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Chronic time, telling texts: forms of temporality in the eighteenth century

Christine A. Mazurkewycz
University of Iowa

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CHRONIC TIME, TELLING TEXTS: FORMS OF TEMPORALITY
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by

Christine A. Mazurkewycz

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in English
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2013

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Judith Pascoe

ABSTRACT

Chronic Time, Telling Texts explores the coordinates of literature and time as they reflect, reproduce, and resist each other in several canonical texts of the long eighteenth century. In reading each text as a portrait of time, I employ an inductive approach that posits historical and theoretical coherence within and across the four genres included in this study. By this I mean that no single literary theory circulates throughout the thesis. Each chapter rather appropriates the most equitable, if not the most productive, theoretical approach in order to focus time as a literary construct and to understand how British writers of the eighteenth century temporalized experience.

In my effort to explore the cultural motives of eighteenth-century constructions of temporality, I begin by focusing on the earliest diurnal publication, *The Spectator* (1710). I argue that *The Spectator* naturalized an experience of time that the periodical's daily distribution made collective, meaning subjective time became available through a pronounced and unprecedented insistence on objective time. This paradigmatic shift in temporality articulated a modern time-consciousness that served economic interests but that also conditioned absence into a practice and timekeeping into a disorder.

In the second chapter, I explore how Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) signaled a revolt against the rationalized timekeeping of *The Spectator*. The novel's formal inventions, I argue, offered a subversive reading of time at odds with enlightenment notions of progress and improvement. In doing so, *The Man of Feeling* disclosed a macabre anxiety about time that compromised ideological commitments of sentiment by making sympathy a bourgeois experience.

The third chapter focuses Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1741-45) as a complicated measure of the journalistic impulse toward equivalence on the one hand, and as sentimental resistance toward that equivalence on the other. I suggest that *Clarissa* clarifies the difficulty of establishing temporal presence when the act of writing meant to record the moment inadvertently casts the moment out, leaving both subjective and objective

measures of time inadequate to account either for time's passage or for the subject's experience of it. Because Clarissa gains by losing what the poet of "Tintern Abbey" (1798) seeks to relinquish—a self mediated by a time outside of its own consciousness—the fourth chapter brings Wordsworth into focus and the century to a close. I provide close readings of "Tintern Abbey" that question the autonomy of the subject when language is the only access to temporal registers of the past, present, and future. I isolate several semantic, grammatical, and adverbial subversions of temporality in "Tintern Abbey" that disclose a linguistic resistance to time, memory, and meaning. In this resistance, recuperation becomes indefatigably circuitous and returns us finally to the beginning, that is, to the fifth and final chapter on Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

The many crises in constructions of eighteenth-century temporality that define the first four chapters of this thesis are observable in *Crusoe*. The obsessive timekeeping I locate in the early periodical is visible in Crusoe's journal. The aesthetic of failed affect I identify in Mackenzie's novel is palpable in Crusoe's alternation between sacred and profane time. The lost moment and missing present of *Clarissa* is anticipated by Crusoe's repeated attempts to start the journal over. The linguistic resistance to time and meaning of "Tintern Abbey" coincides with Crusoe's inability to tell his story with any degree of coherence. Because the episodic nature of *Robinson Crusoe* speaks to every text included in this study, *Chronic Time, Telling Texts* concludes that Defoe established the modern text as a kind of portal, an uncertain category of time and space for which the future is not quite not yet and the past is not quite not there.

Abstract Approved: _____

Thesis Supervisor

Title and Department

Date

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
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May 2013

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Judith Pascoe

Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph. D. thesis of

Christine A. Mazurkewycz

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English at the May 2013 graduation.

Thesis Committee: _____

Judith Pascoe, Thesis Supervisor

Eric Gidal

Garrett Stewart

Lori Branch

Matthew Brown

for Bill

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: TO BE CONTINUED: TIME AND <i>THE SPECTATOR</i>	11
Equivalence.....	14
The Immanence of Today	18
The Imminence of Tomorrow	23
The Return of “Whole Hours Together”	31
Conclusion.....	39
CHAPTER TWO: THE ABSENCE OF MAN IN THE TIME OF FEELING: MACKENZIE’S NOVEL <i>SENTIMENT</i>	43
Some Other Time.....	47
In the Quiet of Time	53
Fifteen Minutes and Three Miles to Noon.....	60
Substitutes.....	65
Introduction to Conclude.....	69
CHAPTER THREE: <i>CLARISSA</i> : OR THE HISTORY OF AN ABANDONED OBJECT.....	73
Variables of Time	73
Two Sides to Every Letter.....	77
Before, Between, and After	80
Time Turning “O’er and O’er”	84
Dating <i>Clarissa</i>	87
Reading <i>Clarissa</i>	92
Composition / Decomposition	98
CHAPTER FOUR: “THEREFORE I AM STILL”: THE ONGOING POETICS OF “TINTERN ABBEY”	101
In the Tradition <i>de Mortuis</i>	103
The Now That Is No More	112
Time on the Rise	119
No Body, No Poem	125
Conclusion.....	133
CHAPTER FIVE: <i>ROBINSON CRUSOE</i> : ADVENTURES IN TIME-WRITING	138
Time and Story	139
The Future of Eternity.....	143
Now, No More, Not Yet.....	153
To Think That This Was All My Own.....	157
“What [Narrative] Need Had I?”	161
Mortal Ends	168
NOTES.....	170
WORKS CITED.....	177

INTRODUCTION

In the cultural excavations that assign value and meaning to time, literature distinguishes the eighteenth century as a privileged moment in the cultivation of time as a category of experience. Though literature of any historical moment canvasses the temporal landscape governing its production, the poetics of time that emerges in the eighteenth century suggests that time was becoming an agent of transvaluation. From the systematic coldness of clocks to the subjective textures of lived experience and felt time, time in the eighteenth century was emptied of hypothetical givens and naturalized into fact, meaning time focused the cultural practice of an ideologically situated concept and time transitioned to temporality.

Literature of the eighteenth century responded in measure, screwing time's mechanisms into place with late-night diaries, novel newspapers, and the epochal advent of the novel itself. These forms, conditioned by newly formed modes of production and consumption, were thought to raise consciousness and focus the subjective shape of time. But the shape time takes in the subject does not necessarily coincide with the shape time takes in the world. Or, that time exists in the world does not mean it will add up to intelligibility at the level of the subject. The eighteenth century both disturbs and confirms the dimensional distinction between objective and subjective time, and the force of its expression highlights the contradictions that inhere between them.

Yet the postmodern turn of the late twentieth- and twenty-first centuries seems to have abandoned the ground and compass of time for the veritable properties of space, the current arbiter of existing relations among power, knowledge, and being. The reason for this change in matrix from time to space is unclear, but I suspect that the exponential growth and ever increasing immanence of digital time will revive and reverse the course and study of time soon enough. Given that a single digital communication occurs at the speed of *one* nanosecond—it takes 500,000 nanoseconds to blink—time seems more important now than ever. In my effort to exhume time from the postmodern lure of space,

I will borrow from the language of Foucault by arguing that time has two qualities—*interpretandum* and *interpretans* (*Order of Things* 189). These qualities challenge the assumption that time is theoretically and literally a dead end by questioning if and when time comes into being.

Time as *interpretandum* is equivalent to time as given, as existing prior to interpretation. But if there is nothing to interpret prior to interpretation, as Foucault suggests, my own thesis must aspire to a hermeneutics of interpretation because the articulation of time in the eighteenth century is rooted in *interpretans*. In the eighteenth century, time as given, *interpretandum*, begins to give way to time as *interpretans*, meaning the literature included in this study spanning from 1710 thru 1798 are attempts to interpret time for the first time. And in them we hear the “terror” of a suspense, “the tempestuous, Neptunian *quos ego*” that Roland Barthes hears in the portrait of *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* (6).

Critics writing about eighteenth-century time and temporality have yet to acknowledge the motionlessness of terror, the paralysis of suspense that paradoxically ticks across the British canon like a repeater watch. Stuart Sherman’s stunning study on the role of time and technology in the construction of eighteenth-century forms and subjectivities has much to say about the figuration of personal time “as a kind of liquid capital and portable property” (21). In *Telling Time*, Sherman moves beyond, but without leaving behind, the private time of the individual to examine how social forms and practices merged with technology to create and ensure a common time of sociability. The new clocks and watches that rendered “time palpable . . . established themselves as the new point of reference not only for measuring time but for talking and thinking about it” (24). Sherman positions diurnal forms—diary, periodical, travel journal—at the center of this negotiation between private identities and public performances of time that he views, significantly, as continuous. The individual writing in isolation that is, shared with society an assurance of time’s commonality, and time’s objective dimensions allowed for the

possibility if not the realization of interpersonal communication. In contrast to the socio-historical works of E. P. Thompson and Foucault, Sherman argues that eighteenth-century diurnal writing was not yet “a relentlessly articulated self-discipline” (107), but rather a way to “write about time, locate the self within it, inhabit it fully and attentively” (24).

Sherman sees self-narration as a powerful means of filling in the gaps left by the homogenous time of minutely tracked and audibly measured duration.

Elizabeth Ermarth’s work on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century realism focuses on the role of time in narration and its production of meaning. In *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel*, time is the “common medium” by which “the reader is led to discover the systematic rules of transformation that explain how events proceed from each other” (42-42). Like Sherman, Ermarth gives to time a unifying function, a rationalizing force against which disparate perspectives are brought to order and made productive by the meanings they create. Contrary to Sherman’s argument that the dialectic of diurnal form shaped the novels of Daniel Defoe and Frances Burney in significant ways (224), Ermarth’s reading of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pamela* yields the opposite conclusion, as she notes the very absence of the “common medium” that holds diurnal and novelistic forms together. In the absence of a time that would produce sequence and coherence, Richardson and Defoe reproduce only “the same metaphor for life unmediated by time and consciousness: the metaphor of enclosure” (123).

In either case, Sherman and Ermarth seem to agree that time constitutes a “common grammar” with and against which writers of the eighteenth century were working (Yahav 33). And both critics seem dissatisfied when writing fails to achieve the sense of wholeness that time, as common and continuous denominator, is assumed to guarantee. I have chosen instead to examine the imperfectability of these canonical texts, to dwell in the ‘negative capability’ of their terror, paralysis, and suspense. I have chosen further to rely on eighteenth-century texts that many readers are likely to be familiar with

because I wanted to explain the contributions of these texts to the critical discourse of time. I will first provide a brief overview of time before addressing my argument directly.

The central contradiction that distinguishes Aristotle's definition of time from Augustine's is the contradiction central to the definition of time itself, namely the irreconcilable difference between the time of the world, or objective time, and the subjective experience of that same time and same world. Both philosophers contributed to the history of ideas in time by focusing on one temporal dimension to the exclusion of the other, and the properties of objective time arrived first. Aristotle's focus on time clarified the physical properties of time and its *physics* of motion. Time was determined by motion; time was thereby objective. For Augustine by contrast, time had to account for the soul and for the psychology of self that perceives time as past, present, and future. To define time for Augustine meant to explain how the soul persists through memory (past), perception (present), and anticipation (future). In *The Confessions*, time is subjective because time, if it exists anywhere, exists in the mind.

The difference between Aristotle's and Augustine's theories illuminates the central paradox of time. In the psychology of time, the subjective experience of living in time cannot derive or accommodate an objective measurement of time. No matter how much I remember, anticipate, or perceive—Augustine never says which cognition comes first, which is primary—I cannot account for the fact that time is in the world. I have only my experience of time. Conversely, physical definitions of time account only for the fact that time is in the world; objective time cannot account for the perceived, subjective experience of that same time. The time of the world cannot determine what I remember, perceive, or anticipate just as memory, perception, and anticipation cannot determine or substitute for the time of the world. In the relationship between these two incompatible yet mutually implied dimensions of time, the problem of time takes place: Objective and subjective renderings of time occlude each other just as they imply one another. Without the time of

the world, I have nothing to remember. With the time of the world, I have everything to remember.

With everything to remember, I necessarily forget. Remembering and forgetting determine what time is valuable and what time is merely available. Writing about the amorous subject in the agony of eternal absence, Barthes elevates forgetting to the status of an instinct, calling it “the condition of my survival; for if I did not forget, I should die” (14). In *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, Barthes’s survival is laid further at the mercy of tautology, as he struggles “to put ‘into other words’ the ipseity of my Image” (20). To explain desire, to ‘put into other words,’ is to experience the “fatigue of language” (20), the lover’s repeating “*its last word*” and finding expression only at “the end of language” itself (21). Barthes nevertheless organizes an alphabetical list of words to create a “structural” portrait of the lover (4) and the desire responsible for the “tautology” that ushers in “the glorious end of the logical operation . . . the explosion of the Nietzschean *yes*” (21). Significantly, the lover of this *yes* is heard “confronting the other (the loved object), who does not speak” (4), creating the parallel context of an eighteenth-century reader confronting the eighteenth-century text.

Key to understanding how Barthes’s alphabetized list of words, or “fragments of discourse . . . called figures” (4), contributes to the lover’s discourse means accepting that “absence persists” (16) and that absence is what makes language “proper to desire” even when made inadequate by “the impropriety of the utterance” (20). In the lover’s address to the absent lover, Barthes discovers “a preposterous situation” (15). He explains that the lover’s address makes the absent lover present as addressee, creating a time distorted by the affect of desire and the *quid pro quo* of linguistic substitution:

The [beloved] other is absent as referent, present as allocutory. This singular distortion generates a kind of insupportable present; I am wedged between two tenses, that of the reference and that of the allocution: you have gone (which I lament), you are here (since I am addressing you). Whereupon I know what the present, that difficult tense, is: a pure portion of anxiety. (15)

The substitution of the lover's address for what might have been or should have been fosters "revulsion—a sentiment he [the lover] expresses under the name of *anxiety*" (29).

In British literature of the eighteenth century, the anxiety that consumes Barthes's fetishistic and insupportable present is reproduced in forms, or analogical representations of *dis-cursus* that drives the "ipseity" (20) of the lover's desire in Barthes's search for its structural portrait. *Dis-cursus* creates suspense by the nature of its motion, which is the "body's gesture caught in action . . . [or] what in the straining body can be immobilized" (4). In the gesture of this stasis, at once active and "caught," the eighteenth century assimilates into a century of forms culminating at century's end with a proliferation of published literary fragments. The generic inscriptions that define the century along the way create a structural portrait of their own, weaving in and out of coherence, breaking down from discontinuities that fragment the felt continuity of time and space. If anxiety produces the "coldness particular to the lover" (133), as Barthes writes, the structural portrait of the eighteenth century is animated and annihilated by what it leaves behind.

In effort to gather the remains of such of a portrait, I have chosen to organize the chapters without a consistent regard for chronology. *Robinson Crusoe*, though written at the beginning of the century, concludes this thesis because Defoe's text serves as a threshold in modern time studies. Defoe was instrumental in christening the genre of the novel, but the text's influence comes less from its advent in 1719 than in the effects it produced across the century. *Robinson Crusoe* was moreover written by a journalist, and Defoe's influence as journalist brings the century to light in ways more illuminating after-the-fact than before. *Crusoe* helps to explain the end of the century more than its beginning. Moreover, in the mixing of forms and figures that derive from an eighteenth-century *dis-cursus* (a running back and forth), Defoe's text exemplifies the preposterous situation that produces Barthes's insupportable present and will implicitly inform my readings in this thesis as I examine what time meant in the eighteenth century. The texts included in this study assemble, structurally, into the horizontal discourse that Barthes writes, "turns like a

perpetual calendar, an encyclopedia of affective culture” (7). I argue that the eighteenth century, wedged between two tenses—that of seventeenth-century allegory and nineteenth-century prose—speaks like no other century of absence and anxiety. You can almost hear it sigh as you watch it almost leave.

“To Be Continued” opens the thesis and explores how *The Spectator* helped to loosen and transform time from an historical paradigm of permanence and objectivity to one of impermanence and subjectivity. At the same time, I suggest that Addison’s and Steele’s periodical naturalized an experience of time that the paper’s daily distribution made collective, meaning subjective time was made available primarily through a pronounced and unprecedented insistence on objective time. As result, Addison and Steele articulated a modern time-consciousness that not only served economic interests in its collectivity, but as my readings demonstrate, produced a measured equivalence that bordered on compulsion. For in promising to be continued, the papers simultaneously conditioned absence into a practice and timekeeping into a disorder.

The time of absence is the time of disjunction; the second chapter traces both absence and disjunction to the sentimental novel and the subject of discourse in Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771). In “The Absence of Man,” I demonstrate how Mackenzie’s novel signaled a revolt against the mechanization of time at the historical apex of privatized technologies in timekeeping and in labor practices. The novel’s form allowed for a time-consciousness severed from the reality of progress and industrialization and kept decidedly distinct from the time of the periodical. I argue that *The Man of Feeling* ultimately resisted the time of commodity and welcomed instead a timelessness at odds with enlightenment notions of progress and improvement. In the macabre anxiety about time that surfaces through sentiment, Mackenzie’s novel reflects the time-consciousness established by *The Spectator* by dismissing it altogether.

In the third chapter, I turn to Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1741-45) and conceptualize the novel as a complicated measure of the journalistic impulse toward equivalence on the

one hand, and the sentimental resistance toward that equivalence on the other. The voluminous novel that squeezes through creates an absence unlike the absence created by waiting (*Spectator*) or the absence created by formal disjunction (*Man of Feeling*). The absence of *Clarissa* turns upon the missing moment, the present that the present-tense of writing has interrupted and the writer cannot restore. The fragmentation that results, poised appropriately at mid-century, is the fragmentation of time itself. The subjective response to that fragmentation, I argue, clarifies *Clarissa*'s dissociative break and eventual decease. Writing herself out of time, *Clarissa* gains by losing what the poet of "Tintern Abbey" seeks to relinquish—a self mediated by a time outside of its own consciousness. Subsequently, the fourth chapter brings Wordsworth into focus and the century to a close. I provide close readings of "Tintern Abbey" that question the autonomy of the subject when language is the only access to temporal registers of the past, present, and future. Seen differently, I isolate several semantic, grammatical, and adverbial subversions of temporality in "Tintern Abbey" that suggest a linguistic resistance to time, memory, and meaning. In this resistance, recuperation becomes indefatigably circuitous and returns us finally to the beginning, that is, to the fifth and final chapter on *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

The obsessive timekeeping I locate in the early periodical is visible in *Crusoe*'s journal. The aesthetic of failed affect I identify in Mackenzie's novel is palpable in *Crusoe*'s alternation between sacred and profane time. The lost moment and missing present of *Clarissa* is anticipated by *Crusoe*'s repeated attempts to start the journal over, interrupting the novel's progression. The linguistic resistance to temporality we find in Wordsworth coincides with *Crusoe*'s inability to tell his story with any degree of coherence. The episodic nature of *Robinson Crusoe*, in fact, speaks to every text included in this study. For ultimately Defoe established the modern text as a kind of portal, an uncertain category of time and space for which the future is not quite not yet and the past is not quite not there.

Because the eighteenth century is known for its generic instability, I attempt to read each text and corresponding genre as broken monuments of an impossible but imagined and highly desired integration—the kind of integration sought by Ermarth and Sherman. But like Barthes’s anxious lover, the authors of these eighteenth-century texts were engaged in creating a discourse of fragments, shards of desire shored up against the communal but allegorically diminished past on the one hand, and the “Ipseity of my Image” (20) that manifests the Janus face of futurity and individuality on the other. In looking forward, the eighteenth century simultaneously looks back, creating the insupportable present that ties together Barthes’s language, emotion, and time.

In approaching each work as though it were a figure of longing, a scrap of language fatigued incapable of integration, I show how they combine and substantively obtain to one of the eighteenth century’s most notable monuments to time—the artificial or built ruin. In the analogue of the built ruin, the formation of eighteenth-century genres assumes and assimilates into Barthes’ discourse, in which “the figures are distributional but not integrative; they always remain on the same level, . . . no transcendence, no deliverance, no novel (though a great deal of the fictive)” (7). In the eighteenth century, which is the century of affect and affective aesthetics, emotions may be repeated, renewed, and sometimes even reversed. But the syntax of desire, invariably composed of sentences that have broken off (aposiopesis), affirms only the stasis and incompleteness of their ontology and not the unity and integration their fragmented status is thought to imply. That is, fragments often imply separation from an original wholeness, but I will read these eighteenth-century forms as fragments that lack antecedents and that thereby cannot be imagined as part of something greater and more complete. Like the “sentences” described by Barthes that distinguish the lover’s discourse, these texts “are matrices of figures precisely because they remain suspended: they utter the affect, then break off, their role is filled” (6). If there exists a complete and self-contained original guiding the multi-volume fragments produced by Addison, Richardson, Mackenzie, Wordsworth and Defoe, that

original discourse is time itself. And if we conceive of the eighteenth century as one long sentence fragment, may we not ask with Barthes: “Is it not on the level of the sentence that the subject seeks his place—and fails to find it—or finds a false place imposed upon him by language” (6)? The ideologies of reading and writing that define romanticism of the nineteenth century are indirectly guided by the latent presence and persistence of this question that circulates throughout the eighteenth.

The texts privileged in this thesis do not take time as their topic, though each text offers ruminations that allow for an historical and cultural study of their temporality. Paul Ricoeur might say they are “‘tales of time’ inasmuch as the structural transformations that affect situations and characters take time,” which he distinguishes from “‘tales about time’ inasmuch as in them it is the very experience of time that is at stake . . .” (II: 101). When Stuart Sherman claims that the history of eighteenth-century narrative time developed in response to the emergence of new technologies in chronometry, technologies that “called attention away from endpoints and invested it in middles—of the current hour, of the ongoing life” (21), he assumes the emergence of a “new emptiness of time” that created in turn “a need, a means, and a structure for *fullness* in text” (24). Without this intersection of technology and text, the history of eighteenth-century narrative time would have been “unimaginably different” (25). Though I am convinced by the argument that writers and readers had to “conceive and narrate their lives on this new template,” I question the sense of “fullness” that he finds organizing the “internal syntax of the new diurnal forms” (23). Though the works conform to an impenetrable belief in the capacity of writing to represent the fullness of experience, they are incapable of achieving it. But failure guards against illusion, and failure is what makes the eighteenth century worth studying once we accept, like Barthes’s lover, that “what the world regards as madness, illusion, error, I take for truth” (229-230).

CHAPTER ONE

TO BE CONTINUED: TIME AND *THE SPECTATOR*

The periodical press emerging late in the seventeenth century mirrored its predecessors the clock and calendar by translating duration into number. But the daily distribution of the papers, beginning with *The Spectator* in 1710, altered the shape of time discerned by the reading public. For unlike the clock and calendar, the daily papers of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele changed how time was understood while corresponding technological developments in timekeeping changed the way time was heard.¹ No longer responsible for upholding eternal truths or immutable laws, time kept new and noisy company among newspapers, snuff boxes, and smelling-bottles.

In 1712, Addison distinguished two types of topics in his daily periodical, *The Spectator*, that help to situate the cultural configuration of eighteenth-century time itself: “Most of the Papers I give the Publick are written on Subjects that never vary, but are for ever fixt and immutable . . . but there is another sort of Speculations, which I consider as Occasional Papers, that take their Rise from Folly, Extravagance, and Caprice of the present Age” (2: 435). The distinction Addison draws between topics of permanence (“for ever fixt”) and topics of impermanence (“caprice”) are analogous to the incompatible but mutually dependent objective and subjective dimensions of time. This chapter explores the ways in which *The Spectator* helped to loosen and transform time from an historical paradigm of permanence and objectivity to one of impermanence and subjectivity. At the same time, I suggest that Addison’s and Steele’s periodical naturalized an experience of time that the paper’s daily distribution made collective, meaning subjective time was made available primarily through a pronounced and unprecedented insistence on objective time. As result, Addison and Steele articulated a modern time-consciousness that not only served economic interests, but as my readings will demonstrate, produced and maintained a measured equivalence of time that bordered on compulsion. For in promising to be

continued every day, the papers simultaneously conditioned absence into a practice and timekeeping into a disorder.

The increasing frequency of the post contributed to the transformations of objective and subjective time. In a subsequent issue, Addison notes that “Time lies heavy on our Hands till the Arrival of a fresh Mail: We long to receive further Particulars, to hear what will be the next Step A Westerly Wind keeps the whole Town in Suspence, and puts a stop to Conversation” (2: 452). The longing for news created an inadvertent desire for a time beyond the present, and this desire for a future circulated among readers of an increasingly secularized and commercially influenced world. Time, desire, and consumption thus came together at the turn of the eighteenth century, and the press marked their arrival.

The press ushered in the daily production and dissemination of a formless found time, an objective time (measured roughly in terms of motion without regard to consciousness) that met the needs of a commercialized world. Objective time figured into the enlightenment’s infatuation with secularized time, or, more specifically, the measurable and infinitely calculable time of science. All the while, Addison notes, the post was creating a cultural expectation for information, a subjective condition and response relative to the time lapse between publications. The post created a state of mind wrapped up in waiting, which Addison describes as a time “heavy on our hands.” The shift from temporal paradigms of permanence and objectivity to those of impermanence and subjectivity is thus ironically conditioned by the arrival of an explicit demand for objective time. The discourse *about* time, in other words, was conditioned by the periodical’s distribution *in* time.

With the advent of *The Spectator*, time, paper, and post combined to create a culture of waiting, receiving, and responding. Addison’s and Steele’s paper was adept at fashioning found time by prescribing antidotes for time’s management. But Addison’s and Steele’s lifestyle magazine was beholden to other voices, an amalgamation of disciplines

and rhetorical figures that defined the cultures of print and time in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These disciplines, visible and productive in *The Spectator*, engaged old ideas while introducing new ones; they engaged “subjects that never vary,” and “occasional” subjects “that take their Rise from . . . the present Age” (*The Spectator* 2: 435). Technology informed the center of this dialogue because timekeeping and print technologies produced material histories and cultural artifacts that both supported and challenged immaterial claims. Early technologies of time and text, that is, allowed access to both material (science) and immaterial (soul) forms of time. From the discourse of *The Spectator*, various disciplines merged to build a conscious-seeking experience of time, with John Locke’s influential succession of ideas contributing to the privatization of time by thought itself.

The Spectator was of course neither unique nor original in fostering a public discourse about time and temporality. Prior to the *Spectator*’s debut in 1710, private diaries multiplied and spiritual autobiographies proliferated. Such forms validated constructs of experience over time by engaging materials of the present and the past, or, as Wayne Shumaker writes: “All autobiographies hold *what was* up to view in light reflected from *what is*” (114). In doing so, they helped to create what Foucault termed a “technology of the self” (58).² In the eighteenth century, technologies of self launched a process of regulation of interiority that coincided with literacy and print, giving currency to the published self as a kind of property both moral and material. But the *Spectator* papers were the first textual entity to promote and naturalize the privatized experience of time, creating in turn the “suspense” (6) that Roland Barthes found particular to amorous discourse and that Addison prefigured as the “Suspence” created by the gap between one day’s paper and the next. The “terror” of waiting particular to the lover’s discourse that generates an “insupportable present” (15), according to Barthes, also distorts the present. In theatres of the mind occupied by figures of suspense, “There is a scenography of waiting,” he writes, “I

organize it, manipulate it, cut out a portion of time in which I shall mime the loss of the loved object. . . . This is then acted out as a play” (37).

Time in *The Spectator* is similarly acted out, inflected through temporal practices of the moment from winding clocks to printing diaries of the dead. In these cultural practices of the eighteenth century, time was no longer something to understand or explain. Time was rather something that you did. Time was mimed, cut out, and organized into a burgeoning middle-class ideology. The performances that occur within and across issues of the first diurnal publication are myopic presentations of the insupportable present that Barthes finds disproportionate, or lacking all “sense of proportions” (Barthes 15). In the anxiety and absence peculiar not just to waiting, but to the felt passage of time that waiting implies, the present is codified by anxiety and absence in *The Spectator*, creating several levels of disproportion. In what follows, I will examine several figures in *The Spectator* that manipulate absence in order to show how absence becomes a practice, “a *business*, writes Barthes, “which keeps me from doing anything else” (16). In one issue, the absence of a town clock allows one man to assume its function by obsessively counting the hours. In another issue, the absence of a husband produces a respondent who writes and thinks obsessively about him. In other issues, the absence of friends and lovers produces similar effects, in that respondents seem incapable of doing anything but waiting for the return of an expected hour. If each of these figures is writing to stave off the fundamental “hysteria of seduction into which I feel myself slipping” (Barthes 17), they fail perfectly and tell us much about time at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Equivalence

In the early eighteenth century, technology and text combined to create narratives of nation and narratives of self, each of these dedicated to preserving the grand narratives of self-reliance that inhibited other narratives from being written and read. Though postcolonial critiques of imperialist imperatives went largely unexamined when *The Spectator* arrived in 1710,³ trade and capital acquisitions were perfectly available to those

who could afford the risk and suffer the loss. But the time of capital requires a hypostatized mechanization of time, a temporal uniformity and order that seventeenth-century physics had amply supplied. In the time quarantined by physics and appropriated by business, time's quality was quantity, the quantitative durations of time existing above, prior to, and independently of the perceiving subject. In the paradigm of science, consciousness is superfluous because time's passage "is always anonymous," writes Mark Muldoon, "a purely quantitative and seemingly independent datum" (25). The problem with the time of science concerns the presumed yet unacknowledged observer that gives time shape, the act of cognition that gives the anonymous passage of time a face. Once time is perceived, once the slightest form of demarcation is noted, the "now" ceases to be anonymous (Muldoon 25).

