Novel passions: re-reading English fiction through the history of emotion, 1689-1751

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NOVEL PASSIONS: RE-READING ENGLISH FICTION THROUGH THE HISTORY OF
EMOTION, 1689-1751

by

Joel P. Sodano

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Through the History of Emotion,
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Dissertation Abstract

“The passions” were of paramount importance in the 18th century. Classical contexts established excessive emotions as potentially dangerous forces that could override the will and dictate human action, but they also perceived them as inessential to and even extirpable from human nature. With the advent of empiricism, the theoretical framework of emotion shifted from an external condition to an internal proposition. Thus, in the 18th century a conceptual symbiosis is formed between “the Gales of Passion” and “the Reins of Reason” (Spectator, no. 408, 1712). This seemingly archaic idea is actually being confirmed by contemporary neuroscience. For recently discovered neural networks show that emotions are formed in the relay between rational and affective brain centers.

“Novel Passions” argues that 18th-century aesthetics of sensibility are informed by inquiry into the nature of that relay between percept and concept, between feeling and knowing. As such, it intervenes in discourses of affect theory, the history of emotion, and literary theory to rethink the role of the aesthetic at a moment when epistemologies of emotion were shifting and the novel was on the rise. Close readings of works by Richard Steele, Eliza Haywood, Samuel Richardson, and John Cleland, demonstrate that 18th-century novels explored affective intensity not merely as a thing to be explained or contained but as a point of theoretical inquiry into the nature of experience itself. By “writing to the moment” of a character’s emotional extremity, these texts make manifest that which is both real and, nonetheless, empirically unverifiable.
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For Malvina, who never doubted;
for Phil, who never understood;
for Mom & Dad, whose support never flagged.
Most of all for Meg, who will forever be
my onlyest.

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impossible to acknowledge everyone whose influence, support and guidance have made this
project possible. Perhaps the subject of affective intensity has carried over into this dedication,
but as I write, I find the attempt to express gratitude in any one direction bleeds into all others.
As Laurence Sterne’s Tristram Shandy has taught us, to start from the beginning is a futile task,
so I’ll just have to start in the middle, with objects most readily at hand, and move out from
there…hopefully with not too many digressions.

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Introduction: The Problem of the Passions in the Eighteenth Century

On June 18, 1712, the anonymous author of Spectator no. 408, who some scholars have supposed to be Alexander Pope, offered a micro-treatise arguing for human nature as the most important subject of philosophy. Compared to the endeavors of natural philosophy, like “sett[ling] the Distance of the Planets, and comput[ing] the Times of their Circumvolutions,” he suggests that the inquiry into human nature “is of more Consequence” because it is the primary feature upon which other, more objective, intellectual pursuits depend. If modern forms of knowledge-making, at least within the British empirical tradition, are dependent on an experiential model, then it would hold true that “Humane Nature [is] the most useful Object of humane Reason” (III: 524). Yet the argument does less to solidify the philosophical concerns of what Hume would call the “science of MAN” than it does to exemplify the prominent role that emotion played in eighteenth-century discourses of human understanding. In fact, the real focus of the essay is trained on explaining the complementary epistemological roles of passion and reason. “One good Effect,” the author surmises, “that will immediately arise from a near Observation of humane Nature,”

is, that we shall cease to wonder at those Actions which Men are used to reckon wholly unaccountable; for as nothing is produced without a Cause, so by observing the Nature and Course of the Passions, we shall be able to trace every Action from its first Conception to its Death: We shall no more admire at the Proceedings of Cataline or Tiberius, when we know the one was actuated by a cruel Jealousy, the other by a furious Ambition; for the Actions of Men follow their Passions as naturally as Light does Heat, or as any other Effect flows from its Cause; Reason must be employed in adjusting the Passions, but they must ever remain the Principles of Action. (III: 524, emphasis in original)

The author’s proposal is in contrast to classical models of passion wherein it would be enough to know the name of an affecting passion to understand, “admire” and consequently excuse, if not approve, the action it precipitates. Passionate actions are “wholly unaccountable” in a classical
light not because they are unknowable but because people are not typically held accountable for actions taken under their influence. Thus, the modern swing of no. 408 (couched in allusion to new scientific techniques of “near Observation” and causal analysis) does not actually occur in tracing a passion back to the point of its original but in the negotiated relationship of passion and reason that takes place in the cognitive space between perception and response. In arguing that reason and passion are coeval and equally essential components of human nature, Spectator no. 408 encapsulates an anti-Stoic line of thought that would remain standard fare in British discourse throughout the eighteenth century: the passions, while potentially dangerous, are a natural and essential component of human experience; “for to be without Passion, or to be hurried away with it, makes a Man equally blind” (III: 526). Reason, then, was seen to serve as the moderating force that kept one seeing clearly through a turbid sea of passions.

If Mr. Spectator’s conclusion (that “the Passions are the Principles of humane Actions, [and, therefore] we must endeavor to manage them so as to retain their Vigour, yet keep them under strict Command”) seems more archaic than modern, some very recent evidence from studies in the neurobiology of emotion may offer a helpful context for comparison (III: 526). In a discussion of his research on “affective style” and findings that people can increase their resilience to “negative and stressful emotional events” through mental training, Richard Davidson provides neurological data to support the eighteenth-century hunch that emotion and reason work in tandem to form affective experience. In contradistinction to “the longstanding scientific orthodoxy,” which held that human emotion and cognition run on “mutually independent brain circuitry: the former in the ‘highly evolved’ frontal cortex and the latter in the limbic system,” Davidson found that the key to the processing of emotion and to the formation of
emotional style lies in a “large bundle of neurons running between certain regions of the prefrontal cortex [logic center] and the amygdala [emotion center].”

What’s most important, however, is not that a relay of neural pathways between ‘higher’ and ‘baser’ brain functions exists but that emotional experience itself takes place in the biobehavioral interplay between the two. In this sense, neuroscience textbooks of the 1980s and 90s, which presented emotion and cognition as categorically distinct neural functions, where emotion centers react and logic centers judge independently of each other, seem to have been reclaiming the Stoic position that cognition and emotion (thinking and feeling) are separate, isolated, and isolatable functions of human nature. The new science shows that activity, and interactivity, between seemingly disparate neurological systems is constituent of the cognitive process. As Davidson puts it:

What we found, in a nutshell, is that people with greater activation on the left side of the prefrontal cortex recovered much more quickly from the strongest feelings of disgust, anger, and fear evoked [through] images. From this, we inferred that the left prefrontal sends inhibitory signals to the amygdala, instructing it to quiet down. Activity in the left prefrontal cortex actually shortens the period of amygdala activation, allowing the brain to bounce back from an upsetting experience.

If the first consequence of the biobehavioral data is that the relay between reason and emotion is open in both directions, the second consequence resonates with eighteenth-century theorizations of passion as a principal feature of human understanding. For, if emotions are principles and rational principles are emotional, the new data shows them to be coproduced in an interactive process. A further study, by Hadas Okon-Singer et. al., on the “cognition interactions” of emotion alludes to one way in which the twenty-first century is moving toward a revaluation of emotion to rival the eighteenth century’s preoccupation with the passions:

The distinction between the ‘emotional’ and the ‘cognitive’ brain is fuzzy and context-dependent. Indeed, there is compelling evidence that brain territories and psychological processes commonly associated with cognition, such as the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and
working memory, play a central role in emotion. Furthermore, putatively emotional and cognitive regions influence one another via a complex web of connections.\textsuperscript{7} It seems, then, that contemporary brain science is confirming the eighteenth-century philosophical speculation that the faculty of reason forms and informs affective experience and, \textit{vice versa}, that emotion forms and informs what we know by way of experience. For emotion and reason are part and parcel of the larger experiential process of human understanding; moreover, subjectivity, itself, as Davidson’s work on affective style attests, is a product of that active negotiation between the “Gales of the Passions, … the Reins of Reason and the Guidance of Judgment.”\textsuperscript{8}

So far, so good, but in order to appreciate the logical feature of active interactivity that is critical to the picture of affective experience that I am drawing here, we must step back. For a moment let’s disregard the connotative determinations that attend either side of the passion/reason, emotion/cognition divide and pay attention to the more abstract pairing of activity and passivity. Here we begin to dig into the foundation of the history of emotion, for passion and passivity share a common etymological root. Susan James is the foremost scholar on the subject, and her work on the early-modern philosophical tradition, which categorizes a transition from classical to modern thought in terms of \textit{Passion and Action}, serves as a touchstone of historical context for this project. The history of emotion from Plato to Descartes is varied and extensive with as many subtle variations as writers and exceptions to every rule; in light of that convolution, James’ work offers a fascinating history of the paramount role that emotion plays in philosophical discourse from the ancient to the early-modern period, with detailed attention to its many disputes and distinctions.\textsuperscript{9}

However, the broader conceptual move that James highlights, a move most apropos to my reading of the eighteenth-century tradition, consists in a transition from classical to modern
conceptions of emotion that is coeval with a shift in conceptual frameworks, from passions as causal agents to passions as cognitive participants. In classical terms, we are passive with regard to our passions because they act upon us, and the OED attests to the etymological foundation of passion as the “condition of being acted upon.” Thus passions had long been seen as active forces that human subjects passively receive. Whether or not those subjects transfer passion’s compulsions into physical manifestations does not change the certainty or passivity of their reception. Act upon them or not, the emotional content of experience is something of an extra-subjective fact that enters the mind whole cloth and must be dealt with as if an intrusion upon, rather than a function of, the ordinary processes of the mind. While writers in the classical tradition are loath to suggest that passions always move us to act unbidden and outside of the consent of our conscious selves, on the whole they allow this as an ever-present condition of possibility that arises with the existence of passions.

Scott Paul Gordon is more forceful in his use of “‘passive’…to describe a behavior caused immediately by a force distinct from and outside of the individual actor. In this scheme, individuals passively react to impressions caused by external bodies.” Such description of a subject’s complete passivity in the wake of passion’s force, if too blunt to capture the varied nuances carried throughout the classical tradition, is useful for pointing out an equally important consequence of the “passivity trope.” Affective experiences, by virtue of what Francis Hutcheson deemed the “passive Power of receiving Ideas,” are conveyed immediately and immediately known. Thus, for passions in a classical context, external causal agency and epistemological unimpeachability go hand in hand…we know the passion that moves us by the mere fact of being moved.
This is why the author of *Spectator* no. 408 describes the passion/action relations of Cataline and Tiberius as being eminently knowable, for their ‘knowability’ consists in categorical definitions that assume passions to be fundamentally distinct feelings. For instance, St. Thomas’ famous categories of irascible and concupiscible passions came in pairs (e.g. love and hate, pleasure and sorrow, hope and despair, fear and courage) because he thought them to be known in terms of their unique, distinguishing characteristics in opposition to each other.\(^{14}\)

Paraphrasing Cicero, James exemplifies how such classification marks emotional states as the separate domains of unique emotional signatures: “*Laetitia* is a kind of delight at something believed to be a present good, *libido* is a desire for a supposed good. *Metus* is a feeling of fear at what is believed to be a threatening evil, *aegritudo* is a distress at present thing held to evil.”\(^{15}\)

Thus, it is the combination of their unique signatures and their direct agency over human action that often results in classically informed descriptions of passions as autonomous, and often mischievous, characters that tamper with human life as did the gods of Olympus.

Yet, passivity is not the more important end of the passion/action dyad, for the signature movement of the philosophico-historical trajectory that James traces is exemplified in the early-modern convergence of Descartes, Malebranche, Hobbes and Spinoza (with Locke arriving shortly after). The modernizing shift is charted through a turn away from passions as passive constructions and toward what we might style an “activity trope,” whereby a subject must now play an active role in generating, and bear an active responsibility for, the affective content of his or her mind. More specifically, early modern philosophers began to formulate concepts of emotion in terms of a relation among minds, subjects, and objects whereby “a passion originates in a judgement of the mind about the relation between an object (which may be present or imagined) and a subject.”\(^{16}\)
James offers an example taken from Malabranche: “[A] man may imagine himself suffering a grievous insult, or may meet an old lover on the street. By itself, … this perception will not excite his passions. It is only when his will…directs its impulse towards the perception, that he experiences a sentiment such as anger or joy, a modification of mind intimately connected to the movement of the will with which it is associated.”¹⁷ Here we see evidence that interactivity between perception and cognition become paramount for modernizing constructions of emotion. If, as per Malabranche, a will is required to draw our attention to and “activate” the potential of the emotionally charged content of experience, this is owing to a wane in the view of passions as active, external agents. Yet, even as cognitive function begins to take a greater role in the experience of emotions, emotions themselves are solidifying their place as integral to the overall system of human understanding. So much so that it becomes almost absurd to consider the ideal of Stoic dispassionate existence in early-modern terms. John Staines describes the reciprocally active-passive process that signifies what I will call *passion’s becoming modern*. For it is crucial to understand that, within the early-modern context, “passions are both active and passive: they are caused by some stimulus, yet themselves cause bodily motions, thoughts, volitions, and even other passions. The rational mind can control passions but is also controlled by passions.”¹⁸

Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis have summarized the general consequence of such becoming as it was formalized into a major problematic of early-modern thought. They assert a common feeling among writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “that passion is *not* just something experienced passively, but that passionate experiences, including admiration, love or even the physical experience of inhabiting a body, contain in themselves a ratiocinative element, or even, that they *are* in themselves a form of cognition.”¹⁹ Susan James, no doubt,
would agree with this encapsulation of her own thesis, but she perhaps more than others who
touch this subject is sensitive to the fact that the reconceptualization at hand, one “that breaks
with the oppositions between activity and passivity,” will be hotly contested and certainly
incomplete to the end of the seventeenth century. 20

The analysis that I offer in this dissertation makes the case for pushing the contestation of
passion’s “modernity” well into the eighteenth century and, at some points, well beyond. For if
Susan James saw in the oeuvres of Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza and Locke a collective yet
nascent foundation for cognitivist thought, in that “taken together, they create the conditions for
the emergence of the twentieth-century orthodoxy that actions are to be explained simply by
invoking beliefs and desires,” we can say now that seventeenth-century developments, which
figured desire as the sole cause of human action and posited an “integrated theory of the mind”
as the foundation of individualized neoliberal subjectivity, may have also created the conditions for
theories of emotion as hermetically sealed features of personal responsibility, but those
conditions certainly did not determine the endpoint of passion’s conceptual evolution. Indeed,
roughly twenty years of work in the emergent interdisciplinary field known as the history of
emotion has done much to call into question the primacy of those twentieth-century
orthodoxies. 21

On the balance, the eighteenth-century British writers who participated in the
contemporary discursive theorization of the passions were not ready to concede the whole of
human nature to a set of intentional decisions, as Robert Solomon seems to do in asserting that
“[e]motions are judgments and actions, not occurrences or happenings that we suffer;…emotions
are choices and our responsibility.” 22 But neither would I suspect the present-day discourse
communities of neuroscience to be willing to go along with such a heavy-handed cognitivist
claim. And it is in this light that we turn back to the comparison of eighteenth- and twenty-first-century visions of the passion/reason, emotion/cognition relationship as interactive, this time with attention to the implied and explicit purposes of each.

In terms of the therapeutic ends of Davidson’s revolution in the neurobiology of emotion, the name of the game is gaining awareness of, and respect for, emotion’s capacity to override the rational centers of the mind. The prescribed cure to debilitating emotional excess, then, amounts to training the mind to increase the number of neural pathways for interaction between emotion and reason.23 “[B]oth prefrontal-cortex activity and the number of pathways sending calming signals to the amygdala determine just how easily a person will bounce back from adversity. Through these two mechanisms, our ‘thinking brain’ is able to calm our ‘feeling self,’ enabling the brain to plan and act effectively without being distracted by negative emotion—not a bad working definition of Resilience.”24 It is also a rather accurate encapsulation of the eighteenth-century juggling act of keeping active and passive powers of the mind in play without letting either one run off with the other.

Thus, Isaac Watts takes pains in his *Doctrine of the Passions* (1729) to situate the passions as integral components of human nature.25 They are brought to us through observation and understood through interpretation of sensory experience; thus, Watts defines them as “those sensible commotions of our whole nature, both soul and body, which are occasioned by the perception of an object.” Despite the firm belief that the passions’ disruptive qualities are consequent to human nature, Watts’ main concern is the fallout that could occur if they are allowed to run amok. “Ungoverned Passions,” he warns, could “break all the Bonds of human Society and Peace,” and “unbridled would violate all the sacred ties of religion, and raise the sons of men in arms against their creator.”26
Making matters more complicated, Watts also claims that the passions are at least as helpful as they are harmful. They are given to us by God “to assist the feeble Influences of our Reason in the Practice of Duty for our own and our Neighbor’s Good,” and he asserts that “the Stoics were much in the wrong to persuade us to root out and destroy all Passions in general, and to nullify (if possible) those active and useful Powers.”27 Rather than nullification he proposes education—offering a solution of equal parts social- and self-government—whereby he intends to “give us Assistance toward the forming proper Rules for [the passions’] better Management, and the bringing these active and restless Promoters, or Disturbers of our Happiness, under a moral and religious Discipline.”28 What’s more, just as with Davidson’s resilience training, the majority of Watt’s rules for properly moderating the passions consist of active rationalization exercises. In cases of unreasonable fear, he recommends that a sufferer “[t]hink how many needless Fears you have had in Time past, and tormented yourself with them; groundless Fears where there was no Danger, Fears of Things that never came to pass.” Though he didn’t know it, Watts was teaching his readers to strengthen the neural network of emotion/cognition symbiosis.29

More to my purpose, though, is the fact that the dominant narrative of modern emotion’s active-passivity has been one of regulatory checks and a balances through a regime of what Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse have termed “affective normativity,” and even a cursory survey of the eighteenth-century texts that touch the subject will reveal a predominantly didactic response to the affective instability that comes along with accepting the natural violence of our passions as natural.30

So, it is not by coincidence that I have opened with The Spectator, for it is a project that, as Alan McKenzie notes, sought to teach readers how to best bring their erstwhile unruly
passions into polite company.\textsuperscript{31} And it is important to note the normative approach of no. 408. Instead of the promised inquiry into the processes of human nature, the essay arrives at a fairly pat end-around passion’s irregularities:

In the same Manner is the Mind assisted or endangered by the Passions; Reason must then take the Place of Pilot, and can never fail of securing her Charge if she be not wanting to her self: The Strength of the Passions will never be accepted as an Excuse for complying with them; they were designed for Subjection, and if a Man suffers them to get the upper Hand, he then betrays the Liberty of his own Soul. (524)

The essay’s conclusive thesis takes a distinctly Lockean position on personal responsibility with regard to the passions, what Peter Schouls calls a passion for self-mastery, and, in doing so, it makes clear that its purpose is not minute investigation after all, but rather a normative injunction of self-control in the face of passion’s potentially dangerous impulses.\textsuperscript{32}

No. 408’s avoidance, however, draws the problematic of my present study more clearly into view. Because of the internalizing move that attends the shift from passive to active constructions of emotion, classically disruptive forces (still as present and perturbatious as ever) now reside within the modern mind in a way that makes “modern passion” (in terms of a fully active, fully cognitive feature of the rational, responsible subject) an unapproachable proposition. The most common approach is a tangential one where acute attention to affective intensity, in its own right, is eschewed in favor of more practical applications for dealing with it or, at least, keeping it at bay; as such, eighteenth-century affective normativity takes measures similar to present day resilience training as a method of applying the rational powers of the ‘thinking brain’ to abate and direct the impulses of the ‘feeling brain.’

An overlooked consideration of eighteenth-century passions discourse, however, is the extent to which it inquired after the value of emotional intensity itself, and it is this self-conscious discursive split (between normative control on one end and inquisitive appreciation on the other) that serves as a starting point for this dissertation. In chapter one, “Uneasy Passions:
The Spectator’s Divergent Interpretations of Locke’s Theory of Emotion,” I begin by challenging the primacy of Schouls’ master-passion theory of Lockean personal responsibility. Not to dismiss it, but to show that it runs parallel to a conflicting vein of thought on the passions that is equally important to the epistemology of An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Locke’s Essay, I argue, allows for competing interpretations of the nature and function of the passions because Locke himself does not reconcile the passive and active conceptual frameworks that he espouses at different points in the text.

Within and against those normative discursive structures, then, we can also find more exploratory, more inquisitive attempts in texts that ask the question of what, precisely, transpires in the mind’s processing of passive impulses and active responses. As Jonathan Kramnck points out in his discussion of Molyneux’s influence on John Locke’s second edition of An Essay, philosophy often forgets that the most critical component of knowing what emotion is, is knowing what it feels like to be affected. And this is where the plot of my own story thickens, for what it feels like to have particular emotional experiences cannot ever be adequately named by the conceptual labels that we use to denote those feelings, as such. We see this in chapter three when Richardson’s Pamela struggles to reconcile her particular feeling of “my gratitude” to the broader categorical determination of “gratitude.” For there is ever a separation between feeling and knowing, and this is, in part, owed to language’s incapacity for capturing intensity. Here, I tap into the oft-discussed “inexpressibility trope” that is heavily employed in sentimental fiction but ubiquitous throughout novels of the period. My concern with the aesthetic of inexpressibility lies not in the assumption of extra-linguistic communication, either between characters within texts or in the “overt or covert assertion that the proper…well-trained reader…will understand without words” what is meant when narrators succumb to passion’s
Instead, I take those moments of caesura at face value, as expressions that touch the point of disconnect that inheres within subjective experience and which emotional extremity magnifies to the point of awareness. In his interrogation of the relation between sense and meaning, Gilles Deleuze puts sense in the position of a radically contingent space that rides on the knife’s edge between the inputs (perceptions) and outputs (cognitions) of experiential knowledge, for “[s]ense is never only one of the two terms of the duality which contrasts things and propositions; … it is also the frontier, the cutting edge, or the articulation of the difference between the two terms.”

Sense, or a sense of what it feels like to have an emotion, is itself a negotiation between the passivity of particular feels and our active determinations of them—the name of the feeling called “love” is not the feeling itself. So, if a classical conceptual framework understands emotion and action to be locked in immediate synonymity, the passive-active relation of passion’s becoming modern reflects various states of coming to terms with the undoing of that immediacy. Indeed, that is a major premise for chapter two, which explores how active and passive constructs of emotion inform the subjective consistency of three of Eliza Haywood’s protagonists. While her earlier works of amatory fiction assume a tight bond between the feels of intensity and the knowledge of emotion, the certainty of that connection is complicated in later texts, those that transition away from classically informed models to modernizing ones.

As such, this dissertation is primarily concerned with an exploratory mode of introspection that we find in the minutely detailed narrative aesthetic of long-form prose fiction. While it is, perhaps, most clearly expressed in Richardson’s epistolary style of “writing to the moment” of a character’s emotional stress, the aesthetic I seek is not exclusive to novels, and it is certainly not the province of “The Novel” as a unifying category. Yet, novel forms do seem to
offer an opportune venue for testing the nature of subjective experience, and they do so “as the individual’s immediate sensory and affective experience becomes the basis for a new empiricist epistemology.”36 The aesthetic mode of introspection and “the self-reflexive effect by which…narrative incorporates, as its subject matter, the process of its own production and consumption,” is the predominant focus of this study because I am concerned with the knack that the literary has for highlighting what tends to lurk in the shadows of more “practical” discourses. Neither the prescriptions of eighteenth-century passions doctrines nor the MRI data of twenty-first century neuroscience can supply us with a sense of what it feels like to experience passions, as such—that remains a peculiar province of fiction.

In her work on the georgic inheritance of British Romantic poetry, Kevis Goodman places great emphasis on the forms of intensity that are inherent to, if not always explicitly evident in, literary production:

Poetry invested in the georgic mode obsessively tests its mediating power, and even when it attempts to narrate or otherwise contain history, something else—an affective residue—will out. I am interested in these moments of excess and dissonance as records of an otherwise unknowable history. … [P]art of the challenge is to find a way to give rigor to processes whose resistance to clear apperception is part of my very subject.37

I offer Goodman’s account of her methodology because it marks an affinity between her approach and my own (we share a common concern for that which is ‘unknowable’ yet nonetheless expressed) and because it highlights the difference between the novel aesthetic I explore and the poetic mediation of history that she contemplates. This is not to say that poetry is incapable of doing so but, rather, that the novel as “that most popular and complex laboratory of sensibility in action” provides a unique space for interrogating affective residue as narrative content by “internaliz[ing] the experience of empirical truth and [embodying] that truth in writing.”38 In the cases of Haywood’s amatory, Richardson’s epistolary, and Cleland’s pornographic aesthetics, they all, to varying extents, explicitly attempt to express that part of
experience that resists expression, and they do so, as Steele’s *Spectator* no. 520 suggests, at a contemporary moment when language’s (in)capacity for “speak[ing] a Motion of the Soul for which there is no Name” was a matter of popular public import. Thus, I argue throughout *Novel Passions* that the moments of excess that “out” as a secondary consequence of Goodman’s georgic poesis form a central problematic of eighteenth-century novels as they test the transits of passivity and activity that are inherent to passion’s becoming modern.

Moreover, it is in this regard that I aim to revise the standard narrative of the relationship between eighteenth-century passions discourse and the earlier conceptual frameworks of emotion that it inherited. In the most comprehensive study to date of the literary history of emotion as it pertains to eighteenth-century English prose, Alan McKenzie introduces his summary of “classical analyses of the passions” with the surprisingly blunt assertion that “[t]he passions that figure so prominently in the prose of the eighteenth century had been refined by several thousand years of analysis and illustration at the hands of philosophers, theologians, and artists. The length, clarity, consistency, intricacy, and coherence that they drew from this tradition imparted force to every episode of the passions.” The “force” that McKenzie reads through eighteenth-century passions discourse is, clearly and unproblematically, one of classical import, and the comma in McKenzie’s title—*Certain, Lively Episodes*—is critical to the interpretation he offers. The agitational impulses that so thoroughly occupy the minds and pens of eighteenth-century writers are attended by an assumption of *certainty* (of feeling and of knowing) that comes from having been ‘perfected’ over the course of their journey through the history of philosophy and arriving, conceptually complete, at the dawn of the eighteenth century. So, for McKenzie, “[b]y 1700 the passions were better understood, better regarded, and more efficiently articulated than ever before.”
Geoffrey Sill makes, more or less, the same limiting assumption of the passions in his attempt to posit stable conceptual knowledge of the passions as a key component of the novel’s genesis.\textsuperscript{42} In arguing that the \textit{Origins of the English Novel} are contingent upon a previously achieved \textit{Cure of the Passions}, Sill adds a literary-historical precursor to Michael McKeon’s conditions of novel production. Before we can address McKeon’s questions of truth and virtue, as indicative of “the instability of social categories in early modern England,” Sill contends, we must first appreciate the importance of “a third category of instability that was of equal importance…in the eighteenth century: the question of passion, which resulted from the uncertainty of the age over the nature, function, and uses of mankind’s irrational, individualistic self.”\textsuperscript{43}

However, Sill seems to set up passion’s “uncertainty” as not much more than a straw man to be readily taken down by the rising novel’s rhetorical aesthetic. For he pegs the passions as a conceptual constant that “came more or less fully formed to the hand of the eighteenth-century novelist, who found in it both a proven formal element capable of resolving the story and a link to a classical heritage for a genre with a questionable pedigree.”\textsuperscript{44} This, in turn, severely limits the theoretical compass of movement for the novel, wherein the genre itself emerges as a finely-tuned answer to a historically defunct question. Passion’s instability, in this light, is figured as an impediment that the novel must overcome as a precondition of its genesis, first tamed by Defoe and all but vanquished by Richardson. Because he reads eighteenth-century passions discourse exclusively in terms of its neo-stoic applications and normative “therapy of desire,” Sill addresses only one dimension of what proves to be a much more complex historico-theoretical \textit{milieu}.\textsuperscript{45} As such, Sill’s argument is insufficiently sensitive to the extreme volatility of the passions during the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{46}
In her introduction to a recent comprehensive study of emotions vocabulary in reference works from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, Ute Frevert explains the main challenge of that work to be “determining the place that emotions generally commanded in European societies that have, since the eighteenth century, been subject to rapid and radical change.”

Amy Schmitter’s work in the history of philosophy points to a frustratingly fascinating paradox of eighteenth-century passions discourse: it was at once of paramount importance to contemporary accounts of human understanding while, at the same time, usage and connotation varied significantly from user to user, thus the need to recreate a “taxonomy and terminology” from the variegated sources in the historical record. For “[r]ather than shoehorning their accounts into old classifications, authors of the period invented new categories, yoked terminology from other areas to discussions of the passions, and developed concepts that had been no more than embryonic in the thought of their predecessors.”

It seems that a critical approach to the eighteenth-century literary history of emotion should account for the fact that the conceptual framework of emotion was splintering rather than solidifying during the period.

Therefore, the analyses to be found in Novel Passions implicitly run counter to Sill’s assignation of the origins of the English novel to its role of extirpating the passions. I say implicitly because I do not intend here to make any definitive claims to what The Novel is or from whence it came. While I am absolutely concerned with a set of aesthetic characteristics that seem to out more generously within commonly understood context of the novel’s rise, my primary focus is on analyzing what texts perform in response to Sill’s question of passion rather than defining what they are on those grounds. It is precisely because such performances are more than merely curative that they give us insight into, and make their own theoretical claims upon,
the nature of emotional experience at a moment when the epistemological certainty of classical passions was on the wane and the novel was on the rise.

In this regard, the most theoretically salient contributions of the texts I address in this dissertation come not in their ability to answer the nagging questions posed by the radically particular ‘feels’ of love or sorrow, for instance, but in the problematic resonances that occur when they attempt to do so—that is, when formal-realistic aesthetics assay a translation of affect into prose.

By addressing this problematic as one of aesthetic flux rather than formal rigidity, owing in part to the period’s liminal position on the transitory border between two ever evolving conceptual frameworks of emotion, I hope to reopen a conversation that McKenzie and Sill seek to close when they mark the year 1700 as a clearly defined limit of passion’s classical import. As such, Novel Passions supplies much needed attention to a surprisingly overlooked aspect of an expanding research field.49 For while literary scholars, particularly from cultural studies perspectives, have been major contributors to the interdisciplinary nexus of what we might now call “history of emotion studies,” the literary history of emotion has yet to be told, as I tell it here, in terms of the eighteenth-century novel’s theorization of passion’s passivity and activity. Adela Pinch’s seminal Strange Fits of Passion, for instance, was groundbreaking in asserting that eighteenth-century aesthetic explorations of emotion are also simultaneously “exploring the limits of an empiricist approach to the mind,” but her work starts with Hume and, thus, avoids a wide swath of the ongoing historical argument regarding the active / passive implications of affective experience.50 By beginning from the premise of Hume’s inherently active-passive theory of emotion, where “the force of gravity is truly inseparable from the force of sympathy,” Pinch’s work of connecting “an empiricist theory of knowledge and the waywardness of feelings
in late eighteenth- [and early nineteenth-] century writing” sets the stage after the fact for the literary-historical premise of this dissertation, which begins with Locke’s own active / passive paradox.51 Recent studies of early-modern culture and the history of emotion have been more acutely aware of the passive and active constructs of emotion that Susan James first charted, but they all stop at roughly the same boundary mark of 1699.52 It is in the historical space between these two accounts, comprising roughly the first half of the eighteenth-century, that I take up my own work.

Here is, perhaps, a good place to offer a note on the literary and historical “historicity” of Novel Passions. It should already be evident that the spirit of this work implies a fluid understanding of periodization, one that follows conceptual arcs and resonances more than the epochal connotations that divide “classical” from “modern.” In fact, as Ted Underwood has recently pointed out, the “larger…historical insight we call ‘historicism’ [which entails] a recognition that different ages were separated by profoundly different, perhaps mutually incomprehensible, modes of life and thought” is itself an invention of the Enlightenment.53 Even as I use the terms to mark commonly understood inflections of an ancient / modern divide, the modernizing subjective relationship to the passions that I’m describing here is not to be conceived as a positive antidote to the classical negation. The approach I take to the history of emotion, then, is akin to Foucault’s response, in The History of Sexuality, to the problematic of an ever-fragmented multiplicity of potential resistances to power:

Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds.54

So too, the close readings that I undertake in this dissertation reveal evidence of a hotly contested debate regarding the plausibility of both passive and active constructions.
Along with a fluid conception of historical influence comes what we might describe as a provisional approach to genre, especially with regard to the distinction between “romance” and “novel” that figures in all three chapters dealing with novelists. Since my intent is not to establish genre classifications I do not attempt to define “the novel” either in contradistinction to or as a form of “romance.” At the same time, I do use the aesthetic characteristics of romance (and its connotations of the classical model of passion) to illustrate a conceptual boundary that eighteenth-century novelists negotiated. I also add the literary subgenre that scholars recognize as “amatory fiction” to the conversation.55 This confluence of literary forms is most evident in the work of Eliza Haywood—wherein a shifting theoretical model of emotion (from passive to active-passive) also seems to coincide with a move away from romance inspired amatory narratives like Love in Excess (1719) toward more didactic works like The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless (1751)—but it is equally at play in the comparison of John Cleland’s sexually explicit Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (1748) to his more socially acceptable Memoirs of a Coxcomb (1751). The romance genre generally relies heavily on passivity tropes, so when those tropes are employed in eighteenth-century works of fiction (whether they be amatory, pornographic, or epistolary) they borrow the theoretical concept along with the aesthetic convention. The novel’s relation to romance is certainly a well-wrought area of literary scholarship, one from which I borrow in describing the formal elements that are apropos to my own argument, but I only touch the subject tangentially because it serves as an analogical example rather than a central tenet of my thesis.56

Finally, this dissertation has consequences for other areas of literary criticism that I want to acknowledge here because such implications are not addressed explicitly elsewhere in my work. They lie under two heads: Temporality and Sensibility. In each case, I will make some
provisional attempts at describing the potential points of intersection; on the whole however, in
the interest of curtailting its scope to the eighteenth-century literary history of emotion, I have
allowed the problems of temporality and sensibility to remain on the periphery of this project.

The first consequence again touches on the historicity of the novel and, more specifically
on its role in the evolution of national and cultural identity over the course of the eighteenth
century. Benedict Anderson, for instance, has famously posited the novel, alongside the
newspaper, as a key print culture innovation that helped inaugurate the modern nation as “an
imagined political community.” He argues, through a Benjaminian conceit, that novels helped
disparate groups of people imagine themselves as part of a larger “sociological organism moving
calendrically through homogeneous, empty time.” They did so through regulated time signatures
and tying many threads into a single linear narrative. “Meanwhile” becomes a signature device
as the novel accounts for the actions of all its individual characters who share the same time
while in disparate locations. The theoretical focus of *Novel Passions* implicitly calls into
question a unified literary complicity in the nationalizing project that Anderson describes. While
it does not make sense to quarrel with his broader claims to the novel as a device for mediating
temporality, points of resistance do emerge when we look carefully at fictional performances of
emotional extremity. This is, in part, because the literary history of emotion inherently
problematizes experiences of time by interrogating the relay between passive impulse and active
response and by asking: what occurs in the micro-temporal space that neuroscientists now call
“affective chronometry?” Provisionally, we might say that “the structure of emotion” itself
contains within it an eventness that threatens homogeneous, empty time; “we live forwards,” to
quote William James, “but we understand backwards” and affective intensity makes evident that
experience itself occurs in the fluctuating interplay between perception and understanding,
feeling and knowing. The inexpressibility tropes that figure in each of the chapters of this dissertation can also be read as theorizations of temporality as event: as “a rolling of subjective and objective elements into a mutual participation co-defining the same dynamic.”

The second consequence, that of sensibility, has to do with the fact that all the texts addressed herein could be designated as “sensibility narratives” such that they foreground “excessive emotional response,” and my readings of them allude to points of contact with well-established political critiques of sensibility. Such arguments hinge on a paradox of sentimental texts that Ann Jessie Van Sant highlights by noting that their “prolonged fusion of investigation and the creation of pathos is made possible by the double nature of gazing on a suffering sensibility.” Certainly, Steele’s suggestion that engaging with and appreciating personal sorrow allows one to “pass through Afflictions in common with all who are in humane Nature” also invites the critique that sentimental valorizations of individual feeling produce their own fetishized and fetishizing “others.” Yet, when we approach these texts from the vantage of their role in the history of emotion, and thus as points of resonance with contemporary affect theory, we must also ask: what else do they offer beyond a glimpse at modernity’s problematic of inevitably coproduced opposites? Provisionally, I would venture to say that they also provide spaces for witnessing an interruption of that inevitable process of coproduction. The difficulty to be found in those spaces does not result in the de-personalization of emotion but rather in a ‘hyper-experiential’ consequence of personal feelings, where characters come to grips with the fact that emotion is experienced at the cutting edge that separates feelings from expressions.

What it feels like within a single body, a single mind to witness a circumstantial set of events that elicit an emotional response tells us quite a bit about how the intensity of affect problematizes modernity’s smooth systematization of experience. Thus, the aesthetic
examinations of personal feelings that concern me in this dissertation are akin to what Branka Arsić has called, in a different context, “literalizations”—access points to the aconceptual features of experience that Locke formulates as “Sensation barely in it self.” In this way literalization, as the expression of an intensity so vivid that it holds interiority and exteriority in play simultaneously, touches upon the problem of realism that I address in chapter three. Because the narrative of Richardson’s *Pamela* hinges on the protagonist’s writing to the moment of her most extreme psychological distress, it’s realism is tied to the assumption that affective intensity is both objectively unverifiable and, nonetheless, real. Margaret Doody’s seminal study of emotion in Richardson’s work emphasizes my point about the intersection of politics and theory in the affective. She puts Richardson on par with the great empirical philosophers of his time because, as they did, he turned the light of observation inward to find “flux rather than stability, and an exterior world not merely reflected in the mind but actually created by the knower rather than the known.” As a result, aesthetic explorations that take affective intensity at face value materialize, because they make manifest, that which is unavailable to empirical observation; in Richardson’s fiction, as in all the works I exemplify in this study, “the experience of passion…is presented as full emotional experience, as something that matters.”

