicious that what is offered as a

Poetical Essay,” Theophilus Evans’ History of Modern Enthusiasm and Ambrose Philips’ Plain Dealer, among many others. See Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Holbrook Jackson (London: Dent, 1964), Meric Casaubon, A Treatise Concerning Enthusiasme (Gainesville: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1970), John Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge Byrom, Miscellaneous Poems (Manchester: J. Harrop, 1773), Theophilus Vicar of Llangamarch Evans, The History of Modern Enthusiasm ... From the Reformation to the Present Times. The Second Edition, with Very Large Additions and Amendments (London, 1757), Ambrose Philips, The Free-Thinker: Or, Essays on Ignorance, Superstition, Bigotry, Enthusiasm, Craft, &C. Intermis’d with Several Pieces of with and Humor... In Three Volumes, vol. 2, 3 vols. (London: J. Brindley, R. Montagu, Olive Payne, T. Woodman, 1733). The inspiration/enthusiasm distinction is also central to Shaftesbury’s work on the topic; its centrality is the reason his work on enthusiasm is not treated at greater length here. Even though he seems to strike the rare approbative stance toward enthusiasm, he really approves of something much closer to what More and others would distinguish as inspiration. See “A Letter” and “Miscellany II” in Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, ed. Lawrence Eliot Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

⁴⁸ It is surprising to note how rarely enthusiasm is reduced to mere satanic manipulation. Doubtless, there is a host of reasons for this, historical and theological, but they are beyond the scope of this inquiry.

philosophical explanation of the operations of the soul is rhetorically motivated, a question-begging arrangement by which More has his goal before he begins.

I say that the imaginary part of the discourse appears because this organization of the soul or body as something that works is precisely what Lacan refers to by the term imaginary. Lacan's famous mirror stage is as much about the imaginary formation of the body as it is about that of the ego. Lacan writes that

the mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation—and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an “orthopedic” form of its totality—and finally to the donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure.
(Écrits 78)

The mythic infant before the mirror forms an “orthopedic” image of his body as whole against the lived experience of the body in pieces; the discourse on enthusiasm forms an image of the body and its functions as whole in much the same way. Because there is not a reasonable way to distinguish between inspiration and enthusiasm in the symbolic, More is forced to resort to imaginary explanations of the difference. Axiomatically, enthusiasm and reason are the same. Imaginarily, they are easily distinguished by enthusiasm's failure to present a well-ordered soul. More's concept of the soul is characterized by its careful division between the inside and outside, voluntary and involuntary, favored and disfavored. The picture of the human subject that can be derived from his text looks like a hero of Western metaphysics; he is shaped by his own will, most at home in his reason and understanding, a master of his innermost self. His world is ordered by the division between the subject and the Other, a bright line between

the human and his milieu. This policing of the boundary between the self and the Other is a typical topos for a Foucauldian analysis of discourse.

Jon Mee looks at the problem of self-authentication in the context of enthusiasm:

Of course, the eighteenth century was not in a constant funk about the nature of identity, but it was alert to behaviours and forms of speech that seemed to put its idea of a coherent subject into jeopardy. To this extent, the subject was never allowed to be self-authenticating. (8)⁴⁹

Mee sees the enthusiast as a self-authenticating subject, much as More sees him as a mistaken self-authenticating subject, but I argue that the enthusiast actually appeals to the Other for his authenticity. Far from deriving his authority from within, the enthusiast derives his authority from a kind of contact with the Other unthinkable to the “coherent subject,” which must have its borders rigidly defined. This may seem like a minor point, but it is one I will develop later, when considering the place of truth in the *cogito*. Suffice it to say for now that, without the locus of the Other as a referent for speech, the enthusiast and the discourse he speaks cannot be understood. The controversy over enthusiasm is not about self-authenticating subjects. It is about subjects being authenticated by the Other in a way that cannot be easily assimilated into surrounding cultural realities.

The discourse on enthusiasm seeks to control precisely this inassimilable irrational foundation through the process Mee calls regulation. Here I articulate the mechanism of discipline through Lacan’s notion of the master’s discourse. The discourse on enthusiasm attempts to rein in the knowledge or the claims of the enthusiast in order to make them part of the “official” canons of knowledge. This is just what Lacan describes happening in the master’s discourse, which he writes this way:

⁴⁹ Note that the first sentence takes “the eighteenth century” as its subject, and the second is passive. Even at the grammatical level, the Foucauldian approach avoids subjects.

$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$	places: <u>agent</u> truth	<u>other</u> production	terms: S ₁ , the master signifier S ₂ , knowledge \$, the subject a, surplus jouissance (Lacan <u>Seminar XX</u> 17)
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Above the bars, we see the master (S₁) addressing the slave (S₂) as a body of knowledge. Lacan states that the purpose of this address, which he identifies with the entire history of philosophy, is to transform the slave's knowledge (*savoir-faire*) into the master's knowledge (articulated *savoir*). This distillation of knowledge out of the slave might be compared to Foucault's notion of the incitement to discourse.⁵⁰ The master then uses the knowledge to control the slave. As an example of this process, Lacan cites Socrates' questioning of Meno's servant in the Meno (Lacan Seminar XVII 7). There Socrates leads the servant through a series of deductions to understand some points of geometry. Socrates' purpose is to prove to Meno that the soul only recalls, and has no need of learning, because it dies and is reborn, always maintaining its knowledge. The interrogation of the servant leads Socrates to ask Meno "So the man who does not know has within himself true opinions about the things that he does not know?" (Plato 886). This question reveals that Socrates' method coerces knowledge out of the servant; it coaxes something out of him that he did not know he had.⁵¹ Of this questioning, Lacan says "the aim is to make it known that the slave knows, but by acknowledging it only in this derisory way, what is hidden is that it is only a matter of robbing the slave of his function at the level of knowledge" (Lacan Seminar XVII 8). This is the purpose of the master discourse, to extract a body of articulated knowledge from the slave it addresses.

⁵⁰See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality Volume One: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978).

⁵¹We will see another example of Socrates getting an interlocutor to articulate his unarticulated knowledge in the Ion, below.

This extraction is both an appropriation of what the slave knows and a way to define what the slave is. In More's discourse on enthusiasm, for instance, the enthusiast is reduced to a malady, a subject engendered by distemper.

However, there is a limit to the master's control. The arrow between the terms above the bars "comprises a relation... which is always defined as impossible" (Lacan Seminar XVII 109). In the case of the master's discourse, this means that "it is effectively impossible that there be a master whom makes the entire world function" (Lacan Seminar XVII 109). The master's discourse strives for a totality that is impossible, just as fully articulating a body of knowledge out of the signifiers of which it consists is impossible, because there is something more to the picture; knowledge has another relation than the impossible one to the master signifier. Under the S_2 , we find the *petit a*, which here symbolizes excess jouissance that is produced by the master discourse.⁵² There is a jouissance produced as well as a knowledge articulated, and it is this excess part that the master cannot account for or control. After the master's process of articulating the knowledge that the slave does not know that he has, there is a remainder that cannot be articulated. Eighteenth-century discourses on enthusiasm often go beyond mere diagnosis and etiology to assign enthusiasm as the cause of marvelous inexplicable phenomena, such as great loquacity or martial valor.⁵³ The side effects of

⁵² Notice also that under the bars, we find Lacan's writing of fantasy $\$ \langle a \rangle$. This illustrates nicely the view that I am putting forward that enthusiasm is a fantasy which supports a master discourse about reality.

⁵³ On the loquacity of enthusiasts (which alternates with silence), see George Lavington, The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared (London: Printed for J. and P. Knapton, 1749) 74. For a discussion of military enthusiasm, see The Collector; or, Elegant Anecdotes, and Other Curiosities of Literature. With Occasional Observations, (Harrison, Cluse, and Co., 1798). A representative passage: "There is nothing insurmountable, to men animated by enthusiasm... a weak, naked enthusiast, is more formidable than the strongest and best armed mercenary" (79). The text goes on to claim that enthusiasm is the true cause of the Greeks' defeat at the hands of barbarians and of Frances "wonderful successes" (82).

enthusiasm make up the jouissance factor lying beyond the reach of the master's articulation.

More's imaginary picture of the soul, which is designed to explain the existence and cause of enthusiasm, is rightly understood as a scheme that tries to account for the excessive jouissance of the enthusiast. The picture is a powerful shaping of the pre-existing melancholic imaginary inherited from Robert Burton (among others), and its hold on the century following Enthusiasmus Triumphatus is strong.⁵⁴ However, More's emotional hypothesis or imaginary scheme is not the only explanation of enthusiasm offered in the period. John Locke also explains enthusiasm in a late chapter of his Essay Concerning Human Understanding.

Locke's treatment of enthusiasm is not the most read portion of his masterpiece, but it is much more central to the whole work than its length might suggest. Locke's "Epistle to the Reader" establishes the ostensible purpose of the work while revealing his kinship with More on the imaginary structure of the soul. Locke writes

he is little acquainted with the subject of this treatise, the UNDERSTANDING, who does not know, that as it is the most elevated faculty of the soul, so it is employed with a greater, and more constant delight, than any of the other. (7)

Locke, like More, puts the understanding at the top of the well-ordered soul, and immediately makes the connection to the pleasure it generates. This take on the understanding describes the master discourse in nearly the terms I used above. Here understanding addresses the world as an object of knowledge, and its purpose is to render it in its own terms while providing enjoyment for its subject. In a way, one could read

⁵⁴ It is worth noting here that imaginary schemata tend to hold on long past any evidence of their "truth." Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, for instance, works no instant change on his culture's bodily imaginary; spleens and vapors continue to plague Britons long after scientific revolutions. Imaginary schemata are not easily unseated.

the pair of Locke and More as working from the same imaginary structure in opposite directions. Where More's explicit purpose is to attack enthusiasm, Locke's is a positive elucidation of the powers of understanding.

At least Locke's title and letter to the reader would have him believe that a positive picture of the understanding is Locke's goal in the work. Again, speaking in the letter to the reader of the work at hand, Locke writes "Mistake not... [that] because I was pleased with the doing of it, that therefore I am fondly taken with how it is done" (7). The distinction between the process of writing and the finished product is vital to Locke's procedure and to my reading of it. While the finished work is a treatment of the understanding, the genesis of the Essay does not necessarily bear this out. Locke famously relates that the origin of the inquiry into understanding was a conversation among friends, evidently "at Exeter House in the early months of 1671." James Tyrell, a friend of Locke and participant in that initial discussion indicates that "the discourse, on the occasion when Locke 'first raised the issue of human understanding' was 'about the principles of morality and revealed religion'" (Cranston 140-1). I do not suggest that this anecdotal evidence of the beginnings of this work convicts it as reactionary, but it is interesting to speculate that Locke's interest in reason is a response to a quandary about "revealed religion." As we saw with More, the control of revelation in religion is one end of the discourse on enthusiasm. The possible priority of enthusiasm to understanding in Locke's case is tantalizing, and it establishes that his philosophical treatise, though a perhaps more respectable alternative to More's screed, is an alternative nonetheless. Seen in this light, Locke's desire to draw the line between revelation and understanding

looks like a species of More's desire to draw the line between healthy and unhealthy souls.

While they may share some anxieties, Locke's text goes beyond More's in its critique of enthusiasm. While More is satisfied with establishing the imaginary regime of the soul and diagnosing enthusiasm as a physical and mental debility, Locke moves to extend the refutation of the enthusiast's claims to more strictly logical ground. Locke's great concern in the Essay is to coordinate assent and evidence, to be sure that any bit of knowledge can be resolved to its proof. Reason proves propositions, makes them into truths, "by deduction made from such ideas, which it has got by the use of its natural faculties, *viz.* by sensation or reflection". Locke defines faith negatively; it "is the assent to any proposition, not thus made out by the deductions of reason; but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming from GOD, in some extraordinary way of communication" (Locke 608). These two definitions, taken together, do not distinguish between the persuasive power of reason and faith. Locke does that a few paragraphs later, where he writes that reason must stand as the judge of revelation, even if the matter is beyond the range of the senses: "it still belongs to *reason*, to judge of the truth of its being a revelation, and of the signification of the words, wherein it is delivered" (612).

To accept revelation without first referring it to reason is the essence of enthusiasm (Locke 615). By making this move, Locke has managed to save revelation, establish the role of reason, and condemn enthusiasm all in a tidy logical package. As much as he has condemned enthusiasm as the "ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain," he has established reason as something more than man's own (615). However, the package does not hold up by its own standards. Just as More has recourse to an

imaginary scheme, Locke sneaks in an unexamined axiom, one that he borrows, surprisingly enough, from Descartes, as I will show later in the chapter. The unstated axiom is that the human subject can trust in its reason and it is the text's unguarded moment where the critique of enthusiasm falters. According to Locke, the subject has been equipped by God with a faculty that will not err, if properly applied. If this principle of the non-deceiving God is removed, the rest of Locke's system becomes a failed attempt to ground certainty in reason's terms. Since the status of God, one face of the Other, as non-deceiving is strictly beyond the limits of reason, Locke's system can only lead us to my premise, which is that reason actually relies first on revelation. Put another way, there is no symbolic order without an axiom, a first signifier, which is by definition excessive and incomprehensible from inside the logic of the symbolic order. Reason fails as a self-righting principle for the simple fact that it cannot right itself without reference to something beyond itself.

I choose to present Locke and More not for their genius but for their aptness. They are writers of their times, and their disquisitions on enthusiasm set the tone for the discourse as the eighteenth century progresses. The discourse teeters between apparently different explanations of enthusiasm, between the emotional hypothesis and reason's failure to right itself, but it always functions as a search for cause. I turn now to a few key moments in the discourse when the question of cause opens up, like the second moment of the sublime, and stares us in the face. These moments are mostly forgotten, buried in interpretations that quiet the cry for cause.

John Dennis's enthusiastic intervention

Enthusiasm, literature, and the sublime come together in John Dennis's critical works. Dennis, fervent supporter of the Whig interest and the Hanoverian succession, eternal scourge of the French (at least in his own mind) is better remembered for his critical works than his poetry, drama, or pamphlets, which have perhaps been forgotten for the better. His two most important works, the closely related Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry [1701] and The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry [1704], are both interventions in the ancients and moderns debate that seek to distinguish the two camps on religious grounds. The former work is in two parts, "The First, shewing that the Principal Reason why the Ancients excel'd the Moderns in the Greater Poetry, was because they mix'd Religion with Poetry" and "The Second, Proving that by joining Poetry with the Religion reveal'd to us in Sacred Writ, the Modern Poets might come to equal the Ancient" (A1). The goals of the two sections indicate the centrality of enthusiasm for Dennis's project. As his contemporary Theophilus Cibber points out, by connecting poetry's power to the divine, Dennis saw himself building on Longinus, tracing the cause of sublimity in language (Shiells 228). Dennis's dual interest in language and enthusiasm would seem to set him firmly in the line of Locke, but that heritage is more complex than it would seem. It makes sense that Dennis's political position would allow and encourage him to deal a little more freely with the potential extravagancies of enthusiasm and the sublime than did his Tory detractors, but his reception has tended to minimize the role of religion in his understanding of poetry.

The tale of Dennis's pamphlet wars, ill-advised schemes and nasty letters is rather too much to relate here, though parts of these exchanges helped cement at once his

reception and the popular understanding of enthusiasm in the British isles.⁵⁵ Marjory Hope Nicolson, a critic who deserves more attention than she gets, considers Dennis's critical work central to what she calls "the aesthetics of the infinite," which developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On his return from a trip to the Alps, Dennis

came back to England to develop an aesthetic that had been only embryonic when he went abroad, to seek for new criteria against which to test literature, and to make the first important distinction in English literary criticism between the Sublime and the Beautiful. (279)

Nicolson stresses the originality of Dennis's contribution to literary aesthetics, refusing to reduce him Sir Tremendous Longinus. She also goes on to carefully delineate what Dennis means by enthusiastic passion: "[t]he effect of the highest poetry upon the soul, then, is one with that of true religion" (286). Her recognition of Dennis's importance in aesthetic discourse and the meaning of enthusiasm in his work is as accurate as it is rare. I return specifically to the latter point below.

The discourse on enthusiasm, and particularly the emotional hypothesis, continues to color Dennis's reception today. In their introduction to "[t]he Longinian tradition," Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla treat Dennis's take on enthusiasm by noting the similarity of his divisions of the "Enthusiastic Passions" to Descartes' and Malebranche's divisions of the passions. They conclude that "such an emphasis on Religion and its relation to the Passions can be seen as an amalgamation of Longinus and the French tradition" (20). Putting Dennis in the context of the passions, a line of thought in which sentiment always arises unproblematically from within the soul, effectively robs his work of the vital difference between vulgar and enthusiastic passions. In short, Ashfield and de Bolla submit Dennis to an intellectual lineage destined to miss one of his most important

⁵⁵ For an account of Dennis's works, see Avon Jack Murphy, *John Dennis*, Twayne's English Authors Series (Boston: Twayne, 1984).

points, that the source of the sublime lies not within the observer, nor in the object, but in the presence of the deity. I am not concerned here to show that Dennis was right about the sublime, but I am concerned to recover some part of the meaning of his writings to help reframe the discourses on the sublime and enthusiasm.

Building another connection between Dennis and the discourse of the passions, and explaining the fate of Dennis's views of enthusiasm more accurately than he realizes, John Morillo writes that "Dennis's literary experiments in the discourse of passions were subordinated to the demands of a developing ideology of social class" (Morillo 24). Morillo's idea is that enthusiasm is fundamentally democratic because everyone has access to the passions while the cultivation of taste is fundamentally exclusive because not everyone has access to the education and leisure taste requires.⁵⁶ He sees Dennis as "trying to play the incompatible roles of person of higher quality and of abolisher of all rank and distinction, a person of taste and an enthusiast" (24). This claim, based in the opposition of enthusiasm and taste, is also based in the equation of enthusiasm with passion, and equation upon which Morillo and most other commentators on enthusiasm lean heavily.⁵⁷ Enthusiasm is only leveling of difference if it is merely a matter of feeling; Dennis's division of passion into common and enthusiastic complicates the leveling tendency, a point I return to shortly. Of course there is historical evidence to support the reduction of enthusiasm to passion and the concordant threat to the social hierarchy—Morillo sites seventeenth-century Anglican fears of enthusiasm pitched

⁵⁶ The terms of Morillo's dilemma begin to fray if one considers the long development of taste as an education of the senses—certainly Dennis's distinction between vulgar and enthusiastic passions does much to remove the charge that he's leveling class by advocating for enthusiasm.

⁵⁷ Equating enthusiasm and passion and emphasizing the revolutionary tendency of this connection is particularly useful to Morillo because he wants to show that Dennis is an important influence on Wordsworth, particularly the *Prelude*. In chapter three of the present work, I present my argument against labeling the ode writers of the 1740s "pre-Romantic;" it also behooves us to save Dennis from that label.

precisely in these terms, quoting George Hickee's fear, expressed in a 1680 sermon, that enthusiasm "*makes every private Christian a Pope*" (qtd. 20). However, it does not seem right that we, as readers of Dennis, should assume that he has the same idea of enthusiasm that vicar Hickee does. If there is a fear of enthusiasm, it does not come from Dennis but from the critique of enthusiasm in which Morillo participates by reading enthusiasm as simply another word for passion.

This view of Dennis's enthusiasm as too threatening to his class goals to pursue is believable, but not terribly interesting. In this conception, readers discover little more than that the dictates of revealed religion and those of social class are in conflict, a state of affairs that has obtained at least since the Sermon on the Mount and is not likely to pass anytime soon.⁵⁸ It is far more interesting to consider Dennis's revisionist take on enthusiasm and its subsequent disappearance from the critical landscape in the light of its challenge to rationality than its challenge to social hierarchy. By situating enthusiasm in its proper place, logically prior to rationality, Dennis recognizes the fundamental flaw of Locke's system (its necessarily non-rational axioms) and exploits it as the basis for great poetry.⁵⁹ If Dennis's version of enthusiasm is rejected, it has at least as much to do with its implications for reason and knowledge as it has to do with violations of the tight boundaries of social class. A close reading of key passages in his important critical works reveals that, for Dennis, the crux of enthusiasm is not passion; passion can be vulgar *or* divine. Rather, the crux is the source, the properly positioned axiom, on which the enthusiastic subject is hung and with which Dennis frames the sublime in poetry.

⁵⁸ Of course my treatment of Morillo does not do justice to the scope of his argument, but enthusiasm and class do make up the fundamental binary around which his reading of Dennis pivots.

⁵⁹ Dennis's recognition of the flaw is one reason why it is difficult to fit Dennis's criticism into Lockean or Humean terms.

The point of my reading of Dennis is that he has an important difference from Locke in his understanding of the limit of reason. Locke pictures reason as a dim candle—if there is something it cannot explain, that is a sign of our shortcoming in applying reason to the world. For Dennis, that shortcoming is precisely the evidence of another power at work. If we imagine the transcendental aesthetic as a long-division problem, Locke skeptically discards the remainder after reducing it as much as possible, indicating that what cannot be reduced is simply not yet known. Dennis, on the other hand, insists that there is something in the remainder that is irreducible. In short, we have two different understandings of the way the Other works; for Locke, it is an ultimately discoverable Other, a sphere in which all is delineated, even if not all has been discovered or revealed yet. In this, Locke takes a sort of hermeneutic position for reason, always advancing toward a goal that sits on an infinite horizon.⁶⁰ For Dennis, the Other will always hold a mystery. What cannot be discovered by the light of reason is not just something around the bend, but something that will not be discovered. The divine spark is there, but it is not within the bounds of reason to understand it. We can think of the difference between Locke and Dennis on this point as a difference between a closed Other, an ‘all’ that awaits discovery, and an open Other, a ‘not all’ that always has an escape hatch, a point that connects the subject to something greater but that also threatens to annihilate it. The real power of enthusiasm and the real danger of the sublime are only available from within Dennis’s approach to the Other. From Locke’s position, the sublime can only finally be a trick and enthusiasm a mistake.

⁶⁰ I develop this notion of the Other more in the following chapter, where I treat the Augustan relation to the Other more extensively.

At first blush, Dennis may seem to present a more or less Lockean approach to cognition and aesthetics. They both share a basic assumption that the mind may be divided into various faculties, the major fault line running between reason and fancy. Dennis's distinction between vulgar and enthusiastic passions even seems to echo Locke's approach to enthusiasm, in which reason acts as a tool to distinguish between revelation and the mere derangement of the imagination. Of the two kinds of passion, Dennis writes

I call that ordinary Passion, whose cause is clearly comprehended by him who feels it, whether it be Admiration, Terror, or Joy; and I call the very same Passions Enthusiasms, when their cause is not clearly comprehended by him who feels them. (26)

Dennis's criteria make comprehension the judge of enthusiasm, which sounds Lockean enough. However, the two diverge decisively on the interpretation of reason's investigation of enthusiastic phenomena.

Consider that for Locke, reason gives its assent to revelation. A good Lockean knows that scriptural revelations, for instance, can be found to agree with the concepts of reason in most cases and when they do not, he feels confident in rejecting them. Dennis's enthusiast, confronted with evidence of revelation, some all-consuming passion, also begins an investigation of the evidence. Most often, it will be possible to find a cause for the passion in everyday things, and this renders it merely vulgar. However, there will also be instances in which the Dennisian investigator can find no reasonable cause for the passion. In the absence of any quotidian cause, this investigator finds not the ground for condemnation, as his Lockean semblable does, but the evidence of divinity. This difference in interpretation of the lack of evidence is fundamental and marks two wholly different approaches to enthusiasm. Locke's approach sets reason up as a hanging judge,

hearing the testimony of the enthusiast with the assumption that the witness is misled or deceptive, guilty until proven innocent. Dennis starts from the opposite side, testing passion against experience to try to falsify it.

The distinction between these two ways of investigating enthusiastic claims emerges from Dennis's distinction between vulgar and enthusiastic passions. This distinction sounds very similar to the one made by Lock, More, and just about any other enemy of enthusiasm between true and false revelation. However, Dennis's distinction between common and enthusiastic passions is fundamentally different from the long running distinction between true and false revelation, which is based in the split between reason and imagination, and critics often miss the importance of Dennis's pair of opposites. Most commentators tend to seize on Dennis's attention to the passions in favor of his fine differentiation between them. Certainly, there is a large body of scholarship on the passions, and Dennis engages in an ongoing discourse about the various passions and their role in motivating human action. Dennis's lampooning as "Sir Tremendous Longinus" points to, among other things, the quick identification of his work with a kind of passion that was and is at odds with the polite world. The broad brush of passion misses the point of Dennis's distinction by trying to paint it back into the old reason/imagination binary. For Dennis, passion is not the indicator of the sublime. Depending on the observer, passion can stem from just about anything: enthusiastic passion cannot be told from common passion by outside observation. Rather, thorough examination and reflection can reveal, for the properly attuned observer, a passion that goes beyond the common and finds its cause somewhere outside of everyday life.⁶¹ The

⁶¹ Dennis vacillates on the cause of the inability to reach a conclusion in The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry. The cause may be lack of observation: "the reason why we know not the

cause of passion, and not passion itself, is the key term for Dennis's aesthetics of the sublime. For Dennis's imagined observer, the lack of reasonable evidence points to a cause beyond both reason and imagination.

The importance of the lack of evidence points to a different tradition of enthusiasm, one that has remained underdeveloped. In this tradition, the binary of reason and fancy, or understanding and imagination, is questioned. There is a third possibility introduced, divine inspiration as reducible to neither the dictate of reason nor the whim of fancy and locatable neither inside the subject as an error nor outside the subject as a reasonable fact, and it is this third possibility that interests me. This thing which cannot be covered by signification, which cannot be named in the symbolic and made amenable to reason nor dismissed by the imaginary humoral body and made a casualty of fancy, is the lack in the Other. In highlighting it, and making it the cornerstone of great literature, Dennis points to the power of literature to deal in the axioms of the fantasy and satisfy the senses, reason, and passions at once. This lack from which the Other speaks is not a point of sleight-of-hand circularity, as it is with Locke,⁶² but a point of sublimity, of cause working in its purest inexplicable form. The lack in the Other is the point where the subject discovers its annihilation, the failure of signifiers to represent; in calling it divine, Dennis pushes this point of annihilation on to its third moment, to borrow chapter

causes of Enthusiack as well as of ordinary Passions, is because we are not so us'd to them, and because they proceed from thoughts, that latently and unobserv'd by us, carry Passion along with them" John Dennis, The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry: A Critical Discourse. In Two Parts (London: 1701) 30. It may also be more objective than subjective: "He who is astonished is moved by the secret causes of things which are too high or too deep for his comprehension" Dennis, Advancement and Reformation 130. Dennis's very essayistic waffling on this matter shows his commitment to the undecidability of the source of enthusiasm. The point for my argument is not whether the source is this or that, but that determining the source is impossible.

⁶² Recall that for Locke reason is God-given and it is this God-given tool the subject should use to determine if a possible revelation is also God-given. In his investigation, the terms are never grounded but in the axiom of the God-giveness of reason, which is itself beyond investigation as it defines the boundaries of the investigation.

one's terminology. The power of nomination is to take the *nihilo* whence creation and make it the basis of divine presence, a reaffirmation of subjective existence.⁶³

The lack in the Other disappears when Dennis is read strictly in terms of class or history, both of which tend to overemphasize the importance of passion while obliterating Dennis's crucial distinction between vulgar and enthusiastic passions. In part, the project of the present work is to take up again Dennis's challenge to the standard understanding of the sublime and enthusiasm, see it through to its logical conclusions, and render its consequences for key cultural fantasies that still inform our thinking and writing today.

Dennis's fate stands as testimony to the power of Shaftesbury's recommendation that bad enthusiasts be jeered out of existence.⁶⁴ To counteract the powerful historicist and class-based reading of Dennis put forward by critics like Morillo, and to restore the third possibility between reason and fancy, a review of the discourse on enthusiasm is in order. Next I will trace the discourse from its origins in Alcmaeon's pre-Socratic writings on the division of the faculties through its unacknowledged pregnant moment in Descartes to show that the eighteenth-century development of the discourse on enthusiasm is just that, a development, and not a new reaction to particular events. In this approach, I am more with Dennis than Locke; in this discourse I find something irreducible that various commentators have been running headlong against for some 2,500 years. The cultural fantasy of the discourse on enthusiasm is, in each instance, a reaction to the lack in the Other, a series of attempts to fix axioms that need no further

⁶³ I see the mid-century rhapsodic poets participating in this tradition rather than the mainstream one, a point that I develop extensively in the next chapter.

⁶⁴ Shaftesbury makes this recommendation in his "Letter Concerning Enthusiasm," and future critics of enthusiasm have hewed pretty well to it, particularly if one considers that to ridicule something is little more than to dogmatically insist it is ridiculous *on principle*.

explanation, momentary stays against confusion that have become the very canons of culture.

Alcmaeon's Razor: The Groundwork of the Discourse on Enthusiasm

Alcmaeon of Croton cuts a somewhat controversial figure in the study of pre-Socratic philosophy. His dates are hard to fix (most scholars put him in the sixth century BCE) and his surviving fragments are few.⁶⁵ He is surrounded by lore, and has been called the founder of physiology, embryology, and indeed medicine itself. Of course the sparse evidence for these titles suggests these titles are unfounded, as James Longrigg points out but I argue that he is the founder (or at least a convenient metonymy for the foundation) of a fantasy that runs from ancient Greece through the discourse on enthusiasm and even to the present day (Longrigg 48). Alcmaeon's crucial division of the senses from the reasoning faculty is the groundwork of the imaginary and symbolic relations to the real underlying the discrediting of inspiration and the accompanying bolstering of the power of reason.

It may seem strange to go all the way back to a pre-Socratic philosopher to understand the discourse on enthusiasm in the eighteenth century. However, there are at least two compelling reasons for doing so. First, it is a contention of this dissertation that imaginary regimes accrete over long terms and that their tenets are not entirely subject to the explosive influence of the advance of reason. As I will show, Alcmaeon's notion of balance and its connection to spiritual health, politics, and cosmology is an imaginary kernel of the discourse on enthusiasm that survives more or less unharmed by the changing winds of symbolic advancement. Second, given that the eighteenth century was

⁶⁵ In a dissertation whose primary historical concern lies in the eighteenth century, it may seem strange to choose such an early point of departure for this history of the discourse, but my structural claims about enthusiasm require it.

in many ways an age of neo-classicism, an investigation that looks to classical sources for Augustan cultural formations such as the discourse on enthusiasm is wholly authorized. Indeed, to understand the eighteenth century (or any period, for that matter) as if its terms are wholly informed by temporally local political and social contexts is to compartmentalize history in such a way as to make its practice indefensible. In other words, the very fact that anyone now cares about the past is indication enough that our conception of people in the past should probably not be limited to their own frame of time and space.