Conceptualizing time as indifferent to consciousness continued in spite of this knowledge and contributed to the instantiation of one universal time. But the creation of a universal time that served economic interests came with social costs. When time's anonymous passage runs parallel to subjectivity, or when time is spatialized along an axis of indifference—conceptually or politically—the results can be frightening and far reaching, but also unsurprising and local. For Horkheimer and Adorno, universal time signaled the advent of a society "ruled by equivalence" (4). Imperatives of middle-class reform included the creation of universal time, for the bourgeois that "makes dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities" (4) generates a time outside of consciousness, a time the same for all. For Henry Bergson, the generative process of equivalence reduces the "heterogeneity of *real* change . . . to a homogeneous succession," as Mark Muldoon explains (26). The abstract quantities of time's appropriation by various disciplines had come at the systematic cost of real change, multiplicity, and difference. Time marks an ideological impasse when the *quality* of its passage goes unremarked. But the qualities of time abstracted from the positivist flow of science, industry, and philosophy had

themselves become abstract *quantities*, making isochronic time not only possible but desirable.

Time's value was increasing and keeping record of the moment was itself a desire worth recording. The newspapers, journals, almanacs, and diaries that nourished these desires organized time around the idea of equivalence. Chronometric technologies created conditions of temporal order that allowed everyone to observe the same time. But the impulse to equivalence borders on compulsion in *The Spectator*, creating disturbing amounts of order and not a little irony. In Addison's and Steele's undertaking, equivalence is underwritten by the episode and the serial publication of episodes. Each paper will be as good and as timely as the next. But the irony of equivalence (in time and culture) derives in part from the episodic nature of the papers. As cultural means for achieving continuity that by definition episodic narratives deny, the *Spectator* papers are doomed by the nature of their fragmented form, but the papers' episodic narratives also allow insight into what this chapter seeks to know—namely, what uses people were making of time and how the *Spectator* fostered the conceptual turn from time as timeless and true, to time as episodic and performed (mimed).

According to Stuart Sherman, the topical material of *The Spectator* was subject to the same drive for equivalence that was happening in the sciences. The writings of Addison and Steele gravitated generally toward thematic cohesion and cultural sameness, away from “heterogeneity,” as Sherman writes, and “toward figures of unity and containment” (116). One figure moving *gravis* toward the centre of that unity and containment was the idea of temporal equivalence and how sameness was presumed to produce wholeness—time was unified and linear, irreversible and moving in one direction. In this regard, *The Spectator* had material precedents with the emergence of Christiaan Huygen's 1657 invention of the pendulum. With improvements in the pendulum, balance springs and escapements, the heterogeneity of time had mechanically if not magically become *one* time while the papers promoted the cultural production of that same singular

time. The pendulum advanced the first clocks that were accurate, creating a time that was reproducible in the sense that clocks and watches could be synchronized. Any two watch owners could boast the same time. The pendulum guaranteed precision and sameness, but its reproducibility created an expectation, a sense of waiting, a state of mind that was duplicated or reproduced by the daily dissemination of the *Spectator* papers. Given that all clocks told but one time, equivalence occurred not only across different clocks for different readers, but across the hours themselves. The pendulum made all hours, minutes, and seconds equivalent to each other, generating the measured duration that was taking precedence over event. Six o'clock no longer meant dusk, dawn, vespers, tea or tavern; six o'clock meant six o'clock.

The pendulum's precision gave to time an identity of invariance, or "the oneness by which we recognize a thing, by which we judge it under varying conditions to be the same" (Ermarth 5). But time was also becoming a form of self-consciousness, a category of experience that allowed the self to define and to defend the nature of its being. The periodical was crucial to the formation of individual identity because the periodical reproduced time through its daily publication. It also included a material, tangible presence, as the daily papers could be touched, tossed, carried, lost, torn, etc. Thus, the pendulum had restructured the sound of time while the periodical had physically changed the feel of it.

In the translation from the Elizabethan "jar" of the clock to the sequential "tick, tick, tick" ⁴ of the new clocks, Sherman finds in the eighteenth century a sound and sequence that offered "a way of reckoning time that includes but goes beyond counting" (6), and that ultimately figured into a structure "of making and recognizing selves" (9). In the midst of this transformation, the day itself mirrored the refinement of the hour and minute through equivalence—each day was measured by the arrival of a new paper and that day was made equivalent, through the repetition of the papers' printing, to the day before. Equivalence meant sequence, sequence meant unity. In such a picture-perfect frame of

homogeneity, subjectivity transforms from an Elizabethan public self of jarred fragmentation into an enlightened, private self of continued renewal and unity, indivisible under one nation, one God, and one time.

Though equivalence and universality may have been organizing goals, the papers themselves suggest something far less reliable and certain. As Erin Mackie has noted of the internalization of eighteenth-century ideologies concerning conduct and conversations, the newspapers and the cultural milieu they helped to create also created “a quite specific sort of person with the peculiar conviction that he represent[ed] a universal class of humanity” (18-19). The papers also created an ideology of time as homogenized and universal, but the specious indeterminacy of the present created an anxiety of expectation. Like Mackie’s reader, the time created by the papers was of “a quite specific sort.” I will provide a brief overview of the conversations surrounding the periodical before addressing *The Spectator* as an eighteenth-century technology that reconfigured the idea of today by engineering an expectation of tomorrow.

The Immanence of Today

At the close of the seventeenth century, a new genre of writing emerged from the desk of John Dunton, and the success of his *Athenian Gazette* established the periodical essay as a prescriptive literary discourse intended to instruct an urban, white, middle-class audience on the morals and manners necessary to maintaining a civil society, or at least a clean kitchen, in service to a beneficent god. Dunton’s periodical essay, like those that would subsequently follow it, had religious overtones but focused primarily on social issues, taking a special interest, according to Shawn Lisa Maurer, “in the most intimate details of family and conjugal life” (6). Similarly, Kathryn Shevelow attributes the development of essentializing gender roles to the early periodical essay, calling the new genre “the principal linguistic site for the production of a new ideology of femininity and the family” (3). Scott Black, on the other hand, situates the social imperatives of the periodical essay at the intersection of print technology and geographical space, where he

finds the emergence of a new urbane ethos that “offered an indigenous form with which to explain the modern city to itself” (21). Still other critics have supplemented the social and ideological paradigms of the periodical essay by offering a conjectural account of the interiority of its readers. In writing about Joseph Addison’s and Richard Steele’s *The Spectator*, for example, Stuart Sherman imagines an eighteenth-century response to have included implicit psychological projections that allowed for private manifestations of a publicized self. As Sherman writes: “To read Mr. Spectator’s daily self-rendering will be in some sense to compose it, to inhabit it, and even to recognize and accept his public prose as a comprehensive account of oneself” (115).

The periodical essay, as these critics have acknowledged and helped to illuminate, is a complicated and paradoxical site because it materializes and mobilizes the dialectics of culture that William Ray posits as “the genesis of social order on the basis of individual conscience” (*Logic* 82). The simultaneity inherent to democratic principles—the one and the many, together and separate at the same time—was becoming a social reality. That readers were able and encouraged to respond to the essays and letters published by Addison and Steele beginning in 1711 proved pivotal to that reality. As correspondence created narratives of self and nation, the papers configured rational discourse as a responsibility while promoting a rhetoric of enlightened “progress.” And the participation of individual agents in the reformation of the social, ethical and aesthetic values championed by the essays distinguished the periodical essay from other public forums. As opposed to “closed” forms of social remuneration, such as the conduct manual or the historical narratives popular in print, *The Spectator* allowed for readers’ written responses. The papers did not stop with their publication. The discursive nature of *The Spectator* assumed no authority, in that the papers did not provide an ending or pretend to have the last word. The papers fostered a desire that began a century earlier with publications such as *The Weekley Neues* (1622) and *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages of Parliament* (1644). These periodicals published letters from the public and introduced the idea of periodicity, which

developed, according to Sherman, out of desire for narrative continuity. But he notes of these earlier periodicals that “the continuity (such as it was) came in clumps” (117). By offering continuity without the clumps, the *Spectator* papers picked up where these other, less ‘timely’ papers, left off. Though working within the codified limits of wit and respectability, the editorials, letters, and essays published in *The Spectator* invited social openness in the form of individual response, which in turn generated discussion and debate. More importantly, the papers delivered on their promise of continuity and daily delivery, creating in turn an exchange and expectation that influenced the discussion and debate. To be continued signaled a change in thinking about time, and time became a part of the debate.

In the eighteenth century, the advent of print and the first run of dailies created a change in temporality, or the way a culture perceives time as evidenced by the ways they inhabit it. As time began to move faster, closing the distance between now and the past, the papers challenged traditional understandings of history; the papers reflected the impermanence of things as they put into circulation a moderately fast, temporal turn over. In this way, the papers by Addison and Steele are cultural artifacts, not limited to text, topic, or figure, but enhanced by the distinguishing and vanishing nature of their pace alone. Their value comes in part from the way they inhabit and move through time. The papers also disclose the mechanisms of ideology and show how individual articulations of autonomy and self assertion are in constant conflict with the laws and customs that both enable and limit those articulations. The periodical’s strategy of including multiple narratives and hazy personae ultimately decentered the authorial voice found in conduct manuals and historical narratives. The assumed cultural authority of *The Spectator* is both recognized and articulated in the struggle for and against cultural immanence, a struggle that marks the essential pathos and process of culture. As William Ray explains, culture refuses closure through a series (or system, or portal) of oppositions that are always both the product of autonomous action and its origin. To respond or resist, therefore, is to

have already internalized the very authority being resisted. In effect, as Ray explains, “We can only express our distinction and get beyond cultural determination by articulating our cultural determination explicitly” (*Logic* 8).

The pessimistic implications that follow from these observations may suggest that the periodical—to both its detractors and supporters—was little more than a rhetorically sound liberation manual designed to keep a public in harmony and a self in check. But in keeping its readers tied neatly to the Post, the *Spectator* papers helped to satisfy the quest of the one in finding its voice among the many. They moved the enlightened subject toward liberty, truth, conscience, and consensus. The stage had been set for the dissemination of a daily paper that spoke volumes, and the subject the eighteenth-century insisted on emancipating but ended up creating, did the looking, evaluating, and judging. *The Spectator* that had crept into the minds and hands of political subjects was the enlightenment writ small.

The papers’ proposed reforms—sartorial, intellectual, gendered, social—implied that reform was possible. But Anthony Pollock suggests that reform was perceived by Addison and Steele as impossible. Yet, “they redeem that impossibility by cultivating a spectatorial ethos that imagines its public impotence as both necessary and unfortunate” (708). If Pollock is right, an ethos of introversion underlies Addison’s posture and not only provides for a psychological grounding to sentimental novels later in the century, but offers a reason for their decline—namely, the political impotence of sympathy. Still, as a dynamic and discursive cultural site, the periodical essay created desires that were no less remarkable for the unfamiliarity of their terrain, circulating among a spending, reading, and responding public. Inspiring a new genre included new ways of thinking and seeing. *The Spectator* both reflected and constructed these differences along racial, economic, ethnic, and gendered lines of identity, further “generating and disseminating a broad nexus of complex values of moral, economic, political, and aesthetic significance” (Maurer 6).

But the narratives of Addison and Steele worked to normalize oppression by creating an objective measure of subjective time, and God could not be found greasing the machine. Since at least Augustine, time belonged to God and God's will. With the advent of commercial trade, however, including the daily report of newspapers and periodicals, the history of time became a question of consumption and expenditure. *The Spectator* was compelled to configure, therefore, time as calculable and useful within a capitalist regime against the time of God as incalculable but useful to the individual soul. *The Spectator*, in other words, needed both science and philosophy to sort things out between God and the shilling.

Isaac Newton was writing about time when the Christian ideal of eternity was an accepted fact. Though he does not disclose his personal beliefs in the *Principia*, Newton preserved the idea of eternity as he set about distinguishing absolute time from relative time. The former "flows equably without regard to anything external, and by another name is called duration," while relative, or clock time, "is some sensible and external measure of duration by means of motion" (77). Key to this distinction between relative and absolute time is number. Relative time implies movement, change, and sequence. Relative time implies anything that may be counted, including the economics of commerce. Absolute time, on the other hand, is all that relative time is not. Although Newton does not feel compelled to offer a pragmatic or commonplace definition of time in the *Principia*, explaining that "I do not define time, space, place, and motion, as being well known to all" (74), his concept of relative time turns on the centrality of number, whether divided into days, hours, months, years or minutes, and requires a certain level of abstraction. Number therefore distinguishes Newton's two kinds of time, but when John Locke assigned that disturbing concept (of number) to the sequence of ideas in consciousness, the concept of duration was equally disturbed.

Both Newton and Locke agreed that time as number is infinitely divisible and therefore may continue forever. Out of one comes two, it was determined, and so satisfied

the symbolic continuity imagined by the infinite capacity of “one.” But for Locke, duration was not infinite but limited to the observing subject, the “I” of selfhood that memory confirms over time to be continuous and unified. Thus, the question of number, which began for Newton as a distinction between eternity and external measurement, became for Locke a question of perception. As Lewis White Beck summarizes the difference, “Eternity was always something thought of as *given*, though beyond human comprehension; now it, or its substitute infinite time, is something constructed by human thought from human experience” (120). In place of eternity, Locke provided a “mathematical property of a continuous infinite series” (119). It was Locke’s formidable idea of series combined with a Newtonian concept of number that corresponded to the publication of *The Spectator*, leading to its persuasive influence on the qualities of time.

The Imminence of Tomorrow

When the first issue of *The Spectator* was made available to the reading public of London on March 1, 1711, the paper did not look or sound altogether unfamiliar. It resembled earlier publications in terms of its physical appearance, the use of a fictional author, its explicit concern with morals and manners, and its publishing of letters from the public. What distinguished *The Spectator* from earlier periodicals—such as Daniel Defoe’s *Review* (1704-1713), Ned Ward’s *The London Spy* (1698), John Dunton’s *Athenian Mercury* (1691-1697), and even Addison’s and Steele’s earlier publication, *The Tatler* (1709-1711)—was its timing. As Donald Newman observes, “Except for its production schedule, there was little new about *The Spectator*” (12). Yet, *The Spectator* was responsible for introducing the very idea of “schedule,” a notion naturalized enough through cultural use but ultimately invented in the early eighteenth century. The production schedule of the papers alone invites an investigation into time because schedules imply a future. In effect, schedules monopolize time as a series of tomorrows taken for granted by the very fixity schedules seek to establish. If only by organizing time formally through daily publication, *The Spectator*’s schedule brought with it then a nascent time consciousness, cultivating a set

of behaviors that are historical manifestations of the early periodical and its implicit promotion of imminence—the idea that tomorrow will surely happen, that the future is certain. The dailies gave each day the promise of another tomorrow.

In the construction of an infinite series of tomorrows plotting the certainty of what is ‘not yet,’ the schedule, as promoted and introduced by the papers, may be read in light of Ricoeur’s discourse on narrativity: “I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent. Their relationship is therefore reciprocal” (*On Narrative* 165). It could be argued that time’s transition to temporality becomes *The Spectator’s* ultimate referent, for as guarantors of survival, the papers promised “to be continued every day.” The papers extended the notion of duration to include language, sentences, and letters. Twenty-four hours came and went, a halfpenny guarded their passage. For the price of a paper, Mr. Spectator delivered time, and time organized both the papers and the day. But as the papers introduced the idea of duration with its daily production schedule, they also accelerated time because of it. The future came faster, the past receded quicker. As result, the future was scotch-taped onto the side of “every day” experience; the future was imported from tomorrow and forced to refigure the present day. In effect, and ultimately refiguring traditional notions of past, present and future, the pace of time set by *The Spectator* altered perceptions about the future by giving it rhythm and increasing its probability. The imminence of tomorrow came like a song. So when Ricoeur argues further that the mutually constitutive relationship of time and language leads to a dialectic whole, giving readers the sustained impression of a definite future, we might apply his theory of narrativity to *The Spectator* based upon the paper’s organization of time, not as end-directed, but as future-centered and ongoing.

Moreover, *The Spectator* tells the story of Mr. Spectator as much as anybody else. Consequently, the paper meets at least one narratological criteria that may qualify the periodical as narrative in Ricoeur’s theory of time and language. *The Spectator* does not

establish continuity in terms of action, language, or plot. Thematic discontinuity—each issue centered on a different topic—makes the emplotment of dialectical wholeness advancing toward an inevitable future difficult to defend. “To be historical,” writes Ricoeur, “an event must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening. It receives its definition from its contribution to the development of a plot” (*On Narrative* 165). But what happens in *The Spectator* is defined by its relation—duration and significance—to elements of time created by its ongoing sequence. Thus, while the papers do not create a continuously running plot, they maintain thematic unity through the ongoing maintenance of a time not yet. The papers prefigure the future by marshalling an expectation of its dubious because impossible arrival, an impossibility to be continued every day.

In the maintenance of such a time, the incorporation of individual timetables often duplicates the idea of schedule in miniature, and further doubles as a substitute for the promise of a future by enlisting the elements of plot. In the final issues of the first volume, for example, Addison decides to tackle the subject of wit. He situates his writing along a continuum and envisions several outcomes. “I intend to lay aside a whole week for this undertaking,” he writes, “that the scheme of my thoughts may not be broken and interrupted; and I dare promise myself, if my readers will give me a week’s attention that this great city will be very much changed for the better by next Saturday night” (1: 417). The first outcome is guaranteed so long as readers keep reading and continue waiting; for any reader who meets with a challenge from one issue addressing wit, “may assure themselves the next shall be much clearer” (1: 417).

Addison invokes a conditional yet imminent sense of futurity. Saturday night will not only happen but will be an improvement, presumably, over Saturday afternoon so long as the writing schedule is not ‘broken’ and the patience of his readers is secured, which may explain why he clarifies the goal of *The Spectator* in the same issue: “As the great and only end of these my speculations is to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of

Great Britain, I shall endeavor . . . to establish among us a taste of polite writing” (1: 418). Addison’s importunate future figures significantly in the issue’s call for taste, meaning futurity and narrative are reciprocal, for what is unbroken and uninterrupted (as one component of a dialectic whole), will produce what is witty and polite. Continuity yields progress—the betterment of humanity through uninterrupted, “much clearer,” language.

Given the complicated and dynamic relations established by *The Spectator* regarding time and narrative, I will examine moments in *The Spectator* when time becomes thematically conspicuous in order to explore the contexts in which those moments occur and the meanings they produce. I will focus on issues that deal directly with clocks, schedules, and diaries to trace the meanings that organize around them and the anxieties they produce. More broadly, I will argue that time in the eighteenth century served as a discursive site upon which notions of normativity were inscribed, and will explore how those inscriptions in turn served to organize time, making it subject to the same reformist agenda and rhetorical attitudes that determined the category of “normative” as disseminated among codes of gender, class, and mental health. My focus on the periodical genre is not to discount the relevance of diaries and travel journals to eighteenth-century constructions of time, but to emphasize the dialogic nature of the genre. I want also to explore the ways in which the periodical’s generic contributions continued to prosper in modernity, and in future genres as they were soon to wrest time from beneath its immovable funeral hearse. From serial and end-determined novels to the Romantic lyric and beyond, the future had a precedent in the periodical essay as it merged periodicity with public opinion, and methods of measurement with cultural critique. As such, the periodical remains crucial to understanding how temporality both influenced and was influenced by the emergent bourgeois subject, as by Habermas, the feminization of discourse, as by Eagleton, the patristic negotiation of public and private spaces, as by Shevelov, and finally the secularization of ethics and the politicization of divine authority.

The *Spectator* papers invite the most pressing interpretations of time in those issues where time assumes a material presence in the form of a clock, watch, or calendar. I will begin with one of those readings published by Addison and Steele on August 2, 1712. In this issue, the *Spectator* devotes himself to the peculiar capacity of “custom” to bring delight and diversion where once there was only necessity and pain.⁵ It begins with the story of a clock.

There is not a common saying which has a better turn of sense in it, than what we often hear in the mouths of the vulgar, that custom is a second nature. It is indeed able to form the man anew, and to give him inclinations and capacities altogether different from those he was born with. Dr. Plot, in his history of Staffordshire, tells us of an idiot that chancing to live within the sound of a clock, and always amusing himself with counting the hour of the day whenever the clock struck, the clock being spoiled by some accident, the idiot continued to strike and count the hour without the help of it, in the same manner as he had done when it was entire. Though I dare not vouch for the truth of this story, it is very certain that custom has a mechanical effect upon the body, at the same time that it has a very extraordinary influence upon the mind. (4: 69-73)

Addison’s reading of time in the essay wants to account for and manage the power of custom to manage and affect both the mind and body. But by invoking the idea of a common saying, Addison has already called upon custom to explain it. The *Spectator* further relies on the very mechanism upon which custom depends, namely repetition. Not only does he begin by repeating what has been heard before, the common saying, he also retells the history of Staffordshire as told by the seventeenth-century naturalist, Plot. Through the repetition of the saying and the retelling of the story, the *Spectator* stages a performance of the habitual mechanisms of custom, which serves at the same time as a critique of custom. In doing so, he has ironically identified the central paradox of culture in which the desire for self-assertion, or individual autonomy, is both a process and product of the cultural institutions that initiate and limit that assertion. The *Spectator*’s endeavor to explain how “custom is able to form the man anew” is itself a product of custom, suggesting again that the “inclinations and capacities altogether different from those he was born with” become available only through submission to the customs that define him as “altogether different.” In the dialectic of imagined selfhood, change and

time are illusory because being is already determined. All that remains in the flux of the new and the different is repetition.

But repetition also occurs at the semantic level of real, or relative, time in the counting and sounding of the hours, a counting that continues beyond the life of the clock and that constitutes the character of the idiot in Plot's plot. Later defined as "the instrument which tells the hour" in Johnson's *Dictionary*, the clock in this story tells of its dysfunction, its vulnerability to chance and mutability. The clock's failure implies the corruption of time measurement in general. At the same time, the continuity promised by the papers is elevated by the presence of a broken clock because both the clock and the issue depend upon the idiot to 'tell' the hour. The idiot mimics the clock in its methodical counting, while the paper mimics the day in its methodical publishing. Both offer the idea of number as infinitely divisible. They also introduce the fundamental idea of John Locke. For while the clock "sounds" until the moment it breaks, the idiot only "strikes and counts," suggesting an interiority of time that cannot be told either by the clock or the *Dictionary*. In the silent measurement of duration—whether striking the hour, or numbering the day—the idiot and the paper suggest a duration limited to the "I" of selfhood that imagines continuity and unity, Locke's essential existential and *The Spectator's* essential goal. Numbers and motion, along with their measurements and calculability, may be infinite but duration need not be. Time in this issue is understood subjectively and constructed wholly by human thought.

But more is going on. The idiot serves a social function that has a literary history dating to at least the fourth century, and Georges Bataille offers a definition that may help situate the Staffordshire's timekeeper within a larger cultural history. In "The Monastery and the Public Sphere," Bataille examines a passage from *Lausiac History* by Palladius that centers on an outcast woman whom the people called the idiot:

The idiot is totally within the unsymbolizable thing that resists meaning. She takes upon herself the body's most humble functions; she loses herself in the unassertable, below the level of all language. But this 'disgusting' castaway makes

possible for the other women the sharing of meals, the community of vestimentary and corporeal signs indicating that they have been chosen, the communication of words. The excluded one renders possible an entire circulation. (*Inner* 34)

In Addison's retelling of the story, the idiot makes possible an entire circulation of words—the issue at hand, for example. Existing outside the promiscuities of election, the idiot loses himself “below the level of all language” in the repetitive acts of striking and counting. In the presence of a ruined clock, time has moreover symbolically run out. The refusal to acknowledge that unsayable condition is the idiot's function. Or rather, the ‘unsymbolizable’ fact of death and silence has been displaced onto the body of the outcast, the body that is circulating in print, the body that makes that circulation possible.

The idiot reproduces *The Spectator* in the latter's daily account of calendar time, the quiet counting of days that contribute to the genesis of a social order rooted in public discourse. As the outcast that “resists meaning,” the idiot also mimics the paper's eidolon—the anonymous narrating voice—as the Spectator admits in the paper's first issue to have distinguished himself early in life “by a most profound Silence” (1: 2). In the presence of a dysfunctional clock and a profoundly silent narrator, the lines that navigate public and private identities blur because both are responsible for keeping time. The borders that distinguish what is and is not ‘reasonable’ are also crossed because the eidolon is responsible for the creation of idiot. In the first instance, what we can point to and call the public sphere is juxtaposed with a public timepiece that has been internalized by a sensibility at once private and intensely obsessive.

The idiot's subjective experience of time points, on the one hand, to the function of opposition in the cultivation of social and private identities. In the absence of the clock's authority, the idiot continues to tell *its* time which is at the same time *his* time, which constitute two opposing but mutually dependent impulses. On the other hand, the idiot's persona is initially contained by the clock and suggested by their synchronic encounter, or his “amusing himself with counting the hour whenever the clock struck.” But when the “mechanical effect” of custom upon the body and its “very extraordinary

influence upon the mind” take over, custom’s capacity to make everything delightful produces a kind of silent delirium. Having internalized the mechanics of time measurement, the idiot remains faithful to a discourse of time that only he can hear. His visible movements represent the sound and movement that once signified through the clock.

Finally, the Spectator launches the story of the idiot by invoking what falls from “the mouths of the vulgar.” In so doing, he discloses a set of power relations endemic to the secularization of writing and reading occurring early in the eighteenth century. Michel de Certeau is helpful here: “When elitist writing uses the ‘vulgar’ speaker as a disguise for a metalanguage about itself, it also allows us to see what dislodges it from its privilege and draws it outside of itself: an Other who is no longer God or the Muse, but the anonymous” (2). The Spectator as anonymous eidolon and the anonymous idiot as timepiece are the same—the latter counting the hour, the former publishing daily. Both are controlled and predictable, yet neither is manageable, a similitude that runs in another direction as well, as Sherman points out: “Mr. Spectator is the first figure, real or feigned, to appear in print day by day, and is also the first print eidolon to define his whole character in terms of an obsessively cultivated privacy about his own experience” (114). Yet, irony always arrives at the expense of an imagined wholeness, leading to a demystification of self that, otherwise living in the empirical world, writes Paul De Man, “exists in a state of inauthenticity” (214). Through use of irony, knowledge of the authentic is recoverable but predicated upon a “dialectic of self-destruction and self-invention” (220), and one that ultimately depends upon a “reflection on madness from the inside of madness itself” (216). It is from this state of madness that Plot’s history emerges, dislodged from its privilege and disclosed as doubling in the mirror image of the idiot and eidolon. Foucault found a similar mirror in the age of reason’s confinement of the insane. It was, he writes, “as if, at the moment of its triumph, reason revived and permitted to drift on the margins of order a character whose mask it had fashioned in derision—a sort of double in which it both recognized and

revoked itself" (*Madness* 202). A fiction borne along by modern advancements yet normalized by ancient ideas, the idiot represents modern time-consciousness expressed through a kind of compulsion marked, recalling Foucault, as visible movements of the body. In the history of Staffordshire, in the counting and the striking of the hour, time and narrative work together to mark the abject body as a site of contamination, as "idiotism." Time, in other words, was becoming institutionalized, if not yet medicalized.

The Return of "Whole Hours Together"

The (his)story of Staffordshire discloses the mechanisms of cultural and institutional power just as it works to accommodate the subjective experience of time in a rapidly changing world. From within the periodical narrative that is "to be continued every day," as advertised at the top of every issue, emerges a woman named Asteria. She is writing to ask the Spectator's advice regarding the "unhappy circumstance" of her separation from "the best of husbands, who is abroad in the service of his country, and may not possibly return for some years" (2: 435). Finding her husband's absence "almost insupportable," she explains how she spends her time visiting the rooms where they used to talk together and reading the books he used to love. When she is not writing to the Spectator, Asteria passes her time trying to conjure up the missing but worldly husband, but as the issue's epigraph forewarns: "All sad she seems, forsaken, and alone / And left to wander wide thro' paths unknown" (2: 435). In the absence of a man whose implied national concerns and responsibilities abroad leave the woman alone with her hysteria, Asteria is shown to have no real character at all. Whatever substance and meaning may inform her perception and constitute her reality, her sense of selfhood is constructed upon an absence. The other's absence is only the image of Asteria that Asteria alone has. As Erin Mackie points out, "Addison and Steele want to give women a character, but one that is wholly defined by her domestic and familial roles" (459). But Asteria pushes more than a mop; she cooks up a letter with polished skill. She substantiates Katheryn Shevelow's more sympathetic reading of Addison's and Steele's project, one that argues they wrote

women into literary culture as both readers and writers, as subjects as well as objects. Women's involvement in their own representation tempered their difference from men, Shevelov notes, "as a difference of kind rather than degree" (3). In this issue, to read Asteria as anything other than an overdetermined domestic figure who applies herself to the care of her husband's family and estate "with more than ordinary diligence" (2: 435) would be difficult. But her husband's absence already intimates ambivalence toward that domesticated figure. Her life goes on without him, and, precisely because of his absence, so does her writing. Time makes itself present and plays a part in the configuration of these gendered differences not only by organizing itself around absence, the husband who "may not possibly return for some years," but also through Asteria's response to that absence.

