Politics of affect, object-oriented-ontology, and multitudes in "The Monk" and "Obi"

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Politics of Affect,
Object-Oriented-Ontology,
and Multitudes in *The Monk* and *Obi*

by:

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Abstract

This thesis will examine the potential viability of a “politics of affect”. The analysis will begin by evaluating Spinoza’s theory of affect and its connection to object-oriented-ontology and quasi-objects. This will include a discussion of Spinoza’s specific brand of “affect” and its ability to influence politics. This paper will also address the theory of Bruno Latour, which utilizes Spinoza’s theory of bodies and affect while examining the political implications of Spinozist ideas. The goal of this analysis is to use a discussion of affect, quasi-objects, and object-oriented-ontology to delineate what exactly a politics of affect might be and how this system might operate. I will use Latour’s quasi-objects and object-oriented-ontology in connection with Spinoza’s affect and Francis Hutcheson’s passions in order to theorize this new political system. The viability of a politics of affect will also be demonstrated by a critique of the formal realist novel and an analysis of Warren Montag’s work *Bodies, Masses, Power*. I posit that the creation of genre, and in particular of the formal realist novel, solidifies the subject-object hierarchy as well as the “bracketing off” of affect. Lastly, the paper will examine multiple examples of politics of affect as seen in *The Monk* and *Obi*. Through a critique of the formal realist novel, and a brief examination of the history of the novel, this thesis will critique false notions of time as linear and generic convention as homogenous. The goal of this analysis is to consider that objects have a profound capability to influence our world, and to question modernity’s insistence in a preordained and a priori hierarchy among and separation between subject and object.
This thesis will examine the potential viability of a “politics of affect”. The analysis will begin by evaluating Spinoza’s theory of affect and its connection to object-oriented-ontology and quasi-objects. This will include a discussion of Spinoza’s specific brand of “affect” and its ability to influence politics. This paper will also address the theory of Bruno Latour, which utilizes Spinoza’s theory of bodies and affect while examining the political implications of Spinozist ideas. Latour suggests a politics of affect or a politics of experimentation over a politics of reason or rationality, defined by the creation of the public sphere, and the indisputable hierarchy of subject and object established by the public sphere. The goal of this analysis is to use a discussion of affect, quasi-objects, and object-oriented-ontology to delineate what exactly a politics of affect might be and how this system might operate. I will use Latour’s quasi-objects and object-oriented-ontology in connection with Spinoza’s affect and Francis Hutcheson’s passions in order to theorize this new political system. The viability of a politics of affect will also be demonstrated by a critique of the formal realist novel and an analysis of Warren Montag’s work *Bodies, Masses, Power*. I posit that the creation of genre, and in particular of the formal realist novel, solidifies the subject-object hierarchy as well as the “bracketing off” of affect. Lastly, the paper will examine multiple examples of politics of affect as seen in *The Monk* and *Obi*. *The Monk* will demonstrate the lack of cohesion in the genre of the novel and the desirability of existing affectively, and *Obi* will prove the agency held by objects within a system of politics of affect.

Latour posits that it is a false notion of ourselves as “modern” that forces us to believe objects lack agency. Consequently, Latour asks why we as a society agree to op-
erate in the rigidly distinct categories and disciplines prescribed by “modernity”. How is this affecting us? How is it hurting us? This paper will demonstrate that the separations between people and things, fabricated by post-enlightenment individuals, have never existed. Connected to this argument will be a discussion of the novel and generic difference as constructed in the same manner as the subject-object divide. These false constructions are what keep us from living a politics of affect, and disallow the multitude access to its bodily power. This analysis will examine the novel as an object, simply a thing, similar to our bodies, and all other bodies. The novel, like all bodies, possesses the force and capability to affect other objects and other subjects. I will posit that the novel is not generically constricted, that it morphs and changes like all other objects, that it is infinite in its multiplicities. The coherence of the novel as a genre is artificial, and the novel itself is invested in fabricating subjectivity as diametrically opposed to objectivity. The real relationship between subject and object (and object-object) is a multiple one. There are many attributes that make an object, and these multiple attributes change from instant to instant. The subject-object hierarchy is about power. It is about producing governable people; it is socialization and social organization. This is why Latour’s “moderns” value the notion of private reason used in a public way above affect: it is a manner by which to produce subjectivity and consensuses (the public sphere). Or, as Habermas puts it, “The private people, gathered to constitute a public, turned the political sanctioning of society as a private sphere into a public topic.” (Habermas 127).

A politics of affect emphasizes the body (and all bodies) and their potential for action. Modernity ignores the body and material substance of everything, including our-
selves, by trying to overcome materiality intellectually. I will propose a politics of affect as a politics of experimentation, without the politics of predictions in which we have prescribed outcomes we think we can prophesize by the use of our reason. I will suggest a politics in which the hierarchy between subjects and objects is abolished.

Modernity’s politics of prediction makes false assumptions and differentiations of not only genre and category, but time. Notions of probability and predictability, justified by reason’s assumed ability to prophesize the future, similarly render a false conception of time as linear and cohesive. This paper will first establish the merit of a system of politics in which there is no hierarchy between people and things, and theorize how exactly a politics of affect based on every body’s ability to affect other bodies may operate. The thesis will then attempt to prove that while this dynamic may not be easily achieved or conflict free, it is still advisable over the current system, which ignores and robs the agency and affect of both objects and the multitude. Later, the paper will question generic convention and the linearity of time, in order to demonstrate their insistence as a hindrance to a successful politics of affect, and prove that these conventions propagate the subject-object divide. Finally, the thesis will posit the novel as a potential object with agency, and conclude with a few examples of object ontology, politics of affect, and quasi-objects in a selection of novels.

Before postulating a politics of affect, or its various and incomplete articulations in both theory and literature, one must understand and interpret Spinozist theory. Spinoza’s particular brand of affect offers a manner by which we can rejoin affect and politics and bridge the subject-object divide. For Spinoza, “god” has no anthropomorphic conno-
tations, but is rather defined as “the immanent but not the transitive cause of all things” (93). God is immanent causality, and has neither intellect nor will, but is rather, “a substance consisting of infinite attributes” (82). God is only substance and is also the only substance, which contains infinite attributes. Following this incarnation of God and substance, any objects or “particular things,” are “nothing other than the affections, i.e. the modes, of the attributes of God” (97). Further, these particular things “cannot exist or be determined to operate unless it is determined to existence and operation by another cause” (126). For Spinoza, this “other cause,” that affects particular things is—and can only be—other bodies or substances (other affections, modes, or attributes of God): “A body which is in motion or at rest must have been determined to motion or rest by another body, which was also determined to motion or rest by another, and that again by another, and so on to infinity” (126). Substance (god) for Spinoza is immanent causality, the causality of substance or objects does not exist prior to the moment the substance affects, and substance cannot exist without affecting. These bodies are what determine everything. Those who wish to claim modernity would have us deliberately ignore this type of affect, knowingly denying and ignoring the ability of bodies (defined as “particular things,” or objects) to affect anything else, be it people or objects.

Warren Montag’s work *Bodies, Masses, Power* discusses Spinozist theory and its relation to “modern” liberal democracy, particularly in relation to the “father’s” of liberalism, Hobbes and Locke. Montag suggests we can break away from the Hobbesian situation wherein we “are declared free so that we will always already have chosen to subject ourselves” by posing a question that does not assume its own answer: “What happens
when we no longer consider minds transcendent in relation to bodies, when mental decisions, acts of will are viewed as entirely immanent in the physical actions of which they are said to be the causes, having like God in relation to his creation no existence apart from them?” (41-2). This is a distinctly Spinozist idea, and relates to the conception of God described above, presented by Spinoza in *Ethics*. By asking this question, Montag claims, we are able to “abruptly and irreversibly” deflect our emphasis from “the phenomena of human interiority,” such as, “the acts of will, the consent given or taken away, the approval or disapprobation and the entire juridical apparatus of laws and right for which they serve as a foundation” (42). Montag’s goal (and the goal of this thesis) is to move away from human interiority and instead to make subjectivity “a physical, corporeal matter, a matter of what bodies do and do not do and how they affect each other” (42). Montag is here reaffirming Spinoza’s goal in *Ethics*. The transformation of subjectivity into a corporeal body is also the crux of this thesis’s argument. This thesis will attempt to both prove and elaborate upon Spinoza and Montag’s claims. My argument will rely upon various literary examples. I will focus on the novel in order to prove its modern misconception and to view the novel in a new and more object-oriented light. I will also locate within a few novels a demonstrable politics of affect in which objets have agency.

Much of the work Spinoza does in *Ethics* necessitates the issues addressed by politics of affect and object-oriented-ontology. Similarly, Montag’s *Bodies, Masses, Power* explores the connection between Spinozist theory and the viability of a politics of affect in the twenty-first century. Society’s unquestionable acceptance of the relationship between the mind is the first convention to rethink. According to Montag, “the notion of the
mind’s mastery of the body as one of the most tenacious forms of the theological-anthropological circle, one whose power will require a higher level of argumentative force to diminish” (Montag 42). This thesis attempts to make use of this argumentative force, firstly by diminishing the mind-body divide. The most important question that Spinoza asks (and which Montag logically extends) is what this thesis attempts to answer: What can the body do as body? Or, as Spinoza inquires: what can the body do “without being determined by mind, solely from the laws of its nature insofar as it is considered as corporeal?” (Spinoza Scholium Part III Prop 2, 280).