The clearest connection between Alcmaeon and the ensuing discourse on enthusiasm comes in a fragment of his On Nature, where he divides the world into things seen and unseen and argues that of the latter, only “the gods possess clear understanding,” leaving men to proceed by “inference” (qtd. Longrigg 51). Beyond human knowledge, here identified with what can be seen, there is an invisible remainder. This is an early articulation of the axiom of the fantasy. Human knowledge can only progress through demonstrable inference, and to make a claim beyond that inference is to overstep a bright line that divides humans and gods. In this foundation of knowledge, Alcmaeon has already dismissed claims of enthusiasm as beyond demonstration, beyond understanding and without value for those who traffic in human knowledge. This division of knowledge relies on the sense of sight, a likely enough location for sneaking an unstated premise or axiom into the system. Alcmaeon has more to say about the senses, though.

It seems that Alcmaeon does deserve to be remembered for his studies of the sense organs. He argues *contra* Empedocles, that “thought and sensation are different”

and singles out man as the only creature who supplements sensation with understanding (qtd. Longrigg 58). The division of the senses and thought is the beginning of the division that later empiricists like Locke would use to deny the claims on enthusiasm; recall that for More, Locke, and a host of others, enthusiasm is untenable because it does not arise from the innermost reason, but from the intermediary of the fancy, somewhere between sensation and thought. This division goes on to have a long and fruitful development in the Western tradition of the humoral body and the great chain of being, two powerful imaginary schemes for locating and defining the identity of human beings.

If that division were Alcmaeon's only contribution to the history of ideas, surely we would do well to remember him. However, his division of the faculties was accompanied by another equally powerful idea, *isonomia*. Alcmaeon conceives of health as a result of a balance of faculties, which he calls *isonomia*; on the other side, illness is a matter of imbalance, which he calls *monarchia*. This distinction is a development of Anaximander's view of the cosmos as a system governed by equilibrium (Vlastos 363). Alcmaeon seems to be the first to use these political terms (*isonomia* is used by Herodotus, for example, as a requirement for democracy) to describe the internal relations of the bodily faculties. This matters because the political and cosmological metaphor situates the human subject precisely in its milieu. As Lacan writes of the mirror stage, "the function of imagos... is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality" (*Écrits* 78). Alcmaeon does not simply explain how the body and mind work, but creates an entire imaginary regime in response to the initial question of divine and human knowledge.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ By joining the human, the political, and the cosmological Alcmaeon fully articulates the microcosm/macrocosm trope which is quite current through the eighteenth century and beyond.

This pattern of solving a fundamental problem of knowledge (the symbolic relation to the real) by the installation of an imaginary regime is the cornerstone of the discourse on enthusiasm. In the remainder of this section, I follow the development of the discourse through some of its most important moments, adumbrated by Alcmaeon. The structure of epistemological challenge followed by a new founding of the initial axiom of difference that ends the impasse, which characterizes the whole development of the discourse on enthusiasm, is shared with the experience of the sublime. I hope to offer something of a sublime history of enthusiasm here, a survey of some important moments in which the void in knowledge found at the root of the enthusiast's claim shows through, like a dry spot in the dough, before it is kneaded back into the flour and water of signification.

Plato's Ion: The Articulation of Knowledge

The discourse on enthusiasm is leavened by Plato's Ion, which provides the initial stages of development post-Alcmaeon. The articulation of knowledge outlined in the Ion, and not unconnected to the knowledge problem raised and settled by Alcmaeon, is part of the critique of enthusiasm for at least the entire period with which this dissertation is concerned. Plato gives a clear early picture of the means of the critique, which is to question the knowledge of the enthusiast at its foundation, which leads to the question of his sanity and the potentially dangerous effects he may have on his listeners, all elements of the discourse on enthusiasm as it continues. The purpose of the dialogue is to investigate whether Ion's profession (he is a rhapsode who performs the works of Homer) can be said to be an art, a *techné*. The dialogue consists primarily of Socrates questioning Ion about what sort of knowledge he has mastered, since the rhapsode claims to speak

well about Homer (in addition to reciting his poetry) and no other poet. Socrates' insistence on the importance of mastery and the division of professions by the knowledge on which they are built works strongly in terms of the master discourse. Recall that, in Lacan's rendering of the master discourse, the master addresses the slave as a body of knowledge. This is just the way Socrates addresses Ion (and all people, it would seem), in terms of the generalized knowledge (Socrates transforms Ion's know-how into the articulated knowledge he calls *techné*) that he has that can define him as a subject. Socrates' questions develop through examples the point that Ion is the master of no particular field of knowledge, and that any number of professional people could better judge the beauty of various passages in Homer than can the rhapsode. In this dialogue, Ion takes the place of Meno's servant in the Meno (the place of the interlocutor waiting to be robbed of his knowledge), with the important difference that Ion, unlike the servant, comes up lacking in any articulation of his knowledge. Rather than any knowledge, the source of Ion's work is inspiration. Socrates forces him to choose between being "a master of [his]subject" (a position blocked by Ion's admission that he is master of none of the subjects of Homer's poetry) and being "possessed by a divine gift from Homer, so that [he makes] many lovely speeches about the poet without knowing anything" (Plato 949). Socrates' questioning process goes so far as to reduce Ion's being to nothingness as Peter Fenves argues,

as long as he rejects Socrates' interpretation of his excitability, Ion is not 'being' (*on*) but is, rather, movement (*ion*) that ... represents nothing in particular, nothing in general, and therefore *anything whatsoever*. (Klein and LaVopa 119)

In the eyes of the master, Ion is nothing. Put another way, Ion cannot be bilked out of his knowledge because he does not have any. In the Socratic terms of articulation, Ion is all

supplement (after all there *is* something Socrates likes about the rhapsode's performance), no substance.

The *Ion* presents the discourse on enthusiasm in embryonic form. First, note that enthusiasm is imputed to Ion through Socrates' subtle reasoning. Throughout the discourse on enthusiasm, the term is used as a charge rather than one applied to oneself. The discourse on enthusiasm is established as a master discourse as Socrates aims to define Ion's work as a generalizable form of knowledge, but is unable to account for something extra that is in the discourse, which he has to impute to a divine origin for poetry.⁶⁷ In that unexplainable something that is at the heart of Ion's craft, we see the attachment of the fantasy of enthusiasm to the real. There is a part that is inexplicable, and it will remain that way because it cannot be made into a *techné*. In a similar fashion, we see the beginnings of the imaginary component of the discourse on enthusiasm as Socrates gets Ion to agree that he is out of his mind as he recites Homer. I say this is the beginning of the imaginary component because we will see madness joined ever more tightly to enthusiasm as the discourse continues and the subtleties of the diagnosis multiply. We also see the foundation of the dangerous sociability of enthusiasm in the dialogue. In the image of the magnets, which impart their power through mysterious means to igneous rocks, Socrates suggests there is something passed from the divine to the poet, on to the rhapsode, and finally to the listeners. Certainly, by the eighteenth century, this fear of contagion, the idea that enthusiasm is communicable, reaches a fever pitch. I do not mean to suggest that the entire discourse on enthusiasm might be considered footnotes to Plato, but I would point out that, from a structural perspective,

⁶⁷ It is certainly also possible to read Socrates as achieving an ironic victory here, as he offers Ion only one niche in which to put himself, which they have agreed is touched by madness.

the most important aspects of the discourse on enthusiasm are present in this early dialogue, and an enduring cultural fantasy (certainly not Plato's most important, but also not his least contribution) is launched.

The Pseudo-Aristotelian Problems: The Imaginary of Enthusiasm

The Problems is a mixed text, treating topics as diverse as generation—"Why is it that, if a living creature is born from our semen, we regard it as our offspring, but if it proceeds from any other part or excretion, we do not consider it our own?"—and harmony—"Why is the octave a pleasanter sound than unison?" (Aristotle 119, 403).⁶⁸ It seems certainly not to have been written by Aristotle in the form we have it now, though parts of it (including Book XXX's treatment of inspiration and melancholy) are quoted by other ancient authors (Aristotle vii). The text on melancholy seeks to answer the question "why do men of genius so often suffer from melancholy?" In the very posing of this question, the Problems inaugurates the reading of inspiration (the real topic of its discussion of great men) as a physical malady rather than a divine gift (as it was for Plato, as demonstrated in the previous section). This interpretation of enthusiasm as a result of a physiological defect is a key step in the development of the critique of enthusiasm because it opens the way to considering it exclusively in its emotional, rather than its rational or epistemological implications. I label this tendency toward reliance on the physical to explain enthusiasm imaginary for reasons I will now explain.

⁶⁸ It is important not to confuse the nine-hundred-question genuine pseudo-Aristotelian Problems with another text popular in the eighteenth century loosely attributed to Aristotle and often called the Problems. I am dealing with the nine-hundred-question, "genuine" pseudo-Aristotelian text. For more on the fascinating history of the other text, along with an analysis of the authority of these texts, see Ann Blair, "Authorship in the Popular 'Problemata Aristotelis'," Early Science and Medicine 4.3 (1999). E. S. Forster indicates that the passage I am most interested in, problem XXX, was most likely written by Aristotle himself. See E. S. Forster, "The Pseudo-Aristotelian Problems: Their Nature and Composition," The Classical Quarterly 22.3/4 (1928): 165.

The Lacanian imaginary cannot be identified with imagination, nor does it refer to all that does not make up a part of reality (Ragland 138). Rather, the imaginary is the totality of ego relations that make up for the fact that the body is experienced as fragmented and that there is no sexual rapport.⁶⁹ In his famous piece, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function,” Lacan says:

For the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted, but in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it.
(Lacan Écrits 76)

The wholeness of the body only occurs to the subject from outside, and it is this wholeness that the subject embraces over the “turbulent movements” of the experience of the body in pieces.⁷⁰ At a cultural level, the mirror image of the infant becomes a metaphor for the thinking about the body that provides its wholeness. Because this wholeness comes from outside, from the world of culture (in the metaphor I am establishing) the imaginary order functions “to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality—or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt* (Lacan Écrits 78). Beyond the infantile mirror stage, culture functions to provide an imaginary account of the workings of the body and its connections to the (equally imaginary) world around it.⁷¹ A literary example of such ordering of the world and man’s place in it is Pope’s Essay on Man, in which statements such as this one abound:

⁶⁹ The lack of sexual rapport indicates that, for Lacan, there will never be a figurable ratio, a way to write the sexual relationship between the sexes because their divide is asymmetrical. For more on the sexual non-rapport, see Lacan, Seminar XX.

⁷⁰ The body is not experienced as a whole because the organs of sensation, the erogenous zones, act like discrete entities according to psychoanalysis.

⁷¹ For a fine account of the making of bodies in this imaginary sense, see Thomas Walter Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990). Laqueur’s account is

Then say not Man's imperfect, Heav'n in fault;
 Say rather, Man's as perfect as he ought;
 His knowledge measur'd to his state and place
 His time a moment, and a point his space. (69-72)

The function of such statements, and indeed, of the poem, is to situate an ego in a well-ordered environment, which includes elements of time and space as constraints.⁷² In the context of the cultural fantasy of enthusiasm, the imaginary component is the well-developed machinery of the body (and, consequently, the world or environment) that is connected to various theories of inspiration.

Among the prime functions of such thinking about the body is the establishment of cause. Consider our current psycho-pharmacological imaginary. Within it, the cause of maladies is often an imbalance in the chemistry of the brain. The investigation into cause stops there, because the chemistry is something that can be manipulated, sometimes even successfully. Likewise, there can be no doubt that the humoral body of a former imaginary regime was sometimes successfully treated in the mineral waters of Bath, for instance. The point of an analysis of cultural imaginary formations is not to say they are right or wrong (though imaginary schemes are, as a rule, tainted by ideology), but to establish the parameters in which thinking about the body happens at various times and places.

It is useful here to consider Althusser's definition of ideology in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," where he writes "Ideology is a 'Representation' of the

particularly worthy because it charts the development of a powerful imaginary regime whose purpose was precisely to posit a rapport between the sexes, to overcome what Lacan would call the real of the sexual non-rapport.

⁷² Another literary example of such situating of the body in its environment (and one that trades even more in the language of humors) is found in *Paradise Lost*. Recall that Adam and Eve's physiologies are in perfect harmony with the world before the fall, exhaling the remnants of digestion in gentle vapors during sleep. This harmony is one of the casualties of the fall, but the important point here is that this harmony or discord is one of the topics through which Milton establishes the world of *Paradise Lost*.

Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to Their Real Conditions of Existence” (Althusser 162). The imaginary relation always obscures real conditions of existence (the sexual non-rapport alluded to earlier) and, in a Marxist analysis, this ideology always works to the benefit of the haves and the detriment of the have-nots. I do not feel the need to be quite so strident in the critique I draw by analyzing the imaginary regime of enthusiasm (I think to say “the ideology of enthusiasm,” a phrase that Althusser’s terminology would authorize, risks losing the vital, specifically imaginary element). For the present, I will say that the imaginary component of any fantasy is the part that functions smoothly, that wards off objection and failure. The lesson psychoanalysis teaches us, a propos of the imaginary, might be “beware of what works too well.” As the discourse on enthusiasm develops, its imaginary trappings become at once the tools of its denunciation and the tenets of reasonable opposition: sanity, clarity, and sobriety.

Like Plato’s Ion, the pseudo-Aristotelian Problems treats the topic of poetic inspiration, trying to comprehend why genius should so often be affected with melancholy.⁷³ In so doing, it brings together the discourse on enthusiasm and the Hippocratic doctrine of the humors for the first time, with all that means in terms of the imaginary: the enthusiast is no longer simply an inspired fool, lacking in articulable knowledge. Instead, the enthusiast is now a sick person, whose body is out of tune, distempered. We can read the Problems as taking up where Socrates has left off in the

⁷³ I say “pseudo-Aristotelian” because “The authorship of the *Problems*... is in considerable doubt” (Radden 55). Certainly in the eighteenth century, the Problems was accepted as a genuine Aristotelian text, with all that meant in terms of authority for the period.

Ion, with the topic of madness, but here the imaginary has taken on a more specific shape, the diagnosis of melancholia.⁷⁴ The text opens with the question:

Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are infected by the diseases arising from black bile, as the story of Heracles among the heroes tells? (Radden 57)

Certainly, there is an air of question begging here, but this fallacy indicates the author's certainty that there *is* a connection between greatness and melancholy. This certainty attests to a conception of genius already in the air by the time of the composition of the Problems. The concept of the melancholic subject brings him in line with nature:

“melancholic humour is already mixed in nature; for it is a mixture of hot and cold; for nature consists of these two elements” (Radden 57-8). This natural explanation of madness is typical of all imaginary accounts of cause; they always seek to keep an idea of nature, of the functioning of the world, central and inviolate, which gives an ideal by which subjects can be judged in terms of temperance. It is also worth noticing the place of hot and cold here. The discourse on enthusiasm will maintain this language of heat throughout the eighteenth century and beyond, in no small part because of the popularity of Galen.⁷⁵ That melancholy is not far from inspiration is attested to by the following passage: “But many, because this heat is near to the seat of the mind, are affected by the diseases of madness or frenzy, which accounts for the sibyls, soothsayers, and all inspired persons, when their condition is due not to disease but to a natural mixture” (Radden 58).

⁷⁴ On the secularization of Plato's notion of divine madness, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Saxl Fritz, Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, History, and Art (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

⁷⁵ On the importance of Galen for the imaginary body up to and even after the birth of science, see Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud. For Galen's problematic position between the ancients and moderns, see Richard Foster Jones, Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1961).

This passage also distinguishes between elements of character and elements of pathology, claiming that there are those pre-disposed to certain effects of black bile, a point that we will see made again in the discourse on enthusiasm. Disorders of the black bile can have a host of different effects: “with some the symptoms are epileptic, with others apoplectic, other again are given to deep despondency or to fear, others are over-confident” (Radden 58). In the broad range of effects describable within this imaginary scheme of melancholia, we see that one purpose of the discourse is to account for the surplus jouissance it engenders by naming and classifying, by explaining causes.

The intricacies of heat and cold and the various organs the black bile can affect are not of the utmost importance to my purpose. What matters is the connection of inspiration to melancholy and the resultant modification of the imaginary sketched out for the inspired poet. The text argues that great inspiration comes from an overheating of the black bile characterized as melancholic.⁷⁶ Inspiration is not, as with Plato, simply a matter of divinely inspired madness, but is a physical problem of bodily spirits. Aristotle provides the imaginary framework of humors that will accompany enthusiasm for a very long time.⁷⁷ That inspiration may be a symptom of the vapors suggests that it may essentially be a mistake, a malfunctioning of the body explainable within the imaginary; Casaubon and More make the same move, as I will show later. In this way, the Problems presents an ambivalence that it has no interest in resolving: men of genius, who do great things in philosophy, statecraft, and poetry, are ultimately sick. It is marvelous to see

⁷⁶ Following the exact meanings and changes in the use of “melancholy” is beyond the scope of this work. For an interesting, if not over-reaching, survey of melancholy, see Jennifer Radden, ed., The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

⁷⁷ Just how long the physical model of cause suggested by the theory of humors has lasted is not easy to establish. It is a fascinating question, and one that I will offer a few words on later, to consider how different our pharmacological imaginary is from the humoral imaginary of Pseudo Aristotle.

how little trouble this gives Aristotle. The Problems begins the long-running substitute of physical malady for divine presence as the cause of enthusiasm.

This doubt about the value and source of inspiration will also haunt the discourse on enthusiasm. I hold that inspiration is a mystery, and that reason gives us no tool to evaluate the relative merit of claims made about it. Because it goes beyond explanation, beyond the meaning usually generated by signification, enthusiasm puts causality in question. The recourse to the imaginary is an easy way to discursively explain one conundrum with another that is more easily accepted.⁷⁸ This imaginary development in the discourse on enthusiasm is the basis of seemingly ‘natural’ accounts that are used as explanations for reason’s shortcomings. The imaginary functions as a system that is complete and consistent (in the mathematical sense), as long as it is not scrutinized too closely. Its purpose is to provide a place for the subject, which is essentially placeless. When it subjected to inspection, it is always found to lack something essential.

Aside from expounding and enlarging the imaginary component of the discourse on enthusiasm, the Problems provides another important insight. Equating inspiration with madness and questioning the value of enthusiasm is not a modern phenomenon. There are those who would hold that the classical definition of enthusiasm is beyond reproach, associated only with epic poets invoking the muse, for instance, while “[i]n its English form... the word’s primary function was a technical and religious one, denoting the delusion that one was possessed by the Holy Spirit” (Mee 26). The Problems and the Ion disrupt this smooth account of the rise and fall of enthusiasm because of their early dates and its speculations on inspiration. The early development of the discourse on

⁷⁸ There is a host of examples of imaginary structures that substitute for cause that I could list here: racial, sexual, or national differences as causes of ‘natural’ superiority or inferiority, for instance.

enthusiasm tells us that, if there is a licit classical tradition of divine inspiration, it exists more in the imaginations of eighteenth-century and modern commentators than it does in the classical texts themselves.

The humoral body and its attending illnesses remained active ideas through the renaissance and on to the eighteenth century, particularly through Galen's enduring influence. The most serious advancement in this regime had to wait until Descartes and his famous *cogito* because Descartes presents a new view of divine inspiration that first elevates it above mere delusion then dispatches with its importance altogether. I will show in the next section that it is in Descartes' thinking that the non-sense of enthusiasm, the part of the fantasy where the symbolic bites into the real, takes shape.

Descartes' Discourse and Meditations: The Real of Enthusiasm

On Nature, Ion, and Problems treat inspiration directly, each engaging in typical moves of the master's discourse to account for and transform the knowledge of the slave. Descartes' writings are not primarily concerned with poetic or prophetic inspiration, so it may seem odd that I order him with the others. What does it mean to treat Descartes as a participant in the discourse on enthusiasm? My analysis of Descartes hinges on my definition of enthusiasm as an avowed appeal to the Other as a foundation of authority and a reading of the *cogito* as just that sort of appeal. In the terms I employ, the *cogito* is the model for enthusiasm, so the label makes perfect sense. If Alcmaeon, Plato, and Aristotle provide the underpinnings of the imaginary and symbolic elements of the enthusiasm fantasy, Descartes provides the symbolic and real elements of it.

During the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries, Descartes was a target of the discourse on enthusiasm. As Michael Heyd attests, Descartes was charged with being no

only an enthusiast, but also an atheist (109-10).⁷⁹ Descartes had a well-established image as a Rosicrucian, which associated him with mysticism, and his method, “the search for a short-cut, direct access to knowledge, was a typical enthusiast characteristic” (Heyd 123).⁸⁰ In the Tale of a Tub, Swift also sets Descartes up as an enthusiast, casting him as an insane introvert who measures all the world only in terms of himself.⁸¹ For traditionalists such as Swift (who seems to draw on Casaubon and More), Descartes’ mechanical philosophy was ripe for satire and the cogito was rank with enthusiasm because it birthed the entire world out of itself, like Swift’s spider in Battle of the Books, emblematic of the moderns. These critiques have great value insofar as they cast Descartes as the key figure in the foundation of a new approach to knowledge, though I do not agree that he draws the world out of himself.⁸² Instead, Descartes inaugurates a relation to the Other (as the guarantee of truth) that had never been envisaged as a foundation for subjectivity and in so doing, gets modern scientific discourse under way.⁸³ At the same time, the Cartesian revolution marks a change in the way knowledge is approached through discourse.

Lacan claims that with the birth of science (an event he correlates with the Cartesian *cogito*), the master’s discourse is replaced by the university discourse, which he writes thus:

⁷⁹ Atheism and enthusiasm are also combined by More and Casaubon, a point I will return to below.

⁸⁰ Heyd develops the image of Descartes as an enthusiast thoroughly in chapter four of his Michael Heyd, Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1995).

⁸¹ For more on Swift and Descartes, see Michael R. G. Spiller, "The Idol of the Stove: The Background to Swift's Criticism of Descartes," The Review of English Studies 25.97 (1974).

⁸² Likewise, the imputations of madness or excessive emotion that often accompany attacks on enthusiasm are not the central concern. Madness should be seen as an epiphenomenon of the discourse, a result of the underlying structure. The real target of attack is the epistemological structure of enthusiasm.

⁸³ As I will show, Descartes’ achievement should not be understood strictly in terms of his results. Crucial to understanding the effect of the cogito is viewing it as a process, as I will below.

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$}$$

The process of articulating knowledge began in the master's discourse sees its fruition in the university discourse, indicated by the rotation of the four terms (each has moved one place counter-clockwise), putting S_2 , knowledge, in the place of agent. The driving force of the discourse becomes, rather than a master who rules over the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, a searcher after knowledge and more specifically, after knowledge as a totality. This discourse structure is the beginning of science because it no longer expects knowledge to mean anything, but only to be countable (consider that in science, the final cause is never in question). In other words, truth is left in the hands of the Other, freeing the subjective collection of knowledge. The dream of the university discourse is that knowledge will form a complete field, having no recourse to anything outside of it, a dream of a rational axiom to ground reason. Under the S_2 , we see S_1 , the master signifier in the place of truth. This means that the university discourse, while "officially" being about the articulation of knowledge through empirical investigation for instance is, viewed from another angle, an endless repetition of master signifiers that support knowledge. One way to think about this is in terms of citation; the university discourse can be seen as a massive game of citations, in which the rule is that certain citations must be made depending on the drift of the current discourse. Lacan's example of this is his expulsion from Saint Anne's Hospital, where he conducted the first ten years of his seminar. He wonders, given that his subject was "the critique of Freud," what medical characteristics his teaching should have had: "Did it only consist in some act of reference—I didn't say 'reverence'—to terms considered to be sacred because they are themselves... at the heart of medical teaching?" (Lacan Seminar XVII 9). Because he

refused to give his teaching even a veneer of medical terminology, the rules of the university discourse indicated that he was not transmitting knowledge, playing the citation game, properly. The result was his well-known excommunication and the relocation of his seminar.

One can also see the substitution of knowledge for master signifiers in the practices of both the ancients and the moderns.⁸⁴ A thorough classicist such as Pope could hold that the purpose of poetry is to represent nature (already a received idea, a repetition of a master signifier) and that nature is best understood through the works of the great classical authors, such as Homer. So, the task of the poet is to learn the ancients first, which certainly looks like acquiring a certain body of knowledge, but can be in great part reduced to the genuflection to masters that the university discourse tries to hide. The university discourse traps the poet between modeling himself on the great ancients and servilely imitating them. Poets have to create poetry, but they must do so according to the master signifiers moving the current discourse. A misstep in either direction (hewing too closely or missing too grossly the ancients' mark) may land the poet in the realm of dullness rather than that of taste. On the other hand, in the case of the moderns, a modern scientific mind seeks to use his experience to generate knowledge about the world that can be set down in laws. The laws, however, are not mere neutral principles. Consider that we have Newton's laws in physics, or Boyle's laws about the behavior of gasses. Each law of this type is at once an attempt to articulate something about the real and an opportunity to venerate the great man who first forged the method, both an activation of knowledge and a citation of past masters. Both the ancient and the

⁸⁴ Though they have different means of going about it, both the ancients and the moderns (those names indicating the partisans on either side of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debate) participate in the discourse that serves knowledge, not the master.

modern thinker work within the university discourse, which is as much to say that they both speak a discourse in which the axiom must remain hidden. The hidden axiom is never neutral or benign, because master signifiers are never neutral. The greatest requirement of the man of science is that he innovate, but that innovation takes place only in the terms, the master signifiers, already given in the discourse. To move outside of these is to risk incomprehension, to fall out of the community of taste, or of science.⁸⁵

How did Descartes find this new relation to knowledge that is the university discourse? By applying his method. Because it is a method, and not a set of static rules or metaphysical abstractions, it must be analyzed as a process. Descartes does not simply pronounce the cogito and move on. Indeed, his Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking for Truth in the Sciences begs to be read as a series; the text even comes with instructions from Descartes about where the reader should stop if she cannot finish the discourse at one sitting (Descartes 3). The progression that takes Descartes from the first moment, through the agonies of existential doubt, only to emerge certain of the foundation of his subjectivity bears a striking resemblance to the three-moment sublime I introduced in chapter one. I will analyze the Discourse on the Method in just these terms, seeing what each moment brings. The result is a dynamic picture of Descartes' advancement. The new subjectivity he finds is at once a redemption of enthusiasm and a corrective to it. Descartes at once shows how the university discourse works, but only after showing its underside. In so doing, he provides a glimpse into the

⁸⁵ Of course there are scientific innovations that depend all that has gone before them, but even these innovations can only be understood as responses to what has gone before. If Einstein has shown Newton the door, it is because he has found new axioms to ground the system, not because he has eliminated them altogether.

relation between the enthusiastic subject and the Other, but only a glimpse, because his last moment is one of certainty.

Part I of the Discourse presents the first moment in Descartes' experience. Here he rejects the knowledge he has acquired through schooling, moving through each subject in order. Having been "nourished on letters since [his] childhood," Descartes "found [himself] embarrassed with so many doubts and errors that it seemed to [him] that the effort to instruct [himself] had no effect other than the increasing discovery of [his] own ignorance" (5). He had followed the traditional path of the ancients, and found it lacking. The first moment in Descartes' discovery, as in the experience of the sublime, is this recognition of ignorance, which amounts to a question about his place in the imaginary order. His education should have served to provide a set of ego ideals out of which to form an ideal ego, but it failed. The result of this failure is a turn inward, making himself the object of his study (Descartes 8). It is precisely in this withdrawal that the enemies of enthusiasm would detect his first error, the beginnings of isolated madness.

Descartes gets to his meditations in Part IV (Parts II and III being given to the establishment of the rules and morals of the method). Casting aside sense data as no more reliable than a dream, and all conclusions of reason as potentially flawed, he reaches the famous moment where he declares "*I think, therefore I am*" (21, italics Descartes'). This may seem very much like a conclusion, and there is a certain solidifying effect in the cogito. The author seems to have won a victory for his self-authorization, but a curious thing happens just after this false conclusion. Seeing that his certainty is based only in doubt, Descartes turns to the idea of something more perfect than he, which can only be God, who communicates perfect ideas to us through reason

alone, while our senses may fail us.⁸⁶ No mention is made here of any possible doubt entering between reason and God; the subject finds its correlate in the Other. It is worth emphasizing this point, as one of my claims is that enthusiasm is not a form of self-authorization; a vital component is this relation to the Other. Regardless of the status of this Other, the enthusiast is never one who stands up to proclaim that he has the answers within him; the answers are always elsewhere. So far, it would seem the cogito is concluded in this second moment, but there is more to the story.

Turning to the Meditations on First Philosophy, we see that something is left out of the cogito given in the Discourse on Method, namely, doubt about God:

“But how do I know that He has not brought it to pass that there is no earth, no heaven, no extended body, no magnitude, no place, and that... nevertheless they seem to me to exist just exactly as I now see them?”
(Descartes 61)

This is the “evil genius” problem, and it constitutes the crux of the second moment in the Cartesian experience. The (at this point) undecidable ambivalence between the deceiving and the non-deceiving God is the Cartesian manifestation of the ambivalence that runs through the discourse on enthusiasm. There is no principle of reason that lets Descartes assume that the Other exists for him, in the sense that such a principle would give him an accurate idea of how things really stand. Having doubted the senses, imagination, and reason itself, Descartes is in the abyss of ignorance. The first signifier cannot be understood in terms of the series (the chains of reasons formed according to the rules set forth in the Discourse) to which it gives birth just as an axiom must first be accepted for a system of equations to work. In the solution to this problem, Descartes establishes

⁸⁶ Note the alternation between the self and God, between the benevolent God and the deceiver, between certainty and annihilation at this moment of Descartes’ process. It bears a striking similarity to the pulsations of pleasure and pain said to accompany the sublime.

himself as an enthusiast in my terms. As we shall see, just as an identification with a signifier ends the impasse of the second sublime moment, such an identification ends the impasse of the foundation of the subject on the bare bones of the Other.