I think of him every moment of the day, and meet him every night in my dreams. I visit his picture a hundred times a-day, and place myself over-against it whole hours together. I pass a great part of my time in the walks where I used to lean upon his arm, and recollect in my mind the discourses which have there passed between us. (2: 436)

Time in this issue signifies a loss of time—possibly many years—that accounts for the separation and explains the cause of Asteria's grief. The time the couple spends apart determines Asteria's grief, but the same grief caused by the same loss of time is also the cause of Asteria's letter. Time enters the narrative as both the cause and effect of her writing, in that Asteria's attempt to recover the time lost due to her husband's absence requires the loss of more time. Whether dreaming, lost in long walks, or absorbed "whole hours together" with her husband's image, Asteria's self-proclaimed "widowhood" negotiates time as much as time necessitates her writing about it (2: 437). Yet, adding to Asteria's catalogue of time lost is the Spectator's use of time in three more examples to explain how other lovers have managed the distance time can create, or "what the poets call death in love" (2: 436). Each example includes the allocation of a specific time when the lovers meet "as if" they were sharing the same physical space.

The consolations of lovers on these occasions are very extraordinary. Besides those mentioned by Asteria, there are many other motives of comfort, which are made use of by absent lovers. I remember in one of Scudery's Romances, a couple of honourable lovers agreed at their parting to set aside one half hour in the day to think of each other during a tedious absence. The Romance tells us, that they both of them punctually observed the time thus agreed upon; and that whatever company or business they were engaged in, they left it abruptly as soon as the clock warned them to retire. The romance further adds, that the lovers expected the return of this stated hour with as much impatience, as if it had been a real assignation, and enjoyed an imaginary happiness that was almost as pleasing to them as what they would have found from a real meeting. (2: 437)

The only space shared by the absent lovers is a temporal one, for the synchronicity of a timed correspondence serves to bring two people together through an imagined discourse. Such discourse figures as remedy. In the absence of true and certain love, set aside one hour each day and 'expect' that hour and love to return.

The "motives of comfort" offered here by the Spectator mirror *The Spectator* itself. For one ideal guiding *The Spectator* included a public discourse that was, according to Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, "at once free from the 'grotesque bodies' of the alehouse and yet (initially at least) democratically accessible to all kinds of men" (95). In order to access it, Erin Mackie explains, the individual needed only the "currency of good sense, benevolence, and reason" (17). But the physical space of the coffee house, while limited mainly to men, was not the only shared space, for some readers shared the novel idea of other readers reading the same issue on the same day. The synchronicity of an hypothetical "assignation" between lovers applies also to the reader of *The Spectator*, for early in the paper's publication the Spectator recommends to "all regulated Families" that they set apart "an Hour in every Morning for Tea and Bread and Butter, and these my Speculations" (1: 44-45). If the papers are to be read as remedies, as shared cultural solutions to domestic (families) and nationalistic (well-regulated) issues, they remain anchored in part to Romance, habitable and yet resigned to the world of "as if."

Significantly, the notions of absence and longing presented by Addison are managed and remedied by a clock while the paper's daily organization of time is reproduced in the issue as a remedy for lost time. While the lovers set aside "one half

hour” in the day, that is, the reader sets aside an hour. What marks the realm of the “as if” includes the imagined unity created by the publication of the paper, but also by the underlying passion that unites both lovers and readers—a passion that turn upon a delirious discourse, finding in the synchronic encounter “an imaginary happiness that was almost as pleasing to them as what they would have found from a real meeting.” Not unlike the idiot’s keeping time in the absence of time, imagination here is scripted and clocked. But its “almost as pleasing” proximity to the real thing calls into question the possibility of the real thing, a notion familiar to readers. In the *Tatler*, Addison writes: “Seeing this sensible World is in Dignity inferior to the Soul of Man, Poesy seems to endow human Nature with that which History denies; and to give Satisfaction to the Mind, with at least the Shadow of Things, where the Substance cannot be had” (1: 111). In proposing ways to fill a soulless void, Addison followed Francis Bacon who believed that poetry could “give some show of satisfaction to the mind, wherein the nature of things doth seem to deny it.” For the lonely soul in Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse*, attempts to endure absence become “an active practice, a *business* (which keeps me from doing anything else)” (16). In the ‘as if’ and the ‘almost’ of the waiting and pretending, the other’s absence distorts the present moment by making both conspicuously present.

The capacity to imagine is implicit to Asteria’s recovery and to the lovers’ continued romance all the same. But implicit to Addison’s advice is the timed regulation of that imagination. The Spectator privileges discourse as a creative response to the world, but that discourse must remain in conversation—real or imagined—at an allotted time. There must be a circumscribed moment reached through consensus and deliberately carried out, as each party “punctually observed the time thus agreed upon.” Anything less for Asteria’s imagination—“in this my widowhood”—borders on the chaotic. And as Foucault notes in *Madness and Civilization*, one of the ways madness was perceived was “through the condemnation of idleness” (43). The remedy included setting the mad to work, making them “subject to the rule of forced labour” (47). In the case of Asteria’s

losing “whole hours” to distraction, the end result of her absorption, the Spectator’s advice includes the policing of her time. In what follows, I focus the temporal reforms of the paper as they organize around the idea of sustained return, the anticipated “return of this stated hour.” The papers were formatting repetition through the creation of schedules, or scheduled time. These temporal reforms were bound to social and political issues, including the status of women and the need for policing women’s time in particular.

The lovers who happily recover each other at the expected hour are borrowed from a novel that Mr. Spectator’s audience would have been familiar with, for presumably he is referring to Madeleine de Scudery (1607-1701), whose popular romances included discussions on women, their education, the nature of love, writing and good conduct.⁶ Like his contemporaries, however, he attributes the novel to Madeleine de Scudery’s brother, George, who took credit for the novels that she wrote. In doing so, Addison’s response to Asteria’s letter complicates the notions of an imagined discourse by discrediting the terms of authorship. To begin with, Asteria’s letter may have been written by Addison, while he himself remains under the guise of an eidolon—a phantom spectre, as the term was understood in the eighteenth century. The same term could also be applied to Madeleine Scudery, as she writes anonymously behind the scenes, while Asteria’s letter may be just another ghostly manifestation of a woman writer who technically does not exist, but whose time is the defining feature of her anxiety. With such mystery surrounding authorship, it is not surprising that “necromancy” makes an appearance in the issue through the Spectator’s elaboration of two other examples, which conjure other fables, other narratives.

In one of these examples, the Spectator tells how “Strada, in one of his Prolusions, gives an account of a chimerical correspondence between two friends by the help of a certain load-stone” (2: 437). He explains that the stone coordinated the movement of two needles, and that each friend possessed one needle. The needle is fixed upon “a kind of dial-plate, inscribing it with the four and twenty letters, in the same manner as the hours of

the day are marked upon the ordinary dial-plate” (2: 438). Upon the friends’ separation, the Spectator notes:

The friends agreed to withdraw themselves punctually into their closets at a certain hour of the day, and to converse with one another by means of this their invention. Accordingly, when they were some hundred miles asunder, each of them shut himself up in his closet at the time appointed, and immediately cast his eye upon his dial-plate. If he had a mind to write any thing to his friend, he directed his needle to every letter that formed the words which he had occasion for, making a little pause at the end of every word or sentence, to avoid confusion. The friend, in the meanwhile, saw his own sympathetic needle moving of itself to every letter which that of his correspondent pointed at. (2: 438)

Correspondence in this passage is distilled to the letter, and to each letter corresponds an hour of the day. (The letters J and V were not yet part of the current twenty-six letter alphabet.) Visually, language mirrors time, as the dial plate of the loadstone duplicates the hours “in the same manner as the hours of the day are marked upon the ordinary dial-plate” (2: 438). In Addison’s simile, the most foundational sign of written language is assigned an appointed time. The letter, in its proximity and likeness to the hour, assumes a syntax of its own, “a little pause . . . to avoid confusion.” Between the time-keeping and the manner of correspondence, language and time collapse the distance of absence. For in one instance, distance is remedied by meeting *at* a prescribed hour, while in the other, by a duplication *of* the hour. Both depend upon repetition. Critical to both meetings, repetition allows for the recovery of the past while anticipating a future. It recovers the memory of past pleasure as while anticipating its return. On repetition, Ricoeur writes in *Time and Narrative*:

The cardinal function of the concept of repetition is to reestablish the balance that the idea of a handed-down heritage tipped to the side of having-been, to recover the primacy of anticipatory resoluteness at the very heart of what is abolished, over and done with, what is no longer. Repetition thus opens potentialities that went unnoticed, were aborted, or were repressed in the past. It opens up the past again in the direction of coming-towards. (3: 76)

The issue in its entirety is based upon the anticipation of return—the return of an absent lover, the return of an allotted time, and the return of older stories. The stories told by the Spectator, in part a product of translation and transmission, point to a consensus among

participants that turns upon a certain hour and that precipitates another telling, namely, the communication—real or imagined, shadow or substance—anticipated between the correspondents. Through the multiplicity of these stories, we get many times and many tellings.

Print discourse can shape a community's belief system through "shared accounts," writes William Ray, "the authority of which derived primarily from the extent of their diffusion, the persistence of their reiteration, the level of acceptance of their message" (*Literary Meaning* 18). Addison and Steele worked carefully around the persistence of Romance and the magical thinking of loadstones. But the imagined community that Addison constructs through *The Spectator* is iterated, literally, in this issue through examples of other imagined meetings and communities. It is an issue about shared accounts, their diffusion, persistence, and acceptance. In bringing the issue to a close, Addison has one more thing to say about the loadstone.

In the mean while, if ever this invention should be revived or put in practice, I would propose, that upon the lover's dial-plate there should be written, not only the four and twenty letters, but several entire words, which have always a place in passionate epistles, as flames, darts, die, language, absence, Cupid, heart, eyes, hang, drown, and the like. This would very much abridge the lover's pains in this way of writing a letter, as it would enable him to express the most useful and significant words with a single touch of the needle. (2: 438)

The proximity of death to concision in language, or 'the most useful and significant words,' speaks also to the *memento mori* that attends the presence of any timepiece. They all remind us of an ending, sometimes even their own, as Ned Ward, in *The London Spy*, notes in a poem:

But Ah, thy Melancholy Tick,
That sounds, alas, so Death-watch like;
Does to my frighted Ears foretell,
Thy fate is irrevocable. (3:30)

In *Clocks and the Cosmos*, Samuel Macey provides a reading of the mid-eighteenth century paintings of William Hogarth. In them he finds unprecedented pictorial representations of clocks and watches, symbolic of time's passage and its always too close

relation to death. Macey reads in these paintings a construction of social parameters and situations that tells of excess and luxury, but that also connotes “some of the negative qualities that came to be associated with the mechanical aspects of clockwork” (59). For later critics like Barthes, Fredrick Jameson and Foucault, the negative qualities of isochronicity have grown to include psychopathology, the wholesale loss of freedom and of autonomy, the anxiety of loss.

The early periodical is negotiating the divide between timekeeping as Temperance—symbolic of predictability and order, linked to pictorial representations of the hourglass, and often gendered feminine—and timekeeping as a kind of gentrification that brought with it a mechanization increasingly secular and atheistic. The value of time was increasing while other values were displaced. The notion of God as first cause, God as watchmaker, was slipping beneath the weight of empirical science and philosophical skepticism. This tension is often expressed in *The Spectator* by virtue of its own temporal qualities. That is, the longer it takes for the Spectator to convey his stories about distance and consolation among lovers, the more time it takes to read them. And the more time it takes to read them, the less time there is for religious and domestic duties. As a result, the reader is brought closer to the experience of Asteria than might be expected, or even desired. Far from feeling consoled by motives of imaginary comfort, we “hang, drown, and the like” with her in solitude and dejection. The absence of her husband stands as metaphor for what eighteenth-century society felt was absence writ large, the absence of mystery and the loss of faith in things unseen, a point I will develop further in the second chapter. For Addison, only “the most useful and significant words” will transcend “what the poets call death in love.”

At the same time, Addison’s examples of useful and significant words—flames, darts, die, absence, eyes, hang—are borrowed from a cosmology that was losing significance. In sum, our identification with Asteria is an exchange based on unequal returns and summoned by a clock that regulates the collaboration and corroboration of a reading

public produced by an iterative temporality. The reading public was an effect of the daily dissemination of topical materials that men could read, more or less, at the same time, regardless of their location in the cities, their age, or class status. With the daily publication of *The Spectator*, public discourse was not made accessible to the average gentleman, exemplary of great probity, wit and understanding; rather, it produced him.

Conclusion

The interpretation of any periodical is determined by its distribution over time. The hour set aside every day to read the *Spectator's* speculations, but also Mr. Spectator's "striking and wondrous tales" (1: 1), allowed readers to create and participate in a collective, serial narrative that began on Monday and continued through Saturday. It allowed them to participate in communal dialogue and helped to construct a collective time. Time was the form that shaped the substance of the papers and the form that also affirmed their worth. Against this temporal backdrop, readers occupied an unstable relation to the papers because readers doubled as those spoken to and those spoken about. As both subjects and objects, readers who followed this running narrative were yet bound and synchronized by the temporal organization of the papers. With each day rising, a new issue pressed to pay it tribute, turning the perpetual page in Barthes's calendar one more time, or one last time. For the "episode," as Barthes explains, "is the tribute the lover must pay to the world in order to be reconciled with it" (7). In the complex negotiations of reader and responder, addressee and addressed, the organizing principle of time assumed new meanings by *The Spectator's* daily incorporation of episodic narratives. Time was "put into other words" (Barthes 20) and words were put into other times, as both time and text assumed a material, tangible quality accompanied by a steady new rhythm of expectation and cultural affect.

"To be continued every day" meant marshalling emotions and directing general opinion, but it also meant that meaning happened, or could happen, in the presence or absence of endings and beginnings. It guaranteed a futurity through meanings that were

disseminated over time and capable of occupying any tense. Undetermined by anything other than the running report of itself, *The Spectator* produced a narrative that literally portrayed the features of temporal existence. But publishers and readers of the eighteenth century expressed an increasing desire for ongoing reports and a sense of narrative continuity. *The Spectator* offers such continuity across the two-year span of its publication, but during the week of March 4, 1712, Addison takes it to a new level. He first provides “a faithful copy” of a dead man’s journal that contains an hourly account of the events taking place from Monday until Saturday (4: 397). They are mundane: “Monday, Eight a clock. I put on my Cloaths and walked into the Parlour. Nine a Clock, ditto. Tied my Knee-strings, and washed my Hands” (4: 397). Addison’s purpose is to show that our lives are generally inconsequential, that most of our “actions are of no significancy to mankind” (4: 396). But he concludes the issue by suggesting that “all those indifferent Actions, which, though they are easily forgotten, must certainly be accounted for” (4: 401). He advises his readers to keep a journal of their lives for one week, and to set down “punctually their whole Series of Employments during that Space of Time. This kind of Self-Examination,” he continues “would give them a true State of themselves and incline them to consider seriously what they are about” (4: 400). Here, we see that narrative continuity at the level of a diary both discloses identity and invites criticism about that identity, which is what *The Spectator* accomplishes as a periodical essay. As part of that continuity yet much to Addison’s chagrin, as noted on the following Tuesday (March 11), the response to that advice included the submission of journals from a motley group of rakes, sots, and pimps, compelling Addison to complain that the purpose of the journal was “not so much to expose Vice as Idleness.” But vice is exposed in the March 11th issue, and Addison’s rhetorical use of *occupatio*, far from vitiating the connection between vice and idleness, strengthens it. The organization of time through a daily journal, atomized further by hourly entries, was supposed to initiate reform, instead it leads to more journals, more mediocrity.

From a respondent named Clarinda, we receive news that the dead man was not alone in his Knee-strings. “Wednesday. From Eight till Ten. Drank two Dishes of chocolate in Bed, and fell asleep after ‘em. . . . Friday. Stay’d within all Day. . . . From Three to Four. Dined . . .” (3: 182-83). If Clarinda’s journal is an ambitious attempt to consider seriously what she is about, then she is not about much. None of us is. What matters is the daily accounting of her time, the running report of her identity and action, and the “ditto” of sequence and continuity. What took place on Friday at eight o’clock, or Thursday at noon, matters less than that it took place and was accounted for. At stake was the idea that continuity over time insured stability. Clarinda, a symbol for all who are awake, must provide an account of her activities to ensure that Clarinda is the same over time, lending her identity stability and coherence. In a world losing philosophical belief in permanence, the self reconstituted continuity through literary ledgers. On Tuesday night, Clarinda writes that she “could not go to Sleep till one in the Morning for thinking of my Journal” (3: 182). Writing has been displaced by thinking about writing. As soon as we make time an explicit topic, we extract from our own lives that part of time that concerns us most—its passage and the inevitability of its and our own cessation. The invective that Addison has such talent for delivering brings Clarinda’s journal to a close. Through a rather serious meditation on time and narrative, and in quoting Ben Jonson as “uncertain Author,” Addison’s narrative of continuity spawns the following:

Underneath this Marble Hearse
Lies the Subject of all Verse,
Sidney’s Sister, Pembroke’s Mother;
Death; ere thou hast Kill’d another,
Fair and learn’d, and good as she,
Time shall throw a Dart Death at thee. (3: 185)

That time, death, and verse surface from the unreflective diary of Clarinda, who writes to the Spectator because she is at a “loss to know whether I pass my Time well or ill” (3: 184), fosters the possibility of recovering what has been lost, both of time and self. As represented and negotiated in the publications of Addison and Steele, time was becoming

an institution unto itself, eventually finding its fraught way into the novel, where we learn from Richardson's Pamela that her husband "is a regular piece of clockwork! . . . Why should we not be so? For man is as frail a piece of machinery as any clock-work whatever: and, by irregularity, is as subject to be disordered" (339). Idleness was remedied by times appointed, times kept, and time managed. Time recorded allowed for reflection and self-evaluation. The keeping of journals and diaries promoted a shared temporality, a process of making time mutual by making it ritual. And if by Saturday night the "taste of polite writing" is able to banish idleness from Addison's "great city," then punctuality and middle-class productivity are good to go (1: 417).

And so they did. Today, the every moment of time and necessity is iterated through any multitude of timepieces and electronic loadstones that arrange our existence in time around the idea that something must be done with it. In the eighteenth century, there was an expectation that people were reasonable and that time could be managed. Anything less was "ill" in the words of Clarinda, who promises at the end of her letter to "not let my Life run away in a Dream" (3: 185).

CHAPTER TWO
 THE ABSENCE OF MAN IN THE TIME OF FEELING:
 MACKENZIE'S NOVEL SENTIMENT

Time in the eighteenth century was becoming an interpretive process, obliging people to indulge the instability of cultural transformation by reading and writing about both time and change. By focusing on forms and practices of time that emerged from *The Spectator*, I showed in the opening chapter how time was perceived in particular ways and noted how the diction of expediency, punctuality, and discipline came to define its worth. The daily publication of *The Spectator* and the temporal expectation it created were central to the transformative effects launched by new technologies, creating realms of experience unique in time's sudden ubiquity. In creating a naturalized experience of time that the paper's daily distribution made collective, the papers articulated a modern time consciousness.

But the demand for temporal accountability launched by *The Spectator* was later challenged by the sentimental text, an argument I develop in this chapter by focusing on the role of sentiment in resisting the time of the commodity. Specifically, I trace the ways in which Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) offers a subversive reading of time that poses a direct challenge to both the rationalizing project of the age and the rationalized timekeeping of *The Spectator*. I first provide a brief review of the moral philosophies that influenced the ideological commitments of sentiment, including the sentimental novel, in order to establish the social climate of the eighteenth century. I then explore the ways in which *The Man of Feeling's* formal inventions and storytelling practices resist and replace the time of capital with a timelessness at odds with enlightenment notions of progress and improvement. In the macabre anxiety about time that surfaces through sentiment, Mackenzie's novel reflects the time-consciousness established by *The Spectator* by dismissing it altogether.

The intellectual climate of the Scottish enlightenment represented by David Hume and Adam Smith at mid-century was inherited in part from the moral philosophies of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Francis Hutcheson. Though their methodologies and national origins differed, their focus on reason, imagination, benevolence, and virtue, unified their work and purpose, as each of these writers undertook the daunting task of defining human nature. They were trying, each in his own way, to decide whether man was fundamentally good or inherently bad, and to determine how he was supposed to live with other men, with history, with nature, and with himself.

The questions that were raised in the first half of the eighteenth century by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson were complicated by the skepticism launched mid-century by David Hume, whose *Treatise of Human Nature* ushered in doubt about the power of reason to accommodate man's place in the universe. Hume, finding reason radically inconsequential to existence, posited the imagination as essential to existence, a position to be made more remarkable later through the works of Vico, Herder, and Hamann. Yet, the enlightenment philosophers in their search for truth were vexed by a certain flaw in logicity. Confronted with the question of how to reconcile the individual—perceived then as the locus of authority, knowledge, and reason—to a collective and social understanding inherently at odds with individual reflection and experience, the master discourse of philosophy was forced to confront the more troubling paradox that philosophical arguments for sentiment and sympathy could not rely on reason alone to explain them.

In the eighteenth century, writers of sentimental fiction responded to the ostensible incompatibility of sympathy and reason by building workable models of community and by offering ways to define—if not resolve—the tension that marks where the public and the private meets, or fails to meet. One way sentimental fiction addressed the problem of reconciling the one and the many involved the representation of characters as isolated from the communal structures that would provide them with a social identity. In the

extreme case of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, for example, either heroine is not only isolated but involuntarily and punitively incarcerated. In Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*, the novel's main character is not kept under lock and key, or subject to expulsion, but he is separated from his community owing to a journey he must make to London, a journey that reveals his inconsequential status as a man of feeling, his inability to cope with "the bustle of the busy" leaving him more often used and abused than adored and esteemed (136). Of even more significance, Harley is introduced to Mackenzie's readers at the beginning of the novel as already dead, the ultimate social estrangement, his once inhabited house depicted as pervasively vacant, solemn, and grave. If Harley's life maintained any similitude with the manuscript he left behind, then his life was, as the editor remarks, "of no importance on the whole" (5). Despite their marginal status, the disenfranchised heroes and heroines of sentimental fiction were nevertheless compelled to sympathize with and weep for the sufferings found in the world at large, even when that world was responsible for their isolation and wholly indifferent to their fates.

Reading sentimental fiction was perceived by some, though certainly not by all, to be ennobling, virtuous, and instructive.⁷ But the self-consciousness that developed alongside the discourse of sympathy and sentiment—who am I, how am I supposed to live, what to think and feel, how much and for how long—was largely an effect of private reading. The isolation inherent in the private reading of a sentimental novel may have allowed for sympathetic identification with isolated characters, but the self-consciousness sentimental fiction inspired developed in tandem with the discontinuities inherent in the sentimental form, including textual elisions, narrative interpolations, missing chapters, blackened pages, or the omission of events simply not worth reporting because they were, in the words of the editor in possession of Harley's manuscript, "simple to excess" (93), a criticism leveled often at the sentimental genre itself. As a form meant to approximate the subjective experience of the reader, the conventions of the sentimental text allowed readers time to contemplate and to feel the gravity of the sentimental moment, thus improving

their ability to sympathize with the suffering of others, and through sympathy to achieve moral improvement and perfectibility. “This,” writes Michael Bell, “was so simplistic and overblown as to come into discredit even at the time” (2).

Although the virtuous effects of reading sentimental literature may have themselves been fiction, an advertisement serving the purposes of booksellers and printers more than a reading public, there was nevertheless an underlying need, according to John Mullan, which the novels of the period—sentimental or not—were attempting to answer. For Mullan, that was “the need to imagine how private individuals might understand each other, and learn to share each other’s interests. If the novel developed as a genre that made significant the distinctive fate of a particular individual, then sentimentalism was the attempt to rescue that individual from isolation and selfishness” (248). But sentimental attempts to rescue the individual from isolation were hampered by the very form thought to encourage the rescue and salvage the sentiment. In the time allowed for sentimental response, in the relentless lacunae that fostered sympathetic identification and bodily response,⁸ the sentimental text does not foster a sense of community or ‘fine feeling’ but rather, as this chapter argues, offers a liminal state of hesitation that the Latin *superstitio* serves well to signify, meaning to stand immobilized with fear over a person or object.

In *The Man of Feeling*, fear and hesitation may be recovered from the recesses of the formal, fictive inventions that define the text as sentimental. The novel’s fractured form and the reader’s immobilization culminate into the crisis that Roland Barthes calls “disreality” (88), a state of mind severed from reality and shivering in a world gone cold. But Mackenzie’s novel speaks more directly to Georg Lukás’s observation that the novel as a genre developed from a crisis in meaning: “The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality” (56). *The Man of Feeling* is essentially novelistic—the hero’s epic quest for meaning begins and ends with his estrangement from the world. But the sentimental fragment also enables a reading of *The*

Man of Feeling that can be situated only in the present, which for Barthes not only “bears within it the terror of a *suspense*” (7), but reflects “a Nature uninhabited by man” (87).

Though sentimental fiction was intended to develop communal understanding, *The Man of Feeling* develops instead an mocking indifference toward community by making sympathy a rather macabre and isolating experience. In doing so, the novel implicitly challenges the temporalities of collective experience established earlier in the century with the newspapers and periodicals.

Some Other Time

Mackenzie’s novel represents one of many attempts in the novelistic tradition to compensate for a lack brought about by changing economic and material conditions. In the eighteenth century, one of these conditions that lay closest to the daily reckonings of life was the loss of the time when time did not matter.⁹ Time had assumed new value and currency in the eighteenth century because chronometric technologies allowed for increasing accuracy in timekeeping and personal portability in the form of watches. Time was made further conspicuous in eighteenth-century labor practices, in the form of longer working hours necessitated by increased consumption.¹⁰ From the combined forces of increasing technology and diminished leisure time, time became a command for activity and people were expected to respond. For Goethe, whose sentimental novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) garnered international fame alongside Mackenzie’s, time wasted was simply a stain on the character of man: “Our moral theory is furthered in the highest degree by division of time and attention to every hour. Something must be done at every moment.” The role of sentimental fiction and its emotive turn was pivotal in processing and resisting this cultural change in temporality because narrative, as a cultural innovation that participates in the formation of temporal existence, also “exploits the nature of temporal existence, in which,” according to Michael Bell, “emotion is more strongly invested, for example, in what we fear to lose, or believe we have lost” (6).

The emotional investment of *The Man of Feeling* sought to restore what had been lost in the eighteenth century. In the novel's critique of contemporary culture, readers might imagine a time lived independently of trinkets and toil, a time without the "every moment" of time's command. And the novel's nostalgic impulse becomes apparent early in the narrator's observation that "all our gay hopes are flown" (3). But since the simplicity of times past most likely never existed, the novel's expressed longing for the 'good 'ole days' is a nostalgia common to every time, place, and individual. But the centralizing concept of loss in the cultural production of sentiment was real enough in the eighteenth century. When Harley visits the schoolyard farm of his youth, for example, he finds it "now ploughed up . . . from the sacrilege of that plough" (113). As "prospects" and improvements reorganized the landscape of Harley's youth, so too Mackenzie reorganizes the time of writing into episodic fragments that deny the reader prospects of coherence, cohesion, or continuity. In creating alternative temporalities to match the real and radical changes that were occurring, sentimental novels allowed readers to lose themselves in a timelessness that may not have actually existed in times past, but that certainly had become incompatible with the fashionable 'now' to which the sentimental novelists of the age were drawn.

The existential fixation on the moment that sentimental writers like Richardson, Sterne and Smollett attempted to translate by creating literary models of consciousness led, ultimately, to a subordination of plot and narrative continuity. As narrative result, sentimental time delivered temporalities to the sentimental reader that conflicted with the ordered time of imagined continuity and uncontaminated selfhood. (*The Man of Feeling* stood helplessly by as Clarinda watched her life run away in a dream.) Sentimental time was at productive odds with the rationalist imperatives of the enlightenment that is, because time organized by consciousness and by loss ultimately challenged both the measured equivalence endemic to the tacit timekeeping launched by the periodical, and

the enlightenment imperatives of progress and individuation that the periodical helped to introduce and promote.