The mind has no domination over the body, and the mind and body are in no way distinct from one another. Spinoza writes: “The mind and the body are one and the same thing, conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension” (Spinoza Scholium, Part II, Prop 2, 259). Further, “the order of the active and passive states of our body is simultaneous in nature with the active and passive states of the mind” (Spinoza Scholium Part III Prop 2, 280). The mind is active and passive at different moments in the very same manner as our (and all) bodies. The mind is a body; it able to be literally and physically active or passive, depending on the moment. “Thought” and “extension” (as in physical matter), are the same for Spinoza because they both have equal and simultaneous potential for motion and action. Put more simply, the mind and the body have the equal ability to affect. Given Spinoza’s interpretation of the connection between mind and body “the notion of the causal priority of one over the other becomes an absurdity” because “not only does mind not determine the body, but both are determined simultaneously by the same causes” (Montag 42). Mind and body are not exterior
to one another. To believe otherwise is likened to superstition by both Spinoza and Montag. This superstition looks for truth and explanations “in an imaginary supernatural realm” and “demands deep meanings” (Montag 42). These accounts refuse to “explain actions of the body [and all bodies] from corporeal reasons alone” and assign “extracorporeal causes to corporeal events” (Montag 42). This is what modernity does. It relies on an almost religious faith in “reason” to explain and defend liberalism. Yet given Spinoza’s conception of God and the actual power of bodies to affect, if we deny that “singular entities (non-human as well as human, inanimate as well as animate) are actualized (exist and act) by right” we are in fact not only being unreasonable, but superstitious (Montag 64).

Though Spinoza insists upon the lack of separation between mind and body, he leaves us with more questions than answers: “No one knows in what way and by what means the mind can move to the body, or how many degrees of motion it can impart to the body and with what speed it can cause it to move” (Spinoza Scholium Part III Prop 2, 280). We cannot know the means or the degrees of motion by which the mind moves the body because the manners and degrees by which any body can move are infinitely multiple. Following this, the movements that any body can elicit in any other body are equally infinite. What is essential is that this infinite potentiality is possessed the body, not the mind. Montag, recalling Spinoza’s famous example of the sleep walker, reminds us that while one sleeps “the body is inert” and “the mind is incapable of thought” (43). The mind’s power (meaning its capacity to think) is “inseparable from the body’s power to act” (Montag 43). Given this inseparability, there is no way “that the mind would remain
unaffected by purely physical determinations: whatever affects the body simultaneously affects the mind to the same degree” (Montag 43). Whatever affects the body is and can only ever be another body, and what is affected can only be a body. Both bodies act independent of and prior to the mind, which does no affecting. The mind, the part of us we consider our “selves,” and credit with all our decision-making, cannot ever actually be the sole (or even the primary) decision-maker: “Experience shows us with abundant examples that nothing is less within men’s power than to hold their tongues or control their appetites” (Spinoza Scholium Part III Prop 2, 280). The same can be said for things that we later regret, or any other compulsions. These are not controversial ideas, yet they lay the foundation for innovative claims. Montag, for example extends Spinoza’s claims, and recognizes the large and powerful implications his conclusions will have:

The notion that all actions, including ‘purposive’ and creative actions, actions supposedly undertaken for individual or civic good, even actions intended to serve God or carried out in obedience to his commandments, are determined by physical, bodily causes alone can only have the most revolutionary consequences for our thinking about society. (44-45)

The “revolutionary consequences” described by Montag are what this thesis describes and seeks. These sweeping and comprehensive changes in both mindset and political system are necessary to achieving a viable politics of affect.

Spinoza recognizes that his findings can lead to this kind of conclusion, and anticipates society’s objections. He admits that some may believe: “It is impossible that the causes of buildings, paintings, and other things of this kind, which are only made by hu-
man skill, should be deduced solely from nature considered only as corporeal, nor is the human body capable of building a temple unless it be determined and guided by mind” (Spinoza Scholium Part III Prop 2, 280). Spinoza, quite uncharacteristically, does not offer a particularly convincing rebuttal to this potential objection to his theory. Here is one key instance in which Montag extends’s Spinozist theory, making Spinoza particularly relevant to a discussion of politics of affect. In Spinoza’s defense, Montag refers back to an argument Spinoza made previously in *Ethics*: “The body that produces a building or a painting is determined by corporeal causes and...to look for extra-corporeal or super-corporeal causes can only divert our attention from the true reasons for our actions” (Montag 46). Montag’s point is strikingly reminiscent of Spinoza’s earlier assertion that theological explanations of creation constitute little more than superstition, because they fabricate extra-corporeal justifications for solely corporeal events (Montag 46).

Philosopher Francis Hutcheson’s work *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* affirms the body’s pre-eminence over the mind, and connects this bodily power to the viability of politics of affect. In this work, Hutcheson differentiates between the passions and the affections, defining the passions as more powerful, bodily versions of the affections:

*Desire, Aversion, Joy and Sorry*, we may...call *spiritual* or *pure Affections*; because the purest Spirit, were it subject to any Evil, might be capable of them. But beside these Affections, which seem to arise necessarily from a rational Apprehension of Good and Evil, there are in our Nature violent *confused Sensations*, connected with *bodily Motions*, from which our Affec-
Hutcheson outlines exactly how the passions and affections differ: the passions are more violent and confused sensations than the affections, and (most importantly for the purposes of this analysis) the passions have an actual connection to real, distinct, bodily motions. The passions are really distinct from feelings and affections in that they are more intense and heightened, confused versions of affections, which are physically connected to the body and to bodily motions:

…when the word *Passion* is imagined to denote anything different from the *Affections* it includes…a confused Sensation either of Pleasure of Pain, occasioned or attended by some violent bodily Motions, which keeps the Mind much employed upon the present Affair, to the exclusion of every thing else, and prolongs or strengthens the Affection sometimes to such a degree, as to prevent all deliberate Reasoning about our conduct. (31).

Passions are violent, confused, and all-consuming sensations, which seize violently upon us, literally putting our bodies in motion. Passions render our minds unable to overcome them by any means, disallowing us from thinking of or doing anything else (reasonable or otherwise) with our minds or our bodies.

Passions occur in conjunction with physical bodily events. Hutcheson posits this as a potential explanation for the undeniable strength and fervor of the passions as opposed to mere affections or other sensations. However, he does not really investigate much further after proclaiming this bodily connection:
Let Physicians or Anatomists explain the several Motions in the *Fluids* or *Solids* of the Body which either make Men prone to any Passion, or are brought upon us by the long Continuance, or frequent Returns of it. 'Tis only our Purpose in general to observe, ‘that probably certain *Motions* in the Body do accompany every Passion by a fixed Law of Nature; *that Temperament* which is apt to receive or prolong these Motions in the Body, does influence our *Passions* to heighten or prolong them.’ Thus a certain *Temperament* may be brought upon the Body by its being frequently put into Motion by the Passions of *Anger, Joy, Love*, or *Sorrow*; and the Continuance of this Temperament shall make men prone to the several Passions for the future. (47-8)

Motions of fluids and solids in the body are connected to and may even be responsible for our passions. These fluids or solids in the body are objects, and these objects control our feelings to such a degree that they can transform them from mere affections to passions. The motions of these fluids and solids, of these objects, make us prone to be passionate. These objects control our temperament. Bodily fluids and solids are not merely objects that have agency, they are objects that control human agency.

Keeping Hutcheson’s passions in mind, we may turn our attention to the manner by which these bodily determined passions can be conceived of politically. Hutcheson’s passions, in conjunction with Spinoza’s affect, allow for a critique of modern liberalism. The problem with liberalism since its genesis in the seventeenth century is that, for liberalism, “the disposition of bodies is far less important than the mental decision that determines this disposition. Thus, servitude, obedience and discipline, even, un-
nder certain conditions, slavery, are not themselves unjust or illegitimate as long as they are the effects of a voluntary decision” (Montag 49-50). As this thesis has already attempted to prove through examination of both Hutcheson and Spinoza, this notion is at the very least incorrect; Montag proves that this notion is potentially dangerous. Liberalism presents another related problem: as it “turns away from the reality of the body and its forces to search for spiritual, incorporeal origins, a search for precisely the mental decision, the act of will that by definition precedes and exceeds the dispositions of the body” (Montag 50). This turning away from the body recalls Spinoza’s criticism of fabricated, incorporeal, and superstitious explanations for purely corporeal matters. These fabrications and superstitions constitute the very foundation on which the liberal tradition was built. Liberalism functionally relies on the dominance of the mind over the body because it is this fallacy that justifies liberalism’s “hermeneutic procedure that compels them to look beyond the body, its powers and its pleasures, for the transcendental origin that determined its disposition” (Montag 50). This thesis has already attempted to prove there is no transcendental origin. Yet it is on the basis of this erroneous assumption that liberalism defines freedom as “having always already been exercised, as having always already preceded the state of subordination and as having always existed in the past that preceded the present” (Montag 50). What we are left with is quite obviously not freedom, but rather, the most cunning justification of servitude: one which retroactively creates its own legitimacy, and is “derived from the unconditioned will of naturally free and equal individuals who can be shown to have voluntarily given up…their power and productivity” (Montag 50). This surrender of power (voluntarily or otherwise) is what liberalism
requires, and what it has actively achieved since the “Enlightenment.” This seizure of our power is exactly why we desperately need a politics of affect.