In finding this ground of the subject, which comes only from the Other (it would be right to say in Descartes' case that the subject is reduced as near as possible to nothing), Descartes for a moment exposes the subject as conceived of in psychoanalysis. In the moment of doubt engendered by the recognition that the Other functions as a repository of signifiers that cannot be cross-checked against reality because it is the foundation of reality, we see what Lacan calls the opening of the unconscious, which I identify with the second sublime moment (Lacan Seminar XI 32). This discovery of the subject represents a change in discourse, from the master's discourse, which appropriates knowledge for the master (and would identify man with some store of knowledge, a premise that Descartes explicitly rejects), to the university discourse, which makes knowledge function differently:

[I]t was only when, by a movement of renunciation of this wrongly acquired knowledge, so to speak, someone, for the first time as such, extracted the function of the subject from the strict relationship between S_1 and S_2 —I named Descartes...—that science was born. (Lacan Seminar XVII 8)

A new episteme results from Descartes' recognition that all knowledge is grounded only in its connection to a first signifier. This recognition means that, at the same time he founds a new discourse, he pulls the rug out from under it by indicating its principle or axiom, the S_1 on which the S_2 rests. Descartes takes the third step in the recognition of the foundation, and it is this basis to which his contemporaries objected. Showing the principle as an irrational point at once exposes the university discourse as a game of

citation and indicates the source to which all citations eventually refer. For his critics, this exposure is tantamount to finding the whole world only within himself, which gives the image of the isolated madman mentioned earlier. In several guises and in several ways, those who cast Descartes as an enthusiast react specifically to the foundation of knowledge laid in the Discourse and the Meditations.

Enthusiasm is a mode of certainty, not one of doubt. Descartes takes the third step when he closes out all doubts about the evil genius that might fool him about all existence. He summarizes his proof that there is a God and that he is not deceptive as follows:

I recognize that it is not possible that my nature should be what it is, and indeed that I should have in myself the idea of a God, if God did not veritably exist—a God, I say, whose idea is in me, i.e. who possesses all those supreme perfections of which our mind may indeed have some idea but without understanding them all, who is liable to no errors or defect... From this it is manifest that He cannot be a deceiver, since the light of nature teaches us that fraud and deception necessarily proceed from some defect. (82-3)

Put another way, Descartes concludes that he is not misled in his principle because he is stamped with the image of the Other. This is clearly an identification with a first signifier in the most fundamental sense of the term (in the quoted passage above, “God” bears an importance resemblance to “me”). This also means that the reality of objects conforms to what is thought about them. This conformity of what is and what is thought about could be offered as a description of the Lacanian imaginary, with the full force of the misrecognition the term carries. Descartes’ moment of doubt about the Other ends, like the sublime experience, in an identification with it. This identification takes place in two parts, both of which confound the subject and the Other by silently moving between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the statement. Certainly, the cogito proves

something about the subject of the statement (the grammatical “ego” implied in the statement), but it does not hold that the certainty established has anything to do with the subject of the enunciation, the one who utters, “*cogito ergo sum.*”⁸⁷ Thus, the unconscious closes again, the subject having appeared for only a moment. The similarity of the progress of this subjecting founding and the drama of the sublime is quite striking.

Finally, it is Descartes’ elevation of the Other as the guarantor of truth that makes him an enthusiast. The promise of the method (this is what traditionalists did not like) is that there is no need to master the ancients backward and forward to get a foothold in knowledge. That brand of mastery was out because, for Descartes, it was only vain fumbling for a subjective foothold in knowledge. By evacuating all knowledge, Descartes moves subjectivity into a relation with the Other without cushioning, so to speak. The commonplaces, the great store of learning heaped up from the ancients, are not there to give the imaginary consistency on which the subject relies as a shield against destruction. Instead, there is only the minimum faith that the Other is not a deceiving God. This minimum faith is the identification with an Other that is all knowing (and all powerful—He has the power to make two and two equal five) and benevolent because it has stamped the ego.⁸⁸ If one accepts this identification, then the problem of reasoning based on sense data is solved, because there is no chance that clear perception can be mistaken. The Cartesian subject is an enthusiastic subject in that it needs the breath of the Other, inspiration, in order to exist from moment to moment.

⁸⁷ On this split between statement and enunciation in the cogito, see Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis 1964*, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1978) 139-40.

⁸⁸ Descartes’ establishment of God’s power as beyond even mathematical limits indicates his sacrifice of his cause of desire to the Other, a formulation to which I will return at the end of the chapter.

Descartes' participation in the discourse on enthusiasm is the articulation of the enthusiastic episteme. It had such an impact in part because the Discourse and the Meditations draw conclusions that would seem to be true for everyone. Effectively, Descartes has reversed the dilemma Socrates poses to Ion at the end of the Ion. The method challenges the world to choose between ignorantly heaping knowledge for the master, or acknowledging that there is a point of identification, of non-sense that governs the world of sense (this is the case even if one rejects the ontological argument for God's existence and benevolence—the more important argument is the prior one, that states there must be some principle).⁸⁹ This challenge situates enthusiasm not as the anti-self of enlightenment, but as a point through which it must pass. This is the point obscured in Mee's approach: enthusiasm must be regulated not because it violates decorum but because it poses a problem for the functioning of reason itself. The attack on enthusiasm has to be vociferous because enthusiasm presents the structural principle that enlightenment disavows—a structural principle that is both envied and feared. The method raises the stakes of the problem of principles, the axiomatics of the fantasy, and solves it in an enthusiastic fashion. What's more, since the first signifier governs the very ability of the subject to know that knowledge can be gained through external objects, the enthusiastic identification is much more than a narrowly religious or sectarian concern; our mode of being depends on it. From Descartes, the fantasy of enthusiasm gets its symbolic articulation, which finds its seat in the master signifier that has no signified and can only “mean” that a certain identification is in play.

⁸⁹ Of course, Descartes would not see this axiom as non-sensical, but there is no reason we must share this view.

In the next chapter, I will show how key poets of the period between Neoclassicism and Romanticism stage enthusiasm to claim poetic authority. The poets of sensibility, as they are known, force an uneasy alliance of enthusiasm and politeness, attempting to extricate the symbolic claims of enthusiasm from its imputed imaginary maladies. In so doing, they not only authorize a potentially scandalous brand of affect, but they establish themselves in a poetic lineage different from that of their immediate predecessors. My reading of this poetic tradition continues this chapter's reappraisal of the importance of enthusiasm, particularly in the revaluation of its symbolic elements for which I am arguing. In large measure, I will show that the concept of sensibility suffers from the same imaginary casting as does enthusiasm: in both cases, there is a motivated ignorance of symbolic claims.

Coda: Is Psychoanalysis Enthusiastic?

Throughout this chapter's discussion of enthusiasm in terms of cause and signification, the question of psychoanalysis' relation to enthusiasm is suspended. Certainly the analyst aims at producing knowledge on the side of the analysand, and the connection of that knowledge to truth (in the analyst's discourse S_2 , the *matheme* for knowledge occupies the bottom left position, the place of truth) indicates that psychoanalysis is indeed embroiled in some of the same controversy as enthusiasm. The question, "Is psychoanalysis enthusiastic?" should be read as a variation on the question, "Is psychoanalysis a science?"

The latter is a question that Lacan worked with for years and it is connected to the question of enthusiasm because both are questions about cause. Lacan defines modern Science in terms of its approach to truth as cause, an approach that he characterizes as

“foreclosure,” the same operation present in psychosis, in which the Name of the Father is foreclosed (Lacan Écrits 742). By calling science’s approach to truth as a cause one of foreclosure, Lacan means that modern science sutures the question of truth, and moves on with its investigations by stopping its ears to any questions about the connection of truth to knowledge, preferring to charge ahead with technological development without heed for the place of the subject. In practical terms, this means that modern science has no concern with the meaning of its discoveries, in any metaphysical sense. For instance, when a scientist participating in the human genome project discovers certain differences in gene expressions between males and females, that discovery has only a (potentially) instrumental use; the discourse of science compels the scientist to go no further in situating her new discovery in a Christian providential scheme, for instance. The subject, as a gap between signifiers that cries out for meaning, has no place in this discourse.

In like manner, I situate enthusiasm as a question of cause. The enthusiast acknowledges the cause that springs from the first signifier, taking up his subjective existence from the Other. What’s more, the enthusiast makes the Other speak, forcing it to disclose itself as the site of the conjunction of truth and knowledge. This solicitation of speech from the Other separates the enthusiast from the believer in revealed religion. Lacan says that to believe in revealed religion is to sacrifice the object *a* to the Other, to leave it in a place where the subject can know nothing about it (Écrits 741). The relation to truth as cause is one of repression, of not wanting to know anything about it. I think here of Milton and Pope, both of whom proscribe knowledge as a way of keeping humans in a certain range of harmony within their own sphere, a strategy quite close to Alcmeaon’s notion of *isonomia*. For these believers, there are points beyond which one

does not inquire. Conversely, for the enthusiast, it is precisely at these points that the Other reveals itself as a speaking voice, the point of overlap between knowledge and truth. The Other speaks to the enthusiast, and in its speech, it guarantees the existence of both the subject and the object.

Synthesizing the two queries leads to the question, “How does psychoanalysis approach truth as cause?” Lacan’s claim is that psychoanalysis takes the truth as material cause, which means that its object is the material of signification (Lacan Écrits 743). The psychoanalyst is charged to get the analysand to reveal something about the material effects of signification, which is as much as to say, to discover something about the place from which she speaks as a subject and the impact this has in terms of *jouissance*. In this limited sense, I would say that psychoanalysis is very much an enthusiastic discipline. It acknowledges that there is a first principle (a master signifier that works as a *point de caption*) from which all other propositions (speech) spring. What distinguishes psychoanalysis from the religious enthusiasm of inner-light faiths, for instance, is that the former has no need to believe in the first principle; it has no stake in propping up the fantasy that God holds the secrets of the subject’s desire and chooses to reveal them through speech.

Rather, psychoanalysis works on these first principles; they are the material of psychoanalytic practice. Recall that in the analyst’s discourse, S_1 is in the place of production. Analytic discourse produces signifiers that reorient the analysand’s fantasy, her place in the scheme of signification. In Stanley Fish’s terms, analysis provides the chance to re-examine the interpretive community in which one has lived as subject because it brings into question the Name of the Father (which is another way of saying

that it stops the phallus from not being written, as I alluded to earlier). The psychoanalyst does not listen to the Other, as the religious enthusiast does, in order to discover what it wants of him. Rather, the psychoanalyst listens to the Other in order to give the analysand a new lodging in it.⁹⁰

To finally answer the question of the scientific and enthusiastic status of psychoanalysis, I will borrow one of Lacan's formulations: *pas-sans*. Not without. Lacan says that without modern science, the science ushered in by the Cogito which reduces the subject, as nearly as possible, to nothing, there would be no psychoanalysis (Écrits 731). I will add two further points. First, there would be no psychoanalysis without enthusiasm, in the sense that both rely on (subtly different) approaches to a first principle which science and revealed religion would shut out altogether. Second, there would be no science without enthusiasm. Before the great moment of Cartesian triumph, the path-clearing that makes way for Newton's method by authorizing experience, indeed suffused throughout the first two moments of the Cogito (to borrow chapter one's terminology), there is the search for subjective certainty that can only be occasioned by an enthusiastic zeal that insists that there subjective certainty *is* attainable, and that the Other holds the key to it. Science, enthusiasm, and psychoanalysis are correlates of the Cartesian subject, all interdependent and unable to function without their companions.

⁹⁰ For the enthusiast, the Other must exist; for the psychoanalyst, its existence is always barred.

CHAPTER THREE: Enthusiasm as a Source of Authority

In the section of Longinus's On Sublimity entitled "IMITATION OF EARLIER WRITERS AS A MEANS TO SUBLIMITY," the author says of his subject "Here too, my friend, is an aim to which we must hold fast" (Russell and Winterbottom 158). This sounds like solid advice—imitate your role models—the sort of conservative impulse that any advisor can safely follow. Indeed, Pope's later pronouncement in An Essay on Criticism seems to echo Longinus: "Be *Homer's* Works your *Study*, and *Delight* / Read them by Day, and meditate by Night, / Thence form your judgment, thence your Maxims bring, / And trace the Muses *upward* to their *Spring*;" (124-7). In both cases, canonical authors are held up as sources worthy of imitation.

However, as is often the case with Longinus, his meaning is less clear than Pope's, his statement less authoritatively univocal. Certainly, Pope gives one of Longinus's meanings in his recommendation to form judgment on previous authority (and therefore on the laws of art, the muses' spring), but there is more in Longinus, who offers the following analogy for imitation:

It is like what we are told of the Pythia at Delphi: she is in contact with the tripod near the cleft in the ground which (so they say) exhales a divine vapour, and she is thereupon made pregnant by the supernatural power and forthwith prophesies as one inspired. (158)

Something other than the formation of judgment is at stake here. Longinus describes what I call an "enthusiastic relation" between the contemporary writer and the canonical object of imitation. The Pythia does not study the divine vapor and frame her judgment on it; she receives it directly, even bodily, as it impregnates her. Her practice is no mere tracing of the "Muses *upward* to their *Spring*;" Longinus conceives of this inspiration as

direct, an encounter with the source. Indeed, Pope's advice to trace the muses suggests that the muses themselves are absent, and only their trace, the mark of their absence, is left, making inspiration a matter of signification. Even as Longinus restates his model of inspiration with less vehemence, he proposes something other than a rational relation of tracing. Advising his pupil to imagine how a great author would have "said the same thing," he writes that "These great figures, presented to us as objects of emulation and, as it were, shining before our gaze, will somehow elevate our minds to the greatness of which we form a mental image" (159). There is something mysterious in the relation to the great author. Minds are elevated "somehow" by the greatness that is imagined only "as it were, shining before our gaze." As he conceives it, even the image offered bears a less than fully understood relation to the process of inspiration. In this shadowy relation between subject and Other, and particularly in the suggestion that there is something beyond signification involved, we are on the track of enthusiasm.

This chapter is about the difference between Pope's model of imitation of earlier writers and Longinus's. My contention is that these two models can help describe an important break in poetic practice that occurred in the wake of Pope's death. The Augustan model that takes the ancients in sum as a prescription, a rationalized and articulated source of rules (a repetition or microcosm of the rational, though inarticulable rules of the universe), was opposed by another model, which approaches literary forebears through the mysterious paths of inspiration set out by Longinus. The Augustan model is very much in the vein of Alcmaeon's idea of *isonomia*; there is an order, which runs from the universe, through the polis, and straight through the soul and body of the individual. Opposite this ordering principle, it is in the context of mysterious inspiration,

or enthusiasm, that we should understand the poetry of Mark Akenside, Joseph Warton, William Collins, and Thomas Gray, rhapsodists who forged new steel starting in the 1740s. I argue that these poets have fallen out of the scheme of isonomia, a scheme which offers a way of understanding how one sits with the cosmos. The result is they are forced to find their own ways through the mysterious paths of the Other. If we suspend the emotional hypothesis which equates inspiration to feeling, then the distinction between neo-classicism and whatever follows it is not between a cold and reptilian reason and a warm and wet passion. The distinction is, instead, between a closed and an open world, between a neo-classical world in which the Other has been banned in order to guarantee its existence, and another world in which the presence of the Other is a real question, full of terror and promise for the subject. My aim is to put the mid-century rhapsodists in their proper context, a situation in which the presence of the Other is not a guarantee, but a possibility.

One of the hallmarks of this group of poets is their taste for the gothic, which is expressed variously as an interest in history. Indicating this group's taste for fanciful national history, Thomas "Gray told Nicholls that 'he never sat down to compose poetry without reading Spenser for a considerable time previously'" (qtd. Pittock 175). That Gray's poetic interest in Britain's history is shared by Joseph Warton and Collins is evident in each of the latter's odes "To Liberty," which proclaim freedom to be British under the hand of the personified concept. This interest in history as source material for poetry is obviously part of the Gothic revival, as Pittock argues in The Ascendancy of Taste. Widely held is the view that the Gothic revival hinged on accessing the stirring emotions accessible to Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton, emotions that seemed to be

inaccessible to contemporary poets working with contemporary materials. Jack Lynch shows that these three giants of English poetry were held by eighteenth-century readers to be sublime, and imitation of them or inspiration by them was held by eighteenth-century poets as the most likely path to sublimity in their verses.⁹¹ It is tempting to make the works of the mid-century rhapsodists enactments of emotional exoticism, and to make these poets good students of their literary masters, deriving rules for excellence in composition from them. These new rules may violate some classical norms, but they are rules nonetheless, templates with which to draw new sublime scenes. This view structures imitation of earlier writers on the Augustan model, rather than the Longinian.

However, if, as I argue, there is more to the sublime than exotic emotional extremity offered as a tonic for cultural boredom, then this accepted view of these mid-eighteenth-century poets as unproblematically gothic (and, indeed, this application of the term “gothic”) is rather limiting. I argue that these poets do not return to their past masters merely to imitate them. Rather, when Gray spent his hours poring over Spenser, his approach was much closer to what Longinus describes. The poetic triumvirate of Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton are the new legs of the tripod watched over by these modern Pythias. In the sublime authors of the British tradition, the mid-century rhapsodists detected the divine exhalations of which their works are the product. Because their place in the scene of literary history could not be assured by recourse to neoclassical rules, they had to appeal to the source of poetic inspiration for something beyond the rules. To put it another way, Warton, Collins and Akenside form part of a movement that approaches poetic and historical sources as something other than mere models on which

⁹¹ See the final chapter of Jack Lynch, *The Age of Elizabeth in the Age of Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).

to build, striking a rhapsodic rather than a rational relation to tradition, one guise of the Other.

The Mid-century Poets

Within little more than ten years of 1746, the most important poems of the movement I am detailing had been published. That fateful year saw published not only Warton's Odes on Various Subjects, but Collins's Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects as well.⁹² Gray had written his most important works by the early 1760's. Of course, all of these poets were writing in the wake of Akenside's The Pleasures of Imagination and Odes on Several Subjects [1744 and 1745, respectively]. These poets are not yoked together only by time, not only by choice of poetic form (the period, and this group in particular, is well known for a rebirth of the ode) and subject matter, but also by the positions they take in relation to the poetry that precedes theirs and in relation to their sources of inspiration. Through an enthusiastic relation to the Other, rather than through mere imitation, these poets establish their authority to write, their identities as poets.

The Advertisement to Joseph Warton's Odes on Various Subjects self-consciously marks a turning point in the poetic practice of the century; indeed, it might be read as a manifesto for the mid-century ode writers, and it comes in the form of an assessment of his immediate forebears and their audience. He addresses his Advertisement to a "Public [which] has been so much accustom'd of late to didactic poetry alone, and Essays on moral Subjects that any work where the imagination is much indulged, will perhaps not be relished or regarded" (A2). This statement clearly

⁹² For an interesting bit of speculation on the timing of the publication of Warton's and Collins's volumes, and Warton's revision process see James G. Powers, "A Fact About Warton's 'Ode to Fancy'," Notes and Queries 17.3 (1970).

anticipates resistance from a public reared on what Warton would judge unimaginative Augustan literature. Richard Wendorf, a proponent of reading 1746 as the watershed year in the period's poetry, reminds readers that Warton's An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope [1756] would critique Pope's poetry for precisely this lack of imagination, the failure to appeal to the mind's eye (29).⁹³ I will take issue with the equation of imagination and the appeal to the mind's eye momentarily. Suffice it to say at present that I think, along with John Sitter, than the meaning of imagination and Warton's antagonism of Pope go deeper than is suggested by Wendorf's conclusion.⁹⁴

Warton states further of his intentions for the book that "he will be happy if the following Odes may be look'd upon as an attempt to bring back Poetry into its right channel" (A2). Not only does Warton recognize the difference between the poetry he espouses and that preceding his, but he insists that his vision is right, and their moralizing is wrong. Wendorf states that Warton's Advertisement "spelled out in general terms the form this new poetic of the 1740s would take," and this position is clearly one of opposition to the Augustan poetic which it hoped to replace (28). That the Advertisement plays such a role I do not doubt; the contours of this new opposition, however, require further exploration.

For Warton and the other mid-century enthusiastic poets, the break with the past is beyond question; even if this break is over-determined and bound to fail, the Advertisement is evidence of how Warton conceived of his poetic task. This break is all

⁹³ Wendorf has Pittock and Hagstrum's company in his claim that Warton denounced Pope's fail to appeal visually. See Joan H. Pittock, The Ascendancy of Taste: The Achievement of Joseph and Thomas Warton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) 179. and Jean H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1958) 270.

⁹⁴ For Sitter's take on the differences between Warton and Pope, see John E. Sitter, Literary Loneliness in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982) 80-4.

the more compelling because Warton puts it in natural terms (returning “Poetry into its right channel”), and his muse is to be found in nature, which folds the question of enthusiasm and authority into the program at its inception because whatever flows in a channel must have a source, though it may be mysterious. In addition, given that Warton’s favored verse form is the ode, it is also easy to imagine that his reference to poetry’s “right channel” should also call to mind Horace’s description of Pindar, from the Odes: “Pindar, like a torrent from the steep / Which, swollen with rain, its banks o’erflows, / With mouth unfathomably deep, / Foams thunders, glows...” (4.2.5-8). This Horatian resonance alerts readers to the power and danger of excess bound to this project of righting poetry’s course.⁹⁵ In his choice of metaphor for poetry’s path, Warton connects his project with the enthusiastic search for first principles and the excesses of the sublime. Questions of authority are mingled throughout the new poetic of the 1740s; the way these questions are posed and answered (or not answered, in many cases) does not unify them with their Augustan predecessors, it separates them.

This alternative to the Augustan neoclassical tradition has a coherent identity. Of the beginnings of this tradition, in Elations: The Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth Century Britain, Shaun Irlam writes:

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, adjacent to the strictures of Augustan neoclassicism (an inadequate label for this period), the lineaments of religious enthusiasm were rehabilitated and made respectable as poetic enthusiasm by such writers as Sir Richard Blackmore, John Dennis, Isaac Watts, John Hughes, and Shaftesbury. Thomas Burnet and Joseph Addison also more obliquely abetted its promotion and prepared it for assimilation into the great adventure of the sublime in the later eighteenth century. (54)

⁹⁵ A fuller explanation of this Horatian resonance would be interesting, but it would take me far afield from my present point.

While I am not so sure of the shared project of rehabilitating enthusiasm, Irlam's idea that enthusiasm was groomed for assimilation into the sublime is provocative. Just as I argued that the discourse on the sublime represses some of the sublime's central elements, I argue that this rehabilitation of enthusiasm for which Irlam argues represses enthusiasm's exposure of the subject/Other relation in exchange for a language of affect. In the above-quoted passage from Irlam, this exchange is hidden in the vagary of "lineaments of religious enthusiasm" and the facile combination of the names he lists. In the language of the previous chapter, the imaginary portion of the fantasy covers for the symbolic lack and the real horror at its root.⁹⁶ It is one goal of my analysis to keep the imaginary obfuscation of the relation between subject and Other to a minimum.

Despite a variety of arguments for their coherence as a movement, these mid-century poets still occupy a difficult-to-name position in the canon of British literature.⁹⁷ There have been two main tendencies in critical attempts to locate these poets. One is to choose their Miltonic influence as indicative of their place. Under this regime, the poets of sensibility are belated and defeated sons of Milton, a pre-Romantic cry in the wilderness that will have to wait for Wordsworth's subtle ear to be heard.⁹⁸ The other

⁹⁶ There is also the conception of a Whig poetic tradition. While there are probably compelling connections between my reading of enthusiasm and the Whig poetic tradition, a full exploration of them would distract from the points I want to establish here. On Whig poetry, see Abigail Williams, Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture 1681-1714 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005). and David Womersly, et. al., "Cultures of Whiggism": New Essays on English Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2005). For a connection of Thomson and Collins to this tradition, see William Levine, "Collins, Thomson, and the Whig Progress of Liberty," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 34.3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1994).

⁹⁷ The terminological difficulties of this period of poetry have been repeatedly treated. For a balanced survey of these difficulties, see Koehler's article on the ode in Christine Gerrard, ed., A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). I agree with Koehler's choice to reject labels; I will attempt to hold open a meaningful place for these poets by calling them mid-century poets, with the understanding that by that term I do not mean all poets writing in the mid-century, just as by "Augustan" I do not mean all poets writing between Waller and Pope.

⁹⁸ J. Paul Hunter indicates that there was a persistent tendency in mid twentieth-century notions of literary history to gloss over the eighteenth century entirely. He notes that for "Harold Bloom... Northrop Frye,

tendency is to read them as Augustans.⁹⁹ According to this school, Collins and company are inheritors of Pope's neo-classicism, understandable in their immediate historical context, but failing to live up to the standards of their forebears. I read these two tendencies as attempts to make these poets coalesce under a signifier, and I hold that in each case, they are resistant to such solidification. In the following sections, I will show how these poets manage to elude the signifiers critics would attach to them, always offering something more or less than these labels would announce. In the language of my first chapter, these poets present something of a second logical moment, an opening of possibilities that is always reduced by the application of a signifier to name them.

These poets tend to unweave history in order to weave it again. Gray's poem "The Bard" presents the power of poetry as the power of making history as well as prophesying the future. In Gray's original argument, found in his commonplace book, the bard reproaches Edward I

with all the misery and desolation which he had brought on his country...
and with prophetic spirit declares, that all his cruelty shall never
extinguish the noble ardour of poetic genius in this island. (qtd. Lonsdale
178)

While this is an exotically historical moment, there is more to it than that. The presence of the prophetic spirit and the power of the bard's voice to stop the king's army in their tracks go beyond mere historical interest. In addition, Gray does not leave the power of

Frank Kermode, M. H. Abrams, and Stanley Fish... there is room between 1667 and 1787 only for Renaissance leftovers and anticipations of the High Romantics" J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990) xiii. The context for his comment on literary history is the improved fortunes of the eighteenth-century novel; the critical reputation of the poetry of the mid-eighteenth century has not fared so well. It is still largely split between "Renaissance leftovers and anticipations of the High Romantics."

⁹⁹ See, for example, Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*. Hagstrum includes Thomson, Collins and Gray under the heading "The Neoclassical Poets," or Patricia Meyer Spacks, "The Eighteenth-Century Collins," *Modern Language Quarterly* 44 (1983).

poetry in the past; the bard's insistence that "the noble ardour of poetic genius" will survive Edward I's cruelty extends that genius to the present day. Reinforcing the power of the bard's pronouncement is the chorus of bards, who sing "Weave the warp and weave the woof,/ The winding-sheet of Edward's race" and later "(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun).../ (The web is wove. The work is done.)" (49-50, 98-100). The matter of the poem is history; however, its purpose is not to record, but to make an argument about how history is made. Because history is not just the subject but also the theme of the poem, Gray presents history in motion; to read "The Bard" is to witness the weaving of the fabric of the Other, of history. The weaving image, borrowed here from Norse mythology, accomplishes two things at once. It presents the bards' prophecy as a *fait accompli* (which is to say it merges prophecy and history), and it allies poetry with weaving, connecting "The Bard" to "The Fatal Sisters."

"The Fatal Sisters" is another poem in which Gray takes historical reference beyond any emotional purpose and uses it to assert the power of poetry in making history. Lonsdale connects the poem with Gray's project for a history of English poetry, in which the poem would have been an example of the Welsh style of the eleventh century. Again, the poem's subject matter, the Norm's weaving of the future at the site of a bloody battle, is suited to providing the sort of historical pleasure that mid eighteenth-century readers were accustomed to.¹⁰⁰ Here again, I insist that Gray finds more than history when he looks into the mythical past. As is the case in "The Bard," he finds a source of power in the past in the image of weaving in "The Fatal Sisters." The sisters weave on a loom, of which Gray writes: "The threads, that formed the texture, were the entrails of Men, the

¹⁰⁰ Gray calls the female deities of the poem "*Valkyriur*" in a note on "The Fatal Sisters." However, the weavers of fate in the Norse mythology are the Norns, or the "weird sisters." In this substitution and combination of terms one might detect an example of the sort of weaving I am arguing for.

shuttles were so many swords, the weights were human heads, the warp was all of blood spears,” determining the fate of the battle over which they preside (qtd. Lonsdale 216). As the sisters produce their “grisly texture,” the poet produces a text (9). This repeated weaver-poet connection plays on the Greek meaning of rhapsode. The term, which equally describes Ion and Gray here, comes from the Greek *rapsoidien*, which is the combination of *rhaptein*, to stitch, and *oide* song; a rhapsodist is one who stitches songs together. When Gray looks back to the sources of English poetry, he does not simply marvel at their wondrous texture and sublime thoughts. He unravels his sources and reweaves them into his odes, making his practice rhapsodic in every sense of the word.

In addition to weaving material, in order to weave, one needs holes. Lacan points out that there is no fabric without a weaving of threads (“RSI” 19). In short, there is no web of signification without the holes requisite for weaving; the fabric of signification is always ripe for unweaving and reweaving. Gray demonstrates in his poems the Longinian approach to imitation. He approaches the text of tradition in terms of its threads, pursuing his sources to their inspirations, pushing past the logic of rules to the unexplainable Longinian “somehow” of enthusiasm. The inexplicable point of inspiration can be understood in the weaving image—the weaving grabs onto a hole, but it does not fix it. As the mid-century poet flees the mundanity of history, he cannot leap immediately to the “voice of grace” which Sitter recognizes in the poetry (Loneliness 150). Like the Pythia at Delphi, he has to approach the hole before he can hear the voice that will inspire him and make him a poet. The step of seeing the lack in the Other (a step that I align with the second moment of the sublime discussed in chapter one) is inevitable, and the uncertainty of its conclusion is the drama of mid-century poetry.

The Augustan and Mid-century Ode: Romanticism *Avant la Lettre*?

The identity of the mid-century poets remains over-determined, in some cases, by the narrative of the turn inward. I would like to set aside the grand narrative running between neo-classicism and Romanticism and take the mid-century poets at their words. What I read in their poetry is not a turn inward, or a turn to nature, but a return to the source in the form of the Other.¹⁰¹ Just as in Longinus's description of the Pythia at Delphi, there is something mysterious in the enthusiasm of this poetry, and to reduce that mystery by blotting out its source with the signifier 'nature' or 'self' is to miss its import, or to adapt it to historical or ideological purposes it was never meant to serve.

The mid-century ode has been imagined as a site of the inward turn. The mid-century is known largely by its lyrics, while the Augustans are marked by a paucity of lyric poetry. This turn to lyricism is, of course, an over-simplification. After all, Augustan poets and other contemporaries produced a number of odes, the lyric form *par excellence* of the mid-century poets. From Cowley to Dryden to Finch to Pope, odes are, if not plentiful, at least consistently present through seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. There is a sense, however, that the mid-century revival of the ode, enacted by the Wartons, Collins, and Gray, among others, took the form in a new direction. Richard Shepherd's preface to his Odes Descriptive and Allegorical [1761] is the *locus classicus* for distinguishing between the ancient and the modern mode of ode writing.¹⁰² Taking his cue from Collins, Shepherd calls the new form the "descriptive and allegorical Ode," of which "The Writings of the Ancients afford no Example... This Species of Writing is

¹⁰¹ Even if the period is characterized by literary loneliness, I for one am not ready to condemn the mid-century poets as solipsists, finding a source that is simply within.