Thus, I argue in this dissertation that investigations of passion’s intensity are taken up in prose fiction as unfinished business of the early-modern transitioning from passivity to activity charted by Susan James. In negotiating *Novel Passions* (passions both historically new and newly articulated in novels) the texts I address manifest an ebb and flow wherein active and passive constructions hold sway to varying degrees and to, perhaps, surprising effects.

Chapter 1: “Uneasy Passions: The Spectator’s Divergent Interpretations of Locke’s Theory of Emotion” forms the project’s theoretical framework by exposing a contradiction in
John Locke’s approach to the passions in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, for that text leaves open the possibility for both modern and classical interpretations. Through close readings of Addison and Steele’s *Spectator* essays on jealousy, envy and grief, it demonstrates the extent to which competing interpretations of Locke’s *Essay* were current in popular discourse. This chapter revises current views on Locke’s importance to the history of emotion and challenges the extent to which *The Spectator* supports a dominant reading of eighteenth-century literature as reiterating a ready-made classical model.

Chapter 2: “Eliza Haywood and the Novel’s Progress through the Passions” continues the first chapter’s query into aesthetic negotiations of passion’s classical/modern dialectic by tracing a theoretical change in the presentation of love across Haywood’s *oeuvre*. The classical conception of love as Eros holds sway in her earliest amatory fiction, while her later novels portray love as a feeling derived from the interplay between one’s heart and mind. In close analysis of *The Rash Resolve* as a text that signals Haywood’s progression, this chapter also sheds new light on her critique of the sexual politics of desire that is inherent to eighteenth-century marriage practices.

Chapter 3: “Negotiating the Passions, Narrating Intensity: Pamela’s (In)voluntary Love” goes one step beyond Haywood’s subversive didacticism by asking “what is love?” in the first place. Pamela’s minute inquiry reveals love to be the belated, rational determination of an “involuntary” thing. The description of (in)voluntary love vacillates at the threshold between classical and modern subjective experience. In holding the contradiction, Pamela’s detailed portrayal of the irreducibility of felt experience to reasoned knowledge calls attention to a fault in the logic of empiricist epistemology. In this case, invocations of passion exacerbate, rather than smooth over, the uncertainties inherent to newly-modern experience.
Chapter 4: “The Odds of Comparison’: John Cleland and the Modern Romance of Fanny Hill” follows the career of one of the most infamous writers of eighteenth-century English fiction and author of Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure, better known as Fanny Hill. In so doing, it shows how attention to the history of emotion can revise literary history. For when we take seriously Fanny’s concluding “tail-piece of morality,” that true love is the driving force of her story, two assertions emerge. First, Cleland’s work does not fully endorse the materialist reading that has been thrust upon it by most critics, for Memoirs actually critiques, by way of parody, the soulless “man as machine” theory it seems to emulate. Second, the extravagance of Fanny’s multifarious erotic experiences actually serves as an empirical premise for testing the difference between true love and something like it. As a point of reference for this argument, I work backward from Cleland’s later works of amatory fiction to capture the ecstatic virtue that underwrites the best known work of English pornographic literature.

1 No. 408 had long been attributed to Pope for its close connection with ideas presented in his Essay on Man. Posthumous editors of both the works of Pope and The Spectator have identified him as the author. Bond disputes the attribution to Pope; see “Pope's Contributions to the Spectator” Modern Language Quarterly 5, no. 1 (1944): 69-78. Whether or not Pope authored the text is largely irrelevant to my point here, which turns on the prevalence of the idea that human nature and passion were interrelated concepts in the eighteenth-century.


3 Here The Spectator anticipates David Hume, who claims, in his introduction to the Treatise, that “[e]ven Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, are in some measure dependent on the science of MAN; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged by their powers and faculties” A Treatise of Human Nature, 2nd ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), xv.


It is, perhaps, worth pointing out the close affinity in this phrasing to Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1733-34) “On life's vast ocean diversely we sail, / Reason the card, but passion is the gale;” (Epistle 2, Part 3, lines 15-16), if not to lay claim to Pope’s authorship of the *Spectator* essay then at least to note the ubiquity of this analogy in eighteenth-century discourse.


Scott Paul Gordon, *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature, 1640-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8, emphasis in original. Gordon’s book runs the import of the classical/passive construction through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in arguing that Enlightenment discourses of “disinterestedness” hinge on a notion of passivity as describing behavior that is not motivated in the interest of personal gain. Thus, adherents to such disinterestedness “locate the source of crucial [moral] behaviors not in the individual will but elsewhere—sometimes in another individual, usually in external nature or in God—and thus depict the agent as more passively prompted than actively choosing, more ‘acted by another’ than acting freely” (5).


Of course, “anger,” which he deemed to have no opposite, is the most obvious outlier, but even without a contrary, anger is still held as having a unique signature that distinguishes it from the rest. For extensive commentary on the Thomist model of emotion see R.C. Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Suman Theologiae 1a2ae 22-48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and N.E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011).
being in control of our destiny, it is the passion of being ruled only by desires of which our reason has approved”

natural passions”—the master passion is a passion for self-mastery: “Since the master passion is the passion for analysis, he derives a Lockean concept of a cultivated “master passion” that is acquired from one’s experience of

AMS Press, 2007), 11.

49 Indeed, over the last ten years, the “history of emotion” has gone from an aspect of the broader history of ideas to a full-blown interdisciplinary field of study in its own right. Sarah McNamer notes that “[s]ince 2008, three major

30 Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tenennhouse, “A Mind for Passion: Locke and Hutcheson on Desire,” in Politics and the Passions: 1500-1850 ed. Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamono, and Daniela Coli (Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), 144. In addition to Watts’ aforementioned Doctrine, an ECCO title search for “the passions” turns up such results as John Armstrong’s The Art of Preserving Health (Dublin, 1765), Daniel Defoe’s The Family Instructor (London, 1720), William Ayliffe’s The Government of the Passions, according to the rules of reason and religion (London, 1704), Philip Hodgson’s “A Poem on the Government of the Passions” (Newcastle, 1775), and Francis Bragge’s A Practical Treatise of the Regulation of the Passions (London, 1708).


32 Peter Schouls, Reasoned Freedom (Ithaca, NY, 1992), especially pgs 106-114 & 160-175. Throughout Schouls’ analysis, he derives a Lockean concept of a cultivated “master passion” that is acquired from one’s experience of “natural passions”—the master passion is a passion for self-mastery: “Since the master passion is the passion for being in control of our destiny, it is the passion of being ruled only by desires of which our reason has approved” (109).


39 The Spectator, IV: 351.

40 Alan McKenzie, Certain, Lively Episodes, 24.

41 Certain, Lively Episodes, 55.


44 The Cure of the Passions, 9.

45 The Cure of the Passions, 23.

46 Thomas Dixon’s From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), for instance, identifies what he calls the “basic historical puzzle” peculiar to English-language passions discourse, “that during the period between c.1800 and c.1850 a wholesale change in established vocabulary occurred such that those engaged in theoretical discussions about phenomena including hope, fear, love, hate, joy, sorrow, anger and the like no longer primarily discussed the passions or affections of the soul, nor the sentiments, but almost invariably referred to ‘the emotions’ (4). Amy Schmitter’s “Passions, Affections, Sentiments: Taxonomy and Terminology” in The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century, ed. James Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 197-225, specifically addresses the network of emotions words employed throughout the eighteenth-century in a way that emphasizes it as a period of flux in the history of emotions. Most recently, Ute Frevert et al., Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), have pushed the study of the historical fluctuation that began with the transition from “passions” to “emotions” in the eighteenth century through to the twenty first, through the exploration of reference works intended for a general audience.


48 “Passions, Affections, Sentiments,” 198.

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research centers have been founded, in Berlin, London, and Australia, to foster international collaboration in the field, each generating lively exchanges through colloquia, visiting fellowships, and seminars. Publications have issued apace; indeed, the early months of 2014 alone witnessed the founding of three new history-of-emotions book series. And we can add to that the emergence of three interdisciplinary and scientific peer-reviewed journals dedicated to the study of emotion in the fields of neuroscience, humanities, and education/social psychology as well as special editions of long established journals such as the PMLA special topic on “Emotions” (October 2015), of which McName’s article is a part.


51 Strange Fits of Passion, 44, 6.

52 The early-modern scholarship to which I refer is well represented in two recent edited volumes: Paster, Rowe and Floyd-Wilson’s Reading the Early Modern Passions and Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis’ Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture. Notably, A History of Emotions, 1200-1800, ed. Jonas Liliequist (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012) does carry through to the cusp of the nineteenth century, but none of the authors in that collection push the passive/active, early/modern boundary that concerns me here. The same can be said of the literary-historical breadth of Spaces for Feeling, Emotions and Sociabilities in Britain, 1650-1850 ed. Susan Broomhall (New York: Routledge, 2015).


58 Imagined Communities, 24.

59 See, for instance, the special section of Emotion Review on Affective Dynamics and Davidson’s prefatory article therein, “Comment: Affective Chronometry Has Come of Age” Emotion Review 7.4 (2015), 368-370.


63 Spectator no. 520, IV:352. Here I take seriously Lilley’s assertion that “it is never enough for [the sentimental] self to emote and to feel in isolation: in order to register its essential humanity, this self must disclose itself, must direct its interiority outward, must cry public tears that somehow materialize and bear witness to its private core” (Common Things, 52).

64 Brian Massumi’s work perhaps most clearly admits of the connection between eighteenth-century passions discourse and affect theory, for he engages affect as an intensity of experience that bears witness to the potentiality from which emotions precipitate. It is only when we qualify them that affective intensities become emotional content, expressible because approximated by the familiar terms of joy, sorrow, love, hate, anger, despair, etc. Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).


*A Natural Passion*, 19.
Chapter One
Uneasy Passions: The Spectator’s Divergent Interpretations of Locke’s Theory of Emotion

Our story of how eighteenth-century novelists inherited, interpreted, and incorporated earlier models of emotion into new generic formulations of affective experience begins in a seemingly obvious place. Indeed, John Locke’s An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) provides a pivotal example of how empiricist epistemology influences both the vocabulary and the logic that eighteenth-century writers employ in describing the nature and function of emotion. However, Locke is not merely a convenient or obligatory point of entry for our investigation, for unlike Descartes before him or Hume after, Locke dedicates very little space to discussions of the passions, as such.¹ Instead, he uses the experience of emotion as an \textit{ad hoc} example, as a peculiar case for modeling the process of how the mind works under extreme circumstances. In this regard, it is important to be explicit in clarifying Locke’s contribution to the history of emotion when he formulates the passions in terms of the uneasiness that motivates some actions and the delight that mollifies others.

To take a brief example by way of introduction, the passions crop up in an unusual way during Locke’s discussion of liberty, necessity, and the will. He wants to draw a line between actions that we must take because we are not at liberty to do otherwise (like when one falls from a bridge after it gives way under him) and actions that we choose to take because we have the power to start or stop them at will (like when one decides to set out across a bridge). Ultimately, he concludes that liberty and will are categorically different concepts—liberty represents a set of circumstantial conditions that delimit the potential for action and will is the active power of the mind to prefer one action over another and to direct the body in that direction. Locke asserts that it is unreasonable to ask “\textit{Whether Man’s Will be free, or no.} For if I mistake not, it follows …
that the Question it self is altogether improper; and it is as insignificant to ask, whether Man’s Will be free, as to ask, whether his Sleep be Swift, or his Vertue square.”2 The logical water he treads is not always crystal clear throughout his long discussion of the motivations of human action, but the distinction he makes between liberty (the real potential for acting or thinking, or not, in certain ways) and will (the power to wish to act or think, or not, in certain ways) remains relatively sound. That is, until he introduces the passions as exemplary of the mind’s power over its own thoughts. We are at liberty to act according to our passions as long as it remains within our physical capability to do so. However, whether or not we have the power to will ourselves to refrain from acting in such a way is a thornier question; one on which An Essay equivocates quite a bit.

On the one hand, Locke’s official position seems definitive. He implores his readers not to “let any one say, he cannot govern his Passions, nor hinder them from breaking out, and carrying him into action; for what he can do before a Prince, or a great Man, he can do alone, or in the presence of God, if he will” (II.XXI.53). On the other hand, ahead of that conclusion lies a curious interplay between classical passion’s involuntary connotations and the modern mind’s power to keep unruly emotions from taking control of human action:

[S]ometimes a boisterous Passion hurries our Thoughts, as a Hurricane does our Bodies, without leaving us the liberty of thinking on other things, which we would rather chuse. But as soon as the Mind regains the power to stop or continue, begin or forbear any of these motions of the Body without, or Thoughts within, according as it thinks fit to preferr [sic] either to the other, we then consider the Man as a free Agent again. (II.XXI.12)

While Locke clearly wants to establish the claim that self-mastery over emotional disturbances is not just possible but necessary for a life of free, rational thought and action, he also carves out a space of exemption for emotion within the rational logic of empirical epistemology. And it is in that space where, if only for a fleeting moment, one’s capacity to be affected has full possession of the mind’s thoughts. Whether or not one eventually regains control is less to my point here
than the observation that Locke’s description of passion retains something of its classical, irrational, unstable, forcefulness. In the sequence above, “we” (following Locke’s generic use of the pronoun) possess, lose, and regain the power of agency in the course of experiencing an emotion.

Locke’s waffling position on the voluntary nature of passion-motivated action is as important for the chapter at hand as it is for Novel Passions at large, for his minute appreciation of the uneasiness that passions manifest in otherwise rational, autonomous free agents, also calls our attention to a unique aspect of experience that lies outside of his arguments about will, necessity, and motivation; namely, what it feels like in those moments when the mind’s power to direct our actions is in doubt. For those feelings, too, must be part and parcel of the empirical data of human understanding. If Locke skirts the question of how to account for the intensity of feeling, the eighteenth-century writers of popular prose who inherit his ideas certainly will not.

What’s more, I argue that when they explore passion’s intensity they ask readers to consider not only the value to be found in “the moderation and restraint of our Passions” but also whether there is not, on certain occasions, something to be gained by allowing one’s affective capacity to run to excess (II.xxi.53). The contemporary discourse of the passions that I will explore forms something of a problematic around classical and modern interpretations of affective experience. In this chapter, I will put essays by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in conversation with each other as I read The Spectator (1711-1712) as a fluid investigation of the problematic of passion’s becoming modern.

Locke’s influence on The Spectator’s treatments of the passions is palpable. Both Addison and Steele agree that emotions are controllable feelings; they differ, however, on the question of whether or not one ought always to control them. These differences are the result of
separate theoretical interpretations of the “uneasiness” at the center of Locke’s model of the passions. Uneasiness in *An Essay* is best described as the psychological discomfort associated with physical pain; it is also the disturbance that motivates people to act. Along with delight (its pleasant counterpart), uneasiness is the key to understanding how passions work in the Lockean model of mind. Addison takes a conservative interpretive line, and his conceptualization is in keeping with what Peter Schouls identifies as the moral backbone of Lockean passions: namely, they exist to drive one toward the “moral Truths” exposed by rational reflection (IV.iii.20). It also coincides with Alan McKenzie’s assertion that *The Spectator*’s mission was to teach readers how to train their passions so as to better bring them into company. Addison treats the passions as if their uneasy feelings are encoded communications from God that only need to be judged correctly. By contrast, Steele’s interpretation of the uneasy nature of emotional experience turns on a more skeptical reading of Lockean empiricism, and his essays on envy and grief expose the indeterminacy that resides at the heart of a modern epistemological model of the passions. Thus, my argument operates on the assumption that within the normative eighteenth-century view of the passions as a controllable, if enigmatic, conduit to psychological self-mastery there lies a necessary kernel of affective susceptibility, a capacity for being moved by our feelings that has value, in and of itself. In essence, Addison’s essays downplay the affective implications of modern emotional experience while Steele’s essays accentuate them. Before going further, however, it is important to situate this argument within the philosophical history of “the passions,” for when Locke, Addison, and Steele take up the question of emotion, they do so fully aware of the long line of Western thought preceding them.6

**THE HISTORY OF MODERN PASSIONS: FROM “DISEASE” TO “UNEASINESS”**
Describing conceptual shifts across history in terms of binaries is always risky, especially when those concepts are loosely analogous to either side of the ancient/modern divide. I run that risk here, in part, because the passions have always invited binary comparison—Plato posited passion as an oppositional force to reason, for instance. More important than historical precedent is the fact that the passions function as a special limit case. Their central trope of instability inherently maintains a fluid, permeable border between the seemingly polar oppositions that are often employed to define them. Lexicographically, “the passions” is a term of mainly classical import. Classical passions are ungovernable, external, extra-rational determinants of the human will; their source is certain, and their effects are immediate—Cupid with his quiver of arrows is their poster-boy. The modern, and our own contemporary, counterpart to “the passions” is emotion, a fully cognitive and internalized psychological concept. Susan James’ work on this subject in the field of early-modern studies has explored the shift from classical passion to modern emotion through the corollary binary of passivity and activity, wherein passivity is the capacity to be acted upon or to be changed by an agent, and activity is the capacity to be an agent, to have the power to act upon or change something else. James describes the classical relationship between a subject and his/her passions as one of passivity: we are passive with regard to our passions because they function as “forces that are at once extremely powerful and actually or potentially beyond our control. They perturb the economy of the soul and body…and in the most extreme cases can overwhelm a person so completely that they [sic] die.” James’ intervention lies in identifying early modern revisions of the relationship between passion and action as indicative of the development of modern subjectivity. The modernizing move comes when empirical models of epistemology begin to insist that emotional feelings are predicated upon active, cognitive functions and are, thus, somewhat within the subject’s realm of
responsibility. The most significant implication of James’ work, however, lies in her analysis of instances where the passive/active and classical/modern binaries become unstable.

Ralph Cudworth, for example, asserted that “the passion of the soul in sensation [is not] a mere naked passion or suffering; because it is a cogitation or perception which hath something of active vigor in it.”

Cudworth here puts his finger on the crux of the tradition that eighteenth-century writers will inherit. The newly modern view retains an element of passivity in the sense that objects of perception engage our capacity to be moved, but subjects can never be merely passive because the patient has some cognitive role to play in how those feelings are registered.

Through this lens early-modern thought envisioned a new model of emotion where “passion is not just something experienced passively, but that passionate experiences…contain in themselves a ratiocinative element,…that they are in themselves a form of cognition.”

Cudworth’s representation of early-modern thinking also demonstrates the fluidity of evolutionary adjustments involving constructs of emotion, for the shift from passivity to activity did not, in itself, divest the passions of their disruptive potential; it merely reconfigured an external force as an internal one. As such, when it comes to emotional experience, theoretical binaries seem to function more like negotiations.

When Locke weighs in on the passions, he creates another binary relationship by presenting their agitational component in terms of “uneasiness,” as opposed to their much more common formulation as “diseases of the mind” that one finds, for example, in Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). It is worth briefly exploring the comparison between Locke and Burton to illustrate the importance of the cautiously negotiated shift from early-modern passions-as-disease to modern passions-as-uneasiness.
Burton’s conceptualization of melancholy as disease is closely contingent on passivity, for it is a condition wherein one is subject to the whims of irrational emotions, and it is rooted in a “faulty imagination” that turns agents into patients (I:170-72). Because melancholics are ever in danger of having their reason overcome by their passions, the doctor of melancholy is pitted against ancient foes of sorrow and fear in order to save his patient from utter dissolution. Burton’s passions are figured as adversarial actors that must be held at bay. Sorrow is not a feeling but a “poisoned worm, consuming body and soul and gnawing the very heart” and fear “an assistant and a principal agent in procuring of this mischief,” a sad “monster,” and a “foul fiend” (I: 259, 261). As both symptom and cause of melancholy, there’s an overriding sense that the passions need to be remedied, rectified, or extirpated in order to cure the disease.

Burton, however, also demonstrates a curious illustration of the modernizing intersection of James’ passivity and activity. Because he posits melancholy as stemming from an irrational passion that is the result of faulty imagining, he must allow cognitive function to play a role in how passions, in general, are translated from sensation to action. If, as Angus Gowland explains, *The Anatomy* presents melancholics as “irrationally fearful and sad about things, because their rational power did not overrule their crazed fantasies,” and if it is the case that there is such a thing as a rational passion (that for which one has good reason to be affected), then the best prevention would be to strengthen one’s ability to correctly judge the difference between the two. Thus, even within Burton’s classically rooted system, passivity and activity perform overlapping conceptual functions, and this overlap is the site at which Burton’s *Anatomy* “is a bridge between medieval and modern thought.”

The same questions of passivity and activity—of compulsion, of will, and of the understanding’s role in regulating the passions—are at issue in *An Essay Concerning Human
Understanding, and while it is easy to see the ways Locke’s work functions as a corrective to that which came before, he doesn’t resolve, in one fell swoop, the classical/modern, immediate/mediate, external/internal, passive/active conflicts embedded in the epistemological tradition that his legacy would eventually upend. The subtle but important distinction is that when Locke introduces a metaphorical “uneasiness” to replace “disease” as the fundamental component of emotional experience, the tension between passivity and activity still remains even as the balance of power shifts to the active processes of rational thought.

Jonathan Kramnick has most recently addressed this conundrum of modern feelings by illustrating how the Lockean framework for explaining human motivation changed substantially between An Essay’s first and second editions. Influenced by his now-famous correspondence with William Molyneux, Locke backpedaled from his original position that knowledge of the “external verities” of good and evil is the provocation that determines the will. The revisions he made to the second edition are in response to Molyneux’s objection that experience (i.e., a feeling of what it is like to be faced with a choice of action) must factor into our desires and, thus, influence our actions upon those desires. In the 1690 edition of Book II, chapter XXI the greater good “is both a contingent estimation, subject to error, and something that lies outside of us, with lasting consequences for our happiness. In either case, the good has a causal role with respect to our actions.” Thus, Locke’s initial estimation that “the greater Good is that alone that determines the Will” effectually situates human actors in a position of passivity. The second edition reflects a distinct rethinking of his position and a shift from passive to active articulations of human action. By 1694 it is no longer the good but the mind that determines the will when we feel uneasy upon finding ourselves in an adverse relationship to some good. If in the first formulation we are moved by knowledge of good/evil itself, Locke’s “second thoughts”
amount to a repositioning wherein “mental states and attitudes have a causal role to play in a person’s activity.” This renegotiation of the function of mental states (including emotional ones) is illustrative of the provisional nature of passions at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

On the one hand, Locke poses a fundamental challenge to the paradigm of passivity. Agents are no longer held captive to their feelings because they are freed by the mind’s ability (power) to assent to or forbear acting upon the desires that uneasiness elicits. In this light, Peter Schouls is correct in arguing that the fail-safe of Lockean emotions is found in the assumption that subjects are able to “give full reign to…the ‘master passion’: a person’s passion for [self-] mastery,” and it is only when the mind is “negligently imploid,” as Locke puts it in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, that we tend to get carried away by the disease-like violence of our passions. Because Locke posits uneasiness as internal and controllable, it is foolish for anyone to say he cannot govern his passions if he wills to do so.

On the other hand, uneasiness is not an unproblematic epistemological construct. Therefore, when Locke postulates it as the key to answering the problem of the passions, he leaves emotional experience open to an indeterminacy that would have been unthinkable in a classical context. By imagining the passions to be stirred by psychological rather than (meta)physical unrest, Locke risks as much as he gains by slipping the yoke of passions as external forces. For the newly modern turn has at its core an unsettled compulsion that can only be glanced at indirectly and must be sorted out by the mind’s active reflection—that is, in retrospect. *An Essay* never resolves the conflict between uneasiness as a solution and uneasiness as a problematic, but the contradiction itself is fruitful. Classical passions were unmistakable because they were figured as immediate—in Humean terms, the classical model assumed a
necessary connection between what one felt and the emotion one attached to it.\textsuperscript{23} On the whole, Locke’s epistemological model lays waste to the construct of immediate perceptions. There are, however, places where An Essay comes down on both sides of the immediate/mediate divide, and those places, not coincidentally, are also conceptually relevant to his arguments regarding the passions.

The crux of Locke’s own cognitive dissonance lies in the question of whether the transmission of ideas through the senses is, at any level, directed by God or if all Lockean ideas come from experience alone. While Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse suggest that Locke’s argument against innate ideas also constitutes a fully executed theoretical move, “primarily intent on taking the concepts of good and evil away from God and placing them squarely in the domain of human understanding,” when it comes to the passions, this assertion goes one step too far.\textsuperscript{24} Even as Locke sets in motion a systematic secularization of emotional experience, he problematizes a wholly skeptical reading by maintaining that some qualities are woven into the fabric of sensation. In chapter VII of Book II, for instance, he attributes the immediacy of such communication to “The infinite Wise Author of our being,” who:

\begin{quote}
having given us…a power to our minds in several Instances, to chuse amongst its Ideas, which it will think on, and to pursue the enquiry of this or that Subject with consideration and attention, to excite us to these Actions of thinking and motion, that we are capable of, has been pleased to join to several Thoughts, and several Sensations, a perception of Delight.
\end{quote}

(II.VII.3)

Locke begins from a premise of activity, wherein it is within the power of the mind to choose which of the ideas it will pursue and which it will eschew. As such, the mind judges on its own how to act in relation to the things that move our passions (i.e., objects of sensation). But the power to choose is ultimately preempted by the pleasure of the Deity, who has made sure to hardwire the relationship between “several Sensations” and our perceptions of pleasure/delight and pain/uneasiness. Thus, the active powers of the mind are underwritten (at least in some
instances) by a passive foundation, a deistic fail-safe buried within his empiricist approach to emotional feelings. Certain things must give us pleasure and others must produce pain in order for the system to work without either completely abandoning or wholly resorting to the premise of the first edition—the assumption that our wills are determined by a quasi-innate appreciation for the eternal truths of good and evil.²⁵ Locke splits the difference in the second edition by maintaining the existence of unquestioned good and evil while asserting that only in a select (but unidentified) set of objects is the relationship immediate, and it is on this account that it has “pleased our Wise Creator,”

to annex to several Objects, and to the Ideas which we receive from them, as also to several of our Thoughts, a concomitant pleasure, and that in several Objects, to several degrees, that those Faculties which he had endowed us with, might not remain wholly idle, and unemploy’d by us. (II.vii.3)

Notice that the pleasure of the deity and one’s own pleasure are locked together in a chain of concomitancy from objects, to ideas, to thoughts. The wise creator has endowed objects with his/her pleasure and agents with faculties to discern that pleasure correctly and to act accordingly. Moreover, “Pain has the same efficacy and use to set us on work, that Pleasure has, we being as ready to employ our Faculties to avoid that, as to pursue this” (II.vii.4). This is significant because Locke identifies an explicit relationship between pleasure and pain, good and evil, and the passions, for “Pleasure and Pain, and that which causes them, Good and Evil, are the hinges on which our Passions turn” (II.xx.3). On these grounds, one could make the case for an undergirding organization of the feelings of joy and sorrow because God has given us faculties for correctly judging the good/evil and pleasure/pain inherent in objects. This would be plain if Locke used pleasure/pain and good/evil as the only measures for our ideas of the passions, but he adds a level of abstraction by introducing “uneasiness” and “delight” as loosely analogous to pain and pleasure, respectively.
Prior to describing the motivations of the will and causes of human action in chapter XXI, Locke sets aside five pages for a discussion “Of Modes of Pleasure and Pain” (Book II, chapter XX), the intent of which is to explain how simple ideas coalesce to form complex ones, through a process of sensation, reflection, and denomination. The sole example he provides is that of the passions. In chapter XX, the initial sensations that eventually will become our passions “cannot be described, nor their Names defined” (II.XX.1). As such, what one feels in the agitational moment of uneasiness or delight is never exactly the same as the thing to which one refers with the signifier of love, hate, joy, sorrow, etc.

Take love, for example: “any one reflecting upon the thought he has of the Delight, which any present, or absent thing is apt to produce in him, has the Idea we call Love” (II.XX.4). While this is offered as a self-explanatory description of what love is, the full extent of the conceptual model it suggests is only evident after some unpacking. Note that Locke’s “love” is not a passion in the classical sense of an immediate perception; it is a name for the endpoint of a logical process wherein a thing (by virtue of its presence, if good, or absence, if evil) triggers in us an “internal Sensation” as we reflect upon the quality of the thing and our relationship to it, “[f]or when a Man declares in Autumn, when he is eating them, or in Spring, when there are none, that he loves Grapes, it is no more, but that the taste of Grapes delights him; let an alteration of Health or Constitution destroy the delight of their Taste, and he then can be said to love Grapes no longer” (II.XX.3-4). In the case of sorrow, the relationship is stated more directly: “Sorrow is uneasiness in the Mind, upon the thought of a Good lost, which might have been enjoy’d longer; or the sense of a present Evil” (II.XX.8). The indescribable moment of delight/uneasiness in either case is prioritized as the impetus that compels us to “form to ourselves the Ideas of the Passions” (II.XX.3). In Locke’s analysis, love and sorrow are expressly
not agents that direct our action; they are instead the names we use for coming to terms with the agitational uncertainties inherent to experience itself, and we only know what to call the uneasiness after we have assembled the associational relationships that allow us to make a determination. If the “Wise Author of our being” has, indeed, predetermined the quality that one is supposed to receive from the things that move the passions (and Locke never rules out the possibility that s/he has), there’s no way to tell, at the point of agitational uneasiness/delight, what it is. Only after the faculties of understanding and will are employed can one recognize the idea that uneasiness harbors (a lost good or apparent evil) and assign to it an emotional appellation—“love” or “sorrow.”

The Lockean mode I describe here represents the modern epistemological procedure for how emotions work—from sensation to denomination, by way of reflection. Yet, this summative evaluation is not the most important consequence of paying closer attention to Book II chapter XX, for implicit within the process of passion’s modern logic is its problematic dependence upon uneasiness as an indeterminate agitation that, nonetheless, determines the will to form for itself the meaning and nature of things. In that fraught relationship between the freedom of uneasiness and the strictures of rational judgment, passivity and activity lose something of their polar opposition as agents become patients and patients assume agency. Moreover, emotional experiences lose their distinguishing “feels” in the reflexive relationship of delight/uneasiness; it is now not only possible but also natural for emotions to overlap under extreme conditions.

In turning to analyze The Spectator as a pivotal text for observing the development of eighteenth-century theorizations of the passions, we might also rephrase the question of this inquiry to better reflect the implications of Locke’s modal uneasiness, for An Essay’s paradoxical denial and admission of the fluidity of emotional experience are apropos of the problem that
eighteenth-century writers faced in dealing with the passions. The question we must ask, then, is: How much attention should one pay to the “sticky entanglements” of affect that are laced into early/modern evocations of the passions? What does one lose, or gain, by ignoring them? What does one gain, or risk, by taking their measure?

Indeed, the focus of this dissertation is centered on literary explorations of affective intensity because they form a crux of early-modern formulations of human understanding. In many ways, we could say that the uncertain relationship between emotional meaning and the pure potentiality of affective intensity mirrors the uneasiness that motivates eighteenth-century writers to hypothesize the experiential function of the passions—that is, they theorize the degree to which emotions influence the empirical facts of modern epistemology. In short, the eighteenth-century preoccupation with aesthetic expression of affective intensity is reflexive of the internalizing move of passion’s becoming modern, and Addison and Steele’s *The Spectator* offers an early example of the aesthetic phenomenon that will continue to evolve with the rise of the novel.

**THE SPECTATOR AND MODERN PASSIONS**

In his introduction to the Clarendon edition of *The Spectator*, Donald Bond privileges Addison’s contributions over those of Steele because, he claims, more of Addison’s essays contained original content (rather than reprinted letters from readers) and his writing was of a superior quality. In favoring the high-spirited and comedic air of Addison’s prose, Bond presents Steele’s serious and straightforward style as indicative of his limited rhetorical ability. For the purposes of the present argument, however, Addison’s supposed literary superiority actually makes him the author of lesser concern because his preferment of fluency and humor to scrupulous questioning and laborious elaboration also places distinct limitations on Addison’s
approach to investigating the passions. My intent is to perform a rhetorical analysis of the
distinction between Addison and Steele that will enable us to revaluate Steele’s *Spectator*
contributions in light of his theoretical claims on the passions. While Addison establishes a
baseline for understanding mainstream eighteenth-century views on the subject, Steele’s essays
on jealousy and grief are significant for their willingness to tarry with the impossible task of
putting the passions’ agitational instability into words.

Addison’s essays on the passions are intended as spirited diversions rather than
theoretical inquiries, and this is illustrated in a satire upon coquettes often referred to as “The
Passions of the Fan.” The essay, no. 102, consists of an epistolary fiction, ostensibly penned by
the headmistress of “an Academy for the training up of young Women in the *Exercise of the Fan*,
according to the most fashionable Airs and Motions that are now practised at Court” (I:426).
Through mock military drills, she trains aspiring courtiers “in the Use of their Arms,” and as the
ladies handle, unfurl, discharge, ground, and recover their fans, the essay takes aim at modish
obsessions with “foppish and fantastic Ornaments” by comparing strict observance of social
protocol to the skill and trade of a marksman (I:70, no. 16).

However, this whimsical farce also contains a model for Addison’s theory of the
passions, for the main function of the headmistress’ academy is to teach coquettes how to
communicate their internal sensations with deadly accuracy. This skill is mastered by producing
and interpreting “*The Fluttering of the Fan*” (I: 428), and she indicates the primary value of her
pedagogy through a hermeneutics of self-discipline. Students are taught to assume a deliberate
relationship between the fan’s “flutters” and the passions they represent. “There is,” Addison
ventriloquizes, “an infinite Variety of Motions to be made use of in the *Flutter of a Fan*: There is
the angry Flutter, the modest Flutter, the timorous Flutter…there is scarce any Emotion in the
Mind which does not produce a suitable Agitation in the Fan; insomuch, that if I only see the Fan of a diciplin’d Lady, I know very well whether she laughs, frowns, or blushes” (I: 428). Most significantly, the education in question is not so much about the fan as instrument but, rather, about the passions it is assumed to communicate. Where the uninitiated see an infinite variety of motions, the well-trained eye perceives a litany of specific, objective relays of emotion. Like Addison’s tireless attention to improving his style, which, as Bond has it, “attained…the perfect adaptation of language to subject-matter without too obvious effect,” the disciplined young lady can achieve an agitation of her fan to match the subject-matter of her mind (I: lxix). What’s most at stake in no. 102 is the ability to adjudicate properly the emotion that lies hidden in any extreme disturbance of the mind, and, thus, within Addison’s essays on the passions, what that disturbance is, *per se*, is beside the point.

If an outline of Addison’s position exists in “The Passions of the Fan,” its full figure is more evident in no. 170, on jealousy, where the difference between chaos and order, when it comes to the passions, rests in the difference between misrecognition and viewing “Truth nakedly.”28 No. 170 extends the theme of self-training through an illustration of the peculiar characteristics that manifest in the jealous man’s mind and the dangers that result from giving oneself over to them. Not only does the passion destroy marriages and torture those who suffer it, but jealousy also proves to be most pernicious for its being caused by an improper communication between our perceptions and our feelings. Thus, “Jealousy is that Pain which a Man feels from the Apprehension that he is not equally beloved by the Person whom he entirely loves” (II: 168), and its danger is attributed to the jealous man’s having mistaken “imaginary for real happiness” (*An Essay*, II.xxi.51). The sufferer has improperly assumed the foundation of his own happiness to reside in the apprehension of something about which he can never be certain—
a perfectly equitable love between himself and his beloved. Not only is his happiness ever in doubt, but every step he takes to rectify his own apprehensions with reality actually results in the inverse of the ends of our passions, as Locke would have them, for the jealous man consistently avoids pleasure to pursue pain.

Most heinous of all, jealousy has a fundamental misrecognition at its root, for “if we consider the effects of this Passion, one would rather think it proceeded from an inveterate Hatred than an excessive Love” (II: 169). Its nagging malignancy lies in its potential to dissimulate the difference between love and hate. Like an interloping spirit reminiscent of Burton’s melancholy via demonic possession, jealousy interferes with a person’s otherwise-unimpeded motive for action, and therefore it brings us pain by improperly converging incompatible emotional states into a monstrous hybrid. The analysis of no. 170 takes for granted that passions are derived from fundamentally distinct “flutters” of feeling, and if we were to imagine an Addisonian theory of the passions, that premise would be its underlying assumption. Addisonian jealousy has love as its primary cause, and it is only by miscalculation that it has the appearance of hatred. The responsibility falls upon the jealous man to discipline his mind to “enlighten the Understanding and rectify the Passions” (I: 158, no. 37).

By comparison, Steele’s take on the passions provides a stark theoretical contrast, for rather than training readers to sense “properly,” he merely asks them to pay attention their mental processes at moments of extreme disturbance. In no. 19, on envy, Steele takes up an investigation that is similar to Addison’s consideration of jealousy, but he is more determined to avoid dependence upon preconceived emotional concepts and examine only the empirical evidence. Rather than consulting “the many excellent Things which one might collect out of Authors upon this miserable Affection,” no. 19 relies instead on a consideration of what passes
in the mind of the envious man himself. The crux of Steele’s analysis is contained in his
description of envy’s pains:

The Envious Man is in Pain upon all Occasions which ought to give him Pleasure. The
Relish of his Life is inverted, and the Objects which administer the highest Satisfaction to
those who are exempt from this Passion, give the quickest Pangs to Persons who are subject
to it. All the Perfections of their Fellow-Creatures are odious: Youth, Beauty, Valour and
Wisdom are Provocations of their Displeasure. (I: 83)

This bears a resemblance to the analysis of Addison’s no. 170 in the sense that the
envious man’s pain stems from a complete inversion of seemingly opposite emotional states. The
important difference is that no. 19 accepts, as an observed fact, that the envious man is
“incapable of rejoicing in another’s Merit or Success” (I: 83). As a result, Steele does not pose
the problem of the passions in terms of appropriately manifesting an intransigent truth of
experience; instead, he provides a more complicated consideration, one where the pains of envy
arise from an incongruous relationship between feelings and normative “oughts.” Although the
commentary of no. 19 does not contest the social conventions that establish youth, beauty, valor
and wisdom as worthy of approbation, they are also not its main focus. Steele, rather, centers the
essay on a discussion of how the pain of envy works through a signature inversion, wherein what
ought to cause the envious man pleasure actually causes him pain. Consequently, no. 19 calls
into question a necessary relationship between things, perceptions and passions.