In challenging enlightenment imperatives of individuation and progress, *The Man of Feeling* brokered a subtle yet subversive (dis)engagement with sentiment itself, suggesting affinities with Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. As opposed to the moral philosophies of Shaftesbury, Smith, and Hutcheson, in which ontological verity, aesthetic unity, and stability of selfhood were assumed to occur *over time*, Hume's *Treatise* questioned the very possibility of selfhood *because of time*. Hume privileged the faculty of imagination over reason because the mind was only "a kind of theatre where several perceptions successively made their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away" (34). The presence of selfhood, originating from John Locke's theory of consciousness and the succession of ideas, was illusory for Hume because consciousness could only perceive truth in the existing but ever fleeting moment. Memory of past events and the anticipation of future outcomes provided coherence to the individual consciousness only by trickery of the imagination for Hume. The historicized, Lockean ego, capable of existing as a coherent and unified entity over time, was for Hume a social fiction.

The reader of *The Man of Feeling* exemplifies this social fiction because the reader alone is responsible for pulling coherence and continuity from beneath the rubble of the novel's episodic form. The reader's imagination is what gives *The Man of Feeling* its sense of story: Harley is a young man who promotes generosity and compassion but who cannot distinguish between people in need and people on the take. His naivety gets in the way of his happiness and he dies of a broken heart. That is the story. But this story is always in the process of leaving, as "Any episode of language which stages the absence of the loved object," writes Barthes, "tends to transform this absence into an ordeal of abandonment" (13). I am not suggesting that Harley is the source of the lover's discourse, though he is an amorous subject in love with the always absent Miss Walton. Rather, I am suggesting that the novel is itself the source and the figure of "an always present *I* . . . constituted only by

confrontation with an always absent *you*” (Barthes 13). The novel presents a series of vignettes that stage an absence, “which expresses the emotion of absence” (Barthes 15). The novel also stages absence in the real sense of missing chapters, but in the place of the “always absent you” stands the sacrilege of the plough, the symbol of progress that has razed Harley’s childhood monuments and dashed his dreams to dust. In the absence of the time when time did not matter, in other words, and in the presence of critique, stands modernity. And for the reader, the story that is always leaving and “doomed” to its own philosophy, creates “a preposterous situation,” writes Barthes, “a kind of insupportable present” (15).

The same insupportable present is found in Hume, creating the same anxiety and tension for the subject that inhabits it. Unfortunately, Hume did not question the nature of time itself. He assumed that time was universal—existing the same for all and prior to perception. But his Newtonian informed *Treatise* suggests the uncertainty and indecision that sentimental fragmentation makes possible. For sentimental fiction, like Hume’s concept of the mind, is but a “theatre where several perceptions successively made their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away” (34). And parallel to Hume’s distrust of reason, the fragmentation of sentimental novels revolutionized into a revolt, not only against reason, but against the century’s menacing mechanization of time. Objectivity, continuity and reason—three touchstones of enlightenment thought—did not disappear beneath the mandates of multiplicity and difference offered by the sentimental text and its formal properties. Rather, the sentimental text revealed the arbitrary nature of reality and reason by using the language of the dominant order to expose the limits of that order.

By fostering a realistic sense of time and place, for example, *The Man of Feeling* creates credulity in order to subvert the objective properties of time and place. In doing so, the novel reveals the historical moment and social context of its production, which included an effort to restore “the genuine pleasures of the soul” that have fallen victim, the narrator notes, to mechanization and industrialization (116). *The Man of Feeling* constantly

interrupts a reader's progression through the text to enact the metaphor of disturbed progress. From pastoral England (126) to the gates of a Milan prison (131), for example, the reader follows the novel's hero from one episode to the next without explanation and without provisional clue or cause. In the juxtaposition of chapters that bear no causal relation, the nature of temporal existence in *The Man of Feeling* becomes both an exercise in time and a disavowal of its authority. In the construction of a temporality that both discloses and refuses the historical moment of the text's production, *The Man of Feeling* exhibits an indifference to hierarchical structures of subordination. In their place stands a temporalizing parataxis, in which the first and the last may coexist without distinction. In Barthes's terms, "there are no first figures, no last figures" (8). Accordingly, to read sentimental fiction is to accept indecision and epistemological uncertainty as *fait accompli*.

Although my claims for sentiment as a cultural production of protest against the mechanization of time are not without precedent, they are without elaboration. Several critics have noted a tendency in sentimental fiction to include marvelous, surprising, and inexplicable events that test the limits of what is possible, including the possibility of chronological time. John Richetti, for example, argues that sentimental and gothic novels were exceptions to the eighteenth-century rule that the novel had defined itself in opposition to earlier forms of storytelling. As popular subtypes known to blur the distinction between fact and fiction, the sentimental and the gothic actively participate, Richetti writes, in "a clear and perennial protest against that rationalistic preference for the actual and the historical" (3). Similarly, Maureen Harkin finds the sentimental text enigmatic to the novelistic enterprise that favors the local and the familiar because it "challenges realist conventions of representation, which demand a consistent chronology" (Introduction 17). For Barbara Benedict, the presence of the marvelous in sentimental fiction is a result of the fractured causality inherent to its fragmented form. Incidents that depart from a natural sequence imbue them with mystery, she writes, and have the effect of "unsettling the extent of human perception" (5).

In traditional readings of sentimental fiction, feeling is conceptualized as a moral quality held to be universal, beautiful, and true. Feeling signified progress, order, common sense, continuity, and reason. The ability to sympathize with another human being was an improving moral obligation indispensable to social good. But Benedict questions the manifest transparency of that imperative by suggesting further that “sentimental fictions always prefer the mystical to the rational” (6). Similarly, Janet Todd questions the realist conventions of sentimental fiction by describing the archetypal man of feeling as “something of an exile from another realm, and his code of sensibility seems the rules of a non-earthly existence” (*Sensibility* 104). Finally, Markman Ellis notes that even the eighteenth-century discourse surrounding sentiment remains “mystically imprecise, lacking even elementary logical rigour . . . a philosophical nightmare of muddled ideas (7).

Each of these critics has identified in sentimental discourse a resistance to the materialist and secular implications of the novel form, yet none has interrogated how it functions in the sentimental text, how it slips by the bourgeois censor, or what implications its presence may have on reading, not only sentimental fiction of the eighteenth century, but the novel as a genre incipiently “modern.” As though identifying a problem were synonymous with fixing it, these critics break the lock on Pandora’s Box and then abandon whatever implications a closer reading of the temporality in sentimental fiction may afford. As a result, not only is there a desideratum in the cultural history of sentimental fiction, there is an element of the fantastic operating in the critical response. That is, the ambivalence of their response reflects the epistemological uncertainty that inheres in the fiction. At the same time, these critics collectively recognize the role of discontinuity in creating moods of mysticism and irrationality, pointing specifically to either disruptions of sequence and chronology, or violations in the logic of verisimilitude. They point to disruptions of time and representation in the sentimental text that this chapter will further explore in terms of the historical continuum that *The Man of Feeling* fractures by nature of the novel’s preference for the mystical.

In the Quiet of Time

Silence endures in the reading of any novel, but the sentimental novel is a special case. In the absence of narrative continuity, owing to missing chapters, incomplete sentences, or multiples narrative points-of-view, silence enters into the sentimental text as a species of signification. Linguistically, words may be abandoned, leaving thoughts unfinished. But the silence that intervenes becomes a language unto itself, a signifying absence that serves a larger purpose. As John Mullan argues, “Sentiment lives at the edge of speech; it is felt most when words stop. . . . By breaking off in the middle of saying something . . . something unsayable is said” (241). When Miss Walton brings hand-woven gifts for the orphaned children of Old Edwards, Harley feels “a thousand sentiments;—but they gushed so impetuously on his heart, that he could not utter a syllable” (120). One of the sentiments stuck in his throat includes his socially unsanctioned desire for the heiress Walton, as such a courtship would have been unthinkable, “ludicrous” (58), “indeed desperate” (135). And when he learns of Walton’s engagement to Sir Harry Benson, the comical descendant of a “knight of the shire in the reign of Charles the First” (122), Harley takes hapless refuge in the night, “walking like some troubled ghost, round the place where his treasure lay” (125).

When the object of Harley’s desire is invoked, the mood of the novel is altered by the sudden appearance of shepherds, whose presence poses questions of origins and influence. In describing Walton early in the novel, the narrator notes, “Her voice was inexpressibly soft . . . ‘like the shepherd’s pipe upon the mountains,’” and later, when Harley is wandering adrift about the gate of his treasure, “At that instant a shepherd blew his horn . . . the very note that wanted to be touched” (125-26). Desire is displaced in the first instance onto the seventeenth century dramatist Otway, in the second instance, desire is displaced onto sound. And once Harley feels the full sting of rejection, desire is displaced further onto time. For Harley writes “Lavinia. A Pastoral” (126-129), in which he evokes the transformative quality of time that Christopher Miller locates at the intersection

of twilight and the Romantic lyric—the “no-longer and the not-yet” (118). Harley writes, comparing his state of mind with times of day: “When I walk’d in the pride of the dawn, / Methought all the region look’d bright: / Has sweetness forsaken the lawn? / For, methinks, I grow sad at the sight” (128). In his lament, Harley registers the perceptual adjustment, aural acuity, sensibility, and change that Miller locates in the pastoral form. His poem is thus symbolic of a process that registers duration, as desire waits in the “no-longer and the not-yet.” But the waiting of desire occurs not only in the liminal time of dawn or dusk, but in the larger liminal, historical moment. At the time of Mackenzie’s novel, England was itself transitioning from the no-longer of agriculture and tasked labor to the not-yet of complete industrialization and timed labor. In order to account for the hesitation, paralysis, and fear that plague our troubled ghost and text, we might turn to questions of origins and influence for contextualization.

According to Michael McKeon, apparitional narratives of the seventeenth century became central to the formation of the sentimental novel and reveal a general dissolution of faith. He notes that doctrines of providential justice were slowly being replaced by doctrines of poetic justice in the seventeenth century, finding “good reason to see these years as a critical period in which the orthodox spirituality of an equitable afterlife was being replaced by the aesthetic spirituality of an equitable denouement” (*Origins* 125). The imagined reality of hell, its system of retribution for the wrongs done on earth, was becoming suspect. People had turned to stories and poems, essays and vignettes, as a means of vindication. In *The Man of Feeling*, Harley expresses this turn on the stagecoach home: “It may be supposed . . . that inspiration of old was an article of religious faith; in modern times it may be translated a propensity to compose” (60). What the language of feeling during this period of secularization seemed most to provide was a religion without a theology. Sentiment allowed for belief that is, but without concession to the magical thinking that such belief was thought to conceal.

Judith Wilt, in writing about the precedents leading to a ‘revival’ of the eighteenth-century gothic, notes that the seventeenth century religious reform of the Puritan counterreformation did not come without a cost. The transition from orthodoxy to humanist and rationalist thought, “however unretractable in the main,” she writes, “constantly generated a powerful counterflow back to the orthodox mysteries” (13). The return to orthodoxy made palpable by gothic fascination was precipitated, according to Wilt, by a perceived sense that life had lost a sense of its “richness and intensity” (13).

In *The Holy and the Daemonic*, R. D. Stock makes a similar claim, finding in the works of Isaac Watts (1709) and John Dennis (1704) an attempt to recover an inspired sense of mystery. Watts and Dennis were engaged in creating an aesthetic of the numinous, Stock explains, just as the numinous was being eclipsed by the rationalizing project of the enlightenment, an argument he extends to include the “spiritual horror” found in the novels of Richardson, Radcliffe, Beckford, and Lewis (259-315). Tobin Siebers makes the case that the romantics found in the rational critique of superstition a spiritual wasteland, “leaving humanity without the comfort of faith and offering nothing in its stead” (25). In so many words, sentiment was fundamentally the representation of a problem seeking expression.¹¹ Sentiment was a fantasy that helped to make the unsayable acceptable, if not manifestly sayable.

With the ebbing of religious belief and subsequent loss of faith as these critics note, attempts were underway to smuggle in belief and close the draft left behind by rationalist doubt. The non-enlightened history of superstition, magic, priests, ghosts, and the familiar tale, did not simply go away because people wished it; rather, these epistemes return to visit the eighteenth century novel, not only blurring distinctions between past and present and haunting the very idea of continuity and history, but becoming constitutive of the genre itself. As J. Paul Hunter has remarked: “The novel . . . draws on that confusion of loyalty, for while it points forward in style, form, subjectivity, and its validation of the ordinary and

everyday, it also longs for what is gone: its consciousness is borne back into a past where it searches for its origins and identity” (14).

In cultivating the unsayable, *The Man of Feeling* allows for the emergence of an unconscious discourse that is not abstract but socially and politically grounded. But to recover what has been lost or repressed takes time. Time enters the sentimental text as a signifying practice because the conventional blank page or elliptical moment deliberately allows readers time to contemplate and to feel the gravity of the sentimental moment. The reader’s own consciousness is “borne back into a past where it searches for its origins and identity.” In the absence of authorial presence, the subjective experience of readers is determined in part by the time intentionally plotted for reader response. But in that moment, as Barthes writes, “There is a scenography of waiting: I organize it manipulate it, cut out a portion of time in which I shall mime the loss of the loved object and provoke all the effects of a minor mourning. This is then acted out as a play” (37). In this drama that calls the reader to action, time in the sentimental novel is shaped and re-shaped through means both aesthetic and psychological, but the reader is also paralyzed by the “anxiety of abandonment” (38) that fills duration with silence. In the sentimental moment, we might say with Barthes: “I keep the habit of hallucinating the being I have loved ... I am an amputee who still feels pain in his missing leg” (39). The sentimental moment is the phantom moment of disreality.

In what follows, I will address the ways in which Mackenzie’s novel organizes time, manipulates time, and extracts portions of time in creating the disreality of Harley’s amputated life and manuscript. By focusing on the novel’s varied manipulations of time, I will show how transformative gaps in the logic of continuity disclose the novel’s counterfeit disregard for times present and times past. The text gestures toward a resistance to temporal order and spatial coherence—“perform[s] discreetly, lunatic chores”—from the start (Barthes 23). The novel proper begins with chapter XI, disrupting temporal registers by virtue of not being chapter I. The first page of chapter XI, moreover, opens both

chapter XI and *The Man of Feeling*. Its firstness occurs twice. Chapter XI distorts temporal registers of past, present and future by its placement in the novel and by its first-page doubling.

Discontinuity continues, as an asterisk on the top line and immediately following the roman numeral directs readers (of contemporary issues) to the bottom of the first page, where they read “The number at the top, when the chapter was entire, he has given as it originally stood” (50). The chapter’s “number at the top” (XI) returns to mental view so that its spatial configuration is not limited to the top or even to numerical representation, which happens to take the form of letters. The chapter’s firstness begins again but with a new semantic this time—“the number.” Meanwhile, the number at the top visually occupies a new location at the bottom of the page, i.e. “the number at the top.” The first chapter of *The Man of Feeling* thus begins at least three different times—as the first chapter, as chapter XI, and as “the number at the top.” We also learn from the footnote to chapter XI that chapter XI will likely not make sense because it is not altogether there. The eleventh chapter is noisy, striking at us in various ways, but it does not offer coherence in the form of a completed narrative. The only thing original and “entire” in the opening line and chapter of *The Man of Feeling* is the roman numeral eleven (XI), an easy translation to the 11th hour on the face of many eighteenth-century clocks. To physically open Mackenzie’s novel is to open the present to a multitude of historical times, times dispersed across the space of the page, the face of an absent clock, and the lettered chronology of the novel’s chapters. In the multiplicity of these times, the present as such becomes insupportable, as the missing chapters are replaced with times imagined while the imported future into the unfinished present (of chapter eleven) carries the story forward by returning it back to the top. For Barthes, this creates “a pure portion of anxiety” (15).

Disruptions of continuity and spatial coherence continue as the narrative properly begins. Having just recovered from the hushed expectation of the introduction and from the crowded space and time of the novel’s first page, readers enter a conversation between

two men, following a brief third-person narrative excursion into issues of privacy, coined bashfulness or “rust,” and ethnic difference. For the British citizen, according to this narrative, privacy is taken to the grave, as “he dares not even pen a *hic jacet* to speak out for him after his death” (50). For other cultures, the rust of privacy wears out sooner because its inhabitants “are so vivacious, so eternally on the wing” (50). The reader is situated as the subject of this discussion, because the reader occupies both positions, being at once ‘eternally on the wing’ from footnotes and discontinuous beginnings and responsible for the maintenance of rust inherent to the private, voiceless reading of the text, a proposition ironically confirmed by the novel’s opening sentence: “There is some rust about every man at the beginning” (50).

The reader is then introduced to two men—the narrator and Ben Silton, the baronet’s brother—who seemingly share the same time and place. The conversation takes place in the historical present and begins with Ben Silton’s antidote for rust: “‘Let them rub it off by travel,’ said the baronet’s brother, who was a striking instance of excellent metal, shamefully rusted. I had drawn my chair near his” (50). The narrator then abandons the conversation in order to address the reader in the next sentence, saying “Let me paint the honest old man: ‘tis but one passing sentence to preserve his image in my mind,” an apostrophe of address that harkens back to the idea of an *hic jacet*. The portrait of Silton that follows refers back in time to the narrator’s conversation with Silton about rust that launched the scene, as the narrator remembers how Silton sat in his chair, recounting the effects of light falling upon his face and features. As the digression concludes, readers then become aware that Silton, the man next to whom the narrator has just “drawn his chair,” is in fact already dead, “now forgotten and gone!” (50). Following yet another brief digression, the conversation continues but significantly without pressing forward. Instead, the narration returns to the historical present in which the conversation began, and Silton’s comment, “‘They should wear it off by travel’” (51), is repeated. The narration is itself subject to the “friction” of a modern tour, such “that not only the rust,

but the metal too is lost in the progress” (51). The semantic hasn’t changed—modern life is moving too fast, taking the good, along with the bad, down with it—but has rather been displaced across several temporal registers.

Readers are thus introduced to a character—Silton—that is both speaking and “forgotten and gone,” both sitting “in his usual attitude with his elbow rested on his knee” and mourned for his passing (50-51). To complicate matters, the narrator’s conversation with Ben Silton is continuously juxtaposed with his narration about “the last time” he was at Silton Hall, which occurred sometime after Silton’s death (50). The historical present and the conversation taking place in the historical present collides with the historical past, such that the time-honored distinction between past and present becomes hazy and uncertain, or “eternally on the wing,” haunting the very idea of continuity and history.

The historical past in chapter XI is further symbolized by the passing (already been) Ben Silton, who is described as venerable and dignified, “uncorrupted” and “honest” (50). His is a past of temperance, moreover, that has been challenged by “the velocity of a modern tour,” suggesting the novel’s resistance to change and the celebrated insistence on the now that came with it. Ben Silton’s surname, meanwhile, conjures the sands of an hourglass while his first name names the past (as homonym for the past tense “to be.”). What has been lost, Ben represents. What once was “tall and well-made . . . the indolence of . . . nature had now inclined it to corpulency” (50). The critique of modern culture plotted along intersecting temporal lines of both now (historical present) and then (historical past) produces a schizophrenic effect. The past, present, and future compete for recognition and for validation in *The Man of Feeling’s* opening chapter. The narrator mourns the decline and loss of Silton, but pities also the people “inclined” to feeding fat on the ‘novel’ now. The character of Silton allows for the recovery of a past that beckons ironically toward a future, as Silton embodies dead but “uncorrupted” speech and becomes the epitaphic construction of a continuing social order. In this cemetery of reversible time, relative time has not disappeared beneath the mandates of reason but has been

transformed into something seemingly new. Ben Silton is the *hic jacet* that continues to speak beyond the grave, and to speak specifically about a past that significantly will become the present for a future but unknown passer-by and reader. The reader of that tombstone materializes in chapter thirty-three, when Silton returns to view with contempt for an eighteenth-century life and culture consumed by “sneer and ridicule” (104), and when the narrator is forced to bid his shamefully rusted friend farewell, “once more” (104). Readers are thus plunged into the notional, as thoughts of death and return, time and eternity, death and writing—“one passing sentence to preserve his image in my mind” (50)—converge, disperse, reappear. The novel’s reflexivity toys with the idea that writing has the power to effect mystical and intense feelings where ethical understanding cannot be had.

Fifteen Minutes and Three Miles to Noon

The Newtonian idea of time as a succession of equal, measured units is a reality more or less ignored but not escaped in Mackenzie’s novel. As in chapter XI, so in subsequent chapters, continuity and logic intrinsically function, and several characters carry and consult the many watches they call attention to. But Mackenzie is suggesting the possibility of other times, the firmament of eternal time, for example, or the timeless time of overwhelming egress, as when Harley beckons death in order to leave this world and “enter into the society of the blessed, wise as angels, with the simplicity of children” (136). Mackenzie also points to the potential for these temporal concepts and forms of time to surface with the help of a pen. The baronet’s brother is not reducible to an individual consciousness bookended by birth and death, for example. Silton exists both now and in the past, which makes him anachronistic and anarchical, literally out-of-order, culturally non-specific and adrift. Silton also symbolizes an earlier time in the history of Great Britain. Changes in labor and technology had turned time into money; and the grand narratives circulating late in the eighteenth century suggest that issues unrelated to the making of money and the saving of time and money were devalued or ignored. Mercantilism allowed for an emergent middle-class, and Harley’s aunt disparages the

change: “It is money, not birth that makes people respected” (122). As for capital acquisitions, Harley finds them costly: “The immense riches acquired by individuals have erected a standard of ambition, destructive of private morals, and of public virtue. The weaknesses of vice are left us” (103). Harley is indifferent towards making money and saving time, as the narrator explains: “The usual and expedient were terms which he held to be very indefinite” (105).

In an issue of Addison’s and Steele’s *Tatler*, Isaac Bickerstaff (Steele’s alias) promotes expedience and cautions his reader against wasting time by promoting time as the antidote. In effort to cure his readers of unsolicited talk, Bickerstaff rattles off a bizarre chain of fractions that correspond to durations of time. Time is the defining feature of the essay, and his method—a metalanguage about time—speaks to ways people were beginning to both value and evaluate it.

A Man that talks for a Quarter of an Hour together in Company, if I meet him frequently, takes up a great Part of my Span. A Quarter of an Hour may be reckoned the Eight and fortieth Part of a Day, a Day the Three hundred and sixtieth Part of a Year, and a Year the Threescore and tenth Part of Life. By this moral Arithmetick . . . whoever gives another a Quarter of an Hour’s hearing, makes him a Sacrifice of more than the Four hundred thousandth Part of his Conversable Life. (3: 337)

In Steele’s accounting, fifteen minutes equals a great deal more than fifteen minutes, for the parsing of life into quarters moves from fifteen countable minutes to an impossible duration of .0000004 % of a life. Not unlike the nanosecond—a duration of time too small to isolate—time in 1709, given Bickerstaff’s record of it, breaks down into fractions and probabilities until life itself becomes a mathematical “Span.”

Time and money are two ships passing, however. In *The Man of Feeling*, the value of commodified time appears early in Harley’s journey to London, when he meets a barefooted “beggar” whose autobiography gives story and voice to Bickerstaff’s satirical censorship. The beggar, who is a fortune teller by “trade” (60), offers to tell Harley’s future but is commissioned instead to explain how he arrived at his occupation as “prophet” (59-60). He begins: “God knows I had the humour of plain-dealing in me from a child; but

there is no doing with it in this world; we must live as we can, and lying is, as you call it, my profession” (60). He explains how he used to tell stories about his own misfortunes, hoping to invoke pity and thereby fill his cup, but soon learned that his audience wanted some kind of return on their charitable investment. So, instead of telling his own misfortunes, he “began to prophesy happiness to others,” adding that “folks will always listen when the tale is their own” (61).

In turning prophet, the beggar turned a profit; but the reason for his change in method, from telling truth (non-fiction) to telling fortunes (fiction), has also to do with time. The beggar notes that when he stopped a passer-by to tell the story of his misfortunes, “the few who gave me a half-penny . . . did it with a shake of the head, and an injunction not to trouble them with a long story” (61). Time is money, so wasting Bickerstaff’s “three hundred and sixtieth part of a year” listening to a “long story” simply failed to accommodate either the audience or the beggar. The semantic turn in content from the past (the beggar’s past) to the future (the fortune of others) derives from the commodification of time, and echoes the driving force behind the periodical’s early financial success, namely, writing essays for an audience that were essays simultaneously about the audience. The novel as a genre was similarly guided by the idea that ordinary, everyday individuals were worth writing about. By 1771, the market-based value of capitalist exchange had turned time into money. Expediency had become the rule regarding time’s use, even for individuals like the beggar existing outside of institutional exchange. In order to determine the costs associated with the transvaluation of time from circulating freely to circumscribed durable good, it helps to position the beggar in light of Walter Benjamin’s “The Storyteller.” By doing so, the beggar may be viewed as a figure of changing temporal structures, structures that manufacture a discourse of sentiment to negotiate the novel’s larger concern with the production of normative behaviors concerning “the usual and the expedient,” or the naturalization of consumption and expenditure in the friction of a hurried headlong life.

For Walter Benjamin, the art of storytelling woven into the fabric of pre-Newtonian time offered proof that experience once held intrinsic moral value, uncorrupted by economics, warfare, and “those in power” (77). Storytelling allowed for an exchange of experiences that gave meaning to life and validated experience by offering, “openly or covertly, something useful” (79). The timeless time of story, in other words, was not reducible to Bickerstaff’s “moral Arithmetick.” The communicative exchange of lived experience held purchase on life because fifteen minutes had not yet taken precedence over provisions of counsel, truth, and wisdom, epistemes that have died out with the loss of storytelling (79). In the place of story stands “information,” the value of which “does not survive the moment in which it was new” (81). Writing of the storyteller himself, Benjamin notes that he has become “something remote from us and something that is getting even more distant” (77). He is “by no means a present force” (77).

As an impoverished transient walking “over the sharpest of these stones,” the beggar in *The Man of Feeling* represents the storyteller as a marginalized, disenfranchised figure (59). The beggar notes that he “dealt once in telling truth” (6), but finding the truth inconsequential to a modern world of fashionable and ephemeral information, he left off storytelling for fortunetelling. His newfound figure as fortuneteller is incompatible with the storyteller of old who “takes what he tells from experience” (Benjamin 79). The beggar’s story of his own downfall and demise is rejected in the name of time. The beggar learns to supply “information” instead, information about his listeners that he gathers when not telling their futures: “I pick up the names of their acquaintance; amours and little squabbles are easily gleaned among servants and neighbours” (61). For Benjamin, storytelling does not explain things. Information explains, stories last. Yet the beggar leaves off, saying to Harley, “I have three miles to walk before noon, to inform some boarding-school ladies whether their husbands are to be peers of the realm . . . a question which I promised to answer them by that time” (61). If the information given the women about their husbands’ future promotions dies the moment it ceases to be new, its authority

will nevertheless linger and so will its fiction. The promised communication between the transient and the women is conditioned by the hour, and the beggar drops out of the novel because of the hour's approach. Noon is the only thing left. In the place of the storyteller, noon is the authority that lingers, for it has determined the course of events, accrued several meanings, and imported several futures.

But the fragmented nature of Mackenzie's novel does not allow readers to experience those meanings first hand. Not only does noon not happen, noon is also "three miles" away—a spatialized metaphor endemic to representations of time since at least the pre-modern period. But noon mostly shows how time is the cause of the beggar's leaving, the storyteller "dying out." As the validation of experience found in storytelling slips unacknowledged into portals of modernity, the storyteller/beggar is instructed to tell his audience only "what they wish to believe" (61). Passing information from one modern to another requires a certain level of abstraction. It requires fiction; or rather, fiction limits the scope of what the storyteller can tell, which suggests that the genre of fiction validates experience by dismissing it altogether.

The loss of a communicative context leads to counterfeit wisdom and impoverished meaning for Benjamin. By sacrificing truth (experience) to rhetoric, or what the beggar's audience wants to believe, Mackenzie suggests that time is central to that loss. But the scripting of the beggar's figure adds yet another dimension to that loss. When Harley throws a coin into the cup, the beggar "poured forth blessing without number." Described as a "prophet," the beggar belongs to another time and place. He appears upon a landscape that is grown unfamiliar, "lost in the distant clouds," travelling a road that alters Harley's perspective (58).

Upon seeing the barefoot figure and the "crook-legged dog" limping at his heel, Harley mutters to himself "Our delicacies . . . are fantastic; they are not in nature" (59). Harley is removing a pebble from his shoe, having "lost the most delightful dream in the world" because of it. The beggar's misadventures ensue and we learn of his resurrection

from the ashes of a house “burnt to the ground,” and we read of his “walking a-night over heaths and church-yards” in order that he “make shift to pick up a livelihood” (61). He is ghostly yet mystical, a supernatural figure rejected by parishes and living among the dead. Adding that he “had no relation living” (61), he belongs to nobody and to nothing. The ambiguity of his portrait as the roaming, solitary beggar “with a tolerable good memory, and some share of cunning” (61), stands for what is “dying out” (Benjamin 79). The beggar removes sentimental fiction from its discourse of everyday doctrine by conjuring a time past that, like Ben Stilton, is “now forgotten and gone” but preserved in a passing sentence and scene. The beggar remembers the time when time did not matter because he embodies that time.