¹⁰² William Collins's Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects [1746] is the clear source for Shepherd's title. I discuss the meaning of the titular adjectives below.

in almost every Circumstance different from the Pindarick Ode, which has its foundation in Fact and Reality... while the other is built intirely upon Fancy” (qtd. Gerrard 395-6). Shepherd’s sense seems to be that the tradition of the ode is to imitate actions in the world, “Fact and Reality,” while the innovation is an inward turn to represent mental or psychological facts and states, “Fancy.” Howard Weinbrot summarizes Richard Shepherd’s preface to his *Odes Descriptive and Allegorical* thus: “Psychological verisimilitude replaces historical events, though of course historical fact cannot be contradicted” (374). Such is the received interpretation of Shepherd’s analysis of the ode in his time. I highlight the equation of fancy and internal psychological states, which I want to trace a little further.

Norman Maclean, in his landmark essay “From Action to Image,” [1965] places the change from the Augustan to the mid-century ode around the same inside/outside axis as Koehler and Weinbrot. According to Maclean, odes written before the vital turning point of the mid-eighteenth century are characterized by dedication to external objects, while the new ode is characterized by the celebration and imagination of internal states. In his words:

It is the purpose of this study to trace critical opinion as it changes from the one world to the other, from a conception of the lyric still shaped by the earliest expression of classical poetry and literary criticism to a view of the lyric as an expression of the poet’s soul, although it is not yet names ‘subjective’ poetry. (Maclean 411)

The division between the ancient world and the emerging Romantic, between poetry that imitates the outside world and poetry that draws on the poet’s soul is tidy, and it serves Maclean’s purposes of seeing the mid-century poets as pre-Romantics more than adequately. Maclean uses this binary to frame not only the course of poetry, but also the

course of the world. Richard Shepherd's distinction lends itself very well to this broad narrative of the eighteenth century that tells of a gradual turn inward that runs from the outward-looking, intellectual Augustans to the inward-looking, emotional Romantics. Of course, since the birth of theory, we have mostly had done with such grand narratives and sweeping binaries. Just the same, this narrative still informs and infects thinking about the mid-eighteenth century poets.

Forty years after Maclean, treating Shepherd's distinction between the old ode and the new, Margaret Koehler writes:

These mid-century poets replace the action of an external subject with an internal act of the poet's mind. Warton calls it 'Imagination'; Shepherd calls it 'Fancy.' In fact, a poet is a poet by virtue of this imaginative vision that allows him to invoke personified abstractions and be transformed by the encounter. (Gerrard 396-7)

Koehler's return to Shepherd's distinction is less motivated than Maclean's by the narrative of the turn inward, but the language of the inward turn is still present. When she distinguishes between the "external subject" and the "internal act of the poet's mind," she has already taken a decisive step in reading the personifications that characterize the mid-century ode. By equating fancy or imagination with an internal act of the mind, Koehler makes the mental state the final reality of personification, and makes the mid-century poets celebrators of themselves, forerunners of Whitman. The insistence on the internal location of imagination or fancy and the elevation of this faculty to the virtue that makes a poet a poet work together to brand these poets as self-authorizers. As such, Koehler's view on these mid-century poets is not far from Jon Mee's view of enthusiasts in general; both are seen as boldly challenging tradition by insisting they can authorize themselves.

As I argued in chapter two, this inside/outside distinction and the imaginary regime of the faculties that goes with it are not unmotivated. The distinction and its regime are formulations with histories, not givens of common sense, even if they are most often treated as such.¹⁰³ If we set this distinction and regime aside for a moment, a fresh perspective on the mid-century poets opens itself to our view. By taking seriously their personifications of fancy, for instance, rather than immediately rendering it a cipher for an internal faculty, I will show that these poets reach beyond the simple “personified element stands in for a mental capacity” correspondence that renders their allegories in a single meaningful dimension. The words of Shepherd’s introduction and, I will argue, mid-century odes, in no way require that we read Fancy or Imagination as a strictly internal faculty personified for the purpose of self-authorization. These descriptive and allegorical poems of the mid-century pursue a figure that escapes personification even as it is personified, the remainder of signification that is present only in flight. The remainder of signification is located in a liminal space, one that is neither inside nor outside. What I have called the predicament of the subject can be reversed; not only does the subject have to represent itself with signifiers found ‘out there’ in the Other, but the subject’s lack, its ownmost and inmost can only be encountered in the Other. The regime of signification with which I work makes any simple split between inside and outside impossible. I offer my reading Joseph Warton’s “Ode to Fancy” as an example of the escaping nature of mid-century personification and the challenge to reading psychological verisimilitude as internal. I intend this reading as something of an overture of the themes I will trace in Collins and Akenside as the chapter progresses. As an

¹⁰³ I return to the inside/outside binary again later, in my response to critics who read the mid-century rhapsodists as late Augustans.

opening gambit, it is intended to trace some of the broader contours of the enthusiastic poetry of the mid-century.

Joseph Warton begins “To Fancy,” the first poem in his Odes on Various Subjects, as any reader expects him to: with a vocative “O.” The practice of invocation lies very close to my subject, enthusiasm. The vocative “O” tells who is addressed, but it also calls the addressed into being. By invoking the Other, the poet takes his position in relation to it, just as any subject does as it speaks. In chapter two, I discuss Lacan’s claim that the Cartesian subject gives truth up to the Other; the subject of the *cogito* is always alienated from his truth because it is determined arbitrarily by the Other. Descartes recognizes this in his statement that God could make two and two equal five without contradiction. This alienation is why Lacan holds that “[t]ruth is based only in the fact that speech, even when it consists of lies, appeals to it and gives rise to it” (Lacan Seminar XI 133). Any utterance of the subject is directed to the Other, which it simultaneously props up and appeals to as guarantor of truth. Outside of this appeal to the Other, language has no meaning, interpretation is impossible.¹⁰⁴ Poems like Warton’s that begin with the vocative “O” often emphasize the “addressed” nature of language, if I may put it that way. This “O” is the first indication that there is something enthusiastic, something of Longinus’s mysterious inspiration, at work in the poem, because Warton indicates by it that he is not addressing just a tradition or just a literary father. Rather, he addresses the “Parent of each lovely Muse,” the source of the source. I will further examine how enthusiastic mid-century poetry negotiates the problem of literary paternity and authority below, particularly in the cases of Collins and Akenside. The first line of

¹⁰⁴ For more on the role of the Other in interpretation, see Jacques-Alain Miller, The Symptom: Knowledge, Meaning, and the Real, 10 July 2007 2006, Available: http://www.lacan.com/symptom7_articles/miller.html, 7.

Warton's poem indicates that the speaker will have no intermediaries between himself and Fancy; he appeals directly to the Other to give him access to the truth of his being, which in this case is his being as a poet in the gaze of the Other. This is a rejection of metaphor as one to one correspondence, of any simple relation of one element standing for another. Warton's chosen invocation and object of personification is singular; no other will do and neither will any representation.¹⁰⁵

The speaker devotes himself to Fancy as to a goddess. After invoking her and asking her to guide him to her temple, the speaker offers his sacrifice. The speaker's offering to Fancy, "no costly wine,/ No murder'd fatling of the flock,/ But flowers and honey from the rock" is at once a rejection of the artful developments of pagan religious devotion (he has already asked Fancy to "O'er all my *artless* songs preside" [emphasis mine]) and a reinforcement of Fancy's singular and exceptional relation to the speaker. The codified offerings of the fatted calf or libations are simply too tainted by sophistication for the rough purposes of the speaker. Instead, he substitutes the food of the true followers of the Hebrew God. Honey from the rock is Biblical. The Bible contains two instances of honey coming from the rock; they occur in Deuteronomy and the Psalms. The first quotation comes from the song of Moses in which, Jacob "the lot of [the LORD's] inheritance" is singled out as an example of righteousness against the wickedness of the Israelites addressed in the passage (King James Version, Deut. 32.9). The passage continues: "So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth... and he made him to suck honey out of the rock" (Deut. 32.12-3). Likewise in the second case, the psalmist exhorts his listeners "There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange

¹⁰⁵ I will return to the mid-century function of metaphor in terms of personification and allegory below.

god,” and goes on to list the gifts they would have received, had they not gone against this injunction: “... and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee” (Ps. 81.9, 81.16). In both cases, honey from the rock is the promised food of those who follow the one true God. Thus the speaker of “To Fancy” aligns himself with the exceptional follower of the law found in the sublime passages of Hebrew poetry, one who has a unique relationship to the Other, rather than the false worshiper, who welcomes other gods.¹⁰⁶ Again, the singular and non-dialectical relation of the subject and Other that characterizes enthusiasm is strongly suggested here. Honey from the rock is not a sign among others, but a unique indicator of the relation of the speaker to the Other, a relation that cannot be displaced along a chain of signification and made part of a logic of substitution.

After a description of Fancy, which includes the infamous clunker “Thy waist with myrtle-girdle bound,” the speaker goes on to pursue Fancy in nature, and the poem becomes a sort of brief catalog of the world. The speaker searches the “deep and pathless vale,” the “hoary mountain’s side/ ‘Midst falls of water you reside.” In fact, in large part, the poem consists of a survey of the world’s peaceful natural scenes, contrasted by its “charnels and the house of Woe,” overseen by Melancholy, its scenes of “thickest war,” and finally back to the shade of its “high archt walks and alleys green.”¹⁰⁷ Along the way, the speaker also visits the tombs of Spenser and Shakespeare, literary fathers to whom I will return later, particularly in my readings of Collins. This rapid tour of the

¹⁰⁶ The speaker’s implication that he is on the right path in a world which has taken the wrong one echoes the sentiment of the Advertisement to the volume. Lowth later identifies Deuteronomy 32 as “a poem, which bears every mark of divine inspiration;” see Robert successively Bishop of St David’s of Oxford and of London Lowth, Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews; Translated from the Latin by G. Gregory. ... To Which Are Added the Principal Notes of Professor Michaelis and Notes by the Translator and Others, vol. 1 (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1787) 324. Lowth’s estimation of the poem and Warton’s drawing on it as a source in his ode indicates the propinquity between the sublime and enthusiasm I trace.

¹⁰⁷ Perhaps riding, along with Moses, “on the high places of the earth?”

world, which also manages to traverse all four seasons, is very much in the mode of Thomson's Seasons, though its development does not match that of Thomson's. Koehler reads Warton's view of nature as a typical "turn away from the busy, public, day-lit world toward a dim and solitary natural scene where [he] can experience an imaginative vision." She sees this turn as typifying the mid-century ode (Gerrard 397). I will point out quickly that, while there is a sense of retirement at certain moments in "To Fancy," the overriding mood is of exploration, an outward-bound mode of discovery in nature. To argue that Warton's speaker retires into himself to discover the powers of Fancy is to substitute the logic of the symbol (that is, to equate nature and Fancy to internal traits of the speaker) for the poem's own logic of allegory.

I would also like to offer that there is more than a simple retirement from the quotidian here, and that there is more to the "dim and solitary natural scene" than an occasion for engaging the powers of the imagination. I argue that Warton and the mid-century poets most often approach nature, as Thomson does, not as an end in itself but as a dwelling for the muse. Certainly, there is celebration of the beauties of nature; this is the part of the mid-century ode I would call descriptive, but there is something more behind it. One recalls here Thomson's "Hymn" to nature, in which he declares of the seasons "These, as they change, Almighty Father, these,/ Are but the varied God. The rolling Year/ Is full of Thee." Warton parallels this sense with his lines "At every season let my ear/ thy solemn whispers, FANCY, hear." Supplementing the descriptive scene of nature is something else, the allegorical. In pursuit of Fancy, Warton's speaker explores "Where NATURE seems to sit alone/ Majestic on a craggy throne." Here it is key that "NATURE" only "*seems* to sit alone:" nature is never really alone because Fancy is there

somewhere as well. The danger in a reading like Koehler's, which sees the poet retiring into nature, is that it can lose the allegorical behind the descriptive by taking nature as the Other, rather than as the dwelling place of the Other. In their conviction that there is something in nature, some Other with which they can connect, poets like Thomson and Warton show themselves enthusiasts. They seek the Other in the retirement of nature much as Descartes sought the Other in the retirement of his cell. Their power of vision is not simply located within; it is located in the extimate space of the Other, and this is the space of their exploration.

The poem concludes with a vision of Fancy's victory in her chosen poet: "With native beauties win applause,/ Beyond cold critic's studied laws:/ O let each Muse's fame encrease,/ O bid BRITANNIA rival GREECE!" The inspired poet is native rather than falsely cultured, and reaches beyond the laws of critics; in short, he reflects contemporary views of Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton as proper British sublime poets. The poem's final request marks the brand of history that typifies the mid-century ode. While these odes generally withdraw from everyday concerns, they often return to broader historical concerns about the progress of poesy, for instance.¹⁰⁸

My reading of "To Fancy" finds the speaker venturing out into nature, away from the stultifying constraints of art, to find Fancy. I do not deny that Fancy also names a power of the mind, which is traditionally read as internal, though that tradition is one that I question. My point is not to argue that Warton or other mid-century poets are making a straightforwardly outward journey. However, it is necessary to accent the outwardness of

¹⁰⁸ Because of these returns to and re-writings of history, I think an approach like Baines', which calls mid-century poetry a "poetry of the mind" marked by "proto-Romantic solitariness," is limiting. See Paul Baines, *The Long 18th Century*, Contexts, ed. Steven Matthews (New York: Arnold, 2004) 116-17. John Sitter also writes of literary loneliness, but his argument does not ignore the ways in which mid-century poets return to history. See Sitter, *Loneliness* particularly its final chapter.

the mid-century ode to counteract a critical tradition that has facilely read the journey as directed strictly inward. The terms of the speaker's search in "To Fancy" suggest that he enters into a unique relation with Fancy, that the place where she is found is the place where the subject and Other overlap. Enthusiastically, the speaker bids the Other to answer his call and make him a poet. This is the essential move of enthusiastic poetry, petitioning the Other to make one a poet, and it takes the form of a psychoanalytic act.¹⁰⁹

The act is a move away from the fields of signification, in which pairs of signifiers make meaning, toward its limit, where one final (or rather, initial) signifier finally means nothing, but inscribes the subject in a certain relation to knowledge. Jacques-Alain Miller writes "[e]very act worthy of the name creates a new truth, which isn't by virtue of that fact eternal, but which has a chance to be unforgettable for the subject supported by this act" (" $\Sigma(x)$ "). The act realigns the subject in terms of its representation in the symbolic and imaginary. The mid-century poets do move away from everyday concerns of history; we might even say that they cancel their subscription to traditional literary history to enact a new relation to it. They often move into dimly lit natural scenes and they even explore the psychological consequences of such moves. However, this is not strictly a move in, a retreat into the psyche and the nature preserve. This is also simultaneously a move out, away from the world of art as mimesis, away from the self that can only refer to itself. Finally, it is a move of the subject toward the Other. The convinced enthusiast finds Fancy there, waiting to make his poems great. However, not all the mid-century ode-writing poets were so convinced, as I will show particularly in the case of Collins. The doubting enthusiast hopes to find the muse

¹⁰⁹ See also chapter two's discussion of Descartes and the act.

awaiting his approach, but at the same time knows the nihilistic anxiety of her disappearance. The act of enthusiasm is never guaranteed, and to some extent it always falls back into what Miller calls the imaginary of meaning, for which I gloss here as the persistence of tradition or the critical desire for clarity of interpretation (" $\Sigma(x)$ ").

However, the act always gestures to something excessive, some kernel that language cannot translate. If the act is a turn inward, it is a turn that discovers that at the heart of the subject there is something foreign, something that cannot even be named, but to which, nevertheless, subjective identity clings. If there is an inward turn in mid-century poetry, it turns around the "structural element which implies that, as soon as we have to deal with... the signifying chain, there is somewhere... the *ex nihilo* on which it is founded and is articulated as such" (Lacan Seminar VII 212).

The Sons of Milton

Sub-joined to the narrative of the inward turn running from neoclassicism to Romanticism is the tendency to inscribe the mid-century rhapsodists in the train of Milton, the immediate temporal (which is not to say poetic) predecessor of the eighteenth-century Augustans. Much criticism of British poetry of the 1740's has relied heavily on Bloom's notion of belatedness, with its attendant anxiety about literary paternity. Many studies see Collins, Akenside, Gray and the Wartons, among others, as oppressed by Milton, trapped but enabled by his literary fatherhood. The typical critical account sees these poets trying to find a way out from under Milton's shadow, and asserts that their development of the powers of the creative imagination is their key contribution. This development, however, is usually brought into immediate relief with the (much greater) achievements of the Romantic poets half a century later. Paul Sherwin's

Precious Bane, a study of Collins, is a fine example of the Bloomian school that reads mid-century poetry only in terms of Milton on one side and Romanticism on the other. While it would be wrong to try to understand this (or any other) poetry without reference to its forebears, the agonistic narrative almost forces the discourse into the anachronistic and falsely teleological quagmire of “pre-Romanticism:” the anxiety of influence risks turning the mid-century poetry into strictly “post-Miltonic” poetry. In order to understand the mid-century poetry of enthusiasm, it is not enough to understand its belatedness, its debt to its literary fathers. Instead, I argue one must analyze the particular appeals to authority that appear in the poetry. I will show that, rather than a simple relation between a belated literary son and a sublimely powerful father, these mid-century poets enact a more complex relationship which always includes a third term. This third term is the product of the enthusiastic approach to the Other, and it complements and complicates the Bloomian anxiety of influence approach.

What is more interesting than taking this poetic lineage at face value is to look at the poems as themselves enactments of the basic move of enthusiasm, the encounter with the Other and the writing that can be made of it, the act which founds a principle for signification or the authority to write. At several points in his Odes on Several Subjects, Akenside presents the confrontation between the aspiring poet and his literary father, but not necessarily in the terms Bloom would lead us to expect. In the sixth ode of his collection, “On the Absence of the Poetic Inclination,” Akenside presents the muse as the third-term alternative to the father in the scene of literary influence.¹¹⁰ The strophe finds the speaker questioning the muse to answer “Why, why hast thou withdrawn thy aid” (2).

¹¹⁰ In subsequent, extended editions of Odes on Several Subjects, this poem is tellingly re-titled “To the Muse.”

The mesode presents a series of possible solutions to the muse's absence, including "purple charms of wine," "Dione's form divine," and "soft melodious airs" among others (Akenside 10, 11, 14). These form a series of possible conclusions to the impasse of the absence of the muse. All of these, of course, fail. Finally, the speaker asks if "from amid th'Elysian train,/ The soul of MILTON shall I gain,/ To win thee back with some coelestial strain" (16-18). This last remedy, not surprisingly, works. What is surprising is how it works. Where Sherwin might detect the enabling influence of Milton here, a close reading of the poem leads in a different direction.

The speaker's "spirit kindles at his name," and "Again [his] lab'ring bosom burns;/ The muse, th'inspiring Muse returns" on the mention of Milton (20-22). So far, it sounds very much like Milton is indeed responsible for the inspiration here, though the muse's sudden reappearance might give one pause. Later alterations to these lines make clearer the preference for the muse over Milton. The final edition of Odes on Several Subjects renders the lines in question thus:

O powerful strain? O sacred soul?
 His number every sense controul:
 And now again my bosom burns;
 The Muse, the Muse herself returns. (Dix 19-22)

Where 1745's "th'inspiring Muse returns" leaves the question of the muse's separation from Milton in question, the final "the Muse herself returns" settles this question at the same time it expresses the superiority of the Muse over Milton. That she is the "Muse herself" strongly suggests that she is the source and Milton and the speaker are her vessels.

When the muse returns, the speaker recalls when he first met her on the "banks of the TYNE:"

I hail'd the bright, ethereal guest,
 When first she seal'd me for her own,
 Made all her blissful treasures known,
 And bad me swear to follow HER alone. (24-27)

The end of the poem recasts the speaker's relation with Milton. The jealousy of the muse does not allow for a reading that would take the muse as a metaphor for the ability to write verse and Milton as the source of inspiration. Nor does it allow for a reading that finds Milton an enabling presence along the road to inspiration. When the speaker invokes Milton's name, the muse returns like the mistress of a harem to break a tryst between two of her conquests; that the muse takes the speaker "for her own," and not vice versa indicates the mode of ownership in this relationship. It is not to Milton that Akenside's speaker owes his poetic ability; it is strictly to the muse, and her return at this moment stands as a reminder of who is responsible for poetic inspiration.

Akenside's arrangement of Milton and the muse, repeated at the end of "To Sleep," provides a handy image for the model of poetic enthusiasm I am pursuing in this chapter. In that poem the speaker asks Morpheus to "Such honorable visions bring,/ As sooth'd great Milton's injur'd age" (52-53). What makes Akenside a model mid-century poet is this leveling move, the request to the muse that removes competition with a literary father by comparison; the father and son are both supplicants. The point of this model is that mid-century poets, who are doubtless beset by the presence of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, do not approach these forebears in a straightforward way. Rather, they find various solutions to this antagonism. The one that interests me is the enthusiastic solution.

The second logical moment is the temporal space in which the act unfolds. A successful act repositions the subject in reference to the Other, but acts tend to fail

because the third moment almost always arrives with a false conclusion. I want to look at this logical and temporal structure more closely in Collins's most famous ode.

Collins's "Ode on the Poetical Character"

With its particularly controversial mesode and antistrophe (which is not to say the strophe is without its differences in critical opinion), the ode that most supports the widely-held image of Collins as a late-comer crippled by Milton's genius is, of course, "On the Poetical Character." It is also the Collins poem that has generated the most critical heat, if not light, in the history of its reception. John Sitter says that the poem is "arguably the most difficult English lyric poem written before the 1790s and on of the most difficult of any era" and notes that the "difficulty stems in part from Collins's personal vision and in part from historical and generic conventions" ("Collins" 265). I agree with Sitter on all of these points, though I would add that part of the poem's difficulty does not rightly belong to the poem, but to the approaches that have been taken to it. The import of this poem has been unduly colored, particularly by the inside/outside binary against which I have been arguing and by the idea of the anxiety of influence. The former binary, to which I return after my reading of the poem, reduces poetic inspiration to the play of the imagination. Of Collins's "Ode to Fear," Bloom writes "Fear, as Fletcher and Sherwin tell us, is Collins's *own* daemon, his indwelling Urania" (Bloom 169). More recently, in a review of "Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century," Michael Mckeon states "Collins's poetry tends to focus on the imaginative process by which the speaker produces in the object an objective correlative that is already within him" ("Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century" 710).¹¹¹

¹¹¹ I will return to the problem of reading personification as a trope that moves from inside to outside later, when I treat Augustan and enthusiastic personifications.

The critical reduction of inspiration to an act of internal imagination continues even to the most recent works on Collins. The latter idea, the anxiety of influence, with its attendant veneration of the power of the father, leads critics like Sherwin to read into the “Ode on the Poetical Character” an Oedipal structure. He sees “Milton assuming the dual role of beloved Muse and intimidating Father in this curious aberration of the Oedipal ordeal” (Sherwin 16). What is really aberrant here is the lengths to which such Freudian critics will go to defend the father in their readings of mid-century odes and in the Oedipal structure itself. One goal of my reading is to restore the place of the Other in such readings, which will realign the relation between the poet and the muse. My reconsideration of the Other in this ode addresses the inside/outside problem, because it confronts it as problematic rather than already solved, and it addresses the problem of the powerful father by properly rendering Milton and the Muse as two separate entities, which is by far the simpler explanation according to the workings of the poem.¹¹²

Various critical approaches have worked together to force the poem to provide certain coherent statements about the status of the poetical character.¹¹³ I am not naïve enough to claim to offer an unbiased reading of the poem; rather, I hope my bias against the forced choice of inside or outside and against the limiting model of literary paternity propounded by Bloom and his followers yields another reading of the poem and new

¹¹² In this sundering of Milton and the muse, I see Collins’s approach as similar to that taken by Akenside in his poems I looked at earlier in the chapter.

¹¹³ Perhaps surprisingly, I include here deconstructive readings of the poem, which typically read it as a statement of the impossibility of attaining immediacy in language. See Casey Finch, “Immediacy in the Odes of William Collins,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20.3 (1987). Finch’s reading makes Collins’s failure to reach presence and fusion in language a matter of linguistic course. My view is that such immediacy, to use her term, is at once impossible and inevitable in language. There is something mysterious in Collins’s poems and in language more generally which appears and disappears in the blink of an eye. Psychoanalysts have called this fleeting presence the unconscious, the stumbling block that keeps language from being perfectly alienated or perfectly united with the desire of the Other.

possibilities for thinking about what the poetical character may have meant to Collins and his contemporaries.

The strophe presents an extended simile beginning with a scene of reading: “As once, if not with light Regard,/ I read aright that gifted Bard,” who is of course Spenser, as the following lines indicate (1-2). One of the great literary fathers of the mid-century is present from the beginning, a promising start for the anxiety of influence reading of the poem. However, the first lines do more than announce Spenser’s presence. The opening “As” sets in motion the convoluted syntax which stretches a single sentence over the twenty-two line strophe and names the near-term of the simile between the Spenser’s contest and the contest for fancy’s prize. The syntax delays the meaning of the sentence so that the reader cannot be sure if the “read” in line two should be in the present or past tense, or if the “As once” refers to a time of reading or the time of the composition of The Fairie Queene (Sitter "Collins" 267). A long periodic sentence usually waits for its final term to give decisive meaning to certain elements of what has gone before, but the meaning granted by the conclusion in this case is not decisive. In this tactic of a long delay followed by an uncertain conclusion I recognize the three-moment structure of the sublime I established in chapter one.

The temporal structure of this ode follows the logic of the sublime encounter with the Other.¹¹⁴ Assuming that one purpose of the poem is for Collins to ask whether he is a poet or not (an interpretation on which most critics agree), it is possible to see Collins engaged precisely in the drama of the subject and the Other I’ve been detailing as the hinge of both sublime experience and enthusiasm. He turns to one guise of the Other, the

¹¹⁴ Other critics have commented on the fleeting nature of satisfaction in Collins’s work. Sherwin explains it by analogy to orgasm, and Finch sees it as the flashing of the “momentary god,” impossible of access (Sherwin 15, Finch 291-2).

literary father, but Spenser's answer is not immediate or certain. The "if not with light Regard,/ I read aright that gifted Bard," indicates the possibility that the speaker has misread Spenser. The answer the Other provides may not be accurate, or it might be misinterpreted. The question of who the poet is as subject overlaps with the Other's inability to accurately and unquestionably transmit its message, the message that would give the subject his identity. Spenser's message may be garbled by the dialectic process of meaning making, an unfortunate situation possibly to be remedied by Fancy. So, Collins's sentence spins across many lines, still settling in the uncertainty of the second moment. Even as the sentence reaches a grammatical conclusion, part of its meaning still escapes, unbound by signification. As the strophe concludes, the extended simile is completed: just as only one woman in The Fairie Queene "Might hope the magic Gridle wear," only one subject might hope to gain Fancy's "God-like Gift" of poet-hood (Collins 6, 20).

I question the purpose and completeness of the extended simile. Is Spenser's depicted contest truly similar to the contest for Fancy's prize? Where Spenser's competition is a zero-sum game, fancy "To *few* the godlike gift assigns" (20, emphasis mine).¹¹⁵ Far more problematic is the element of certainty about the victor present in the contest of Spenser's ladies. In their competition, there is immediate and undeniable evidence of success or failure: if the wrong "Nymph" tried the band, "It left unblest her loath'd dishonour'd Side" (13). The competition of poets for fancy's prize is not so

¹¹⁵ Weiskel observes several discrepancies in the strophe's simile, which he resolves by claiming "What they evidently have in common is a kind of sexual test in which only the chaste are blessed with success" Thomas Weiskel, The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976) 125. This is a shrewd reading of the poem, but I would like to extend psychoanalytic criticism beyond the impulse that resolves everything as a matter of sex. In my reading of the poem, the relation between the subject and Other is fundamental, and sex is merely one mode of its expression, perhaps more primal than some, but in no sense primary.

certain, as my reading of the rest of the poem will bear out. The identity of the poetical character cannot be indicated by a magic belt that would burst from the side of the unworthy poet. The strophe is rife with uncertainty about the possibility of being confirmed in the gaze of the Other, which is the drama and risk of the sublime. Risk returns us to the poem, for there the simile works again. Collins writes of the failures in the Spenserian contest: “Happier hopeless Fair, if never/ Her baffled Hand with vain Endeavour/ Had touch’ed that fatal Zone to her denied!” (14-16). The contest for fancy’s prize shares with Spenser’s ladies’ contest the disastrous consequences of failure. It is telling that the strophe does not depict the winner of the contest; in leaving the winner out, Collins opens the space of uncertainty that accompanies the second moment of the sublime experience or the enthusiastic silence held open for the Other’s response. Spenser’s nymphs and Collins’s speaker live in the space of the question of their identity in the eyes of the Other, though Collins’s speaker may be stranded on the question without the benefit of a magic belt that would burst, revealing the desire of the Other without question.

G. Gabrielle Starr analyzes this dialectic of risk, seeing it “in terms of the relationship of the speaker’s body and the expression or identification of pleasure” (Starr 87). She sees a “subgenre, the poem as plea for feeling” which “is another significant category of lyric in the mid-century.” The poems of this sub-genre “exhibit a... paradigm of longing and self-effacement” (90). The risk, in her assessment, is the plea for feeling, which typically goes unanswered. The result is that “[t]he speaker’s body is there, but the core of emotional experience is beyond it” (90). In this analysis, the mid-century ode becomes a site for dramatizing the self, trying to find and confirm a body for

the speaker through experience, or even fusion with the Other which always seems to fail. I agree with her reading, and particularly with the stakes of risk taken by the speaker in the plea for feeling. I would add, however, there is more than feeling at stake here. Of course, feeling is a symptom of the body, an indication that it is present, and its failure may indicate a sort of subjective failure in self-constitution, so the body is an important register in these poems. What is more important is the source to which these pleading speakers appeal. Their failure is not a result of not being able to feel, but of not being recognized in the eyes of the Other as they would be. I call this a failure of enthusiasm. These poets approach the Other enthusiastically, but too often, the Other has no response. I want to distinguish this movement of appeal to the Other from the notion of creating a poetic self, as Scott Hess puts forward in Authoring the Self. The point of the appeal to the Other is not to model a self for use in poetry, a representation that would be adequate to poetic purposes. Rather, the enthusiastic approach to the Other turns the idea of self-construction on its head by cutting straight to the point where self-fashioning begins and ends. The enthusiastic appellant asks, “what is given, what is the first principle?” then waits, often vainly. There is, on one hand, absolute certainty that fancy (for example) has a gift to give, and on the other, absolute uncertainty that it will be granted.¹¹⁶ Collins’s enthusiasm is at least equally concerned with the subject’s representation in language as it is with the self’s place in the imaginary order.