Here Steele offers a counter to Addison’s interpretation of the Lockean morality that
undergirds experience, for Locke, too, takes into consideration instances where we find our sense
of “relish” to be out of calibration. The envious man is in the most “Apostate State” not because
he misdirects his esteem so that it mimics contempt, but because his perception of the figure that
others approve does cause him pain and that pain does move him to hatred. On this level, Steele
echoes Locke’s assertion that “the relish of the mind…may be alter’d; and ‘tis a mistake to think,
that Men cannot change the displeasingness, or indifference, that is in actions, into pleasure and
desire, if they will do but what is in their power” (II.xxi.69). While Steele doesn’t quibble with the idea that one could train oneself to readjust his/her sense of pleasure or desire, the general inquiry of his essays is more cautious on the question of whether or not one ought to do so. Again, taking a Lockean tack, one must look inward, not to social convention, to find the answer.

Locke warns that “Fashion and the common Opinion having settled wrong Notions, and education and custom ill habits, the just values of things are misplaced, and the palates of Men corrupted” (II.xxi.69). So we must rectify our palates not according to what “custom has endear’d” but to what we judge, without prejudice, to be in service of the “greatest apparent good” (II.xxi.68). Achieving such a level of understanding, as I have shown above, would require an attunement to the intrinsic good or evil in things which reveals the “inexorable law of being” underwritten by the pleasure of God. This is the point at which Steele’s inquiries diverge from Addison’s, via Locke. While Addison, Steele and Locke all share a distrust of “Fashion and the common Opinion,” Steele (in line with Molyneux’s criticism of the first edition of An Essay) places more value on testing what it feels like to experience happiness and misery than on deriving judgments of human action from those feelings. When he turns his attention to grief, we get a full picture of how Steele imagines passions to function within the newly interrogated space between agitation and motivation, that is, between affective intensity and a determination of its meaning.

In a letter signed by a “B.D.” that makes up half of no. 95’s content, the writer asks Mr. Spectator to “enter into the Matter [of mourning] more deeply” and comment on those “who prescribe Rules and Fashions to the most solemn Affliction” (I: 402-3). Since there is no reply from Mr. Spectator, the letter stands alone as its own commentary on the subject, and B.D.’s request makes plain the risk we run when social norms codify responses to deeply personal
experiences. The essay implies that when all of the social capital of mourning is attached to predetermined sets of physical reactions, there is little incentive to contemplate what actually passes in the mind and, thus, the very concept of passion is reduced to superficiality. No. 95 asks us instead to pay attention to what is beneath the injunction to adjudicate properly the relationship between one’s feelings and behaviors. After calling into question the, supposedly immediate, link of sorrow to tears, B.D. finds his own occasion to dive deeper than the “common Sense the ordinary People have” (I: 402). Citing the authority of scientific disciplines, B.D. asserts: “Experience has told us nothing is so fallacious as this outward Sign of Sorrow; and the natural History of our Bodies will teach us, that this Flux of the Eyes, this Faculty of weeping is peculiar only to some Constitutions” (I: 403). B.D.’s observation that the quintessential nature of the passions is most evident at their point of greatest excess is the heart of Steele’s model.

By employing more than cautionary rhetoric, B.D.’s observation calls attention to the conundrum underlying modern conceptions of emotion: How can we account for the anomalous uneasiness that inheres in the passions, one that the “natural History of our Bodies” has always made known to us but that philosophy has never explained? This is a key question that will be addressed in various ways throughout the chapters of this dissertation, but the point I want to emphasize here is that, precisely because of their inherent disruptive quality, our passions allow us to access a feature of experience that is “profound” because it is intensely felt and at the same time ineffable. It is not translatable into outward shows or descriptive language until it loses something of its intensity. Moreover, the act of experiencing a passion is a split event such that the articulable feelings of “joy” and “sorrow” precipitate from an imbricated, ur-state of mental activity where both are drawn from the same turbulent source. The distinctions between them only develop through the process of assessment and categorization.
To emphasize the departure of this view from Addison’s, the theorization of no. 95 challenges altogether the idea that the structure of experience has been organized according to “Final Causes” that allow us to “naturally [and thus immediately] delight” in the perception of some objects and “naturally” be disgusted with others. Most importantly, rather than skipping over the difficult indeterminacy posed by the Lockean formulation of uneasiness, Steele’s illustration does well to draw out its more radical implications.

Locke pays special attention to the passions because, unlike more visceral modes of pleasure and pain, the ideas we have of them are a product of both sensation and reflection—they invite us to “reflect on our selves, and observe how [pleasure and pain], under various Considerations, operate in us; what Modifications or Tempers of the Mind, what internal Sensations, (if I may so call them,) they produce in us” (II.XX.3). Thus, the value Locke places on the passions in Book II, chapter xx is tied to their function as a problematic, for they resist categorization in terms of a simple immediacy and demand a more thorough investigation into the interplay between sensation and idea. Locke attempts to describe the mental processes through which “we form to our selves the Ideas of our Passions” (II.XX.3) because doing so is one step toward attaining “the highest perfection of intellectual nature” (II.XXI.51); An Essay must therefore take on the first challenge as a primer for the second.

In the preface to chapter xx, Locke emphasizes the tension between sensual intensity and cognition to which no. 95 alludes by presenting what we might call unqualified experience as integral to perception itself: “For as in the Body, there is Sensation barely in it self, or accompanied with Pain or Pleasure; so the Thought, or Perception of the Mind is simply so, or else accompanied also with Pleasure or Pain” (II.XX.1, bold emphasis is mine). Though Locke gives little indication of what the barest sensation or the simplest perception might be, he is clear
on what they are not: “These like other simple Ideas cannot be described, nor their Names
defined; the way of knowing them is…only by Experience” (II.xx.1). He goes out of his way to
establish an enigmatic moment in the cognitive process where what one receives from the senses
is intensely known and at the same time profoundly inexpressible. Such unqualified experience is
the kernel of uneasiness around which we form more concrete ideas of our passions through the
process of reflection, description and definition. The kernel itself, however, is nothing more than
agitation, bare stimulus, which we immediately “know” and only later come to “understand.”

Steele’s argument about grief follows from the same logic: what we know can in no way
be said to be the same thing as what we show or even articulate with regard to our passions. Yet
the most fruitful correlation to be made between Locke’s description of the modes of pleasure
and pain and a Steelian theory of the passions is that both put more emphasis on the problem of
bearing witness to the simply knowable than on the task of making it conform to what is
expressible. In this light, Steele’s essays on the passions evince his reluctance to frame them
explicitly in terms of The Spectator’s (or Locke’s, for that matter) dominant mode of self-
mastery, for Steele’s inquiries signal an entirely different conceptual function of the passions—
as an apparatus for bearing witness to our capacity for feeling. As such, they present readers with
small nudges that hint more toward exploratory awareness than direct instruction, and essay no.
520 (another take on immoderate grief) stands as a culmination of this theoretical work.

Modeling this essay on a letter from an “F.J.” of Norwich (dated Oct. 7th, 1712), Steele
enlarges the author’s original ideas into a treatise on male widowhood whose take on the act of
grieving is quite different from the assessment offered in no. 95. Whereas B.D. complains of the
false excesses demonstrated by would-be mourners, F.J. overcomes his fear of “being ridiculous”
to admit his frequent crying fits “upon any Circumstance that revives” the memory of his
deceased wife. They are especially troublesome for occurring “often, in the midst of Company” (IV: 350). Yet F.J. makes no apology for his condition in the original letter, and Steele does not manufacture one in his essay. We find, instead, that candid observation occupies a central position in both texts. Though the details of their accounts differ, both F.J. and Steele depict an inconsolable instance of sorrow, and both are remarkable for their attention to the slippages that occur during excessive emotional stress.34

No. 520 recreates a portion of F.J.’s letter wherein his private sorrow is interrupted by a charming young Woman, my Daughter, who is the Picture of what her Mother was on her Wedding-Day. The good Girl strives to comfort me; but how shall I let you know that all the Comfort she gives me is to make my Tears flow more easily? The Child knows she quickens my Sorrow, and rejoices my Heart at the same Time. Oh, ye Learned, tell me by what Word to speak a Motion of the Soul for which there is no Name. (IV: 351)

The scene is remarkable not only for its depiction of affective extremity but also for how well F.J.’s assessment illustrates the intermediary moment of uneasy, bare sensation that Locke posits between perception and idea. The point that no. 520 absolutely insists upon is that the very same object elicits from F.J. simultaneous and seemingly opposite emotional responses, and Steele will illustrate in the conclusion that there is a virtue in being able to feel deeply such a disparity, even to the point of excess. For to do so is also to recognize that happiness itself is unachievable without sorrow; the full measure of each is embedded in the other.

The description of F.J.’s paroxysm becomes all the more significant when we map each of the emotional states he addresses (love, sorrow, and joy) onto Locke’s definitions of these terms in chapter xx of Book II. Love is the key term at play, for he loves both his living daughter and his deceased wife and he does so in a way that is consistent with Locke’s definition as the result of one’s “reflecting upon the thought he has of the Delight, which any present, or absent thing is apt to produce in him” (II.xx.4). However, the simultaneity of presence and absence at work in the letter posits the experience of love as a challenge to the distinction between the
categories of both joy and sorrow. Because sorrow is defined as an “uneasiness in the Mind, upon the thought of a Good lost, which might have been enjoy’d longer” (II.xx.8), his daughter’s act of “comfort” fills the condition of sorrow by reminding him of the irrevocable absence of his wife. Yet the very same act also engages the conditions for joy as a “delight of the Mind, from the consideration of the present…possession of a Good” (II.xx.7). The present sensation of his daughter’s embrace is simultaneously cause for his joy and sorrow because it engages the concept of love on multiple levels, and, importantly, this moment of emotional distress brings about an experiential knowledge that outpaces the mind’s capacity for classification.

In this way, Steele takes up the passions not so much in order to make them the proper subject for company but, rather, to test them and, thus, to test the foundations of the relationship between feeling and knowing. The result is somewhat surprising. For if it is a commonplace thesis of epistemology in the wake of Locke’s Essay that what we know (“only by Experience”) and what we understand (through the formation of ideas) need not share a fundamental resemblance, Steele highlights the subjective openness that is implicit in the in-between space of Locke’s unqualified experience. Under these conditions, the meaning of F.J.’s grief can only be provisional; subject to circumstantial changes, it must be negotiated continuously: “When she kneels and bids me be comforted, she is my Child; when I take her in my Arms, and bid her say no more, she is my very Wife, and is the very Comforter I lament the Loss of” (IV: 351). In this provisional exploration of how passions function at the limits of comprehension, the figure of F.J. occupies a theoretically novel space. Neither agent nor patient, exactly, he is instead a participant in a negotiation—one that the classical paradigm could never abide and one that the dominant thread of modern interpretations of the passions would implore him to control. Steele, instead, seems most insistent that there is something to be gained by maintaining an ambivalence.
of activity and passivity. In admitting the impossibility of finding words to “speak a Motion of the Soul for which there is no Name,” F.J. can only wish that his audience could “have a Sense of these pleasing Perplexities” (IV: 351). We can only do so if we resist the compulsion to relieve our uneasiness by mastering our thoughts.

Thus, when Steele finally addresses the question of “ought,” his answer flies in the face of what every seasoned Spectator reader (and by October, 1712 there were thousands) would have expected. F.J. concludes: “I sate down with a Design to put you [Mr. Spectator] upon giving us Rules [for] how to overcome such Griefs as these; but I should rather advise you to teach Men to be capable of them” (IV: 352). On this point, a full challenge to The Spectator’s notorious conservatism is palpable, a challenge achieved, nonetheless, on Lockean premises. This injunction seems to suggest that creating a regulatory system for defining and controlling the passions is not only arbitrary but, at best, ethically questionable. Moreover, the end to which F.J. would have us strive (to learn to be capable of extreme sorrow, or joy, or love) cannot be met through training but, rather, through exposure to the frailties of our own subjective consistency.

No. 520, then, is an aesthetic demonstration of the lesson it asks readers to learn, for it makes an attempt, however feeble, at exposing the space of bare sensation as a gesture or a nudge for others to bear witness to the unnamable motions of their own passions. In doing so, we, as readers, might become capable of “pass[ing] through Afflictions in common with all who are in humane Nature” (IV: 352). The call for such awareness contains within it seeds of an ethics of feeling, one that is not interpretive but affective, wherein close attention to one’s own capacity for sorrow may offer an access point for imagining, without fetishizing, the suffering of others.
In sum, it is not enough merely to demonstrate the fact that Addison and Steele represent two, obviously divergent, trajectories of eighteenth-century conceptualizations of the passions. For, while recent scholarship has done well to recognize the “psychological machinery” of the modern self “as the rationalized product of a long history of theorizing the passions,” the intricacy of that development has not been sufficiently appreciated.37 We should, therefore, acknowledge the importance of paying attention to the countervailing narratives embedded within that long history of rationalization. Addison, Steele and Locke do not represent an endpoint of the intellectual process of passion’s modernization; their diverse interpretations of passion’s intensity only serve as one of many possible points of entry for an analysis of the contribution that eighteenth-century British writers made to the history of emotion. As we will see throughout the chapters to follow, the history of the novel and the history of emotion run parallel to each other in striking ways. Only by recognizing that theoretical debate over the nature, function and value of the passions was not closed but, rather, opened to an entirely new set of problems with the advent of Lockean thought, do we get a full sense of what it means to talk about “the passions” in an eighteenth-century context. For, the theoretical tug-of-war between classical passivity and modern activity is palpable as a problematic inherent to the novel’s aesthetic expression of subjective experience.

1 Descartes’ last philosophical work, The Passions of the Soul (1649), isolates and expands on a key feature of his signature dualism. The second volume of Hume’s Treatise on Human Nature (1740) is titled “Of The Passions.” By contrast, Locke’s treatments of passion are so sporadic that they lead Alan McKenzie to assert that he disregards them entirely. See Certain, Lively Episodes: The Articulation of Passion in Eighteenth-Century Prose (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 73.

2 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically, identifying book, chapter and section thusly: (II.xxi.14). Because of Locke’s extensive use of italics, the reader can assume all emphasis is original unless otherwise noted.

3 While I offer a general corrective to scholars who, mistakenly, refer to “Addison and Steele” as if they were of the same mind, my argument is in specific opposition to McKenzie’s claim that Spectator essays on the passions are interchangeable in terms of their authorship: “I have not attempted to establish differences between Addison and Steele in their application. I doubt very much that such a distinction could be made,” 243, n. 1.


7 Thomas Dixon’s *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) is still unmatched for its illustration of how “emotion” replaced “passion” as the dominant trope for describing experiences of psychological intensity over the course of the eighteenth century.


9 *Passion and Action*, 11.

10 Quoted in *Passion and Action*, 80.

11 Cummings and Sierhuis have, more recently, made a case for the far-reaching implications of rethinking modern epistemology alongside the passions’ conceptual development. See their introduction to *Passions and Subjectivity*, 1-9.

12 *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, 9, emphasis in original.


14 “Melancholy, Passions, and Identity in the Renaissance” in *Passions and Subjectivity*, 78.

15 Holbrook Jackson, *Introduction to Anatomy of Melancholy*, x.

16 The following summary is indebted to Kramnick’s *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2010). See, especially, chapter 4 for a full explication of the revisions Locke made to Bk II, ch xxI, “Of Power,” and the influence William Molyneux had on Locke’s “second thoughts” on whether it is knowledge of good and evil or “uneasiness” that determines the will.

17 For Locke’s insistence upon the existence of a set of external, eternal truths of experience see his correspondence with Molyneux in *John Locke Selected Correspondence* ed. Mark Goldie (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), especially the letter dated August 8, 1693.

18 *Actions and Objects*, 158.


20 *Actions and Objects*, 156.

21 *Reasoned Freedom*, 93.


24 “A Mind for Passion,” 136. See also Dixon, especially 1-25, for an argument about the relationship between secularization of eighteenth-century thought and the decline of “the passions” as a culturally relevant concept.


This phrase comes from Robert South’s “A Sermon Preached at Christ-Church, October 29, 1693” (Twelve Sermons upon Several Subjects and Occasions [London: 1727], 3: 68). South urges his parishioners to use their eyes, ears and minds, as “Instruments of Knowledge,” to discern the unequivocal truths of good and evil.

See Burton’s “Digression of the Nature of Spirits, Bad Angels, or Devils, and how they cause Melancholy,” I: 180-202.


No corresponding document has been found to suggest that this was based on the correspondence of an actual reader. Because “B.D.” is used both by Addison and Steele to identify the hand of a supposed reader’s contribution, I assume the letter to be of Steele’s invention.

The Spectator, III: 545, no. 413. See, in general, Addison’s series of Spectator essays on “the pleasures the imagination” (411-21).

The most significant difference between the original letter (preserved at the Blenheim Palace archives and reprinted in Bond, V:236-37) and the essay is that the child is not a daughter but a son. The implications of Steele’s having made this change would merit further exploration in other contexts.

For a well-defined overview of The Spectator’s social conservatism, see Erin Mackie’s introduction to The Commerce of Everyday Life (Boston, 1998), 1-46.


Chapter Two
Eliza Haywood and the Novel’s Progress through the Passions

As I argued in the previous chapter, the literary discourse of eighteenth-century England reflects a self-conscious negotiation of the conceptual shift of passion’s becoming modern. If Addison and Steele’s *Spectator* essays demonstrate that such a shift was interpreted with more or less reverence for conservative ideology, popular novels of the eighteenth century test the passive/active binary of modern passions in other ways—through narrative depictions of their characters’ emotional intelligence. To illustrate this concern, I will here turn to the novels of Eliza Haywood, with attention to Samuel Richardson and John Cleland in subsequent chapters.¹ Not only does the trajectory of Haywood’s career as novelist span the historical ground that I cover in this dissertation, the marked transition of her literary production—from amatory to domestic fiction—serves as a fruitful illustration of the important subjective shift I want to emphasize as a consequence of the move from classical passion to modern emotion, a shift best illustrated in presentations of emotional experience across three of Haywood’s novels—*Love in Excess; or, The Fatal Inquiry* (1719), *The Rash Resolve; or, The Untimely Discovery* (1723), and *Life’s Progress through the Passions: or, The Adventures of Natura* (1748).²

*Love in Excess* is Haywood’s first and most substantial work of amatory fiction—remarkable for its attachment to the continental romance tradition and, subsequently, its classical depictions of the passions. *Life’s Progress* is extremely conscious of its operation within the mid-century public sphere and its relationship to polite sociability; as such, it offers a kind of stadial history of emotional development intended to help guide readers through the thorny thickets that emerge between reason and emotion at various stages in “life’s progress…from the cradle to the grave” (198). *Love in Excess* revels in the immediacy of passions that have a mind
of their own, while *Life’s Progress* makes key observations on the inner workings of modern passion as an epistemological process. Between them (both historically and conceptually) lies *The Rash Resolve*. By and large, the amatory fiction of *Rash Resolve* is strongly influenced by the romance tradition and the classical passions that drive it; however, its conclusion offers a tragic ending, of sorts, for romance subjectivity when its heroine dies after confronting the radical implications of modern emotional excess. The text, literally and figuratively, establishes the theoretical threshold of emotional experience beyond which romance subjectivity cannot venture; as such, *The Rash Resolve’s* dénouement will serve as a touchstone for the investigations of this dissertation, going forward.

The analysis of the present chapter runs parallel to two well-known lines of argumentation in Haywood scholarship. I will address them here by way of introduction if only to demonstrate the tangential nature of those debates to the argument at hand. The first is what Paula Backscheider has identified as a “conversion theory” for interpreting the shift of focus across Haywood’s oeuvre.³ This theory took root as early as 1785 with Clara Reeve’s *Progress of Romance*, and suggests a kind of personal conversion narrative to describe the relationship between early (salacious, quasi-pornographic) and late (reformed, moralistic) periods of Haywood’s fiction-writing career.⁴ Backscheider’s challenge to Haywood conversion theories has sparked various recovery projects showing the interrelationship of both politics and aesthetics across her early and late texts. Aleksandra Hultquist, for instance, has argued convincingly the premise that since, “Haywood never converted from her amatory aesthetic to a didactic one, then we need to reevaluate the way we read her “moralistic” domestic fiction of the 1750s.”⁵ Much of the analysis below will also call attention to the aesthetic and ideological overlap between Haywood’s early- and mid-century novels even as it trades on distinct
differences between them. The distinctions I draw, however, are not aimed at debunking the important work of scholars who have taken seriously “Eliza Haywood’s Amatory Aesthetic” as fundamental to her body of work at large. I am more concerned with asserting that, nonetheless, there are significant differences between her early and late portrayals of emotional experience—particularly those of love—and it is in those differences that we find aesthetic evidence of a larger epistemological shift from classical to modern conceptions of passion.

The question of conversion in Haywood studies is implicitly wrapped up in formal concerns over amatory fiction’s (derivative) relationship to “romance.” Laurie Langbauer makes this point emphatically in challenging “the patriarchal association of romance as the novel’s other;” ultimately pointing to the inherently unstable distinctions between them, for “the problems of romance are the problems of fiction, and of the novel as well.” Langbauer’s critique is in response to the tendency for romance to get gendered as female and labeled as inferior. Scholars of traditionally-recognizable romance texts—prose fiction tales and pastoral lyric poetry of Renaissance vintage—emphasize that, even in its own contemporary moment, romance had to contend with charges that it deviated “from the law of genre” and was, thus, a lesser form. Helen Hackett comments specifically on “analogies between Renaissance romance and modern romantic fiction [that] depend upon a characterization of Renaissance romance as a popular genre of courtship narratives offering escapist pleasures to women readers” and, consequently, not models of serious theoretical inquiry. In light of Hackett’s endeavor to place this axiomatic structure under erasure, it is important to address the seemingly tenuous ground to be tread in founding an argument, as I do here, on the association between romance conventions and Haywood’s earlier amatory fiction (behelden to a not-yet-modern model of emotional
experience) in juxtaposition to later texts that tend to complicate the classical conceptualization of passion and, thus, subjectivity along with it.

The case I will make in the pages to follow does not rely on the determination of a fully-fledged dissociation of “romance” from “novel” aesthetics. We could, perhaps, place those terms under erasure here as well, for the texts discussed below tend to negotiate rather than delineate the relationship between modes traditionally seen as existing on two sides of an axiological divide: classical/romance/passion || modern/novel/emotion. In this way Haywood’s novels are linked to the larger project of Novel Passions, as an analysis of eighteenth-century texts whose preoccupation with affective experience also demonstrates the fraught tension that exists between those dialectical terms, in the agitation of passions in a state of becoming something else. Be that as it may, my purpose here is, in part, historical. For I contend that it is useful to read the progress of Haywood’s fiction on a continuum between the theoretical positions evident in her early and late work. However fluid the terms of this transition might be, the transition itself helps to illustrate a larger point about the eighteenth-century novel’s developing aesthetic, wherein symbolic resonances of classical passions (often in figurative terms of the romance plot) usually signal attempts to dodge, or circumvent, inquiry into the modern logic of epistemology as an active, cognitive process.

On these grounds, it is important to take at face value the influence of romance, as romance, in Haywood’s archive. David Oakleaf has traced a connection between political agency in Love in Excess and its romance-inspired plot structure, for the text’s “transgressive subjectivity finds its natural expression in what we could call liminal relationships—sexual relationships that transform socially sanctioned ties.” So subjectivity, itself, in Haywood’s
earliest fiction can be seen as emblazoned with the stamp of a desiring self that finds its
expression through romance tropes.

Victoria Kahn’s remarks on the passions at work in Battista Guarini’s Italian pastoral
romance, *Il Pastor fido* (1590), substantiate the connection I want to make here. For Kahn,
Guarini’s text “raises the question of the relation of natural impulses to human art, and of
unmediated passion to craft or self-interest” (225). In essence, the early-modern romance can
only present the concept of passion as unmediated impulse, derived from forces of external
agency; moreover, its paradigm does not turn on a relation between unmediated and mediated
emotional experience—that, in a nutshell is the crux of the modern idiom of eighteenth-century
passions discourse. Instead, early-modern passions theory hangs its hat on the Stoic binary of
immediate passion and mediating reason. It is only important for now to say that the unmediated
quality of passions (and a subject’s utter passivity in relation to them) remains unquestioned in
early-modern romance. Haywood, likewise, does not question the classical model of passions in
1719, with *Love in Excess*. By 1748, and *Life’s Progress through the Passions*, the protagonist’s
relationship to his passions looks radically different. We will shortly see the functional
implications of that shift on the latter novel’s aesthetics, but the main point that drives the
analysis of this chapter is that just after *Love in Excess*, as early as 1723, Haywood began
crafting texts that are demonstrative of the transition itself.

*The Rash Resolve* posits its heroine as a romance subject on the precipice of something
else, a figure who ultimately comes face to face with the affective limitations of emotional and
epistemological passivity. The following investigation weaves an intertextual story told through
resonant nodes of emotional experience that connect seemingly disparate texts; in so doing, it
also tells of how Eliza Haywood’s literary progress through the passions mirrors the
contemporary development of a modern affective idiom—beginning, of course, with Love in Excess.

THE CLASSICAL AGENCY OF HAYWOOD’S AMATORY FICTION

Haywood’s first novel follows the exploits of the gallantly handsome Count D’elmont through France and Italy as he negotiates various models of female desire. D’elmont’s intrigues place him in the middle of two separate love triangles. The first drives the plot of the novel’s first volume and places D’elmont between Alovysa and Amena. It ends when he marries Alovysa after she and D’elmont conspire with Amena’s father to have her confined to a convent. D’elmont’s choice of wife is fueled by a mix of motivations—money, status, mutual interest—but not love; Alovysa eventually, and conveniently for the novel’s story-line, dies by D’elmont’s own hand in a scene of tragic accident. The second love triangle is the focus of the third volume and pits Ciamara—a stereotypical model of “bad” female ambition—against the unequivocally chaste Violetta as they both vie for D’elmont’s affections. This intrigue also ends tragically with the catastrophic death of both women, thus freeing up D’elmont to fulfill his desire for the only character in the text with whom he is truly in love, the “matchless Melliora.” Though it doesn’t come to fruition until the novel’s end, the plot line of his courtship to Melliora develops in the central volume of Love in Excess. It is on this last relationship that I focus my analysis because it most clearly illustrates the conceptual model of the passions at work in Haywood’s earliest fiction.

The second volume opens with D’elmont and Alovysa in marital contentment but is quickly interrupted by the introduction of Melliora—a young woman whose guardianship is entrusted to D’elmont and with whom he falls in love immediately. D’elmont (to that point, the consummate player) is now struck dumb with love at first sight:
[T]he first sight of Melliora gave him a discomposure he had never felt before, he sympathized in all her sorrows, and was ready to joyn his tears with hers, but when her eyes met his, the god of love seemed there to have united all his lightnings for one effectual blaze; their admiration of each others perfections was mutual, and tho’ he had got the start in love, as being touched with that almighty dart…it was hard to say whose passion was the strongest. (90-91, my emphasis)

While the passage begins with a gesture toward the affective uneasiness with reference to D’elmont’s precognitive “discomposure,” the main emphasis is placed on the classical god Eros and his “almighty dart” that will underwrite the emotional context of the affair. Having “got [their] start in love,” neither Melliora nor D’elmont can conceptualize their feelings in a way that deviates from that trajectory.

This is most evident in the pivotal scene of the second volume where the couple’s mutual affection is nearly consummated in a fit of lust. After completing an elaborate ruse to steal into Melliora’s chamber, D’elmont finds her fast asleep, half-naked and bathed in erotic moonlight. The titillating scene brings his sense of physical desire to a fever-pitch, whereby “the encreasing transports of his soul,” no matter how piqued, always seem capable of “receiv[ing] a vast addition” (120-21). The novel forestalls, however, its furious pace toward erotic fulfillment when a moment of conscience causes D’elmont to suspend the gratification of his physical urges. For along with the promise of pleasure, Melliora’s “resistless posture” also “rouzed all that was honorable in him; he thought it pity even to wake her, but more to wrong such innocence, and he was sometimes prompted to return and leave her as he found her” (121). The text leaves no doubt that “D’elmont…has a soul,” for love, after all, is both an emotion and an honor-bound virtue. Thus, the novel introduces a digression that interrupts its path toward would-be rape by doubling down on the “true” love that ultimately drives its action.

We should be careful, however, not to read the scene as an uncomplicated endorsement of the moral virtue of love, coded as masculine and monopolized by D’elmont.11 As Toni
Bowers points out, “for Haywood, female sexual virtue consists not of the absence or denial of desire, but in acting on desire in particular ways,” so when D’elmont does not act on his desire in the particular way of rape, the text introduces the possibility for “Melliora’s virtue [to be] exercised within, not just in response to, transgressive sexual desire.”12 In a different context, Karen Gevirtz’s observation that Haywood “rejects the device of an all-seeing male authority whose vision and prescience create moral and factual knowledge, and the positioning of women as the recipients rather than the generators of knowledge” is also applicable to the relationship between Melliora and D’elmont.13 Most important for our purposes, Haywood’s liberating intervention on the part of female desire is achieved through the idiomatic tropes of contemporary passions discourse.

In *Love in Excess*, physical passion and emotional love converge on a plane that unapologetically validates sexual urges as natural movements of the soul, not aberrations of it.14 As such, at the moment when D’elmont checks his impulse to ravage her the text opens up a space of third-person narration through which the reader is given a window into Melliora’s psyche. She is, at that moment, having a rape-fantasy dream about the “extatick ruiner” who actually hovers above her (121). The narration suggests that the dream state is a place where honor and virtue (traditionally male-coded principles that govern Melliora’s waking conduct) cede control to one’s natural urges. In these instances,

> our passions then exert their forceful power, and that which is most predominant in the soul, agitates the fancy, and brings even things impossible to pass. Desire, with watchful diligence repelled, returns with greater violence in unguarded sleep, and overthrows the vain efforts of day. Melliora in spite of her self, was often happy in idea, and possesst a blessing, which shame and guilt, deterred her from in reality. (121, my emphasis)

Shame and guilt here are presented both as the proper checks to social ruin and as the manifestation of artificial social injunctions that vilify the ineradicable passions of the soul. This
is a pattern we will find repeated in *The Rash Resolve*, and reading carefully here, we see that shame and guilt dispossess Melliora of her happiness and of a blessing. Moreover, I want to stress how well a reading of the novel as a demonstration of a particular theoretical model of passion fits alongside an activist reading of the text’s validation of female desire. For the romance conception of passion, as an indelible psychological mark, also serves the novel’s celebration of “love as the center and source of virtue,” and this is the aesthetic motif through which *Love in Excess* consistently portrays the emotional motivations of its characters’ actions.\textsuperscript{15}

Because of the classically rooted notion of love’s passion as a forceful power that can cause material changes in the world (it “brings even things impossible to pass”) the text provides an unequivocal vindication of a chaste and virtuous woman’s sexual desire. It goes so far as to suggest that, had Melliora and D’elmont given in to the “happy…idea” of their sexual union at that moment any “sin” attached to it would hold true only in the eyes of the world. For in the eyes of heaven, the “wonder-working power” of love alone is enough to anoint the event.

Most important here is that the characters of *Love in Excess* are moved by their passions with a force that is every bit as undeniable and unmistakable as that which the ancient stoics attributed to them. For Diogenes Laertius’ definition (paraphrasing Zeno) of passion as “an irrational movement in the soul…an impulse in excess” applies equally to Sophoclean tragedy as it does to Haywood’s amatory fiction.\textsuperscript{16} And D’elmont makes an apology for his actions along these lines by declaring to Melliora that “[t]here are times madam…in which the wisest have not power over their own actions—If therefore I have offended, impute not the crime to me, but that unavoidable impulse which for a moment hurried me from myself” (106). On Melliora’s end, the unmistakable impulse is explicitly named as love, that which “may be feigned [but] can never be concealed” (105). We should note that the same logic could have easily been used to facilitate
the rape scene that Haywood evokes in the reader’s mind but never consummates in the text.\textsuperscript{17} Be this as it may, the text asks readers to believe that love is the driving force of the protagonists’ romance plot and, most importantly, that it is the agent to which they are passive respondents. Such passivity is the cornerstone of the passions as a classical concept, and here the \textit{deus ex machina} so familiar to the romance tradition is manifested in the passive subjective relationship to one’s emotional experiences. But \textit{Love in Excess} is only the first iteration of Haywood’s novelistic treatment of the passions, a topic that would concern her throughout her long career.

**THE COGNITIVE PROGRESS OF MODERN PASSION**

Nearly thirty years after the publication of \textit{Love in Excess}, a striking contrast to passion’s subjective passivity can be seen in \textit{Life’s Progress through the Passions: Or, The Adventures of Natura}. The novel follows the protagonist as it traces “nature in all her mazy windings, and shew[s] life’s progress thro’ the passions, from the cradle to the grave.”\textsuperscript{18} As such, the narrative jumps from scene to scene, starting with the death of Natura’s mother at an early age and moving through squabbles with his stepmother, an early childhood infatuation, the ambitions of his school days at Eton, his misguided contractual marriage to a prostitute, sexual and educational dalliances on an unaccompanied grand tour, a settled life of marriage in a moderate station, the grief of losing a father and then his wife in childbirth shortly after, and another marriage in pursuit of social and professional advancement which ends in jealousy, rage and divorce. Ultimately, his progress comes to a happy end in marriage to Charlotte, a jointured widow who is in every way his equal. In that final relationship, the bonds “of friendship [are] sublimed into the most pure and virtuous tenderness, and a parity of principles, humours, and inclinations” (194). So Natura’s tumultuous adventures come to a peaceful end.
Compared to other novels published in the late 1740s—most notably Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1748) and Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1748/9)—*Life’s Progress* does not have much to recommend it in terms of plot structure or narrative innovation. The table of contents lays out in detail the moral concerns the novel will address, and the staccato staging of its vignettes has no hint of the plot devices with which contemporary writers were experimenting. Within that format, however, Haywood’s late work does much to emphasize the concerns inherent to modern depictions of emotional experience. Most notably, like other novels of the time, it renounces any connection to the romance tradition by endeavoring to stay within the bounds of probability. Haywood’s introduction even anticipates the preface of Fanny Burney’s *Evelina* (1778) in asserting that:

> the reader will be convinced he must not expect to see a faultless figure in the hero of the following pages; but to remove all possibility of a disappointment on that score, I shall farther declare, that I am an enemy to all romances, novels, and whatever carries the air of them, tho’ disguised under different appellations….I flatter myself, however, that truth will appear not altogether void of charms, and the adventures I take upon me to relate, not to be less pleasing for being within the reach of probability. (*Life’s Progress*, 78)

How closely the text itself follows its prefatory claims is up for debate; surely, many vignettes will hint at the conventions of both romances and “novels,” but this professed focus on verisimilitude clearly identifies a conscious break from the ethos of *Love In Excess*’ characterization. On this point, the most remarkable feature of *Life’s Progress* is its manifestation of a complex theoretical model of the passions at work within, not upon, the human mind—as an integral part of the epistemological education of one’s life.

The passions of *Life’s Progress* do not rely on the classical convention of external governing forces; this much is suggested in the above quoted passage. However, the novel never fully escapes the notion that “passions exert themselves in influencing the conduct of [one’s] life” (129). Thus, the central difficulty of the novel lies in its attempt to make the fine distinction
of passions as “powerful abettors” without also being the “sole authors of all human actions” (79). The difference is to be found in an active, cognitive role that the subject plays in framing a self in response to emotional stimuli. In Life’s Progress, the subtle but important theoretical shift from passion as author to passion as influence plays out as a response to contemporary discourses on human nature. It is important to note here, however, a point that will be explored below in more detail. Modern constructions of emotion still retain an element of excessive affectivity—even to the point of entertaining the possibility of a subject becoming overwhelmed by an emotional response to circumstantial conditions. For the moment, I want only to stress that the overt differences between the conceptualizations of passion offered in Love in Excess and Life’s Progress can be used to chart a larger historical transition in eighteenth-century discourse, whereby affective intensity moves from external to internal subjective spaces.

Writing now outside the amatory context and solidly within that of mid-century domestic fiction, Haywood reformulates her ever-present theme of passions as irresistible, impulsive motivators of action to coincide with contemporary scientific and philosophical discourses concerning “how far the constitution of the outward frame is concerned in the emotions of the inward faculties” (78). From the beginning, Life’s Progress is set up as an empirical conceit, a thought experiment through which the gales of passion are triggered by sensory perceptions. So Natura (who is “uncircumscribed by precept” and, thus, not directed by apriori edicts) acts out an allegory of Lockean understanding through the trial and error of objects that pique his curiosity. The narrator establishes such an experimental mode in the style of philosophy’s logical reasoning: “by curiosity we examine, by examining we compare, and by comparing we are alone enabled to form a right judgment whether of things or persons” (85). It also follows that we form judgements about our passions through examination and comparison of the sensations we gain
through perception. The opening of *Life’s Progress* is clear in establishing that Natura’s constitution is formed of no *a priori* concepts, and his knowledge of things, persons, and the emotions they stir in him will be the product of his experience alone. Throughout his episodic adventures, the text holds true to its premise that Natura’s example, as representative of human nature, is at least as important as the narrative force of his history. This is illustrated well in the final chapter of the novel’s second volume, on ambition. More than anything, it illustrates the ebb and flow inherent to the emotional model that *Life’s Progress* theorizes.

The chapter opens with Natura returning from political exile in Holland. He regains public favor in London, marries, has a son, gains a seat in Parliament, and begins to lobby for a position of greater status at court. At this point of relative comfort and stability, his father dies, followed in quick succession by the death of his wife—happiness is supplanted by grief. Coincidentally, and conveniently, this plot twist wipes the slate clean for the chapter’s primary excursus: “The desire of being well settled in the world is both natural and laudable; but then great care ought to be taken to moderate this passion…for it is the nature of ambition…to be ever craving new acquisitions, ever unsatisfied” (158).