Substitutes

The sentimental novel was meant to appeal to the virtuous instincts of a virtuous reader, enhancing that reader’s capacity to feel for and sympathize with the characters about whom he or she read. The beggar in Mackenzie’s novel suggests that the world of sentimental fiction is not the world we inhabit. Virtuous instincts are vanishing because incompatible with timekeeping and the need to keep and protect the fifteen minutes defined and valued by virtue of their having been kept. Time further determines in what order things will happen and how long they will last. In capitalist markets, time sometimes upsets the order in which things happen by determining what will or will not happen. Readers of sentimental fiction learned how to fashion time, in addition to learning how to perform time in relation to sympathy, or how long to feel something.

The Man of Feeling raises general questions, however, about the cultural uses and effects of feeling and sympathy, especially as they are emotions that take time and do not produce enlightened results. Harley does after all die. Mackenzie’s novel may in fact be read as a reflection of its own inadequacy to enact social change, a self-consciousness implicit in the beggar’s tale, but expressed openly in Harley’s initial objection to a proposed visit to Bedlam: “I think it an inhuman practice to expose the greatest misery with which

our nature is afflicted, to every idle visitant who can afford a trifling perquisite to the keeper; especially as it is a distress which the humane must see with the painful reflection, that it is not in their power to alleviate it" (66-67). Sympathy is shown to be just another luxury item available for consumption—a reified fetish in good moral standing. The passage also doubles as commentary on reading sentimental fiction. The “trifling” sixpence is metaphor for the act of reading sentimental fiction; the reader’s tear a page-turning perquisite. The reader feels better about herself for having read the fiction and for having sighed and cried in all the right places, but nothing in the world has actually changed. Though the reader is juxtaposed to the “idle visitant” and is responsible for leaving “the greatest misery” intact, the novel’s self-reflexivity capitalizes upon reader loyalty with the mesmerizing attraction of a brand name. Mackenzie is depicting scenes of incurable suffering that are reproduced as the scene of incurable reading. Incapable of acting or improving upon the miseries of the world, the reader is the visitor that can only watch each spectacle unfold. In this “idle” state of watching and reading, the spectator grows ever more remote, idle, and finally indifferent to social interaction altogether. As the narrator sums up communication in the second half of the eighteenth century: “It may be doubted whether the pleasure (for pleasure there certainly is) arising from it be not often more selfish than social. . . . Is it that we delight in observing the effects of the stronger passions?” (120-121).

The idea of spectacle harbors other psychical mappings. For Mackenzie’s narrator, spectacle allows for the emergence of the most genuine passions that just so happen to be the most sadistic passions. Spectators of public executions, he suspects, possess the most intense feelings and take the most obscene pleasure from death either because “we are all philosophers in this respect” (121), or because “Mankind, in the gross, is a gaping monster” (74). We simply welcome intensity, no matter which way it falls. But why does Mackenzie evoke the gallows in a novel consumed by anxious orphans, tired veterans, helpless women, and lonely men? Why make the time of sympathetic spectacle and pleasure synonymous

with the time of death? I would venture that circulating commodities, changing fashions, and the substitution of information for knowledge (truth) created a need for something permanent and abiding, some form of reality outside of reality.

Once a fundamental shift in the time of commodity occurs, time and its representations shift accordingly. According to David Harvey, this shift includes a set of “processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves” (240). The birth of shelf life conceptually promotes one such crisis in the representation of time. As commodities and fashions become increasingly outdated in shorter amounts of time, people crave and companies deliver what Harvey calls the “values and virtues of instantaneity” and “disposability,” which include not only commodities—fast food, for example, paper plates—but people as well. Fast turnover means “being able to throw away values, lifestyles, stable relationships, and attachments to things, buildings, places, people, and received ways of doing and being” (285-86).

In the chapter titled “The Misanthropist,” Harley listens to a rant on modern culture and manners that, according to a footnote, was written by two different people, “for the hand is different, and the ink whiter” (75). Everything is wrong, according to the misanthrope, because of “luxury” (75), and because “frivolous pursuits of pleasure are mingled with the most important concerns of the state” (75). (Thank goodness those days are over.) After taking issue with the evening’s meal and degrading “any thing of human form,” including two children, the misanthrope turns to tackle other institutions and concepts: “Truth . . . you are at pains to eradicate. Your very nurseries are seminaries of falsehood” (74). Years of education leave only “a raw unprincipled boy . . . without any ideas but those of improving his dress at Paris” (75), while marriage for women means “the enjoyment of pin money, and the expectation of a jointure” (75). No institution escapes censor by either the first writer, or the second, “whoever he was” (75). The misanthrope is interesting for his observations on changing values and the losses attaching to them if only

because he is not immune to their influence, for “when a clock struck eleven; he started up at the sound . . . and walked out of the room” (77). The misanthrope shares affinities with the lover in Barthes’s *Discourse* who, stranded in disreality, finds nothing but “dime-store items” and “generalized hysteria” (88). In order to escape their disreality, each subject feels compelled to “discourse against something” (Barthes 88) and takes comfort in his misanthropy: “So long as I perceive the world as hostile,” Barthes writes, “I remain linked to it” (89).

Even in Mackenzie’s *Bedlam*, dime-store items circulate and fashions function, from a man spinning pendulums made of psychosis and thread to a woman’s ring, which she says, “I plaited to-day, of some gold-thread from this bit of stuff” (71). The inmates are examined as to “the particulars of their dress” (69), but are seen always with “the painful reflection” (67) that nothing can be done to alleviate their suffering. The people in *Bedlam* are compartmentalized according to the severity of their illness, or “the state of their distemper” (67). The incurables are stored in “dismal mansions” and the others in “quarters” that allow “a certain degree of freedom” (67). The women are “in a quarter of the house set apart” (69). The narrative turns upon sympathy’s latent violence, its inherent inadequacy to relieve distress because the privilege of observation takes precedence over the pain being observed. And observation turns easily to fear: “Harley and his companions, especially the female part of them, begged their guide to return” (67). The ambivalent tug of attraction and revulsion is symptomatic of a culture situated between increasing material claims, on the one hand, and the need to live a meaningful life on the other. Among the rings, pendulums, stocks, waistcoats, and clocks, Harley finds only “a scene of dissimulation, of restraint, of disappointment” (136), not unlike Barthes’s lover, for whom “everything seems inert to me, cut off, thunder-struck” (87). The world for both figures is emptied of life, “so that I no longer have any meaning . . . available to me” (Barthes 89). Inhumanity defines the ethical paralysis of a dime-store society. In Mackenzie’s commercialized, disposable society, benevolence “squints for its reward” (77). In Barthes’s,

“everyone is *badly behaved*” (89). Mackenzie’s novel resists the time of commodity and welcomes instead a time at odds with Enlightenment progress and its psychotic spin of self-induced timekeeping.

Introduction to Conclude

As the Enlightenment turned a cultural focus inward toward the empowerment of the human being and his unlimited capacity for achievement, fears of inadequacy followed.¹² Heroic ideals and the demands of individual accomplishment pressured people into constant evaluation of their own selves. Since few could afford the shipwrecked dreams of Robinson Crusoe beyond a purchased copy of the text, people turned instead toward examining the routine details of their daily lives. But as *The Spectator’s* call for journals revealed, the texture of daily life registered an itemized tedium of innocuous inconsequence. Experience was trivialized as a result, and the eighteenth century found itself moving toward what James Thomson called “the Brink / Of dreary Nothing.” Novelists responded.

In the Introduction to the *The Man of Feeling* that charts the genealogy of Harley’s manuscript, Mackenzie establishes a sense of dreary nothing by creating an atmosphere that though subdued and still, lacks any sense of the serene. The setting creeps into being by a slow rationing of vacancy, the haunting perch of a single crow the only sensation, the “nauseated listlessness” of humanity the only response (47). All that remains of “some warm wish or other” is nothing too tangible, “a venerable pile . . . a little rill at some distance” (47). Our sense of place registers what Heidegger called the “world-ness of the world” that gathers, in this instance, into an apocalyptic ennui following the editor’s observation that a tree trunk inscription “’twas indeed the only mark of human art about the place” (47-48). Finding a “funerary” quality in the Introduction, Mareen Harkin suggests that its focus on melancholy and ruins elevates the significance of Harley’s death to the “passing of a way of life” (“Embalming” 322). I have tried to show how changes in time were both the cause and effect of that shift and how Mackenzie’s novel encoded and

resisted them. In what follows, I will briefly address the structure of the novel in order to account for the time and timelessness at the immovable center of Harley's life and death.

Harley's manuscript exudes, like the place itself, a sense of things not there. What is visible is hardly visible and what is left looks like not enough. Yet, in the absent pieces of place blooms the "strange and unlovely flower" (12) that Devendra Varma called the Gothic. In the garden of the Gothic, "such a mind grasps the infinite and the finite, the abstract and the concrete, the whole and the nothingness as one" (16). *The Man of Feeling* does not qualify as gothic, but the novel explores how the mind processes the passage of time in the absence of progress and continuity. The road Harley travels to and from London is a spatialized metaphor of time; his episodic encounters with beggars, desperate women, and confidence men seem a test of public virtue in collision with cultural normalization. Harley's sympathetic response is not subordinate to his journey, but his physical progress and movement forward in time belong to the reader's past because Harley's future has already happened. All sympathy is colored with time and mortality, in other words, owing to the editor's disclosure of Harley's death in the Introduction. The reader knows Harley's future before Harley does, suggesting that self-knowledge is questionable at best, delusional at worst. And were the beggar to have told honestly of Harley's future, he would have told simultaneously of the reader's past. Mackenzie thus disrupts the normal course of time as chronological sequence by offering alternatives that turn upon who knows what and when they know it.

Fictional time invariably distorts lived time—ten minutes of reading time might cover twenty years in the time of fiction. The ability to expand and compress time makes literature a temporal art. But by moving forward *into* the past as opposed to moving forward *from* the past, Mackenzie's novel suggests that continuity and history, as perfectly linear and irreversible, are unsustainable as the only means of understanding time. At the very least, unidirectional time and history require what the beggar once had but lost: "the humour of plain-dealing" and the simplicity of childhood. *The Man of Feeling* offers

neither, as distinctions between past, present and future become indefatigably non-linear, leading readers into a labyrinth of time.

The history of past events embedded in an imagined, because already determined, future coincides with both the present and the past belonging to the reader. This reader's knowledge of future outcomes reconfigures the present by disturbing the past and future, leaving none of them the way they were. The past becomes a destination, the future glistens like a ship already sailed. In this way, Mackenzie's novel creates an intractable figure in a condition of perpetual departure, of journeying. The novel is composed of episodes tied loosely together by Harley's pilgrimage to London, his inevitable return home and subsequent death, but the Introduction splits the episodic narrative to excess by conjuring other times and other texts. From German life materials to the Hebrew Bible, episodes are imbedded in other episodes, and bodily response is made subordinate to the mind's ability to process them. Guilty pleasures, manipulated bodies, and torn manuscripts hover in the novel like fog, beginning with the Introduction that frames the text, the reader, and the response in a thick gruel of mystery and combustion.

In the Introduction readers learn that the man of feeling—the novel's protagonist—is already dead, a figure antagonistic to life and continuity. The man of feeling's character is presented as a doomed fragment from the start, but his work is compared to that of Samuel Richardson. The editor of the found manuscript acknowledges the sentimental tradition, and pays ironic homage. He himself remains anonymous and in possession of "the works of one knows not whom." The editorial framing is interesting in and of itself. When the editor asks for the manuscript, he tells the curate, "I should be glad to see this medley" (48). The editor invokes a series of images, an allusion perhaps to Hogarth. But the editor is not the narrator. And the narrator, who also remains anonymous until the penultimate chapter, is not the man of feeling. Neither the editor nor the narrator, then, is fully understood, but combined they create a visual theatre of voices, anonymous and mysterious. The narrator postpones disclosing his identity and name until the penultimate

chapter, but his narration slips in and out of both third- and first-person points of view, giving the novel a multifarious sense of voice and fractured authority.

The narrator may also occupy both points-of-view at once; and when he pays a visit to Harley, the end approaching, two narrative voices merge. Following Harley's conclusion that "the world is in general selfish, interested, and unthinking," Walton arrives to bid Harley farewell. The narrator notes, while escorted to the door by Mrs. Margery, "I took my leave," adding that "Harley was left with Miss Walton alone" (137). This first-person narration is replaced by the third, as the narration details the particulars of the ensuing conversation, quoting Harley and Walton directly and summarizing their attitudes and bodily postures. If the "I" has exited the room, who is narrating the story? The answer matters less than the question of who is speaking, which I think only Barthes's figure of self-evaluation might answer: "I shall never know anything; my language will always fumble, stammer I can never produce anything but a blank word" (19). In Mackenzie's characters and manners, *The Man of Feeling* parodied the ideals guiding sentimental fiction; it stammered a blank word, poked it full of conventional holes, and then bid the idea of making sense, farewell.

CHAPTER THREE

CLARISSA: OR THE HISTORY OF AN ABANDONED OBJECT

The periodical and the novel revolutionized conceptions about time and altered individual and collective practices of time's use. I began this thesis by examining how *The Spectator* papers saddled time with text, creating imminent rituals of timekeeping that *The Man of Feeling* later deemed inadequate. I turn now to examine a text historically positioned between the periodical's temporal advance and Mackenzie's sentimental retreat. *Clarissa* discloses problems with the former by anticipating the concerns of the latter, and I suggest that Richardson's mid-century novel of letters reveals the difficulty of representing subjective time when the present moment is displaced across several temporal registers. Though *Clarissa* shares the culture of timekeeping established by the periodical and partakes in the ideological commitments of sentiment, the novel neither advances nor resists a singular temporal order. *Clarissa* is rather an aggregate of advance and retreat, both an excursion into the inscrutability of subjective time and a textual measure of its impossibility in the absence of collective time. Put simply, *Clarissa* concerns how an individual actually experiences time. In this chapter, I examine the difficulty of establishing temporal presence when the act of writing meant to record the moment inadvertently casts the moment out, leaving both subjective and objective measures of time inadequate to account either for time's passage or for the subject's experience of it.

Variables of Time

Clarissa Harlowe was left alone at death's door on a Thursday evening in September. She died "exactly at 40 minutes after Six o'clock, as by her watch on the table" (L 481), following from an unspecified illness precipitated by the cruel negligence of her family, and the subsequent abduction and assault by the "wicked storyteller," Lovelace (L 98). Clarissa died also because Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa's* phantom creator and editorial voice-over, chose to portray, not a world that was just, but the world that was. Given the quantity of critical works on Richardson's most acclaimed novel—often

considered the progenitor of the genre—one is left with the feeling that Clarissa died only in spirit, yet lives on in body, died heroically on the page, but continues to live in print. Much like a ghost incapable of separating herself from the living, Clarissa Harlowe continues to haunt the literary imaginary, the minutiae concerning the clock time of her death obscured by the larger uncertainty regarding the year. All we know for sure is that she took the six o'clock exit.

But Clarissa's status as a mythological figure existing outside of historical time and place,¹³ coupled with a religiosity that betrays the early Christian characterization of women as inherently and spiritually inferior, allow her some postmortem refuge given what hagiography has taught us about the lives of women saints. Margaret Anne Doody, in fact, calls Clarissa a "spiritual genius" (101), and certainly there are similarities between the lives of medieval women mystics and Clarissa's behavior—her refusal to eat, her unwillingness to marry, her chastity, tears, penitence, enforced isolation from the community, and her ascetic withdrawal from worldly ambition.

But cast from within the dogmatic presuppositions of Clarissa's own historical moment, Clarissa is not so much a heretic as she is fragmented, a disembodied figure that exceeds and questions the received order of things. Like a fragment, she is "a part detached . . . an incomplete work . . . the embodiment of breakage" (Kritzman vii). But forced from her father's home, she is compelled to reconstitute a life story that begins with the crisis of her abduction. Writing from within this 'before and after' paradigm, a narrative perspective and lived reality that often follow from a traumatic experience, Clarissa must withstand the onslaught of two lives—before Lovelace, after Lovelace—and navigate the corresponding terrain of two selves and two times. In this sense, there is nothing essential or eternal about the figure of Clarissa. Like the letters that cross her desk, Clarissa's existence is consistent with the contingencies and polyvalent temporalities that underwrite the epistolary process. Her life and Richardson's text are scratched

through and scarred over with irresolute realities of every kind, leaving only a variable of time—accidental, disordered, and migrant—to account for them.

The defamiliarization that Clarissa experiences of her own body and mind, for example, forces her to bracket the world and her place within it. Most everything is where she is not. But other characters in the novel urge that Clarissa overcome Lovelace's manipulation and recover her 'before' identity. In order to become congruent with the world around her, that is, Clarissa must reject a new narrative of difference and seek instead to establish continuity with the old Clarissa. This is the essence of ableist discourse, the habit of devaluing variations of body and mind. From a twenty-first-century perspective, I could read Clarissa, both text and body, as antecedent to an ableist discourse that is exclusionary and painfully ideological.¹⁴ But it is not Clarissa's physical appearance that is incongruent with the space or persons around her; rather, Clarissa's difference and incongruence follow from her unwillingness to obey, much less "cheerfully" as her father demands, the conventional paradigm of what a woman in the eighteenth century ought to be and do.¹⁵ As she struggles to free herself from the parasitic bondage of familial and patristic ties, Clarissa writes herself into time in order to reconstitute an identity. In doing so, Clarissa articulates a self ironically posited in the absence of time, for only by writing herself *out* of the moment is Clarissa able to reconstitute an identity and set her mortal self free. Only by disappearing altogether is Clarissa able (to be).

Meanwhile, the eight-volume novel itself—composed of more than five hundred letters, a conclusion, preface, and postscript—has been viewed by many modern readers as a stepping stone to its nineteenth century beneficiary, the real novel, the more perfect embodiment of word and experience. English Showalter writes, for example, that "the epistolary novel . . . was obviously a technical dead end Until the writer was freed from the bondage of the first person, the genre was unable to move forward" (11). Similarly, Vivienne Mylne argues that eighteenth-century novelists fell short of realizing the novelistic enterprise because "it was to be some time before common-sense, attention to

detail, consistency and obedience to the conventions of the chosen form were accepted as part of the basic equipment of any competent novelist” (12). According to these assessments, Samuel Richardson was held hostage by a pronoun that slowed the evolution of literary history. Found inattentive and finally judged incompetent, Richardson and his epistolary variations were in need of a ‘cure,’ which according to Peter Brooks, can come only in the form of textual closure.¹⁶

The epistolary form presents unique problems, however, to narratives defined as end-determined fictions. Unless a character (correspondent) dies, or simply stops writing, the potential interminability of correspondence makes closure in epistolary fiction a fiction in its own right. Moreover, characters in epistolary fiction are writing the events and circumstances of their lives from a present-centered perspective. The *récit* they provide speaks of and to the moment, so much so that it may include a reflection on the moment of writing itself. Unlike the temporal distance that inheres in third-person, retrospective narratives, the present tense of epistolary fiction works to bridge or eliminate that distance. The immediacy effect is achieved in part by use of the present tense, but also by the content of the letters. For characters who write letters create the plot as they go along, but without knowledge of the outcome. The present-centered perspective obviates both retrospection and anticipation, qualities understood in conventional models of narrative as essential to plot. Plot structures of epistolary fiction do not develop in conventional ways because nothing can be decided in advance or guaranteed after-the-fact. Present-centered narratives in general impede the formation of a past tense by substituting ‘now’ for ‘then.’ In what follows, I will focus on the immanence of now in *Clarissa* and show how registers of time in the novel combine to create an overdetermined and largely ironic (because insupportable) present. What is present (tense) and what is ‘now’ detach from one another, leaving a self-consuming, aggressive, and prohibitive ‘now’ that, in Lacanian terms, springs eternal in and through the “desire for something else (‘autre chose’). I will begin by addressing how the writerly present interacts with the readerly past to create the

“lively present-centered perspective” that is not only one of Lovelace’s “peculiar,” but one of the novel’s more impressive and antagonistic points of absence (L 256).

Two Sides to Every Letter

Epistolary characters write to situate themselves in relation to the present moment by telling their addressee what has transpired since the last letter. Epistolary characters thus write about the immediate past, and the correspondence in *Clarissa* turns generally upon what happened earlier in the day. It is unavoidable, and to a large degree resembles what Lennard Davis has termed “median past tense,” a tense he finds uniquely journalistic and that implies “what one was reading had only a slightly deferred immediacy” (73). This particular kind of past tense, he argues, evolved from the advent of print technology, but developed more specifically from the continuity of the early newspapers. It was only by “combining continuity with recentness” that a mediated past tense—understood as semantic and not grammatical—came into being (71). As I suggested earlier, *The Spectator* launched an unprecedented time-consciousness because the periodical’s continuity created expectations that were incorporated by its readers and reconstituted through self-reports. And because the past in *Clarissa* is subsumed by the larger momentum of a running sequence, marked conspicuously by the letters’ posting of precise temporal markers—the month, date, day of the week, and time of day—the letters do in fact lend themselves to a journalistic reading of deferred immediacy. Terry Eagleton goes further, suggesting that the unending nature and collaborative process of Richardson’s novels—including the novels’ “flexible, deconstructed apparatus”—read like and resemble “less a novel than a newspaper” (22). The past in *Clarissa* is colored by the subjective reports of the parties involved, which include moral judgments, admissions of fear and guilt, and confessions of longing and regret. But whenever the past is invoked in *Clarissa*, regardless of how recent or how distant, the characters are unable to confer meaning on that past in light of the entire story, because the entire story consists of fragments offered up piece by piece, day to day, moment to moment.

When literary forms read like newspapers, readers external to epistolary forms may be further excluded, as Tom Keymer explains: “Far from placing the reader in immediate possession of each novel’s story, Richardson’s method complicates [the reader’s] access to it to an unprecedented degree” (xvii). But *Clarissa* is delivered in ways both disjunctive and continuous. The form of the novel imitates the serial publication of newspapers in two ways: the novel’s letters reach recipients one unpredictable post at a time, while the volumes of the novel are published serially across the span of several years. But unlike (reliable) journalistic forms, the letters in *Clarissa* provide more than facts. The letters contain characters’ interpretations as they write to understand and explain their lives, justify their choices, and resolve the conflicts that disclose in part the effects of writing. The novel’s reader is caught in the incipient mixing of these unreliable, first-person interpretations and the novel’s disjunctive but continuous (serial) form. The story that Keymer finds inaccessible remains inaccessible by the combined articulations of unpredictable content and heterogeneous but predictable form. In the ongoing solitary acts that give us the character who writes and the correspondent who reads, the story reaches the novel’s reader through a complicated context bound at once to discontinuity and indeterminacy but made reliable and predictable at the same time. One volume of disorder will surely lead to a second volume.

Beyond the structural mechanisms that dialectically oppose form and content in creating the immediacy of epistolary fiction, the question of meaning falls to the implied reader, who becomes an impossible but indispensable reader. Confronted with multiple interpretations, often of the same event, sometimes issuing from the same character, the reader of *Clarissa* helps to constitute the text’s meaning. Without that reader, meaning in *Clarissa* remains uncertain, sometimes incoherent, and almost always incomplete. Richardson must have been aware of the priority given to the reader (beholder, onlooker) in the affective aesthetics developing in the eighteenth century. In both writing and painting, the observer defined the politics of art and literature by determining what was

written and what was seen. Richardson's work accomplishes an affective aesthetic of participation but without the obvious techniques used by other contemporary writers. For Elizabeth Wanning Harries, reader response is especially pronounced in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, as blank pages, asterisks, vague outlines, and other types of omission are "attempts to galvanize the reader, to make the reader a partner in the production of the text" (45). She links such attempts to Sterne's interest in the *non finito*, and notes how the essence of the *non finito*—the early Modern equivalent to an aesthetic of the unfinished—"leads to an aesthetic (and, ultimately, an ethic) of participation" (45). Richardson achieves this ethic in part through the fragmented and unfinished form of the letter. By virtue of its invitation, the letter makes the call and anxiety answers in the wait.

For now, I want to stress that central to Richardson's construction of the indispensable reader is time, for unlike the beginning, middle, and end paradigm of nineteenth-century novels, the time of the epistolary novel is fragmented and dispersed. No two characters occupy the same moment; face-to-face encounters occur, but they are relayed after-the-fact, which leads to multiple points of access for the reader. With many voices and perspectives competing to gain the voice of narrative authority that any competent novelist might use, the epistolary novel privileges process over product. It also brings to writing a fiction of sufficiency—delusional, boundless, perfect—that elicits a demand for mastery over the written. Yet, the novel's title hints at the disparity of full disclosure in the absence of narrative authority, with or without a reader. *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* suggests that there is a novel and that there is a story. The 'Or' suggests the two will never meet. The punctuation wants to confirm a Clarissa who lives and writes in the present (left of punctuation), but the colon plants a pause, a short breathy uptake that exhales a Clarissa perpetually already written (right of punctuation). Her history has been decided, her name ceases to circulate. In the story, Clarissa is heroic and present. In the novel, Clarissa is tragic and past. But Richardson had to begin somewhere.

At the point of division, as between the heroic now and the tragic then, Richardson sowed *Clarissa* and reaped *the History of a Young Lady*.

Before, Between, and After

The letters in *Clarissa* arrive in sequence, but like beads spilling from a string, sequence cannot withstand the unruly pull of time in the novel. The dates marking the letters indicate the sequence of writing, but the scattering of days and lives do not organize into neat piles because of them. *Clarissa's* dispersion over a centralized lack (of time) gives the novel its febrile and unstable feel. Formally, the novel reproduces the heroine as a young, middle-class woman trapped in an environment of falling objects. The text calls attention to itself, to the acts of writing that both engender its story and constitute a major part of its action. The epistle tells the reader what is happening and the novel tells of the writing of epistles, creating a diffuse *mise en abyme* that ultimately deconstructs what Bakhtin, in referring to the epic, called “a world of fathers . . . a world of ‘firsts’ and bests” (*Dialogic* 13).

Clarissa is neither tragic nor heroic. She is not an anomalous figure severed from an earlier time or abandoned by the light of history and fact. Clarissa is not a lot of things because *Clarissa* is an ensemble, the kitsch of put-together parts—each letter addressed to a particular individual at a particular time—that are separated by the letters themselves.¹⁷ Clarissa is made continuous with *Clarissa* through the materiality of the letter, but functions apart from others because of it. Like Clarissa, the letter as physical object is susceptible to mutability, bound to chance, and prone to accidents. Like the letters, Clarissa is vulnerable to the unavoidable effects of time itself—inks fade, paper molds, bodies fail. These contingencies alone make letter writing a dangerous liaison, and *Clarissa* is chalked with suspense and risk. But when legitimate succession—first, second, third—is unable to stabilize under the weight of time or withstand the contingencies that come with time, novels have fewer readers than church steps filled with suppliants. In *Clarissa*, a theatre of waiting happens when there is sequence without succession. Were each epistle a

figure, we might say with Barthes that “each figure explodes, vibrates in and of itself like a sound severed from any tune” (6). Sequence without succession leaves each letter marginally exilic, as rain severed from any wet. The novel builds fragmentation, and fragments create the craving for integration that the novel’s fragmented entrails hoard and deny. The novel is unable to order time and event in ways that might condense or expand the epistolary drama into narrative. In *Clarissa*, the time of event supersedes all other time because the event itself never takes place. That is, hundreds of letter-writing scenes take place in the novel’s drama and substitute for the drama itself.

The letter form distills into an incessant longing for completion and resolution. But what the letters initiate, the novel refuses. In what follows, I will show how the novel fails to satisfy the need created both by its epistolary form and the centralized lack that organizes it. For as readers wait for sequence to organize into succession, for rain to drip wet again, meanings accumulate and meanings disperse across a scattering of selves. Moving indefinitely toward and infinitely away from each other, meaning and subjectivity organize the ambiguities of self and time as they are constructed, circulated, and finally dissolved “by snatches of time,” a phrase used by Clarissa in a letter to Anna Howe—immediately following her abduction—to explain the letter’s inadequacy (L 94). The entire novel, one full year abstracted from the lives of characters that seldom and sometimes never meet, is a snatch of time. The whole of *Clarissa*, as this chapter argues, turns upon a perpetual temporal absence that the letters attempt but fail to bridge. Clarissa’s time is not the time of Dorothea Brooke or Fanny Price. Clarissa’s time, abstracted from the flow of duration, is the maddening center of a discourse that determines the end, and Clarissa’s end is what defines who she is and what she has been. Time governs that end as time governs identity. But Clarissa’s time also revolves around a blank, the ever-present absence of the present moment—a mirror for the real, physical absence of every letter’s addressee. In the way internal readers are imaginatively made present, or figured as presence, to the mind of the writer, so too the “now” of Clarissa’s time is made present by the internal

omniscience of the always absent now, the pathological ‘now’ that precedes every colon and that every history chokes out of life.