The nature of fancy’s gift is of great importance here. Earl Wasserman sees fancy’s gift creating a kind of inspiration “differing from similar contemporary theories... in proposing that what the poet creates is truth, not fiction” (qtd. Jung 100).

¹¹⁶ I will return to the role of the uncertainty of the desire of the Other in mid-century poetry in my later treatment of the Augustan relation to the Other.

Sandro Jung equates fancy's gift of inspiration with those "whom Alexander Pope in his *An Essay on Criticism* calls 'true wits' being able to imitate the ancients and thus nature," and notes no disparity between his position and Wasserman's (Jung 100). Clearly, Wasserman is correct to see in Collins something different from Pope's model of greatness here. Collins's ode presents no long scene of study, no derivation of rules from examples, but direct inspiration that metaphorically and mysteriously elevates the poet to the status of a god. Collins's model of inspiration detailed in this ode is far closer to Longinus than it is to Pope.¹¹⁷

This uncertainty as to the desire of the Other supports the enthusiastic structure for which I argue more than the agonistic structure Bloom and his followers find. The power of a literary father, as conceived of by Bloom, is certain and inescapable. For example, Bloom detects the crippling presence of Milton in the antistrophe of the "Ode to Fear," even though he does not appear there in name (Bloom 175-6). The father is there, palpable and dangerous, always ready with castrating blade of chronological precedence. His power is like the "hov'ring Hand" which waits to tear the girdle from the side of the unworthy in the Spenserian analogue (10). In "On the Poetical Character," the power of the father is very much in question. Spenser is not appealed to directly; his tournament is the near term of the extended simile that wants to tell the reader about "Young *Fancy*," not old Spenser (17). The strophe sets the terms of the interaction with the Other, the contest for recognition, but it is for the mesode and the antistrophe to settle the question

¹¹⁷ Jung's criticism is an odd combination of two usually opposed critical impulses I am situating in the chapter, which I call the tendency to Miltonize (which is usually accompanied by the label 'pre-Romantic' and a thinly-veiled preference for the Romantics) and the tendency to Augustanize. In his reading of the ode in question here, Jung turns at times to Pope and at times to Schiller to parse Collins's meanings. See Sandro Jung, *William Collins and 'the Poetical Character': Originality, Original Genius and the Poems of William Collins* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2000) 96-107.

of who can wear the “Cest of amplest Pow’r (19). The dialectics of Spenser’s meaning cannot answer the speaker’s question to the Other (e.g., “am I a poet?”). Only fancy can answer this question with “her Visions wild” and her “unmix’d... Flame” (22).¹¹⁸ Again, as with Warton, we see the dimension of the singular rather than the dialectical as part of the goal in the pursuit of fancy.¹¹⁹ To chase fancy is to chase an always-escaping oneness, an experience that would transcend the capacity of language to capture it.

The poem’s mesode, as Sitter observes, “follows the same contrastive structure as the strophe and the antistrophe: a long visionary excursion to Back Then or Up There is followed by a short conclusion returning to Here and Now” (“Collins” 269). In each section of this ode, then, there is a scene the speaker inhabits, and one he does not. The drama of the poem comes in the shuttling back and forth between the domain of the subject and the domain of the Other, here the past or the scene of creation. In these excursions and returns, it is easy to see how the question of identity (the speaker is asking if he might be inhabited by the poetical character, if he might be a poet) is a question of the desire of the Other, and not a question of self-authorization. If this were a matter of self-authorization, there would be no need to appeal to the Other. The very structure of language as addressed to the Other is prohibitive of self-authorization; even the barest announcement of one’s own identity is already addressed to whoever would hear it and

¹¹⁸ Sitter represents the more traditional reading of the strophe when he asserts that Collins “fuse[s] his idea of the true poetic gift with Spenser” John E. Sitter, “William Collins, “Ode on the Poetical Character,” A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry, ed. Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) 272. I do not dispute that Collins sees Spenser as one who has received fancy’s gift, but I insist that Spenser functions more as an example of one who has earned fancy’s honor than as a direct source of inspiration. Fancy, the third term, is still needed here because it is to her the poet addresses himself, albeit through Spenser.

¹¹⁹ Jung also writes on the singularity of the muse in the poem. Of Fancy he writes “Her singularity is expressed in her being characterised as ‘unrivalled fair’ who wears a ‘magic girdle.’” Jung, William Collins and ‘the Poetical Character’: Originality, Original Genius and the Poems of William Collins 97.

approve or disapprove it. This is the dialectic shared by enthusiasm, the sublime, and the ode “On the Poetical Character.”

The mesode reaches further back to the creation of “The Band,” which “as Fairy Legends say,/ Was wove on that creating Day” when God created the sky, the Earth, its vegetation, and the seas (Collins 23-28).¹²⁰ First, it is worth noting that the uncertainty of time established in the strophe’s reference to Spenser is continued here. The Biblical account of the creation does not have all of these events happening on one day; Collins presents a combination of the first three days (maybe even four, depending on the meaning of “Day”) of the creation story as happening on “that creating Day.” The continued chronological uncertainty of the Other scenes or Other moments presented in the poem highlights the speaker’s concern about the possibility of failure in finding the Other. This uncertainty is further bolstered by the source of the creation story. In the strophe, the speaker has misgivings about reading Spenser correctly, and here the source is again questioned by the parenthetical “as Fairy Legends say.” All of the scaffolding erected by the speaker to bolster his belief in the poetical character, with its tortured syntax, its parenthetical qualifications, and its various vagaries, could melt into air. Collins recognizes, here and elsewhere, the fate much more terrifying than failing to live up to one’s literary father. True terror for the subject is the certainty of the Other’s non-existence. As long as one is waiting for fancy, or Godot, there is a sense of structure to the world, a place to be as a subject. Once the band is burst, so to speak, the subject faces the annihilation of speaking into the void. The uncertainty expressed about the Other in “On the Poetical Character” combines desire and fear. On the one hand, the speaker

¹²⁰ I will return to the significance of weaving in two poems by Gray below.

desires the Other's confirmation of his vocation, and on the other, he fears that there may be no entity to provide this confirmation.

The mesode offers strong evidence that fancy is not simply standing in for the poet's own power of imagination. It is easy, when a personification is used in passing, to reduce it to an internal element of the poet, or a way of quickly figuring an abstract as a figure. When the personification begins moving about and acting, this strict and limited sense of personification is harder to hold on to.¹²¹ In the case of Collins's mesode to the ode "On the Poetical Character," it is absurd to reduce fancy to a representation of the poet's or the speaker's faculties. The poem does not make precise the relation between God and fancy, though He is "Long by the lov'd *Enthusiast* woo'd," (29). The "Long" here might indicate that fancy is coeval with the Creator, maybe even one of his faculties, though that reading would turn their tryst on the "Saphire Throne" into something that Anna Barbauld would have doubtless found repulsive, rather than merely irreverent.¹²² That fancy is the Creator's "lov'd *Enthusiast*" almost frames the poet's approach to her on Socrates' metaphor of the magnetic rings. What really matters is that both "Long" and "lov'd *Enthusiast*," in the context of the mesode, establish fancy as an entity separate from the speaker and the Creator, the third term required by enthusiasm.

As He places "her on his Saphire Throne," the poem switches from the rich imagery of the creation to a feast of sound: "Seraphic Wires," swell and fall as fancy, "from out the veiling Cloud" breathes "her magic notes aloud" (32-38). The certainty of

¹²¹ We might take Johnson's famous dictum on personification as a measuring stick here. I return to personification below.

¹²² See Anna Laetitia Barbauld, ed., The Poetical Works of Mr. William Collins. With a Prefatory Essay, by Mrs. Barbauld. [with Engravings after Thomas Stothard.] (London: T. Cadell, 1797) xxiv.

vision is replaced by the less certain sense of sound.¹²³ Collins veils the divine couple's activities not merely out of decency but also out of his lack of certainty. Starr also observes the relative unimportance or unavailability of vision in Collins's poetry, noting that in the ode "To Evening," "the pictorial aspects of personification, those most closely associated with the device, are explicitly subordinate to an approach that emphasizes other senses" (87). The same could be said of the ode "On the Poetical Character." It is moves like this veiling that separate him from (and I would argue raise him above) a poet like Akenside, who freely claims to feel the power of his own prophetic mind, giving all in bold detail. Collins's muse is no mere stand-in for powers of the creative imagination that he has surely in hand. It is particularly important that fancy is obscured here because at this very moment "Thou, Thou rich-hair'd Youth of Morn,/ And all they subject Life was born!" (39). This birth, coming almost exactly half-way through the poem, is the poem's central event, and its meaning has long been disputed. I contend that this line's resistance to easy interpretation reveals the workings of a key aspect of mid-century poetry: personification.

The referent of the "rich-hair'd Youth of Morn" is not settled. Some hold that it refers to the sun, some to the ideal poet, some to the poetical character, and some to Apollo as a sort of sublation of these various elements. That many critics have approached this personification as requiring a specific and singular referent is not surprising; this is, according to Thomas Maresca, the way personification works. In his essay "Personification vs. Allegory," Maresca argues that personification is a univocal trope, in which a concrete element stands precisely for the abstract thing it embodies,

¹²³ If Collins's is indeed a poetry of vision, as Patricia Meyer Spacks' title would suggest, this switch from the visual to the auditory is telling. I return to Spacks' assessment of Collins below.

with no room for slippage (Cope 25). To illustrate this, consider Maresca's example, The Pilgrim's Progress, of which he notes, "Christian flees the City of Destruction to seek the Celestial City. That is not a metaphor but a literal narrative statement, and it does not figure anything significantly other than what it says." He further notes that the one to one correspondence created by personification is perfectly suited to Bunyan's didactic purposes (Cope 24).¹²⁴ In their desire for a single referent for the "rich-hair'd Youth of Morn," some critics are simply holding to the definition and practice of personification.

Those critics who are satisfied with multiple referents for the "rich-hair'd Youth of Morn," the critics with whom I am compelled to agree, are clearly violating the rules of personification. The lack of a single referent for the personification indicates that Collins is not really engaging here in personification as we usually apply the term. Rather, he is creating an allegory, in the sense that Maresca opposes the term to personification. He compares allegory to a pun, arguing that "[j]ust as a pun cannot be paraphrased and still exist as a pun, so too allegory" (Cope 36). There is something irreducible in the multiplicity of the referent of allegory. This multiplicity does not destroy meaning, as Maresca thinks the deconstructive account of allegory holds, but enlarges it, adding meanings according to the ability of readers to comprehend them. Collins's so-called personification of the "rich-hair'd Youth of Morn" is really an allegory in which the referent need not be absolutely confirmed.

This is not simply a critical squabble over what trope Collins chose to employ in his poem. That he uses allegory at this very point further indicates the duplicity of

¹²⁴ I return to the question of Collins's didacticism as it relates to the problem of reference in his poems below.

language that makes addressing the Other so difficult and inevitable at once.¹²⁵ Just as in the strophe the broad simile between Spenser's Ladies' contest for Florimel's girdle and the poets' contest for fancy's prize breaks down at a certain point, the would-be personification that would capture the essence of the poetical character breaks down and points in several directions. The tools of language are marvelous in their power, they can produce a Fairie Queene in the right hands, but they have a harder time making manifest the nature of the poetical character. In this reading of Collins's trope as allegorical, I do not see allegory as a necessarily conscious choice of the author, but as a condition of language. Allegory is the name given to the dual phenomenon of the overlap of the symbolic and the real, in the Lacanian sense. On one hand, the symbolic cannot help but refer to the real. On the other hand, the symbolic can never wholly wrest the real into language. I situate the vicissitudes of enthusiasm, whether it be poetic or religious, precisely at this juncture. Enthusiasm is always the attempt to win something back from the real, to take the response of the gods as proof of one's identity as made evident by the very form of inspiration. If Collins could resolve the poetical character with a simple figure like personification, he would be a very different poet, a convinced enthusiast along the lines of Akenside, one whose certainty is a point of embarrassment, rather than one whose struggle is a point of continuing interest. In this allegory, Collins confronts us with the possibility of enthusiasm, not its conclusion, and it is in the opening of this possibility that Collins's greatness lies. Collins's poem presents the act itself rather than

¹²⁵ Here I disagree with Marsca on the status of allegory. His essay suggests that allegory is a choice made by an author, or by a reader. Doubtless he would detect the defeatism of deconstruction in my contention that allegory is finally inevitable in trying to pin down the Other. If allegory were simply a matter of desire in language, then we should have no problem choosing to make what Lacan calls *das Ding* present in language, if we so choose. It is our collective and fortunate failure to do so that best supports my position. As a consequence, I regard his reading of Pilgrim's Progress as univocal as a useful strawman. Surely even a text as baldly didactic as this is available for deconstruction.

its assured conclusion. I will return to the topic of personification and allegory after looking at the rest of the ode “On the Poetical Character.”

Collins fleshes out the mythological armature of his creation story, writing that during this creation “The dang’rous Passions kept aloof,/ Far from the sainted growing Woof” (41-2). That the “dang’rous Passions” are not part of the poetical character fits with my argument that emotional excess should be severed from the discussion of enthusiasm and the mid-century poets. It also makes it harder to see Collins as a wild pre-romantic, harnessing the power of emotion to ride to glory; after all, “dang’rous Passions” could as easily indicate all of the passions as some of them. The passions kept away, but “*Wonder... Truth...*” and “All the shad’wy Tribes of *Mind*” were in attendance. That they were present as witnesses and not as co-creators, as celebrants and not as active partners, indicates how Collins conceives of the relation between the powers of mind and the power of fancy. They are not united, though they are related. At this point in the poem, it would be particularly hard to assert that fancy names only the creative power of the imagination, a faculty in the poet’s control, which he exercises at his will. The relation between the attendants and the creators repeats the enthusiastic structure of divine power entering the subject. The mesode ends with a return to this world and the relation of the poet to the divine: “Where is the Bard, whose Soul can now,/ Its high presuming Hopes avow?/ Where he who things, with Rapture blind,/ This hallow’d Work for Him design’d?” (51-54). Ending on this note, the mesode structurally reinforces the poem’s central concern, which is the relation between the subject and the Other, the poet and the divine. I say structurally because the first twenty-eight lines of the mesode present the divine scene, and the last four present the mundane one. Structurally, the

mesode, like the other sections of the ode, sets the one scene against the other, and asks how they have met in the past, and if they might meet again.

The antistrophe returns again to another scene, this time one easily recognized, and even named, as like Milton's Eden: "An *Eden*, like his own, lies spread" (62). This poetic return to a scene created by the literary father suggests Collins's great debt to Milton. However, Milton's function is not as inspiration or source, but again, as in the case of Spenser, example. The envisioned scene is the place where Milton composed his verses. Milton is not figured here as self-sufficient and the cause of his own greatness. Rather, "His Ev'ning Ear,/ From many a Cloud that drop'd Ethereal Dew,/ Nigh spher'd in Heav' its native Strains could hear" (64-66). His greatness is the result of being close to heaven, close enough to hear "its native Strains." Indeed, the presence of the many clouds and the "native Strains" of heaven strongly suggest that Milton hears fancy breathing "her magic Notes aloud." That inspiration takes place auditorily rather than visually should come as no surprise here. First, the switch from vision to sound in the antistrophe echoes that same switch in the mesode, where fancy's tryst with the Creator is rendered in sound. Second, the switch is appropriate since the subject of the description is the great blind poet. The speaker puts himself in relation to Milton: "With many a Vow from Hope's aspiring Tongue,/ My trembling Feet his guiding Steps pursue" (70-71). He is drawn along like a magnetic ring, following his literary forebear, but to what end? His end is not to imitate Milton, to draw lessons and rules from his art, as Pope advised at the beginning of this chapter. Rather, he wants Milton to show him the way to fancy. His model of gaining sublimity from Milton is not Pope's mimetic model, but Longinus's mysterious model of inspiration.

That this is a matter of inspiration is evident in the final lines of the poem, which indicate the fate of the pursuit of Milton:

In vain—Such bliss to One alone,
Of all the Sons of Soul was known,
And Heav'n, and *Fancy*, kindred Pow'rs,
Have now o'erturn'd th'inspiring Bow'rs,
Or curtain'd close such Scene from ev'ry future View. (72-76)

If Milton was great, it was because of “Heaven and *Fancy*,” rather than anything of his own doing. The speaker asks only to be put in the same position Milton had before him, to receive fancy’s gift of inspiration by entering “th’inspiring Bow’rs.” The final two lines are the moment of triumph for critics looking for the anxiety of influence, because they seem to depict a poet paralyzed by the power of his predecessor, lamenting that he will never be able to do the things the former did. However, I have established that time referents are not always clear in this poem. What exactly is meant by “now” in the second to last line is not entirely clear; Sitter suggests that “[p]erhaps the Edenic ‘scene’ is closed to any *future* view, but Collins and his readers have just had a good look” (“Collins” 274). If there is a positive sense granted by this “now,” its modesty is in keeping with the rest of the poem, which has questioned throughout how the poet and the divine come together. Likewise, the final line offers another possibility, that the “kindred Pow’rs... curtain’d close such Scene from ev’ry future View.” If by “such” Collins means every scene which could inspire a future poet, then we have something like the closing of the canon of prophecy. However, “such” could also refer to this specific Miltonic scene, and “Such bliss to one alone.../ was known” seems to support this reading. The speaker’s veneration of Spenser in the strophe seems to indicate that he has felt fancy’s flame, though it would be absurd to make Spenser’s scene of inspiration look

like Milton's Eden, so there may be more scenes of inspiration to come. Milton's solitary bliss was the vision of Eden he was given by fancy. The reading of the poem's ending as a sour note, an admission that the speaker has no chance at greatness, it at odds with the speculative and open nature of the rest of the work. Just as there is from some quarters a push to reduce allegory to personification, there can be a push to find a conclusion, to reach a third moment. Part of the point of Collins's "Ode on the Poetical Character" is that conclusions, like the prospect of divine inspiration, are not so certain. The unknown element is the possibility that the Other does not have a place for the subject, that the bower of earthly bliss has no connection to the divine.¹²⁶

The point of this reading of Collins's greatest ode, which at times parallels my reading of Warton's "To Fancy," is to show that Collins and the other mid-century ode writers do not approach their literary fathers antagonistically. It is far more accurate to say that they approach the Other, which includes literary history, the imagined development of poetry from its golden age to the present, enthusiastically. If there is anxiety here, it stems from the possibility that this Other, the third term required for enthusiasm, will not recognize them, not from the possibility that a more able man has already done all there is to do in poetry. This enthusiastic relation to the Other affects mid-century poetry in many ways. It can be a source of authority. It can set the scene for depictions of inspiration that go beyond Pope's mimetic model, as I have shown with Warton and Collins. In the following section, I examine the Augustan relation to the Other as it contrasts with the enthusiastic relation to the Other. This distinction, which I

¹²⁶ I am tempted to say that Collins's critics who see nothing in his allegory that reaches beyond himself, that see fancy as a stand-in for his own imagination, have only fulfilled the negative prophecy that they read at the end of this ode. By failing to consider the inside/outside question, these critics have "curtain'd close such Scene from ev'ry future view."

fit under the umbrella of Collins's title "descriptive and allegoric," has great consequences for understanding the poetry of both schools. These consequences will be made particularly clear through a closer look at two different schemes personification.

The Sons of Pope

Obviously, not all critics of the mid-century fall into the "pre-Romantic" and "post-Miltonic" schools. There are also those who question the split that Frye sees between the Augustans and the poets of sensibility, preferring to find for poets like Collins a place within Augustan poetry. Critics who would diminish the differences between Augustan poetry and the mid-century enthusiastic poetry have tended to concentrate on three inter-related topics: personification, self-authorization, and the threat of madness brought by the clash of imagination and reason. I will argue that these topics, and the take on them offered by Augustanizing critics of mid-century poetry, are determined by a skeptical relation to the Other, expressed in views on art and cosmology. By "Augustanizing", I mean the uncritical application of Augustan views to non-Augustan poetry. The root of Augustanizing is the silent assent to the position that the Other exists, but does not speak. I will show the consequences of this concept in more recent criticism of mid-century poets.

The tendency to Augustanize arises primarily out of the canonical place awarded the Scriblerians. The aesthetic power of Pope and his cohort (particularly as expressed in polemical works such as Peri Bathous and The Dunciad, following in the footsteps of Dryden's MacFlecknoe) still exerts a great deal of control over critical opinion. In a recent survey of Pope criticism, Jennifer Snead claims that the mid-1980s saw the establishment of two camps, one bent on "revealing the flawed and fissured systems of

belief” behind the poetry, the other trying to “shore up the opposite image of Pope as an embattled humanist.” She goes on to write that “[m]uch of the scholarly work produced on Pope over the following two decades has positioned itself, implicitly or explicitly, somewhere along the spectrum... of this debate” (349). The defense of Pope’s humanism often amounts to an extension of neo-classical standards beyond their proper application. I argue the great fun of skewering supposedly lesser poets has colored the reception not only of those poets (How many critical studies of Shadwell or Cibber are in print? Who but the most dogged researchers read Blackmore and Dennis?), but also of the mid-century poets.

One strong proponent of the continuity argument which would put Collins and company in the school of Pope, is Patricia Meyer Spacks. In her oft-reprinted article, “The Eighteenth-Century Collins [1983],” she bemoans the historically over-determined approach to the poet. Referring to Bloom and Sherwin specifically, and taking aim at a Freudian orientation shared by these and several other critics, she sums up the contemporary response to Collins: “The currently fashionable view privileges poetic sensibility, posits discernible relations between psyches and the texts they originate, appropriates Collins to the values of Romanticism.” To this, she opposes her argument “that he belongs, rather, to the century of Pope and Johnson, the century in which he lived” (“Collins” 4).¹²⁷

¹²⁷ The Augustanizing tendency can be seen in Spacks’ equation of “the century in which [Collins] lived” and the “century of Pope and Johnson,” as if there were no other way to read the century than as belonging to the titans of neo-classicism.

This charge and counter-claim are certainly reasonable. It cannot be wrong to put Collins, or any other poet, in his own historical context.¹²⁸ Spacks also deftly exposes the dangerous potential in psychoanalytic criticism of using texts to reach conclusions about their authors. This danger is only heightened when there is colorful biographical material to link the poetry to, such as Collins's questionable mental health (Spacks "Collins" 5). Because this temptation to psychoanalyze the author through the text is so prominent, and so laden with problems, I would like to take a moment to indicate that my approach does not fall into this trap. It is partly because the biographical can be so tempting that I put my approach forward as rhetorical. I am not concerned with the fears or beliefs suffered by Collins or Akenside as they composed their poetry. Instead, I am only concerned with what their poetry *does*. The mode of establishing authority that I argue distinguishes the poetry of sensibility from the Augustan is a textual-rhetorical, and not a biographical matter.

Spacks' analysis of Collins yields a picture different from the visionary and demonic one suggested by Bloom and company. She sees him as a conventional poet, working within the Augustan norms established by Pope and Johnson, particularly when it comes to personification. Commenting on Collins's poem "The Manners," she writes "his reliance on a personification devoid of pictorial reality to distance the speaker from his own concerns and to authorize a project of psychological and social investigation foretells the technique of Johnson's [The Vanity of Human Wishes]" ("Collins" 14). Collins uses personification not to play out some oedipal drama, as some agonistic critics would have it, but to launch an investigation into the limits and applications of reason and

¹²⁸ Weinbrot is another critic who favors putting Collins in his own context. See his essay in Howard D. Weinbrot and Martin Price, eds., Context Influence and Mid-18th Century Poetry (Los Angeles: U of California, 1990).

imagination, which marks his interests and techniques as very close to Augustan interests and techniques. His personifications move toward generality, rather than specificity, making them part of the Augustan project of establishing a universal shared subjectivity. If the strictures of Augustan poetry are less clear in Collins, according to Spacks, it is in part that he is a lesser poet than Pope or Johnson, and in part because he lacks the “[a]rtistic tradition, social decorum, and Christian faith” used by “Reynolds, Burney, and Johnson,” for “judging and controlling the self” (“Collins” 17).¹²⁹ At this point, Spacks offers only the evidence of her reading of the poems to show that Collins lacked trust in these institutions, the weakest link in her chain that would bind Collins to the Augustans.¹³⁰

Concluding her reading of Collins, Spacks says “I read Collins’s poems as a series of questions about the possibility of self-authorization,” and these questions go largely unanswered (“Collins” 21). I agree that authorization is a major concern for Collins and the period, though to characterize it as “self-authorization” is already to beg the question, as it limits the source of authority to the self.¹³¹ The enigma onto which Spacks does not shed light is, why is authorization a question for Collins? Certainly for Pope or Johnson, or even for as strange a figure as Smart, authorization is not an unanswerable question because the form of the answer is already present in the poetic practice and tradition of the period. In these terms, even if one wants to stretch and call Collins an Augustan, he

¹²⁹ Here I think Spacks is very close to articulating the difference between the Augustan relation to the Other, represented by these relatively stable institutions, and Collins’s, which is marked by doubt and failure.

¹³⁰ This is a key point, as Spacks is essentially inserting her conclusion as a premise in her argument. For her, Collins doesn’t have access to these external forms that other Augustans use to tame their fears, and his poetry is an expression of this, rather than an expression of his debt to Milton or of the power of imagination, as pre-Romantic or Bloomian critics would have it.

¹³¹ It is no coincidence that Spacks converts the question of authorization to one of self-authorization: I will develop the argument that self-reference is a characteristic of the Augustans and their modern critical proponents later in the chapter.

is certainly a failed Augustan, in many ways. I argue that it is precisely this difference, this question of authorization, that splits the mid-century poets from the Augustan poets. To use the fact that both the Augustans and the poets of sensibility raise questions about authorization, while obscuring Collins's lack of answers as an individual quirk, an idiotic (in the solitary sense) mistake, is to miss the importance of placing the poetry of enthusiasm in the context of its forebears altogether.

The Augustan Relation to the Other

The soul of the tendency to read the mid-century poets as Augustan lies in two assumptions: that there is a hard boundary between inside and outside, and that nothing ever really comes from outside. This hard boundary is particularly evident in Pope's cosmology, its consequences for epistemology, and theories of art. Here we see something of his cosmology:

But of this frame the bearings, and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look'd thro' or can a part contain the whole? (29-32)

Pope's ordering of the universe in these lines positions the subject in a definite relation to that universe. Its elements are ordered, "Not *Chaos*-like together crushed and bruised" though human perception and understanding is not equal to understanding that order in its own terms, "But as the World, harmoniously confus'd" (Windsor-Forest 13-14). Because the subject is so perfectly circumscribed, a part that cannot contain the whole, any reaching beyond this narrow compass of the part, of the inside, is the definition of folly. This limiting of the subject's scope combined with locating it precisely in a supersensible network is emblematic of what I call the Augustan relation to the Other. The Augustan subject, just like Pope's Bolingbroke, is trapped by its very faculties in an inescapable

microcosm; the only wisdom available to it is to recognize itself as the inmate of perception. I said earlier that neo-classicism is the success of Alcmeaon's isonomia. Pope's cosmology demonstrates this, ordering the universe, the polis, and even the organs of the body.¹³²

The Augustan relation to the Other that limits the sublime to self-reference and enthusiasm to self-authorization is very much Cartesian. As I claimed in chapter one, polite society in eighteenth-century Britain got along primarily by not referring to first principles, because such principles are at once necessary to discourse and excluded from it. What I call the Augustan relation to the Other is precisely the stance that leaves first principles wholly to one side, in order to press on with the semblance of shared qualities. This relation to the Other is Cartesian because it is Descartes' brand of subjectivity, and the science that it entails, which functions by leaving God, the Other, wholly in the margins, unquestioned and unmentioned, as much as possible. Recall that, for the Cartesian subject, the Other is a silent guarantee—Descartes only needs God for a brief moment on his path to founding his subjectivity. For the Augustan subject, as described in Pope's Essay on Man, it is vital that order reign as that it be excluded from perception.

This strategy of clearly locating the subject in the context of a regular and ordered Other can be seen in the type of verse at which neoclassical poets excel all others: the heroic couplet. In her study of the master of the heroic couplet, Alexander Pope, Laura Brown claims that the aphoristic verse form “records a proposition rather than a movement” (53). The heroic couplet establishes a sense of finality, of being all encompassing in scope. The very two-beat rhythm of the couplet suggests this perfect

¹³² For another instance of the Augustan subject aligned with an understandable universe, see Starr's readings of Shaftesbury: G. Gabrielle Starr, Lyric Generations: Poetry and the Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2004) 80-85.

ordering of the universe, a hasty movement from the first moment to the third that closes out the possibility of the second, fleeting moment. Of such paired opposites as writing and judging, genius and taste, wit and judgment, colouring and learning, which Pope uses to distinguish between creating poetry and criticizing in the Essay on Criticism, Brown says “the system goes on to determine the inner logic of the human soul, where ‘*Understanding*’ gives way to ‘*Memory*’, and ‘*Memory*’ to ‘*Imagination*’ (56-9) in a neat and comprehensive hierarchy” (55). The pairing of terms in lines turned to pairs creates an Other, an order of things, in which the poet can locate himself or his reader as subject. By seeming to encompass all in opposites, Pope’s verse leaves the impression that nothing is left out. The Other for Pope functions according to the great chain of being, which means there is a place in the imaginary for each subject. This ordered Other is what Brown calls “the neo-Platonic belief in an ordering principle that determines the logic of the universe” (55). The Augustan Other (which Pope most often calls “nature,” in all its meanings), a silent order without gaps, plays the same role as Descartes’ god; only non-deceit is required to substantiate and ground the subject.¹³³

A further example of the Augustan relation to the Other is found in Johnson’s criticism of Thomson’s Seasons. Of Thomson’s masterpiece Johnson famously writes

The great defect of the *Seasons* is want of method... Of many appearances subsisting all at once, no rule can be given why one should be mentioned before another; yet the memory wants the help of order, and the curiosity is not excited by suspense or expectation. (Lives V. 3 269)

There are two opposed relations to the Other here: Johnson’s, in which the relation is characterized by an order that ultimately locates the subject in a well-defined space, and

¹³³ For an alternative reading of Pope’s employment of the heroic couplet, see the final chapter of Margaret Anne Doody, The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985).