Now thirty-six, Natura settles on another wife, this time solely for the place at court that her uncle is able to afford him. As “love was not now the reigning passion of Natura’s soul,” he has none for his new bride, and his neglect drives her to seek pleasure and dissipated entertainment in *le beau monde*—thus focus on ambition above all else cedes the way for resentment and jealousy (160). The novel’s illustration of the domestic unhappiness that is borne from ambition allows Haywood to dive deep into the inner-workings of the passions. In strong opposition to Addison’s claim, in no. 170 of *The Spectator*, that jealousy is an ill representation of love, Haywood’s narrator maintains that love and jealousy are not mutually inclusive.
Because Natura has never experienced love for his second wife (the novel doesn’t even give her a name), his jealousy is really an outgrowth of his ambition, and her behavior is most offensive because it threatens to offend not his affection but his honor.

The vignette takes pains to present the ways in which marriage devoid of mutual affection is toxic to the emotional health of those involved. The couple keeps up appearances for a while, but “a perpetual dissimulation is what human nature finds among the things which are impossible to perform” (164), and in this lies the crux of the sad tale of Natura’s second marriage: resolving to act in contradistinction to the emotional truth of one’s feelings is “no more than throwing Water against the Wind” (The Rash Resolve, 48). It is worth quoting at length the details of their eventual meeting of the minds and subsequent irreparable break:

It was indeed a kind of farce acted by this unhappy pair, in which both played their parts so awkwardly, that the real character would frequently peep out, and though each dissembled, yet neither was deceived; but as I said before, this could not last for ever; and the ice being broke in some unguarded humour either on the one or the other side, I cannot pretend to affirm on which, the torrent of their mutual disgust burst out with the greater force, from having been so long pent up: it is hard to tell which testified the most virulence, or expressed themselves in the most bitter terms:—all that can be determined is, that those of Natura shewed most of rage, and those his wife made use of, most of hatred. (164)

Here we see the kernel of the vignette’s message: to deny the force of what we learn from our passions is a fatal mistake. Indeed, this is a feature consistent across Haywood’s oeuvre, but Life’s Progress differs from, say, the characterization of D’elmont and Melliora’s passions in Love in Excess in this one aspect: exactly what those feelings are cannot be known with any modicum of certainty. The narrative emphasizes this through the third-person, omniscient narrator’s inability to affirm or determine more than what their passions seem to be.

There is a further consequence of the chapter on ambition that bears teasing out. Life’s Progress also seems to replace the rigid structuring of passion as motivating force (once the
cornerstone of Haywood’s amatory fiction) with a more fluid model of successive passions vying for influence over a character’s mind. Ambition (which the narrator suspects is more likely to be an assemblage of pride and envy “than a passion simple of itself”) fosters jealousy which, unchecked by the rectifying force of love, overflows into rage and hatred (167). Grief can become melancholy if it gives over to despair or can cede the way to joy if it contains a ray of hope. What’s most striking about the structure of Life’s Progress is that it builds its imagery into a proliferation of interconnected emotional states that slip into and out of prominence as reason and inclination permit.

In her concluding remarks on revenge, the narrator illustrates this point in terms of particularly pernicious passions, which “like counter-poisons, destroy the force of each other: and tho’ it is certain, a man may be possessed of many passions at once, and those also may be of different natures…yet will there be a struggle… between them in the breast, and which ever happens to get predominance, will drive out the others in time, and reign alone master of the mind” (177). This model of passions as competing forces has been described by A.O. Hirschman as the theory of “countervailing passions.”22 Citing d’Holbach, Hirschman crystalizes the theory in the notion that “[t]he passions are the true counterweights of the passions; we must not at all attempt to destroy them, but rather try to direct them” (27). Most important is the inherent conflict between a classical model of passions as governing impulses and the modern evolution of passions as competing interests that could be managed. Thus, for Hirschman, the subtle transition from the classical model lies in a shift toward the active, cognitive juggling of passions. No longer direct agents associated with proper names and personas like Eros or Erida, the model of passion at work in Life’s Progress is one that hosts a cast of characters within the
mind, a mind that balances those passions against a variety of other considerations as part of the
determination of one’s actions.

The recent Pixar film *Inside Out* (2015) offers a ready example of how the model of
countervailing passions still operates in the popular imagination today. The film gives viewers an
insider’s perspective on the mind of Riley, a pre-teen girl who is encountering the first
emotionally harrowing experiences of her life. As such, screen time is dominated by animated
characterizations of Joy, Fear, Sadness, and Anger as they negotiate their responses to the
stresses and challenges of moving from Minnesota to San Francisco at a time when Riley’s
emotional psychology is also in an unsettled period of transition. Moreover, *Inside Out* and *Life’s
Progress* seem to agree most in the overarching moral that comes through in both their tales of a
protagonist’s coming to terms with his/her passions—attentiveness to the emotional cues that are
inextricable from experience is more important than determining who’s “driving” at any given
moment.

This is not to say that emotional experience has no effect at all on behavior within the
modern framework that eighteenth-century discourses are developing. Certainly, as in the above
cited case of Natura’s marriage-ending *tête-à-tête* with his second wife, unguarded honesty
among unhappy lovers can result in intensely moving emotional responses, regardless of the
historical context within which they occur. And how one responds is not always within his/her
control. In some ways, the classically inflected tenet of passion’s affective tendency to
overwhelm the mind and move the body to action is similar to what Raymond Williams
describes in *Marxism and Literature* as a “residual” element of classical epistemology that “is
still alive in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an
effective element of the present.”23 Haywood’s seeming contradictions reflect the negotiated
relationship between an inherited lexicon of emotion and a newly emergent conceptual framework of empiricist epistemology. In fact, she addresses this subject with striking specificity in another mid-career text *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love* (1726), a text that does not shy away from inflammatory suggestions of love as an ungovernable “Tempest” at the same time that it cautions readers against the common tendency to “impute infinitely more to [love’s] influence, than ever was simply in its Power of performing, either in *Good* or *Ill*.

*Reflections* is helpful for our purposes because it is a hybrid of philosophy and fiction. After a short introduction and prefatory “Explanation of LOVE” that functions as a theoretical treatise on the subject, Haywood offers a series of amatory vignettes that are intended to illustrate “a great many Examples of the *good* and *bad* Consequences of that PASSION” (11, 2). She is careful to cite both ancient and modern sources in order to explain why the passion of love can incite people to both tender and malicious actions. The answer at which the “Explanation” arrives, and the premise of the amatory fictions that follow, is strikingly modern. Because we know from many examples, “Collected from the best Ancient and Modern HISTORIES,” that love manifests itself in contradictory ways, it can’t possibly be the case that love has a uniform causal character. It is impossible, therefore, to consider “*Love* merely as *Love,*” as a distinctly traceable causal agent (10). As such, we can only know love in terms of its various effects, and this is where things get muddy. Because the effects of love are only observable after they pass through the cognitive processes of subjects who have been inflamed by the passion, they are bound to change radically depending on the psychological dispositions of affected individuals.

Thus, *Reflections* bestows a considerable amount of agency on the would-be patient in suggesting that love itself requires the active, cognitive participation of a subject in order to exist. Haywood’s prefatory study also suggests that the modal operations of love will always
regain an element of uncertainty, for what will transpire when “Love finds Entrance in a Mind” is anybody’s guess (18). Clearly, Haywood’s *Reflections* on love as an internal cognitive process demonstrate that, by the mid 1720s, her rhetorical description of the passions has taken a distinctly modern turn. More even than that, Haywood is also careful not to ignore the fact that even active, cognitive emotional responses are affective in the sense that our emotional feelings are not, and never have been, a matter of choice. If the concept of love cannot exist independent of a lover’s psychological processes, a person cannot will himself into or out of love. Moreover, it is always possible that one may react in volatile, unpredictable ways to a psychological condition that is both real and unaccountable. Haywood’s attention to this phenomenon is so remarkable because she insists on setting aside a space for extreme passability within the modern logic of affective experience. As such, her work reflects a wider repercussion of eighteenth-century passions discourse, which tends to reinscribe a residual passivity into the modern system of active subjectivity. To illustrate how this works in *Reflections*, let us look briefly to the cautionary tale of the love affair between Sophiana, a susceptible young girl of exquisite beauty and high quality but little means, and Aranthus, a gentleman of both “Birth and Fortune” (30).

Sophiana is offered as an example of one who allows her amorous feelings to take precedence over all other considerations, including the discretions of socially acceptable behavior. Notably, she does not fall in love with Aranthus at first sight, but once love does enter her mind, the acceleration of its intensity is swift and unchecked. The combination of Aranthus’ charm and passionate addresses,

made her in a little Time listen to him with Pleasure, and soon after become enamour’d of him to that violent Degree, that she cou’d not conceal it from the view of the whole World; … He seem’d so wholly to engross her Soul, that she not only forgot that Decorum due to her Sex and Birth, but also grew Remiss in her Devoirs to those, whom it was her Interest as well as Duty to make it her Study to oblige. (31)
Because the intensity of her emotion makes her incapable of being discreet with the shows of her affection, her behavior results in the embarrassment of Aranthus and his subsequent disengagement of his amours. Love, here, is not a thing that hits Sophiana all of a sudden (she participates in and allows its effects to take hold), but her feelings are not for that reason purely a matter of her own choosing. And this is the residual active-passive inflection that I want to emphasize in this example. On the one hand, Haywood certainly suggests that Sophiana is at fault for allowing herself to act entirely according to the whims of her passions. In this regard, *Reflections* serves a cautionary didactic purpose in allowing “observers to decipher the motivations and behaviors of individuals and, subsequently, to more closely monitor their own passions.”25 On the other hand, the intensity of her passions (first love, then grief and despair at Aranthus’ lack of reciprocation) is not something that can be helped—it is a real condition of her experience.

Sophiana’s ill-advised letter of complaint to Aranthus inspects both sides of that dynamic:

But whither am I going? To what a shameful Confession does my uncautious Tenderness transport me!—Confusion on the guilty Scene of ruinous Delight—‘tis hateful to Remembrance, and I cou’d curse my self and thee, and even those Principles which told me I did ill, yet were too weak to hinder me from sinning.—If Love be criminal, how monstrously guilty have I been!—But wherefore do I question it? (35)

The intensity that is the reason, if not the excuse, for her otherwise unaccountable behavior is a residual form of classical passion’s active forces. It is in this way that Sophiana finds her knowingly illicit behavior justifiable, because in line with the felt truth of her experience. Principled reason, alone, is not enough to redirect her away from acting in accord with what the heart approves. And, on that score, Sophiana echoes the epigraph on the title page of *Reflections*, “Love is not Sin, but where ‘tis sinful Love” (2). Whether or not she can actually help herself
from acting (the text is rather ambiguous on that point), she can certainly not help herself from feeling. Moreover, *Reflections* consistently encourages readers to see passion’s impulses as “Agonies of [the] Mind” and not the predetermined dictates of external forces (49, my emphasis). As such, the text knowingly cuts both ways in its philosophical exploration of passion’s becoming modern even as the cornerstone of its philosophical argument is a round rejection of love as a causal force.

Haywood concludes her prefatory remarks with a comment on the purpose of her discourse, a comment made necessary because she has just declared that “[t]he deepest Penetration will never be able to fathom the hidden Mistery, Learning cannot explode it: Inferences drawn from History or Experience will but more puzzle us in the fruitless Search, and still the Question will remain unanswerable!” (10). What, therefore, can we possibly know for sure about love in the wake of this profound uncertainty? The modern turn in her answer is quite pronounced, for we are inclined to see contradiction in love’s various effects (of good and evil) when “we imagine it of much greater Force than in Reality it can boast” (10). As such, we must be ready to relinquish belief that love has a constant character that precedes individual experience that can be traced back from individual effects to a universal cause. Once divested of classical expectations, we can get down to the heart of the matter:

Let us take away a little of that almighty Power which we ascribe to *Love*, and allow something more to *Nature* and those Inclinations born with us, and we shall immediately reconcile the seeming Impossibility. *Love*, like the Grape’s potent Juice, but heightens *Nature*, and makes the conceal’d Sparks of Good, or Ill, blaze out, and show themselves to the wond’ring World! (10)

Without belaboring the point here, the shift from love, itself, to the inclination of human nature as a means of explaining emotion’s powerful motivation also entails an important consequence, for it suggests that human nature contains within it the inexplicable affective tendencies that once
were understood as external and other; the intensity of passion, as Sophiana can attest, is no less acute in a modern context than it was in a classical one. What’s more, the concept and the feeling have now become divorced from each other, where passions like love and grief are belated appellations that we apply, retroactively, as markers of affective intensity—both real and unaccountable; what’s more, they are part and parcel of our own cognitive processing. The corpus of Haywood’s archive, I argue, represents the historical coming to terms with the phenomenon of passion’s becoming modern that is taking place across eighteenth-century discourse.

In *Life’s Progress*, this signature of attentiveness to *emotional truths* (if not necessarily emotional meanings) that are not ascribed to passions as agents, plays out most strongly in the novel’s aesthetic theorizations of a sexual politics of desire. In her study on the romance origins of the eighteenth-century novel, Deborah Ross suggests a different kind of realism at work within women’s writing, one that focuses less on conventions of historical and social verisimilitude and more on the revaluation of “their own, alternative truth,” a truth in opposition to the patriarchal social structure often reified in romances written by men. More broadly, texts that work on the emotional register within the eighteenth century must also develop a concept of epistemological truth that relies as much on that which is veridically felt as on that which is objectively verifiable. Ronald de Sousa has recently made a compelling argument for considering “emotional truth” as an analytic category by claiming that a cognitive view of emotions is “better construed on the model of perception than belief.” For de Sousa, emotions are axiological because they trigger “the locus of our capacity to be moved, and yet not moved to any specific behavior” (37). This model of emotion, which walks a fine line between cognitivism and non-cognitivism, is useful for illustrating the theoretical and political challenge at work in
Life’s Progress, wherein Haywood mobilizes the language of contemporary natural philosophy to complicate the logic of the passions. For, the novel reinscribes passion as a capacity to be moved and the study of human nature as bearing witness to that capacity.

This is most evident in the third, and final, volume when the plot-driven narrative of Natura’s adventurous younger days morphs into a series of periodical-style essays on the nature of the passions. Within these excurses, Haywood offers an explicit picture of the passions as closely linked to their motivating objects, and here we do well to recall the Lockean model outlined in chapter one, above. For Locke, as for Haywood, the passions do not arise ex nihilo; they must be moved by things, but Haywood’s aesthetic reformulation of this concept ultimately serves as an extended commentary on Lockean uneasiness and the desire it kindles as the predominant motivating force of human nature. We will remember that Locke reserves a privileged place for pleasure and pain as the key inducement to human industry. “Man,” he claims, “would be a very idle and unactive Creature, and pass his time only in a lazy lethargick Dream” without the wisely ordained annexation of feelings to objects and our consequent tendency to pursue objects that promise pleasure and avoid those that portend pain.28 In Life’s Progress, Haywood makes even more clear than does Locke that the logic of motivation—which moves from sensation through reflection and determination to action—is also the logic on which the passions turn. Thus, “hope has its period in possession; – fear ceases, either by the cause being removed, or by a fatal certainty of some dreaded evil; –ambition dies within us, on a just sense of the folly of pursuing it…” (175). Here the novel exposes its underlying ethos: the passions that usher us through life are connected to the objects that incite them. They are coeval with desire. Desire, though, is almost never depicted as something that should be curbed without question; it is far more important to come to terms with one’s desire than to contain, restrict, or
dissimulate it. Moreover, Haywood’s figure of the passions is consistently (one might say self-consciously) painted in step with the foresight of an “all-wise and all-beneficent Author of our being” so as to borrow the language as well as the logic of the Lockean model (172). The twist of *Life’s Progress* is that it employs both to validate the sexual proclivities of our bodies as part and parcel of the whole structure of human nature (172).

For Haywood, as for David Hume, “reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions,” and *Life’s Progress*, like Hume, does not lay claim to this idea merely as an excuse to let passions run amok. Passions are only the sparks that motivate our actions, actions which require both reason and judgment for one to carry out his/her desires with any effect. Haywood only deviates from the moral agenda behind both Lockean and Humean motivations when she uses the logic of *natural philosophy* to unburden the *natural vitality* of sexual desire from its moral, social, and legal fetters. This is evident when, in Rome, Natura encounters a girl who is alone in a box at the opera.

When Natura finds her enraptured by “the music, and the words…[and] so much dissolved in extasy” the narrator asserts that he “must have been *more*, or *less*, than *man*, to have behaved otherwise than” satisfying the desires of *her* “unguarded nature” at that moment; he does so with alacrity (133, 134). In warning the “severely virtuous” reader against unfairly condemning the “transgressing pair,” the narrator takes pains to attribute passion’s “irresistible impulse” both to a “surprise of the senses” (something empirically felt before it is rationally endorsed) and to the operations of nature (133, 134). In such a light, these unimpeded provocations of passion differ from the classical forces that pull the strings of D’elmont’s character in *Love in Excess*. Furthermore, Haywood wields this naturalistic depiction of sexual compulsion to political effect in the vignette’s conclusion, which I quote here in full:
Were it not for the precepts of religion and morality, the fears of scandal, and shame of offending against law and custom, man would undoubtedly think himself intitled to the same priviliges which the brute creation in this point enjoy above him; and it is not therefore strange, that whenever reason nods, as it sometimes will do, even in those who are most careful to preserve themselves under its subjection, that the senses ever craving, ever impatient for gratification, should readily snatch the opportunity of indulging themselves, and which it is observable they ordinarily do to the greater excess, by so much the longer, and the more strictly they have been kept under restraint. (134, all emphasis is my own)

Here Haywood’s language cuts an ambiguous figure. While it could be read as endorsing the restraints of religion, morality, and social mores that set up clear and ready boundaries around the baser passions of human nature, the larger context of the passage literally asks prudish readers to consider the scene independent of those perceptive lenses. At best, she is agnostic about the social apparatuses that proscribe a very limited space for licit sexual activity, and scenes like Natura’s experience at the Roman opera are explicitly intended to express the futility of codifying certain effects of desire as good or ill.

Kathleen Lubey has recently challenged uncritical readings of Haywood’s sexual politics of desire in asserting that she employed amatory passions “not out of an emancipatory or modern feminist impulse but because [they teach] the most unmistakable lesson about love: that its overwhelming force must be monitored lest it escalate into impropriety.”31 From such vantage, we might be inclined to see this brief conquest of Natura as a warning to female readers to keep their guard up at every moment, to enforce social convention through the attention-getting aspect of erotic reading. However, in this instance, the narrator’s direct address to “severely virtuous” readers suggests a different kind of reflexive act at work. She cautions those who are too quick to judge and asks them to rethink the foundations of their own judgments. What’s at stake here is precisely the fact that the ideological structures of religion, morality, law and custom are arbitrary, and we know this because they inscribe as taboo that which the most basic review of
human interaction reveals to be natural. What’s more, those precepts assert their ideological dominance through emotional coding wherein transgression is associated with fear and shame. We should, however, stop short of confusing the novel’s critique of ideology with the author’s implicit encouragement of her readers to act exactly as her characters do. For Lubey’s argument is more than compelling in its assertion that Haywood’s overarching project is not the excitement of her female readers to ruin in the real terms of their contemporary moment. Nevertheless, there is a strong provocation inherent in this scene that couldn’t possibly be construed as a veiled endorsement of social conventions; if readers are getting a virtual sexual education (one that allows them to experience the eroticism of sex acts without transgression), we should not lose sight of the fact that they are getting a political education as well.32

In theoretical terms, the novel’s provocation is a direct inversion of the Lockean concept of freedom though self-mastery, which is expressed most explicitly in On the Conduct of the Understanding.33 Locke warns against the slavery of a mind that is “negligently imploid” and allows itself to be “captivated” rather than purposefully attending to its “present circumstances and interests” as well as its passions.34 Haywood undermines the notion of dominant reason as the proper counterbalance to passion by calling attention to the fact that the checks to our natural passions are the precepts of religion, morality, law and custom. In the absence of an a priori structure of human nature, precepts must necessarily be human constructions. As such, reason is the faculty that serves to formulate and reinforce arbitrary structures of order and regulation, reward and punishment, thus generating fear and shame as internalized responses to an external set of conditions which, in the absence of reason’s empire of subjection and restraint, “the natural history of our Bodies” alone would teach us to be blameless.35 On this score, a truly empirical account of human nature would necessarily privilege the emotional truths found in
one’s desiring senses over the manufactured truths of reason. At least when it comes to sex (the novel is not so Mandevillian on subjects of ambition, revenge or avarice) Life’s Progress strikes a radically liberating politics of desire, even if that politics is not, necessarily, posited as a model for behavior.

To put this all back into the context of the broader purpose of this chapter—offering Haywood as an exemplary figure for understanding the eighteenth-century novel’s theorization of the passions as a function of modernity—it is abundantly clear that Life’s Progress never deviates from its presentation of experience as a complex interplay of reasons, resolutions, passions and actions. Modern subjects, for whom Natura is a stand-in, are apt to make “gross mistakes concerning the springs of action in [their] breasts,” because motivation functions on a sliding scale of countervailing passions where meanings are always slightly belated to feelings (185). What the reader learns, above all else, from this bird’s eye view of life’s progress through the passions is that “Man is a stranger to nothing, more than to himself” (185-86).

**THE RASH RESOLVE: PASSIONS IN TRANSITION**

Thus far, I’ve shown how Life’s Progress achieves a modern conception of passion as it tarries with the interplay of active and passive characterizations of the mind. It does so through a messy picture of human nature where readers are tempted to look beyond order, reserve, and self-regulation as the guides for how one ought to behave. However, the passions are never presented as a direct alternative to reason. They are *more true* than strict rational precepts, yet, at the same time, they offer only variable answers to the question of human motivation. As such, the text cannot do more than assert a modest claim: the modern subject ignores the passions at her own peril. This is both an outgrowth of and a far cry from the classical concept of passion at work in Love in Excess. In the remainder of this chapter I will turn to The Rash Resolve, a text
that serves as a nexus of the classical and modern conceptions of the passions and as a middle
ground in the progress of Haywood’s novels. I do so, first, to pinpoint a moment in the trajectory
of Haywood’s career that exemplifies the shift toward modern emotional subjectivity and,
second, to call attention to the recurrent aesthetic tropes that eighteenth-century novels employ as
they bear witness to their own theorization of passion’s becoming modern.

In the opening pages of *The Rash Resolve*, the narrator makes familiar claims to its
pedigree as an anti-romance, clarifying for the reader that the protagonist will receive no undue
additions from non-diegetic machinery: “No chilling Fears from within – No Omens from
without – No Secret Warning from her Guardian Angel” will harass the narrative or portend its
outcome (20). Nonetheless, in terms of its plot structure and emotional signatures, there’s a
strong sense of passivity. The narrative is largely given over to the extravagant improbability of
its action and the characters’ unmistakable passions are almost entirely responsible for directing
their actions. In short, *The Rash Resolve* is as strong an example of an incubator for classical
passion as one will find in Haywood’s amatory fiction.

At the center of its romance plot is Emanuella, the daughter of a Spanish nobleman and
governor of Porto-Rico. Orphaned at the age of fifteen and far from her home in Madrid,
Emanuella is left in the charge of the deceitful Don Pedro—a man to whom Emanuella’s father
mistakenly entrusted her care and the management of her inheritance. Don Pedro devises a series
of attempts to defraud Emanuella of her fortune. After being abducted and imprisoned by Don
Pedro, escaping to Madrid, and arguing a legal trial before the king of Spain, the heroine gains
her freedom and the right to her inheritance; it is at this point that the central story-line of the
novel begins.
Now that Emanuella is set up in a proper domestic environment, in the home of her uncle, Don Jabin, she can both reassert the perfections of her character and establish a place in Madrid society commensurate to her birth. News of how she achieved victory over Don Pedro through the paragon of her virtue spreads throughout the capital and Emanuella’s character inspires a cult of celebrity: “she was so universally applauded by all the knowing part of the World, that it was sufficient to be accounted well thought of by her, to engage the Reputation of being a fine Woman” (25). Emanuella possesses every bit of the unparalleled, unquestioned and self-evident virtue of a romance heroine and the structural conceit of her perfection provides a ready home for the figuration of classical passions—a point most evident when her love interest, Count Emilius, enters the novel and advances the romance plot.

Though the publicity of her excellence gains her the attention of almost all eligible suitors within the sphere of her influence, there is one wrinkle that prevents her from entering the marriage market—Don Pedro hasn’t yet delivered her inheritance from Porto-Rico. Until then, the perfection of her figure, as bride, remains incomplete. So, she resolves to act with utmost reserve in the company of all potential suitors. She executes this scheme flawlessly until her jealous cousin, Berillia, resolves to act as a foil to her perfection. Berillia is emblematic of the many young women who “made it their whole Study by all the little Artifices they were Mistresses of, to lessen the brightness of a Character whose Radiency discover’d the Imperfections of their own” (25). Incensed by Emanuella’s admonishment of “her too great Affection for a young Fop, who had nothing to recommend him to the Approbation of a Woman of Discretion” (26), she becomes hell-bent on teaching Emanuella that no one is immune to the passion of love or its natural attendant, carnal desire. Haywood’s narrator is characteristically verbose in her description of Emanuella’s transition to the knowledge of love:
Emanuella, among the multiplicity of her Adorers, behav’d herself in such a manner, that might defy the strictest Scrutiny – all her Actions – all her Words – all her Looks, were govern’d by Prudence, and her malicious Observer [Berillia] began to think it would be but Labour lost to attempt to blast either her Virtue or Reputation. But alas! what Courage, what Discretion! what cool Reserve, what Sanctity of Wishes can defend the Heart when once the God of Love has found an Entrance there! that Tyrant Passion lords it o’er the Mind, fills every Faculty, and leaves no room for any other Thought – drives Consideration far away – overturns Reflection – and permits no Image but it self to dwell in Fancy’s Region. The soft and tender Soul of Emanuella, was a fit Temple for the enslaving Deity to work his utmost wonders in; and that she no sooner felt his Power, was not because she was less susceptible than others of her Acquaintance, but that her Taste was more delicate, and so many different Perfections as were necessary to attract her Admiration, were very difficult to be found in one Man. (26, my emphasis)

From this point forward, the reader knows exactly what she can expect, for the author/narrator makes no bones about what kind of romance she is writing. Likewise, the mark of a classical conception of passions in the above passage is unmistakable; there is no tinge of uncertainty about what is felt or who/what engenders that feeling. Unlike in Life’s Progress, the view of the mind presented here admits of no sliding scale where actions, words and looks tarry between prudent discretion and the full-blown fancy of emotional abandon. In either case, there is no room for any other thought precisely because this model is not reliant upon reflection or the active processing of the relationship between one’s own perceptions and one’s feelings. In strict keeping with the classical conception, the novel telegraphs Emanuella’s soon to be experience of love as an immediate usurper of her own agency, and the overt attribution of that agency to the classical machinery of Eros, “the God of Love” only drives this point home ad nauseum.

So when Emilius, the “one Man” that does meet Emanuella’s impossible qualifications, comes on the scene, he too is painted in terms of romance subjectivity, and the reader should not be surprised to find that he quickly falls into a fit of love, possessed of a “perfect Knowledge of…the Passion he was at present fir’d with” (27). Their relationship has all the makings of an ideal companionate marriage of mutual affection, for “Emilius was really possess’d of all those
Qualities which go to the making up a perfect Lover,” and now, instead of prudence and reserve, Emanuella’s “Words, her Looks, her every Action betray’d the Wishes of her Heart,” desires inspired by a love that the text never calls into question (32,33). As a point of comparison, Life’s Progress undermines, rather than ratifies, the universal constancy of love as predetermination of future actions, for in Natura’s cosmology love has its greatest distinction in being subject to fluctuations “and may be terminated by a thousand accidents” (175). However, in order to fully understand what we gain from reading The Rash Resolve’s attention to the passions in the context of Haywood’s other work, it is important to note that, despite the palpable shift in aesthetic conceptualization of subjectivity that occurs between 1719 and 1748, what remains consistent is the clearly drawn politics of female sexual desire. Moreover, it is on this point that, I contend, that Rash Resolve deserves more careful scholarly attention, particularly in light of the theoretical model of the passions through which its sexual politics is envisioned.

With full assistance from Berillia, the novel’s romance plot peaks at the moment when Emilius and Emanuella gratify the urgency of their natural passion as they venture from one liberty to another “till rapacious, greedy Love, too conscious of his Power, encroached on all, and nothing left for Honour” (34). The deed itself, however, is not completely illicit, for it occurs only after they made “mutual Vows” to each other and she made a “firm Resolution to marry him” as soon as the ship of her inheritance arrives in Madrid (34). From the very instant of this consummation, the novel shrouds Emilius and Emanuella’s act of love in ambiguity—it is both outside of their power to avoid and, in terms of the religious standards of the time, conducted in the most virtuous manner possible. The only thing missing is the socially and legally binding contract of marriage in the eyes of the church and state. Moreover, it is not emotional truth that leads them astray but Emanuella’s too-conscious concern for the social and economic apparatus
that is grafted on to a private concept (marriage for love) that ultimately derails the romance plot. Before going further, it is perhaps best to summarize the novel from this point forward.

The romance narrative unravels when the ship carrying Emanuella’s fortune is lost in a storm. Berillia seals her cousin’s fate by using the misfortune to devise an elaborate plan for convincing Emilius to abandon Emanuella in her time of greatest need. The details of this deceit are intricate but important to the novel’s overall ethos. She begins by relating a fabricated message to him on behalf of Emanuella, saying that “her whole Fortune…being lost, she cannot think of marrying any Man, but one whose Estate can make up for the Deficiency of hers, and yours cannot, she has been inform’d” (37). This half-truth is very close to Emanuella’s own feelings of embarrassment and despair at not being able to bring a proper dowry to her marriage. When Emilius’ love allows him to intuit Emanuella’s true feelings, Berillia heaps on a much more damaging account which discourages him from clearing things up with Emanuella in person. She tells him in confidence, making him swear an oath not to divulge the secret to anyone, that Emanuella has been unfaithful to him, the result of that “criminal Conversation” being that she is pregnant (67). What’s more, according to Berillia’s ruse, Emanuella knows that Emilius’ love will prove too strong to allow him to quit his pursuit after just one dismissal, and she hopes he will not do so, “seeming to shun, the more [she] engages your Pursuit” (37). Berillia ultimately convinces him that Emanuella really does want to marry him, but only in order to cover the shame of losing her other lover who will not marry her because she is now poor. Taking the bait, Count Emilius runs off.

Emanuella, in turn, is convinced by Berillia that Emilius leaves because of her financial misfortune. She curses his supposed inconstancy and, in a state of dejection, decides to take up the monastic life in a convent, “resolving to punish her easy Belief, and the Condescension she
had made to Emilius, in as rigid a manner as was possible” (40, emphasis in original). Shortly after arriving at the convent, Berillia’s premonition proves correct: Emanuella is pregnant with Emilius’ child. Upon discovering her own condition, Emanuella flees into the country on foot. Rather than seeking out Emilius and making him own their mutual vows, she pursues a life of penitent servitude and anonymity. In the meanwhile, Emilius finds a new love and marries while Emanuella bears his son in self-imposed exile. Throughout the novel, they both second-guess their resolutions—his honor-bound promise, against his better judgment, not to betray Berillia’s confidence and her determination never to ask anything of Emilius at the expense of her comfort, to hide her shame.

Therein lies the crux for interpreting the characters’ motivations, the moral embedded within the novel’s title and, consequently, the social critique that it implies. At first glance, one would expect the title to be in reference to the “rashness” of desire, as Carol Stewart claims in her critical introduction to the text, and evidence of “the danger of giving way to passion” (xi). Haywood herself seems to corroborate such a reading in her dedication of Lasselia (a novel written simultaneously with The Rash Resolve) to Edward Howard, eighth Earl of Suffolk.37 “My design in writing this little Novel,” she owns:

being only to remind the unthinking Part of the World, how dangerous it is to give way to Passion, will, I hope, excuse the too great Warmth, which may perhaps, appear in some particular Pages; for without the Expression being invigorated in some Measure, proportionate to the Subject, ‘twou’d be impossible for a Reader to be sensible how far it touches him, or how probable it is that he is in falling into those Inadvertencies which the Examples I relate wou’d caution him to avoid.38

Despite the overt terms through which Haywood’s dedication melds with a conventional view of novel reading as morally instructive, I contend that we should be cautious in how far we allow this sentiment to influence our reading of Haywood’s amatory aesthetic. Firstly, this public statement could not have been written in a wholly disinterested spirit. The doubly self-conscious
motives of currying the favor of a patron, on the one hand, and avoiding condemnation of censors, on the other, make it such that we should be dubious of taking it at face value. Secondly, and most importantly, when one looks closely into the particulars of the novel itself, one finds that *The Rash Resolve* just does not bear out an unqualified reading in terms of either its “avowed cautionary purpose [or] the perception of the author’s work as mere titillation.”

The work of offering a more comprehensive reading of the relationship between that either/or proposition begins with close attention to the title itself, the significance of which is hinted at in the novel’s opening paragraph:

Tho’ nothing is more laudable than a Firmness of Resolution, yet there is no one thing more apt to bring us into Misfortunes, than too inconsiderately to form them: Whoever fixes a Determination to do, or leave undone any Action of Importance, ought to advise with Time, and deliberately weigh not only all apparent Obstacles, but also all that may possibly arise either to thwart the present Intention, or obligate Repentance if compleated. (7)

The message here is, perhaps purposely, ambiguous. It begins on a theme similar to that of Johnson’s “The Vanity of Human Wishes,” which warns us: plan and resolve as you may, there are some things in life for which we cannot account in advance. While the passage hints at an alternative position by introducing the notion of repentance for inconsiderately determined actions, it never clarifies the point; rather, it runs headlong into the first idealistic description of Emanuella as “the most lively and penetrating Wit that ever was known, a Wisdom wonderful in Youth, a Depth of Learning which scarce any of the Fair Sex could boast, an elevated Genius, and Sublimity of Thought, a Soul composed of …all those Virtues which wear the Name of Manly, joined with…every Grace with which the softer Specie attracts” (7). Whatever other conclusions might be drawn from the opening paragraph, we can say without hesitation that it casts a shade of doubt on the certainty of carrying out even one’s most well-intentioned
resolutions, and Emanuella is clearly offered as the best possible combination of human faculties for making well-reasoned judgments.

We must, then, consider the kinds of resolutions that Emanuella actually makes as her story unfolds. Her first major resolution, as I already discussed, was to act in perfect accord with public approbation in response to her many suitors. As we saw, love easily disabuses her of both “her own Strength of Reason” and the determination of her “Self-Will” (31). However, it is not love itself that brings her calamity, and this is most evident in the role that Berillia plays in causing her dismay. For her aim is “that of exposing the Dishonour…and bring[ing] on her unhappy Cousin, the Shame and Misery, as well as Guilt, which waits on a too fond Belief” (35).

The most crucial point however, one which cannot be overstressed, is that there is nothing inherently shameful, miserable, or guilty in the union of Emanuella and Emilius as it stands, not even according to the moral precepts of the novel’s contemporary moment. For, at least thirty years after the publication of *The Rash Resolve*, when Parliament passed Hardwicke’s Marriage Act in 1753, the Church of England still openly “recognized a verbal contract or ‘spousals’…as forming a binding marriage.” It was only in they eyes of property law that such bonds were seen as illegitimate.40

Moreover, despite the narrator’s milquetoast paean to decorum in labeling Emanuella’s “Condition both blameable and pitiable,” all censure is immediately undercut as “They were now arriv’d to such a height of Love confess’d, that the most binding Vows of everlasting Constancy had pass’d between them” (34), and, lest we be too quick to think that Emanuella was duped by a beguilingly handsome Emilius, it was he who “often press’d that the Ceremony of the Church might put it past the power of even Fate it self to deprive him of the Blessing she had made him hope” (34). To put a very fine point on it, his virtuous *resolution* to solemnize their tryst in the
eyes of both church and state is thwarted by none other than Emanuella’s own, and second
major, resolution not to marry until after “the return of the Ships sent for that purpose should
make her Mistress of that Wealth which was her Due” (34). While Emilius heeds the novel’s
warning against ‘best-laid plans,’ Emanuella is resolved not to move forward without all the
pieces of an ideal marriage in place (the social, the economic, the companionate, and the
passionate), so she sacrifices the good to the perfect and loses them both. In this scenario, the
conviction that errs on the side of social convention is also the more rash resolve.

Even after the narrative arc of ‘Emilius and Emanuella Forever’ splits into two separate
plot lines, the novel continues to build its case against socio-normative precepts in favor of
emotional truths. At a pivotal moment when it looks like their misunderstanding might be
rectified, the reconciliation fails because Emilius cannot challenge the dubious information he
has of Emanuella’s guilt “without Breach of the Vow he had made to Berillia,” so the novel’s
path to happiness is again undone by too strong adherence to honor and custom, in short, to
valuing principles over passions (40). On Emanuella’s side, all her resolutions in the second half
of the novel are made in the spirit of self-punishment. In fact, her self-inflicted misery is so
severe that it is difficult to read it as anything less than an indictment of customs that make love
a sin.