Based on the concepts introduced in *Ethics*, this thesis will theorize and propose a viable politics of affect. This can be achieved by extending Spinoza’s critique of Hobbes, in which he reiterates the importance of action over thought and speech. Speech (as the end goal of thought) is only affective when it leads to action. Montag writes: “just as men will think as they are determined to do and will express in speech and writing what they think, so they will inevitably tend to express in action their ideas and beliefs, especially those critical of the established political and theological order” (60). The importance of the affective capabilities of thought, writing, speech, and language should not be understated. The *actionable* results wrought from the expression of thought and language make a politics of affect viable. When being expressed in action, these affective words in turn affect people’s bodies, transforming thought and speech into undeniable ideals and beliefs that affect the corporeal world. The beliefs that render bodily action are reminiscent of Hutcheson’s incontrollable and affective passions. When citizens literally act with their bodies based upon and in defense of these passions, a politics of affect is lived and established. Politics of affect can and should be “disobedience and resistance to servitude and superstition” (Montag 60). Politics of affect necessitates affective responses to liberalism’s implied and unavoidable oppression of humans and things. We must counteract liberalism’s seizure of our bodily power. We must reclaim this power, and not only critique the servitude under which we exist in liberalism, but actively disobey and resist it, by means of our bodily affect. Politics of affect must demand
… the liberation not simply of mind, a freedom of the mind never to be ex-
pressed in the body… but a freedom of the body as well; not simply the lib-
eration of an individual who is owner of himself and his rights, but the liber-
ation of the collectivity outside of which the individual has no existence and
apart from which the freedom of the individual is inconceivable. (Montag

63)

We must not only achieve both intellectual and bodily freedom of the individual. A poli-
tics of affect would also free the collective body, in the form of the multitude, to take
back and subsequently exercise their bodily power.

The first step toward politics of affect is to acknowledge that power (defined as
affective force) should belong to the multitude, defined as a collection of infinitely multi-
ple bodies. How might this be achieved? First, we must change our conception of power.
Recalling Spinoza’s definition, we must view power as the physical potentiality of bodies
to affect others, with force and motion. Because power is not a graspable object, and is
rather an animated force with the ability to affect objects, it should not and can never be
“alienated as if it were property, or surrendered as it it were a possession or a
subject” (Montag 70). Yet this “surrender” of power is precisely what liberalism not only
demands but actively depends upon for legitimation and validation. Yet if power is not an
object, such a surrender of it is impossible! States claim to have “rights” over both indi-
viduals and collectives, yet they have this right “only to the extent that the state in its ca-
pacity to make use of the power of many individuals is more powerful than any one
alone” (Montag 70). This means that the state’s power rests entirely upon the collective’s
willingly allowing the state to make use of the multitude’s bodily power as individuals in a collective. The masses have always “functioned as that force internal to or immanent in every political regime, whether monarchical, republican, or tyrannical, in which, whether they were formally represented or not, their power, which no ruler could or did ignore, guaranteed them right, whether legally sanctioned or not” (77). The multitude has force (power) in their bodies, and they alone have the exclusive right to exercise this force. Whether or not the multitude recognizes this, their power is real, and really exists. Consequently, the sovereign must always consciously or unconsciously acknowledge the power of the masses. The power is the multitude’s. It is physical. It exists only in the multitude’s individual bodies, and is rendered more potent by the collective joining of their individual bodies. If we do not give up the power that resides in our bodies to the state, the state cannot use our power, and has no power over us. When we use our physical, bodily power to affect, politically or otherwise, we are exercising the power that only exists within us and that only we (as individuals or collectives) can and should exercise. We must remember to exercise it, and remember that at no point have we actually surrendered it, no matter what the governing body would have us believe. Further, if at any point the multitude, recalling that it is the majority and thus holds the majority of the power (to which the state has no right), should feel dissatisfied with the state, or if the state should deserve our indignation, “no matter how the majority previously expressed its will, no matter what agreement it or its representatives entrained into, the right of the sovereign authority will diminish with its power” (Montag 70). If we are indignant toward the state, its imagined right to our power and its actual power will necessarily di-
minish. This is politics of affect: if we recognize both our indignation (passions) and our exclusive right to our bodily power, we allow ourselves (the multitude and the majority) the affect other bodies and to elicit change. Any contract the multitude may have with a sovereign is “only valid so long as the sovereign has power to compel men to obey him through either love or fear” (Montag 71). If the sovereign does not have our love, we must remember that because of the exclusive power of the multitude’s affect and bodies, we have nothing to fear, and thus the sovereign has no valid claim over us, in any respect.

Liberalism requires the multitude to surrender their bodily affect to the sovereign and to purposely dispense with our affections (here signifying emotionality). This position is connected to the theory of Jürgen Habermas, in which the establishment of the public sphere necessitates the deliberate exclusion of anything but reason and rationality. The goal is to use one’s private reason in a public manner, thereby peacefully reaching political consensus. Jane Bennett’s recent work, entitled Vibrant Matter, which builds on much previous work done in both vitalism and object ontology, questions Habermas’s (and modernity’s) exclusion of affect, in both the material and emotional sense. Bennett notes “the contributions made by affect to public culture, whereby affect refers to how moods and aesthetic sensibilities influence ethics and politics as much do words, arguments, and reason” (61). Later, Bennett extends the role of affect in politics farther, referring to affect’s role in politics in the more material, object-oriented sense. In her own words, Bennett prefers to focus on “an affect that is not only not fully susceptible to rational analysis or linguistic representation but that is also not specific to humans, organisms, or even bodies: the affect of technologies, winds, vegetables, minerals” (61). It is
the affect of material vitality to which Bennett attributes real political power. Bennett’s analysis recalls the Deleuzian notion that “materiality needs no animating accessory,” and “is figured as *itself* the ‘active principle’” (Bennett 61).

Later in *Vibrant Matter* Bennett reminds the reader “things do in fact affect other bodies, enhancing or weakening their power” (3). This is a distinctly Spinozist idea, and because of this fact, Bennett tells us that she will “shift from the language of epistemology to that of ontology, from a focus on an elusive recalcitrance hovering between immanence and transcendence (the absolute) to an active, earthy, not-quite-human capaciousness (vibrant matter)” (3). Bennett defines her interpretation of object-oriented-ontology. The author succinctly states the goal of her work: to give power to the objects with which she has instilled this distinct type of efficacy and form.

Bennett reminds us that if we acknowledge active material vitality and its political ramifications, we will notice that this “vibrant matter” is not confined to political acts or even conscious ones. Bennett relates what we consider the “political act” of suburbanization to the act of worms “dragging their leaves to their burrows or migrating to a savanna-forest border” (98). Can our political acts and this thesis’s politics of affect, be debased this far? Bennett, of course, does not see this as a debasement, but as a positive restructuring of the hierarchy of humans and matter, from a linear to more horizontal, equalizing and fluid model. This author agrees. The continuum of subjectivity-objectivity, described in a different manner by Latour, does not entail “shifting the definition of human along the horizontal line that connects the Object pole to the Subject pole, but it sliding it along the vertical dimension that defines the nonmodern world” (“Never Modern” 137). This is
to say that the goal is not to orient objects toward or against subjects: “The human is not a constitutional pole to be opposed to that of nonhuman” (“Never Modern” 137).

It is important to consider how humans are oriented by and toward objects. Liberalism makes human agency is primary and functionally necessary. We believe that objects do not have agency. In order to fabricate the binary between subject and object, modernity has drawn imaginary lines between subject and object, between humans and things. These categorical separations never existed. These distinctions, divisions, and binaries, precisely because they are a modern construction, are not as solid or perfect as we believe (or pretend) them to be. Consequently, objects are what we agree they are. We exercise our private reason in a public way, and reach consensus in the public sphere, wherein we agree what an object is. What an object is is in no way connected to the name by which humans arbitrarily decide to refer to it. Objects have affect and agency. They are not below human beings in an a priori hierarchy. The real relationship between humans and things, between subject and object, is a multiple one. Many attributes make up an object, and objects, as well as their attributes, affections, and relations to other objects and subjects, change from instant to instant. The most that one can refer to an object is in one singular and specific instance, or “site” of that object, among an infinite multitude of other potential sites.

Agency is everywhere, infinite at any given moment and in any space. By making human intellectual agency in the form of reason the primary and lone form, we connect agency to one specific and singular type of activity: human communication. We cannot deny that objects have agency simply on the basis that they do not communicate. We
cannot deny “Scallops make the fisherman do things just as nets placed in the ocean lure the scallops into attaching themselves to the nets as data collectors bring together fishermen and scallops in oceanography” (Latour, “Reassembling” 107). Viruses, plagues, synapses, a kidney, all have the ability to affect entire societies. Mosquitoes determine the outcomes of wars. The environment has incredibly destructive quicksand, floods, droughts, and other natural disasters. All of these objects have agency that is not reducible to or connected human reason or communication in any way, and their effects are infinitely multiple and unpredictable. A few ways in which an earthquake can affect humans include leading to capitalist exploitation of those affected, or the exact opposite: altruism and volunteerism. The destruction the earthquake affects could also lead to the mobilization of a class or group that was not politicized previously. The multiplicities are endless.