Thomson's, in which the subject is there to be inspired rhapsodically by the Other, which may or may not come in an order that makes sense. Johnson's disapproval of the Seasons' lack of a plan indicates more than aesthetic judgment; because of the poem's subject matter and method, his judgment of it reveals the world-view that underpins his Augustan aesthetic.

In The Skeptical Sublime: Aesthetic Ideology in Pope and the Tory Satirists, James Noggle clearly traces the contours of this relation to the Other. Seeking, in part, to reconcile Tory satire with the tradition of the sublime, Noggle claims that Pope and his cohort present a skeptical sublime, one which questions humanity's knowledge, rather than buoying it up in some epiphanic final moment. There is value in this argument; if nothing else, it envisions a sublime that manages to hold on to some of its requisite terror. Certainly, the conclusion to the skeptical sublime is not pleasant, as the subject rebounds on himself, and is left to lament the impossibility of understanding the universe. This reading of the sublime is offered as an alternative to the more pervasive Burkean or Addisonian accounts, in which the soul is inflated and the subject is allowed to feel his power in the final moment. However, the skeptical sublime is ultimately not different from the more familiar accounts. While the subject Noggle envisions certainly is not comforted in his rationality or his ontological calling, it does confront something awesome before which it fails to understand. This sublime object, the order of the universe, for instance, is the immaculate and untouchable Augustan Other. As Pope has it in his Essay on Man: "A mighty maze! But not without a plan," and later "All Nature is but Art unknown to thee;/All chance direction, which thou canst not see;/All discord, harmony not understood." To the human eye, all seems to be chaos, but there is a plan,

which is available only from the super-position of the deity. In the skeptical sublime, there is an order out there, a consistent Other who has structured this universe, but it has not constructed it for our understanding. The failure is entirely subjective, and the lesson of the failure is not to inquire too far beyond one's own realm: "The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find)/Is not to act or think beyond mankind" (189-90). The Other is left wholly intact by the skeptical sublime, just as it is by the Kantian one; the two approaches simply set different limits for humanity. These versions of the sublime function like an insurance policy for the Name of the Father, a guarantee of its power.¹³⁴ The difference between them lies in the Other's non-communication with the subject in the case of the skeptical sublime, and this is the crux of the Augustan relation to the Other. The Other is certainly there, but it is not there to respond to the subject and wisdom consists in reinforcing the subject's alienation from this Other. In this context, it is clear that any claim to have gained inspiration from an interaction with the Other can only be madness or a metaphor, politely covered by the concept of the imagination. For the Augustans, the Other has no mouth, so to listen to it is folly.

This sealing-off of the Other finds its way into contemporary accounts of enthusiasm. In the Blackwell Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry, John D. Morillo defines enthusiasm as "literally 'the god within,' from the Greek *en-theos*" (Gerrard 69). This definition misleads in the same direction taken by Spacks, Siskin, and Knapp: self-reference. The Oxford English Dictionary does not go so far as to split *en* from *theos*. Instead, it suggests that "enthusiasm" derives from the Greek *ἐνθουσιασμός*, meaning "the fact of being *ἐνθεος* possessed by a god" ("Enthusiasm"). This small difference in

¹³⁴ The whole idea of the anxiety of influence is also predicated on the unchallengeable power of the father, an encounter which is always already doomed to failure for the son.

etymology makes all the difference in meaning. The derivation of enthusiasm does not authorize anyone to insist that the god dwells within the enthusiast. Rather, there is a crossing of boundaries, a possession. As in the earlier case of personification, the simple insistence on an inside/outside split is not a simple error. The commitment to the inside/outside split is an ideologically motivated restriction of meaning that serves to remove the grounds of enthusiasm by reducing it to a matter of self-reference. The Augustan subject, trapped by its attendant cosmology in a world of self-reference, is forced to conceive of personification in a certain, limited way. In the following section, I examine the effects of this Augustan worldview on the practice of personification.

Personification in the Augustan Mode

In Windsor-Forest, Pope offers a typical string of Augustan personifications:

See *Pan* with Flocks, with Fruits *Pomona* crown'd,
 Here blushing *Flora* paints the enamel'd Ground,
 Here *Ceres'* Gifts in waving Prospect stand,
 And nodding tempt the joyful Reaper's Hand,
 Rich Industry sits smiling on the Plains... (37-41)

Identifying these as typical, I highlight first of all the echo of Virgil's Georgics.

Personifications are present here, to some extent, because they were present in Virgil, a matter of convention. These personified elements are also not very active. The most active, *Flora*, does no more than paint, and the image is more of the product of her painting than her process. Industry "sits smiling," while *Pan* and *Pomona* are objects, rather than subjects of the verb "crown'd." All of this is in keeping with Johnson's prescription for personification. In this section, I analyze the implications of the Augustan practice of personification in order to differentiate the personification engaged in by the mid-century poets. I argue that Augustan poets personify in order to prop up the

Other as separate and unreachable, while the mid-century poets of sensibility personify to reach out enthusiastically to the Other, to elicit a response.

Personification stands as one way to locate and explain continuity and change in the poetic tradition of the eighteenth century. It is, of course, a common enough trope in poetry. Johnson's oft-quoted stricture on its decorous application, denying personified ideas "any real employment or... material agency" indicates that the period's greatest taste-maker saw it as a technique worthy of proper use (Lives V. 1 260). I argue that personification is indispensable to the mid-century poets and that they put it to a different use than did the Augustans. Throughout the period to which I have confined my study in this chapter, many odes were published, and many of those are addressed to personified qualities: the poetical character, fear, pity, fancy, and so on. It is appropriate that the mid-century poets would rely on personification because their poetry traffics in ideas and problems that lie outside the urbane bounds of Augustan poetry.¹³⁵

In "The Augustan Pantheon: Mythology and Personification in Eighteenth Century Poetry," Rachel Trickett distinguishes between Renaissance mythology and Augustan personification, claiming that the latter represents "ideas which were much more clearly defined than the conceptions behind the heathen gods of earlier literature" (71). She goes on to connect Augustan personification with the visual arts: "The personifications of Augustan poetry... with their formalized gestures, can be paralleled in the poses of the figures of neo-classical paintings" (78). Trickett sees this as a manifestation of the *Ut Pictura Poesis* philosophy in poetry. Spacks also sees Augustan

¹³⁵ Implicit in my argument is that a concept like Marshall Brown's urbane sublime is too great a contradiction to bear. On the urbane sublime, see particularly the first chapter of Marshall Brown, Preromanticism (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991).

personification “[d]rawing on iconographic tradition” (“Collins” 13). Augustan taste and poetic practice point to static personifications best imagined as paintings or statues.

It would be easy to oppose to these static personifications the more active ones of the mid-century poets. This may seem fair enough, though there would doubtless be exceptions that always make such a formal distinction tenuous at best. I propose to separate Augustan personification from what followed by rhetorical criteria. The question to pose of these different approaches to personification is not “what are they,” but “what do they do?” The mid-century poets, like Milton before them, often appeal to their personifications. They repeatedly ask their personified elements to help them achieve their poetic tasks. Joseph Warton calls “To Fancy:” “O Parent of each lovely muse, / Thy spirit o’er my soul diffuse” (1-2). In his ode “To Pity,” Collins invites her to “Come, *Pity*, come, by Fancy’s Aid,” and there are numerous other instances of this brand of calling in the odes of the 1740s (25). These invocations of the muse are not mere genuflections to tradition because they are often the whole purpose of the poem and they often seem to spring from the poet rather than the demands of genre.¹³⁶ The Augustan approach to the Other guts this sort of appeal, which presumes an enthusiastic approach to the Other, resulting in personifications whose realm of activity is severely restricted. I say this type of approach is impossible because the goal of Augustan personification is allusion and imagery, not inspiration. The personified element counts far less than the image generated in Augustan personification. This understanding of personification informs not only Augustan taste, but also some modern criticism of the

¹³⁶ An epic may feature an invocation of the muse as a matter of convention. In the ode, there is no such conventional pressure to invoke the muse.

period. In their respective works on personification, Clifford Siskin and Steven Knapp repeat the Augustan relation to the Other in new circumstances.

Clifford Siskin, in “Personification and Community: Literary change in the Mid and Late Eighteenth Century” reads personification as a community-building trope; he sees personification as formative of a social link within the discourse of Augustan poetry. Siskin focuses on the “personification of human faculties or attributes [which] requires the transplantation of a part from the body of the individual (e.g., each man’s reason) to the body of the community (e.g., reason as a standard faculty shared by all)” (377). This focus on one type of personification allows him to make a compelling argument about the role of personification in Augustan poetry and patronage, both areas that accommodate a select audience that wants to see its values generalized to the whole of humanity. Siskin says that “[p]ersonifying and generalizing are... interrelated processes” (377). By linking personifying and generalizing, he amplifies the scope of the type of personification he writes about to encompass its whole field. This amplification has a place in his argument, but it is dangerous to make an equation between personifying and generalizing, because it reduces the pool of referents for personification to elements found “within” and determines the direction in which the personification extends. In other words, if personification is the same as generalization, then the trope moves only from the particular quality found inside the poet to the same quality shared by his audience. The failure to envision the possibility that personification can refer to something not already within the poet is a mark of unexamined Augustan prejudice, which has always already decided that there is nothing outside the poet to be personified. Steven Knapp makes a similar move to limit the pool of referents for personification.

Knapp, in Personification and the Sublime, reads personification as a self-reflexive device for staging the (according to him, inherently false) drama of the sublime. Knapp's insistence on the falsity of sublime experience indicates the Augustan inability to question the Other as guarantor of order. Knapp and Siskin share a slightly skewed definition of personification, which might not seem important at first, but is actually crucial in each of their arguments. Albeit for different reasons than Siskin, Knapp also sees personification as self-reflexive (Knapp 87).¹³⁷ For both authors, what is personified is an aspect of the poet, which is then treated as an abstraction. Building on the definition of personification as amplification of an internal trait into an abstracted but concrete image, Knapp says:

To treat one's own invention as an external power, then, is at worst the mark of a Satanic fanatic, at best a symptom of the innocent vanity that tricks Milton's Eve into a brief infatuation with her own watery image. Somewhere between these two extremes—or perhaps worse that both of them—is the reflexive absurdity of a Swiftian Aeolist or a Popean dunce. (91)

The trouble with this conclusion is two-fold. First, it treats the satirical inventions of Swift and Pope as unproblematic standards by which to judge poetry. Just because Pope and the rest of the Scriblerians skewered John Dennis, for instance, does not necessarily mean that his work has no value. Scholars of any period of literature should not have the luxury of sharing in their period's prejudices and preferences. The second problem with this conclusion about the value of treating personifications as external powers is that it is

¹³⁷ While Siskin is interested in personification as a means to community building and regularization, Knapp's interest is in sublime personification. Knapp sees personification and the sublime as sharing a certain self-reflexive quality. I will return to some of Knapp's conclusions shortly.

circular.¹³⁸ Because the source of personification is taken to be within the poet, it is of course absurd for that poet to treat the personification as a separate and external power.

However, the notion that personification necessarily means an abstraction of an “internal” quality or trait is far from settled. First, a standard definition of personification is not so specialized. Quintilian says “we often personify the abstract, as Virgil does with Fame, or as Xenophon records that Prodicus did with Virtue and Pleasure, or as Ennius does when... he represents Life and Death contending with one another” (Quintilian 395). Note that this definition includes no self-reference between the poet or speaker and the object of personification; rather, “the abstract” is the target of personification. Let me repeat: “The abstract” is the *source* of the personification, not a result of its working, as Siskin would have it. This fine point of definition may seem fussy, but it is of great importance. By bringing self-reference into the definition of personification, Siskin finds it easy to analyze it as a community-building trope, and Knapp finds it easy to marry it to what he sees as the self-reflexive process of the sublime.

Self-reference as a way to deflate the elevating powers of the sublime is one of Pope’s favorite tools, as demonstrated by Noggle in The Skeptical Sublime. The classic example of this deflation by self-reference is Pope’s comment on Longinus in the Essay on Criticism: “Longinus.../ Whose own Example strengthens all his Laws, / And Is himself that great Sublime he draws.” It is telling that Knapp uses self-reference as Pope does, to deflate the sublime, because it indicates they are both working with similar notions of the Other. However, Knapp and Siskin’s *glissement* in the definition of personification alone does not negate Knapp’s claim that personification is self-reflexive.

¹³⁸ Knapp’s scoffing at Eve’s brief infatuation with her own image, taken here as a paradigm of personification, suggests that the Augustan relation to the Other is one in which the only thing one can discover is oneself, a relation in which the image is *das Ding an sich*.

Even without the loaded definition, Knapp could easily argue that personifications still arise within the mind of the poet, regardless of what they are personifications of, and therefore are always absurdly self-reflexive if treated as anything other than mental furnishings.

This potential response is no less problematic than the original formation, because it depends on an under-examined distinction between the inside and the outside. The course of deconstructive criticism has taught, if nothing else, that such oppositions often break down under close examination. Indeed, Paul de Man analyzes this very inside/outside distinction, albeit in a different context, in his essay “Semiology and Rhetoric.” Because the division between the subject and the Other (a more complex way of approaching the inside/outside binary) is of paramount importance in my analysis of enthusiasm, Knapp’s easy distinction between the two fields in his analysis of the sublime as well as that of personification is troubling. Knapp’s claim that personification refers to an internal state seems to hold well enough for a case like Collins’s personification of fear in the “Ode to Fear,” as the fear might be read as an emotion that arises within the speaker and becomes the subject of address.

However, one could just as easily argue that the point of the poem, and one of the identifying marks of its subject, is that fear upsets the boundaries between the subject and the Other or between subject and object. In the “Ode to Fear,” the speaker states “I know thy hurried Step, thy haggard Eye!/ Like Thee I start, like Thee disorder’d fly” (Collins 7-8). Fear is familiar, the speaker knows Fear, and there is some kind of kinship between them suggested by the repeated “like.” This kinship is further attested when the speaker asks “Who, *Fear*, this ghastly Train can see,/ And look not madly wild, like Thee?” (25-

26). The agitation of the poem's speaker arises not from being touched deeply within, but from having its boundaries violated: the speaker sees something that reacts as he does; something "out there" mirrors something "in here." This Fear has something of the *Unheimlich* about it, and to settle the uncanny as simply internal is to miss a great deal of its power. This inside/outside or subject/object confusion is more than the difficulty that attends all aesthetic judgments: namely, that it is at times difficult to decide if the sublime, for instance, describes the object observed, the state of mind, or the author of both. Collins's personification of Fear reveals a subject trying to uphold an identity in spite of the derangement of boundaries caused by Fear.

The poem's epode presents a poetic lineage that could serve as a way to moor the subject, a brief history of the poetic conquests of Fear. Of course, as I have shown with Akenside and with the "Ode on the Poetical Character," the speaker does not smoothly integrate himself with this lineage, nor does he hope to best it, nor does he sink in defeat before it. Rather, in the antistrophe, he reveals the stakes of the appeal to the Other, which are no less than the speaker's existence as a poet. The speaker will superstitiously follow "every strange Tale" lest he be "found, by Thee o'eraw'd/ In that thrice-hallow'd Eve abroad" (Collins). Fear is figured as a force that can locate the speaker, even in the sense of a hunter locating prey. This matter of location as the hinge of the subject's existence ends the poem, as the speaker asks Fear to inspire him as she did Shakespeare: "His *Cypress Wreath* my Meed decree,/ And I, O *Fear*, will dwell with *Thee!*" (Collins). This is an enthusiastic relationship in the sense that I defined in the previous chapter because the speaker is searching for something in the Other to respond to him, to locate him in an imaginary space (hence the emphasis on *dwelling* with fear in the last line of

the poem). If Fear is an emotion that arises within this speaker, then it has become something else by the end of the poem, something that transcends the subject and can serve to establish its boundaries. Fear is the name of the risk taken in the enthusiastic act; there is no guarantee of the act, and its only evidence is its effect on the subject.

This risk is presented in the “Ode on the Poetical Character” as the possibility that fancy may not reward the speaker with her inspiration, her flame that at once would recognize the speaker as a poet and make him one. The discourse on the sublime consistently excludes this dimension of subjective danger, and Knapp continues this exclusion. His criticism, based on the assumption that personification is a matter of treating internal states as external realities, is an example of the blind alley that maintains the decorum and reinforces the repressive practices of the period he studies. At bottom, Knapp’s claim that the self-referentiality of personification reflects that of the sublime is a circular argument, two iterations of the same Scriblerian function masquerading as cause and effect.

The over-application of Tory-Augustan sensibilities to the sublime leads Knapp into other logical impasses as well. Knapp’s dismissal of the power and potential of personification is of a piece with his dismissal of the sublime. Of an echo of Pope in the “Ode to Fear,” Knapp says “artificial thunder, I have been arguing, is what the sublime was (consciously and deliberately) all about” (93). While I agree with Knapp, Weiskel, and Hertz that the discourse on the sublime functions, in the false conclusion of the third moment, to strengthen reason’s place in the war of the faculties, I insist that this function of the sublime is a response to subjective danger, not just an epistemological shell game. In Knapp’s conception, which I call a no-stakes sublime, it is hard to see any exigency for

the sublime. If there is not already a problem among the faculties of the mind, why should such a body of writings as we have on the sublime arise as a solution? I hold that we as readers, as critics, and as humans, have more to gain by assuming there are high stakes present in the sublime and enthusiasm than by assuming there are no stakes. Likewise, I am more willing than Knapp to risk a potentially naïve reading of Collins, to take the “Ode to Fear” at its word, rather than employ a readerly gymnastics that would impress the prime minister of Liliput in order to cleanse the poet of the stench of fanaticism.

In short, the scheme of personification engaged by Augustans like Pope and the latter-day followers he has found in critics like Knapp, is univocal, to return to Maresca’s term. The elements of the personification are to be readily found on this side of the line that binds humanity and the universe together. In the terms of Collins’s title, Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects, I call this function of personification descriptive. This title is appropriate for two reasons. First, the goal of these Augustan personifications is representation, the creation of poetic imagery. I have noted that both Spacks and Starr comment on Collins’s personifications’ lack of visuality, albeit with different consequences. Their remarks, along with the works of Hagstrum and Trickett, indicate well enough that Augustan personifications resolve themselves primarily in a descriptive, representative function. Second, these personifications tend toward univocality. While any given personification is ripe for deconstruction, Pope’s personification of Flora in Windsor-Forest is less obviously polyvalent than Collins’s in the ode “On the Poetical Character.” Univocality is the mark of a good description, where the correct image or the right meaning is the goal. These personifications are like

formations of the unconscious in that they are posed as interpretable. The dimension of meaning is figured here as exhaustive. In these ways, Augustan personifications can be called descriptive.

The personifications of the mid-century ode writers ought to be labeled with Collins's other term, allegoric. First, for Maresca's reason; their personifications do not tend directly toward singular resolution. Rather, as is the case with the "Rich-hair'd youth of morn," their meaning spreads out over several possibilities and cannot be reduced to one without being changed. Second, they often have as their target something beyond the realm of signification. Mid-century personifications often seek to stretch language beyond its function of making meaning by pairing signifiers, to make it stumble in referentiality in order to point to that mysterious source of inspiration that Longinus imagines with the Pythia at Delphi. Their personifications carry with them a sense of "somehow" rather than sense of clear meaning. If the former mode of personification works like typical formations of the unconscious, the latter mode works like the symptom, posing something strange that is not readily exhausted by meaning, something that plays on another register beyond meaning.¹³⁹

Personification in the Mid-Century Rhapsodist Mode

The mid-century rhapsodists use personification to try to ground the Other, to try to make it present in language, rather than to join signifier to signifier to make sense. If one slope of language is metaphorical, allowing one thing to be substituted for another, their slope is metonymic, exposing the gaps in signification that point toward something other than meaning. In the hands of Collins, personification stops being a solidifying

¹³⁹ The distinction I make here between two understandings of personification parallels the distinction Lacan makes between Perelman's understanding of analogy and his own understanding of metaphor. See "Metaphor of the Subject" in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006).

trope that straitjackets the poet's meaning by the weight of convention, and becomes a way to reach past convention and conventional uses of language. It is also, at the same time, the refusal of the third moment of the sublime and the failure of enthusiasm.

I say that mid-century personification represents a refusal of the third moment of the sublime because, as a trope, it does not exhaust itself in any particular reference, or any collection of references. The sublime, as I described in chapter one, has the three-moment structure of logical time. The last moment of that structure is the conclusion, in which a new signifier comes to encompass the meaning of the experience, and puts to rest the terror of the event. I argued there that such third moments always have something false about them. Put another way, the alienation of language from its field of references is never complete and perfect. There is no doubt that the word is the death of the thing, but the predicament of the subject is that the thing continues on in an afterlife, cropping up from time to time in sublime moments. The afterlife of the thing is the radical decompletion of the Other, the failure of language that makes signification always excessive. Perfect clarity in language is made impossible in part by repetitions of these excesses, attempts to work through them that always leave something behind. Mid-century personification uses this excess to open holes in the static scheme of meaning usually established by the bi-univocal relation of signifiers. Chronologically, these poems present second moments that cannot be banished, as can be observed in the continuing critical controversy created by the desire to fix the meaning of some of them, and these poets, as I observed earlier, represent a sort of critical second moment, a literary period that refuses to coalesce under one signifier or another. The poets and their

poems are moments of the opening of possibility in signification, and such openings are always accompanied by the anxiety of absence, rather than the anxiety of influence.

This opening of possibility I call a failure of enthusiasm because it stops short of any confirmation of faith, which is the typical goal of enthusiasm. The mid-century rhapsodists venture into the fields of the gods, the field of the Other, but what they find there is uncertain or incommunicable. When they do communicate their election by the muse, the reader's reaction is often one of disbelief.¹⁴⁰ Because they reach beyond signification, their poetry has to be considered rhetorically rather than poetically, assessed for what it does rather than what it is, or what it is about. Frye makes a distinction between literatures of product and process, and it still holds for these mid-century poets of process. The gift received from the Other cannot, by definition, be contained in language, but it can be demonstrated. When a writer like Collins or Warton implicitly asks if he is a poet, it is up to the reader to answer, which means each reading of the poem is a symptomatic repetition of the test, another chance to see if the Other responds.

¹⁴⁰ Here I have in mind the more triumphal passages of Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination, or passages like that found at the end of Warton's ode "To Superstition," in which superstition is resoundingly banished by the "friends of Reason" dwelling in "Truth's high temple" Joseph Warton, Odes on Various Subjects (London: R. Dodsley, 1746) 31-33. Such passages protest too much.

CHAPTER FOUR: “The Blaze of Enthusiastic Bravery:” Genre and Hysteria in The Female Quixote

“The *Quixot* who is a sort of enthusiast in Honour... is actuated by a distempered Brain, never meddles with any but military Men, and tho’ he may do some Injury to a good name, among the unthinking, yet he cannot entirely blast it, his Notions being too romantic and Chimerical”

Philonauticus Antiquixotus, The Rule of Two to One: Or, the Difference Betwixt Courage and Quixotism

“Quixote, *n.* An enthusiastic visionary person like Don Quixote, inspired by lofty and chivalrous but false or unrealizable ideals”

The Oxford English Dictionary

“my Heart yields to the Force of Truth, and I now wonder how the Blaze of Enthusiastic Bravery, could hinder me from remarking with Abhorrence the Crime of deliberate unnecessary Bloodshed”

Charlotte Lennox, The Female Quixote

In the second-to-last chapter of Charlotte Lennox’s The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella, the titular hero meets a clergyman who tries to convince her that her belief in the reality of her beloved romances is misplaced and dangerous. Initially, Arabella holds fast to her defense of “Heroick Virtue.” Lennox relates the clergyman’s reaction to Arabella:

“And tho’ in the Performance of his Office he had been accustom’d to accommodate his Notions to every Understanding, and had therefore accumulated a great Variety of Topicks and Illustrations; yet he found himself now engag’d in a Controversy for which he was not so well prepar’d as he imagin’d, and was at a Loss for some leading Principle, by which he might introduce his Reasonings, and begin his Confutation.”

The clergyman's reaction, his search for the right rhetorical stance to take, is telling. In the absence of a sound logical "leading Principle," he knows his appeal will be that much more difficult. His difficulty is not simply a result of his lack of preparation. Rather, it is the lack of a principle shared between the Quixote and the rational speaker. That question of the principle, the cornerstone on which reasonable arguments and realistic fictions are built, is the matter of this chapter. The clergyman's perplexity in his conversation with Arabella is emblematic of the confrontation between the rational and the Quixotic. The Quixote's challenge, like the enthusiast's, is difficult because it short-circuits the rational discourse that responds to it, asking the rational responder to demonstrate the superiority of his axiom to the Quixotic one.

In this chapter, I bring together three discourses that are related, but which have not been treated together adequately. The three discourses are those on hysteria, Quixotism, and enthusiasm. Quixotism and enthusiasm have dropped out of the language or changed into something wholly different than they were in the period; hysteria has continued the strange course it has taken since its appearance in ancient Egypt. They have all been associated with emotional excess, a point on which I want to intervene. I hoped to show in chapter two a way to think about enthusiasm without falling into the trap of emotionalism. In this chapter, I want to extend that line of argument through Quixotism and hysteria. By looking at these discourses in terms of how each positions the subject and the Other, I hope to cut through the recourse to emotion and reconsider the value of Quixotism and hysteria. To return to the language of my first chapter, hysteria and Quixotism are both discursive practices that open the possibilities of the

second logical moment, possibilities that are generally precluded by the very principles of more rational discourse.

The eighteenth century provides many different Quixotes. The work of Ronald Paulson and Wendy Motooka indicates the broad influence of Cervantes' creation and its afterlife in various reformulations in England during this period. The one that interests me most in this chapter is Charlotte Lennox's Arabella in The Female Quixote. I am most interested in Lennox's novel because it treats female Quixotism, which helps connect the three discourses that I am bringing together here. The figure cut by Arabella, an imperious monster of egotism in some readings, an unfortunately failed proto-feminist in others, touches on the key interconnected topics of gender and genre, topics that I explore below. From my perspective, Arabella's assertion of authority makes her look much like an enthusiast, while her position as a woman situates her differently in terms of the Other, which means she provides a great opportunity for thinking about gender and enthusiasm in the period and in modern criticism.

That romance is a women's genre is also not a given of this chapter. I will examine the relation between gender and genre (particularly the romance/novel pair) as it plays out in The Female Quixote.¹⁴¹ My reading of Arabella's hysteria will provide the

¹⁴¹ I do not claim that romance and novel are the only genres that matter for an understanding of The Female Quixote. Catherine Gallagher and Susan Staves both argue for the place of scandal literature in interpreting this novel. See Catherine Gallagher, Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820 (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994) 184., and Susan Staves, A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 268. Judith Dorn, Devoney Looser, and Everett Zimmerman emphasize the distinction between fiction and history in Lennox's work. See Judith Dorn, "Reading Women Reading History: The Philosophy of Periodical Form in Charlotte Lennox's *the Lady's Museum*," Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques 18.3 (1992), Devoney Looser, British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670-1820 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000), Everett Zimmerman, "Personal Identity, Narrative, and History: *The Female Quixote* and *Redgauntlet*," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 12.2/3 (2000). Sharon Smith Palo has considered this work in light of contemporary texts on female education. See Sharon Smith Palo, "The Good Effects of a Whimsical Study: Romance and Women's Learning in Charlotte Lennox's *the Female Quixote*," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 18.2 (2005/06).

reference points for a reappraisal of the differences between the romance and the novel. Adding to Scott Paul Gordon's work on this crucial difference, I will argue that we should think of romance and novel as two different strategies of reading that can be differentiated in terms of the status of desire in each of them. The realistic novel requires a Hobbesian transparency of desire while the fantastic romance always maintains desire as an enigma. Bringing together gender and genre, I will argue that the mystery of desire presented by the romance genre is one way of (not) answering the question Lacan attributes to hysterics: am I a man or a woman? The novel and romance genres are subjective technologies that each provides a different answer to the question of the subject's identity for the Other.

The demands of distinguishing the romance and novel genres will lead me to a close reading of some of the formal properties of The Female Quixote. This close reading will address two problems. First, our understanding of the romance genre is based primarily on its content (fantastic, unrealistic) and its social purpose (particularly as contrasted with the epic), rather than rhetorical stance. Identifying some rhetorical properties of romance will help clarify Lennox's use of the conventions of the novel in The Female Quixote. Second, while many critics have considered the meaning of Arabella's actions and their possible relations with Lennox's life, few have done Lennox the honor of reading the narrative voice of her novel closely. The narrator's voice is particularly telling in this novel. Her frequent cynicism functions as a counterpoint to Arabella's mistakenness, but that cynicism is not necessarily endorsed as always correct in the novel. In tracing the distance between the narrator and the main character of the novel, I hope to show that Lennox does not present a simple tale of a foolish young

woman who has poor reality testing skills, to use today's psychological parlance.

Arabella's story is more complex than that, and one indicator of that complexity is the ironic distance of the narrator.

Finally, I will argue that Arabella's conversion need not be read as a failure. If the reader enters into the true spirit of comparison and interconnectedness of the novel way of reading and the romance way of reading, there is no need to conclude that Arabella has abandoned the fantastic in favor of the realistic. Madness and reason, genre and gender are intertwined in The Female Quixote in ways that make any reading that removes the mystery of desire miss the point. The conflict between these different genre discourses indicates that the only correct approach is a practical one, as long as it is understood that "practical" means not approaching reality with a stifling set of axioms. If Arabella's conversion is the failure of romance, it should not be immediately assumed that it is at the same time the triumph of the novel. I hope to offer a reading of Lennox's novel that maintains the mystery of Arabella's desire, even as the novel reaches a third moment conclusion.

Quixotism and Enthusiasm

In eighteenth-century England, 'Quixotism' could name a range of bizarre behavior, from a lamentable brain distemper brought on by reading too many romances to a noble, if still misled, opposition to the baseness of the fallen world of the present day. The titular character of Don Quixote was read as both a "lunatic knight" and a "just and virtuous hero, persecuted by an uncomprehending age" (Wood 9).¹⁴² The kernel of

¹⁴² As Wood points out, critics such as Stuart M. Tave and Ronald Paulson pin these alternate readings of Don Quixote to historical changes, arguing that the second reading succeeds and supplants the first. See Sarah Florence Wood, Quixotic Fictions of the USA, 1792-1815 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 9, 13. I reject this historical development along with Wood. One of the tenets of this chapter is that histories of thought

agreement shared by these different assessments of the Quixote is a lack of participation in the common relation to reality. As I indicate in the previous chapter, that relation to reality is never more or less than a fantasy that always rests on axioms, which are definitionally unsound and unsoundable. Regardless of whether one approved or disapproved of the Quixote's actions, there was general agreement that the Quixote was not in step with the rest of the world.