The final piece of evidence for interpreting the titular moral lies in Emanuella’s third
major resolve, and the last impediment to the novel’s resolution, when she strikes out on her own
to hide the disgrace of her pregnancy. The novel paints her destitution in no uncertain terms:

She was infinitely more wretched than any other Woman would have been in the like
Circumstances, by the Addition of a superior Understanding – and the Greatness of her
Spirit, and the Fortitude which had so well enabled her to bear all other Misfortunes, serv’d
here but to increase the Misery of her Condition, and prevent her from stooping to those
Measures by which she alone could hope to secure her Reputation, and screen what had
happen’d from the Knowledge of a censorious and unpitying World. (49)
It is precisely because she is set apart from other women by the possession of “a Soul composed of Honour, Courage…Fortitude, and all those Virtues which wear the Name of Manly” that her suffering is destined to be so severe (7). For those principled virtues also teach her to hold the social values of reputation, propriety, and justice in highest esteem, so that she feels greater pains for transgressing them. Moreover, the strength of her character is what shields her from crumbling under the weight of the unduly harsh punishment she foists upon herself and, thus, to continue enduring it. This is where the resolution comes into play.

The novel introduces a few possibilities for how she might proceed with her pregnancy. Implicitly, she could stay in the convent, have the baby in secret, relinquish it to the church, return to Madrid, and resume life as usual—a not uncommon practice. Explicitly, and preferable to the romance plot, she could write to Emilius, clear up the misunderstanding and, at the very least, “oblig[e] him to protect and support her in those Miseries, to which her Love for him had reduc’d her” (49). Alternately, she could admit her situation to her uncle who would, we presume, provide for her comfort and advise her on how to move forward. The first possibility is overshadowed by the other two. The last she dismisses out of hand because of her hyper-consciousness of modesty and shame. As to appealing to the “Honor and Gratitude” of Emilius, she rejects it with a firmly resolved declaration of her resentment. “No, rather let me suffer all the Plagues that Heaven can inflict, or Flesh endure – Let me be driven to Want, to Beggary – exposed to publick Infamy, the Sport of every Slave…it will be a less Shock – less Horror than an Obligation to…the hated, loath’d Emilius” (49). So the plot carries on to make her suffer, more or less, all the things she wishes upon herself. Significantly, it is none other than “the Haughtiness of her Soul” that prevents the “Eclaircissment” that would have restored the romance plot and alleviated her suffering (49, 67).
On this score, there is far more evidence within the text to suggest that the most rash resolvés occur when one denies rather than gives oneself over to the physical and emotional forces of love. It is not unreasonable to suggest, then, that embedded within the ambivalent signals of the novel’s endorsement of conventional morality is an undercurrent of criticism toward received social conventions regarding sexual conduct, in line with the critique we saw in *Life’s Progress*. Indeed, every one of the censures that Emanuella experiences comes to her through a causal chain reaching back to the reserve she shows in not marrying Emilius for lack of fortune, a fortune he cares less about than her love. Moreover, throughout the many scenes of Emanuella’s suffering, the novel harbors moments that suggest love as the operative term for her eventual redemption.

From the moment when Berillia gives Emanuella the false account of Emilius’ inconstancy, the reader is assured that under all “the stormy Passions [that] rolled in her tortur’d Bosom…Emanuella’s Soul distain’d those Testimonies of continued Weakness, which however bitter they may appear in the *Expression*, the *Meaning* still is *Love*” (39). Thus it will require a considerable amount of beguiling on Berillia’s part, and rationalization on Emanuella’s, before she makes the resolution to deny it.

In a scene of poignant affirmation, the political context of the novel’s theme is perhaps most palpable, and it occurs at the birth of Emanuella’s son, Victorinus. Haywood here pulls no punches in presenting the “illegitimate” birth as one to be reveled in, rather than reviled: “Had the Ceremony of the Church made *Emilius* as much her Husband, as by his Vows he ought to have acknowledg’d himself…she could not have loved his Son with greater Fondness” (54). What’s more, the love that emerges—a clear manifestation of the one so vividly painted earlier between Emanuella and Emilius—softens Emanuella’s convictions and her ironclad reverence
for what the “busy Crowd” holds as the standard for approbation (31). “Even Virtue was become less dear; and she could scarce repent she had been guilty of a Breach of it, so much she priz’d the Effect – and it would only have been with Transports of unconceivable Affection she had beheld the lovely Babe, if the Reflection how little it was in her power to do for him, had not sometimes given a check to the Pleasure she took in calling him her own” (54).

If this depiction of “too great Warmth” is intended as an example of what Haywood would caution others to avoid, such cautioning comes with an enormous caveat—the transgression is liable to be accompanied by so great a love that it could make one happy to forget her obligation to the precepts that assigned it ignominy in the first place. More even than that, this genuine and generous scene in praise of a mother’s love for her child, regardless of circumstance, establishes a clear break within the narrative as well, after which point Emanuella’s efforts are concerted in setting up a life outside of Madrid (the locus where social conventions are set), a life whose object is love and devotion, not reputation. Finally, it is under these circumstances that the stage is set for the novel’s dénouement, one that shatters its own conception of romance subjectivity and paves the way for a modern affective impulse.

Emanuella’s trials come to an end in the home of Donna Jacinta, a young widow of independent wealth who takes her in as governess to her children but treats her “more like a Sister than a Servant,” and the plot resolves when Emilius and his wife Julia, who is Donna Jacinta’s cousin, come to visit (62). Upon seeing Victorinus, Julia immediately marks his resemblance to her husband and will not rest until she talks to his mother. Emanuella, who now assumed the name of Placillia, in evidence of her resolve to harbor her shame silently in pursuit of a quiet anonymous life, sees her worst fears come to fruition. So when all of the dirty laundry of her life’s adventures is aired “[i]t would be impossible to represent the disturb’d Motions of
Emanuella’s constitution dissolves as she is brought face to face with her past. Donna Jacinta prevents her from leaping from her chamber window and Emilius, who independently discovered the truth of Berillia’s treachery, finally clears the air—all but signaling Emanuella’s death knell. Most striking, however, is the way in which love engenders a chain of forgiveness in order to bring the narrative to a conclusion. Not only do the original lovers forgive each other for acting contrary to their better nature but Emanuella also admits to Julia that she, herself, broke her unconsecrated vow of marriage to Emilius and swears to honor their consecrated one. Julia, in turn, bears no resentment regarding Victorinus and insists, “This lovely Infant…whom at first sight attracted my Love, must ever be acknowledg’d as the just Heir of all his Father is possess’d of” (69). Donna Jacinta, too, is far from repelled at Emanuella’s having concealed her true identity; because she knew her real worth “before [Jacinta] knew who she was,” her benefactor insists that Emanuella “continue with me ‘till Death inforces a Separation” (69). As if responding to a cue to complete that separation and her story, Emanuella proves powerless to withstand the full force of all her passions unleashed at once: “her Misfortunes were now arriv’d at their utmost height, and soon must know a Period with her Life – Resentment was all which for a long time had kept the Lamp of Life awake, and that being now extinguish’d in a Flood of softer Passions, the other must of necessity expire” (70).

Resentment is the final rash resolve to fail under the weight of love’s constancy. It is also in this final moment that the novel deals an unsustainable blow to the classical model of passion as Emanuella (the classically-modeled subject par excellence) is overcome. To this point, her relationship to her passions was decidedly unilateral, first driven by love, then grief, then fear, finally by resentment without any real sense of either transition or interplay between them; just
as with her initial consideration of love, she feels them each in a vacuum, no reflection required. But in this moment when resentment breaks, so too does her own self-conceptualization under “a Flood of softer Passions” (70). The narrator is even more specific on this point when Emanuella responds physically to the litany of forgiveness: “over-press’d with Shame, with Gratitude, with Tenderness, and perhaps, a mixture of another Passion more difficult to be supported than all the rest; [she] had no longer Strength to struggle with the differing Agitations, and sunk fainting in her Chair” (69). It is far from insignificant that that “shame” is coupled with “gratitude;” indeed, it is the only place in the text where two emotions of opposite character are held in equivalence. Shame had hitherto always travelled with misery, guilt, horror, remorse, and anguish, and even then they were carefully separated, by syntax and punctuation, to suggest succession and isolation rather than simultaneity. For instance, when she became pregnant, the narrator tells us, “She found she was now destined to go through all that can be conceived of Shame – of Misery – of Horror,” the dashes providing strong boundaries demarcating distinct emotional states (49).

The most critical blow to the classical model comes when she is faced with “a mixture of another Passion more difficult to be supported than all the rest” (69). Emanuella’s psychological makeup literally cannot support the conception of a passion that is neither known nor named immediately but is, nonetheless, felt. Negotiating that quintessentially modern mental agitation is work that must be done by protagonists of a wholly different constitution, so Emanuella “expires” to make room for the heroines of novels to come.

It is thus that I end, by way of transition, with one final reference to Life’s Progress through the Passions. For when Natura’s own narrative comes to a close in the vignette of his companionate marriage to Charlotte, they both arrive at the discovery of ‘true’ love as if by surprise. It is expressly not through the shock and awe of Eros’ thunderbolt or the pinch of
Cupid’s arrow but by degrees, through small touches, and reflections upon feelings unknown at first but unmistakable in retrospect: “Natura, who till now had thought he loved only the soul of his mistress, found how dear her lovely person was also to him,…and Charlotte, by the secret satisfaction she felt on those indications Natura…had given of a more than ordinary admiration of her, discovered, for the first time, that he was indeed the only man whose love would not be displeasing to her” (192).

In all, however, Haywood’s hints at the implications of passion’s becoming-modern represent a very tentative move from the classical sphere of influence, and even Life’s Progress shares with The Rash Resolve a sense that passion and reason are ever in conflict rather than a reciprocal consequence of each other. As such, the conclusion of the later novel calls our attention back to the opening of its predecessor: “Thus does passion triumph over the most seemingly fixed and determined resolution” (194). We must, then, turn our attention elsewhere in order to further this exploration of the ways in which eighteenth-century novels were theorizing the transition from passive passion to active emotion, to texts that more thoroughly investigate the inner workings of the affective mind. Chief among such texts is Richardson’s Pamela, whose central concern picks up where Natura and Charlotte leave off in asking the question: What is love?

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1 Haywood was a prolific writer. Beginning her literary career amid the exciting political turmoil of the London stage prior to the Licensing act of 1737 and, thereafter, (like Henry Fielding) turning to novel writing. In addition to novels, she wrote political pamphlets, non-fiction conduct manuals, and essays in the style of Addison and Steele’s Spectator. Haywood’s very successful The Female Spectator (1744-46) is widely considered the first periodical aimed at a female readership that was also written by a woman. In addition to an impressive body of original work, Haywood also translated popular French and Italian romances into English.

2 Though it was published in 1724, Patrick Spedding makes a convincing argument for dating the composition of The Rash Resolve to “some time before October 1723” (A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood, London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), 136.

4 Until recently, Reeve’s assessment had mostly gone unchallenged, that Haywood “had the singular good fortune to recover a lost reputation, and the yet greater honour to atone for her errors” by penning essays and fiction in “the service of virtue” (The Progress of Romance (London, 1785), 121).


6 The phrase is lifted from the title of Kathleen Lubey’s essay in Eighteenth-Century Studies 39, no. 3 (2006): 309-22. Lubey’s argument is expanded in Excitable Imaginations: Eroticism and Reading in Britain, 1660-1760, wherein she takes a conservative stance on Haywood’s use of sex and seduction as the primary focus of her fiction. Lubey argues that “Haywood presents…self-scrutiny as something readers ought to be internalizing, distinguishing their own self-awareness from the heroine’s transgressive turn toward illicit sexual desire” (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2012), 103.

7 Laurie Langbauer, Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel, Reading Women Writing (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 3, 64. More recently, Rebecca Tierney-Hynes’ Novel Minds: Philosophers and Romance Readers, 1680-1740 (publication info here) shows just how thoroughly Langbauer’s assertions have been accepted, for Tierney-Hynes’ monograph makes no apology for applying the metaphor of romance to narrative structure, as such, to texts from Locke to Richardson.


10 Eliza Haywood, Love in Excess (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1994), 89. Further citations will be provided parenthetically in the text. The reader should note that, for all quotations from Haywood’s work, I have retained the spelling and punctuation exactly as it stands in the original rather than identifying individual instances of unconventional usage with [sic] or silently editing them to conform to contemporary standards, with the exception of the long “s” (ſ) which I have chosen to normalize.


14 The theme of the soul as an arbiter of both the passions and moral virtues is a theme I will return to in chapter four.


17 John J. Richetti, for instance, leaves us to imagine “just what sort of picture Mrs. Haywood’s readers drew for themselves when they were told that Melantha interrupted the lovers again just as D’Elmont ‘was preparing to take from the resistless Melliora the last, and remaining proof that she was all his own.’” Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 201. If readers did supply an alternate picture, one where D’elmont’s unchecked passion runs its course, as we will see it do in Life’s Progress through the Passions, the text has already established the classical grounds by which the “crime” could not be imputed to D’elmont himself but to the external gales of his passions.

18 Eliza Fowler Haywood, The Rash Resolve and, Life’s Progress, ed. Carol Stewart (Brookfield, Vt.: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 172. Further citations for both Life’s Progress and The Rash Resolve will be cited parenthetically in text. Unless otherwise noted, all emphasis is in original.
19 Fanny Burney, *Evelina; Or The History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World*, Oxford World’s Classics
Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968). Burney’s novel is at least as well known among contemporary scholars for its preface as for its plot; therein, she roundly rejects the novel’s association with romance, noting that in her text the reader will find “No faultless Monster, that the World ne’er saw” (8).

20 See chapter one above (pg 45-47) for a full explication of Addison’s essay on jealousy.

21 See Hultquist’s “Marriage in Haywood” for an argument in support of marriage, not passion, as the critical through-line of Haywood’s oeuvre—“Throughout her writing career, Haywood ‘trains’ young women and their families to think critically about marriage” (34).


25 *Excitable Imaginations*, 95.


29 We will recall from the previous chapter that the conservative line of Lockean thought with regard to the passions as motivating forces attributes the direct communication between perceptions and passions to “The infinite Wise Author of our being” (II.vii.3). See pg 39-41 above.


31 *Excitable Imaginations*, 98.

32 Lubey’s argument follows closely that of Michael McKeon in *The Secret History of Domesticity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005) whereby the virtual experience of reading literature serves as a process of refinement through exposure to socio-political mores. McKeon leans heavily on this concept of “virtualization” in his reading of Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (see especially pgs 662-65), but does not address it with regard to Haywood.

33 Peter Schouls *Reasoned Freedom*, see chapter one for his discussion of the Lockean “master passion” of self-determination, pgs 1-38.


35 Hirschman’s *Passions and Interests*.

36 Steele’s *Spectator* no. 95, 1:403.

37 For a comparison of the publication histories of *The Rash Resolve* and *Lasselia* see Spedding, *A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood*, 133-39.

38 Quoted in Stewart’s Introduction to *The Rash Resolve and Life’s Progress*, xi.

39 Introduction, xii. On this point, Stewart’s assessment and my own are in agreement, but much more, as yet, needs to be done to tease out the intricacies of the relationship between those binary positions. For conflicting readings of the *Lasselia* dedication, see Backscheider’s “Story of Eliza Haywood’s Novels,” 33 and Lubey’s “Eliza Haywood’s Amatory Aesthetic,” 309-11.


41 Bowers reads this implicit option as a euphemism for abortion, *The Politics of Motherhood*, 126. However, that seems far less likely than the practice of having the baby in secret, especially considering Emanuella’s scruples. While Stone does not specifically take up clandestine births of the upper class, data from *The Family, Sex and Marriage* illustrates that it was far more common for illegitimate children to be abandoned or “fostered-out” than aborted. See especially pgs 106-8, 423-4, and 473-7.

42 This scene resonates strongly with Johnson’s *Life of Savage*—Richard Savage was Haywood’s lover and a champion of her writing, even writing a dedicatory poem that is published at the front of *The Rash Resolve*. 100
Victorinus’ fortune is almost the mirror opposite of what Savage experiences at the hands of his mother on account of his illegitimacy, and one can’t help but wonder whether Haywood writes this so explicitly in order, perhaps, to rewrite his story, to assuage the real with a fictional account. At the very least, it is a strong rebuke of the behavior of “the generality of her Sex” who “could regard a Child whose begetting had cost her so many Tears but with Indifference” (54).
Chapter Three
Negotiating the Passions, Narrating Intensity: Pamela’s (In)voluntary Love

In the previous chapter we explored the relationship between a classical model of emotional experience and the romance narrative tradition that is evident in Eliza Haywood’s early amatory fiction and which she complicates over the course of her career. There I suggested a historico-theoretical shift in conceptualizations of emotion takes place in step with the development of the novel. In this chapter we will draw a more direct connection between the problematic of passion’s becoming modern and the formal presentation of emotional experience in English prose by delving into the modern form of passion that is manifest in Richardson’s Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded (1740). If Haywood’s Rash Resolve offers Emanuella as an exemplar of romance subjectivity by virtue of her inability to maintain the simultaneous incongruity of static emotional ideals and the active connotations attendant to forgiveness’s flood of “differing Agitations,” Pamela is a text that strikes an intricate balance of passive and active figurations of emotion. Before exploring that problem in detail, we must first begin by setting the theoretical stakes with another emotional history lesson, further establishing the dichotomy of passivity and activity.

Susan James illustrates this divide in her seminal work on the transition from pre-modern to early-modern philosophical constructs of emotion. In Passion and Action, James identifies the shift as beginning from a “passive,” classical construction of passions. This does not mean that passions themselves are passive but that subjects are passive with regard to the active agency of emotional disturbances. Passions, in the pre-modern context, are agents: forces that “perturb the economy of the soul and body in ways that we are sometimes unable to prevent, and in the most extreme cases can overwhelm a person so completely that they die.”1 To sum up briefly the pre-
modern figure of passivity, it is the capacity to be acted upon or to be changed by an agent. Activity, then, demonstrates the capacity to be an agent, to have the power to act upon or change something else.² Aristotelian in origin, the idea that we are essentially passive with regard to our passions runs through the Scholastic tradition (manifest in both Augustine and Aquinas) and holds sway in the early-modern school of Cambridge Platonists.³ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, this Aristotelian Scholastic model of passivity had enjoyed a reign of influence over the popular imagination that stretches back to the foundations of Western thought itself. Alan McKenzie notes that the passions, as a cornerstone of ontological truth, “had become terms by which one could exhibit and explore humanity. ... In the first place, they were constituted of shared, similar, and commensurate responses to kindred circumstances. In the second place, they had been so thoroughly honed by philosophers and moralists and envisioned by artists that they participated in, indeed partially constituted, ‘the natural social order.’”⁴

The implications of this long-held tradition are many, but I will focus here only on the aspects that help us posit an answer to the question of what classical emotion is and how it behaves in an epistemological context. If passions have agency, they must be a collective set of singular entities, immediate and knowable, that act as external governing forces. Most important for the study of Pamela that is about to unfold, passivity entails “a kind of involuntary thinking that goes on in and between the bodies of individuals, binding them together or forcing them apart, drawing them to respond enviously or compassionately, haughtily or subserviently, to creatures they recognize as like themselves.”⁵ Under the model of passivity, passions are things that happen to subjects with a transparency and force that is akin to divine intervention. It should come as no surprise that classical passion’s tenuous relationship to voluntary action would prove a sticking point for early-modern philosophical models of subjectivity, and this is the very point
at which the inherently active powers of mind, at work in the processing of what modern
cognitive scientists call “emotion,” rise to complicate passion’s passivity.

An example from the physics of natural philosophy demonstrates how passive models
become untenable within a modern worldview. The behavior of bodies in motion shows us that
inert objects have a capacity to resist, if not to oppose, the force of moving bodies. Descartes
explains the active nature of passive resistance in *Principles of Philosophy* (1644):

> [W]e must be careful to note what it is that constitutes the power of any given
body to act on, or resist the action of, another body. This power consists simply in
the fact that everything tends, so far as it can, to persist in the same state, as laid
down in our first law. Thus what is joined to another thing has some power of
resisting separation from it; and what is separated has some power of remaining
separate.  

As such, the power of objects to resist change without exerting any deliberate force implies “that
it is not altogether apt to describe the effect of one body on another as a passion, or to call the
latter body the patient.” Even if the patient (as inert) does not have an outright active power, its
response behaves less like a passion and more like a reaction, implying some mix of agency
(through resistance) and passivity (by virtue of having motion transferred to it). Everything, then
finds itself in a series of active/passive relationships, and when we apply this to theoretical
questions of human emotion, the binary distinction that separates active agents from passive
patients becomes thoroughly blurred within the affective circuitry of experience itself.

That the blurred lines of active/passive emotional content are a marker of modern
transition is evidenced in the ubiquitous treatment of “the passions” in eighteenth-century
discourse, and Lord Kames’ *Elements of Criticism* (1762), which opens with one hundred pages
of introduction on “Emotions and Passions,” provides a salient example of how the passions
were being reworked to fit into a modern context.
For Kames, our passions grow out of relationships with others; wherein, we develop affections or aversions with regard to potential objects of our passions. As various circumstances arise, our feelings will change in comparison to our predispositions. The same affection can be “inflamed” into different passions, he tells us, “by different circumstances: the affection I bear to my son, is inflamed into the passion of fear when he is in danger; becomes hope when he hath a prospect of good fortune; becomes admiration when he performs a laudable action; and shame when he commits any wrong.” The first thing to notice here is that this modern model indicates an overlap of passivity and activity—the structural framework of emotional experience is established through rational assessment, but emotions themselves are not intentional; we cannot will ourselves into fear, hope, admiration, or shame, we must be “inflamed” to them. Secondly, we should take seriously the logical sequencing of Kames’ example. Because hope and fear both blossom, if you will, out of the same predisposition, it stands to reason that they might not be fundamentally different passions, but, rather, retrospective determinations of a previously unrecognized sensation. In fact, he explicitly states that all passions and emotions originate not from knowable forces but from an inchoate “internal motion or agitation of the mind,” and it is only after active reflection that we can denominate them properly. Those denominations, we should note, could render us passively inflamed all over again. Thus, newly modern models still retain elements of classical passivity, for, once our minds are inflamed, we are “not in a proper state for distinct perception, nor for cool reflection;” in short, we can get still carried away by modern passions.

It is most important to understand, however, that we get to this heightened state through a cognitive process, and Kames’ choice of analogy is telling: “[B]etween a passion and its object there is a natural operation, resembling action and reaction in physics: a passion acting upon its
object, magnifies it greatly in appearance; and this magnified object reacting upon the passion, swells and inflames it mightily.”13 As a process of many actions and reactions, that build from acquaintance to affection or aversion and then into the fever pitch of love or hatred, Kames illustrates an important distinction from the instantaneous change of classical models. If our emotional knowledge is formed through a perpetual negotiation of activity and passivity—of sizing up circumstances that, in turn, elicit emotional responses—then our actions can never be the work of love or hate as external agencies, and passions can’t precede our determination of them; our emotional states are coeval with our understanding. In short, we know what we feel through experience alone.

Significantly, Kames’ observation about the active role the mind plays in engaging the passions’ capacity to disrupt the will and move a subject to intense emotional feeling is nearly identical to what Robert Gordon has much more recently theorized as the “causal structure of a passion.”14 In his account of The Structure of Emotion, Gordon shows that even within the twentieth-century analytical tradition the prospect of passion’s passivity can make philosophers uneasy. The danger is the same for Edward Sankowski and Robert C. Solomon as it was for Renes Descartes and John Locke—if we concede that emotional experience is passive and, thus, that emotions are passions, then both volition and the attendant responsibility for our actions evaporates while under the influence of our feelings. In short, Gordon’s work makes plain that the philosophy of affective experience has never truly divested itself of the idea that just under the surface of contemporary psychological and neurological explanations of emotion lies the common belief that to lend any credence to a passive quality of emotions, as “ways of being acted upon,” “is to conceive them as involuntary states.”15 In trying to avoid the pitfall of pure passivity, contemporary philosophers seem content to adopt the hyper-analytical position that
“[e]motions are judgements and actions, not occurrences or happenings that we suffer, [and thus] emotions are choices and our responsibility.”\(^{16}\) The only problem with such a position is that it doesn’t match with the felt truth of experience itself—rationalize them however you like, in practice, emotions have always been more than the sum total of information available for making a judgment or for deciding to act. Gordon’s intervention takes a middle ground that is useful for the argument I will make hereafter: he agrees with the analytical premise that emotions are formed by the processing of beliefs and attitudes (i.e. the stuff of judgments) but he diverges on the implication of will. In short, he claims that “beliefs and attitudes can cause action without being intentional.”\(^{17}\) In place of a radically passive classical construction, we find one that merges the passive/active binary in modern terms of cognitive mental processes by invoking the “grammatical passivity of emotional descriptions.”\(^{18}\) In following this logic, we could make the Latourian case that emotion, too, has never been modern, and that speaks to my point about the process of passion’s becoming modern that is illustrated so explicitly within the eighteenth-century British prose tradition. For it is a moment where the overlapping passivity and activity of emotion is laid bare within a form that expects full disclosure of experience.\(^{19}\)

Here’s how Gordon’s modern construction of causal passivity works: beliefs and attitudes precondition us to certain kinds of responses to particular circumstances, and when those circumstantial conditions are met, they trigger in us an emotional state that is simultaneously rational, cognitive, and involuntary—somewhat like a neurological reflex. Let’s take the healthy fear of venomous snakes as an example.\(^{20}\) Imagine a hypothetical hiker in the Sierra Nevada mountains who fears encountering a rattlesnake. The hiker’s fear is founded in the knowledge that rattlesnakes exist in the region where he hikes, the rational belief that a rattlesnake’s bite could cause his death, and his trepidatious attitude toward dying of snakebite.
Now imagine that the hiker turns a blind corner to find himself face-to-face with a snake that bears distinctive light and dark markings; when the hiker startles the snake it takes a coiled, defensive posture, wags its diamond shaped head, shakes its tail, and makes a rattling sound.

When these circumstantial conditions align with the hiker’s beliefs and attitudes, they trigger in him an emotive response of fear that is neither pre-mediated nor controlled. How he handles that fear or how he acts in response to the feeling are irrelevant to a description of how fear, itself, works. Most importantly, the example gives a clear picture of how even rationally based emotional responses are, in a very real way, involuntary. When the hiker registers a perception that engages a set of circumstantial conditions (those conditions need not be established in advance), both volition and judgment are separate from the “feeling” of fear, as a quasi-autonomic signal. Even when the serpent in question turns out to be the similarly-colored pacific gopher snake, whose defensive mechanisms include mimicking rattlesnake behavior, the feeling of fear is not apt to be immediately, or even completely, allayed.

Another aspect to consider in this scenario is the fact that the hiker’s uneasy feelings about his circumstance are not caused by “fear,” as agent, the same way that, as we saw in chapter one, Robert Burton described Melancholy as a capricious character who wreaks havoc on a patient’s mental health. Indeed, Gordon clearly marks the line between the structural passivity of emotion as cognitive process and the pre-modern surrender of agency to a cast of subtle, quasi-divine agencies. “That emotions are ways, or products of ways, of being acted on warrants the conclusion that we are passive with respect to (i.e., acted on by) something. But it does not tell us what acts on us, what the ‘agent’ is. It plainly does not imply that the agent is the emotion: the fear, the embarrassment, or whatever.”21 It is useful to notice that fear is still a case in which we are moved by our feelings, but the difference lies in a subtle shift in where and how that
movement occurs—in modern, analytical terms emotions have gone from ways of being acted upon to ways of being enacted within, that is, internal responses to what we encounter from without. As the hiker registers the data provided to his senses by external phenomena, something takes place within him that I will venture here only to describe as the internal processing of perception.22 Thus, “to say that emotions are types of states in which something acts on us is not to say that emotions act on us,” and that something is a “state of affairs” that both develops over time and is subject to circumstantial change—and we are most apt to be emotionally moved when the material circumstances to which we respond are not within our control.23

Just like with the hiker’s fear of the gopher snake, the emotion itself is both directly related to one’s processing of circumstantial conditions and not identical to it. The processing of reality and the processing of emotion are conceptually related but separated by the same indescribable aspect of passion that makes it involuntary, if explainable. Crucial here is the fact that the experience of a state of affairs brings about emotional experience but does not tell us what emotion, itself, is; it merely opens us up to an intensity. This is where we must move beyond Gordon’s clinical analysis, for such states of affairs can bring about aspects of experience that have a tinge of the aleatory to them and close examination of emotional responsivity describes a moment when something active, rational, and cognitive slips, if only for an instant, to reveal something passive, irrational, and non-cognitive at the core of experience itself. Thinking, now more generally, about an average person’s healthy fear of pit vipers, we could say that she is susceptible to being acted upon in unaccountable ways by her own internal processing (and thus to behaving in unpredictable, perhaps unaccountable, ways) when she encounters a rattlesnake. Alas, the theoretical modeling of analytical philosophy can only take us so far because it is concerned with general and repeatable scenarios rather than singular,
anomalous events; in order to explore the latter, we must shift from the hypothetical case to the literary example.

Toward the end of *Pamela*, Richardson’s heroine makes an observation that bears witness to the nature of passion’s relation to modern experience, and the subject of her reflection is a feeling of gratitude. At this late point in the novel, her trials are nearly over; she and Mr. B have reached an understanding, and their nuptials are complete. What lies ahead is the matter of adjusting to and confronting the particular consequences of the change in her personal status—i.e. what exactly is entailed in the transition from lady’s maid to lady of the manor? Not the least point of consideration is the kind of economic accommodation, for her family and herself, that such transition will afford. Within the context of the novel, this is registered as a measure of Mr. B’s generosity. He bestows upon Mr. and Mrs. Andrews the status of rent-free life tenants at his “little Kentish estate” and provides them with an allowance on top of that. Pamela, too, is provided with a measure of economic autonomy, at £200 a year, to exercise the acts of beneficence she is expected to perform in her new station. Her autonomy signals Pamela’s fulfillment as a paragon of progressive virtue, and Pamela’s keen sense of her own former condition becomes a mark of the text’s ideological argument for her worthiness. “For else,” she asks, “what is it for such a worm as I to be exalted! What is my single happiness, if I suffer it, niggard-like, to extend no farther than to myself? (382). Indeed, the ethos and telos of the novel’s ‘virtue rewarded’ conclusion hinges on a mixture of virtuous passions that come in contact with gratitude: love, forgiveness, and generosity. These are all feelings that, as Pamela notes, have the potential to split open the “narrow, selfish, compass” of subjectivity because they can only be felt in relation and not held, solipsistically, in their own right. When Pamela struggles to find an
adequate expression of her unique response to the material conditions of B’s generosity, she also
suggests that words, themselves, do no better than to approximate affective conditions (384).

Therein lies the crux of Pamela’s observation in reply to B’s generosity:

O, sir, said I, the English tongue affords not words, or, at least, I have them not, to
express sufficiently my gratitude! Teach me, dear sir, continued I, and pressed his
dear hand to my lips, teach me some other language, if there be any, that abounds
with more grateful terms; that I may not thus be choked with meanings, for which
I can find no utterance. (emphasis added, 386)

Here, Pamela is clearly moved by an emotional state of affairs, but the epistolary aesthetic of her
detailed self-expression allows us to go further in our analysis than just that. Pamela’s request for
a more precise epistemological lexicon belies the level of theoretical complexity that the text will
attain to when the passions are at issue. For her self-reflexive observation makes explicit that the
general label of “gratitude” is not an adequate signifier for her unique experience of “my
gratitude.” In terms of the history of emotion, it cannot be the case that a classical figure of
passion, as an autonomous causal agent, is the originator of the feeling to which Pamela is in
passive compliance. Gratitude does not direct her action of taking B’s hand to her lips; instead,
her confused, one might say nervous, response comes from the disparity between what she
expects gratitude to feel like and what she actually feels when a state of affairs arises that seems
to call for gratitude. Because it is an impetus that sets her searching for more grateful terms, we
could say that the feeling of Pamela’s response is a pure activity, one that is structurally similar
to passivity; thus, her active-passive response offers a mini excursus on the nature of emotion, as
such. Moreover, whatever else it is, the active overdetermination of her affective condition is not,
in any material sense, voluntary.

Indeed, her “my gratitude” is not only involuntary in the structurally causal sense of
being enacted within her as a result of a state of affairs, it is also a rational appreciation that
cannot possibly be conceived of as a judgment. For it is explicitly a reflection on her inability to
judge what she feels at that instant. In short, what *Pamela* gives us most often when it comes up against the question of passion is a demonstration of intensity. An intensity that is both real and unaccountable in determinate language. What’s more, it is brought on by the internal processing of a state of affairs. Ultimately, I will argue, Richardson’s novel describes the logical process of passion as a modern phenomenon, and in that respect Gordon’s analysis of cognitive causality provides a model for illustrating how *Pamela’s* negotiation of the passions represents a modern problematic.

However, that very same problematic, in its twentieth-century iterations, tends to elide altogether the intensity—the ‘gales of passion,’ to paraphrase Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1733-1734)—that the classical tradition found to be obvious. So, while the Aristotelian Scholastic model took intensity as a given too well-known to require detailed exploration, the contemporary cognitive school finds the nature of affect outside the scope of its analysis. Such is the point of intervention of this dissertation, with its focus on the eighteenth century (at least in the British tradition) as a moment of transition that hinges on the question of how the external agency of classical passions translates to the internal agency of the modern subjective experience. And this is where *Pamela’s* investigations prove most helpful to the larger project. First, because the text persistently oscillates between modern and classical conceptualizations. Second, because, in doing so, the form of Richardson’s text and the aesthetic energy of his “writing to the moment” opens a window on the nature of affective intensity that remains tightly shut on either side of the classical/modern divide.26

In turning back to the late example of Pamela’s curiously unspeakable gratitude, we see evidence of the vacillation between conservative and progressive interpretations of emotional intensity that will be the focus of this chapter’s close readings. At first, the text entertains the
idea that passion poses a real, fundamental problem to modern understanding; it just as quickly, however, employs the reassuring, and authoritative, voice of Mr. B to refute that possibility. Where Pamela suggests a disconnect between sense and meaning, Mr. B responds in a way that pastes over the discrepancy by dismissing it. “My charmer! says he, your language is all wonderful, as your sentiments; and you most abound, when you seem most to want!” (386). On the one hand, he mistakes her quite legitimate interrogation of affect for affected delicacy, which he cannot but approve. On the other hand, he insists on recasting her uncertainty as evidence of an immediate relationship between “language” and “sentiment.” What Pamela marks as a lack, he identifies as a lack of distance that fills in the gap she opens up—therefore, she only seems to want a direct connection to the feeling of true gratitude that abounds in her speech and, thus, her sentiment. B is charmed by his own lack of insight, and, perhaps, by a willful ignorance, even as Pamela tries to open his eyes to the aporias of experience that the text’s epistolary realism must expose.

Indeed, throughout the novel, Mr. B seems to act as a pre-modern foil to Pamela’s ideologically progressive experiments. If B’s unproblematic view of emotion stakes a claim within the text for romance subjectivity, we should not forget that it is his own misguided misinterpretation that provides the novel with its dramatic conflict. Mr. B is the villain for most of the novel because he is wrong about the subjective content of Pamela’s experience, subjective content that is made abundantly clear to the reader through the heroine’s descriptive accounts. Thus, even when he becomes the redemptive and redeemed hero, the reader should know better than to trust his interpretation over Pamela’s own explication. Such explication, I argue, is key to appreciating the text’s contribution to the literary history of emotion. When she asks for another language “that abounds with more grateful terms,” Pamela’s expression of language’s
inadequacy to describe the extent of her feeling is also, and more importantly, a gesture toward a fullness of experience that is unavailable—not just to the English tongue—for capture in linguistic expression. The experience of her emotional state is that which is “choked with meanings,” many of which are not commensurate with the name of ‘gratitude’ because the determined meaning of that word alone is not sufficient to express what Pamela is feeling; thus, ‘gratitude’ is not a signifier for Pamela’s “my gratitude” at that very moment.

This is all the more significant because throughout the bulk of the novel, Pamela proves herself to be something of a wit. She goes toe to toe with highly educated characters and holds her own in nuanced, argumentative discourse. So it is not rhetorical inability but, rather, intellectual capability that allows her to isolate the limitations of language. What she feels, but cannot convey, is the glut of affective potentiality for which a single expression is impossible. Its communication requires something more akin to a singularity of expression, one that contains within it all possible outcomes of her hyper-active, affective state. Barring that, what remains is the seemingly trite gesture found throughout the eighteenth-century literary tradition, “the English tongue affords not words.” And yet it tries. This is the conundrum of realist fiction that coincides with the English novel’s negotiation of the transition from classical passion to modern emotion.

To borrow a dialectic from McKeon’s Origins of the English Novel, the realism of Pamela’s exploration of emotion as truth is neither naïve empiricism nor extreme skepticism; rather, it takes a kind of third position, what we might call, after William James, speculative realism. It operates on the edges of experience, expressing a truth that is not objectively verifiable but, nonetheless, real. It is thus that we should emphasize Margaret Doody’s assertion that one of the most important consequences of Pamela is that it presents “passion…as
a full emotional experience, as something that matters.”

Passion is something that matters in Richardson’s work because a full expression of that which is true in human experience requires reference to the internal processes of emotion that do not have an empirically verifiable referent. Thus, realism in the age of empiricism requires a reorientation toward reality that pays attention to the movements within and between subjects and objects. Emotional intensity is something that matters in Richardson’s fiction because it is the predominant matter of his protagonists’ experience of reality.

In a final illustrative gesture to Pamela’s “my gratitude” before moving on to the broader scope of the novel’s emotional content, we find that the sentiment which cannot be conveyed in words is ultimately conveyed in a kiss—in an extralinguistic signifier, no more than a placeholder for the inexpressible. So too is it with all the words that represent “the passions” in the modern complex of empirical epistemology; they stand in as markers, denotations of an always already past “process of heteroglot development” that occurs in every experience as event. As such, Richardson’s technique of writing to the moment is uniquely positioned to run up against the eventness of experience through the detailed minutia of its capture.