Liberalism supports the dangerous idea that “the jurisdiction of reason is unbounded and that there is no realm in which its exercise is unwarranted” (Montag 53). Reason should not be unbounded, its first task should be to “discover its own limits” (Montag 53). This is the problem with “Enlightenment,” and the modern fetishization of reason. Enlightenment positions such as these “…to the extent that they depend on a separation of mind and body…can only appear as ruses of servitude, doctrines designed to convince individuals to accept the regulation of their bodies in a regime of obedience with the promise that their minds…will remain free” (Montag 56). We are not free, we must change. The multitude must take back their bodies, and recognize their bodily power. The multitude must not be content controlling only their intellectual power. Intellec-
tual power (reason) is a modern fabrication, created specifically to dupe us into believing we control our power. This thesis’s discussion of Hutcheson’s passions and Spinoza affect has proven this, and Spinoza reiterates: “Mental decisions are nothing more than the appetites themselves, varying according to the varying disposition of the body” (Spinoza, scholium, part III, prop 2, 281). People “do not control what they say” and are tricked into “believing that they are masters of their bodies and authors of their works, when in fact they are determined by corporeal causes they they neither control nor even know” (Montag 56). It is imperative that we recognize these actual corporeal causes, and use our bodily power to affect change. This is the path to “A world in which bodies determine other bodies and mental decisions are determined by the disposition of the body” (Montag 56). This bodily determination is necessary for a politics of affect. We must banish the cultural and intellectual elite in order to create politics based on the real power (defined as right, bodies, force) of the multitude. This politics will be based on the power of multiple masses of bodies, which affect other bodies. The affecting may or may not be reasonable. The physical nature of power is what matters. Yet the multitude also does not put its affect to the side. The power of the multitude is “the condition of our power, their weakness only weakens us, their fear and hatred are as contagious as the plague that ravaged Amsterdam in the 1660’s, and just as deadly to reason” (Montag 82). Realizing that the power in every sense resides in the bodies of the multitude is an essential step in formulating a politics of affect. This system will be:

A politics utterly without guarantees of any kind, in which social stability must always be re-created through a constant reorganization of corporeal life, by
means of a perpetual mass mobilization, in order to increase to the maximum
the power to act and think according to the guidance of reason, without…the
slightest possibility of an ‘individual solution, whether through intellectual
withdrawal or mystical illumination. (Montag 85)

The multitude cab be reasonable, but (more importantly), it must also be a forceful and
affective collective body that is able and willing to constantly and actively reorganize its
corporeal structure, so as to take proper advantage of its real bodily power.

Modernity not only fetishizes reason to the detriment of the multitude, but also
cling to the fabricated notion of “the social”. To this end, we refuse to abandon the pre-
scribed divisions between subject and object. We ignore the multiplicities in favor of bi-
naries, and falsely impose categorical difference. A notion of the social necessarily entails
deliberate “group-making effect[s],” and efforts to create categories, to establish and con-
tinually maintain separations (Latour, “Reassembling” 35). These artificial separations
imply differences of form, but the only differences that truly exist are variations of collec-
tive organization. Instead of falsely constructing differences of form, it would better serve
us to embrace the numbers, and increase the scale, specifically in terms of the number
multiplicities allowed in the public sphere. This affirmative step brings us closer a poli-
tics in which objects have agency. After having embraced the numbers and added the
multiplicities, what then is the “political task ahead”? (Latour “Reassembling” 189). Ac-
knowledging the agency of the multitude of people and things is merely the first step. We
must now consider how these multiplicities of subject and object will express and utilize
their agency politically.

21
How do we theorize or conceive of a politics that is based on the ability of bodies (human or otherwise) to affect other bodies? If affect is defined in Spinozist terms, literally as “movement,” how would power be characterized in this political system? Power in a politics of affect is connected to the notion of “potencia,” a word with multiple connotations. A more traditional sense of potencia, which is embraced by the current political system, signifies power or authority, particularly of a sovereign. The definition of potencia that is useful for this analysis, and for creating a politics of affect, is the notion of potencia as pure potential, as the ability or capacity to act. This idea of pure potentiality is related to the theory of Francis Bacon, which emphasizes the importance of surprise and chance in experimentation. For Bacon, it is the essential difference between anticipation and interpretation that signifies authentic scientific experimentation. The worthwhile experiment in one in which one does not know (or pretend to know) the outcome ahead of time, and rather, remains open to and embraces the potential of infinite and multiple outcomes. This is the fundamental difference between a politics of “rationally” predicted and prescribed outcomes and a politics of affective experimentation. This pure potentiality applies to both humans and objects, both of which possess potencia, defined as forceful physical power and infinite potentiality.

The preconceived notions of probability from which Bacon attempts to free science do not allow for the existence or embrace of chance. Probability means that we anticipate rather than interpret, and disallows the affective response of surprise. Latour calls us to remember: we do not know what the effect of an utterance will be until after it has been uttered (“Reassembling” 129). We must similarly refrain from being prescriptive or
predictive in politics. We only know what may or might potentially occur if we succeed in creating a politics of affect. This is the entire point: to embrace the infinite multiplicities.

Politics of affect, along with the need for chance, surprise, and improbability, requires a new way of considering the concept of time. By the very same manner that modernity has fabricated the division between subject and object, so too has modernity created the notion of empty homogenous time. The false notion of time as sequential, linear, calendrical, and universally shared also deliberately denies multiplicities. This concept of time is used to orchestrate, sort, and manufacture specific moments that should matter to us. The invention of “the news,” did precisely this: it literally physically controls, manages, and sorts our conception of time in a coherent, probable, and predictable manner. This “shared” experience of time is essential to one’s existence in the public sphere. The false continuity that time claims is paradoxically also denied by the “interruptions” or sharp historical breaks which the modernity claims. History is neither serially continuous nor a series of breaks or revolutions. We must consider time and history in terms of net-centric forms of newness, and acknowledge that there are some interruptions and there is some continuity, and that these undulate. Time too is multiple.

The manner by which we can become closer to reality and closer to a politics of affect is by accounting for and acknowledging these multiplicities. Both our politics of predictability and our conception of time as serial, empty, and homogenous, ignore reality. An empirical fact does not exist when you acknowledge the thousands of other simultaneously occurring instances. Things and categories mutate over time. The infinite oc-
currences of a single moment are meant to be in shared conversation, yet we willfully ignore them. As Bacon reminds us: “The habit of looking at only a few things and of giving a judgment on the basis of a few things has ruined everything” (226).

Modernity’s categorical denial of multiplicities is nowhere more evident then in the creation generic convention. How did knowledge produce the false separation between people and things? One way to explain this fallacy is through the creation of the formal realist novel. The reading of these works created subjectivity. The formal realist novel’s fabrication of genre, taste, canon, and norms (domestic, psychological, and otherwise) occurred in a manner strikingly similar to the invention of serial time and the subject-object divide. The canon now stands in place for the universal multiplicity of all novels, just as the public sphere stands in place for the universality of all people. The formal realist novel is precisely not real. It is only real in so much as we consider it probable, but by the very consideration of it as probable, the formal realist novel becomes fictionalized. It represents nothing of reality, and none of the multiplicities. The very concept of “literary realism” gives one a quasi-authority or objectivity that is based on expectation, where nothing and no one is ever given the chance to object, and there is no potential for change (Latour “Reassembling” 129-31).

Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel* epitomizes modern misconceptions about the novel, as well as literary and generic convention more generally. A discussion of the history and development of the novel will prove the flaws of generic categorization, the novel’s insidious involvement in the creation of subjectivity, and allow for a reconsideration of the *thing-hood* of books. The use of the word “novel” is a fairly recent develop-
ment, having not been “fully established until the end of the eighteenth century” (Watt 10). Watt does acknowledge the problem of the term “formal realism,” which implies that “real”, specific, and particular concrete “truths” (as opposed to abstract and multiple forms and categories) exist in and are a defining tenet of novelistic convention. The definition of the novel is connected to the concept of realism, but Watt concedes that utilizing this term as the sole and defining characteristic of the novel fails because it implies that all other writers of fiction and all “previous literary forms pursued the unreal” (Watt 10). Watt is correct in this criticism of formal realism, yet he almost immediately checks his critique by stating that the historical focus on this purported “realism” is incorrect because it ignores that actual defining characteristic of the novel:

This use of realism, however, has the grave defect of obscuring what is probably the most original feature of the novel form. If the novel were realistic merely because it saw life from the seamy side, it would only be an inverted romance; but in fact it surely attempts to portray all the varieties of human experience, and not merely those suited to one particular literary perspective: the novel’s realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but the way it presents it. (Watt 11)

This praise for the manner by which novels “portray all the varieties of human experience” naively suggests that a literary form can successfully portray or embody all of the infinite multiplicities of human experience. This portrayal by the novel (or anything else) is neither possible nor advisable. Suggesting that the novel is capable of or actually succeeds in representing life as it really is implies that things are and should be the way that
they are portrayed in the novel. This means that in some perverse way the novel is actually defining and creating the “real”. Watt agrees, as he suggests realists should remember “the problem of the correspondence between the literary work and the reality which it imitates” (Watt 11). Watt thus checks the previous passage’s implication that the novel can be reality-making. I posit that the novel cannot be reality-representing either.

The problem with claiming that the novel can or should represent reality is a multifaceted one. The suggestion that the novel can embody all the multiplicities and therefore “make” reality as it attempts to (falsely) represent it has been noted above. Similarly, defining the novel this way (or any way) necessitates “deciding what the novels distinctive literary features were and are” (Watt 7). Defining the novel as any type of cohesive literary form falsely creates and artificially imposes generic conventions upon it. These conventions are false categorizations of difference, similar to those created to separate subject and object. During a discussion of the men widely considered to be the first novelists, Watt reminds us that Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding do not share much in common with each other or literary tradition that came before them (9). Even if we allow for the debatable consideration of these three men as the “first” novelists, these are just the first three writers to be considered writers of novels! Writing has become infinitely more complicated and widely differing since just these three wrote, and even the three of them did not form any kind of cohesive or generically similar unit. Watt’s admission proves that creating a category by which to refer to Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding’s work, let alone all subsequent works of extended prose fiction that followed, is a false categorization, an artificial creation, and a forced imposition. Continuing his discussion of Defoe,
Richardson, and Fielding, Watt solidifies this claim: “Indeed their works show so little sign of mutual influence and are so different in nature that at first sight it appears that our curiosity about the rise of the novel is unlikely to find any satisfaction other than the meagre one afforded by the terms ‘genius’ and ‘accident’” (9). Watt’s entire work *The Rise of the Novel*, however, is attempting to account for or explain this “accident,” and in this attempt is falsely ascribing some sort of purposeful and mythical genesis to an already falsely constructed literary genre.