The present moment in *Clarissa* is the chronic form of every lunatic chore. It is ambiguously centered and mobile, for the *presence* of now may be conjured by writing but the *present* of that same now is simultaneously cast out. In one writing instance, time is made present by the writing of a letter but the real-life writing of the letter itself displaces the present moment. We could say *Clarissa* is “chronologically” ill, addicted to the manufactured, writing self as antidote and cure, but overwhelmed by the form the cure takes. In the act of writing letters, the means and ends toward empowerment in the present moment prove incompatible because of the letter’s function. With any letter, time is displaced in relation to any present. The time of every epistolary exchange involves a corresponding exchange of ‘now’ and ‘then,’ with the letter writer’s ‘now’ becoming the letter writer’s ‘then’ once the letter is received by the reader, for whom the letter writer’s then becomes his or her now.¹⁸ When the ‘now’ of any given moment ceases to be intelligible or measurable in relation to a before and after sequence as it does in *Clarissa*, chronology is shown inadequate to the task of organizing the sequence of events and actions, such that the orderability of experience belongs to the reader. In 1741, Richardson and his fragmented collection of letters thus challenged received definitions of order, including pre-modern narratives concerned with Christian dogma and the stability of social hierarchies. Time may be viewed as an organizing force of social change and the radicalization of government. Put differently, when the ‘now’ ceases to be intelligible, revolution becomes probable.

The distinction given to *Clarissa* by the perpetual flight of the present further distinguishes *Clarissa*, as a novel of letters, from later novels that appeal to and originate from ‘fathers, firsts, and bests,’ including epistolary novels. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, for example, does not challenge the organizing voice of authority because Werther, though knowable only through his letters, does not embody the status of a reader.

Werther doesn't read; he writes, and the only letters that surface in the novel are his own. Correspondence is not altogether absent, but barely implied by a few letters in which Werther acknowledges his receipt of a letter the novel's reader has not seen. At the end of the day, we get one voice in *Werther*, notwithstanding the editor who collects the letters in good faith and then assumes full authoritative control in the novel's concluding pages. But time itself in *Werther* is legible through practical paradigms of before and after. When Werther writes a letter, communication is made legible by time's easy measurability and maneuverability. The letters occur in sequence and their sequence organizes into succession. Transmission in *Werther* is not complicated by other letters, other voices. Though Werther's 'now' becomes Werther's 'then' by the time his friend receives the letter, the absence of an internal reader (i.e. the exchange of letters between Wilhelm and Werther is implied but not present in the novel) limits the displacement of time to now-*as-before* and then-*as-after*. In *Clarissa*, time is more complicated because more demanding, and subsequently, more misleading. Internal readers and writers complicate the voice of time as it weaves together interior dimensions of experience with exterior dimensions of change and exchange. Letters in *Clarissa* circulate both privately and publicly. In *Werther* by contrast, time is taken for granted and largely dismissed as inconsequential. Werther's suicide is perhaps a superficial example of time's dismissal—easily got rid of—but Goethe goes no further toward manipulating time than in Werther's finding a way to end it.

In the letters written by Clarissa, time is more than the passive passage of hours lettered across the history of a day. Time is an agent in the distribution of knowledge. Time is also the reason why things happen the way they do. When Clarissa writes to Anna Howe following the abduction, time motivates Clarissa to explain the condition of the letter: "You will not wonder to see this narrative so dismally scrawled. It is owing to different pens and ink, all bad, and written by snatches of time, my hand trembling too with fatigue and grief (L 94). Without the time necessary to write an adequate "narrative," meaning becomes conditional and illegibility the price paid for a present 'snatched' from

its formidable reliance on and distinction from the past and future. In the transmission of letters, the novel asks whether transmission alone satisfies the need to communicate some piece of meaning. This letter in particular asks whether meaning happens when it is compromised by material, psychical and emotional realities that are as spirited and vicious as the interpretations of 'reality' offered by the characters.

The practiced verisimilitude that occupied the eighteenth-century painter and poet is available in *Clarissa* and realizable in the letter form, but the verisimilitude of time is not. From one end of reality, time is the condition of indeterminacy and irrationality, the place of beginnings. It is impossible to represent this vanishing point and time. At the other end of reality, time points toward logic and fulfillment, providing comfort in the noble cause and practical sense of things past and things about to be. But unlike the time that constitutes our days, vanishings that point forward in epistolary fiction lead only to the impossibility of its completion, which is to say that the place of endings returns us to the place of indeterminacy and irrationality. In order to engage endings that never come, time in epistolary discourse becomes a resource that assumes the quality of a material signifier, no less culpable than Clarissa's "different pens and ink, all bad." But time is no dismal scrawl in the novel, for it determines not only what or when something happens, but why it happens. Time is co-creator, creating a reader in common creation with time itself. Thus time is part of the imbroglio that results for Clarissa in trembling fatigue and grief. Time demands to be read as an essential ingredient of the novel, as central to its nervous configuration and disfiguration of meaning, as the very source of its narratability.

Time Turning "O'er and O'er"

Everything said so far has taken for granted that time is an objective phenomenon, measurable, divisible, predictable, and unchanging. But time is only invariably the same—one hour is not the same duration for all people at all times. Subjective time may expand, contract, accelerate, or seemingly stop; objective time remains constant. Composed of universally agreed upon but scientifically indefensible facts, objective time does not

disappear under the mandates of subjective time. But Clarissa's final weeks mark the inconsequence of objective time when tricks of time play bad magic upon the mind. When confronted with the reality of death, Clarissa reports that "Hours now are days, nay years" (L 281). She registers an expansion of time that discrete measurements of the clock cannot measure and that science cannot explain. In this instance, time plays a duplicitous role for Clarissa, creating its own conflict by twisting into shapes that outlast their moment. If time expands, turning days into years, then Clarissa must feel older than she actually is, suggesting her physical appearance is in fact incongruent with her environment. In 'Clary' people see youth and promise—even light as the name connotes—not the dark and obscure experience of a time that inwardly and subjectively, if not outwardly lived, constitutes her days.

Ricoeur has argued famously that "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative, and narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal existence" (3: 112). Richard Albright's recent reading of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic, however, challenges Ricoeur's underlying assumption that objective time is fixed, immune to the influences of history or to conditions, whether fleeting or permanent, that may alter time perception. For Albright, the experience of time can and does change, because "temporal 'features' are not limited to a mechanistic sequence of identical increments" (71). Because a *quantitative* counting of hours or minutes may give way to a *qualitative* sense of days, 'nay years,' Albright argues that alternative forms of temporality are available to and from within narrative. Though writing about *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Albright argues that Maturin's novel accomplishes a transformation in durational (subjective) time through "terror, pain, anticipation . . . the deprivation of food, water, and external stimuli" (72). Albright's remark seems particularly apposite when applied to the "spiritual horror"¹⁹ that is *Clarissa*.

That the passage of minutes can incubate eternity in the mind makes it difficult to deny that clock time has little to do with lived time. As such, linear and spatial constructions of ‘here’ and ‘now,’ as opposed to ‘there’ and ‘then,’ begin to deconstruct in *Clarissa*, leaving only so many “dismally scrawled” marks on “this narrative” page (L 94). Increasingly, Richardson’s novel about a teenager deserted and thrown into the hands of strangers becomes disproportionately theoretical; for the seemingly stable but concentric circles of here and now, the present-ness of time to consciousness, may deceptively resolve into a present by sole virtue of its being borrowed from the plurality of other times. The only livable time is the present, but in a letter to Belford, Lovelace shows that the here and now of the present, though not indistinguishable from the there and then of the past (or future), is simply a different version of it. On the prowl for Anna Howe, who has been casting interference with his seduction scheme, Lovelace calls on Elizabethan drama to settle the score:²⁰

Henceforth, *oh watchful* fair one, guard thee well:
 For I’ll not kill thee There! Nor There! Nor There!
 But, by the *zone that circles Venus’ waist*,
 I’ll kill thee Ev’ry-where; yea, o’er and o’er. (L 209)

The demonstrative sense of violence and repetition—grammatically, semantically, and visually—disengages time from its conceptualized and uncontested function as a condition of human understanding and action. The lines from the play are spoken by Hector to rival Achilles and have little to do with the love plot of *Troilus and Cressida*. Thus, Lovelace has taken the passage out of context to express contempt for his rival Anna Howe. The love and death nexus that Lovelace finds so attractive in *Troilus and Cressida* is expressed earlier in the play by Aeneas: “By Venus’ hand I swear / No man alive can love in such a sort / The thing he means to kill more excellently” (4.1 ll 23-25). But the diatribe tells more than Lovelace knows. In his reference to Shakespeare, Lovelace removes the ‘familiar letter’ from the realm of the familiar in ways the others do not. Not to discount the numerous embedded literary (and biblical) references in the novel—from Homer,

Chaucer, and Milton to Mandeville, Pope and Addison—the passage taken from *Troilus and Cressida*, when viewed in light of the plot of *Clarissa*, represents an urge toward mystification, not of love, poetry, vengeance, or death, but of time itself. Clarissa’s failed escapes, capture, and death are allegorized by Lovelace through the absent Cressida,²¹ a rhetorical figure that does not exist. The letter is a diabolical, perversely anachronistic reenactment of what is going to happen by borrowing from a past in which it has already occurred.

In the passage from *Troilus and Cressida*, Hector promises to kill Achilles “o’er and o’er,” taking repetition past the point of possible by suggesting death does not end time. Such repetition is later iterated through Clarissa’s letters, as they are received and read posthumously. Though the sentiment of Lovelace’s cruel intentions remains intact and anchored to the here and now of the letter, the here and now belongs to the there and then of times not present—the early modern history of the play, and significantly, the yet-to-be written letter of a yet-to-be committed crime. The essence of the present resides in a confluence of historical signs that, like helium balloons, are visible but lost to the sky. For this reason, Richardson seems committed to a time more local, a time that demands its own interpretation and that figures as significantly and metonymically as the letters themselves.²²

Dating *Clarissa*

Writing takes time, and there will always be a measurable duration between the event and its written account. As a result, what Richardson called ‘writing to the moment’ must be evaluated less in terms of simultaneity between event and record and more in terms of “psychological authenticity.”²³ Gathered into a collective sequence of dated letters, *Clarissa* ought to point in the direction of epistemological continuity, reflecting adherence to time and knowledge within the framework provided by the characters’ lives and time(s) of writing. But when time structures the self in the ongoing, written sequence of its becoming, writing to the moment is plagued by contingencies that affect and delimit

both knowledge and identity, or what the characters think they know and who they actually become.

Time is indifferent to pain, terror, hope, betrayal, isolation, fear, and love when they plague and unsettle the subject who exists in time. But these contingencies of time also chart the transience and disintegration of the writing self in time. Clarissa suffers mind, body, and soul, becoming the illegible scrawl that marks her final letters. But Clarissa intuits trouble from the start: “Something is working, I know not what. I am really a good deal disordered in body as well as mind” (L 80). Given this early admission, coupled with Lovelace’s reflection that “but for this scribbling vein . . . I should still run mad!” (L 228), how will the coherence and continuity essential to narrative and intelligibility be produced? What may a reader reasonably expect from a character who writes under constant duress, or from the character responsible for it? Will the date of each letter be enough to establish continuity and movement through time?

For Charles Sherover, the answer to the last question is a qualified no. He argues that an unexamined acceptance of dates as indicators of time is not a legitimate form of temporal engagement. Dating indicators ultimately spatialize time, he writes, turning Plato’s ‘moving image of eternity’ into static vacuity: “When we regard time as uniquely *sui generis*, we quickly see that a date is literally a term without any reference” (111). Dates are fictional marks on a fictional line. They simply mark the “junction of a specific ‘before’ and a specific ‘after’” (111). The descriptive force of a date in claiming to locate a specific *when* “is fiction compounded and literally meaningless. A date is nothing temporal” (112). Whatever value comes from a dating system is intrinsically relational, according to Sherover, because dates call attention solely to the “temporal context within which the entity or event manifests its activity of existing” (112).

Dates disclose the limits of things, not the thing itself. Anna Howe’s letter to Clarissa, dated Wednesday July 5th, reveals the complexity of dates and their relational value. In the letter, Howe begins by establishing that she is only now in receipt of

Clarissa's letter dated the 29th of June because Howe's mother had taken possession of the letter. "I have at last heard from you from a quarter I little expected. From my mamma" (L 310). Howe then explains that she has been granted permission by her mother to write to Clarissa, "once or twice," upon condition that the mother read the letters before they are mailed. Howe's mother thus becomes an internal reader, in addition to Clarissa, whose very presence determines both the content and the form of the letter. And as Howe continues to write, the content of the letter turns overwhelmingly toward writing, and, more importantly, reading: "(But I shall get [mother] to be satisfied with hearing me read what I write; putting in between hooks, thus (), what I intend not to read to her)." As graphic as the sentence appears to the eye, the promise of 'hooks' goes unfulfilled in the letter because, as we learn in the letter's postscript, "my mother would not be satisfied without reading my letter herself; and that before I had fixed my proposed hooks."

Parentheses (or hooks) often contain dates, for example, dates of birth and death to signify the duration of a life, or the year of a book's publication. Thus, to read dates as hooks leads to a provocative shuffle of more dates, more hooks. The letter continues:

I tell you I sent you three letters: the first of which, dated the 7th and 8th of June (for it was wrote at twice), came safe to your hands, as you sent me word by a few lines dated the ninth. ... The second, dated June 10, was given into your own hand at Hampstead on Sunday the 11th, as you was lying upon a couch in a strange way, according to my messenger's account of you, bloated, and flush-coloured; I don't know how. The third was dated the 20th of June. Having not heard one word from you since the promising billet of the 9th, I own I did not spare you in it.
(L 310)

Any reader of this letter, including Clarissa, enters upon a visual labyrinth of dates and numerical references that finally, through the sheer force of visual dissonance, interferes with the reader's sense of time perception.²⁴ Howe invokes, in this letter dated the 5th of July, the 'first' letter 'wrote at twice' on the 7th and 8th, the second on the 10th, and the third on the 20th. The reader's attention is led, if not astray, than certainly away from the present letter by returning it to June, to letters presumably already read and dates already lived. Because Howe's letter removes the reader to a time earlier in the novel, the

reader wonders whether she has missed something, a suspicion furthered by Howe's claim of "having not heard one word" from Clarissa since the 9th. For Paul Alkon, who examines the impact of narrative time-schemes (in Defoe) on the phenomenological time of reading, Howe's letter may serve as an example of how "perceived distinctions between past and present moments of reading-time collapse," even though "the impulse to make such distinctions remains" (8). Alkon argues that memory gaps created by texts do not constitute malfeasance on the part of the writer, but rather should be "regarded as a valid part of a narrative's temporal structure" (14). The relational effect of *Clarissa's* seemingly errant dates and their placement along a temporal continuum—first, second, third—suspend the plot and create uncertainty in the reader, two qualities that interfere with two corresponding qualities belonging to the reader—the ability to sustain memories created by the text and the capacity to form new ones. In the place of memory and expectation there stand the o'er and o'er of reading and rereading. Now that old memories are suspect, the reader is forced to question her own time and understanding because the potential formation of future memories—like Clarissa's letter to Howe dated the twenty-ninth of June—has been confiscated. Richardson has us between the hooks, so to speak, and spares us little.

Interestingly, Howe's letter of proposed hooks also brings to light the parameters of a specific before and a specific after. Howe writes to Clarissa: "God grant that you may be able to clear your conduct *after* you had escaped from Hampstead; as all *before* that time was noble, generous, and prudent: the man a devil and you a saint" (310). The use of a 'before-and-after' sequence, in any context, suggests that time is infinitely divisible, a series of distinguishable moments and events, each made sovereign by its difference from the next. But the living present is not authentically representable as a series at all. As Sherover summarizes, "the experienced present, wide or narrow in focus, is a synthetic whole, a *Gestalt*, in which the present of perception, the present of anticipation, and the present of recollection are experienced together in an organically inseparable unity" (25). The before-

and-after paradigm is an ingredient of time, but it fails to account for the whole story because it precludes “the possibility of comprehending . . . the meaning of a real event” (Sherover 115).

Howe writes to Clarissa asking for “the *particulars at large of your sad story*,” as this will not only help ameliorate Clarissa’s misfortune,²⁵ but also honor and uphold “the *love of mind*.” The letter is signed, “Your afflicted and faithful, A. H.” (L 310). The reader, still tossing about in June for clues to a misreading, turns the page and finds Clarissa’s response dated Thursday, July 6—an ostensibly sequential, nearly arithmetical, response to a letter steeped in disorder, of tales untold, and of letters, at the behest of love and sad affliction, yet to be written. However, Clarissa’s letter dated July 6th may, in fact, have already been read, given the editorial cue earlier in the novel following Lovelace’s guilty letter to Belford dated June 13th (L 257). As the editorial note reads, “The whole of this black transaction is given by the injured lady to Miss Howe, in her subsequent letters, dated Thursday July 6. To which the reader is referred.” Thus, the letter from Clarissa to Howe dated July 6th has been ‘read at twice’ by the reader of the novel but without the certainty of knowing when. The presumed organizing force of before and after is thus shown to be incapable of supporting memory or stabilizing temporality. The “the whole of this black transaction” refers to the rape, suggesting before and after are especially pointless when the organizing event is traumatic. Before and after cannot provide the meaning of a real event, not even a real bad one.

In this way, Clarissa’s letter moves beyond the editorial superscription and opens onto questions of authorship, identity, and ideology. First, Howe’s signature—“(the name not being written at length)” (L 311)—gives Clarissa pause. She questions whether the letter was authored by Anna Howe or rather by her sister, Arabella Harlowe (A. H.). Clarissa then denies ever lying loose on a compromised couch, suggesting that Howe’s second letter was delivered to a woman who, by the unhappy accident of her circumstance, was unwittingly contesting the ideology of the domestic woman that the

novel was working to establish.²⁶ Each of these instances of disequilibrium is superseded by Howe's first letter, 'wrote at twice,' because that letter was purloined and later forged by Lovelace, making it 'wrote at' three times. Ultimately, the running sequence of dates—Wednesday July 5th, Thursday July 6th—speaks to the inscrutability of time itself, or “the various ways in which time,” as David Wood writes, “continually breaks through our attempts to constitute it, to clarify its meaning” (33). Finally and significantly, Howe's request for Clarissa's story in this letter is the reiteration of an earlier request, when in January Howe wrote to Clarissa, saying, “Write to me, therefore, my dear, the whole of your story. . .” (L 1). The dates of the letters can neither situate temporally nor withstand experientially the onslaught of events—real or imagined, particular or whole—contained within them. Dates can only point to other times, other dates. They provide a pattern that gives the illusion of change, not the change itself.

Reading Clarissa

Clarissa is a novel that raises several issues relevant to gender, power, and authority; Clarissa is a character written by them. The eighteenth-century novel, like all forms of cultural activity, had its precedent.²⁷ The conduct manual of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had become increasingly centered on domesticity and the role of women. How a woman spent her time, particularly her leisure time, was of critical interest in defining what made a woman desirable. Conduct manuals were considered appropriate reading for women because the books promoted domestic, sexual, and intellectual compliance. Nancy Armstrong's seminal study on power and gender, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, helps to clarify the role of conduct manuals in the objectification of women, and she identifies time management as central to political techniques of social control. But Armstrong also assumes that time exists anterior to the production of these ideologies and adjacent to the oppressive environments they produce. Time may rather be an effect. For Armstrong argues that the eighteenth-century novel was one means of contesting the conduct book because written narratives “constituted the female subject as

she became an object of knowledge in and through her own writing” (98). But Clarissa as a figure of power and authority is largely unsustainable by the text Richardson gives us, and her ability to become an object of self-knowledge is tenuous at best. The reasons for Clarissa’s objectification turn upon her struggle with the production of time as much as upon her struggle with the sexual politics of a patriarchal discourse that inhibit her movement and silence her desires.

In the novel’s first correspondence—a letter written by Anna Howe to Clarissa—we learn that Clarissa’s desire of “sliding through life to the end of it unnoted” has been “pushed into blaze” by the actions of others (L 1). As the novel unfolds, Clarissa’s more immediate desires concerning the direction of her life are treated with contempt and indifference, first by her tyrannical father, then by Lovelace. James Harlowe wants his daughter to marry a man she detests in order that he reap the benefits of class privilege and restore his recently diminished bank balance. Lovelace, inspired by deception and armed with leisure, for “time had hung heavy upon my hands” (L 323), snares Clarissa in his narcissistic web of desire and control, and while holding her hostage at St. Albans, claims that she will like it: “When a little more used to her new situation: when her hurries are at an end: when she sees how religiously I shall observe all her injunctions, she will undoubtedly have the gratitude to distinguish between the confinement she has escaped from, and the liberty she has reason to rejoice in” (L 97). Clarissa will learn to appreciate her bondage once at leisure to do so, and will later rejoice to find that “all her grievous distresses shall end in a man-child” (L 422). Ironically, both Harlowe and Lovelace reflect the changing power relations that according to Armstrong were a direct result of writings about women. In “defining the female,” first in conduct manuals and then in novels, the chasm that resulted between kinship and political relations produced “a culture divided into the respective domains of domestic woman and economic man” (60).

Disowned by her father, drugged and deadened by Lovelace, Clarissa's trust is violated at every turn by economic man, but Clarissa believes nevertheless that everything is her fault. "My blame was indeed turned inward," she writes, naming the clandestine correspondence with Lovelace—whom she was trying to protect—as the defining moment of her downfall (L 98). But Clarissa also understands vulnerability. In writing letters to Lady Betty, Clarissa anticipates a response but Lady Betty gives the letters to Lovelace instead, who recounts, in a letter to Belford, how he read Clarissa's letter aloud at Lady Betty's social, condescending Clarissa's "very pretty metaphor," and adding "that every line as she writes on, she improves upon herself" (L 323). Clarissa's intention in writing to Lady Betty was not that her letters become a social event, or copied into a second letter. But as Richardson demonstrates, Clarissa's intention bears little resemblance to the future it actually reaches. In the shuffle from private palms to public parlors, letters subordinate intentions to chance because intentions may be compromised by the materiality of the letter and the fate of its fitful journey. Reading a novel in the process of its being written, *Clarissa's* go-to audience becomes very much like Clarissa, stuck between the being and non-being of time that leave both "unable to articulate in the face of an inexpressible contradiction" (Albright 69). As Clarissa will later remark: "No, indeed—my name is—I don't know what my name is" (L 261).

That Clarissa's "pretty metaphor" falls into the wrong hands suggests that autonomy and agency of the self are illusions. These illusions are constructed in part by the novel genre, and Clarissa shows just delusive and damaging they might be. For her naivety in "valuing her honour above her life," as she writes in rebuttal to Lewen, suggests that what she covets and tries to protect is the root cause of her suffering and misfortune (L 428). Thus, writing as a means of integration, self-fulfillment, knowledge, and power leads instead to dissimulation and loss, but also to an overwhelming and unjustified sense of guilt, the kind of guilt that bleeds ink and dries into "I hate myself" (L 227.4). Clarissa's 'liberation,' her will, and her life are honored only in her death, as Lovelace is denied

access to her dead body for the purpose of embalming and storing her heart in a jar. His desire to continue counting the days in the fetishistic presence of his victim is denied, but Clarissa's death does not bring an end to her own life and time. Rather, the dialectical relationship between time and narrative may be realized only by the cessation of both, and this is what makes Clarissa seem like a tragic figure. The aporias of time that create inexpressible gaps between the lived time of one's existence and the public, or world time of history, lie at the root of Clarissa's dilemma. Time is what she must overcome as she begins to disintegrate, both in body and mind, bearing all the mythical scars of her politicized and painful existence. Would that six feet under satisfy, all would be well. But the death of Clarissa does not suffice, for she continues to have an audience beyond the grave, and the eleven posthumous letters delivered to her family are distinguishable from the earlier letters only by the absence of a date. The representation of time that dates offer, along with the illusions of change they provide, has collapsed, but the excesses of time, especially as they coalesce around the limits of mortality, continue.

Clarissa dies but the sociopathic malevolence that Lovelace, in a letter to Belford, defines as "possibly necessary" and perfectly natural to the masculine imperative, never does: "We begin with birds as boys, and as men go on to ladies; and both perhaps, in turns, experience our sportive cruelty" (L 170). Belford's initial encounter with Clarissa leaves a different impression by casting a different logic. Belford sees in Clarissa "something so awful, and yet so sweet" that he believes, "she was born to adorn the age she was given to, and would be an ornament to the first dignity She is, in my eye, all mind" (L 169). Clarissa is gendered feminine in both accounts—the object of specular fascination in the one, and slave to masochistic pleasure in the tormenting other, for the bird "newly caught," Lovelace explains, will eventually "reward its keeper" (L 170). But Belford's account of Clarissa is an implicit account of the sublime, that "awful" temptation of divine terror and beauty that fascinates the beholder, causing unrest in the eighteenth-century soul. The onlooker, paralyzed by fear and perfection and by the desire to possess, is not the reader of

Clarissa but the reader of *Clarissa*, who, in this instance, is Belford. The reader of *Clarissa* is reading Belford's reading of *Clarissa*, suggesting that *Clarissa* operates by a supplementary logic. She extends the story but her overwhelming presence replaces it at the same time, which undermines any representation of reality that the text may superficially suggest. As supplement, *Clarissa* spoils the illusion of *Clarissa*.

But in the eighteenth-century culture of sentiment, *Clarissa* is iconic. She enables identification in ways that address the moral ambiguities sentiment was thought to address. And in ways more subtle, *Clarissa* represents the temporal conundrum that is the eighteenth century as it struggled to transition from the mythical past of irrational belief to the less enchanted age of positivist thinking and disinterested reason. In Richardson's sentimental opus, time is gendered and generated in ways overtly political, but *Clarissa* moves beyond the textualization of time we find in travel journals, newspapers, and diaries. If by tapping realms of consciousness that exceed what the fragmented letter form permits, Richardson's manner of writing to the moment must disclose the anxiety ridden potential for extremes that brokers every instant. In doing just that, *Clarissa* must inevitably face the conditions of its own impossibility. For Janet Altman, that impossibility resides in the "unseizability" of the now—the impossibility of the present that "haunts epistolary language" (129). I agree that the 'now' in *Clarissa* is made problematic by the lack of simultaneity between narration and the event narrated, the unreliable shifting of sentiment, and the dislocation of the letter writer's present in the hands of the letter's reader. Nowhere is this last problematic more apparent than in *Clarissa*'s posthumous letter to Belford: "Sir, let me beg of you for *my sake* who *am*, or, as *now* you will best read it, *have been* . . ." (L 486.1).²⁸ The italics are original, suggesting Richardson's emphasis on time and tense as mediating functions of meaning. But Altman sees the "precariousness of now" as synonymous with the present (129). *Clarissa*'s 'now' is impossible for the reasons she cites, but the very reasons are themselves what make the 'now' pluralistic, democratic, and ultimately divorced from any monolithic sense of the present, narrative or otherwise.

The multiplicity of these migrant and dispersed moments creates the unseizable now that Altman locates in epistolary fiction; but not because “vicissitudes are external to the writer,” or because the letter writer is “removed . . . from his addressee and from the events to which he refers” (127-128). Rather, the now is impossible because the letter writer is incapable of restoring totality to the present moment that his letter writing has interrupted, that all writing interrupts. For the letter writer, ‘now’ may fully exist without a present to house it. And though it may be tempting to conclude that the novel’s reader alone is capable of restoring the “now” to its rightful present, the fragmentation of *Clarissa*’s ‘now’ between internal readers and writers, and across narrations and narrated events, does not necessarily imply impossibility, discontinuity or temporal chaos. It may instead place “an emphasis on stasis or regression as a negation or denial of time,” as Elizabeth Harries finds occurring in the eighteenth-century fragment (100). She notes also that fragments call attention to themselves because they cause us to remember “the process of making and the maker” (7).

In *Clarissa*, the self-conscious process of making and the maker whose making (writing) has interrupted the moment in order to fill it constitute the text. When confronted with an epistolary novel, the reader is confronted with absence and fragmentation on a grand scale. The medieval definition of the letter—*sermo absentis ad absentem*—points in that direction, but it an absence that includes even *Clarissa*’s author. Richardson, according to Terry Eagleton, is an ideologue participating in a discursive formation of the public sphere while remaining “shadowily inaccessible, a self-effacing entrepreneur” (9). The Richardsonian text, he continues, “can never be definitive: it lives only as a function of audience feedback or authorial second thoughts, fruits of a wider social discourse” (12). In the context of time, the amplitude of the immanent yet impossible now doesn’t end on the last page of the novel.