**PAMELA’S “NATURAL PASSION” AND THE REAL INTENSITY OF LOVE**

The predominant arc of the enquiry we will trace in the pages to follow centers on one basic question—what is love?—for there is a line of commentary running through Richardson’s novel that stakes a claim to love as a strange hybrid of active passivity. In Pamela’s final estimation, love is curiously involuntary, not because it is a disruptive and overpowering force but because love is a thing that creeps, on the periphery of perception, first felt ever uncertainly and then known unequivocally—as if all of a sudden. In taking on the impossible task of writing to the moment of an experience that cannot be captured at the moment of its happening,
Richardson also pinpoints a key problematic of formal realism. For the remainder of this chapter I will weave together arguments about realism and arguments about affect into a single narrative exploration of Pamela’s deceptively simple inquiry into the nature of love. The answer at which she arrives, that love is “not a voluntary thing,” will serve as a paradigm for the problematic of passion’s becoming modern.

First, a note on realism in the context of literary criticism of the novel. As Patricia Meyer Spacks has recently pointed out with an air of exasperation, the realism question continues to dog contemporary scholars of the eighteenth-century novel because of its central role, as “formal realism,” in Ian Watt’s seminal *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), and the many succeeding arguments that define the novel in relation to what John Bender describes as “an impetus toward realism, that is, toward a fine, observationally ordered, materially exhaustive grid of representation that accounts for behaviour, in fact constructs it in terms of sensory experience.”

The general notion being that an increasingly secular, empirical worldview lends itself to probabilistic fictions which downplay the metaphysical and focus on plots that stay within the realm of possibility. In response to that critical tradition, and the scholarly short-hand that it has coined, Spacks does a nice job of exploding the many ways in which realism could be constructed, and I tend to agree with her that, “[w]hatever one’s definition of realism, the assumption that eighteenth-century novels aspire to it can lead the reader into trouble by obscuring salient aspects of the fiction.” As Spacks would have it, there is perhaps no such thing as a singularly “realistic” eighteenth-century novel but, rather, the genre offers a collection of texts that respond to a variety of realisms that are revealed in the specific aesthetic attentions of the texts themselves.
It is on this account that I choose not to jettison the term altogether but, instead, narrow its scope to the kind of reality that is palpable in Richardson’s work. Margaret Doody remains the critic most attentive to this concern in her observation of the subjective stance that permeates Richardson’s epistolary form. “Richardson’s kind of novel in letters,” Doody observes:

sets human life in the context of both the unknowable and the knowable; for Richardson, God is real and knowable, but His ways may not be knowable at every step. More puzzling still, other human beings are not easily knowable but must be perpetually read by clues and hints and changing signs. The society in which we live, though it declares itself a knowable structure manifest in both law and daily institutions, is a large, complex, and obscure creation that the lonely self may touch at every turn and yet cannot ever fully know or control. Time is the unknowable element in which we think and through which we live. … The writers of Richardson’s letters are in each letter in a little island of time, stuck in ‘now,’ here on Wednesday and remembering Tuesday but not in control of Thursday…they are always uttering in the middle of events, forced to judge and act before all the facts are in.34

Doody’s prose strikes to the core of Richardson’s epistolary reality in the sense that his texts are made up entirely of unfolding middles. That is the aspect of reality that Pamela exposes and the aspect with which I will be concerned in the close readings to follow. It is in this regard that we can think of Pamela as an experimental text that “attempts to write writing as a truthful exposure of intimate psychology, rather than as a theatrical rhetoric of mutable identity.”35 It is most crucial that we pay attention to the exposure of intensity that takes place when the text “internalizes the experience of empirical truth” and, in turn, redefines the passions as part and parcel of experience as an ever-unfolding process.36 To quote Doody again, “Richardson’s characters thus mirror the state of each one of us during the process of living,” and it “is in this that the central philosophical realism of the novels consists, if we take ‘realism’ to mean what is like life in the way that we know it.”37 And, given the emotionally charged content that dominates Richardson’s novels, the philosophical contribution that Richardson’s realism makes to the history of emotion resides in his attention to the way that we process affective intensity.
The ‘realism’ of Richardson’s fiction, as I read it, hinges on its ability to describe what it is like to feel a passion at the moment when one is in the middle of coming to know it.

THE BEGINNINGS OF LOVE: PAMELA’S STRANGE INQUIRY

The passion, as I suggested previously, that most prominently emerges as the subject of inquiry in Pamela is love. In pre-modern terms, love is an external agent with regard to which we are passive; its force is enacted upon us through our senses and its pressures are felt and known simultaneously. Because we are innately predisposed, by passion’s “kindred circumstances,” the motion itself is enough to make us know what love is.38 The modern model, instead, posits that we feel the impulses and agitations that will eventually be claimed as love before we know them, as such. They are involuntary and autonomic but, not for that reason, outside of our cognitive comprehension. The classical answer to the question of love’s ontology is tautological—to know we are in love we must only be acted upon by the passion itself. The modern answer is agnostic—it is more important to know how the feeling of love is processed, how it works, than what love is. Pamela, by virtue of her attention to affective reality and the situation of her philosophico-historical moment, is caught in a liminal space between the two. So it becomes not only possible but necessary for her to ask: what is love? She inquires after the stable, kindred determinations of emotional content that, as per the enduring common knowledge of passion’s ancient history, she expects to uncover, but her empirical investigations reveal only process. It is within this context that I argue for Pamela as an experimental interrogation of the emerging model of modern passion.

The story begins in the middle of a young maidservant’s career, and through that narrative we can piece together her backstory. At the age of 12, Pamela was taken in to the family of a large estate as a lady’s maid in training. There she was brought up in a manner
commensurate with her position; her education included not only training in how to wait on a 
person of quality but also instructions of personal improvement. She excelled in her study and 
appreciation of singing, dancing, needle-work, and drawing; such aptitude for refinement, along 
with her unparalleled beauty, made Pamela a favorite of the household. It also created a distance 
between her and the humble station of her parents. It is this distance that leads her to conclude 
that she was “brought up wrong,” when circumstances change and she seeks to leave her 
adoptive household and return to her familial home (74). After three years of dutiful service, the 
lady of the house dies. This turn of events initiates the novel’s dramatic action when Pamela is 
left in the employ of the lady’s son—Mr. B, as the reader knows him, is a young bachelor, sole 
heir to the family’s wealth, and governor of all its affairs.

At the time of the lady’s death, Pamela is fifteen and has not yet begun to draw a salary. 
Because the novel does little to recount her duties when the lady was alive, we get the impression 
that Pamela never actually reached the status of an autonomous employee. Mr. B indicates as 
much early in the novel when he suggests that, in the absence of a household mistress, the long-
serving and trustworthy housekeeper, Mrs. Jervis, would “be a mother” to her. So, Pamela’s 
status is uncertain at the novel’s opening; she is not quite fully a servant and not quite fully a 
daughter. Pamela’s circumstances are further complicated by the lady’s deathbed injunction that 
Mr. B “Remember [her] poor Pamela” (3). B keeps Pamela in his household for fourteen months 
without a lady to wait on while he, we can only assume, considers how best to ‘remember’ her. 
In that time, he gives her gifts, asks no work of her, and invites her to read freely from his late 
mother’s library.

Now sixteen years of age, Pamela is bright, beautiful, well-read and well-loved by all the 
servants of Mr. B’s Bedfordshire estate, and B continues to stall in finding her more appropriate
employment. The text poses an alternative arrangement when Lady Davers, B’s sister, attempts to bring Pamela into her household under the pretense that, “I was too pretty to live in a bachelor’s house; since no lady he might marry would care to continue me with her” (8). When B refuses, suggesting that his mother had committed Pamela to his own personal guardianship, Davers’ exasperated response of “Ah! brother! and no more” hints at his erotically motivated ulterior motives (14). Indeed, Pamela directly observes that the “bad examples” of other country gentlemen who take advantage of their servants teaches B that he has the right to attempt the physical enjoyment of her ‘virtues’ (68). And attempt he does, by various means of force and persuasion over the course of the novel. The many intrigues of Mr. B in pursuit of Pamela (hiding in closets, cross-dressing disguises, attempted rape, kidnapping, sham-marriage plots, etc.) are well known to, and well-documented by, scholars of eighteenth-century fiction. However, the text presents a critically important caveat to his bad behavior in suggesting that that B’s actions are driven by more than just libido.

For sure, his conduct is both underhanded and unbecoming a person of his social and familial status, but in the course of the theoretical argument I’m presenting here, it is also crucial not to overlook the fact that the text connects Mr. B’s pursuit to love as well as desire. Mrs. Jervis introduces the idea of Mr. B’s love at the same time that Pamela begins to realize she is being held captive as a consequence of his desire. As B vacillates between wanting Pamela to leave and wishing that she would want to stay, Jervis confesses a secret about B’s emotional state:

No, said she, he says you shall go; for he thinks it won’t be for his reputation to keep you: but he wished (don’t speak a word of it for the world, Pamela,) that he knew a lady of birth, just such as yourself, in person and mind, and he would marry her to-morrow. (42)
In revealing that the disparity in their social status is the only, if monumental, impediment preventing him from marrying her on the spot, Mrs. Jervis does more than suggest that B has strong feelings for Pamela. Shortly thereafter, Jervis puts a name to his feelings, and it becomes clear that Pamela first encounters love not in terms of her own emotional state but as a consequence of Mr. B’s passion for her. “This love, said [Jervis], is the d[evil]! In how many strange shapes does it make people shew themselves! And in some the farthest from their hearts” (44).

Jervis insinuates what Mr. B will soon declare in no uncertain terms—that he loves her and that his actions are driven by the passion that has come over him. “You have too much wit and good sense not to discover,” B says to Pamela as he tries to convince her to stay on in his house, “that I, in spite of my heart, and all the pride of it, cannot but love you. … I must say I love you” (81-2). Despite all the healthy skepticism one could, and should, read into those lines, we must not be too quick to dismiss the fact that, almost from the start, Mr. B’s love for Pamela is made manifest in the text—both in his own words and through the observation of the trustworthy Mrs. Jervis.

Just as important for our exploration is the kind of love that is evidenced in the early declarations of Mr. B’s passion. Jervis’ interpretation is fully compatible with the classical model of passivity in the sense that B is ‘bedeviled’ by an impulse that makes him act in uncharacteristic ways; in his own terms, he has been “bewitched by her” to the point where his love moves him to act in spite of both his heart and his head; as Jervis knowingly informs Pamela, “he doats [sic] upon you; and I begin to see it is not in his power to help it” (29, 57). In many ways, it seems that B has been struck by a classical kind of love; this is important because it forms a baseline expectation for how passions work and a test case for the novel’s future
investigations. However, even in its most classically informed iterations of passion, the limited perspective of Richardson’s epistolary form, and thus its realism, necessarily pulls back from offering the full-blown certainty of emotional experience that we get in amatory fiction.

It is in this sense that we can read Mrs. Jervis’ explanation of B’s feelings as splitting the difference between classical passivity and modern activity. For no omniscient narrative presence breaks through to assure the reader of the relationship between Mr. B’s passions and his actions (i.e. that his behavior is the product and reflection of an idealized love). Instead, the emotional influence is presented as anything but straightforward; the befuddling ‘love’ to which she points shows itself in “strange shapes,” and its actions are manifested in ways that betray a myriad of incongruent impulses that subjects must retrospectively explain in order to understand them as indicators of love.

Here Richardson breaks from the romance conventions of amatory fiction that I have explored in detail in chapter two above because the novel’s overt declaration of love as the effective force behind B’s feelings is not accompanied by a formal certainty that guarantees it. So when Mrs. Jervis offers an apology for B’s behavior by suggesting that love shows itself in strange ways, her observation also makes plain that the text’s compromised claim to love as a driving force of the narrative does more to open the concept to scrutiny than to pre-define the parameters according to which affective experience can be known. Most importantly, neither Mrs. Jervis nor Mr. B offers the primary lens through which the novel investigates the nature of passion. That investigative burden, of course, falls to Pamela herself.

If Mr. B has been ‘bitten’ by a classical kind of love, Pamela is sitting, as it were, on the outside of that experience looking in, and her questioning of it takes on an analytical tone. When she notes the obvious distance between Jervis’ claim that “my master likes me” and the
consequence of ruin that “he aims at,” she offers an early critique of the logical incongruity between feelings and actions that accompanies classical causal passivity. Pamela’s analytical perspective is owed to her status as an outsider (she does not yet know the experiential truth of love as passion). Because Pamela finds only danger in Mr. B’s protestations of love, she exacerbates both his passion and his peevishness at being denied what common practice leads him to think of as no less than a right.

In the impasse between what Pamela believes love to mean and the actions that it manifests in B, she makes a profound observation:

This is Thursday morning, and next Thursday I hope to set out; for…my master is horrid cross! And I am vexed his crossness affects me so. If ever he had any kindness towards me, I believe he now hates me heartily.

Is it not strange, that love borders so much upon hate? But this wicked love is not like the true virtuous love to be sure: that and hatred must be as far off, as light and darkness. (49)

Pamela puts her finger on the same difficult distinction between love and lust that John Cleland attempts to negotiate in Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (see chapter four below). It is important to note here, though, that Pamela explicitly describes such differentiation not as two materially different experiences but in terms of a subtle differentiation of quality. At first, Pamela abides by the logical belief that Mr. B could not both love her and act toward her with distain, she reasons that the manifestations of true love must have a unique signifying character and, thus, could not be mistaken for or closely aligned with those of hate. At this point, Pamela also seems to be taking the classical conceptualization at face value in that love and hate must have distinctly different “feels” that should be known with certainty and immediacy. The distinction she poses, that between light and darkness, also alludes to the theological framework that Pamela relies on for her certainty in paraphrasing the New Testament injunction to “take heed…that the light which is in thee be not darkness.”40
However, when she compares the strict binary logic of her assumptions to what she observes in practice, Pamela’s causal premise actually yields a phenomenological conclusion; in the final analysis, emotional experience remains “strange.” For even as she tries to maintain a place for “virtuous love” as a singular ideal that is knowable by virtue of its opposition to hate, the circumstances that confront her at the moment complicate such an easy distinction. Pamela doesn’t completely discount Mrs. Jervis’ insinuation and B’s declaration that his actions are driven by love and not hate. If this is the case, she reasons, there must be a different more subtle distinction within love itself where the true and virtuous feeling is distinguished from its “wicked” alter-ego. This seemingly clever assertion that love must be more precisely categorized only reveals the murkiness of the rhetorical water she’s traversing. For when she proposes “wicked love” as a foil to expose the full measure of love, as such, she only complicates what she sought to clarify. In fact, it brings the reader right back to the strange affective coincidence of love and hate; alternately, the possibility that love could maintain both wicked and virtuous forms calls into question the integrity of the originating passion. In either case, Pamela’s observation calls attention to the instability of meaning that subsists within emotional intensity.

The difference between Pamela’s critical analysis of passion as active experience and the representations offered in amatory fiction is important. If Pamela, as a naïve paragon of virtue, is a mid-century counterpart to Haywood’s “matchless Melliola,” the architecture of Pamela’s experience sets them in stark relief. For while Melliola’s passive character is insulated from the most extreme implications of passion’s intensity by external reassurances that the actions of a would-be rapist “had got the[ir] start in love,” Pamela finds no underlying signification within her uncertainty and no intrinsic value in what threatens to figure as an experience of pure ambivalence; this is the problematic that Pamela, by way of Richardson’s epistolary realism,
must negotiate in order to come to its conclusion and an answer to the question: what has “love”
got to do with the transports of passion? For that we must fast-forward, for a moment, past the
most harrowing tests of Pamela’s emotional stability to focus on the first scene where she and
Mr. B candidly discuss the possibility of their highly unconventional nuptials.

PAMELA’S AGITATION AND THE ‘SHADOWS OF FORM’

After B has resolved to allow Pamela to act according to her own will, he is faced with
the real possibility that she will leave the Lincolnshire estate where he has held her captive and,
finally, return to her parents. He courts Pamela now in earnest, and as a means of assuring her of
his honorable intentions, he makes marriage the topic of their conversation. When he does, we
get a glimpse of the text’s incapacity to articulate the experience of modern passion. “How then,”
he asks her, “with the distance between us in the world’s judgment, can I think of making you
my wife?—Yet I must have you; I cannot bear the thoughts of any other man supplanting me in
your affections” (223). The candor is noteworthy as he seems to be laying it all on the line here,
despite his reluctance. The question itself contains a dual edge of transgression—on the one
hand, he identifies their marriage as culturally taboo and, thus, the one thing that he cannot grant
her; on the other hand, he brings the possibility of their marriage into the text for the first time.
What’s more, we should not gloss over the fact that he is literally seeking her guidance on the
thorny issue of their marrying in spite of the judgment that the “world” will surely cast upon
such a transgression of social mores.

As usual, B doesn’t see the burden he puts on Pamela because he views love in classical
terms. Things get interesting when he pushes her on the subject by making her not only the judge
of but the advisor to his conduct:

Now, Pamela, judge for me; and, since I have told you thus candidly, my mind,
and I see yours is big with some important meaning, by your eyes, your blushes,
and that sweet confusion which I behold struggling in your bosom, tell me, with like openness and candour, what you think I ought to do, and what you would have me do. (223)

Like a hero of amatory fiction, B assumes that he can read the writing on the outward shows of Pamela’s countenance—that behind the look in her eyes, her blushes and the struggles of her bosom there is a clearly definable meaning just waiting to be blurted out, a passion fully-formed and felt with certainty only waiting for permission to be named. From Mr. B’s position he thinks it is in his power to grant her such permission by allowing her to speak candidly. He assumes, by laying the holy grail of marriage before her, that he is allowing her to lay claim to what he thinks is love in her eyes and hopes is the wish to marry him that he reads in her blushes.

If we take his avowedly candid words at face value, we see that he only wants Pamela’s encouragement to push him over the edge and to make good on his own belief that he cannot live without her.

In the context of amatory romance, such encouragement would feed through the heroine as a passive conduit of the natural passion of love. Love in Excess provides another example in contrast as it expands on the futility of concealing the passion’s overpowering impulse: “What modest fears, or cunning artifice can correct the fierceness of it’s [sic] fiery flashes in the eyes, keep down the strugling [sic] sighs, command the pulse, and bid the trembling, cease?”

Because there is “nothing more certain than…love,” the rational, socially constructed checks of honor and virtue are powerless “to stop the spring that with a rapid whirl transports us from our selves, and darts our souls into the bosom of the darling object.” This is the tradition that Mr. B is working within and Richardson is working against; it’s not hard to imagine B as a romance hero imagining Pamela as a kind of Melliora who secretly harbors an intense physical desire wrapped in the virtuous ideal of love as passion.
So the scene of B’s candid confession is most salient when we consider the aporia that subsists within Pamela’s response, for, as the reader knows, her physical expressions do not reflect, in Haywood’s terms, “the exalted soaring of a lovers [sic] meaning!” laying dormant in Pamela’s bosom. Pamela’s confusion is not affected but affective because the scenario that B presents to her is thoroughly incongruous with what she imagines possible. Regardless of the question he thinks he is asking or the answer he hopes to get in response, what B has literally asked from her is a quid-pro-quo of candidly divulging her mind to him at that moment. Pamela finds a profound impossibility at the heart of B’s request, and she confides in the reader of her trials, “It is impossible for me to express the agitations of my mind, on this unexpected declaration, so contrary to his former behaviour. His manner too had something so noble, and so sincere, as I thought, that, alas for me! I found I had need of all my poor discretion, to ward off the blow which this treatment gave to my most guarded thoughts” (223-4, my emphasis). In further exploring Pamela’s response in comparison to an analogous passage from *Love in Excess*, we see the subtle but critically important difference between classical and modern models of passion’s inexpressibility.

In Haywood’s text the narrative voice delimits the parameters according to which the mind’s agitations could be defined: “There is nothing more certain than that love, tho’ it fills the mind with a thousand charming ideas, … entirely takes away the power of utterance, and the deeper impression it had [sic] made on the soul, the less we are able to express it.” The crucial difference we find in turning back to *Pamela* is that Richardson poses only agitation, and not love, as that which is unutterable. In fact, the figure of love as a divining power of the narrative’s conflict is entirely absent from Pamela’s diaristic account. Importantly, it is my contention that such absence reveals the epistemological problem that modern conceptions of passion face when
experience is pushed to the extremities of agitation. How do we explain, for instance, what Locke describes as “sensation barely in it self”?45 According to Locke’s own system of simple and complex ideas, there can be no explanation because the feeling precedes the idea we form from it. In other words, it is utterly impossible to describe the Kamesian “internal motion or agitation of the mind,” and Richardson’s text grapples with that problem here directly.46

Pamela’s “most unguarded thoughts” are not those she withholds as a means of keeping her real feelings secret; rather, what she’s guarding are the raw impulses of her affective experience, emotional content that has yet to form signifiable parameters. It is an experiential space where ideas that ought to be as distinct as the difference between light and darkness (or love and hate) seem to bleed together. Direct expression of such agitation is a task too far for her, or any, narrative to deliver and articulation gives over to physical gesture, “for [she] trembled, and could hardly stand” (224). Trembling excess stands in as the material mark of language’s lamentable imperfection and it is the only gesture Richardson can make in lieu of classical determinations of the intensity of affect. We find a fruitful analogy for the theoretical difficulty embedded within the formal aesthetic of Richardson’s epistolary narrative in a letter from Aaron Hill to the author dated 9 February, 1741. In reference to an eventually aborted plan to include two frontispieces to the second edition of Pamela, Hill makes an astute observation regarding the text’s treatment of intensity. Apparently, the two scenes that Richardson intended to have depicted were of Pamela with her three bundles of clothing and Pamela beside the pond at B’s Lincolnshire estate while contemplating suicide.47 The letter from Richardson to Hill is lost, but we can assume from Hill’s response that it explains a shift in the engraver’s attention from the latter to the former:

I am glad your designer falls to work on the bundles; because there is something too intensively reflective in the passions, at the pond, that would make such
significant calls for expression and attitude, as not to allow the due pardon, for those negligent *shadows of form*, which we commonly find, in a frontispiece.\(^{48}\)

Of course, Hill is specifically talking about the characteristic imprecision that attends the mass production of engraving. However, he also alludes to the inherent difficulty of capturing the intensively reflective passions in any medium. For the passions demand a subtlety of expression that gestures beyond that which is readily available in objective terms, and Hill’s lack of confidence in the artist’s ability to do it justice is evidence enough that he and Richardson were aware of the intricate theoretical task inherent to *Pamela*’s epistolary aesthetic.

To extend Hill’s analogy, we might say that affective intensity is perceptible as a shadow on the periphery of experience; thus, it can enter into literary expression only obliquely. In this way, we can see how *Pamela*’s critique of classical immediacy intersects with the problematic that emotional intensity poses for narrative realism. For, in the absence of a providential failsafe (i.e. the certain agency of love), Richardson tries to express, through narrative technique, the agitational movement of passion that always escapes linguistic capture. In that sense, I would pose a particular claim from Rebecca Tierney-Hynes’ general observation that *Pamela* is “not a rejection of romance, but…a rendition of its competing versions, a self-conscious representation of a developing genre in which the conventions of different kinds of narratives, all of which are called ‘romances’ in varying contexts, jostle against each other.”\(^{49}\) If the key question that Richardson tackles in the process of writing *Pamela* is “what kind of romance am I writing?” the answer, I would argue is: the kind that divests itself of passion’s classical certainty and inhabits the uncertain epistemological ground of passion’s becoming modern.

“A MIND JUST BROKEN”

So far I’ve shown how *Pamela* demonstrates the conceptual urgency that drives its formal considerations, an urgency grounded in the recognition of a receding providential
worldview and compounded by the incapacity of narrative to offer an equivalent substitution for the agency of classical passion. In the pages to follow, I will argue that Richardson’s investigation of emotional experience does more than expose a curiosity of human nature, for Pamela’s theoretical contribution is evident in the resonances of what its text performs as it navigates around the impasses that passion poses for narrative verisimilitude. When it touches bare sensation with glancing blows and then reroutes to calmer waters, it not only tarries with an irreconcilable remove from a classically structured emotional codex, it also pushes the envelope of what it is possible to say about a modern affective experience in light of such distance. For this we must visit Pamela in the darkest moments of her time at Lincolnshire and her contemplation of suicide as a means of escape from mental anguish.

The idea of escape through suicide is a consequence of her failing to obtain a more material freedom through a literal escape that is curiously elaborate and ill-conceived. She waits for Mrs. Jewkes (Mr. B’s Lincolnshire housekeeper who schemes with him to effect Pamela’s ruin) to fall asleep and then exits through the bars of her closet window, down to the roof of a room below before dropping to the garden grounds. At that point she discards some decoy clothing into the garden pond and makes her way to the back gate to which she has procured a key. Once beyond the gate, though, she has no clear plan other than to “trust, that Providence will direct [her] steps to some good place of safety” (176). When she discovers that the lock has been changed, and another padlock added as well, she resorts to scaling the brick wall that surrounds the estate. It is in this endeavor that she comes to grips with the fact that there will be “no escape for poor Pamela!” (179).

The wall being old, the bricks I held gave way, just as I was taking a spring to get up; and down came I, and received such a blow upon my head, with one of the bricks, that it quite stunned me; and I broke my shins and my ancle [sic] besides … In this dreadful way, flat upon the ground, lay poor I, for I believe five or six
minutes; and then trying to get up, I sunk down again two or three times; and my left hip and shoulder were very stiff, and full of pain, with bruises; and, besides, my head bled, and ached grievously with the blow I had from the brick. (179)

It is in this state of injury and despair that Pamela contemplates the dark temptation of drowning herself in the pond. Her injuries, however, hinder her ability to execute such a rash decision. After an extended reflection upon what she is about to do, she resolves against taking her own life. Unable either to go forward or back from where she started, Pamela takes refuge in a wood shed “with a mind just broken, and a heart sensible to nothing but the extremest woe and dejection” (183). This sequence represents a pivotal point in the novel for many reasons. Not the least of which is the fact that Pamela’s narrative relation of her abortive suicide attempt, when read by Mr. B, proves the first major step in their coming to a mutual understanding. In addition to playing a crucial role in fulfilling the novel’s marriage plot, Pamela’s diaristic description of her most emotionally charged experience exposes a conflict inherent to passion’s becoming modern. For in negotiating the affective intensity of utter despair, her internal dialogue tarries between active and passive emotional configurations that arise as she considers the ‘forces’ that influence her decision.

As readers of an epistolary narrative, we are privy to Pamela’s retrospective explication of a first-hand experience. Throughout the chain of subjective spaces that she reveals, the text vacillates between active and passive interpretive models of how passions function under extreme conditions. She begins her recollection with a paragraph that serves as a key to the logical structure of the entire scene:

It was well for me, as I have since thought, that I was so maimed, as made me the longer before I got to the water; for this gave me time to consider, and abated the impetuousness of my passions, which possibly might otherwise have hurried me, in my first transport of grief … to throw myself in. But my weakness of body made me move so slowly, that it gave time, as I said, for a little reflection, a ray of grace, to dart in upon my benighted mind; and so, when I came to the pond-side, I sat myself down on the sloping bank, and began to ponder my wretched condition; and thus I reasoned with myself. (179-80)
Here the text explicitly considers the possibility of passion’s pre-modern agency taking control of the narrative, whereby, through the “transport of grief,” Pamela would be induced to kill herself by the “impetuousness” of her passions. Specifically, grief is posed as the culprit that triggers both her distress and her action. But Pamela’s inquiry only entertains the prospect of being swayed by the passive configuration in the absence of active reflection. In fact, active and passive formulations compete for space in the same sentence. Notice how the long train of syntax that separates her impetuous passion from the action of throwing herself in the pond—an act that possibly, might, otherwise have occurred—mimics the interruptive slowness that injuries induce. Thus, when the text interposes an extended spatial and temporal distance between passion and action, Richardson both anticipates the Kamesian logical process of emotion (which moves from agitation through reflection to determination) and highlights the importance of the active mental operation that such reflection entails. For it is the interruption imposed by her inoperative body that gives time “for a little reflection” and saves her from a wicked fate.

The self-reflexivity of the scene allows her to ‘press pause’ on a chain of events that would have been outside of her control if the narrative were given over wholly to classical principles. “Pause here a little, Pamela, on what thou art about, before thou takest the dreadful leap; and consider whether there be no way yet, no hope, if not to escape from this wicked house, yet from the mischiefs threatened thee in it” (my emphasis, 180). Interestingly, the active reflection, as Pamela narrates it within the real time of her experience, takes place in the form of an internal dialogue. So when she asks herself to consider the circumstances, hope becomes the determinate condition that would make the case for or against suicide. In the first consideration she writes, “I had cast about in my mind [for] every thing that could make me hope, and saw no probability” (180). Her inability to find hope in a desperate situation sends her down a track of
thinking that ends in oblivion. “What hast thou to do, distressed creature, said I to myself, but throw thyself upon a merciful God…to avoid the merciless wickedness of those who are determined on my ruin?” (180). When she attempts to fulfil the resolution of her “indulgent” thinking, however, her bruises again give her pause and an opportunity to rethink what she is about to do.

Such reconsideration reveals the theological fallacy in her logic and a glimmer of hope finds its way into her “benighted mind.” The introduction of hope changes the way she perceives her circumstances and, consequently, the way she feels about them. For, she reasonably concludes, “God Almighty would not lay me under these sore afflictions, if he had not given me strength to grapple with them, if I will exert it as I ought: And who knows, but that … God can touch [Mr. B’s] heart in an instant; and if this should not be done, I can then but put an end to my life by some other means, if I am so resolved” (181). Pamela finds hope not only in the possibility of God’s providence but also in the active power that he has given her to grapple with affliction, the potential for her to exert her own agency in active/passive resistance to the agency of others. What’s more, her hopeful logic also retains the potential for her to act otherwise in the future, should her appreciation of new circumstances warrant a new resolution to end her life.

It is important to note the modern implications that reside within her movement from resolution to resolution. Over the course of her contemplations, Pamela is considering the confluence of hope and despair that resides within a single situational moment. The emotion that will ultimately come to pass is dependent upon the cognitive process of determining truth values regarding one’s experience of a given reality. Read in this way, Pamela’s exploration abides very closely to the analytical structure of emotion that I discussed above, for once one arrives at hope
or despair as the condition of one’s “emotional truth” the determination itself can be seen as causal to the actions that follow in response to the determination.50

While Richardson anticipates the modern logic of emotion quite precisely, here we, too, must also pause in order to consider the curious injection of passivity into Pamela’s active contemplations. For, after all is said and done, she stands quite firmly on the point that her injuries, and the space of reflection that they opened up, made room for a ray of grace, that is, for a divine intervention to counteract the Satanic persuasion. Richardson identifies these retroactive insertions by having Pamela weave them parenthetically, as past tense statements, into her present tense accounts. “What to do,” she reasons with her reader in a preemptive preamble, “but to throw myself into the pond, and so put a period to all my griefs in this world!—But, O! to find them infinitely aggravated (had I not, by the divine grace, been withheld) in a miserable eternity! As I have escaped this temptation, (blessed be God for it!) I will tell you my conflicts on this dreadful occasion” (179). Here the theological fallacy of her suicidal reasoning is clear; because the Judeo-Christian injunction makes taking one’s own life is a sin that “admits of no repentance” it must always result in the exchange of temporary for eternal suffering (182). Because she does not see this at the moment of her most aggravated distress, she poses divine grace as an antidote to “the tempting evil” which she asserts to be, in another parenthetical retrospection, “surely of the devil’s instigation; for it was very soothing, and powerful with me” (182, 180). Without getting tangled in the contributions to eighteenth-century theological discourse that Richardson makes here, I will only make the observation that Pamela’s reliance upon devout religiosity allows her to assert an underlying system of passivity that never actually comes to bear on the material facts of the narrative itself.
Indeed, we could also read Pamela’s contemplative negotiation of hope and despair as an extended act of self-sermonizing about the relationship between her free will (and the duty to exert her God-given strengths against affliction) and her passive obedience to what God ordains. She sums up the essence of that sermon in a series of soul searching questions:

[W]ho gave thee, presumptuous as thou art, a power over thy life? Who authorised thee to put an end to it, when the weakness of thy mind suggests not to thee a way to preserve it with honour? How knowest thou what purposes God may have to serve, by the trials with which thou art now exercised? Art thou to put a bound to the divine will, and to say, Thus much will I bear, and no more? … [W]ilt thou fly in the face of the Almighty, and distrust his grace and goodness, who can still turn all these sufferings to benefits? And how do I know, but that God, who sees all the lurking vileness of my heart, may have permitted these sufferings on that very score, and to make me rely solely on his grace and assistance, who, perhaps, have too much prided myself in a vain dependence on my own foolish contrivances? (181-2)

To act in the vainglorious attempt to alter God’s plan is to give oneself over to a deceiving agency of evil, and yet to act on impulse alone, passively, without asking “what thou art about” could result in mistaking wicked temptation for divine inspiration (180). Such is her final spurious consideration before coming to a moment of clarity: “But how do I know, thought I, that even these bruises and maims that I have gotten, while I pursued only the laudable escape I had meditated, may not kindly have furnished me with the opportunity I am now tempted with to precipitate myself, and of surrendering up my life, spotless and unguilty, to that merciful Being who gave it!” (181). Pamela’s intense vacillations all seem to lead to the complicated conclusion that in order to properly give oneself over to the divine ray of God’s merciful protection, one must take up some form of active self-scrutiny.

It is not for Pamela to determine the meaning of her own passions (that is beyond the comprehension that God has granted), but neither is it acceptable to follow any passion, uncritically, without first actively considering whether it be derived from light or darkness. Melvyn New offers an explanation for this kind of intellectual tight-rope walking by suggesting
that eighteenth-century novelists “imaged forth in their writings neither the Christian world view, which was slowly giving way, nor the secular world view, which we now recognize as having replaced it;” instead, they reflect “a world in intellectual transition.”51 For Pamela, the figure of God’s providence is strong enough to weigh heavily on her mind as she consciously rationalizes the possible actions open to her in the wake of her passionate agitation. But divine intervention only manifests as idea and never alters the narrative arc with any modicum of certainty. Thus at the end of Pamela’s “sad relation” the reader is left with an oddly active-passive conclusion: “But yet I will add, that though I should have praised God for my deliverance, had I been freed from my wicked keepers, and my designing master; yet I have more abundant reason to praise him, that I have been delivered from a worse enemy, myself!” (183). Indeed, she both begins and ends with this insinuation that while a religiously inflected worldview still requires that one must praise God for happily concluded distresses, we have more abundant cause to look within the self for both our passions and the attendant actions to which they move us. So when the novel ends happily-ever-after, it may have been the case that it was God who turned all Pamela’s sufferings into benefits, but it is equally true that, within the context of the novel’s realism, we could not arrive at that conclusion in any other way but through the cause and effect of her own active contrivances.

So when we return to an analysis of how the text interprets emotional experience in light of her “sad attempts” we see that the only thing that changes about Pamela’s circumstances, from consideration to consideration, is how she interprets them. Thus, her emotional state shifts from despair to hope, and vice versa, even though the causal conditions for those emotions remain the same. Indeed, Pamela’s precise description of a mind in the process of deep distress makes explicitly clear that the difference between seemingly opposing emotions is owed not to the
agency of emotions themselves—i.e. the type of feeling one gets when one is hopeful is not caused by “hope,” as such—but to the mind’s active participation in how it registers the relationship between self and environment, and that is Richardson’s most important contribution to the eighteenth-century discourse of passion’s becoming modern.

PAMELA’S (IN)VOLUNTARY LOVE

At this point however, it would not be unfair to ask: what has all of this tarrying with thoughts of suicide got to do with Pamela’s investigation of love? Quite a bit, actually. Even superficially, within the context of the novel’s marriage plot, the near-suicide scene is directly connected to the mutual recognition of love that signals its conclusion. So important, in fact, that it is doubled within the text, appearing first when Pamela writes it in her journal and again when B reads her account. Moreover, it is through the act of reading Pamela’s “moving tale” that he is able to enter into her subjective position and, thus, recognizes the full measure of her sincerity (251). The fact that he reads her story on the banks of the same pond, and with Pamela at his side, lends it an air of reenactment. It has such a profound impact on B’s emotional state precisely because it allows him to bear witness to her most solitary and private experience. Here, again, Richardson anticipates Lord Kames’ aesthetic theory when Pamela’s story engages Mr. B in a state of “ideal presence” wherein “[a] lively and accurate description of an important event, raises in me ideas no less distinct than if I had been originally an eye-witness: I am insensibly transformed into a spectator; and have an impression that every incident is passing in my presence.”52 Ideal presence engages our sympathy and, through its lively description, can also “be the means by which our passions are moved.”53 When Mr. B reads Pamela’s journal, like Kames’ ideal participant, he is moved to the point that he literally goes through the paces of her experience by walking along the pond and to the wall to inspect its missing bricks.
If B’s ‘love’ previously showed itself in strange ways, it now seems more in tune with expectations, as he is ready to, “defy the world and the world’s censures, and make my Pamela amends, if it be in the power of my whole life, for all the hardships I have made her undergo” (253). After reading her journals by the fish pond, Mr. B declares his intention to fulfill the acme of the novel’s promise——not only with material and marital compensation but, more importantly, with genuine reciprocation of sympathy and the sharing of his “whole life” (253). Yet Pamela has grown so accustomed to giving a party-line response to his advances (not to mention the as yet unresolved possibility of a “sham-wedding”) that she doesn’t quite grasp what B. is offering and proposing. The plot of their misunderstanding is perpetuated when she responds with the refrain to which we have grown all too familiar, “sir, permit me to return to my poor parents, and that is all that I have to ask” (253). B has finally bared his heart to her and she stomps on it. In the sequence of events that follows, Pamela is, herself, ready to learn what it means to experience the passion of love. Roundly rebuked and twice made to play the fool (first, in his own mind, for prostrating himself so completely and second by Pamela’s denial of emotional reciprocity), Mr. B. concedes to her will, though not without exposing the “fearful passion” brought about by this rejection (253); Pamela will be delivered to her parents tout de suite and B will be left with his heart on his sleeve.