The most dangerous suggestion made by *The Rise of the Novel* is one that praises the novel for being unlike literary forms that came before it, which “reflected the general tendency of their cultures to make conformity to traditional practice the major tests of truth” (13). This claim about literary forms before the novel is doubly false. Previous cultures decidedly did *not* conceive of literature as representative of truth, regardless of whether or not they conformed to literary convention, and in fact it is the *novel* that is defined by its false claims at representing “real” experience. Watt confirms this by defining the novel’s “primary criterion” as “truth to individual experience—individual experience which is always unique and therefore new” (13). The notion that novels can accurately portray any kind of “unique,” particular, or individual experience is not only false, but also mistakenly prioritizes these individual experiences at the expense of the infinite multiplicities that should be embraced. The false categorization of the novel as a cohesive genre ignores that there is little homogeneity in the “genre” itself, as evidenced by various “breaks” or “anomalies” of novelistic convention, such as the gothic. The gothic in in
no way attempts to demonstrate any truth to individual experience, particularly in the its
treatment of time, objects, and multitudes.

Watt’s discussion of the novel and account of its “creation” relies heavily on the
notion that the early novelists, for the first time, wrote literature that mirrored real, calen-
drical, homogenous, linear time. *The Rise of the Novel* claims that this new treatment of
time by novelists is what allows their work to successfully portray individual experience
(which I have already suggested is impossible). Watt, gesturing toward Locke, defines
“personal identity” as “an identity of consciousness through duration in time; the individ-
ual was in touch with his own continuing identity through memory of his past thoughts
and actions” (Watt 21). This paper argues that time itself is neither linear nor continuous.
To suggest that empty, homogenous time exists and is a defining characteristic of human
identity and novelistic convention creates multiple other false constructions and divisions
between collectives and multiplicities, and between subject and object. By claiming that
“the exploration of the personality as it is defined in the interpenetration of its past and
present self awareness” is “characteristic of the novel,” Watt creates false descriptions
and categorizations of both humans and literature. The history of the “novel,” as a con-
vention or an object, like the history of both collectives and individuals (human or
object), is not linearly traceable, nor is hierarchical. There is no “trans-temporal” continu-
ity or even unity in time, human identity, or genre. Yet it is clear that Watt credits the
novel’s successful portrayal of human identity’s trans-temporal continuity as one of the
genre’s defining characteristics: “The novel’s plot is also distinguished from most previ-
ous fiction by its use of past experience as the cause of present action: a causal connec-
tion operating through time replaces the reliance of earlier narratives on disguises and coincidences, and this tends to give the novel a much more cohesive structure” (22). This is the veritable definition of trans-temporal continuity. Watt’s assertion also implies a false causal connection between past and present, and denies that the only cause and effect relationship that exists is between bodies affecting other bodies, not between past and present. To say that acknowledging and reaffirming the false notion of linear time makes the plot of a novel more “real”, and to use this false notion as one of the defining characteristics of the novel as a genre is doubly false. This claim implies that this artificial, linear, and cohesive form of time exists, and that the novel exists as a cohesive and linearly traceable genre precisely because it portrays this (false!) notion of calendrical, cohesive time.

Watt critiques the notion of time upheld by medieval thinkers and writers, who did not conceive of time as linear, continual, or even particularly important: “They focus attention, not on the temporal flux, but on the supremely timeless fact of death [for example]; their role is to overwhelm our awareness of daily life so that we shall be prepared to face eternity” (23). Further, Watt claims that medieval and renaissance treatments of time in fiction are “fundamentally ahistorical, and are therefore equally typical of the very minor importance to the temporal dimension in most literature previous to the novel” (23). Watt is correct in his description of medieval and renaissance representations of time in literature, but he is sadly critiquing these conceptions in order to demonstrate the ways in which the novel “progressed” or “corrected” representations of time in fiction by making them linear and continuous. The very same “correction” has been imposed upon
subject and object, oftentimes by the novel itself. Contrary to modernity’s demands that we praise the novel for its ability to “accurately” portray trans-temporal time and consciousness, we should return to a conception of time that is ahistorical and non-hierarchical. We should embrace the infinitely possible multiplicities. History, genre, and consciousness are not linearly cohesive or categorically specific. The subject-object hierarchy was created and is upheld on the basis on this false notion.

Watt couples this problematic view of time in general and time as portrayed in the novel with the previously critiqued notion of “formal realism”. In order to complete his account of the novel’s rise, Watt claims that novels’ employment of trans-temporal continuity, as well as their display of specific “truths” of human consciousness allow them to produce “an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals” (26). But, as this analysis has attempted to prove, the novel cannot and should not attempt to do this. Realism does not report truth, and the novelist certainly does not “convey the knowledge of things” as Watt suggests (30). Things have their own agency, their own capacity to affect, and can convey their own truth. The novel is also a thing, and should not attempt to subjectively mediate. The novel does not produce “authentic” portrayals of individuals, human or otherwise. In attempting to do so, novels further distance themselves from the multiplicities of affectively capable objects that constitute reality.

The formal realist novel, as has been demonstrated, most offensively makes claims to represent reality. The very supposition that a genre could depict “ordinary” or “particular” behavior means these novels actively determine standards of ordinariness as the reader consumes them. The staged ordinariness of the formal realist novel (like the
posed “snapshot”) is an act of denial. This is the very same denial made by politics of prediction and homogenous time, as they ignore affect, refuse surprise, and deny multiplicities. Genre is combinatory. Modernity has a perverse tendency toward purification and categorical division, as between subject and object. Genre is no exception. It is absurd to think of or to claim a universality of any concept or mode, particularly the novel. We must consider the book not in any universal way, but as a mass event, and one that is multitudinous. We must contemplate the novel in the same net-centric manner as history, and consider the novel as what it truly is: a mode or form of media technology. We must remember that the novel is a thing and like all other objects, we must consider its relation to and effect upon other objects. Formal realism implies probability and predictability, and dismisses any novel that does not demonstrate “real,” “ordinary,” “particular,” or linear cause and effect as mere anomaly.

A critique of the formal realist novel, and any discussion of the novel in general, necessitates the acknowledgment of the enormous and revolutionary birth of print culture that accompanied—or arguably, lead to—the “creation” of the novel. Alvin B. Kernan’s work, *Samuel Johnson and the Impact of Print*, not only addresses the impact of print on the novel, but also on all of literature and the concept of “writing” in general: “In this general transformation to a print culture, letters, and the entire world of writing, which were directly and continuously involved with printing, inevitable underwent radical, even revolutionary changes” (49). Kernan provides a long, but in no way exhaustive, list of some of these changes:
The novel became the major literary form, and prose challenged poetry as the most prestigious medium; the author’s copyright was legalized and censorship was nearly abolished; enormous numbers of literary works, both old and new, were printed and made available to readers; large public and private libraries became common; criticism became a standard literary genre; patronage nearly disappeared as authors began to be able to live by selling their writing; literacy increased and a new public audience of readers appeared; literary histories were written for the first time. (49)

Kernan attributes these revolutionary changes to what he refers to as the “logic of a technology,” defined as “an idea, or an institution” that has “a tendency consistently to shape whatever it affects in a limited number of definite forms or directions” (49). The technology of the printing press (notably an object) affects these forms and directions. The print that the press produces is first and foremost an object, and secondarily a form of media or technology. *Samuel Johnson and the Impact of Print* accurately considers both the novel and writing in general as forms of media technology. We must analyze the technological aspect of print culture, in order to demonstrate the reality of the novel, literature, and writing in general as a “things”. Properly considering the enormous influence of print culture on writing as a medium allows us to more easily conceive of the novel as an object, as each and every novel is in fact a thing, composed of ink on paper.

Print technology “fixed the literary text, by giving it an objective and unchanging reality in its own right. In earlier oral cultures there could be no such thing as an exact text, since the particular form something took at any given moment always depended…”
on performance” (Kernan 51). More simply put, print culture transformed writing and literature from performance into object. Even once oral tradition had given way to the existence of “writing” in the forms of manuscripts, writing was not yet truly “objectified” because manuscripts were seldom produced the exact same way twice, “and so remained always a process, never becoming a completed, static object” (Kernan 51-2). Yet the fact that print culture solidified writing as a static object did not diminish its power or agency, but on the contrary, created it. This is because print culture, specifically type, “make it possible for the work to exist as a fixed object, infinite and accurately reproducible, controlling, even ‘being’ as it were, its own form independent of perception or accidents” (Kernan 52). Somewhat ironically, print culture, precisely because it made books static and unchangeable, gave writing its own independence (agency!) outside of the individuals or accidents involved in the copying of manuscripts. The literal, static objects that print technology creates (from writing) give writing agency in a more profound and literal way than the manuscripts that preceded them. What’s more, an object (the printing press) elicited this profound change. The printing press transformed the book not only into an object, but an object with agency. It is print culture that stimulates “a new hypnotic superstition of the book as independent of and uncontaminated by human agency,” and in turn provides books with agency of their own (McLuhan 144.) McLuhan’s language is telling; that he uses the word “uncontaminated” to describe the human agency lacking in printed writing is significant. Without and only without this human contamination, books (and all other objects, for that matter) are able to have wills that are entirely separate from us and beyond our control. Kernan lists but a few examples
of such writing: “Printed books like the Bible, *Paradise Lost*, or Johnson’s *Dictionary* have acquired enormous validity and transcendental authority in their own right” (52). These works have not only the validity and authority with which Kernan endows them, but because of their agency apart from humans and their demonstrated ability to actually affect change, they also have ontology’s of their own.