This is the first shared quality of the Quixote and the enthusiast. Both fail to participate in the common relation to reality of their surrounding contemporary discourses. As my first epigraph indicates, occasionally the Quixote was seen as a species of enthusiast on just this ground, that he acted on a principle or axiom out of all proportion with those around him. The early twentieth-century moral essayist Samuel McChord Crothers identifies, in his own term, the axiomatic nature of Quixotism:

We sometimes speak of an inconsequent, harum-scarum person, who is always going off after new ideas, as Quixotic. But true Quixotism is grave, self-contained, conservative. Within its own sphere it is accurate and circumstantial. There is no absurdity in its mental process; all that is concealed in its assumptions. (279)

Arabella shows the gravity Crothers attributes to the Quixote. She also displays the quick wit that allows the Quixote to adapt any set of circumstances to her axiomatic beliefs about the world. Logically speaking, Quixotism is fully valid, but may not be sound. The soundness of belief is the ground of the challenge of both enthusiasm and Quixotism.

Expanding on the critique of reason implicit in Quixotic discourse, Wendy Motooka writes that "Quixotism is a parody of reason, satirizing rational authority as a

often rely too heavily on watersheds and that we stand to gain much more by considering the opposed interpretations in their simultaneity than in their pretended succession. See Ronald Paulson, *Don Quixote in England: The Aesthetics of Laughter* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998), Stuart Malcolm Tave, *The Amiable Humorist. A Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960).

political fiction only as rational as the authority of don Quixote's lance" (2). My reading of enthusiasm as a challenge to reason is of a piece with Motooka's reading of Quixotism presented here. In both cases, the axiom of the fantasy, the incomprehensible kernel, is exposed, and the Quixote's or enthusiast's rational foil is challenged to show how his or her axiom is any more reasonable. Motooka goes on to say that "Quixotes appear to be crazy because their rationale rests on peculiar, not general, experiences, yet they nonetheless forcefully insist on the universal validity of their own authority" (4). She sees Quixotism opposing itself to reason by sticking to its peculiar guns against reason's glittering generalities. This is where I differentiate my view from hers; the basis for Quixotism, like the basis for enthusiasm, while unique, does not come from a private realm of experience. In other words, the axis for separation between the Quixote and the rational person is not private/public.

To illustrate this, briefly consider Lennox's Arabella. Arabella draws her authority not from herself, as Jon Mee and Motooka would have it, but from a specific set of texts. This may seem like a hair-splitting point, but Arabella's authority does not lie in herself, but in her Other. Arabella, the beautiful heiress, could easily use her own social position as a basis for authority. However, she does not. The Quixote, like the enthusiast, acts as a subject of the Other, one who has entered into a special relation with this guarantee of meaning. Arabella, as a subject, is pinned entirely to this admittedly strange romantic Other, which consists of her favored endless French romances, her treasure trove of signifiers that render herself and her world for her. She is not an autocrat, driven by whim to torture everyone around her, as some have suggested.¹⁴³ The

¹⁴³ I develop the question of Arabella's will or desire and its difference from the perceptions offered by those around her below, particularly in the sections on hysteria and genre.

Quixote's connection to the Other is vital because it allows me to read The Female Quixote outside the rigid boundaries of the self, which are part of the target of Lennox's critique. Rather than considering the difference between Quixotism and rationalism in terms of private and public, we might think in terms of shared and unshared axioms, a distinction which removes some of the hierarchy implied in the more reasonable inside/outside pair. Quixotes and enthusiasts alike challenge the very notion of inside and outside.

Scott Paul Gordon notes that Quixote narratives are useful in the classroom for getting students to reflect on their own reading practices. He writes that “[s]uch reflection can make visible what is typically invisible: the assumptions or ‘preknowledges’ that one uses in assembling a reading... above all, one’s own activity in *making* a reading that seems merely to wait to be *found* in the text itself” (Gordon "Reading" 321). In other words, the Quixote’s performance of misreading lays bare the structure of axioms that undergirds all readings, rational or not, and gets readers to look back at the principles that inform their own reading. I hope that my approach to Lennox’s novel, in the spirit of my analysis of enthusiasm, will reflect critical practices back on themselves, revealing the often-unacknowledged principles on which their conclusions are based.

These incommunicable, possibly unshared convictions or axioms quickly put Quixotism on the track of sentimentalism, which Motooka calls

a mode of representation, reading, and/or understanding that assumes—in the face of possible alternatives—the empirical existence of an empirically unverified moral truth that can be denied only by those willing to be excluded from the community that testifies to this moral truth. (20-1)

In this definition of sentimentalism, Motooka uncovers precisely the function of the signifier in the interpretive community. In Quixotism, enthusiasm, and sentimentalism, what is at stake is a non-sensical commitment to a signifier that cannot be verified, whose only meaning is belonging or not belonging. The important twist I give to this understanding of community is that the consensus of the community does not arise from any authentic public communication within it. Rather, it arises from a transference relation with the Other established one by one by an axiom of the fantasy. Odd as it may seem, a single Quixote is a community as much as an artist's commune; the real community (or better yet, communion) is between the subject and the Other and is based only on the signifier that represents the subject for the Other. The whole series of ego-to-ego identifications that take place, and which might more typically define a community, come only after that. In other words, the "vertical" connection between the community member and the privileged axiom is what makes the community work, not the many "horizontal" connections between and among community members. Given this framework, it is easy to see how the Quixote, the one inspired by a signifier he or she has found in the Other, can seem like a fool or a hero depending on the acceptance or rejection of that signifier by the one judging.

This scheme of identification is very close to what Freud puts forward in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. There, speaking of the "libidinal construction of groups... that have a leader and have not been able... to acquire secondarily the characteristics of an individual," he writes "*A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego*" (SE 18 116, italics

Freud's). The important point here is that the first identification in the forming of such a group is between the individual and the ego ideal substitute, not between or among individuals themselves. The Quixote and the sentimentalist attain their respective statuses first through the signifier each finds in the Other, second through their recognitions of others like them.¹⁴⁴

Sentimentalism, enthusiasm, and Quixotism come down to questions of control: control over interpretation, the “correct” way of reading the world. These challenges to rationality require a response, a series of regulative discursive moves that would hem in the peculiar exceptions to reason’s universality. Or so it would seem. There is actually a reversal here: both rationalists and sentimentalists are really trying to maintain the illusion of the possibility of self authorization (rationalists and sentimentalists both rely on the existence of some grounds of authorization that can be discovered by the subject) in the face of something much more threatening, a subjectivity that is not in charge of itself, but dictated by the signifiers that form it, quite possibly irrationally. My argument about Quixotism and enthusiasm is that they are discursive formations in which self-authorization is called into question, and the possibility of authorization by the Other, rather than the self, is raised. In other words, Quixotism and enthusiasm are particularly ripe points for understanding the predicament of the subject, to be alienated in the only sphere where it can be represented, to be required to forge an identity from the inconsistent shards of the Other, to be the overlap of within and without.

¹⁴⁴ As Lacan says, “Marx and Lenin, Freud and Lacan are not coupled in being. It is via the letter they found in the Other that, as being of knowledge, they proceed two by two, in a supposed Other.” Lacan, Seminar XX 97. The connections among Quixotes, enthusiasts, or sentimentalists are founded on just this sort of discovery of the letter in the Other.

“Quixote” and “enthusiast” are both terms of disapprobation that are only leveled at another, never applied to oneself. As easily as we can imagine an enthusiast would always call himself divinely inspired, we can imagine a Quixote would rather call himself noble, idealistic, or Romantic in a pinch. In their shared accusative quality, both terms situate subject and object on opposite sides of reason; to accuse another of Quixotism simultaneously rejects her notion of the world and bolsters one’s own. The rejection of the enthusiast or the Quixote is always a rejection of an offered ground of authority. As Gordon writes, “Nobody wants to be a Quixote. We invoke Quixotes... precisely to dismiss others’ beliefs” (Practice 1). Replacing “Quixote” with “enthusiast” would do no violence to Gordon’s formula. Finally, Quixotism and enthusiasm are both seen as the result of a distempered brain, a fault much more likely to be blamed on imagination than perception. In the discourses against Quixotism and enthusiasm, the rational program to reduce the object of thought or perception to thought or perception itself, to make them equivalent, is evident. Any interruption between thought or perception and its object is a threat to reason’s transparent function, a threat to the discoverability of the true rational grounds of authority. If this interruption proceeds from too much reading of the wrong kind of books, it is called Quixotism; if it proceeds from a divine source, it is called enthusiasm.

Sir Richard Blackmore observes the accusatory nature of the diagnosis of hysteria (and its male counterpart, hypochondria), which parallels the accusatory status of Quixotism. In a treatise on the spleen and vapours, he writes that “two Persons... will reciprocally charge on each other this Disease, and with good Reason, as two Misers will upbraid one another with Avarice, which however neither of them can discern, or will

acknowledge in themselves” (Blackmore 97). Blackmore’s claim is useful for me because it indicates that Gordon’s observation about Quixotism does not result from an historical misprision and that it applies equally well to hysteria, which is the next discursive link in the chain I am forging.

Lennox’s title signals that we are dealing with a distempered *female* brain in her novel. Arabella’s gender and her madness put us in the field of hysteria, both in eighteenth-century and modern terms. Enthusiasm, Quixotism and hysteria form a series in the eighteenth century, a family of overlapping discourses that all work to situate speaking subjects in certain relations to authority and to authorize certain uses of reason while condemning others.

Quixotism and Hysteria

That Arabella suffers from some sort of madness is as clear to the learned divine who cures her as it is to most of the novel’s readers. The meaning of her madness, though, is less clear than its existence. The critical trend in interpretation of her madness has been to transform it subversively into a form of female power. This interpretation reads The Female Quixote as a narrative of gender-motivated discursive control rather than one of illness and recovery. In these two opposed interpretations are the elements of the history of hysteria. One interpretation sees a woman suffering a distempered brain, which is the oldest sense of hysteria, and the other sees a woman using gender roles to her advantage, which is one modern feminist rewriting of hysteria. The critical response to Arabella acts almost as a barometer of critical evaluations of hysteria. Given the interest Lennox’s novel has held for feminist scholars, it is surprising that The Female Quixote has not been looked at in terms of hysteria more often.

Thomas H. Schmid is one critic who has explicitly introduced the concept of hysteria into the study of The Female Quixote. He sees Arabella as discursively trapped by the powerful men who surround her; she

mimes a romance discourse that aggressively relegates women to passive roles defined by men... In this sense, Arabella's exaggerated romantic discourse and code of behavior suggest female 'hysteria,' an Irigarayan hyper-mimesis of a male economy of desire in which woman serves as the sign of difference and lack. (Schmid 21)

Schmid is right that hysteria offers a different way to think about Arabella's madness, though I disagree with his equation of hysteria and "hyper-mimesis of a male economy of desire," if for no other reason than that such a hyper-mimesis implies that there is a subject standing outside this economy who chooses to imitate something of it to make a point. Schmid's approach, reading Arabella as a willful mime of her surrounding discourse, misses the real transformation that hysteria might lend to criticism of this novel. Schmid positions Arabella outside the circuit of masculine discourse that surrounds her, picking and choosing the ways she will enter into it or interrupt it. By reiterating the image of Arabella as a power-wielding woman, Schmid leaves readers in the dilemma of the active or passive heroine. Here I want to investigate the hysterical subject as one who speaks from within a discourse, albeit from a different place than that in which the discourse would situate her. The hysteric, like the Quixote and the enthusiast, is best understood in terms of her discursive positioning in relation to sources of discursive authority. The question of Arabella's activity or passivity is always posed too hastily. One goal of my reading of Arabella as an hysteric is to restore not so much the question of her madness or her authority, but the question of her desire and its interpretation.

Quixotism, enthusiasm and hysteria have often been used as discursive centers of interpretation, ready-made ways of understanding, categorizing and discounting the speech of some subjects. Each of these conditions poses a question of cause, and each of them is speedily answered in the imaginary, as I describe in chapter two. There I outline how the discourse on enthusiasm ultimately lodges cause in the body for much of the eighteenth century. The discourse on hysteria also finds cause in the body throughout the period, despite what some historians of hysteria would claim about the development of the discourse at the time. For instance, G. S. Rousseau, writing on “Hysteria in the Early Modern World,” touts Thomas Sydenham’s seventeenth-century advancements in the discourse on the disease, making the latter the “unacknowledged hero of that illness before Freud and Charcot” (Gilman 102). Rousseau indicates that Sydenham, “The English Hippocrates,” removed the gender disparity of hysteria by finding it in both men and women and that “[h]e viewed hysteria as a function of civilization,” effectively removing cause from the body and lodging it in society (Gilman 140). Of course, Sydenham contributed these points to the discourse, but these contributions were not decisive. Throughout the eighteenth century, it is easy to find various models of the body called upon to explain the working of hysteria (and enthusiasm). My point is that stories of historical progress, in which great statements chart changes over time, miss the tendency of imaginary regimes to hold on long past their expulsion from rationality. The history of hysteria is one of blunders and miscues, a consistent indicator of the failures of discourse to explain the experiences of its subjects, and we should therefore be careful of reading the heralds of later understandings of hysteria as historical watersheds.

Hysteria and history are tightly connected, and not just phonemically, though plenty of authors have gotten mileage out of that connection as well. From the oldest crumbling papyri to the avant-garde of French feminism, hysteria seems to run its course. I say seems because I would rather not assume there is a course for it to run in the first place. Rather than read the history of hysteria as a narrative of any sort that moves from point A to point B in a meaningful way, I propose that we read it as a series of blunders. At bottom, hysteria is the presentation of the problem of cause, the impossibility of the demonstration of the axiom. Like enthusiasm, hysteria is a challenge to the system of signification, an aporia whose fundamental unanswerability attracts a series of explanations that work only as long as they satisfy the demands of the imaginary dictated by the cultural fantasy. To risk jocularly, hysteria always arrives to ask, “who has the phallus?” and remains only to demonstrate, one case at a time, that no one does.¹⁴⁵

Hysteria presents itself as a challenge to discursive understandings of reason and the functioning of the body over and over, and in each presentation, the cultural fantasy that holds reality together on a large scale responds.

Writers on hysteria from George Cheyne to Elaine Showalter have recognized the role of culture in hysteria. In The English Malady, Cheyne blames a host of nervous disorders on the social conditions of the day, on the “Provisions of Delicacy, number, and Plenty, sufficient to provoke , and even gorge, the most large and voluptuous Appetite” (34). A decadent appetite joined with a widespread torpor expresses Cheyne’s fears for

¹⁴⁵ Brian McCrea raises precisely this question in the context of The Female Quixote when he writes that Catherine Gallagher’s reading of the novel “prompts the question of who is the ‘paternal authority’?” Brian McCrea, Impotent Fathers: Patriarchy and Demographic Crisis in the Eighteenth-Century Novel (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998) 154.

the expanding empire and its bloated subjects. In *Hystories*, Showalter shows that hysterical narratives partake of literary narratives, writing

Nineteenth-century French doctors organized their case studies of hysterical women according to the conventions of the French novel, especially its seduction scenes, and writers based their portraits of seductive or unhappy women on medical textbooks. (Showalter 81)

The modification I bring to this understanding of the interaction of hysteria and culture is that locating the cause in culture is simply an alternative to (and often an adjunct to) locating the cause in the body, another answer that is only as true as the others. Most often in the west, hysteria's question has been answered by referring it to the imaginary, finding its cause in the body, a privileged site of any given cultural fantasy. The obvious evidence here is the etymology of hysteria, the Greek *hyster* indicating that the trouble stems from the womb. Of course, the particular responses change over time—the wandering uterus is discovered not to literally move, so it becomes a source of vapors, the vapors are replaced by the nerves, and so forth—but those changes themselves signify more as a whole than any particular one does on its own. These changes chart the movement of imaginary regimes around the unanswerable question at the core of the real. Like the discourse on enthusiasm, the discourses on Quixotism and hysteria look to make perception and reality coincide by explaining the cases where they do not. The legibility of Arabella's person and gestures, which are at issue throughout Lennox's novel, stands as evidence of the imaginary component of the discourse on Quixotism. Even the failed attempts at getting Arabella to respond and correspond discursively indicate that the matrix of discursive responsibility as an explanation of and cure for Quixotism is present in the novel.

This awareness of the historical challenge of hysteria helps make sense of Arabella in The Female Quixote. Arabella's challenge in the narrative is analogous to hysteria's challenge to history; in each case, something that does not quite fit presents itself, and in each case, the culture has a handy way to rein in the outriding element which not only removes the threat of distemper, but also reinforces the very concept of temperance. To this point, my argument merely presents another way to think about the discursive control of threats to reason, and that ground of discursive control lies well within established criticism of The Female Quixote. What hysteria adds to this picture is the hysterical subject's entrapment within the scheme of signification and the inability of any discourse to bring together perception and reality, the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt* at stake in the mirror stage, in an unproblematic way. The Quixote trope is always, at some level, a way of treating the difference between appearance and reality; Lennox's take on it is no different.

Eighteenth-century discourses on hysteria make it clear that the crux of the malady is women's refusal to join in the sexual masquerade that the dominant discourse would substitute for the lack of sexual rapport. Something in the behavior of the afflicted woman does not comport with the reality everyone around her inhabits; she exploits the difference between perception and reality. This non-participation comes through in stereotypes of the hysterical woman as unreasonable, stubborn, inconsolable, and seductive but unwilling to satisfy. The importance of bringing hysterics back into the sexual masquerade is also apparent in one of the most common contemporary cures for hysteria, marriage and the proper sexual relations that accompany it.¹⁴⁶ The authors who

¹⁴⁶ Marriage and sexual intercourse have been recommended as cures for Hysteria from Hippocrates to Sauvages and beyond. See Ann Ellis Hanson, "Hippocrates: "Diseases of Women 1"," Signs 1.2 (1975),

recommend marriage come closer than any others to seeing that hysteria often interrupts the pretended rapport between the sexes that is a huge component of the shared fantasy that keeps a given reality going.

The lack of sexual rapport treated here does not simply mean that sexual relations between men and women do not go well. The sexual non-rapport is one of the truths Lacan sees coming out of psychoanalysis, and he analyzes it as a mathematical non-rapport. As he says in seminar XX, the sexual rapport cannot be written because “ ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are mere signifiers that are altogether related to the ‘curcurrent’ use of language” (Seminar XX 35). By calling it the “curcurrent” use of language, Lacan highlights the ridiculousness of trying to capture the sexual rapport in language, which is always current; in other words, it always serves the purposes of the current and local fantasies that support reality. From this perspective, hysteria can be read as the refusal to be the support for the object *a* on which phallic jouissance is based; in short, she will not be a man’s symptom. The hysteric can see how the discourse around her works, but she is not satisfied with playing the role of woman inscribed by that signifier in the current discourse. Lacanian analyst Colette Soler writes that “[w]hat defines the hysterical position very precisely is the will to leave jouissance unsatisfied” (61). In Lennox’s novel, Arabella will not play the object of exchange between her father and her would-be husband. She will also not play the other roles of the young beauty or the heiress that are open to her. In short, she leaves jouissance unsatisfied by not supporting the jouissance connected with her father’s choice of husband for her.

Francois Boissier de Sauvages, Nosologie Méthodique Dan Laquelle Les Maladies Sont Rangées Par Classes, 3 vols. (Paris: Hérisant, 1771). For a review of Hysteria in Eighteenth-Century France, see Elizabeth A. Williams, "Hysteria and the Court Physician in Enlightenment France," Eighteenth-Century Studies 35.2 (2002).

Arabella's refusal to fulfill the roles that others see her in and her insistence on maintaining the role of the object of courtly love gives her a double character. This split reflects the split between the mind and body, even the war between the mind and body, present in contemporary accounts of hysteria, a point to which I shall return below.¹⁴⁷

Arabella is split between her image and her self-image, and I think there is little benefit in assuming that she is aware of this split and consciously manipulates it. The split between Arabella's Quixotism and her beauty, between her refusal to comply and her ability to ignite desire, is evident in the scene where her cousin and suitor Glanville sees her for the first time as an adult. Glanville and his father enter Arabella's chamber after the death of her father:

Her deep Mourning, and the black Gawse, which covered Part of her fair Face, was so advantageous to her Shape and Complexion, that Sir *Charles*, who had not seen her since she grew up, was struck with an extreme Surprize at her Beauty, while his Son was gazing on her so passionately, that he never thought of introducing his Father to her, who contemplated her with as much Admiration as his Son, though with less Passion.
(Lennox 60)

Arabella the Quixote is simply mourning her father in the style she has been taught by the tradition of romance, throwing herself, disheveled, on her bed. Without knowing it, she is also evidently looking quite fetching while mourning, at least fetching enough to gain the "Admiration" of the father while making the son forget his social duties in the "Passion" of the moment. Arabella has all the beauty required of a coquette, a willing manipulator of men, but she seems to lack the will. She is split between being the object that causes desire and being the Quixote who will not satisfy the desire she causes. If we

¹⁴⁷ Leland Warren observes this split in Arabella's character, though he sees the split as indicative of the position of women caught in the public/private divide of the mid-eighteenth century. See Leland E. Warren, "Of the Conversation of Women: *The Female Quixote* and the Dream of Perfection," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 11 (1982): 370-1.

are to treat Arabella as a hysteric, then we have to assume that she suffers from her relation to the axiom which she did not choose and which she cannot easily escape.

By not participating in the discourse that surrounds her, Arabella accentuates the hysteric's question, am I a man or a woman? This is one version of the more general question, what does the Other want of me? This question can be translated into more colloquial language as, what is my place in the world? Conceived of in these terms, it is clear that The Female Quixote addresses the problem of Arabella's identity by putting its main character into a world, into the context of an Other, to which she does not really belong or subscribe. Arabella's romance reading effectively supplies the place of the Other for her—in the absence of her dead mother and all social congress (she and her father have been in total seclusion since her mother's death), she is forced to supply her own world. Her mother's romances, moved into her father's library, provide Arabella with an identity for the Other. She becomes the object of courtly love, an object defined by being desired, but not possessed, just as the romance genre works by depicting the long route of desire, but not its consummation. Arabella's Quixotism does not so much answer the question of what the Other wants of her (after all, it seems clear enough what the romantic knight wants of the courtly lady, but much less clear what the lady wants) as allow her to delay the question. Quixotism, then, is an elaborate way of delaying the question of the desire of the Other.

Before I go too far in looking at Arabella as a hysteric, I should stop for one or two cautions. One of the risks of psychoanalytic literary criticism is treating characters as though they are real people with real maladies. The danger in that is losing sight of the differences between characters and people by acting as though I have had Arabella on the

couch. Rather than claim that Arabella is an hysteric, I should rather say that her character is a vehicle for thinking about relations between subjects and between subjects and signifiers that are at play in hysteria. Her character provides a telling intersection of several discourses, and Lennox's novel gives us a way to glimpse the place of gender relations in the imaginary functioning of contemporary cultural fantasies that are still operative in some ways. As I will show below, this social and historical function of the work is also connected to its status as a literary work. Much more than Arabella, the object of my analysis is these various discourses, Quixotism and hysteria, novel and romance, reason and madness, art and criticism, which come together here.

At this point, I am most interested in Arabella's non-participation in her surrounding discourse, and particularly its version of relations between the sexes. She is neither obedient daughter to her father nor pliant quarry to Glanville, her future husband. In the novel, suitors and others take various tacks for getting through to her, aping romantic discourse, offering levelheaded advice, or simply waiting patiently. In fact, the plot of The Female Quixote could be schematized as the various attempts by men (and at least one woman) to get through to Arabella, to get her to respond properly to the sorts of stimulation that the current discourse trades in. In this attempted (and mostly failed) communication, the plot of Lennox's novel mirrors contemporary discourses on hysteria.

That the body speaks in hysteria is a commonplace. The idea is that there is something unspeakable bottled up inside the subject, and since it cannot be uttered but must be communicated somehow, the body is forced to communicate through illness or malfunction. Building on this idea of hysteria as a linguistic phenomenon, I see in eighteenth-century treatises on hysteria a kind of talking to the body, attempts by the

doctor to get the body to respond as it should according to medicine. In short, the goal of the medical discourse on hysteria in the eighteenth century is to enforce the imaginary regime of temper that makes up for the lack of a rational axiom that could ground the fantasy that backs up the contemporary discursive reality. Like Arabella, the eighteenth-century hysterical woman simply did not respond as the dominant discourse dictated she should. This non-response is evident in the remedies suggested in contemporary works on the disease.

John Purcell's A Treatise of Vapours, or, Hysterick Fits... [1702] provides a wide range of treatments for hysteric fits, ranging from unpleasant odors ("*Galbanum, Assa Foetida... Spirit of Urine*") to sneezing agents ("*Tobacco, or Ellebore in powder... blown up her Nose through a Quill*") to more violent measures such as foot tickling, hair pulling, ligatures, and, of course, strong emetics. Particularly severe cases might call for "*Scarifications, Blysters, Burning the Extremeties of the Fingers or toes*" (128-9). Finally, if the patient looks like she might die from the fit, Purcell recommends that the doctor

heat a Fire shovel red hot, and hold it to the Head at a convenient distance: this seldom fails of wakening the sick Person, and th' it cures her not, yet it gains her some Moments which are very pretious in this conjuncture, of the settling of her Concerns, both as to this, and the next World. (132)

While Purcell's last recommendation is extreme, even in the context of eighteenth-century medicine for women, the general tenor of his remedies is consistent with other works treating hysterical fits. Purcell's treatments, like many others, can be seen as a series of attempts to get the patient's hysterical body to respond. As the methods become more strident, the role of this response becomes more apparent; if the first light shocks do not yield the proper bodily-discursive response, the heavier methods applied later may.

Purcell's red-hot shovel makes it clear that, in the end, getting the hysterical woman to come back within the dominant discourse, "the settling of her Concerns, both as to this, and the next World," is actually more important than her physical survival.

The purpose of this brief look at one treatment regimen for hysteric fits is to establish that hysteria can be read as a problem of non-responsiveness, a failure of the hysterical patient to participate in the dominant discourse by giving the proper responses to stimuli received. I do not suggest that there are not substantial differences among the treatments of hysterical fits offered in eighteenth-century England, but I do claim that for the most part they consist of trying to get the patient's body to respond, to regroup itself under the doctor's imaginary regime of health. The essence of this treatment is the idea of temperance, the proper mixing of things, which is an entirely imaginary concept closely related to the notion of *isonomia* traced in the preceding chapter. By calling it imaginary, I mean that it is outside the circuit of what can be demonstrated through signification and relies on an axiomatic image of propriety. Hysteria and Quixotism are both distempers in the sense that in both cases, reactions are out of proportion with their causes. This distemper causes trouble because the goal of any master discourse is to maintain the image of proportionality or temper as rational, which is to simultaneously defend it against the reality that temperance is imaginary.

In the eighteenth century as now, hysteria presents a special case of the sexual non-rapport. Contemporary remedies express this failure of communication in their attempts to get the distempered body and mind to respond properly. What's more, by applying a medical model of health, an imaginary regime built on a long tradition, doctors like Purcell are able to ignore the non-rapport even as their remedies try to treat it

in their heavy-handed way, concentrating on an image of health rather than addressing the problem of desire that is really posed. At one point, Purcell even glimpses this question of desire, as he considers a treatment where the

Physician ought to consider attentively the Circumstances of his Patient, and to inform himself of her acquaintance, what may be the cause of her Concern, which having found out, he must, with the aid of her Friends and Relations, facilitate to her, the means of obtaining what she desires. (150)

While this treatment is certainly gentler than those he endorses, it repeats their basic discursive move, which is to locate the ailing subject and get it to respond properly. In this case, rather than trapping her in the imaginary regime of the body, the treatment tries to rally friends and family to help interpret her desire and satisfy it. The hysteric is hemmed in by the interpretation of her desire rather than the strict picture of health, but she is still hemmed in.

Hysteria in The Female Quixote

Purcell's final treatment option, the interpretive treatment, is one offered repeatedly to Arabella in The Female Quixote. We see it in the disingenuous mode of Sir George Bellmour's failed attempts at imitating Arabella's favored romantic discourse and in a more honest, though still ineffective mode employed by the countess in her failed attempt to cure Arabella's Quixotism. The interpretive treatment that finally cures Arabella works because it moves her out of one regime of reading into another. Not only do the characters surrounding Arabella try to understand her desire and work within its parameters; so do many of Lennox's critics.

The critical response to The Female Quixote splits along lines roughly analogous to the two interpretations of Don Quixote. On one side are critics who read the work as an anti-romance, and on the other are those who read it as a commentary on its world,

particularly its gender relations. The Quixote is still either a misreading and misled fool or a chivalrous hero, barometer of the world's decline. The rush to condemn Arabella as a spoiled brat shares a critical assumption about desire with the rush to save her as powerful feminine icon. Both critical camps start from an under-examined position that says Arabella is expressing her desire, striving to get the things she wants through her Quixotism. This assumption about the workings of desire is closely tied to the realism of the novel.

The realism that Watt, among others, sees as one of the defining characteristics of the eighteenth-century novel is based on a series of assumptions made about people and their relation to the world around them. At bottom, these are assumptions about desire that let readers accept or reject the fictive realities offered up by novels. In Watt's treatment of the topic, the axiom of the novel, the principle that sets it in motion and frequently its concluding device, is marriage. For Watt, marriage is the substitute for the sexual non-rapport that provides the ground of realism on which the novel rests. Romance, which bases itself on the mystery of courtly love rather than the clarity of marriage, has no clear axiom on which to rest. Watt writes: "from the point of view of plot, heroic chastity is subject to exactly the same literary defects as inveterate promiscuity; both are poor in the qualities of development and surprise" (136). His treatment of courtly love and marriage serves a different purpose than mine, but the centrality of the love plot ending in marriage to the narrative arc and realism of the novel is there in his account. The missing axiom of desire that would give the plot a clear goal is what separates the romance from the novel, not the improbability of the romantic plot.

In the language of this dissertation, there are certain axioms of desire operative in novels, which frame the special rhetorical relation between author and reader, text, and world that is responsible for the realism of the novel. Scott Paul Gordon writes about such an axiom in terms of one of the contemporary reigning philosophical explanations of human motivation, the one put forth by Thomas Hobbes. The Hobbesian assumptions about human motivation or desire lead many readings of The Female Quixote down the wrong path, because much of Arabella's character, like the romances she reads, derives precisely from the *question* of desire. Both Arabella and the late romance tradition cannot be understood if the content of desire is determined by an axiom.