Composition / Decomposition

The dispersed and pathological now of the letter creates a present so patently disturbed that arguably there may be no legitimate means of marshalling it under the rubric of time. The epistle is a fragment of experience that in turn fragments experience. The questions of agency and intentionality that often accompany the study of fragments are premised on the idea that fragments are parallels of human perception and inseparable from human experience. Thomas McFarland finds an overwhelming presence of the fragment in a variety of cultural activity during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, extending from the writings of Hegel, Schlegel, and Schiller to the literary imaginations of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Rimbaud. Of interest here is McFarland's delineation of the diasparact—his term for the fragment—as symbolizing a pervasive, hegemonic longing for realities not present. In a diasparactive structure, “the object itself, which is present to the mind, implies a larger whole, which is not” (3). In the posthumous letters of Clarissa, the “larger whole, which is not,” is literally not.

But McFarland's phenomenological method may be applied to Clarissa's knowledge of her own death. For McFarland, when the mind, confronted by an absence, turns back to become aware of its own sense of unboundedness, the logic of incompleteness becomes “the logic of infinity” (28). Confronted by the imminent approach of her own end, or the impending absence of her own self, Clarissa's mind is not only alert to its own unboundedness but manifests visually the logic of infinity on Clarissa's coffin, which doubles as a writing desk upon which she engraves symbols of infinity. In playing the dutiful daughter to the pitiful end, Clarissa's thoughts on death gravitate toward eternity and forgiveness, but her earthly and uncanny practice of those meditations involves mythical symbols—the winged hour glass and the ouroboros, the mythical serpent, crowned with tail in mouth and shaped into silent ring. The effect of these images modifies the felt passage of time. They are sketches that suggest rupture, confirmed by the tablet of a coffin; they suggest the sundering of substance, a life cut short, confirmed by a dead body. But

they also suggest nostalgia for a future that hasn't yet happened. They remain symbols of time that create meanings about time in a harrowing atmosphere of fragmentation and absence, with nothing in the way of permanence or eternal renewal to alter its course. Writing to the moment, in the symbolic presence of death, assumes a heightened sense of urgency but composition, including that of the novel, is hinged on a desperate sense of fatalism that death cannot resolve, despair cannot explain, and forgiveness cannot fix. Composition turns inevitably for Clarissa into decomposition, for the presence that Clarissa charts in her letters at the age of eighteenth becomes a haunting absence at nineteen.

The papers Clarissa writes following the assault are found “torn to pieces, scratched through, and thrown under the table” (L 261). Coherence comes and goes in similar pieces, for Clarissa has no choice but to learn that “writing compensates for nothing,” as Barthes says, “sublimates nothing, that it is precisely *there where you are not*—this is the beginning of writing” (*Discourse* 100). “My dearest Miss Howe,” begins the letter where Clarissa is not:

I sat down to say a great deal . . . I did not know what to say first—and thought, and grief, and confusion, and . . . I cannot tell what—And thought, and grief, and confusion, came crowding so thick upon me; *one* would be first, *another* would be first, *all* would be first; so I can write nothing at all—only that, whatever they have done to me, I cannot tell; but I am no longer what I was in any one thing.—In any one thing did I say? (L 261)

That all would be first, suggests that all would be nothing. Clarissa has lost the ability to experience time either subjectively, as a synthetic whole (*gestalt*), or objectively as a discrete series of moments. With the loss of time, she loses the ability to tell, to write, and to know. Her future is horizonless and her past a “cruel remembrance” to be forgotten. With nothing left to gather and nothing left to give, Clarissa is no longer anybody she recognizes. And whatever discursive unity may have been constituted by her memory has also died.

As she continues to write herself out of time, the typography dismantles—words are flipped on their side, broken sentences pile up with broken words, a dissociative break

blisters: “Then down I laid my head, / down on cold earth, and for a while was dead.” These torn letters are fragments that mirror the embodied breakage of Clarissa. But Richardson’s innovation lies in his ability to extend the confining limits of linearity. Clarissa dies, but her life doesn’t end. When Clarissa learns of her impending death, she writes to inform Anna Howe: “I could not send this letter away with so melancholy an ending as *you* would have thought it. So I deferred closing it, till I saw how I should be on my return . . . and now I must say, I am quite another thing” (L 436). Another thing all along, Clarissa was forced to reconstitute time, which in turned forced a reconsideration of time as *sui generis*. Both heroine and novel created a world that could be read only on their terms, lest meaning, exactly at forty minutes after 6 o’clock on a Thursday evening in September, cease to expire. To read the novel in any other way would leave in place what has already been—a world of fathers, firsts, and bests.

CHAPTER FOUR
 “THEREFORE I AM STILL”: THE ONGOING POETICS OF
 “TINTERN ABBEY”

The highest compliment of consensus paid to romanticism turns generally upon agreement that romantic poetry is the literary province and first history of interiority. The romantic poetry of self emerging late in the eighteenth century offered an inward turn toward the possibilities of the poet’s own consciousness, the subject of discourse and the lamp by which the external world was discerned, desired, and understood. The task of reading thus ultimately narrated the poet and the poet’s relation to his own mind. The sociability cultivated by moral philosophies earlier in the century was not dismissed by the romantics but rendered subordinate to the capacity of the individual mind and the mind’s “Power” to create. Wordsworth in particular, by looking “steadily at [his] subject,” resisted the cool surface of meanings inherited from the enlightenment. The idea that social and private lives were guided by an improving sense toward reason and polite society did not satisfy the dark and rough desires of the lonely soul. As opposed to progress of observable origin, the romantic sensibility fostered instead, Marjorie Levinson explains, “a turn toward a more theoretical, disinterested, and spiritually focused philanthropic mode” (2). And in this mode, the poet’s philanthropy (generosity of spirit and communication) unsettles what is seen by the very presence of the poet’s consciousness and manner of looking. Insofar as consciousness is looking for poetry, Coleridge writes, “Images, however beautiful . . . become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion.”

The predominant romantic passion changed not only the way emotion was encoded but determined which phenomena were worthy of emotional investment. The lyric proved the most fitting form to carry the long song of self since the suggestive and suggested “I” of consciousness dominates the moment of poetic utterance in the lyrical mode. Moreover, the time of lyric promotes a time distinct from the time of culture and

the time of narrative. The lyrical moment is abstracted from the time of cause and effect; it is emptied of character and conflict; it is void of action. As Monique Morgan summarizes the difference between lyric and narrative time: “Lyric creates a timeless present, an indefinitely suspended moment, which contrasts with narrative past progression of events” (301). Or, as Jonathan Culler explains in *The Pursuit of Signs*, lyric is composed of “the set of all moments at which writing can say ‘now’” (149).

The lyrical form also helps to position this chapter in relation to the narrative techniques, temporalities, and forms addressed in other chapters. The difference between narrative and lyric time requires qualification not only because lyric time is much older than narrative or novel time, but because the temporality this study extracts from Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” is to be unique to Wordsworth’s historical moment and not simply germane to the time of lyric itself. Without characters to navigate terrains of time, without conflicts to establish and realize a timeline of causality, Wordsworth’s lyric will not speak of time in conventional or even observable ways. What time “Tintern Abbey” tells will be told in spite of itself.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between the ‘now’ of lyric time and the ‘I’ that speaks from within it. I will show how the mind is constituted in relation to time, imaged as oddly synchronic in “Tintern Abbey,” and how time, in its peculiar relation to death and dying, intersects with and opens onto a consciousness that is not quite conscious. In referring to an extra-subjective temporality displaced from historical contingency and therefore rendered dubious in its relation to memory, I mean to suggest that time itself in “Tintern Abbey” is not quite there; and that what vestiges of time remain take the mortal “I” of the poem to its vanishing place, leaving in its wake only a “fugitive” and immortal trace of the subject’s having been.

In order to do this, I contextualize figures of death in Wordsworth’s work and life, and examine the philosophical contemporary of Wordsworth who influenced the trade in the time and culture and whose *The Critique of Pure Reason* plays a role in the imaginative

constructions of immortality, permanence, and change that Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and "Intimations Ode" illuminate. With Kant's model of time, permanence becomes one mode of time—the result of persistence, simultaneity, and sequence—that translates into the notional theme of immortality. I bring together the grammatical and semantic shapes that double in "Tintern Abbey" as subversions of time to examine the contradictions of permanence that emerge, and I employ a materialist perspective to account for the vanishing "I" of that subjective engagement and its eventual extinguishment. The time underwriting the lyrical "I" and eager to be free from time as we know it, ironically discovers and discloses a loss of time—a time not present—that allows for an apocalyptic rendering of the poet's figure and for insight into the nature of its impermanence.

In the Tradition *de Mortuis*

In 1803, William Wordsworth's enduring fascination and poetic engagement with death and dying were made explicit in "Memorials," a collection of ballads, sonnets and inscriptions composed at the grave sites of Burns, 'Ossian,' and Rob Roy. Wordsworth's propensity to compose in order to aggrandize what remains of body and soul once "rolled round in earth's diurnal course"²⁹ is especially pronounced in this instance, but his focus on dead poets suggests an added interest in the fragility of human achievement. Composing lines above decomposing bodies, Wordsworth not only laments what has been lost but seeks to restore what has been severed by time. In his attempt to mitigate the distance that death imposes upon rhythms of continuity both corporeal and linguistic, Wordsworth's graveyard verse gravitates toward epitaphic inscription and follows, accordingly, conventional modes established by eighteenth-century "sensibility" poets such as Gray, Cowper, and Smith. Though Wordsworth synthesizes mood and place to create a loco-descriptive melancholy and mind that might be "searching for renewal . . . in the face of loneliness and distress," as Mary Jacobus speculates (*Tradition* 107), the 1803 poems

explore metaphysical givens that the sensibility poet sought to capture and make adequate to an aesthetic.

But the poetry of sensibility imposed limits that failed to satisfy the younger Wordsworth who demanded “only . . . that which is conversant [with], or turns upon infinity . . . where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish, and aspirations are raised” (672). As “Memorials” perpetuates mourning on the 1803 plains of grief, professed longings for the infinite do not bring dead bodies back just as they may not substitute for lived realities of time and experience in which every action or experience is bound to time and known to be finite.

Wordsworth may have sought consolation in the liberal expanse of infinity because limits, including temporal limits, vanish in what is endless. In his verse, mountaintops might be dripped in gold by the infinite sun, but the finite nature of life stands ready to correct the poet, for “Alas! The idle tale of man is found / Depicted in the dial’s moral round.”³⁰ Mortality, though recognized in “An Evening Walk,” is yet unequal to the poet’s struggle against the insistence on limits found there. For once the dial has run and the setting sun has set, “all light is mute amid the gloom, / The interlunar cavern of the tomb” (267-68). Mortality in “An Evening Walk” is ultimately “the sport of some malignant Pow’r, / He knows but from its shade the present hour” (41-42). The conventional limits derived from Aristotle’s logic of beginnings, middles, and ends vanish if and when the poet encounters mortal time knowing things are lost in each other already, that boundaries have already blurred, that infinity originates only through a synthesis of the mind. “An Evening Walk” does not know this poet. Nor do the graveyard poems collected in “Memorials” move beyond the poet’s recognition of limits. But death in Wordsworth’s verse is not an exceptional theme, for a significant number of poems in Wordsworth’s oeuvre expresses, albeit more subtly and without elegy, thoughts on the nature of dying.

For Geoffrey Hartman, Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper" may be "quietly linked to a *memento mori*" while "The Boy of Winander" may be read as "a beautifully extended epitaph" (*Wordsworth's Poetry* 17, 20). We might add "The Thorn" and "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew Tree" to the list of poems that recall the dead in order to consecrate the living. For Dewey Hall, Wordsworth's *The Prelude* vaults past the status of *memento mori* and epitaph altogether to become "an open grave" of writing visited by the poet who himself "occupies the gap beyond life at the threshold of death" (657). Wordsworth's preoccupation with death extended beyond the grave and its relentless stasis, however, to include words and concepts unrelated to it. His attempt to define the imagination—the heart of Romantic ideology and home to its apocalyptic fervor—in *The Prelude*, for example, "stands closer to death than life," according to Hartman, "[for] the poet is isolated and immobilized by it; it obscures rather than reveals" (*Wordsworth's Poetry* 17).

For romantics writing in the nineteenth century, imagination was key to unlocking man from the mind-forged manacles that had kept him tethered to a desperate world and that had denied his participation with the divine. For Harold Bloom, "Tintern Abbey" represents the power of the poet's imagination to transcend a world of ordinary objects by imagining a world of "human glory" that is local and discrete, situated within "the possibilities inherent in our condition, here and now" (128). Bloom calls the poem itself a "history in little" of Wordsworth's imagination (131). "Tintern Abbey" also places ideas into a metonymic relation with things of the world, as Marjorie Levinson argues, for the poet's "mental 'forms' (half-created) include historical *shapes* or received meanings" (24). But the object world also escapes Wordsworth's notice, Levinson continues, as "the narrator achieves his penetrating vision through the exercise of a selective blindness" (24). Jerome McGann finds an historical blindness at play and so cautions against totalizing the romantic imagination as unique to romantic poetry. In tracing the imagination's deeply rooted origins to nineteenth-century philosophy and theology, McGann sees the romantic imagination as but one of many fictions that "Romantic poetry 'argues' . . . and in the

process ‘suffers’ the contradictions of its own illusions . . .” (13). The here and now of ordinary time and place may have been transcended by the poet’s imagination (Bloom), or have been seen but selectively by the poet (Levinson). But the contradictions noted by McGann include if not raise the intractable problem regarding the here and now in relation to the poet’s art. The time of experience is never simultaneous with the time of writing, so how to translate the here and now without turning them into a there and then?

Following publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth’s own doubt about the capacity of the imagination to transcend the here (presence) and now (present) may have reasonably been due to the positivist debris left by the war, including political disillusionment and humanitarian disrepair. The ambiguities of politics and war left Wordsworth’s “hand-maid of desolation” listless and awake to the opacities of the real because the war may have ended but civil unrest had not (671). The shift in Wordsworth’s appraisal of the imagination—down from raising Bloom’s hope of “human glory” to the hapless pitch of maddening reprise in Hartman’s immobilized obscurity—suggests a reality beyond the imaginative scope and possibility of transcendence.

For Paul De Man, the key to understanding Wordsworth lies in the imagination’s relation to time. Time and imagination create temporalities that De Man considers essential but also resemble times gathering around architectural ruins, both artificial and natural. For as meditations on that past, the ruin presents “the form in which the wish images of the past century appear, as rubble, in the present” (Buck-Morss 42). Though natural ruins reflect decay and time’s passage in general, the construction of an artificial ruin requires that the artist posit what De Man finds in the Wordsworthian imagination, i.e. the “future possibility of a retrospective reflection on its own decay.” Ruins obviously cannot reflect; the artist must imagine a building in the future that speaks to the past and to the passage of time that has produced its ruinous appearance. What is helpful about reading “Tintern Abbey” and the ‘history in little’ of its imagination in light of the artificial ruin is that the ruin, a “blasphemy against time” (Harries 84), necessitates not only the

preservation of a past but the creation of a past that never actually existed. At the same time, the artificial ruin points forward and promotes progression, as the ruin is “a token of the struggle to remember and to move away from the past” (Harries 85). Wordsworth will simultaneously engage and disavow the past in “Tintern Abbey,” creating the kind of reading that Harries assigns to ruins in general: “All ruins require a characteristic double vision—a vision of the building when it was whole or perfect, a simultaneous vision of the building as ruinous or imperfect” (84). The speaker in “Tintern Abbey” becomes the past of the artificial ruin, in which “past, future, and even present become equally illusory” (Harries 84), creating the poet’s figure that Carol Jacobs finds “both possible and unthinkable at once” (114). The poem is a monument built to a past that the poet cannot really remember.

The influence of ruins at the time of *Lyrical Ballads* was strong, suggesting Wordsworth’s attitude about the imagination may have coincided with a battered future already in view, given the irreversible changes happening all around him; yet Jacobs locates the retrospective reflection of decay defined by De Man in the 1850 revision of *The Prelude*. The imagination in 1850 is expressed as “sense-extinguishing” (235), but in the earlier 1805 version, the imagination is preserved by the world of sense, as “The scene before him lies in perfect view / Exposed, and lifeless as a written book” (1805 Viii, 711-27). The imagination when it was whole is now ruinous and imperfect. The drop in Wordsworth’s estimation of the imagination may have been caused by the war, by personal loss, especially the untimely death of his brother, or by the realized impossibility of Godwinian ideals. But as E. P. Thompson notes, Wordsworth wrote few letters at the close of the eighteenth century, and so the historian finds “little evidence” to aid in the reconstruction of Wordsworth’s “inner conflicts” (*The Romantics* 58).

With or without evidence, Wordsworth’s keeping company with death was not inconceivably existential in the sense of his being *le dernier homme*, surviving the lives and early loss of friends, parents, siblings, and even children. Left standing “the last human

tenant of these ruined walls,”³¹ Wordsworth was well acquainted with that good and awful night. His humanitarianism concerning the down-and-out may have been sincere—“A power to virtue friendly”³²—but insofar as poverty may lead to an early or unmarked grave, Wordsworth more likely projected his sympathies and guilt onto a group of people whose pain he knew nothing about. That he wrote frequently about death and peopled his poetry with survivors, in other words, suggests a psychological—as opposed to commercial—imperative. He tried to tease the unknowable out of hiding and into a condition of cultural production—death beckons the temporal rupture that serves as incitement to poetry and transcendence—to make peace with death in his personal life. But in the literary legacy he produced as a result, Wordsworth managed only to survive himself, which he might have accomplished with far less zeal since every print outlasts every author, as Byron observed: “’Tis strange, . . . paper, even a rag like this, / Survives himself, his tomb and all that’s his!” (*DJ* III 87).

That print should leave survivors and that death numbers (survives) among them through a legacy of poems suggests that immortality follows from print and that print follows from death. Writing, in other words, depends upon the already written. With particular irony, and writing in defense of the late Robert Burns whose character had come under public scrutiny, Wordsworth remarked in his letter to James Gray that “Silence is a privilege of the grave, a right of the departed” (*Major Works* 667). While this socially sanctioned “rule” (667) may serve deliberative purposes in the letter and persuade the reader of its argument, death disarticulates the rational economies of argument and law. Death affords no simile; nothing is to deter its course or dissuade it from speaking. Death in Wordsworth by contrast speaks early and often, but more to the point, as Hartman has noted, there lived a Wordsworth who “[was] continually writing his own epitaph” (*Unmediated Vision* 6). Death prevailed as the anterior source of Wordsworth’s argument and the law of his being.

Wordsworth's compulsive fixation on death and dying may have emerged from personal experience, but his persistent return to death as poetic material suggests a source of influence and inspiration beyond the many ruined walls of his lived experience. As a contemporary of Kant, whose critical philosophy posited time as an *a priori*, non-discursive condition of experience, Wordsworth may have confronted in himself the limitations inherent to Kant's conception of time as "something abiding and permanent, of which all change and coexistence are only so many ways (modes of time) in which the permanent exists" (182). If permanence "expresses time in general," as Kant goes on to say, how to explain "this brief Drama in the flesh" that Emily Dickinson observed "shifted—like a Sand—" (P 664)? The muse of immortality runs headlong toward eternity, so perhaps Wordsworth's fascination with death—varied and elusive though the causes may be—relocated the ideality of Kantian permanence to the other side of life, where the subtext of death that burrows deep in Wordsworth's mind and work stands contiguous with life everlasting. The idea of immortality, in other words, fostered the poet's imagination and forged his creative excursus into death because immortality promises the possibility of permanence. In keeping the immortal pyre lit, words with immortal meanings—forever, fixed, permanent, perfect, and free—gathered into a deathless reality, a death without the act of dying. In that immortal place, transcendence plagues and decenters the metaphysical arc of time found in traditional verse. In the articulation and incarnation of time itself, transcendence replaces mortal time with a time no longer subject to change or relevant to motion. This is the time of "Tintern Abbey."

Yet the logical cause of immortality includes the unknowable realities of death; without death, there can be no forever, free, perfect and permanent. Where does immortality fit within a paradigm of permanence given that, in Kant's transcendental aesthetic, time (and space) assumes an empirical reality? As suggested, time for Kant is anterior to human subjectivity and foundational to its existence if not constitutive of its existence. But knowledge in Kantian theory corresponds to the positing of three modes of

time—persistence, sequence, and simultaneity—that guarantee the structuring of perception and so make ‘knowing’ possible. The subject of perception alone, that is, is necessary to organize the three modes of time that establish the external permanence of time, meaning time cannot exist in the world of things because things cannot perceive. As such, Kant’s theory of time is flawed, for he claims that time exists prior to experience but that time does not exist in the world itself. Where then does time go prior to perception? How to reconcile an empirical reality of time with the transcendental unreality of time that constitutes not only the subject’s perception of time and things, but his or her very existence in and among them? (For Kant, there can never be a subject of perception that is not in time.)

Kant concedes further that time is measured by change. Since changes occur, time must be real. To resolve this paradox of the existence and non-existence of time and the role of change as proof of time’s reality, Kant turns to the world of appearances: Since things in the world cannot perceive, time is not in the world because things cannot be in time, but all things, *as appearances*, can be in the world and so time is in the world. The transcendental unreality of time (and hence the autonomy of the subject) is preserved by the world of appearances, a theoretical construct itself incapable of solving anything.³³ But without his theoretical resolve and reliance on appearances, Kant’s epistemology suggests a different kind of subject. In a world without appearances, the subject he imagines partakes of a non-sensual type of perception that Kant claims would yield a knowledge to which neither time nor change occurs anymore. He imagines what Wordsworth delivers—a perception structured by immortality, a structure that makes “centuries . . . shorter than the Day,” as Dickinson observed a few years later. The Kantian perception of numberless time and motionless change is analogous to “Tintern Abbey” and the death—emptied of change and time—it seeks to ‘know.’

In Wordsworth, immortality may be seen to rescue time from the conundrum of being perceived as *either* temporal *or* eternal. Immortality allows for both. Kant’s reliance

on appearances accomplishes the same end, and together they make possible the impossibility of grasping altogether at once the now and the eternal. Wordsworth approached the objective sensual world with what appeared like an act of faith; but meditations on time rise invariably to the center of his agony. In the 1807 Immortality Ode, the poet's search for a time both temporal (now) and eternal (forever) is reflected in the boundaries between life (mortality) and eternal life (immortality) that blur and change shape, the poet upsetting even their sequence, for "The soul that rises . . . / Hath had elsewhere its setting" (57-60). In the Ode, death marks the beginning of desire for Wordsworth: built from ash, immortality is a fire that birth snuffs out.

Time and nature share the same objective presence in the Ode. The past may be recovered through nature as nature becomes iconic, a language that remembers and by remembering creates and preserves. The Ode means to create an organic connection between experience and the representation of experience, but the poem is filled too soon with conjecture, and memory is flooded finally with history and distance. In time's passing away, the speaker feels only the fury of passing indifference. Although the poet of the Ode knows that "nothing can bring back the hour / . . . of glory in the flower" (180-181), the poem seems confident that there was an hour, beginning with the acknowledgement that "There was a time" (1), as though to secure the real possibility of the speaker's past-ness. The history of those temporal realities yet seem subordinate to the Ode's preference for the poet's immortal intimations which are simultaneous with "truths that wake / To perish never" (158). The lexicon of immortality is seen to function as permanence, while the impermanence of mortality stands as the "meanest flower that blows" (205). The knowledge of inevitability moves the poet across an axis of time—from the temporal past of causes, analogues and symbols to a causeless eternity of death and rebirth. The time of immortality in the Ode, in other words, is simultaneous with a primordial temporality, a time anterior to and continuing beyond life, a "primal sympathy / Which having been

must ever be" (184-85). But the temporal realities of life and death in the Ode are not finally escaped.

In 1798, Wordsworth's attempt to recuperate through language and memory evidence of his own history is met by a sequence of impressions that both constitute the moment of his utterance and yet question the possibility of that moment. The poet of 1798 is not concerned with "the faith that looks through death" and that guides the hopeful Ode (188). In place of the Ode's primal sympathy and enabling faith, the poet's presence in "Tintern Abbey" is an uncertain presence, an anxious embodiment subsisting between the infinity of spirit and the finality of creation. In the Ode, choosing one time (immortal) over the other (mortal time) naturalizes the poet and keeps time mystified. By contrast, "Tintern Abbey" questions the possibility of embodied experience—in relation to things in the world—by positing an alternative time of experience altogether. The poet of "Tintern Abbey" dwells in the simultaneity of time and language by existing in the now of lyrical moment *and* in the historical past that lyric time is assumed to sunder. The poet of "Tintern Abbey" is oddly anachronistic, a claim I will examine by means of readings that push the limits of the poem's grammaticalities, diction, and syntax. The poet's capacity to exist in the two incompatible times of anachronism mirrors the poem itself, as "Tintern Abbey" inhabits a generic simultaneity—both prose and poetic—that shadows the narrative and poetic impulse of the poem's interior patterns to which I will now turn.

The Now That Is No More

In "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798," the poet's first utterance and initializing thought beyond the poem's title congeals an awareness of time's passage and his place within it: "Five years have passed; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters! And again I hear/ These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs." Intuitively, he registers seasonal recurrence, repetition and cyclical return, and locally situates himself within these biological rhythms of nature. He does so 'intuitively' because intuition, as Descartes

explained in *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, lays the groundwork for memory and reason even though the reception of “truth,” made present to the mind in a single moment through intuition, happens independently of them. The poet thus intuits the full spectrum of experience that the poem will figure synchronically, but to make non-intuitive (or diachronic) sense Wordsworth must resort to symbolic language—the only available logos and verbal means to representation—to capture memory, reason, and sense.

Yet his desire to translate experience (as truth) into written language (with immunity from the ligatures of time) is burdened by representation, as Jennifer Wagner has observed: “The emergence into language of the intuition, of the ‘full’ or ‘intense’ moment, the ideal instant, the exquisite pause that lay at the center of nineteenth-century aestheticism, is characterized by an effort to make representation *presentation*—as if there were no temporal interval between vision and form” (16). Wordsworth employs the present tense to perform this immediacy, to give an impression of the moment as somehow essential—Wagner would say ‘monumental’—existing beyond the reach of earthly time and circumstance. Yet, writing takes time. Mediated by temporal increments informing mind to pen and pen to paper, writing also requires a certain amount of abstraction—a detour from the “ideal instant”—to make meaning(s), even when such attempts at meaning are illusory and inadequate.

Thus Wordsworth begins “Tintern Abbey.” That the poet has been to this particular place before is decided with the use of “again,” while the object of his aural attention—“And again I hear / These waters, rolling”—discloses a genial environment, the world of nature in a state of calm. As the passage appears on the page to inaugurate the poem:

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! And again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a sweet inland murmur. –Once again

What is significant beyond the conventional establishment of time, place, and mood—each in compliance with the rules of sensibility—concerns the poet’s actual return to the place, a return qualified by the conjunctive “And.”

The word itself, typographically distinguished by an upper-case ‘A’ and placed at the beginning of the sentence—the capital letter ‘A’ visually capitalizing upon what is *alphabetic*—does not work to suggest a new beginning, introduce a subject, or develop the subject’s action through a verb. As conjunction, the ‘And’ serves rather to fuse the anticipation of a future with acknowledgment of a past; but the word accomplishes this mediation by falling in the middle of the line and not by its linguistic function. As a part of speech, the ‘And’ fails to link the two time periods because “And” connects what the poet hears to the passage of time—five years—already relayed in the previous sentence, a sentence concluded with a mark of exacerbated finality (!). Thus, the ‘And’ in looking forward is met with resistance by the past, for the use and proximity of ‘again,’ following on the heels of the conjunction, creates an internal digression returning to the repetition of “five”—five years, five summers, and five yet again winters.

The poet’s return to the Wye, though reproduced in the structure of the language, is yet denied completion—met with resistance—by the return of the past produced by “And again.” The result is a sense of textual vulnerability, a semantic instability—“and” has no meaning in and of itself—that allows the poet to elide the essence of the (de)finite. The function of “And” in the grammatical unit as a whole inhibits movement forward in time by the modifier “again,” which occurs twice in the first four lines and echoes the passage of time in the first two. What is taking place “again” and “Once again” in the opening lines of “Tintern Abbey,” in other words, is not the poet’s return to the Wye, but words that keep returning, creating what Hartman has identified as “a peculiar type of redundancy [which] indicates resistance to abrupt progression” (*Wordsworth’s Poetry* 26). The poem’s “waters, rolling from their mountain-springs” bear apt resemblance to the linguistic

landscape used to describe the physical scene, for the words of that landscape fail to signify beyond the springs of their own regressive regeneration.

“Tintern Abbey” begins, therefore, bound to indeterminacy. Such undecidability underwrites resistance to saying anything once and for all and aligns itself with poetic indirection in general. Yet, the function, placement, and appearance of the conjunction go a step further to collectively suggest a *topos* of distrust, literally a distrust of place, but of the place where one finds endings and beginnings—in this instance, the beginning of the sentence, the beginning of the poem. In the place of temporal relationships that define and make concrete the orderability of time and experience, the poet seeks “something far more deeply interfused” (99). He seeks what the natural geography of the Simplon Pass in *The Prelude* will bring to view: “Characters of the great Apocalypse, / The types and symbols of Eternity, / Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.” The poet of “Tintern Abbey” settles for a humble beginning without beginning.