Another manner by which the agency of printed literature can be grasped is the consideration of print’s invention of the author. The onset of print culture transformed the mere human writer into author, as it is the “factual, solid external existence of the printed book in numerous copies ‘told’ the writer he was an author, identified him as such on the title page, and offered him permanent existence in eternal fame” (Kernan 52). Kernan recalls Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel*, and refers to the novel as “an expression in form and subject of middle class values, and world view, which were, inevitably closely identified with, even extensions into reading of, print logic, and as such most likely to interest the mass of literate middle-class people with enough money to buy books” (Kernan 68). Yet unlike Watt, Kernan more readily admits and addresses the sheer volume of novels that were produced as a direct result of the onset of print culture. Using conservative numbers, Kernan figures that “an average of about 1,100 titles a year during the eighteenth century, and still using the loused figure of runs of 500, about 5.5 million English books during that period. These numbers are, of course, very rough approximations, but they show a distinct trend and at least suggest the magnitude of the increase” (153). The importance of this magnitude and the exponential nature with which this increase occurred cannot be
understated. This volume of writings cannot be said to all possess the same, distinctly “realist” qualities that supposedly define them as novels.

The sheer volume of works being printed at the invention of the printing press had another profound effect on writing: because of the number of books being printed, “books became ordinary, frequently seen and handled. Printing further cheapened books by making them commodities to be bought and sold in the marketplace, available to all who could read, owned by all who could afford them…and found in increasingly numerous private and public libraries” (Kernan 153). Books were not only turned into objects, but ordinary and commodified ones at that. The “thingness” of writing is further solidified by its commodification. The book is an object, one that is not only ubiquitous, but easily and affordably bought and sold. The book is commodified yet still possess agency outside of humans. Books, and novels in particular, cannot and should not make any claims of representing truth. Novels are not true. The “genre” of the novel is neither cohesive nor actually existent. The fact that print makes books permanent does not make them by any means “perfect,” cohesive, or complete, and most importantly, does not make them true, even though they are unchanging:

…print encourages the conception of a single authentic text, identified with the author’s unchanging intent, which is then assembled by the editor collating the previously printed texts and printing the result in an authoritative edition that in turn objectifies the original hypothesis of a true text. In this way the literary text is taken out of history and acquires an aura of idealized perfection, authorized by the author’s mind and realized as hard bibliographic fact, solidly out
there, typographically fixed, in eight octavo volumes costing two gold guineas.

(Kernan 171)

This aura of perfection is absolutely false. Books, writing, speech, and language are bodily, and corporeal: “speech not only is a kind of action in the physical sense, but...as body, possesses the capacity to move other bodies” (Montag 58-9). This is the power of writing, and it has virtually nothing to do with the novel’s false claims of representing truth.

The gothic novel is the “anomaly” that is most pervasively excluded by generic convention, most likely because it makes no false claims to represent reality. Yet to consider the gothic as an anomaly is to dismiss it as an interruption to the “probable,” ordinary stories outlined by the formal realist novel. This is precisely what we must refrain from doing. We must not exclude or dismiss, but affirm and amalgamate the multiplicities as indicators of new types of directionality (Latour, “Reassembling” 235). We must consider the other time, other place, and other agencies constantly at work. These others are the ones which modernity leaves out, ignores, or suspends (Latour “Reassembling” 166). Objects and time in the gothic do not behave as they are “supposed” to. Reality is not based on probability in the gothic. The gothic deliberately defies the modern order of things. It rejects the idea of category or time as generative of meaning. The gothic, itself a generic exception, ignores probability, cause and effect, continuity, convention, and ordinariness. The realm of the gothic is one in which a politics of affect already exists, and in which there is no subject-object divide.

Recalling Latour’s object-oriented-ontology, which does not seek to unite subject and object on some horizontal pole but rather to slide subjectivity and objectivity “along
the vertical dimension that defines the nonmodern world,” we arrive at a (somewhat simplified) definition of what Latour refers to as “quasi-objects” (“Never Modern” 137). Quasi-objects “are in between and below the two poles…more than social…much more collective than the ‘hard’ parts of nature,” yet at the same time “much more real, nonhuman, and objective” (“Never Modern” 55). The character Matilda/Rosario in gothic novel *The Monk* is a quasi-object. Quasi-objects cannot be reduced to formulaic causality or generic distinction. Like Matilda/Rosario and like the novel *The Monk* itself, quasi-objects are distinctly and purposefully anti-formalist. Matthew G. Lewis, the author of *The Monk*, refuses to categorize Matilda/Rosario through the consistent use of a pronoun by which to refer to the character, even though the existence of her female biology is revealed to the reader. For Matilda/Rosario, gender is an attribute, or mode, to use Spinozist terms. Matilda/Rosario has many forms, and her/his gender is simply one of them. The character’s gender is a feature, and a construction. Matilda/Rosario occupies a different gender at different times, and we, as readers, have no ability to predict beforehand which gender this will be. Matilda/Rosario, portrayed at times as a mystical, mythical, supernatural *force*, is not even categorically human. *The Monk* reminds us that gender, humanity, and subjectivity are amorphic categories. Matilda/Rosario as quasi-object embodies and personifies the necessary abandonment of binaries, and resististane to prediction and probability.

*The Monk* itself is a quasi-object, as it refuses to adhere to generic convention. *The Monk* makes us question the presumption of genre as any type of fixed categorical determination, in very much the same way Matilda/Rosario makes us question gender or
human/subjective form. Neither *The Monk* nor Matilda/Rosario designate “pure” form or formal realism, and it would be absurd to consider either in this way. The novel is not natural; it is precisely a fabrication, as are gender, nation, and race. *The Monk* is an object that has no “natural” or “real” determination. It is also an object that has agency. Lewis writes that he is “unconscious” of any other plagiarisms that may exist in the novel other than those listed in the preface. How can an author be unconscious of anything existing within a novel he himself has written? Lewis gives *The Monk* agency. If Lewis is unconscious of anything that may be present in his work, it can be inferred that his novel does not (like formal realist novels) attempt to actively produce consensus or standards of ordinariness, or to represent reality. *The Monk* is not in conversation with the public sphere. *The Monk* overtly and purposefully exists outside of it. In the preface, Lewis does not suggest that anything in *The Monk* should be considered “real.” Rather, the preface insinuates that the book has its own agency that is separate from the author’s, and has of its own volition actively retreated from the public sphere. Lewis, like Latour, is preoccupied with fabricated traditions and is actively attempting to break them. One way in which *The Monk* makes this attempt is by giving objects agency and affect.

*The Monk* contains numerous occasions wherein the hierarchy between people and things is questioned. Objects in the novel have a profound ability to affect humans and their actions. This is a politics of affect in which objects have agency. The novel also contains multiple instances of people taking representations of things as the things themselves. Ambrosio lusts after and kisses a portrait, an object that, like the novel, is meant only to represent that which is “real.” The portrait of the bleeding nun takes on multiple
human and phantasmagoric forms, each of which profoundly affects multiple characters and realities in the novel. A single dagger causes most of the deaths in the novel. This object determines and affects virtually every turn of the entire plot. The dagger wields its own dangerous power, outside of and above the fact that it is a weapon with the ability to inflict harm. No matter who is in possession of it, the dagger will kill, and it is the dagger that determines the killing.

Not only does The Monk attribute agency and affect to various objects, the work is also similarly preoccupied with the affect of multitudes, masses, and multiplicities. The character/spectre/object of the bleeding nun is “so called by the multitude” (Lewis 184). The multitude here signifies the domestics of the castle and the peasants of the surrounding town, and it is these individuals, “the masses,” who not only name, but bring to life “The Bleeding Nun.” The bleeding nun, as noted above, is a supernatural force that affects much of the action in the novel. It is the multitudes that name the nun and in so doing call her forth, and give her power. The domestics create and perpetuate the stories of the bleeding nun, thereby fueling her existence. It is the treatment of the ghost by the domestics that affects much of the action in the novel. Agnes, having heard repeatedly the story of the time and date at which the nun makes her appearance, and knowing perfectly the nun’s physical description, is able to don the appearance of the bleeding nun and orchestrate her escape. By this logic it is the multitudes, these lower class servants and peasants, who are responsible for what befalls all the other (upper class) characters in the novel. The Monk contains many examples of the multitude affecting their masters in this way. Don Cunegonda almost succeeds in foiling Agnes and Don Raymond’s plan for es-
cape, and Raymond readily admits that his servant boy Theodore is directly responsible for the majority of Raymond’s successes (Lewis 158). The masses in *The Monk* are multiple in every way. They are “queer,” “baroque,” and “idiosyncratic” (Latour, “Reassembling” 47). *The Monk*’s multitudes defy form and presumption, but regardless (or perhaps—because) of their refusal to be categorized or controlled, they are one of the multiple driving forces of the novel.

*The Monk* refuses to accept or operate within sequential, calendrical time. The story consistently moves forward and backward in time, and changes based on the perspective of the (multiple) narrators. The novel *Obi: or The History of Three-Fingered Jack* is narrated in a similar manner. The novel takes place during (and immediately following) a slave rebellion in Jamaica, but relays the histories of other characters in layers of multiple storytelling.