It is upon that pivotal moment in the text that Richardson lays out with painstaking detail the crux of Pamela’s empirical experiment for testing the grounds of emotional experience. The text concludes that love is not an a priori informant that prefigures the meaning of experience but, rather, the residuum of a psychological agitation whose character is utterly unavailable at its inception. This starts to come about at the moment when Pamela first questions her resolve to leave Mr. B. In doing so, she entertains the idea of love almost by accident in reflecting upon
how B defended her against Mrs. Jewkes at the moment when he was most hurt. Here, Pamela’s
internal description of her emotional condition is as important as any passage in the text:

I think I was loath to leave the house. Can you believe it?—What could be the matter with
me, I wonder?—I felt something so strange, and my heart was so lumpish!—I wonder what
ailed me!—But this was so unexpected!—I believe that was all!—Yet I am very strange
still. Surely, surely, I cannot be like the old murmuring Israelites, to long after the onions and
garlick [sic] of Egypt, when they had suffered there such heavy bondage?—I’ll take thee, O
lumpish, contradictory, ungovernable heart! to severe task, for this thy strange impulse,
when I get to my dear father’s and mother’s; and if I find any thing in thee that should not be,
depend upon it thou shalt be humbled, if strict abstinence, prayer, and mortification will do
it! (256, italics in original, bold emphasis is mine)

In both form and content, it could not be clearer that Pamela is processing an intensity of
experience that is felt well before it is understood. Her monologue is almost apoplectic. She
speaks sometimes in the past tense, sometimes in the present, sometimes to her audience and
sometimes directly to her own heart. Surely, surely, she tries to convince herself, the pull she
feels to remain at Lincolnshire is not an instance of Stockholm Syndrome, so it must be that the
unexpected and swift reversal of fortune has only caught her off-guard. Yet, the indeterminacy of
her own conviction throws it all up as conjecture. If this scene alludes to passion’s classical
passivity, here and in similar passages throughout the novel, Richardson places more emphasis
on the strangeness of ungovernable impulses than on their ability to determine action. Moreover,
we should not lose sight of the fact that Pamela’s profound agitation at this moment is the same
feeling that, ultimately, will be telegraphed into the “true love” upon which the novel’s resolution
depends—it is only the circumstances that have changed.

She finally declares her love after reading a letter sent to her from Mr. B while she is
heading back to her parents (he sends his fastest horse to overtake her carriage). Because Pamela
now finds affection where once there was only aversion, Mr. B’s candid confession of his respect
and regard for her well-being, as Kames would say, inflames her and she is “quite overcome”
(260). As if trying to explain to herself, and maybe to the readers of her story, how such an
improbable reversal could be possible (her would-be rapist is now the only person she could ever think to marry) she argues:

But love is not a voluntary thing; Love, did I say?—But come, I hope not:—At least it is not, I hope, gone so far as to make me very uneasy: For I know not how it came, nor when it began; but crept, crept it has, like a thief, upon me; and before I knew what was the matter, it looked like love. (260, emphasis in original)

Her initial consideration of love is passive (something that makes one “very uneasy”) but her curious definition of involuntary love is grounded in modernizing, rather than classical, principles—it is initiated by a continuous renegotiation of one’s feelings in relation to changing circumstances, through an intermittent process of actions and passions; thus, it creeps through subtle touches until we are taken ‘all of a sudden.’ Here love is involuntary in the sense that once she feels it she cannot will herself to feel otherwise, but it is not entirely involuntary in the sense of being an intervening force that compels her to act completely outside of herself. Therefore, Pamela’s claim to an involuntary love refers to the implacable feeling that is manifest through the process of experience (like the feeling of fear one gets when one encounters a rattlesnake), not to a causal agent (like Cupid’s arrow) that one could trace back to as the source of her uneasiness.

A parallel analysis occurs when Mr. B makes his own declaration of love after Pamela has returned to Lincolnshire upon his request. It is another scene that begins by flirting with the classical pretenses of love’s actions when Pamela demurs the unreserved praise B heaps upon her for choosing to return. She claims not to merit such high esteem “because [she] was driven, by an irresistible impulse to it; and could not help it, if [she] would” (284). Again, the text is in a most productive limbo. She alludes directly to the passivity of pre-modern love, but the whole context of her return belies this as an affected show of giddy devotion rather than a truly wanton
act. For the novel relies heavily on the fact that Pamela did have a choice in order to maintain that the lovers’ reunion is genuine. This is evident in B’s rebuttal:

This…is engaging, indeed; if I may hope, that my Pamela’s gentle inclination for her persecutor was the strongest motive to her return; and I so much value a voluntary love in the person I would wish for my wife, that I would have even prudence and interest hardly named in comparison with it…In the choice I have made, it is impossible I should have any view to my interest. Love, true love, is the only motive by which I am induced. (284, emphasis in original)

Of course, Richardson must not only couch the reunion of Pamela and Mr. B in terms of free will but also in the romantic terms of companionate marriage. B couldn’t possibly be accused of marrying Pamela to sure up his material interests, and his choice to marry, rather than rape, her is the primary indicator that his actions are motivated by a true love. If these circumstances exonerate Mr. B, Pamela will be far more subject to criticism for letting her interests guide her actions. So when B places a high value on the concept of a wife’s voluntary love, the theoretical ground he traverses is shaky. Indeed, his voluntary and her involuntary passion actually share an important characteristic; they both happen before they are understood and they are both, ultimately, claimed as love. For Mr. B believes that a romantic inclination should be the motivator of Pamela’s actions, without it her return must be seen as devoid of love. So long as that strange impulse is later claimed and named as “true love” it can safely be blamed, retroactively, for inducing all of the hitherto unqualified events that preceded it. The most salient consequence here is that the choice to claim love in the end is always both voluntary and involuntary because feeling and saying are bound only by a corollary and not a causal relationship.

So, what kind of a “thing” is love in Pamela? Ultimately, neither the reader nor the protagonist can say. When pressed by Mr. B for an assurance that her decision to return to him was motivated by the same true love that induced him to marry her, she suggests what she makes
explicit in her commentary on gratitude, that “the English tongue affords not words” for doing so; thus, she can only answer in terms of negation: “before I knew this to be what I now blush to call it,” she tells him, “I could not hate you, or wish you ill” (386, 284). Indeed, the text’s many oblique expressions and subtle reversals suggest that, within the context of passion, love is not a “thing” at all—that is, it is not a direct object of perception to which we are sensitive and, thus, merely patients. It bears a relationship to the agitations of our mind, but it cannot be said to cause them. Love, instead functions like a biological response to stimuli in the sense that it is an actualization of the potentiality that subsides within the intensity of cognitive emotional content. Love in Pamela is, perhaps, best described as a reaction, both in the sense that it is belated to the feelings that generate it and that it is the result of a cognitive interplay between what we first feel and later know. In saying it, we lay claim to an affective moment that cannot, in its own right, be described. This is precisely what makes Pamela such a valuable text for studying emotion in the context of its eighteenth-century developments, for it is remarkable for so frequently taking the opportunity to reflect upon its own incapacity to do more than bear witness to the strangeness that underwrites modern conceptions of the epistemological truths of emotion.

In the next chapter this will become all the more striking in comparison to a contrasting example found in John Cleland’s Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (1748). Counterintuitively, Cleland’s highly pornographic novel models an investigation of emotion that takes as its premise a profound faith in the providential structure of experience. As such, it acts as the negative exposure of Pamela’s realism and offers a complex and conflicting resistance against the modernization of love that occurs when we equate that exalted passion to a series of mechanical acts.

Admittedly, this wide swath of philosophical history offers at least as much diversity as unity on the qualitative and quantitative nature of passion’s passivity, but the key defining consistency that James identifies, and I follow here, is the fact that classical passions were identified, catalogued, and categorized as having distinct unified characteristics that are essentially different from each other.


Passion and Action, 78.

Kames’ *Elements of Criticism* was an extremely well-known text in the first half of the eighteenth century. For, it was commonly used, up until the nineteenth century, throughout Europe and in America as a textbook in university courses on rhetoric.


As a rhetoric, the precise formulation and style of Kames’ argumentation is as important as the content of his subject matter.


*Structure of Emotions*, 110, emphasis in original.


*Structure of Emotions*, 111.

*Structure of Emotions*, 112.

The reference here is to Bruno Latour’s *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). Though the perspective of this dissertation varies significantly from Latour’s take on the problematic of becoming modern (see the introduction above), the analogy here is meant to emphasize the point that passion is a quintessentially classical and, more or less, outdated concept that nonetheless inheres in contemporary thinking.

I have chosen the probable scenario of encountering a rattlesnake, combined with the rational fear of such an encounter instead of a circumstance in which one suffers from the irrational “condition” of ophidiophobia to illustrate the structural features of quotidian emotional response, as per Gordon.

*Structure of Emotions*, 117, emphasis in original.

I think it is perfectly fair to think of such processing as simultaneously cognitive, emotional, and autonomic, but an extended discussion of the confluence of these concepts under the umbrella of affect is beyond the scope of the argument at hand. I merely gesture to it here to suggest future points of departure.

*Structure of Emotions*, 118; emphasis in original.

Samuel Richardson, *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded*, ed. William M. Sale (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 385. All further citations will be to this edition of *Pamela* and cited parenthetically in the text. Because of Richardson’s extensive use of italics, unless stated otherwise, all emphasis in quotations is original.

For Michael McKeon’s seminal argument regarding the “progressive ideology” inherent to Richardson’s contribution to the rise of the novel, see *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 357-381 and passim.

This now-famous trope of the Richardsonian epistolary aesthetic was actually originated by Richardson himself in the introduction to *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), wherein he describes “The nature of familiar letters, written, as it were, to the moment, while the heart is agitated by hopes and fears, on events undecided.”

Just a few notable instances in which Pamela demonstrates her rhetorical dexterity include: her retort to Lady Towers’ remark that she was “born to undo, or to be undone!” (48); her indirect criticism of Mr. B to his face through biblical analogy: “O the difference between the minds of thy creatures, good God! How shall some be cast down in their innocence, while others can triumph in their guilt!” (64); and, of course, her conversation of dueling wit with Lady Davers (402-407).

The concept of realism that I employ here is influenced by William James’ *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912). See, especially, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” wherein James insists that “non-perceptual experiences,” have an equal share in the conceptual makeup of reality (17). Realism, for James is speculative because it does not exclude non-perceptual experiences from the larger picture of subjective, relational reality.


*Love in Excess*, 127.

*Love in Excess*, 127.

*Love in Excess*, 127.

We will remember from chapter one that “sensation barely in itself,” marked by a general uneasiness or delight is the common perception that precedes all of his determinations of passion.


From *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill* (London, 1754), qtd. in *The Pamela Controversy*, xxvi, emphasis in original.

*Novel Minds*, 153.


*Elements of Criticism*, 1:68-69

*Elements of Criticism*, 1:70.
Imagine for a moment that John Cleland never published the infamous *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748). Imagine that he had not found himself facing a lengthy stint in debtor’s prison in 1747 and, thus, did not authorize Fenton Griffiths to publish the work to satisfy his debt. Hal Gladfelder paints a convincing picture of the origin of Cleland’s *Woman of Pleasure*. Begun as a collaboration between Cleland and his friend Charles Carmichael, it was an homage to *L’Ecole des Filles* that “took shape as a series of exchanges, challenges, borrowings, revisions, and dares between Carmichael, Cleland, and the books they were secretly reading” as young soldiers in service of the East India Company.¹ Evidently, Cleland himself never intended the story of Fanny Hill to find a broader readership. Necessity and the opportunistic eye of booksellers (first Fenton and then his brother Ralph Griffiths) sealed the fate of the most famous work of English pornographic literature. If we remove *Woman of Pleasure* from Cleland’s repertoire, his body of work stands as eclectic but undistinguished. Aside from a few texts on the etymology of Celtic languages, the odd pseudo-medical treatise, three never-to-be-performed plays and a few poorly reputed works of prose fiction, the John Cleland who never agreed to let Griffiths publish *Woman of Pleasure* would, no doubt, have little reputation and hardly be remembered today.

Without *Woman of Pleasure*, we might presume Cleland would have vanished into the multitudinous backdrop of fiction writers against which Fielding and Burney sought to distinguish themselves.² If scholars were to read him at all, John Cleland, the non-pornographer, would be most notable as a writer of romance.³ His amatory fiction offers various accounts of dissipated men who come to “experimentally discern the infinite inferiority of [merely sexual]
pleasure to … a passion seasoned with sentiment and authorized by virtue.”⁴ True to the romance impulse we saw in the early work of Eliza Haywood, a classical concept of love’s immediacy and unrelenting constancy shapes the arc of Cleland’s amatory narratives. It is for that very reason that I begin this chapter by looking closely at the romance structure of Cleland’s later work, for, by this comparison, we can develop a much better understanding of the extent to which emotional discourse fashioned not only the form but the function of *The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*.

Only by taking seriously the classical incantation of love as the predominant passion, one that both sets in motion the novel’s narrative events and underwrites Fanny’s experimental explorations of the many “feels” of physical intensity, do we get a full account of how Cleland’s text was engaging with contemporary models of materialist epistemology. In fact, when we read *Woman of Pleasure* as a modern romance of the classical passion of love, we must also revise Leo Braudy’s interpretation of the novel as “a defense of the materialist view of human nature popularized by the publication of [Julien Offray de la Mettrie’s] *l’Homme Machine* only a little over a year before.”⁵ I will argue below that we must not regard *Woman of Pleasure*’s “tail-piece of morality” as “out of character” with either Fanny’s own narrative or Cleland’s larger oeuvre.⁶ By working backward from Cleland’s amatory fiction, we find a conservative line of consistency whereby “love’s true arrow” serves as the model for comparison by which protagonists test the difference between love and lust.⁷ Without a doubt, that difference is tested on the body, but comparison can only be made in consultation with the soul.

In this way, Cleland’s fiction serves as something of an example in contrast to the inquiries of Steele, Haywood, and Richardson that I explore in preceding chapters, which call readers’ attention to the interstices of mental acuity where external sensations set off a chain that
travels from radical uneasiness to belated understanding of emotional content. In fact, one could claim that Cleland’s theoretical position best resembles Addison’s conservative assumption that within the experience of passion resides an un-ironic naked truth and that moral good is achieved when external conditions are rectified to internal truths.

Most importantly, Cleland’s contrasting example offers a case in point for the broader thesis of this dissertation. For, when eighteenth-century novels take up the subject of the passions, with the attendant baggage of its long history, they inherently engage in a theoretical exploration of the relationship between external and internal conditions of experience, between perception and knowledge, between feeling and knowing. As such, Cleland’s modern romance of love, tried in the fire of pornography’s physical intensity, is a fitting final illustration of the critical interrelationship among passions discourse, prose fiction and eighteenth-century articulations of modern epistemology.

WORKING BACKWARD FROM CLELAND’S AMATORY FICTION

Let us begin by setting the stage with Cleland’s second novel, Memoirs of a Coxcomb (1751). The protagonist, William Delamore, is an orphaned baronet of enormous wealth and dubious education. Placated by an overly affectionate aunt, William whiles away the years prior to his majority in the sport and leisure of his country seat. The narrative finds its course when William has his first experience of “true love-passion” imbued in him when he first sets eyes on Lydia. While out on one of his hunting excursions, he stops for respite at a cottage on his aunt’s land that is tenanted by an old woman and stocked with provisions by William for that purpose. To his surprise, he finds two well-dressed gentlewomen—Lydia and her guardian Mrs. Bernard—taking tea in the cottage, surrounded by an equipage worthy of their rank. The young
girl’s beauty is comparable to “Venus in her state of innocence, when new-born of the sea” (12).

So powerful is the force of her charm that he is instantly in love.

Of most consequence, though, is the knowledge he gains from that love-struck moment:

What wretch is there so unhappy, so disinherited by nature, as not to have been sometime of his life in love! Those indeed alone, who have paid the tribute of humanity to this passion, can conceive to what a point I was struck…; I was however only affected relatively to this new object of another set of sensations, than those merely instinctive ones, which nature furnishes in the rough, and which love alone can give a polish and a lustre to. (15, my emphasis)

In the plainest of terms, William’s experience of love at first sight allows him to make a distinction between virtuous and vicious sexual feelings. The significance of this passage, however, resides in the theoretical framework that Cleland relies upon for making that distinction. He begins by establishing the experience of love as a natural phenomenon, so much so that those unhappy few who have not known the feeling are “disinherited,” and nature is bifurcated in a way that separates the miserable “merely natural” from the happy communicant members of “human nature.” William has learned to tell the difference precisely because he has had carnal desires before; thus, what’s most important is the self-contradictory description of the transition between the two. Either William is imbued with a new set of sensations from the merely natural ones he experienced before or those same sensations are given a new character by the super-added emotional quality of love. The text holds both possibilities in suspension by virtue of the fact that the first slips into the second. He is most affected, that is changed, because the sight of Lydia gives him access to “another set of sensations.” This would seem to imply that those sensations are of an entirely different kind from his previous sexual urges. In the same breath, however, the metaphor shifts to a concept of improvement. Like a diamond in the rough, merely natural desire is given a new character through the polish and luster that only love can
provide. The unmistakably peculiar passion of love not only reorients his sensations but also achieves, as Fanny Hill puts it, “a difference in the state of the same thing.”

William’s blissful enjoyment is cut short when Lydia and Mrs. Bernard leave abruptly with little explanation beyond an entreaty to “not think more about us, till time, and circumstances, shall give us leave to explain the whole mystery to you” (69). The open-ended disappointment sets him down the road to “coxcombry” wherein he fills the void of Lydia’s loss with debauchery until comparative reflection brings him pain, for he finds “at length how essential the heart is to the preparation of a feast worth the appetite of the senses” (329). In a culinary twist on the unsatisfying result of his sexual satiety, William realizes that “it was reserved for love alone to secure the benefit of this disgust” (330). “My heart,” he declares, “made me sensible that it was made for love; that nothing less would worthily satisfy its delicacy, and that in playing false to that passion, I had, to my own wrong, renounced the truest, greatest pleasure, to which humanity can boast its inheritance” (330). Here again we find passion, particularly the sovereign passion of love, to be the rightful inheritance of humanity. Thus, it becomes a moral imperative, of sorts, to exercise one’s capacity for appreciating the difference between love and lust, between rapacious desires of the body and virtuous desires of the soul even as both impulses manifest in the consummation of sexual union.

By mixing his corporeal and metaphysical metaphors, especially (as we shall see) in Woman of Pleasure, Cleland openly thwarts attempts to place the burden of the text’s ethos on the interaction of material bodies alone. In the case of William’s moment of repentance, the heart stands in as a physical embodiment of the immaterial soul, and his sin of coxcombry after Lydia’s departure amounts to a willful ignorance of the distinction between good and evil.
Indeed, the “error of indistinction” is his greatest crime, and Cleland presents this transgression in the quasi-religious language that abounds in *Memoirs of a Coxcomb*. William reflects:

I wondered how, or by what infatuation, I could sacrifice a divinity to objects beneath even the honour of being her victims. I could not conceive then a more mortifying degradation, than what the error of indistinction, and the violence of those tasteless passions had plunged me into, only to make me feel the more sharply their comparison with the noble one, to which I had seemed to give up my pretensions. (330-31)

The injustice of his faulty judgment resides not only in the error of mistaking unworthy for worthy objects of love (coded here as the pursuit and gratification of sexual desire) but also in believing the feelings those sexual conquests elicited to be a tolerable stand in for the sovereign passion for which there is no substitute. Indeed, William’s scene of self-penance is the fulfilment of an earlier passage that foretells of his misery-to-come. “I should now have,” he laments, “looked on every earthly paradise with indifference or contempt, that was not dignified and embellished with the presence of this new sovereign of all the world, to me,” the exalted passion of love (18). As it stands, the now-fallen William, fully cognizant of his indiscretion of indistinction, takes up a new mission: he is set to the task not by his own agency but by the “violent reflux of the tide of love” (331).

It should be readily evident, by now, that the theoretical concept of the passions at work in *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* runs parallel to the more conservative, classical vein I have described elsewhere in this dissertation. William’s experience of his passions, whether noble or ignoble, is described in terms of implacable immediacy, and he acts, almost exclusively, at the mercy of their capricious whims. What’s more, Cleland’s sophomore novel embraces, wholeheartedly, the connection that I outlined in chapter two between classical passions and the influence of romance narrative. Indeed, when William decides to rectify his earlier mistake by resuming inquiries after Lydia, he resolves upon “going personally in quest of her, with a diligence that should leave no hero of a romance, in pursuit of his princess, the odds of comparison to his advantage” (331).
William’s heart gains agency over him, and the story shifts into full romance mode. Indeed, it owns itself to be more of a romance than even romance itself, perhaps because there will be no fantastic impediments to William’s quest once he has made up his mind to listen to his heart. The tint of modernity that shades the romance of Coxcomb lies in the refinement of William’s taste for emotional experiences. As we saw with Addison’s interpretation of Locke’s theory of emotion in chapter one, William has learned to attune himself to the intrinsic good/evil, pleasure/pain residing in various types of “pleasures.” His heart reveals to him what Wallace Jackson terms the “inexorable law of being” that is underwritten by God and implacably connected to experience itself. In the coup-de-grâce of his self-examination, William exclaims:

I tasted now, with the highest relish, the difference between pleasures, which reflection is sure to redouble, and those it is sure to destroy, and erect pain upon their ruins: between, in fine, those delicate desires, which are the rectified spirit of the highest passion, and those instinctive ones which are the sediments of the lowest. (334-35)

To be absolutely clear, the point he is driving at is sex; sexual intercourse is the common denominator of physical, material sensation that remains the same even as the moral estimation is tinted by a metaphysical attachment. The difficulty of the kind of distinction Cleland’s fiction attempts to make is evident in his reliance upon adjectives. Active reflection reveals to William the difference between delicate and instinctive desires because a lasting pleasure attends the former whereas, in the latter, pleasure subsides into pain once the physical urge is gratified. The distinction, too, runs all the way back to the originary underwriting passion in each case. Love rectifies while lust debases desire; it is a distinction for which no material evidence can be provided. The difference between sublime and guttural sensuality is sentimental. So William lays claim to “[s]entiments of all another merit, sentiments more delicate, and infinitely more voluptuous, [which] filled [his] heart, and added to the sweetness they brought with them, the joy and self-gratulation of an escape” from the basest coxcombry (334).
The modern romance of *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* is essentially over at this moment because he has won by experience (i.e. “experimentally”) a validation of the truth he has known all along. The learning is only evident in the “odds of comparison” by putting virtue up against vice in order to learn how to make the fine distinction. It is important that William becomes a coxcomb, as Fanny becomes a whore, only after he experiences the passion of love that gives a dart of “humanity” to the merely natural experience of physical pleasure. William’s description of his feelings on “first sight of Agnes,” one of his dishonorable conquests, provides a revealing case in point:

Nothing could be more engaging than her face, nothing more correct than her shape, and all together composed a system of attraction, more powerful and more naturally accounted for, than any in all Sir Isaac Newton’s works. It was not that I felt that sort of emotion which was reserved for Lydia alone to inspire me, but I felt that quick and sensible desire, which sets all the powers of the mind in action to obtain its satisfaction, and which made me, on that instant, conceive and form designs of pleasure upon her. (170-71)

The reference to Newton and the epistemology of empirical science is significant, especially when we compare it to the classical imagery through which Cleland describes Lydia’s beauty. With “the shape of a nymph, an air of the Graces, [and]…a complexion…which is at once the painter’s admiration, and despair,” Lydia’s beauty is nothing if not ideational, a model that can only be gestured toward but never captured (12). Agnes, on the other hand, is described in formulaic terms; her features are “correct” in such a way that they add up to a system of natural physical attraction modeled on the laws of natural philosophy—the intractable, unfeeling laws of mechanical bodies in a “merely” natural material universe. Thus, he feels a “quick and sensible desire,” registered in the quantitative flows of the body and involuntary agitations of the mind. These are outside the qualitative moral framework that, as Addison puts it in *The Spectator* no. 37, “enlighten[s] the Understanding and rectif[ies] the Passions.”11
Precedent for the theoretical model of passion at work in *Coxcomb*, a model that carries over into all of the “romances” that make up Cleland’s *The Surprises of Love* (1760), was set in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. In fact, when we look carefully at how the passions actually function within that text, we will see that the theoretical experiment of passion’s metaphysical certainty tested on the sexualized body is the engine that drives the novel’s aesthetic explorations. In that sense, the “tail-piece of morality…resulting from compared experience” becomes crucially important for comprehending the theoretical stakes of Fanny Hill’s narrative (*Woman of Pleasure*, 187).

As preposterous as it seems on the surface, I would argue that there is reason to take the novel’s moral turn at face value. This is not at all to downplay or discredit the text’s pornography, for when Fanny tells her reader, “if I have painted vice all in its gayest colors, if I have deck’d it with flowers, it has been solely in order to make the worthier, the solemner sacrifice of it, to virtue,” she also describes the novel’s broader theoretical investigation into the imperceptible, affective signatures of physical experience (187-8). Because she can ultimately test the ideational figure of “true love” against her sensual exploits of the body, the underlying lesson that Fanny learns is how to make a very fine distinction between sexual pleasures that bear the stamp of love and those that have all the appearance of being, but are explicitly not, drawn from the same well of emotional experience.

We are, indeed, fortunate that Cleland *did* publish his narrative of Fanny Hill. Its forays into the intricate details of illicit sexual experience, when compared with the predominant “true love” motif of all Cleland’s prose fiction, allow us to make a greater case for the theoretical implications of eighteenth-century novels. Whatever else it might be, *Woman of Pleasure* is a love story that relies upon a classically passive conception of passion. Within that classical
frame, however, lies a theoretical investigation of experience the likes of which is not to be found anywhere among its contemporaries. I will contend that Cleland’s first novel establishes the metaphysical given of love in order to test a material uncertainty. Fanny calls into question the knowledge we derive from the body by presenting it as a system of impulsive flows that must be checked against internal certainties of the difference between love and something like it.

In this way, *Woman of Pleasure* presents the tropological both/and that is characteristic of all the texts explored in this dissertation. It is at once a transgressive, materialist expression of the mechanistic “collision of the sexes,” and a conservative model of the immediacy and constancy of the passion of love, a love whose ultimate beatification will serve as the solid “ground-work” that both anchors the telos of the novel’s plot and allows for its most transgressive digressions to take place (64, 91).

**FANNY HILL’S MODERN ROMANCE**

*Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is the epistolary narrative of Fanny Hill, written by the protagonist to an unspecified “Madam” who, has requested to hear a full account of Fanny’s story. It is the tale, as Fanny says, of “those scandalous stages of my life, out of which I emerg’d at length, to the enjoyment of every blessing in the power of love, health, and fortune to bestow” (1). The “unhappy profession” from which she emerged, of course, is prostitution, and the path that takes her there will be familiar to readers of eighteenth-century fiction.

Orphaned at the age of fifteen, she seeks a living in London, whereupon she is subjected to the deceit and exploitation of Mrs. Brown, the madam of a brothel who takes her in under the pretense of being a servant with the intention of selling her virginity to the highest bidder. Once inculcated to life in a brothel (but before the arrival of lord B—, a virgin hunter for whom she was intended) Fanny meets Charles and they fall in love at first sight. Charles designs to remove
her from Mrs. Brown’s to a London apartment where they perform a pseudo marriage ceremony and he takes her virginity.

At this point, Fanny tells us, “love itself took charge of the disposal of me, in spite of interest, or gross lust” (34). Their union of true love ends shortly thereafter when Charles is effectively pressed by his father into service on a South Seas voyage. Being unaware of his future departure, Charles does not arrange for Fanny’s care in his absence. After Charles disappears, Fanny suffers a miscarriage of their child followed by a long illness that puts her in considerable debt to her landlady, Mrs. Jones, who cares for her during her recovery. Under these circumstances, she succumbs to the advice of Jones, who sets her up as the kept mistress of a Mr. H— in exchange for his relief of her debts.

She then leaves the life of a kept mistress for that of a prostitute in the house of the libertine Mrs. Cole and, from that point forward, Fanny’s narrative is punctuated by a series of sexual encounters, had for the sake of experience alone. In the end, Charles returns to rescue her, once again, from a life of vice, and the novel ends with its infamous “tail-piece of morality,” wherein the pleasures of gross sensuality, in which most of the novel indulges its readers, are retroactively diminished in favor of its new dominant mode of virtue.

The above outline, no doubt, leaves out the most intimate details of Fanny’s forays into a life of hedonistic pleasure, but this is to better show the structural similarity between Woman of Pleasure and Cleland’s more heavily censored later romances. The first, and most obvious, overlap comes in Fanny’s description of how her own quest, of sorts, got its start in love. Like William Delamore, Fanny is adrift when she is surprised by her chance encounter with Charles and the new set of sensations that her awareness of him makes available. Without such an intervention, the vicious arc of the narrative would have started too soon, giving her no morsel of
virtue by which to make the comparison of her later vices. Indeed, Mrs. Brown is on the verge of executing her plan to sell Fanny’s virginity to Lord B— when that train of events is derailed by the same affective agent that intercedes on William’s behalf in *Coxcomb*.

Fanny tells the reader that she “had all the air of not being able to wait for the arrival of my lord B— … [when] *love itself took charge* of the disposal of me, in spite of interest, or gross lust” (34, my emphasis). In the three pages that make up the first meeting of Fanny and Charles, a classical idea of love—as passion that thwarts rationality, governs impulses, and dictates events—is either directly stated or alluded to in every paragraph. No passage, however, captures that spirit better than Fanny’s recollection of the first time she sees her soon-to-be lover, who is fast asleep in Mrs. Brown’s parlor after the previous night’s “drunken revel”:

> Heavens! what a sight! no! no term of years, no turns of fortune could ever eraze the lightening-like impression his form made on me…Yes! dearest object of my early passion, I command for ever the remembrance of thy first appearance to my ravish’d eyes,—it calls thee up, present; and I see thee now! (34)

Fanny’s retrospective narration reinforces for the reader the idea that there is a certain fatality to the experience she has at that moment. Though she is able to “command” her mind to call up its recollection, the affective quality of passion’s initial immediacy is unmistakable. Struck with what she later terms “a true passion” and “love itself,” Fanny leaves no room to imagine that there is anything but an active force pulling strings behind the scenes (35).

With this classically inspired invocation—of passivity, immediacy, and indelibility of meaning—Cleland begins the modern romance of Fanny Hill. The mixture of eighteenth-century brothel transaction and courtly romance, itself, makes for an odd comparison, but it is worth paying close attention to the classical imagery embedded within the modern. For Fanny’s description of Charles’ form as he lays unconscious, mirrors William’s appreciation of Lydia’s beauty. The “roseate bloom of Charles’ youth…in which the momentary triumph of the lilly over
the rose…gave an inexpressible sweetness to the finest features imaginable” (*MWP*, 34-5) is nearly equivalent to Lydia’s “complexion in which the tints of red and white, delicately blended, formed that more than roseate colour, which is at once the painter’s admiration, and despair” (*Coxcomb*, 12). Both texts describe the visual sensation of true love in terms of idealized figurations that set the stage for a romance-driven narrative.

Yet Fanny’s idealistic recollection also queers the classical tropes in important ways. When she describes the regularity of Charles’ classical beauty, “which no pencil could have describ’d,” she tells us that the vision “seem’d to challenge me to get the gloves of this lovely sleeper, had not the modesty and respect, which in both sexes are inseparable from a true passion, checked my impulses” (35). Fanny assumes the posture of the romance rake, poised to gain a sexual advantage over a helpless conquest. Here Cleland offers a very near copy of the pivotal scene from *Love in Excess* where D’Elmont holds back from ravishing a sleeping Melliora.\(^\text{12}\) When Charles wakes and mistakes Fanny for “one of the house-pliers, come to amuse him,” the tables turn, and it is now for him to check the guttural impulses of lust in favor of love, as a feeling that carries a subtle, materially imperceptible distinction (35). “[W]hether my figure made a more than ordinary impression on him, or whether it was his natural politeness, he addrest me in a manner far from rude” (35). He becomes her “conqueror,” as she was his, not through physical violence but through a “tone set…by love itself” (35).

In both cases, the virtues of “new-born love, that true refiner of lust,” check the physiological impulse to sexual conquest (35). There is not, however, a perfect equivalency of male and female desire, even in this idyllic scenario. Fanny never actually had the agency to gain advantage of the situation without incurring some form of injury from the transaction, so when she chooses, in an instant, to hazard her own safety to put herself in the care of love, the
intricately intertwined narratives of the text are set in motion. On the one hand, material 
exposure to physical experience always rides on the surface. On the other hand, the immaterially 
codified emotional truth of love that inheres within the agitations of Fanny’s mind remains the 
paramount object of the novel’s quest.

The critical architecture of Woman of Pleasure, as a long-form investigation of the 
difference between love and ‘something like it’ is exemplified in Fanny’s description of her 
cognitive state at the moment when she decides to accept Charles’ invitation to become his kept 
mistress:

Rash, sudden, undigested, and even dangerous as this offer might be from a perfect stranger, 
and that stranger a giddy boy, the prodigious love I was struck with for him, had put a charm 
into his voice there was no resisting, and blinded me to every objection… thus my heart 
beating strong to the proposal, dictated my answer, after scarce a minute’s pause, that I 
would accept his offer … I would be entirely at his disposal, let it be good or bad. (36, my 
emphasis)

Here Fanny clearly recognizes the peril of her situation. The rash offer of a giddy boy (as the 
older, wiser Fanny would surely know) is ever subject to change. She could have no idea how, or 
to what ends, Charles would use her as a sexual partner. The text seems undecided on whether 
young Fanny knew, at the time, the danger her narrator projects, but such apprehension is 
immaterial to the events themselves. For the “magic of love” that William Delamore perceives in 
Coxcomb is the same resistless charm that Fanny follows, through the agency of her heart which 
dictates her behavior based on an instinctive response to an “undigested” proposition of sin.
Because that sin is preempted by the exalted passion of love, her motivations are described as far 
more chaste than the bare facts of the material circumstances show them to be. At any rate, she is 
moved by her passion as vigorously and undoubtedly as any romance heroine ever was. The 
choice to follow Charles’s plan of escaping Mrs. Brown to an apartment destined for their
elope, was no choice at all—“but, alas! this was no merit in me, for I was drove to it by a passion too impetuous for me to resist, and I did what I did, because I could not help it” (38)\textsuperscript{13}.

Fanny’s non-decision to follow Charles and become his kept mistress in the name of love is also the opening move that allows the text’s pornographic narrative to unfold. It begins with the exquisitely chaste and explicitly graphic sexual account of Charles’ triumph over her virginity. It continues as he is removed from the picture and the power vacuum nearly destroys her. Left to “make [her] market while [she] may,” from this point forward Fanny must capitalize on the commodified value of her, literally and figuratively, alienated body (58). As such, it may be bought by Mr. H who is willing to relieve her monetary debt to Mrs. Jones, in exchange for a corporeal one to him. Thus begins the journey of Fanny’s body as a fungible commodity.

Anne Louise Kibbie has described \textit{Woman of Pleasure} in terms of three competing narratives, each governed by commercial, sexual and sentimental economies that “function as organizing principles or systems.”\textsuperscript{14} Her observation is apropos to the competing interests that drive the action of the novel’s plot, and Charles’ entrance into the text is most significant because he sets them all into play at once. Fanny is struck by the true love at first sight of a sentimental economy, coupled with the physical longings of a sexual economy, while all is overshadowed by the commercial economy—she defaults on a debt to Mrs. Brown by taking up with Charles, and it is on the pretense of “securing a considerable inheritance” that Charles is forced to leave for the “South-Seas” (55). When Charles disappears, love figures only as an absence, a void to be filled by sexual commerce. Thinking about the novel’s economies in terms of the exploration of emotional content, it is possible to see how Kibbie’s tripartite scheme also functions in terms of the fluctuating binary of modern passion. For Fanny’s emotional
investigation ultimately pits material and immaterial principles of understanding against one another—physical feeling versus apperceived passion, lust versus love.

The unique scenario of Cleland’s first novel (with its focus on female sex work and the economic destitution that catapults the narrative) sets it apart from *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* and the rest of his later fiction. The material conditions that put Fanny in a position to test the experiences of “a pleasure merely animal” actually allow *Woman of Pleasure* the opportunity to provide a more convincing data set for its conclusion (64). Once indoctrinated into Mrs. Cole’s libertine society Fanny sees the motivation of her actions (beyond earning a living) in terms of the gathering of experience—experimentally testing the feelings of physical ecstasy. Therefore, if the emotional force behind William Delamore’s motivation is what brings *Coxcomb* to claim itself as more romance than romance, Fanny’s utter subjection to material conditions makes her narrative less than romance in productive ways. For Cleland’s later texts are missing the very thing that lends a theoretical salience to *Woman of Pleasure*—the pornography that enables an intricately detailed testing of its metaphysical premise.

**THREE (IM)MATERIAL EXAMPLES**

The text establishes the organizing principles of Fanny’s investigations at the very beginning of her post-Charles experiences. Her miscarriage and destitution throw her into a wild fit of grief and despair that deadens her senses. When Mr. *H* enters the text under the pretense of tenderness with intentions only of buying the rights to her body, he finds her in a state of stupefaction that exacts a dissociation of sense from act. The act of rape that initiates the text’s commercial and sexual economies calls our attention to the explicit materiality of the scene.

Fanny admits of “neither resistance nor compliance,” now looking on myself as bought by the payment that had been transacted before me, I did not care what became of my wretched body: … I did not so much as know what he was
about, till recovering from a trance of lifeless insensitivity, I found him buried in me, whilst I lay passive and innocent of the least sensation of pleasure: a death cold corpse could scarce have had less life or sense in it. As soon as he had thus pacified a passion, which had too little respected the condition I was in, he got off, and after recomposing the disorder of my cloaths, employ’d himself with the utmost tenderness to calm the transports of remorse and madness at myself, with which I was seiz’d. (60, my emphasis)

Her flight of raging tears calms into a bitter remorse and then dejected sorrow. The disgusting scene of Mr. H’s physical self-gratification acts according to a classical code of passions—his unyielding lust compels him to act against all common decency and Fanny’s sheer passivity brings about her unequivocal grief. What’s more, Fanny’s “lifeless insensitivity” and the comparison to a “death cold corpse” emphasize the fact that what we witness is a material transaction devoid of the emotional sensibility and active participation that would lend the scene a human quality beyond the starkly physical transaction.