Another word of caution is in order here. The distinction between the novel and romance genres is not a given. Scholars such as Michael McKeon emphasize the terminological indeterminacy resulting from the eighteenth-century use of words like "novel," "history," and "romance."¹⁴⁸ In a recent assessment of the Romance genre, Barbara Fuchs notes that "for decades [of the eighteenth century], the terminology remained indistinct" (106). The approach that refuses to distinguish among these genres, seeing them as a continuum, is certainly historically valid, but it is not mine. I acknowledge that these terms are used interchangeably, but I am concerned with local distinctions that can be made between and among them in terms of how the different genres position readers differently. Likewise, my contrasting of novel and romance does not imply any kind of parent/child relationship, as J. Paul Hunter indicates such contrasts sometimes do (Hunter 28). Rather, I argue for a distinction that is reflective of different attitudes toward desire, different approaches to the proposition of imagining what

¹⁴⁸ See Michael McKeon, The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987).

someone else's desire is. In short, the novel is only possible when the whole is animated by an assumption, an axiom about how desire animates characters. Of course, I do not propose my criterion as the decisive test of genre; instead, I propose that the axiom of desire is one telling, albeit local, approach to generic identification.

That the novel relies on such an axiom might seem an odd claim at first. Doesn't Samuel Johnson's famous distinction between Richardson and Fielding, "that there was as great a difference between them as between a man who knew how a watch was made and a man who could tell the hour by looking on the dial-plate," indicate that at least Richardson's novels are based precisely on the question of desire, the inner workings of the human being (Boswell 389)?¹⁴⁹ Without entering into an analysis of Richardson's work, I will suggest that there is little beyond the conventional in the desires of Pamela or Mr. B., to take a pair. In fact, without the essential frame of the lecherous male desire to possess the woman, defined by her own desire to remain chaste, the motivating force of that great sentimental novel falls flat. It would fall flat because without that axiomatic of desire functioning as a given of the text, there is no foothold for the reader to gain in judging the text realistic or not. In order for a novel like Pamela to provide readers with a realistic experience, readers have to have already bought into a certain Hobbesian view of human nature (even if that view is held at arm's length, so to speak). In Stanley Fish's terms, readers satisfied by Pamela are likely being satisfied, at least in part, by an affirmation of the beliefs (in this case, beliefs about desire and human nature) that are tenets of their interpretive community. Realistic fiction like Richardson's discovers not

¹⁴⁹ For an analysis of Johnson's statements on Richardson and Fielding, see Robert Ethereidge Moore, "Dr. Johnson on Fielding and Richardson," PMLA 66.2 (1951).

so much the mystery of desire as the narrative of desire embedded in the culture that birthed it.

What I am calling an axiomatics of desire that informs the novel-reading public is one of the consequences of what Gordon sees as one of the tenets of anti-romance. He writes that

Critics of romance often assume a world... that debunks romance values as thoroughly as it discredits giants, castles, and magic carpets. In suspecting that readers see in romance a code that can be mastered and put to use, these critics assume a universal instrumentality blind to the possibility of disinterestedness. (Practice 502)

Here Gordon identifies “romance values” with disinterestedness, a point I want to return to and modify momentarily. More striking here is Gordon’s observation of the assumption made by critics of romance, who overlap greatly with partisans and readers of novels, which throws the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak. In one swoop, those critical of romance, that critical camp that reads The Female Quixote as a satire of excessive sensibility ignited by the flames of Madame de Scudéry’s texts, reject the obviously fantastic and the entire system of values that informs romance. Gordon traces the preference for universal instrumentality to Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville who taught “a way of reading... that treats any expression of generosity or disinterestedness as fraudulent, as a ‘cover’ for other, more real, motivations” (Practice 504). In other words, Hobbes and Mandeville favor an interpretation of the world that already knows what the real motivations are and rejects any other motivation until it strikes upon the real ones. This reading strategy starts from an axiom and repeats it.

Some might recognize in the Mandevillian approach to the reading the flavor of psychoanalytic interpretation. What could be more Freudian than quietly rejecting every

expressed desire or motivation as a sham, an alibi for the real desire, which is of course Oedipal? It is true that psychoanalysis often interprets on different levels, finding expressed content and latent content in a dream, for instance. However, what often is overlooked, and this is where I modify Gordon's reading of "romance values," is that the latent content is ultimately radically unknown. It is without a concept, *Unbewußt*. If we modify the vulgar Freudian interpretation that reduces everything to sex and accept that sex is not, in fact, the final reality, then we are left with the possibility of a desire that can never be understood. This is what Freud means when he says that every finding of the object is a refinding, with the caution that it is a refinding modified by layers of metaphor and metonymy that hide the fact that what was originally lost, the thing that drives desire, is present only as a trace, a mark of absence (Freud SE 7 222). This modifies Gordon's notion of "romance values" by changing the axis of opposition.

Gordon sees the romance values of self-sacrifice, love and honor opposing the Hobbesian or Mandevillian purely instrumental, purely selfish values. The diametric difference between the two is in content. This axis can be shifted from a difference in content of motivation to a difference in knowledge of motivation. Hobbes and Mandeville, in my account, argue for a system in which human desire is always and infallibly known. Theirs is a technology of *jouissance*, a way of interpreting motivation, in which all motives are completely economized, accounted for in a phallic economy where the goal is evident and readily understandable. The romance tradition, on the other hand, presents fictional worlds in which human desire cannot be known, but only followed; the heroes of romance delay gratification for so long that desire returns as a question, rather than a known quantity to be satisfied in the most plausible and pleasing

manner. Phallic jouissance may account for some part of the motivations of romance, but there is always another space reserved, one not encoded in that instrumental system. In the world of romance, desire is a mystery present in its enactment rather than an axiom present in its assertion.¹⁵⁰

I do not mean to suggest that the heroes and heroines of the sort of seventeenth-century French romance that Arabella reads in The Female Quixote have no desires. It seems clear that the romance hero, for instance, is motivated by his desire to possess the object of his love, the courtly lady. However, the very form of romance, its length as well as (in some cases) its content authorizing the epithet ‘interminable,’ indicates that there is something other than Hobbesian instrumentality in play here. That desire can be readily understood seems even less likely if we approach romance from the side of the courtly lady, the heroine who delays the consummation of her love, sometimes forever.¹⁵¹ If read from a Mandevillian perspective, these romances are a ridiculous pack of lies because the characters do not act in accordance with the law of universal instrumentality.¹⁵² Read from another perspective, one that maintains the question of

¹⁵⁰ It is worth noting that Lacan builds his ethics of psychoanalysis precisely on the refusal to assume that one knows the other’s desire. From this perspective, the romance is far more ethical than the novel in the assumptions that it requires of its readers. See Jacques Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 7: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960, trans. Dennis Porter, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1997).

¹⁵¹ On the interminability of romance and its use as a strategy for the deferral of desire, see Patricia A. Parker, Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979). Joan DeJean shows that seventeenth-century French romance was associated with a rebellion against marriage, the traditional symbol of and substitute for the sexual rapport. See Joan DeJean, Tender Geographies: Women and the Origin of the Novel in France, Gender and Culture, eds. Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia UP, 1991) 21.

¹⁵² I do not mean to suggest that universal instrumentality is enacted by every character in every novel. Rather, universal instrumentality is the presupposition, the axiom of desire, that forms the backdrop of the novel. Call it a condition of the realistic novel’s possibility. This axiom also authorizes the identification of the novel with reason and the romance with passion; that distinction is strictly meaningless without reference to the novelistic axiom of desire.

desire, these works present a long-running, tension-filled quest that is valued for the quest itself, not the phallic jouissance of the proper expression of instrumental desire.

This, I claim, is the real problem presented by romance to Mandevillian readers and readers of novels alike: the question of desire. The romance author forms a wholly different contract with the reader and a wholly different relation between reader, work, and world, than the novelist, the one who knows desire and its interpretive satisfaction and seeks to reveal it. Because the romance does not trade on its realism, there is no need for an axiom of desire to animate the characters. The characters of romance need not subscribe to Mandevillian universal instrumentality to have their intended effect. In fact, such a subscription would destroy them as characters.

Where characters in novels exist in the space defined by universal instrumentality, characters of romance exist in its absence, in the space of the question of desire rather than its axiom. The romance of the errant knight and the courtly lady exists only in the deferral of its conclusion. Patricia Parker argues that, in the case of the Orlando Furioso, the epic form intervenes to put an end to the deferral, to turn the hero's endless quest into one with a socially acceptable goal (38). Likewise, I read The Female Quixote's turn from the romance to the novel as a way to end Arabella's erring not by quieting her desire, as many of Lennox's critics hold, but by supplying her desire with a tangible goal, settling her desire in contemporary discourse.

This is a reinterpretation of the generic divide between the romance and the novel. Critics from Samuel Johnson to Helen Thompson have conceived of the split between novel and romance in terms of content: the romance includes fantastic elements like disappearing castles and giants while the novel does not; the novel is thoroughly

reasonable while the romance is guided by passion.¹⁵³ The novel is an imitation of reality; the romance is a mere bit of fancy. I argue that we have much more to gain by thinking of the split in terms of the axiomatic standing of each genre. Then novel can only work as an imitation of reality if the author and reader share a set of assumptions about that reality. I have been calling that set of assumptions about reality universal instrumentality, which is particularly important in establishing the motivations of characters. The romance can only be read and enjoyed if the author and reader suspend the assumption of universal instrumentality, and allow desire to rise and fall as a question whose answer is always deferred. As Gillian Beer writes, “[o]ur enjoyment [of the romance] depends upon our willing surrender to [the narrator’s] power” (8). In other words, the romance trades on a relationship between author and reader in which the reader accepts what the text offers, rather than approaching it with skepticism.¹⁵⁴ To return to the terms of my first chapter, the novel exists according to an assumption of the third logical moment’s completion while the romance exists in the space opened by the second logical moment. In this distinction between romance and novel, I am agreeing with critics like Debra Ross and Christine Roulston, who treat genre and gender differences together. The latter writes that “Romance... takes on a specific narrative agency of its own which challenges the assumptions of realist discourse” (Roulston 25).

Applying this rubric to The Female Quixote yields surprising results. First, an awareness of the assumptions made about desire puts a reader on a very different footing

¹⁵³ See Johnson’s famous Rambler issue 4, and Helen Thompson, Ingenuous Subjection: Compliance and Power in the Eighteenth-Century Domestic Novel (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2005) 155.

¹⁵⁴ It’s interesting to note that even an anti-romance like Don Quixote requires a pliant reader. Consider that the reader has to accept the narrator’s perspective on the misguided knight; if one read Cervantes suspiciously, it might be possible (though an admittedly great feat of strong misreading) to conclude that don Quixote is actually a schemer, out to bilk people with his assumed identity. Only an acceptance of the narrator’s words can create the univocality required for don Quixote to function as a character.

from critics of the novel. Much of the critical attention given to Lennox's novel has focused on the question of Arabella's empowerment. Whether reading the novel as an anti-romance or as a proto-feminist work, many critics start by making assumptions about Arabella's desires. Patricia Meyer Spacks refers to "Arabella's foolish desire," which is "chastened" by the "plot's construction" ("Sophistry" 533). Writing of Arabella's cure, Kate Levin says that The Female Quixote "exemplifies [Lennox's] theory that properly written novels should discipline their female readers by teaching them how to become proper domestic women" (271). Amy Pawl sees Lennox's Quixote as a "vehicl[e] for fantasies of female power and importance" which are "redirected, corrected, or undercut by characters who attempt the heroine's seduction or reform" (142). These and a number of other critics are concerned with Arabella's power as an expression of her desire.¹⁵⁵ I see two problems with this approach. First, to put Arabella in this context, where power is the expression of desire, is to judge a character and a plot which are (at least up until the plot's denouement, her cure) operating on the tenets of romance by the standards of the novel. Arabella's will to power is nothing more than the imputation of instrumentalism to her character. Second, in assuming the novel is an anti-romance (or a subversive power grab masquerading as one), these critics tacitly put forward an understanding of desire as transgression, as resistance to male-dominated hegemony. I want to reverse the latter terms, and think of desire as the law of the superego. Lacan refigures the relation between desire and transgression, arguing that the function of

¹⁵⁵ I include Margaret Doody, Laurie Langbauer, Katherine Sobba Green and Lorna Ellis in this critical camp. See Doody's introduction to Charlotte Lennox, The Female Quixote: Or the Adventures of Arabella (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), Laurie Langbauer, "Romance Revised: Chalotte Lennox's "The Female Quixote", " Novel: A Forum on Fiction 18.1 (1984), Katherine Sobba Green, The Courtship Novel, 1740-1820: A Feminized Genre (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1991), Lorna Ellis, Appearing to Diminish: Female Development and the British Bildungsroman, 1750-1850 (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1999).

desire, in accordance with the pleasure principle, is to keep the subject at a certain safe distance from the forbidden Good object, “*das Ding*” (Seminar VII 76). Far from being cured of her wild desires, Arabella must actually be taught to desire, to want the things that Glanville can give her, rather than to continually err as the object of courtly love. Arabella has to trade her strange and unaccountable relationship with the sovereign Good of *das Ding* (recall that her romances are the only remainder of her mother in The Female Quixote) for the lesser though more concrete goods that circulate in the novel’s world of instrumentality. Here I agree with Mary Patricia Martin, that Arabella has to move from reading romances to reading novels, with the proviso that this change in reading is not a simple matter of relinquishing her feminine power but rather one of embracing the system of substitutions that allows the subject to negotiate the world as an instrument of desire (46). In short, Arabella must learn to become a man’s symptom, rather than an unpossessible object; the two sides of her character, the errant Quixote and the beautiful heiress, must be resolved by bringing her within the circuit of desire.

One reason critics have so long embraced (or denounced) the unreformed Arabella as an image of power—or a “monster of egotism,” one of Ronald Paulson’s epithets for her—is that the novel’s narrator invites them to (Paulson Satire 276). Most readings of The Female Quixote are concerned enough with the novel’s content that they do not give enough weight to its form. The critical distance between the narrator and Arabella is key to understanding her character and the meaning of the novel. Lennox’s novel carefully situates its reader to teach her (i.e., the reader) a lesson about desire and interpretation. Looking closely at its narrative voice and the chapter headings deepens the interaction of novel and romance in this work. The novel and romance do not oppose

each other merely in content or in theme, but in the very form of the work. The embeddedness of the conflict of the opposing takes on desire, the novel's reliance on universal instrumentality and the romance's reliance on eternal deferral, makes Lennox's most famous novel deeply ironic.

The clearest expression of this irony is in the distance between the narrator and the protagonist.¹⁵⁶ Katherine Sobba Green examines the way Lennox situates her reader in The Female Quixote: "The situation for Arabella (and by extension for Lennox's readers) is that by choosing to identify with romantic heroines, she voluntarily gives herself over to a system of objectification" (48). Green is right to consider how Arabella helps situate the reader, but the text does not bear out the claim that romance makes her part of "a system of objectification." She reaches this conclusion by analysis of the following passage:

Her Glass, which she often consulted, always shewed her a Form so extremely lovely, that, not finding herself engaged in such Adventures as were common to the Heroines in the Romances she read, she often complained of the Insensibility of Mankind, upon whom her Charms seemed to have so little Influence. (Lennox 7)

Green writes, "Arabella's narcissism is... simultaneously yet paradoxically an identification with [male hegemony] and a self-objectification. She is both objectifier and object, reader and text" (48). This analysis leaves out the fact that it is through the narrator that we learn this about Arabella. If Arabella is objectified here, it is not without the interpretation of the narrator, who expresses Arabella's real desires for her. What's

¹⁵⁶ Here I am in perfect disagreement with Ronald Paulson, who writes "there is no ironic observer like Fielding's narrator to distance Arabella; she is merely described" Ronald Paulson, Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale UP, 1967) 277. This is an uncharacteristic statement for a usually perceptive critic like Paulson. It is safe to say most readers would agree that The Female Quixote addresses the question of the difference between fiction and reality, description and its referent, so thoroughly that Paulson's claim that Arabella is "merely described" is puzzling.

more, once she has more converse with “Mankind,” Arabella’s form and person wield great influence, even over those who read no romances—the incident at Bath, where Miss Glanville vainly hopes to have a laugh at Arabella’s public appearance in outdated clothes is evidence enough that she is not the only participant in her objectification.

If Arabella is part of a system of objectification, then an important part of objectification is missing, and that is possession. Up until the moment she is cured, Arabella does indeed arouse the desire of most people who see her. She is a fascinating object, beautiful and strange, coveted and talked about, but there is a sort of misprision that takes place when people view Arabella, and the narrator is caught up in it even as she perpetuates it. Of her appearance, we read “Her fine black Hair, hung upon her Neck in Curls, which had so much the Appearance of being artless, that all but her Maid, whose Employment it was to give them that Form, imagined they were so” (9). This description of her hair mirrors the description of the grounds of the Marquis’ castle; “the most laborious Endeavours of Art had been used to make it appear like the beautiful Product of wild, uncultivated Nature” (6). In both these descriptions, the narrator lifts the veil of illusion for the reader to show her what no one, or almost no one, knows. There is an appreciable distance between appearance and reality here, and the narrator (and through her, the reader) is the one who appreciates it. The mistaking of appearance for reality is what I refer to here as misprision. The narrator and the reader know the truth about Arabella’s hair, but even she does not. Her hair is falsely artless; Arabella is truly artless, assuming we include her in “all but her Maid.” She is split between being the object-cause of desire and the object of exchange; she is the former without guile while she refuses the latter. What others see when they look at Arabella is not what she is, at least

up until her cure. The injustice done to Arabella by most readers comes in assuming that she understands this dissimulation, that she is a coquette who uses her charms to manipulate the men around her. The required novelistic assumption of instrumentality can lead the reader to no other assumption, and the narrator is more than happy to lead along.

The assumption that the narrator is simply right about Arabella tips the book toward being an anti-romance, and Arabella toward being a “monster of egotism.” Approached more critically, and accepted as another data point for interpretation, the narrator’s comments make the book less certain in its statement on romance, and make Arabella a more sympathetic character. If the intensity and singularity of her desire is read as the imputation of the narrator, her commands to her lovers can be read as *pro forma* romance moves to defer desire, not to enact it. If the reader takes Arabella as a figure of deferral, then the narrator’s too-quick interpretations of her ‘real motives’ serve as a warning about making just this sort of hasty conclusion. In this reading, Lennox uses the critical distance between the narrator and the protagonist to make a point about desire. She also ends up catching many readers in that ironic space as they uncritically join the narrator in gawping at Arabella’s monstrous (or celebrated) power of desire.

The often cynical tone of the narrator carries over to the chapter headings, which are reminiscent of Fielding.¹⁵⁷ For instance, chapter one of book one “*contains a Turn at Court, neither new nor surprising—Some useless Additions to a fine Lady’s education—The bad Effects of a whimsical Study: which, some will say, is borrowed from Cervantes*”

¹⁵⁷ It is worth noting that, according to Wayne Booth, Fielding’s “playful chapter headings” were “undoubtedly developed from the practice of Cervantes and Lesage” Wayne C. Booth, “The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction before Tristram Shandy,” *PMLA* 67.2 (1952): 174. The comic history of these chapter headings alone should be enough to prick up a reader’s ears to the potential of the narrator’s ironic distance from the protagonist.

(Lennox v). The imagined reader is experienced with fiction, and therefore will not find the “*Turn at Court*” surprising. That reader is also expected to have understood the intertextuality with *Don Quixote*, not a great expectation, but Lennox makes the homage clear sardonically. The tone is wry and biting, more of a commentary on the text than a straightforward guide to it. There is a trend for these chapter headings to deflate the more romantic portions of the text by subjecting them to the axiom of instrumentality. They are a wink and a nudge that asks the reader to nudge back, to accept what they say as the truth of the matter. For instance, chapter two of book one “*Contains a Description of a Lady’s Dress, in Fashion not much above Two thousand Years ago*” (v). The content of this chapter heading tips off the anachronism of Arabella’s dress, but its rhetoric, the litotes of “*not much above Two thousand Years ago*,” takes another step, deriding the anachronism and separating the chapter heading from the protagonist. That tone carries over into many other chapter headings. Chapter seven of book six, for instance, is listed as “*Containing an Incident, full as probable as any in Scudéry’s Romances*” (viii). Clearly, making Scudéry the measure of probability is ironic. Again, Lennox convinces many of her readers to join the narrator’s voice in mocking Arabella by assuming they understand her desires and her world better than she does. The book gets its readers to perform the very act to which it questions, the act of short-circuiting the question of desire and discarding the possibility of romance values. After all, another chapter heading warns “*that a Person ought not to be too hasty, in deciding a Question he does not perfectly understand*” (vii).¹⁵⁸ To a great extent, The Female Quixote is concerned

¹⁵⁸ One further example that illustrates the ambiguity that accompanies irony as well developed as Lennox’s is the chapter headed “*Being of the satirical kind*” Lennox, The Female Quixote: Or the Adventures of Arabella ix. If irony means something other than what is said, what does this chapter heading mean in the context of a satiric work like Lennox’s?

with understanding and communication, the possibility of and obstacles to shared understandings of reality. The wry tone of the chapter headings cuts now this way, now that, situating readers now comfortably above Arabella and now uncomfortably close to Charlotte Glanville.

The Female Quixote turns, to some extent, on its reader's superiority to Arabella in reading ability. As Catherine Gallagher points out, "the difference between Arabella and the... reader of The Female Quixote is that Arabella does not know she is reading fiction." She goes on to indicate that "the reader of [Lennox's] book can register that she is reading a satire, can get the jokes, only by understanding she is reading a fiction" (177). Ostensibly, a fellow Quixote would react to Arabella's adventures with the mixture of perplexity and certainty with which the Quixote always confronts challenges to her axioms, whereas a more wily reader will enjoy that same Quixotic perplexion and certainty from the safe distance of novelistic reality. The real difference between Arabella and the reader of The Female Quixote is not so much one of knowledge—everyone who meets Arabella agrees that she is as wise as she is fair—as a matter of different axioms installed in different generic expectations. The enjoyment Arabella offers readers demonstrates that the generic split between romance and novel is not to be found between realism and fantasy, but in what makes that line, the axiom of the fantasy, the organizing principle of reality brought to bear on the work. Gallagher comes close to this position when she writes that "the 'realism' of this book is not a suppression of fiction but rather a sign that fiction is to be taken for granted" (178). "Taking for granted" is a solid formula for what I am calling axioms. The realistic fiction of the novel establishes itself on certain assumptions about desire that allow it to be taken for

granted. Lennox works hard in The Female Quixote to disrupt the givenness of novelistic reality; as Staves writes, Lennox's novel "calls attention to the non-transparency and manipulability of language, highlighting not only the conventionality of romance narratives but also... of anti-romance narratives" (269).

Readers who join the narrator in mocking Arabella, in knowing her own mind better than she does, are repeatedly brought up short by the text. Charlotte Glanville is the text's stand-in for the reader who assumes universal instrumentality. She is the coquette who understands her own world perfectly and who comes to a much worse end than Arabella. Charlotte Glanville is repeatedly disappointed in her attempts to publicly humiliate Arabella because the latter possesses some degree of unthinking grace. In short, the readers who insist that The Female Quixote is an anti-romance are forced to discount the weight of Arabella's unadorned beauty and unaffected charm, because for them there is nothing unadorned or unaffected. Staves argues that, contrary to the reading that finds Arabella to be the target of her satire, "Lennox moves to attack ordinary women like the coquette Charlotte Glanville" (267). I agree with Staves that Arabella's future sister in law is the target of satire in the novel, though I hesitate to call Charlotte Glanville "ordinary." If she is ordinary, her ordinariness is the vulgarity of the present so often highlighted by Quixotic narratives. This vulgarity is the axiom of universal instrumentality. The instrumental view of the world is the true target of Lennox's satire.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Lennox knew that folly must be shot as it flies. Clara Reeve writes that "satire of the Female Quixote seems in great measure to have lost its aim, because at the time it first appeared, the taste for those Romances was extinct, and the books exploded" Clara Reeve, The Progress of Romance, through Times, Countries, and Manners; ... In a Course of Evening Conversations., vol. 1, 2 vols. (Dublin: 1785) 6.

The most discussed chapter of The Female Quixote is the second to last. Its long-standing attribution to Samuel Johnson may never be completely settled, but it is generally agreed that the divine who attends to Arabella after her disastrous jump into the Thames to avoid a perceived ravisher gives her a lesson in reading.¹⁶⁰ Arabella's reeducation on the matter of what and how to read comes as a disappointment to the critics who proclaim the unreformed Arabella's power. For instance, Margaret Doody writes that Arabella's conversion is "the end of all story, and a cessation of all power" (Doody "Introduction" xxiv). I return to this oft-visited chapter to examine just how the learned divine convinces Arabella that he is right. His arguments are as important in their implications for the reasonable alternative to Quixotism as they are in their effect on the novel's protagonist.

Of course, the good divine's lesson in reading applies not just to fiction, but life as well. He sets out to show Arabella her error in thinking she was about to be ravished and in imitating Clelia in her precipitous jump into the river. The divine's perspective is that Arabella has been chronically incorrect in her judgments of the world around her; she has been unable to see that no one meant her harm. She has not been initiated to the ways of desire; her problem is "Want of Power to understand her own Advantages" (Lennox 370). In a way, the divine is precisely right. Arabella's method of reading, informed by the romance, does not function on the assumptions of the novel, those of instrumentalism. Instrumentally, a would-be ravisher faces numerous discouragements from the sort of public assault that Arabella anticipates. Romantically, Arabella rejects all obstacles and

¹⁶⁰ For a recent and authoritative treatment of the author of the chapter in question, see Susan Carlile and O. M. Brack Jr., "Samuel Johnson's Contributions to Charlotte Lennox's *the Female Quixote*," Yale University Library Gazette 77.3-4 (2003). The authors conclude that Lennox did write the penultimate chapter in a rather weak and unadvised attempt to imitate Johnson.

discouragements because they require an axiom about desire that she simply lacks. Replying to the divine's assertion that she should have been able to deduce the reality of the situation, Arabella says "Human Beings cannot penetrate Intentions, nor regulate their Conduct but by exterior Appearances" (Lennox 371). Her romantic method of reading does not proceed from the axiom of instrumentality that allows novelistic, reasonable judgment to be rendered.

The exchange on the perception of motive covers the content of the dialogue. The good divine brings Arabella around to see that she should accept the novelistic requirement of universal instrumentality, and she subjects herself to his arguments, acting as a willing participant in her conversion. Her conversion moves Arabella from the position of the courtly beloved, always fleeing the solidification of desire, to the position of willing wife. She gives up her status as object cause of desire, at least in part, to play the role of object of exchange, as her relenting is the last step in doing her father's and Glanville's will. As Margaret Doody writes, Arabella "submits to the role of the object of the paternal authority which also claims the name of reason" (Doody "Introduction" xxxiii).

More interesting than the fact of the conversion is how it is affected. Clearly, the conversion moves Arabella into a more rational way of thinking. However, the arguments offered by the learned divine are not themselves based in reason. Addressing the method of deducing the likely actions of others, the divine points out that "We can judge of the Future only by the Past" (Lennox 372). The ground of the conversion argument shifts from reason to experience. This shift matters because, as I have argued throughout the chapter, reason cannot found its own axioms. Arabella is possessed of a

full measure of reason; her arguments are all as perfectly valid as they are perfectly false because her problem lies entirely with the premises from which she starts. The shift also matters because, while she has reason, Arabella lacks experience. As the divine pretends to preach a message of self-reliance and independence of potentially misleading sources, he actually has to stand in for Arabella's lack of experience. As the divine puts it, "the Likeness of a Picture can only be determined by a Knowledge of the Original. You have yet had little Opportunity of knowing the Ways of Mankind" (Lennox 379). Even as he teaches her to distinguish between fantastic and realistic fiction, a distinction that comes down to a question of desire as axiom, he shows her that she is disqualified to judge reality or realism and is in need of an experienced guide.

In short, Arabella's salvation comes through the sleight of hand always employed by reason to shore itself up. Lennox shows that the romantic approach to the world and the novelistic one recommended by the divine cannot be differentiated in reasonable terms. Rather, one requires a question-begging notion of experience that must be possessed rather than gained while the other does not. I am far from arguing that Lennox wholeheartedly advocates for Arabella's romantic delusions. Instead, I argue that Lennox supports judging these different approaches to reality and mimesis in terms of their outcomes. Rather than read The Female Quixote as an anachronistic attack on romance, as the plight of woman tragically trapped, we should read it as a timely assessment of the impact of realistic fiction on desire. It is telling that Arabella is finally convinced by an appeal to experience (which she lacks) and morality, another alternative to reason.

The two marriages with which the book ends support my reading. Arabella marries Glanville, of course, and Charlotte Glanville marries Sir George Bellmour. Of Charlotte and George, Lennox writes that they “were indeed only married in the common Acceptation of the Word; that is, they were privileged to join Fortunes, Equipages, Titles, and Expenche.” This is an instrumental marriage, one in which all motives are laid bare, in which there is no mystery of desire, only the chill of calculation. Mr. Glanville and Arabella, on the other hand “were united, as well in these, as in every Virtue and laudable Affection of the Mind” (383). The virtues and laudable affections simply do not belong to the instrumental world of the novel. Because something of her Quixotism survives, something also of the values of romance survives; the values that dissipate in the cold light of rational instrumentality lend an incommensurable, irrational component to her marriage, which raises it above the vulgarity of “the common Acceptation of the Word.” The evident pleasure that marriage grants Arabella and Glanville indicates that even if Arabella’s reform subjects her to paternal authority, it still has not reduced her merely to an object.

In the end, Lennox favors moderation on the question of desire. Coquettes like Charlotte Glanville take no rich pleasures and look forward only to mean futures just as Quixotes like the unreformed Arabella suffer real dangers and moral outrage. Arabella is a figure who, because she has passed through her transformation, maintains something of both. She can understand the stakes of her actions, but she still has access to the values of romance. She sees the value of instrumentality but she knows that it does not hold every answer about human motivations. Lennox’s lesson about desire is that, while some part of it relies on calculation, there is always an incalculable remainder. If the novelistic

imitation of reality has the value of accuracy, the romantic creation of fancy has its own indispensable values as well. I do not hope to have had the last word on Lennox, but to have put in one word for re-opening the question of desire in a text that makes it so central.

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