William Earle’s eighteenth-century novel, *Obi, or The History of Three-Fingered Jack*, defies categorization. *Obi* is based on the true events of a 1780 slave rebellion in Jamaica. The rebellion, lead by “Three-fingered Jack,” and the work based upon it, elude generic cohesion in virtually every sense. *Obi* contains, in its minuscule 91 pages, “… Romance elements, sentimental poetry, mock-epistolary structure, anthropological footnote, and colonial reportage” (Avaramudan 8). It is also strikingly (at times cloyingly) sentimental, penned “with a view to eliciting the feeling tear or the melancholic sign of the sentimentalist reader and the abolitionist activist” (Avaramudan 8). Earle in no way suggests pushing our affect to the side in favor of reason, and in many areas in the work portrays the “reasonable” or “enlightened” white slave owners in an extremely unflatter-
ing light. For these reasons, *Obi* cannot be strictly categorized as a novel. There in nothing particularly “formally realist” about *Obi*, yet it is (somewhat ironically, perhaps) based on true events, even incorporating actual historical and journalistic accounts of Jack Mansong’s rebellion. Yet the work obeys none of the “rules” of realism, such as those praised by Watt’s *Rise of the Novel*. As a work of fiction, *Obi* obeys no convention. Its nonlinear portrayal of time, its often times interrupted and multilayered storyline, the power it places in the agency of objects, the narrator’s uncontrollable sadness and feeling for the characters about which he writes, not a single one of the work’s characteristics would categorize it as a “traditional” novel.

The narrative structure of *Obi* consists primarily of a series of letters written by the narrator, George, to the faceless recipient, Charles. This structure allows for virtually incessant interruptions in the story. The most common interruption is due to George’s sentimental affect, and his inability to continue penning his letters as the events he is relaying have caused him to be overcome with emotion. While considering the horrors of slavery perpetrated by his fellow countrymen, George exclaims “Oh fie! fie!” and later wishes the reader (Charles, and all of us) could understand George’s own deep sympathy for Jack’s father’s death during The Middle Passage: “Could you feel as I felt while penning the death of Makro!” (Earle 82, 95). The reader is expressly made aware of George’s inability to continue writing in the face of such deep affections, and in order to compose himself enough to carry on George says “Adieu to the impulse of the moment, to the feeling tear, I am a West-Indian again, and can proceed” (Earle 96). George literally assumes voice of Jack’s mother, Amri, in order to continue relaying the sad story of her arrival in
Jamaica. Perhaps George assumes Amri’s voice because his own has failed him. The voice assumed when the narrator relays the story of Jack’s parents adds to the complexity of Obi’s generic structure. The speaker moves backward and forward in time while relaying Amri’s story, and throughout the entire work. Prior to beginning the sad tale of Amri, George admits it is an amalgamated account, based on her retelling to others, and these various others’ retelling to George: “What I am now going to write is nothing more than a copy of what I have sometime ago begun to put into a regular story, out of several memoranda collected at different times” (Earle 71). In order to somewhat verify his account of Amri’s life, George states: “So much of the narrative was imported to me by a negro, well acquainted with Amri” (Earle 73). George writes Amri’s story, as told to him by an individual who claims to be well acquainted with Amri, “as near as [his] memory can trace” (Earle 73).

The narrator’s perspective is in constant flux, as is the time at which the action is occurring in Obi: it has all already happened, is happening, and will happen. Is Jack still alive and at large? Has he rebelled yet? Is he is dead? Has he even been born yet? It depends on which voice the narrator is assuming and the time at which this voice is relaying the story. Obi is an almost paradoxical blend of epic heroism and the horror of slavery and genocide it seems to seamlessly unite. These two themes commingle to such an extent in Obi that the reader almost forgets these are two mutually exclusive genres. The multiple genres existing in Obi are so well blended that the paradox of their mutual presence is not problematic, but rather, it is welcomed. This tension renders Obi a “rousing account of a heroic individual’s attempt to combat slavery while defending family honor.
suggests aspects of epic tale and revenge tragedy alongside the history, memory, and syncretic legacy of the New World African diaspora” (Avaramudan 7). Not only does *Obi* marry epic tale, tragedy, and revenge, it also draws attention to and successfully illustrates the blend of profoundly diverse black slave culture in Jamaica. One manner in which this achieved is Earle’s characterization of the practice of obeah and its reception by the multiple strata of both black and white populations on the island.

While the story of Three-fingered Jack is in many ways about Jack as an individual folk hero and the leader of a rebellion, it is important to acknowledge that he was also the originator of a real, political, collective movement. Jack was the leader of this movement because of his profound ability to affect others. This movement’s goal was to set up a separate society that was economically and politically free from slave owners and the rest of white (and black) Jamaica. Similarly, it is essential to note the Collective nature of the threat posted by runaway slaves…Fleeing slave society and sometimes attempting to form political communities based on subsistence agriculture and political autonomy in the woods and inaccessible mountain areas, escaped and former slaves experimented with various forms of desertion. (Avaramudan 11)

The slaves portrayed in *Obi*, led by but also in conjunction with Jack, were truly living a politics of experimentation and affect, as were the white and non-rebellious blacks on the island. The make-shift communities formed out of an innate and desperate desire for freedom (as well as the way in which those who pursued freedom affected the rest of so-
ciety) demonstrate the viability and necessity for these experimental and affective systems of politics.

The majority of the action in *Obi* occurs because of the affective capabilities of the obeah religion. Obeah *itself* is an amalgam. Similar to *Obi* as a work of writing, the obeah religion defies categorization. Obeah is a changing and evolving practice based on who is observing it, as well as where one is located. Obeah is a blend of religious and cultural practices from a number of African locales, and even its narrowest definition deliberately flouts classification because its followers are aware of its evolutionary and amalgamated nature. Obeah is “a set of practices and beliefs produced by the cultural synthesis of enslaved populations drawn from a number of African locations” (Avaramudan 8). This is perhaps one reason for which a work based upon its practice encompasses elements of numerous genres: “we might trace obeah as a religious theme treated through several genres during this time—but we can also consider whether the complex phenomenon of obeah stimulated writers into experimenting with a number of generic innovations when representing it” (Avaramudan 8). Obeah is nebulously defined, and “can be read variably as medicine, symptom, fetish, or trope, suggesting a full-blown information system that named pharmacological knowledge, political conspiracy, religious practice, or literary construction” (Avaramudan 50). Obeah had a psychological if not pharmacological hold on those who believed in it (both white and black). Obeah’s ability to affect both believers and non-believers of multiple races demonstrates the power of its ideology. This ideology works in conjunction with actual objects (obis) to affect real change in both those who ascribed to the ideological power of obeah and those who were skeptical of it.
The practice of obeah, before, during, and after Jack’s rebellion, was a site, rallying point, and “repository,” for many white anxieties and attitudes about slaves in the Caribbean, being the place at which “projections by the slaveowners and British cultural discourse about the Caribbean at large,” were directed (Avaramudan 49).

Multiple instances in *Obi* prove just how deeply both white and black populations were affected by the obeah religion. The first case is demonstrated by the extremely public execution of Amri’s father, Jack’s grandfather, upon his conviction of being an “obi man,” or practitioner of obeah. The white slave owners, in order to make an example of an obeah practitioner, execute Amri’s father in the “presence of every slave” (Earle 97). This public execution as a form of warning to the other slaves proves that the white plantation owners acknowledged and feared the power of obeah to actually affect individuals. Whites, blacks, and even plantations themselves, as in land and profits, have suffered by this obi man, and his executioners charge him as having perpetrated all of these crimes: “The plantations have suffered by you; it seems you have, by some hidden means, spirited up the negroes to a rebellion, and those that have refused to raise their hands against their maters have died in the most cruel manner by your means” (Earle 98). The slave owners actually believe that this obi man and the obeah religion were able not only to rouse the other slaves into rebelling, but to actually affect the blacks who did not rebel so intensely as to literally kill them. The obi man recognizes his own individual power and force, and the profound affect he alone can have over those who believe they are inherently superior to him “I have made the pallid Europeans tremble at my power…and I will make ye feel its force” (Earle 99). Later, Jack requests his fellow slaves heed a similar
call, to collectively band together, uniting their individual affective force in order to wield even stronger affective capabilities: “Rise, and resume your rights” (Earle 109). These rights, recalling Montag’s analysis, include the right to utilize their individual power and force in order to affect change, despite any sovereign who would claim to have power over their individual force. Jack calls his fellow slaves to “Remember the struggle is for liberty; to destroy the power of our enemies” (Earle 110). The power that Jack is describing is the power that the white slave owners presume they have over the slaves: the power to control the force of the slaves’ bodies. Slavery objectifies the black body. Jack calls his fellow slaves to reclaim their subjectivity. This subjectivity is achieved, but like all other forms of categorization in *Obi*, it is tenuous. Once Jack receives his obi, he is able to link all the bodies of the slaves to be *one* collective body, and to join his own body with his obi (an object). This amalgam of bodies, both human and thing, wields power against the sovereign and live a politics of affect: “He resolved to speak to the private ear of those groaning slaves, and holding advantages views before them, link them to one firm and resolute body” (Earle 105). Jack links all the slaves together to be one collective body and he links them to his own body and to the “body” of his obi, through the affective power of his obi. It is as Montag says: “The truth of these definitive historical moments [revolutions, etc] does not lie within the political system proper but outside it, in the power of an indignant multitude” (Montag 77). Jack’s rebellion is proof that against the power of the multitude, the sovereign is “brandishing mere laws against the storm sea whose force nothing can withstand” (Montag 84). Jack’s rebellion wields the power of bodies on every level: people as individual and collective bodies, and bodies as objects.
This is what makes *Obi* the perfect work to analyze in this thesis: its subjects are a religion and an individual that both acknowledge the agency of objects and refuse to be categorized, demanding that a work based upon them also be generically un-categorizable and experimental.