This graphic scene forms a crux around pleasure as an affective concept. For the merely physical sensations that Fanny’s state of trauma first insulates her from feeling and in which she will later discern a kind of delight, lack an imperceptible residue that is best appreciated by way of comparison. “I obey’d, with a heart full of affliction,” she tells the reader, “at the comparison it made between those delicious tete-a-tetes with my ever dear youth, and this forc’d situation, this new awkward scene, impos’d and obtruded on me by cruel necessity” (61-62). It is the cruel necessity of the narrative’s material arc that literally rapes the text of its classical transaction of true love.

What we get in its wake is an intricate critique of material sensation and the “gross sensuality” of physical ecstasy (187). Interestingly, Fanny’s profane baptism, if you will, into the world of sexual experimentation comes through another inverted romance trope. In Mr. H’s second trial of Fanny’s now commodified body he takes a less violent, though more devious, approach by sending up an aphrodisiacal “bridal posset” that conditions her, physically, to his
advances. Evocative of the love potions of ancient romance—such as the one that hardwires Tristan and Isolde to a love that seals their fate—Mr. H’s apothecary intervention works remarkably well, for she “felt immediately a heat, a fire run like a hue-and-cry through ev’ry part of [her] body” (63). While Fanny registers a change in her condition that is charged with romance mystique, the language Cleland uses to describe the fulfillment of H’s plan is almost clinical. As such, it emphasizes a stark contrast from the magical tone that permeates other true love scenes in Cleland’s work.

While Cleland’s scenes of true love own their romance allusions unironically, the nefarious circumstances that surround Mr. H’s aphrodisiac seem to present a modern parallel as a kind of mockery of purely empirical explanations of human nature. As such, it mimics the anti-materialist sentiments that Cleland expresses in his Institutes of Health (1761). The pseudo-medical tract offers a classically grounded defense of diet, exercise, and moderation in opposition to the positivist approaches of modern medicine. As far back as Galen’s time, he asserts, “Empirics…, with their packets and mountebank-professions, were in high vogue” and men were just as much in need then, as in 1761, of rescue from “senseless and destructive quackery.”15 Thus, the quasi-medicinal intervention that H invents to facilitate Fanny’s rape seems every bit a critique of materialist principles of human nature.

The scene of Mr. H’s conquest replaces immaterial influence with the very specific physiological motion of bodily fluids. It is the first of three pivotal experimental moments the text devises to test its main hypothesis, and what will concern us most here is the relationship between the fluid motion of the physiological transaction and a certain knowledge that is superadded to the material mark. The bridal posset has brought her conscious self in tune with her physical body such that she can claim: “I had it now, I felt it now:”
and beginning to drive, he soon gave nature such a powerful summons down to her favourite quarters, that she could no longer refuse repairing thither: all my animal spirits then rush’d mechanically to that center of attraction, and presently, inly warm’d, and stirr’d as I was beyond bearing, I lost all restraint, and yielding to the force of the emotion, gave down, as mere woman, those effusions of pleasure, which in the strictness of still faithful love, I could have wish’d to have held up. (64, my emphasis)

Cleland deliberately envelopes the description of Fanny’s first commodified orgasm in the same language that Julien Offray De La Mettrie uses to offer a mechanical explanation of the passions, via a purely material conception of the soul. “The passions,” Mettrie asserts:

are the habitual modifications of the animal spirits, which almost continually supply the soul with pleasant or unpleasant sensations, and which inspire in it desire or aversion for the objects which gave rise to the usual modifications in the movement of these spirits. Hence arise love, hatred, fear, audacity, pity, ferocity, anger, gentleness and a tendency to particular sensual pleasure.16

Here we see that love and “sensual pleasure” are on par with hatred and gentleness, pity and ferocity; thus love and lust are connected by a chain of equivalency which flattens out the distinctions between all variants of passion and reduces them to mechanical movement alone.

Passions, in the materialist context of Mettrie’s anti-Cartesian polemic, can have no intrinsic meaning, for they are all connected by the same pneumatic system of neurological movement that he explains through the stimulus and response of animal spirits. The OED reminds us that animal spirits had long been understood as “[t]he (supposed) agent responsible for sensation and movement, originating in the brain and passing to and from the periphery of the body through the nerves.”17 These ‘spirits’ move mechanically through a systemic set of pressures and reflexes that had only begun, by 1748, to be theorized by the first modern neuroscientists.18 Even the “emotion” that Fanny experiences in the materialized encounter with H is evacuated because Cleland employs here an older, strictly physical, usage of the term to denote not a psychological but a biological revolution, as Locke had done in referring to cardiovascular circulation as an “Emotion in [one’s] Blood or Pulse.”19 Fanny’s will is short-
circuited, but not by passion; instead the affective signature has been supplanted by the stirring
of a kind of pneumatic pressure. The materialist implications of human nature are clearly
evident. Thus, Fanny contemplates her own being as a mere woman of pleasure or as a woman of
mere pleasure, with “mere” denoting a bare physicality of self and the sheer mechanism of
movement accounting for all the inward warmth and stirrings of the human soul.

Cleland offers this as an explicit example of the hollowed out system of radical
materialism. There is good reason to believe, then, that Fanny’s most explicit depictions of
sexual encounters as the mechanical interactions of machinic bodies are not validations of
Mettrie’s anti-Cartesian system but, rather, parodies of it. For *Woman of Pleasure* offers the
commodified exploits, and exploitations, of its heroine as foils for proving the metaphysical truth
of the passions that inspire her to understand the (im)material difference between materially
identical perceptions.

In fact, the text offers proof for such an interpretation directly after its pneumatic
description of sexual intercourse when Fanny reflects upon the critical comparison that
perpetuates the novel’s most significant theoretical engagement:

> Yet oh! *what an immense difference* did I feel between this impression of a pleasure merely
animal, and struck out of the collision of the sexes, by a passive bodily effect, from that
sweet fury, that rage of active delight which crowns the enjoynments of a mutual love-passion,
where two hearts tenderly and truly united, club to exalt the joy, and give it a spirit and soul
that bids defiance to that end, which mere momentary desires generally terminate in, when
they die of a surfeit of satisfaction. (64, my emphasis)

Previous experience has taught her the full measure of “love-passion” as the mutually
participatory engagement of two hearts on equal footing, outside of a material, commercial
economy. Her “still faithful love” is not only the baseline impression that cannot be overwritten
by the vicious experiences in which she will shortly be awash, it is also the quintessential
experience that places all others into relief. Moreover, Fanny’s observation begs the question:
Wherein does that “immense difference” reside? The answer is, obtusely, nowhere within the verifiable domain of physical reality.

The bodily manifestation of sexual pleasure in both cases of love and lust is the mechanical rush of orgasm. Yet the text insists upon maintaining an immaterial distinction that is reserved for love alone in terms of a physical feeling marked by the unmistakable resonances of classical passion. Fanny’s description even takes on a theological tenor to illustrate the stark, yet imperceptible contrast. The difference between mere joy and the joy of love is nothing less than an exaltation, an emanation of the inspired soul that serves to isolate joy from joy without admitting of any empirically verifiable difference in the physical register of two seemingly identical experiences. I will continue to clarify this point as we look at other parallel examples, but, for now, I want only to point out that the language Cleland uses to critique the seeming certainties of materialist epistemology is steeped in contemporary passions discourse.

In particular, the above passage inverts the typical paradigm of passions and actions that we have explored throughout this dissertation. If Susan James’ active/passive binary describes a historical trajectory where passivity is abandoned on the far side of the ancient/modern divide, Fanny makes the case for a modern subjective passivity that is figured as the logical endpoint of arguments founded on the premises of radical materialism. Here only the physics of bodily effects and animalistic sensory stimuli are passive. By contrast, the passion of love requires an active, cognitive participation in order to recognize the compassionate potential of one’s capacity for intense emotional feeling, and that capacity is precisely what allows us to participate in the ecstasy of others. The notion of active attunement to a profoundly codified, yet immeasurable, intensity marks the overlapping classical and modern ideologies at work in Woman of Pleasure.
Curious convergences of classical and modern passion validate the virtuous trajectory of its pornographic plot, but it is only after Fanny relinquishes any claim she might have to the victim-hero status of ancient tragedy that she can move forward with her narrative. Before describing the endeavors of her “first launch into vice” as H’s mistress, she takes a moment to reflect on the options that were available to her at that moment (65). “If I now thought of my first, my only charmer, it was still with the tenderness and regret of the fondest love, embittered with the consciousness that I was no longer worthy of him. I could have beg’d my bread with him all over the world, but wretch that I was! I had neither the virtue or courage requisite not to outlive my separation from him” (65). In her own eyes, at that moment, Fanny has been utterly broken by the text’s material economy, which has made her unworthy of Charles’ honor in terms of physical/sexual fidelity.

Just as Pamela did while sitting beside the fishpond of B—’s Lincolnshire estate, Fanny entertains the idea of suicide. While Richardson’s heroine examines the concept minutely enough to determine it a false virtue of vanity masquerading as honor, Cleland’s narrator poses it as an archetypal act of virtue and courage no longer available to the modern heroine who must passively suffer “the force of conjunctures” (65). And so, the now emptied vessel of Fanny’s body-as-commodity is “instantly born away down the stream, without the power of making back to the shore” (65). At this moment, the subjective passivity of the text’s sexual economy (as a mere effect of the collision of sexual organs) is married to the subjective passivity of its commercial economy (as a series of responses to reified market forces). Taken together, we can read Fanny’s movement into vice as part and parcel of the text’s critique of materialist indeterminacy. Active attunement to the guiding forces of true-love-as-passion must eventually claim the full significance of its example in contrast. Until then, Fanny is kept afloat, if you will,
by the intellectual investigation she makes into the nature of the relationship between immaterial love and material pleasures.

Andrea Haslanger has pointed out how quickly the novel slips the yoke of ethical responsibility for Fanny’s physical harm by replacing injury with pleasure, and the introduction of Mr. H serves as a critical example. Within the space of five pages, she moves from detailing the minutia of his sexual violations to a contemplation of her gratitude to him for elevating her from a destitute to a diverted life, and Fanny lets readers off the hook by positing her new condition as one of ease. Her “heart, no longer engross’d by love, [could] please itself with such trifles as Mr. H’s liberal liking led him to make his court to the usual vanity of our sex” (66). Indeed, the autoerotic ends of the novel’s pornography depend upon readers not dwelling too long in the grim realities of the origin story of the infamous Fanny Hill.

There is yet another element of complexity that we miss by skipping hurriedly over the depiction of Fanny’s transition to get to the naughty bits of may-poles and quivering avenues of pleasure. For as Fanny gains facility with the kind of agency that the life of a kept mistress affords, the narrative also interjects meta-commentary on the epistemological status of feeling. In terms of the larger narrative arc I am describing, Fanny’s relationship with Mr. H serves to exemplify the strict dualism of the text’s material and immaterial economies, for Fanny introduces the question of love even as she pacifies her physical pain by counting her material pleasures. “Silks, laces, ear-rings, pearl-necklace, gold watch, in short all the trinkets and articles of dress were lavishly heap’d upon me, the sense of which, if it did not create returns of love, forc’d a kind of grateful fondness something like love, a distinction it would be spoiling the pleasure of nine tenths of the keepers in the town to make” (66, my emphasis). The distinction is
unmistakable even as she entertains the possibility of a gradation, an in-between where ‘something like’ love can be returned for ‘something like’ care.

The case is somewhat different with her next sexual partner—a young man named Will who is Mr. *H*’s footman. Fanny seduces him in spiteful retribution for *H*’s sexual indiscretions with Fanny’s chambermaid. After a protracted affair, she becomes increasingly attached to him; so much so that she finds it difficult to explain why she shouldn’t actually be in love with him. In fact, the text goes out of its way to cast a shade of virtuous circumstances over their first sexual encounter. Will is a virgin, and if we overlook for a minute the fact that Fanny is seducing him for vindictive purposes, there is a sense in which Fanny, herself, gains a newfound innocence from the endeavor. Though she sets out to teach her “young novice…his first lesson of pleasure,” the enormity of Will’s priapic endowment puts her in a position of inexperience, such that he “triumph’d over a kind of second maiden-head” as the young initiate gives his seductress more than she bargained for (73, 76). Graphed onto the misogynistic fantasy of male dominance is the semblance of two young lovers who have taken each other’s virginity. Fanny is probably not much older than Will, and she is no more than two years removed from being a country-born novice herself. As such, the text alludes to the conditions that might make possible a second experience of *bona fide* love, assented to by both the head and the heart.

More than just allusion, Fanny seriously considers the proposition: “There is then a fatality in love, or have lov’d him I must; for he was really a treasure…and, to say the truth, my liking for him was so extreme, that it was distinguishing very nicely to deny that I lov’d him” (84). Here she pushes the envelope of possibility for love to function outside of the paradigm of classical immediacy, only to assert a backlash that reaffirms her conviction.
Despite the intention to describe her attachment in terms devoid of passion (neither love nor revenge, she claims, has a share in her feelings), the premise of love crops up as she considers the excellence of Will’s character alongside his sexual prowess. However, in deep contradistinction to Pamela’s final analysis, the love that operates in Cleland’s novels is not a thing that sneaks up slowly until it is understood as if all of a sudden. Its force is as decisive and unequivocal as any classical example. All other evidence aside, Fanny must declare that “there was something more wanting to create in me, and constitute the passion of love” (84). That “something more” is precisely what is at stake in Fanny’s moral claim at the end of the novel, for love must have a decisive, unmistakable character in order to maintain a through-line across a text that only offers radical uncertainty and material fungibility in its absence. As such, it is the crux of fatality that drives the narrative to continue experimenting, to keep making finer and finer distinctions that insulate her capacity for discerning the ‘something more’ that constitutes the passion of love from the alienating exploitation of her “wretched body” (60).

Through the text’s assertion that love exists independently of material circumstances, it stands firm in its insistence even while description is incapable of offering explicit empirical evidence to support it. To illustrate this point, we must make comparison between the Woman of Pleasure’s two most prominent sex scenes, beginning with Memoir’s apotheosis of true love in Charles’ return. With the reintroduction of Charles, the romance narrative asserts itself with a vengeance. Fanny recognizes him instantly, and the tripartite conditions of her moral existence are returned at once in “My life!—my soul!—my Charles!” (177). The conceptual immediacy of classical passion and the “magic charm” of romance motifs are combined in their reunion, and Fanny describes the moment as one that operates outside of the logical constructions of language: “Our caresses, our questions, our answers, for some time, observ’d no order: all
crossing, or interrupting one another in sweet confusion, whilst we exchang’d hearts at our eyes, and renew’d the ratifications of a love unabated by time or absence: not a breath, not a motion, not a gesture on either side, but what was strongly impressed with it” (178-9). They observe the order of no other system but that which is impelled by the “fiery thrill” of their hearts (179).

The description of Charles’ physical appearance reinvigorates the narrative with the imagery of formal ideals. Though his travels and a few years of maturity have hardened him, “[t]here were still the same exquisite lineaments, still the same vivid vermilion, and bloom reigning in his face, but now the roses were more fully blown,” and along with the description of classical “symmetriz’d” beauty that denotes the true passion of love come connotations of its (and his) sovereign position “with that air of distinction and empire” (179). The journey of her commodified body ends with the ascension of love to its rightful place as governor of the text’s final movement.

Of course, such a completion must be consummated or, if you will, consubstantiated as the material and immaterial concerns of Fanny’s being are united in one all-consuming orgasm. In the very famous scene where Fanny interrupts the narration because recollection of past events has overtaken her with a renewed state of agitation, we also witness the extreme lengths to which Cleland goes to couple the physical with the spiritual:

I see! I feel! the delicious velvet tip!—he enters might and main with—oh!—my pen drops from me here in the extasy now present to my faithful memory! Description too deserts me, and delivers over a task, above its strength of Wing, to the imagination: but it must be an imagination exalted by such a flame as mine, that can do justice to that sweetest, noblest of all Sensations that hailed and accompany’d the stiff insinuation all the way up, till it was at the end of its penetration, sending up, through my eyes, the Sparks of the love-fire that ran all over me, and blaz’d in every vein, and every pore of me: a system incarnate of joy all over. (183-4)

Here the theoretical stakes of the novel draw nearer into focus, as she calls into question the truth-value of explicit empirical description of physical conditions. For naked description, no
matter how faithfully rendered, must necessarily leave something out of the full equation, a
something that exists somewhere in the interstices between the physical and the metaphysical,
between the feels and the feelings. Fanny insists on an ennobling and exalting supplement of
love which separates mere sensations from “Sensations” and imbues an incarnate system with
passionate meaning.

When description leaves its task over to an *exalted* imagination, Cleland makes more than
a flourishing gesture to the novel’s moralizing ethos, for what’s at stake is nothing less than a
materialist concept of the soul. Indeed, the imagination holds a principal place in Mettrie’s
*L’Homme Machine* as the motivating factor that allows us to mistake the machinic operations of
physical reality for an ensouled system. “Nothing is simpler” Mettrie contends:

> than to prove a system which is founded, like this one, on each individual’s intimate feelings
and experience. […] The imagination alone perceives; it forms an idea of all objects, with the
words and figures that characterise them; thus once again, *the imagination is the soul*,
because it plays all its roles. Thanks to the imagination, to its flattering touch, the cold
skeleton of reason acquires living rosy flesh; thanks to it the sciences flourish, the arts are
embellished, woods speak, echoes sigh, rocks weep, marble breathes and all inanimate
objects come to life.24

In comparison, we can see how Cleland calls attention to the inadequacy of the materialist
system he seems to be emulating. By explicitly installing love as the presiding force, *Woman of
Pleasure* passifies, if you will, the imagination, for nowhere in the text is it suggested that the
force of love is a secondary apperception or consequential effect of material conditions, subject
only to the imagination. Cleland actually seems to be doubling down on the inspirted worldview
that Mettrie mocks. For if love-as-passion is truly a justifying force, and I have shown above that
the novel adamantly holds this position, it becomes something of a moral obligation to cultivate
an exalted imagination, one in tune with those experiences to which the soul assents. The text
draws a close line of relationship among passion, imagination, and experience without
discounting the soul, as Mettrie does, from the mix.
As such, it makes sense that the cold dead corpse of Fanny’s body-as-commodity could not have been truly invigorated by either “the mechanism of the body’s movements” or the transports of libertine desire that she learned to appreciate as a mere woman of pleasure. Her imagination may have allowed her to formulate a kind of pleasure from the experience, but we are never led to believe that such imaginings are anything more than profane, if exquisite, copies. Furthermore, as we saw in the case of Mr. H—, the text does not allow Fanny to imagine an analogue to love without categorically denying its equivalency. To put it bluntly, the entire structure of Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure serves as a foil to, rather than a validation of, its materialist tendencies; thus, Cleland’s reliance on a classical model of passion must necessarily posit the soul as more than a figment of one’s imagination. This point is clarified when we consider that the text’s most pressing concern is to establish Fanny’s capacity for sorting out the difference between the vulgar joys of mere sex from the ennobled joys of loving copulation.

Because the physical feels are the same, Fanny implies, we must have access to some faculty for arbitrating the difference, and we see that faculty at work at the point where Fanny’s reunion with Charles transitions from a sentimental to a physical one, for “action was now a necessity to desires so much on edge as ours” (182). And it is through the text’s final pornographic movement that Fanny can make her most minute inquiry—an inquiry about the quality of physical experience itself at the intersection of general and particular.

Fanny begins from the premise that there is something “inimitably pathetic” in “the feel of that favourite piece of manhood,” a point that she is sure her epistolary correspondent (if she but thinks “as a lover”) will concede (182-3). Speaking from a position of experience, she puts vaginal, heterosexual intercourse on a pedestal, such that “[n]othing can be dearer to the touch, or can affect it with a more delicious sensation” than the feel of the penis of a lover, any lover
Her task, then, is to articulate the conditions that account for the critical difference she perceives when the penis in question belongs to Charles and, thus, falls within the domain of love, which “points the pleasure” (184). She explains it thusly:

[I]t felt to me something so subduing, so active, so solid, and agreeable that I know not what name to give its singular impression; but the sentiment of consciousness of its belonging to my supremely beloved youth, gave me so pleasing an agitation, and work’d so strongly on my soul, that it sent all its sensitive spirits to that organ of bliss in me, dedicated to its reception: there concentrating to a point, like rays in a burning-glass, they glow’d, they burnt with the intensest heat: the springs of pleasure were, in short, wound up to such a pitch!” (183, emphasis added)

Before attending to the differences, we should first pay attention to the similarities between this passage and other sexual experiences within the novel that Fanny clearly identifies as having nothing to do with love. Thinking back to her unwilling complicity in the gratification of Mr. H—’s desires, we recall that the text evokes a nearly identical image of the physical flows of orgasm in the language of heated spirits, stirring agitations, and irrepressible effusions that move naturally, like a spring that feeds a stream, and mechanically, like the spring that turns a watch.

Let us add a further point of comparison by looking to another mirroring scene where Fanny is “consummately initiated” into Mrs. Cole’s secret libertine society of the “science of pleasure” (124, 120). Fanny finds herself at the center of attention, performing a public sex act with a perfect stranger. The passage most relevant to our purposes comes at the scene’s, and the character’s, climax. Having been “lifted then to the utmost pitch of joy that human life can bear” Fanny tells us:

I touched that sweetly critical point, when scarce prevented by the spermatic injection from my partner spurring liquid fire up to my vitals, I dissolv’d, and breaking out into a deep drawn sigh, sent my whole sensitive soul down to that passage where escape was denied it, by its being so deliciously plugged and choak’d up. Thus we lay a few blissful instants, overpower’d, still, and languid; till, as the sense of pleasure stagnated, we recovered from our trance, and he slipt out of me. (124, my emphasis)
The warm, sympathetic, flows of flaming desire are functionally similar in all three cases. And within each instance, the generically “peculiar idol,” “that peculiar scepter-member” sets off a chain reaction for the imagination (both Fanny’s and the reader’s) to follow along (123, 183).²⁶

Because commodified and impassioned sex acts admit of the same physical conditions, passions discourse allows us to shed new light on the text’s self-conscious concern over the repetitive nature of pornography. We see such anxiety most clearly in the opening of the second volume where the text offers apology for “the uniformity of adventures and expressions, inseparable from a subject of this sort, whose bottom or ground-work being, in the nature of things, eternally one and the same, whatever variety of forms and modes, the situations are susceptible of, there is no escaping a repetition of near the same images, the same figures, the same expressions” (91). It is a point of critical importance that things (i.e. the forms and modes of the material sexual acts) are the same across the board. The stiffness and vigor of an erect penis are only peculiar in their capacity to generate the same arousal, to stimulate the same response. Such functional equivalence, however, only lends credence to the text’s eventual conclusion—that a distinction can and must be made despite the fact that no objectively verifiable proof could ever be offered to maintain it. The difference cannot reside in the material fact but in the signature of love whose essence is immaterial even as its effects are registered on the physical body.

With this in mind, we return to the three parallel examples of physical ecstasy provided above to trace an important gradation in how they present the relationship among sensation, imagination, and soul. Such a gradation also corresponds roughly to the three components of the scholastic soul—vegetative, sensitive, and rational—that Thomas Aquinas lays out in the *Summa Theologica.*²⁷
In the earliest and most clear-cut example, “insensibility” is the overriding characteristic. The trauma of rape manifests an emotional detachment from Fanny’s own experiences, and her imagination is likewise disengaged. Fanny’s corporeal body is “merely animal” (64). Even as H—’s aphrodisiac sets the material markers of sensual pleasure into motion, the text describes that movement in starkly mechanical terms. With neither sense, nor feeling, Fanny’s “trance of lifeless insensibility” evokes the passive connotations of the vegetative soul, to which Aquinas attributed the capacity for the most basic bodily functions such as nutrition, growth, response to stimuli, etc.  

In the example of Fanny’s libertine indoctrination, the text adds a layer of complexity to her experiential knowledge. Both her body and mind are now aroused, and the scene is overrun with a “too much heated” imagination (123). Far from inert or insensible, she actively scrutinizes every detail of “gross sensuality;” it is nothing less than a concert of sense and sensibility (187). The scene is composed of sympathetic, well-choreographed, accommodating motions, punctuated by crescendos of simultaneous orgasm where both participants are set “on flow to share the momentary extasy” (123). If Fanny here is also in a trance, it is not one of inertia but more akin to the great athlete who is said to be “unconscious” when she finds herself in perfect sync with the rhythm and flow of a game. Fanny’s part in the spectacle, then, requires a fully immersed attention to detail:

[K]isses, squeezes, tender murmurs, all came into play, till our joys growing more turbulent and riotous, threw us into a fond disorder, and as they raged to a point, bore us far from ourselves into an ocean of boundless pleasures, into which we both plung’d together in a transport of taste….I perfectly fever’d and madden’d with their excess: I did not now enjoy a calm of reason enough to perceive, but I, extatically indeed! felt the policy and power of such rare and exquisite provocatives as the examples of the night had proved towards thus exalting our pleasures. (123, original emphasis)

Here, perhaps, one might make a case for reading Fanny’s experiences in line with Mettrie’s evacuation of spirit in favor of imagination. The imagination has full reign, not only to form
ideas in the wake of perception and reason, but also to emulate the motions of the soul, to play, as Mettrie puts it, “all its roles.”29 It is precisely the imagination that orchestrates the event, bringing Fanny as close as she will come to a merely physical enthusiasm by laying claim to the exaltation of libertine pleasures. Read within the context of the novel’s narrative arc, however, this scene proves most fruitful for its exquisite forgery of “true love-passion” (176). All the cues are the same, but something’s just a little bit off.

Again, knowledge of the Thomist cosmology of the soul points us to an essential difference, for when Fanny claims that the confluence of sensation and imagination “sent [her] whole sensitive soul down” to meet the anonymous lover’s “spermatic injection,” the kind of soul that she indicates is of critical significance (124, my emphasis). For the sensitive soul, sometimes referred to as appetitive, serves a peculiar function in the tripartite scholastic model. Like the vegetative, the sensitive soul “must be united to a body in order to exercise [its] functions.”30 The reach of the sensitive soul, however, is not limited to the strictly material, for its powers of appetite, motion, and sensation creep toward the metaphysical in Aquinas’ claim that “appetite follows both sensitive and intellectual perception.”31 It is most important to recognize that the sensitive soul attains to divinity while being, at the same time, exclusively corporeal. Angels, according to Saint Thomas, have no need for a sensitive soul because they are incorporeal beings. In that sense, one could say that the sensitive soul and the imagination are roughly equivalent, for they combine to register the feelings of feeling which operate across the board of human experience from basest vice to beatified virtue.

Through the repetitions of her commodified adventures, Fanny seems to have lost the appreciation she had in the novel’s opening movements—an understanding that sensation and imagination are only partially constitutive faculties of the soul. Its full measure resides in an
immaterial supplement known as the rational soul. The rational soul is the highest faculty of human nature and the seat of our capacity for seeking after physical, metaphysical and moral truths. In the libertine exhibition, her hyperactive imagination leaves no room for reason to perceive, and, despite all its exquisite appreciation, Fanny’s hypersensitive attunement to ecstasy is no more than the overvaluation of the ecstatically felt in the absence of the rational soul’s governing influence and the unmistakably virtuous passion of love.

Therefore, when we look back to the novel’s final scene of pornography, between Fanny and Charles, the conditions that set it apart have already been established by the odds of comparison. Opposed to the trancelike insensibility that marks her commercial exploits, Fanny lays claim to a “sentiment of consciousness” that distinguishes the feel of Charles’ sexual organ from the feels of all others (183). When emotional sentiment and sexual desire merge, Fanny and Charles are given over to an agitation of virtue that is materially identical to but essentially distinct from agitations of vice:

now, the sense of his glowing body in naked touch with mine, took all power over my thoughts out of my own disposal, and deliver’d up every faculty of my soul to the sensiblest of joys, that affecting me infinitely more with my distinction of the person, than of the sex, now brought my conscious heart deliciously into play; my heart, which, eternally constant to Charles, had never taken any part in my occasional sacrifices to the calls of constitution, complaisance, or interest. (182, my emphasis)

As if anticipating William Delamore’s realization in Coxcomb that it was his heart that “made him sensible,” Fanny’s heart—with its confluence of mind and body, imagination and stimulation—comes to prominence at this late point in the novel (330). It serves as the figural representation of a rational soul that only knows only one passion—“Love! that may be stiled the attic salt of enjoyment: and indeed, without it, the joy, great as it is, is still a vulgar one, whether in a king or a beggar: for it is undoubtedly love alone, that refines, ennobles, and exalts it” (184).
There is also a final insinuation against rule of the mind/imagination just as the sexual metaphors morph into theological ones. “Thus happy…by the heart, happy by the senses,” Fanny asserts, “it was beyond all power, even of thought, to form the conception of a greater delight, than what I was now consummating the fruition of” (184). In this rapturous moment, Fanny witnesses her imagination relinquish the power to form perceptions into ideas. Such power is precisely that which allows Mettrie to suggest that the soul is a figment of the imagination. Instead, Fanny makes explicit reference to an external force that excludes imagination from the revelation of knowledge.

She is quite literally describing love as a kind of enthusiasm to which one is attuned by the apperceptive powers of a conscious heart. And this all comes together in a crescendo of physical and metaphysical convergence that the text illustrates through mutual orgasm.

Charles, whose whole frame all convulsed with the agitation of his rapture, whilst the tenderest fires trembled in his eyes, all assured me of a perfect concord of joy, penetrated me so profoundly, touch’d me so vitally, took me so much out of my own possession, while he seem’d himself so much in mine, that in a delicious enthusiasm I imagin’d such a transfusion of heart and spirit, as that coaliting, and making one body and soul with him, I was him, and he, me. (184)

In this passage, Fanny bears witness to something that is superadded to the merely physical encounter. We see it in the way the text de-materializes the concept of penetration without removing its literal connotation. For in the above passage, the subject of the sentence is separated from the object of its action by a distracting but important parenthetical interjection. Cutting through all the qualifiers and the emotional and spiritual cues, the material facts of the sentence are only thus, “Charles, whose whole frame all convulsed with…agitation…, whilst…his eyes [trembled], penetrated me.” However, that bare physical description of his orgasm is overloaded with contextual, unverifiable information. The tender rapture of his trembling provides a profound assurance. The touch is not merely touch but something more, something both vital and
disembodied. Both he and she have gained something in the touch of the other that does not
change them in any material way.

If we take this seriously, rather than passing it over as a hackneyed attempt to
manufacture a moralizing ending, the theoretical stakes of Cleland’s pornographic romance draw
clearer into view. In full opposition to materialist readings of the text, Memoirs of a Woman of
Pleasure ultimately relies on a kind of beatification of the physical body to complete its romance
of love in the face of modern fetishization of the material features of reality.

In this light, I argue that we must look beyond coincidence to explain the fact that the
classical connotation of a Thomist conception of the soul follows so closely alongside the
classical model of the passions that underwrites Cleland’s narrative. Giorgio Agamben, the
contemporary philosopher and scholar of medieval Christian theology, has offered commentary
on Saint Thomas’s treatise on halos that should prove illustrative here. By way of conclusion, I
quote Agamben at length:

The beatitude of the chosen, [Aquinas] argues, includes all the goods that are necessary for
the perfect workings of human nature, and therefore nothing essential can be added. There is,
however, something that can be added in surplus (superaddi), an “accidental reward that is
added to the essential,” that is not necessary for beatitude and does not alter it substantially,
but that simply makes it more brilliant (clarior).

The halo is this supplement added to perfection—something like the vibration of that which
is perfect, the glow at its edges. … The halo is not a quid, a property or an essence that is
added to beatitude: It is an absolutely inessential supplement. In this sense, the difference between purely physical and metaphysical experience of ecstasy is
akin to Agamben’s description of the aura of sainthood. It is sex, or pleasure, or joy with a
vibrant glow at its edges, exemplified in Charles’s “glowing body in naked touch with” Fanny’s.
It is an immaterial addition to the most exquisite physical sensation. Despite the devaluation of
gross sensuality that Woman of Pleasure offers in its parting morality tale, the text as a whole
does not effectively challenge the perfection of physical, sexual pleasure. Indeed, the sensual
experience of orgasm must be palpably identical to divine enthusiasm for the beatification of
love to be beatification, as such. This may help to explain an additional significance attended to
Cleland’s repetition of figures and expressions in treating both “vicious” and “virtuous”
examples of ecstatic feeling. The mirroring language in each of the scenes serves all the more to
present love as a halo, something superadded to physical encounters that are otherwise
identical—“a difference,” as Fanny states very early on, “in the state of the same thing” (12). It
comes down to what we might call a sentimental consciousness of the interplay of the soul’s
every faculty, a thinking-feeling of love that is embedded within the event.

We are now far from Mettrie’s reductive equation of the soul and the imagination. For the
text’s modern romance of classical passions resides in the testing of an idea on the body in order
to divine an (im)material difference. The novel begins, like Cleland’s later romances, with a
baseline experience of love’s “delicious enthusiasm,” and the loss of that state of grace initiates
Fanny’s salacious forays through the commodification of vice. Far from knight-errantry, hers is a
quest marked by the fact of simple endurance, and it is through her trials that readers may learn
to appreciate the difference between ecstasy and ecstasy—-the reader, though, may appreciate
each as perfection in its own right. So, in the end, we can think of Memoirs of a Woman of
Pleasure not as a work of pornography that tests the grounds of the novel, but as a novel that
tests the grounds of pornography. Even as Cleland’s most illicit and most complex novel engages
readers in a virtually erotic experience, it always calls our attention to the fact that there is a
difference between emotionally enriched eroticism and an autoerotic experience of something
like it.

1 Hal Gladfelder, Fanny Hill in Bombay: The Making and Unmaking of John Cleland (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins
Press, 1974) for details of Cleland’s early years and the publication history of Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure.
Most notably, Cleland followed *Woman of Pleasure* with *The Memoirs of a Coxcomb* (1751), a novel that emulates the structure of *Woman of Pleasure* while avoiding its pornographic content. *Coxcomb* was succeeded by *The Surprises of Love* (London, 1753), a collection of novellas variously titled *The Romance of a Day, The Romance of a Night, The Romance of a Morning*, and *The Romance of an Evening*.


*Woman of Pleasure*, 184.


*Woman of Pleasure*, 12.


Completing the metaphor of these two sexual partners as engaging in a contest of love in the romance tradition, to ‘get the gloves’ is “a token of accepting a challenge to battle” (*Woman of Pleasure*, 193, explanatory notes). Andrea Haslanger’s “What Happens when Pornography Ends in Marriage: The Uniformity of Pleasure in *Fanny Hill*” also cites this scene in *Love in Excess* by way of referencing *Woman of Pleasure*’s “roots in the amatory fictions of Eliza Haywood” *ELH* 78 (2011): 163-188, 166. See chapter two of this dissertation for a full explication of the passages from *Love in Excess* as they relate to romance and novel traditions and the literature of modern passions, especially pgs 63-67.

It is worth noting here, if only in passing, the striking resemblance this passage bears to the involuntary nature of Pamela’s return to Mr. B after finally freeing herself from his Lincolnshire estate—“I had the less merit in this my return, because I was driven, by an irresistible impulse to it; and could not help it if I would.” See the previous chapter, especially pgs 137-142, for a further discussion of this passage.


Some of the earliest work on the subject was done by the English physician Thomas Willis. His collaborations with Christopher Wren and Richard Lowler resulted in Willis’s *Cerebri Anatome: Cui Accessit Nervorum Descriptio et Usus* (London, 1664). Translated as *The Anatomy of the Brain and Nerves*, Willis’s work not only described but illustrated, through Wren’s detailed drawings, the complex network of connections leading from the brain to the extremities of the body. For an excellent historical biography of Willis, see Carl Zimmer’s *Soul Made Flesh: The Discovery of the Brain—and How it Changed the World* (New York: Free Press, 2004). The Scottish physician, and near contemporary of Cleland, Robert Whytt was the first to develop a theory of neurological reflex, in *An Essay on the Vital and other Involuntary Motions of Animals* (Edinburgh, 1763). Cleland’s preface to John Freke’s *A Treatise on the Nature and Property of Fire* (London, 1752) indicates that the author was well versed in the medical science of his time.


Here there is also an interesting parallel to Eliza Haywood’s *Sophiana* in *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love* (London, 1761), who we will remember from chapter two. After being brought to the brink of despair, Sophiana concludes that passion no longer maintains the full measure of its influence over human action that it had within a classical worldview. “I am now convinc’d,” she laments to the lover who jilts her, “that Grief has not the
Power to kill, nor will I, wretched as I am, obey the Dictates of that, or my Despair, so far, as to seek in the Grave, that Quiet which is deny’d me here; No, tho’ lost to every Hope of my desiring Soul,—tho’ more miserable, more accurst, than Words can find a Name for; yet I will live a lasting Monument of thy Ingratitude” (34).

22 In his introduction to the Oxford World’s Classics edition (cited in this chapter), Peter Sabor offers an explication of various textual references that draw a parallel between Fanny’s journey and the voyage of a ship upon the sea.

23 See “What Happens when Pornography Ends in Marriage.” Haslanger argues that within Cleland’s text, “Characters must be imaginable as sexual agents, but they cannot attract attention that distracts from the constant repetition of sexual encounters, nor can they be imagined as permanently injured: to the extent that pain is admissible, it must turn into pleasure,” (168).


25 La Mettrie, _Treatise on the Soul_, in _Machine Man and Other Writings_, 73.


28 _Summa_ “Whether life is properly attributed to God?” Kindel location 4249-4279.

29 _Machine Man_, 15.

30 _Summa_ “Whether the lights of heaven are living beings?” Objection 5. Kindel location 13802.

31 Kindel location 13802.

32 _Summa_ “Whether the Aureole is the Same as the Essential Reward which is Called the Aurea?” Objection 5. Kindel location 115793-115840.