Twenty years after the rebellion of Jack Mansong, newspaper reports categorize Jack not as the leader of a slave rebellion, nor as a distinct threat to the slave-owner or white-black political dichotomy. Rather, these accounts categorize Jack principally and most importantly as a devotee of obeah. In these accounts of the history of Three-fingered Jack, “the emphasis has shifted from law and order to obeah” and the focus is “more prominently on the materials recovered form Three-fingered Jack that demonstrate his identity as a practitioner of obeah, rather than on his political objectives” (Avaramudan 14). A newspaper article about Jack lists a virtual inventory or things found on his person. This account implies that these are the things that are most important about, and are the literal cause of, Jack’s rebellion. In other words, white individuals are actually writing and claiming that the obeah religion, and objects imbued with obeah magic, *literally* caused a full scale rebellion to occur. The white journalists are not attributing the rebellion to political motivations, a desire to be free, the will of one man, nor the will of many men, but to

…the end of a goat’s horn, filled with a compound of grave dirt, ashes, the blood of a black cat, and human fat; all mixed into a kind of paste. A black cat’s foot, a dried toad, a pig’s tail, a flip of parchment of kid’s skin, with characters marked in blood on it…These, with a keen sabre, and two guns… (Earle 164).
This inventory of objects is what caused the rebellion to occur, and these objects are what this reporter believes to be of consequence in relation to Jack’s story. The affective capabilities these things possess were bestowed upon them by the supposed supernatural practices of the obeah religion. It is because obeah works that the people of Jamaica were thrown into such an affective frenzy. It is because the island and all its inhabitants were existing so affectively that for once the veil was lifted and they were able to see and truly acknowledge the affective capabilities of objects. The objects had their power all along. Yet because they were at this moment operating within a politics of affect, the people of Jamaica allowed themselves to be really affected by objects in a way in which they otherwise would not.

Jack is a quasi-object. Every body (every one and every thing) is Jack, every time the narrator hears of Obi the name, or even hears the name of an object called Jack, it is Jack Mansong: “Nay, there is not thing called Jack, whether a smoke-jack, a boot-jack, or any other Jack, but acts as a spell upon my senses and set me on on the fret a the bear mention of it” (Earle 69-70). The things called Jack affect the narrator just as much as Jack the man, and Jack is likened to the things themselves. Jack is an object, he is many objects, and after he has achieved subjectivity, he blurs the line between person and object. Jack Mansong is all people called Jack and all things called Jack. As a result of three-fingered Jack’s infamy, all people and things referred to as “jack” affect the author equally, George does not discriminate between the degree to which any mention of “jack” affects him, and the affects they render are “too much” for him to bear. (Earle 69-70).
Throughout the course of *Obi* Jack is likened more and more to an object: “Look to me, Europeans; tremble at the name of Jack, for will revenge his father and banish humanity from his heart” (Earle 108). Jack is a a name and an inhuman thing, and his image and his name just as powerful, and just as affective as he: “The image of Jack haunts me,” laments George, throughout *Obi* (Earle 112). Jack fills people’s heads and even literally their mouths. His name is constantly being uttered, and he is thought to more than a man. As a consequence of this, his name is more powerful he himself is: “through the whole Island, every mouth was filled with the name of Jack” (Earle 120). What is Jack? He is his obi, he is a man, he is “awake to feeling” and is a hero (Earl118-119). His name and his obi are something larger than he,: “All the negroes trembled at his name…and thought his obi was most powerful” (Earle 136). Jack not only affects those who believe in the power of obeah and obis, even his name itself incites fear in both black and white individuals: “the negroes and all the inhabitants were terrified at the name of Three-fingered Jack!!” (Earle 136). Blacks who believed in obeah and did not, as well as Europeans, were terrified of Jack the *thing*: “not one of the negroes but trembled at the name of Three-fingered Jack, and many of the Europeans believed in the fancied virtues of his Obi” (Earle 140).

Jack’s obi (an object) succeeds in making Jack himself immortal and inhuman, almost *himself* an object. After Jack is shot by Quashee: “Some asserted that the shots passed through his body and left no trace behind; nay, all unanimously declared that it was idle to attempt to shoot Jack as to wound a shadow” (Earle 140). Jack believes in his obi, and believes it renders him immortal:“Learn that thou wilt combat with Three-fin-
ged Jack; let me name strike terror in thy heart” (Earle 150). Jack’s body becomes a quasi-object: “The revenge tale the author promises is rendered anticlimactic by the ultimate defeat of Three-fingered Jack, whose body parts are successfully exchanged for the advertised bounty” (Avaramudan 51). Jack’s body is what matters, and it is his severed hand, missing two fingers, that comes to embody his entire movement. It is not his soul, personality, voice, or even his actions or crimes. Rather, what those who fear Jack desired was the ability visibly examine his body and determine it to be no longer a threat. The demand that Jack’s assassins bring his body parts preserved for identification to the authorities in order to claim a bounty and confirm the dissolution of Jack’s threat objectifies his body once more. The British crown recognizes the power of Jack’s body as a quasi-object, and solidifies it as such: “We do hereby strictly charge and command all and every [one of] our loving subjects within our said Island, to pursue and apprehend, or cause to be apprehended, the body of the said negro-man named Three-fingered Jack” (Earle 154). It is Jack’s body that needs to be pursued and apprehended. He is a quasi-object, one that is worth “two hundred pounds” as was promised “to the person or persons who shall so apprehend and take the body of the said negro” (Earle 154). Only if they were to “bring in his head and hand wanting the two fingers” and “upon due proof made of their being the head and hand of the said Three-fingered Jack” could his assassins claim their reward. (Earle 155).

Jack’s obi as an object with agency, similar to Jack’s body, yet entirely separate from his personhood. Bashra (the second obi man to appear in the work) prepares an obi for Jack, “…of more than common qualities, a purpose preparation, that should stand by
him in time of need, and the arms of his foe should fall defenseless from their grasp; in short, the charm possessed such rare virtues, that it was to answer every wish of its possessor” (Earle 105). Similar to the name of Jack, the name or word “obi” comes to have equal power to affect those who are aware of obeah religion. Further, the object itself is endowed with this power! Amri says “learn from me that possesses an Obi and shall sink you all to very nothingness” (Earle 120). The reaction of the people who know about obeah proves the obi’s power (in name and as object): “The few slaves that were present, at the name of Obi, gave a dreadful scream and fell upon their faces” (Earle 120). What’s more, even the white people are affected by the ontology of the obi: “…even the council were alarmed” because “they well knew what a panic the science had occasioned for many years among the slaves, and to be thus revived, was to fill the Island with fresh terrors” (Earle 120). The black individuals, being familiar with obeah, are particularly afraid, so much so that they were afraid to pursue Jack even at the prospect of a large reward, including money and freedom: “This reward was alluring, and many of the negroes would have tried to obtain it; but every one feared to venture against Jack, who possessed so powerful an Obi” (Earle 123). Jack’s enemies who had “in their speech upbraided him,” and were afraid he had somehow overheard them, “thought themselves affected by him” (Earle 123). These individuals tremble at the mention of Jack’s obi, and are therefore literally affected by the mere thought of an object.

Objects have agency in Obi. The obis work. The supernatural properties in the obeah master’s herbs have real, affective consequences. The word “obi” signifies both a subject and an object, as it refers to both the masters of obeah and the objects created by
these obeah masters. Obeah, and in particular the object of the obi, has the very real and
very profound ability to affect every body in the novel. As Spinoza prefers it, the sub-
stance and its affect are not separated. These affective objects influence the actions of al-
most everyone in the novel, regardless of race. These objects do not discriminate between
races, and consequently make race a quasi-category, a fallacy. Upon the legal prohibition
of the practice of obeah, individuals who have been affected by it are referred to as “those
who are supposed to be influenced thereby” (108). The legislators acknowledge (in their
reserved, unaffected way) that obeah can and does affect individuals of both the white
and black race. I posit that this is the reason obeah is outlawed: not because of any effect
it has on slaves or other black individuals, but because of its terrifying ability to lure “en-
lightened” (white) people into the world of things and affect. The legislators have a vest-
ed interest in maintaining the fallacy of the public sphere. They must ensure Jamaicans
continue (or resume) using their reason and rationality, and willfully denying their affect.
White people do not understand the art of obeah and the ways in which its objects can
really affect them. But paradoxically, the outlawing of obeah is what gives obeah and the
obis their agency, and acknowledges their affective capacity. The banning of obeah is
simply another manner by which the public sphere desperately attempts to deny affect.
The only access we can gain to Jack or the art of obeah is through affect, yet the “enlight-
ened” individuals in Obi continually attempt to ignore, bracket off, or literally “illegalize"
their affect. The society in Obi is practicing politics of affect, whether or not they willing-
ly and consciously accept it.
This paper has attempted to list the ways by which we can establish a politics of affect. It has considered the affective capabilities of objects. It has demanded the multitude take back their bodies’ affective power. Through a critique of the formal realist novel, and a brief examination of the history of the novel, this thesis has critiqued false notions of time as linear and generic convention as homogenous. It has insisted that we devote real attention to the marginalized “anomaly” of the gothic novel, and deny generic convention and categorization altogether. This analysis suggests we take our cues from the politics of affect that exists in The Monk and Obi. These novels, despite their anomalous position, give objects agency and allow both subject and object to live affectively. The individuals and in these novels do not leave their affect to the side, nor do The Monk and Obi refuse to acknowledge the subject-object divide. The goal of this analysis is to consider that objects have a profound capability to influence our world, and to question modernity’s insistence in a preordained and a priori hierarchy among and separation between subject and object. Each has infinite and affective potentiality, and infinite multiplicities.
Works Cited