But in both poems, desire for the “And Again” of exile from clocks and calendars is proscribed by a desire for the “without end” of ritual that, existing outside of time, presupposes stasis, not change and transformation. If drawing from the Book of Revelations, which is premised upon the end of history, Wordsworth is entertaining in both poems a time that has stopped. Thus the poem claims a revisionary motive in the poet’s movement from ‘then’ to ‘now’ but the poem at Tintern simultaneously registers identity as crafted from the changeless change of ritual and recurrence.³⁴

Marjorie Levinson’s perspective on the reciprocity of nature and self in the poem helps to put the identity question in perspective. She notes how the grounds of the abbey are “hallowed by private commemorative acts,” and how Wordsworth returns to the place “in a spirit of worship” (23). She bases her critique upon Wordsworth’s political (Jacobin) disenfranchisement and his escape from a country “suddenly experienced as inimical to his interests, values, and essential wellbeing” (23), yet she questions whether personal change occurs in the poet’s relation to place: “Nature in ‘Tintern Abbey’ is not terribly Romantic;

it neither dramatizes principles of self-renewal nor enables material and self-transcendence” (23). If the poet’s revisionary motives are visible in the poem, they are not literary but visible, literally, visible as distinct from the written word and from the reader’s ability to actually read it. Five years have passed, but the poet’s sense of “I” is shaped primarily by an overachieving sensorium that manifests itself typographically (four types of punctuation occur in the passage), and that surpasses self-transcendence altogether by leading to an ironic reversal of total self-effacement. Visually, the passage substitutes repetition and stasis for the poet’s moment of convergence upon a site that is familiar to him, suggesting that memory and expectation may be less reliable than most lyric poems presuppose.

The passage further questions Hegel’s foundational claim that in romantic art “The inner life triumphs over the outer world . . . [and] sensuous appearance sinks into insignificance” (*The Philosophy of Art* 327). While punctuation hardly counts as “sensuous,” appearance counts for a great deal in the romantic art of Wordsworth. The poet asks that the moment of utterance, which opens the poem, be held in meditative balance, not as consolation for what has been lost during the five-year absence, but as revelation of the utterance itself and the moment that contains it. Yet, as though dissatisfied both with permanence (“!”) and impermanence (“And”), or with closure of the past and indeterminacy of the present, the poet’s pilgrimage to the Wye is not an attempt to bridge the distance of five years, or to even acknowledge their passage, but rather to embody and to occupy the “length” and the “long” of those five years. The poet seeks to inhabit duration in the ways seasons inhabit years—continuously.

The poet’s return to the valley suggests another kind of return and invites another kind of reading if the narrative poem seeks to confer meaning on a life verging toward erasure as Christopher Miller suggests, arguing that Wordsworth “ultimately imagines a scene from which he will one day be absent” (88). When the poet addresses his sister in the final stanza, he asks that she remember him “with what healing thoughts” (148) once he “should be, where I no more can hear” (151). Leading to this self-memorializing

moment in the poem, the poet looks first to the recent past, to the five unsettled years that have passed. Finding there only “hours of weariness” (29), he generates a past remote and roomy enough to house the promise and simplicity of an uncompromised childhood. With pastoral dew still fresh upon his lips, he feels compelled to remember his milk and honey past with fondness, calling it a place and time “that had no need of a remoter charm” (84), where everything by and by “was all in all” (77).

Although the nostalgic spirit of romantic poetry turned frequently on incorporating and revitalizing the past, the poet of “Tintern Abbey” increasingly comes to acknowledge that his “boyish days” (76) and dreams cannot compete with “the dreary intercourse of daily life” (135) that has since intervened, admitting that his adolescent worldview was naïve anyway. Consequently, he feels compelled to cut his losses and hurry on, to leave off those “coarser pleasures” (76) and desires because “that time is past, / And all its aching joys are now no more, / And all its dizzy raptures” (86-87). The poet’s present task of letting go and leaving off, however typical of the lyrical rupture it may be, introduces only a new kind of dizziness. In what follows, I will explore the dizzy rapture passage to show how the poet seeks a time different from that offered by modern secularization, how he makes that time possible through language, and what implications follow as a result.

The word “now” appears only twice in the poem. Here—“. . . aching joys are *now* no more”—it is used as an adverb and is inseparable from the poet’s recognition of loss and his perceived betrayal by a life that refuses to mean, a life “unintelligible” (42). Unlike the adjectival “now” that appears earlier in the poem and establishes temporal immediacy, but also change, promise, renewal—“And now / . . . The picture of the mind revives again” (61-64)—the adverbial “now” of “now no more” (87) slows the poem’s tempo by replacing temporal change and motion (“revives again”) with stasis and disappearance (“no more”). In the context of this ‘now,’ the temporal matrix that emerges in determining what “is past” (86) and what is “now no more” (87) presents a challenge, for the adverbial now of ‘now no more’ complicates the role of memory and meaning by the blending of tenses.

As a figure, the temporality of the adverbial “now” registers the present moment, and by modifying “no more” it differentiates the poet’s present moment from the past. By melding contradictory times through proximity of placement—“are now” (is) and “no more” (was)—the poet relates an immediate experience by incorporating a past that, combined into a single linguistic unit, creates a unified span of time. But what is no more is also now, making what is past—over and done with—present. Wordsworth does not deny the past that is, but turns what ‘was’ into what ‘is’ by poetic invention, specifically, by an adverbial negation of that past. In doing so, the temporality unique to language is shown to be the modifying force of action. The subject, in other words, is relegated to the margins, as memory, meaning, and desire fail to account for the subject outside of the language used to convey them. In the aftermath of his own deconstruction, the poet’s “now” that ought to suggest immediacy for Wordsworth suggests instead an historical subject deepened only by the recognition that past, present and future may exist only in words. This recognition, anticipated by the first now—“And now . . . / With many recognitions dim and faint, / And somewhat of a sad perplexity” (61-63)—also sets the stage for the slow-motion stasis and disappearance that the poet will proceed to effect and inhabit.

Supplementing the temporal manipulations made possible with ‘now,’ the form embodied by the lines may also be read in light of the temporal matrix. Here, first, are the lines again:

. . . That time is past,
 And all its aching joys are now no more,
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur: other gifts (86-89)

The “And” that occurs twice in this grammatical unit further fuses temporal distinctions among past, present, and future, creating a fulcrum of time that the poet may occupy even when “that time is past.” For the ‘was’ that is ‘now no more’ continues beyond the line break, sustained by the ongoing “And all its dizzy raptures,” which brings the three-line

sentence to an insufficient end. The same clause yet begins a new line and anticipates a new thought, reproducing in miniature the dizzy swirl of times and situating the poet continuously amidst the flux of its temporalities. For following from the poet's youth and "All its dizzy raptures," life brings "other gifts" bearing "Abundant recompense." Although the dull momentum of adulthood that has replaced his ecstatic but "thoughtless youth" (92) is rewarded by "elevated thoughts; a sense sublime" (98), the poet's compensation derives from his recognition of time and duration as forms of recuperation made possible by linguistic recurrence.

The poet's wisdom comes from salvaging a time that exists beyond the scope of secularization and beyond the tyranny of its fact. His refusal to substitute history for timelessness, or time for eternity, is a political statement and cultural resistance hidden beneath apolitical effects and affect. In the poet's words, he no longer lives "in the hour / Of thoughtless youth" (93) but with a consciousness "whose dwelling is the light of setting suns" (100). The eighteenth century was witness to the introduction of time measurement as a form of social and industrial control. Unlike the equivalence of time measured by clocks and watches, sun-dials produce no equivalence—i.e. no two hours are alike when measured by the sun. Thus, maturing beyond the fiction of hourly, mechanized time, the poet has achieved "something far more deeply interfused . . . / A motion and a spirit, that impels / all thinking things, all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all things" (103-105). If the romantic idiom of the transcendental imagination helps to explicate this passage, it does not fully explain the temporally derived aesthetic that the passage seeks to effect, but that the changing role of time in eighteenth-century life may help to contextualize.

Time on the Rise

By 1775 England was producing nearly 200,000 watches and clocks a year, accounting for approximately half of Europe's total output of timepieces. According to David Landes, England's manufacturing output of timepieces merely kept pace with "the

precocious, rapidly growing, and socially diversified demand” for timepieces that helped in part to define the age (227). By 1831, England’s production of timepieces had more than doubled to nearly half a million per year. Hans-Joachim Voth, assuming the “pessimistic” mean life span of six years for any given clock, estimates that the total number of clocks and watches available in England during the first half of the century increased nearly four hundred percent. In 1700, the number of available timepieces in England was approximately 200,000. By 1750, the number of clocks and watches in circulation increased to nearly one million, suggesting in turn a proportionate (400%) increase in timepiece ownership (assuming each individual owned only one watch.) Based upon court records, Voth also discovered that a basic watch sold for ten shillings in London in 1750, costing an average laborer four days of pay. In other words, “The price of timepieces . . . hardly acted as a constraint on watch-ownership” (Voth 52). The growing ubiquity of timepieces across the century culminates with a 97% ownership rate by 1831, but the prevalence of clocks and watches tells perhaps less about the ways in which people conceived of time than might a brief inquiry into how time was actually spent.

E. P. Thompson is often cited regarding the social history of pre-industrial England, but Thompson’s notable “Time, Work-discipline, and Industrial Capitalism” has been challenged by more recent empirical studies that find his argument largely insupportable. Thompson argued that early industrialization was accompanied by a newfound discipline in the form of synchronized timekeeping, which forced unwilling laborers into working longer hours at a faster pace than pre-industrial laborers who set their own hours and worked at their own, presumably slower, pace. Voth’s *Time and Work in England 1750-1830* provides alternatives to thinking about time as Wordsworth may have perceived it, and further offers the first empirical challenge I’ve encountered to E.P. Thompson’s seminal study.

Voth’s study supports Thompson’s argument of increased working hours per worker per year, but identifies a different set of causes. With evidence drawn from court

records, Voth concurs with Thompson that people did work longer—the labor input per worker increased nearly twenty-five percent beginning mid-century (1760). However, the increase in working time was not due to the deployment of synchronized labor and timekeeping discipline as Thompson argues. To the contrary, Voth cites the elimination of holidays as contributing to the increase in the total number of hours worked. Prior to 1760, the number of “holy days” and weekends combined to create a working year of 208 days, meaning each worker had 157 days off (unpaid) per year. With nearly five months of free time per year, laborers prior to 1760 did in fact work fewer hours than workers in the 1780’s and 1790’s, for the elimination of sixty holidays resulted in a 25% increase in work time.

Voth also challenges Laurence Stone and Neil McKendrick, two scholars who examine leisure time and consumer spending, respectively, in the eighteenth century. To summarize, the length of the working year—the number of days spent working—increased twenty-five percent not only because of fewer holidays, but, significantly, because of the availability and low prices of increasingly diversified commodities. Put simply, people entered a cycle of getting and spending, working longer hours by working more often—wages remained constant—to increase their purchasing power.

In contrast to Stone who argues that the exponential growth of consumerism in the second half of the eighteenth century coincided with an increase in leisure time and activities, studies like Voth’s suggest otherwise. “How can leisure,” asks Voth, “assume such importance in a society where long hours of toil prevailed and where incomes hardly grew?” (209). The lure of consumer goods was in fact responsible for a longer working year (210). Just as consumer goods increased so the ways to spend what leisure time was left. As Voth notes: “The number of hours spent in leisure probably did not rise, [but] there were, by the end of the eighteenth century, numerous new ways to spend it in a more varied and stimulating way” (203).

Thus, though consumption had become conspicuous, consumption itself did not translate into more available free time or happen because of it. What did happen concerns a weakening of both individual and social time. Longer hours of work, coupled with the high turnover of durable goods, offers but an early example of twentieth-century life and the technological innovations that have not only made private time a thing of the past, but have made long-term constructions of time difficult to imagine. In a world of short-term gains and long-term losses, the ability to historicize and to think ahead are forced into the margins by increasingly shortened temporal spans, not only of things, but of places (sites), people, and ideas. This is the reason for Wordsworth's lament. Time was losing its collectivity, the sense of shared experience. No longer a means of bringing people together, time was isolated and isolating, growing increasingly dormant with the silencing of bells.

What the poet of "Tintern Abbey" disparages, therefore, has less to do with the Romantic idiom of irrecoverable loss (of childhood "joys") than with the poet's unexpressed knowledge that modern, industrial configurations of time create temporal limits that not only close off possibilities of experience, but reduce memory (past), desire (future), and meaning (present) to linguistic playthings, or placeholders, depending on where you shop. Memory becomes a form of recuperation for the remembering subject but desire and meaning remain beholden to the combined powers of language and imagination. If language and imagination are clocked and assembled into discrete and reproducible units, the possibilities they offer are limited; they reify time into discrete, homogenized, and short-lived units that mirror commodities. Thus, the poet's dissatisfaction derives from contemporary conceptions of time as measured chronicity. What happened or has since happened is important but subordinate to the poet's occupation of time as uncorrupted duration, a state of being and of consciousness disclosed through his use of participial (insufficient) endings and ongoing, regenerating thoughts.

The dizzy rapture passage, though a single expression contained within an historical frame, does not lend itself to finality but points rather toward process and flux. The “now no more” (87) that qualifies the “aching joys” (87) of youth also modifies “that time” in the preceding line. But such finality has already been established by, and doubly because of, the line break. That time is past. / That line is past. The “And” that unites the intervening collapse of one line and the start of another—not once but twice—allows the poem to open onto unmediated duration precisely because it is happening “now,” a now embedded simultaneously in what is to come and what has already been, both in the poet’s life and in the poem. The “now no more” is a metonymic unearthing of that event, an ironic accretion of words over time that subtends an essence of time—like the mountain springs that keep “these waters, rolling”—indicative of connection, or the poet’s intuitive awareness of time in its endless flux of cosmic duration. Typical of lyric time, perhaps; but by ghosting man-made distinctions between past, present, and future, “Tintern Abbey” ponders the impossibility of stepping into the same time twice, for what ‘is past’ and what is ‘now no more’ may not be the same thing. A new time of alterity emerges, thrashing about in the lyrical moment, casting doubt on the present moment of utterance and on the possibility of saying anything at all. We could say that the history and the growth of the individual—two teleological touchstones of the Romantic quest for equilibrium amid political, social and economic unrest—are revealed to be isolating and useless in this poem because the individual and his rarified ego have been mutilated by the language and versification employed to glorify them.

Immortality in “Tintern Abbey” remains unspecified all the same, but the concept of life outliving the body seems inseparable from time outliving the clock, or duration outliving its measurement. The “hours of weariness” that summarize the poet’s five-year absence from the valley speak indirectly to the poet’s desire for exemption, not from metaphors of time or from experiences that occur in time, but from “hours” themselves. Time as hours—duration measured, industrialized, mechanized—makes recuperation of the

past through memory chaotic in the poet's mind. Hours do not contain weariness as much as they create it by reducing time to reproducible units, to commodities meant for consumption. Unlike the Ode, "Tintern Abbey" does not explicitly name immortality, but both poems point to the poet's refusal to partake in the Christian promise of another more peaceful time and place. In lieu of providential compensation for depravities suffered on earth, the poet seeks rather to reconcile the experience of loss to language, or better still, to reconcile loss as language. In visiting the Wye, he seeks shelter from "the fretful stir / Unprofitable" of the world, but also questions how a poetic sensibility can respond to and survive such a world. The philosophical nihilism that results in (or as) "Tintern Abbey" comes from the poet's suspicion that artistic creation or aesthetic response is not only hallucinatory, "but a vain belief," and that the possibility of a subject existing "by the power / Of harmony" and prior to the response is equally fantastic. Yet, time is implicated in the poetic dilemma of creating the lyrical "I." For as Wordsworth forges forward to write and re-present his present experience—"While here I stand" (65)—his writing increasingly turns from doubts about poetry toward suspicions about the power of language itself to authentically mediate the experience of standing "here," simultaneously, or "While," other things happen.

Where time and language intersect becomes a pressing concern, not only for Wordsworth, but for the Romantics at large. From a distance, Wordsworth's desire for immediacy—the unmediated expression of the ideal moment contained within an iconic present—inheres in "Tintern Abbey" through subjective perceptions of the mind that encounter and interpret the world. Up close, however, Wordsworth's lyrical moment turns reflexive by the poet's attention to the mind's encounter with itself. In the traditional reading of the romantic lyric, there exists an interval between thought and form, or between intuition and expression, that Wordsworth conceives as the moment of consciousness itself. "Tintern Abbey" embodies this moment—the poem is this consciousness that manages the lyrical moment of simultaneity by collapsing distinctions

between private time awareness and what Sharon Cameron calls “social and objective time, those strictures that drive hard lines between past, present, and future” (204).

That “Tintern Abbey” suggests a formal excursion into the narrative of self-consciousness does not exempt the poem from historicity. In spite of the poet’s efforts, the poem owns a teleology and linearity that yield an internal involuntary pulse, providing cadence and giving the poem its feel of story. This does not mean that we should read Wordsworth’s lyric as a mode of narrative, however, because the poem circulates between poetry and prose, occupying at least these two categories at once. “Tintern Abbey” inhabits a generic simultaneity—both prose and poetic—that shadows the narrative and poetic impulse of the poem’s interior patterns. The functional “And” noted above and synecdochal for the poem’s structural plight will determine not only what the poem delivers as poetry, but will demonstrate the apocalyptic outcomes of psychic loss and degeneration that the poem seeks to measure and from which the poet, in his effort to embody all times, tries to escape.³⁵

No Body, No Poem

Genre formation and transformation are embedded in culture and constitute “a social act,” as Ralph Cohen argues in his exemplary analysis, “History and Genre.” Genres may appear, transform internally, or disappear altogether given any number of political and social conditions underwriting any historical moment. Generally speaking, however, the classification of literary works, regardless of the rationale for the classification, engenders expectations that affect, disturbingly at times, the interpretive strategies of both readers and writers. In 1799, Charles Burney expressed his frustration with *Lyrical Ballads*, as a volume of poems, in *The Monthly Review*:

When we confess that our author has had the art of pleasing and interesting in no common way by his natural delineation of human passions, we must add that these effects were not produced by the *poetry*; we have been as much affected by pictures of misery and unmerited distress in *prose*.³⁶ (II 713)

Burney's critique is grounded in genre—in this instance, *Lyrical Ballads* transgresses taxonomies because its realism, or “natural delineation,” is mediated by a non-poetic form. Although Burney's critique applies more to the Wordsworth of “The Ruined Cottage” or “The Thorn” than to the Wordsworth of “Tintern Abbey,” Burney touches upon a dimension of lyric that, in presupposing poetic address *in propria person*, has generated debate among critics ever since. Because the presence of the poet in the lyric reads like the “I” of epistolary discourse, autobiography, or essay, the poet is assumed to narrate the text; but literary critics have sought to deflect this attention from the poet by displacing the poet's presence in the poem onto a persona. The aftermath-poet that emerges is tasked, not with finding expression for his or her deepest thoughts and feelings, but with creating the ‘speaker’ of the poem. The problem with this approach, according to Jonathan Culler, is that it “pushes lyric in the direction of the novel by adopting a mimetic model and focusing on the speaker as character, and it neglects all those elements of lyric—including rhyme, meter and refrain—not drawn from ordinary speech acts” (“Lyric” 891).

I have avoided the use of “speaker” in this essay for reasons that coincide with Culler's. Interpreting the poem on borrowed terms suppresses the raw materiality—sound, rhythm, cadence, and organizing silence—of its language and the historical moment of its production. Instead of forcing a poem into a system until either the poem fits or the genre expands—poems are not pants, after all—generic instability may itself offer insight into the cultural and literary moment surrounding the work in question. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the instability of forms is especially pronounced and linked to social transformations of public and private negotiations of space and time. The meanings generated in the culture's negotiation with time emerge from this instability. In the shared time of the lyric, the poet's presence allows for identification between the reader and the lived moment of lyric time. To install a speaker in “Tintern Abbey” would drown the voice of the poet that allows for identification and would further invite a twisted logic: “Tintern Abbey” offers a series of disparate readings—four odal structures—that cannot be subsumed

under the structural possibilities of narrative without losing the poetic function of those readings or the functional properties of narrative. But the main reason for keeping Wordsworth, the poet, in possession of the “I” involves the intense awareness that Burney identifies as “interesting in no common way,” and that Keats, in a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, recognized as “that tremendous . . . sharpening one’s vision into the heart and nature of man, of convincing one’s nerves that the world is full of misery and heartbreak” (May 3, 1818).

For Keats, “Tintern Abbey” is a poem that interfaces with the materiality of the reader’s body, and “this breathing” that defines the poem for Keats is generated from within the permeable borders of its text. The poem’s persona, the poet’s “I,” coincides with the reader who occupies the same enlightened position and partakes of the same distressing knowledge. The poem teaches and the reader learns that “Tintern Abbey” is not a text to see and read but rather an imagination to occupy and experience. Reading “Tintern Abbey” is thus also a social act. Entering the poem, readers are simultaneous with the poetic voice of the self, the “I” that speaks. And once we recover from the intoxicating spell of the opening stanzas, Keats explains, “this chamber of maiden thought becomes gradually darkened and, at the same time, on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark, all leading to dark passages. . . . We are in a mist. *We* are now in that state. We feel the ‘burden of the mystery’” (Letter to Reynolds May 3, 1818).

The ways in which a shared identity is constructed between text and reader inform at least one burden and deepen at least one mystery in the poem. Given “Tintern Abbey’s” free and open form, the poem may be read as a letter from Wordsworth addressed to his sister memorializing the creepy candor of their relationship. As autobiography, the poem may be read as narrative, constructing an historical self or narrative identity through time by supplying the necessary illusion of cohesion and chronicity, creating what we might call chronic stability. In either case, however, the formation of identity is discursive, an open-ended rearticulation of self through which the reader’s presence in the poem, his or her

breathing *in* —and *breathing in* —the mist, is articulated. Assuming an identity we call our own, we enter the chamber of maiden transition and choose from among the many dark doors that memorialize our own macabre passage. The poem's longevity and transhistorical resonance, I believe, reside in its power to explore passages that invite readers to become something or somebody else, to "make the present time vanish," as Wordsworth said of reading in "Essays Supplementary to the Preface."³⁷ But "Tintern Abbey" also weaves an indistinct thread of autobiography. In what follows, I will close-read Wordsworth's close-reading of Tintern to explore how the poet is denied the "I" of autobiography.

The poet, feeling inclined to recollect and to record, strikes the quintessential pose in order to do so, announcing, "The day is come when I again repose / Here, under this dark sycamore" (9-10). Seemingly, the poet has simply reclined beneath a tree to remember, reflect, and write. The action of repose is modified with "again," while the moment itself is marked with a temporal sign, "day." Embedded within "repose," however, are secondary definitions that complicate the poet's posture by invoking funerary concepts and inscriptions, as is the 'repose' that circulates in civic, pre-burial lexicon of "lying in repose." Engraved often on graveyard tombs of France is *ici repose*. In the poem of Wordsworth's abbey, "repose" twists the poet with a deathlike re-positing. Yet another meaning of repose turns upon trust, for to repose is to relinquish control by transferring power onto something or someone outside of the self. In this sense, 'repose' is an epitaphic posture and construction—a text entrusted to readers unseen. The final stanza of "The Epitaph," from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), exemplifies the personification of the dispossession that gathers around the talking dead:

No longer seek his merits to disclose
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

The ambiguities that accumulate around ‘repose’ in “Tintern Abbey” do not directly oppose the poet’s meditative posture but supplement the idea of mortal extinguishment by introducing an obscure anxiety, a transformational grammar. The disquiet that follows from “repose” does not manifest as a theme in the poem but shuffles through as a structurally unnamed element of the poem. The odd syntax of “The day is come when I again repose” (9), for instance, places an unnatural emphasis on ‘repose.’ Although the moment is marked by a temporal sign that we know to be sequential—i.e. “the day”—the placement of “again” modifies the action of the poet and not the diurnal passage of time. Common phrases marking time’s passage that include recurrence, such as ‘time and time again’ or ‘day after day,’ set an expectation that recurrence (“again”) will attach itself to the day, and not to the poet’s figure. Given especially the litany of “five” earlier in the stanza to count seasons, years, and winters, we anticipate that “the day is come again,” but the poet’s response substitutes for diurnal succession, i.e. time is deferred and made retrospectively dependent upon the subject’s repose, which is simultaneously his response (to the day that has come). The awkward substitution in the sentence of “is” for “has”—“the day is come”—hastens the syntactical breach, generating an emphasis on “The day” only to defeat its linguistic dawning with a word that beckons the end of all days, “repose,” bringing the line to a surreptitious end. Lying in-state, so to speak, the auxiliary poet does not exist *in* time so much as he exists beside it, parenthetically, paratextually. As with the dizzy rapture passage, the poet becomes marginalized, a welcomed exemption from the tyranny of clock and calendar through a manipulation of word order, frustrating in turn temporal, especially diurnal, expectations as they occur in language.

As the passage continues, the poet is to “view / These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts, / Which at this season, with their unripe fruits, / Among the woods and copses lose themselves” (10-13). Here, the visual similitude between “copses” and the more frequently encountered ‘corpses’—or ‘corses’ as the word was spelled by Wordsworth in “Essays Upon Epitaphs”—is prepared for and amplified by the use of “plots,” a word

associated with lands designated for burial, as in burial plots of a cemetery.³⁸ Thus, the intimating distance between corses and plots on the one hand, and corpses and burial grounds on the other, is not so great as to be implausible, especially since here lies the poet in repose “under this dark sycamore” to write about the five years that “have passed.” Death is everywhere visual, but also indexical. In addition to the semantic uncertainty created by orthographically similar but diversely defined words, deictic pointers such as “this” (season) and “these” (plots) refer to their objects by contiguity in space and time. Unlike symbols, deictic signs—this, that, these—do not assert anything about the object. They only affect listeners by directing their attention in a certain direction and by effecting a type of immediacy. Death is thus doubly called to our attention—first by way of symbolic suggestion and then by the contiguous relation of reader to deictic word and word to immediate and localized presence. *This* corpse/copse, for example, or *these* orchard/burial plots, creates a scene of reading that not only includes the reader but calls her attention to a space and time immediate with the language used to represent them. The irony resides in the referential status of what is being pointed to—interred bodies incapable of reading. Death and the poem, in other words, form thus an inseparable dyad that is inseparable further from the reader.

The associative derivatives of Wordsworth’s chosen words and their meanings show how semantics is operating in the poem as an agent of its production, and not simply as an object, or an ordering, of its meaning. Words like ‘plots’ and ‘copse’ disrupt the borders of the (de)finite, casting interference with the definition of things and thereby slowing down the reader’s reception. Such epistemological uncertainty is extended to include the reader who becomes, not distanced from the poem by symbolic representation, but a requisite to its meaning. By use of pronouns that establish contiguity in time and space, the poem makes “Tintern Abbey” a poem concerned with sociability in an odd way—the social traffic of interred readers merging with corpses in the poem’s epitaphic effusions. Even “under this dark sycamore” (10) registers an unsettled dystopia, with “the quiet of the sky” (8)

slowly growing too quiet. As the referential image of corpses begins to blur, yielding to the dissonance created by the *appearance* of the signifier, the signifier begins to hold sway over signification. Language itself begins to assume an autonomous function as the phenomenal world of objects begins to blur and recede. What were “hedge-rows” become, after the comma, “hardly hedge-rows” (16), and not long after the corpses “lose themselves” (13) among the “wild green landscape” (15), the poet mulls over what is and what only “might seem” (20). In the 1815 “Essay, Supplementary to the Preface,” Wordsworth rages against what ‘might seem’ as a sanctioned absurdity meant to obfuscate sound judgment: “The appropriate business of poetry . . . her appropriate employment, her privilege and her *duty*, is to treat of things not as they *are*, but as they *appear*, not as they exist in themselves, but as they *seem* to exist to the *senses* and to the *passions*. What a world of delusion does this acknowledged principle prepare for the inexperienced!” (*The Major Works* 641).

The Wordsworth of “Tintern Abbey” may still boast the “confidence of youth in its feelings” (“Essay” 641) and thereby guard against, or hide behind, worlds of delusion. But slipping from a world of presence into one of ambiguity and absence, and with his own “little lines / Of sportive wood run wild” (16-17), the poet’s search for refuge and “restoration” (32) becomes rather an austere translation of his own mortality, coupled with an economy of solitude and intellect. With “thoughts of more deep seclusion” (7), “while with an eye made quiet” (99), the poet partakes of a bloodless heroics in search of something akin to death, but less permanent and disembodied. He seeks:

~that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul. (42-47)

Corporeality is being without happening, but the poet’s desire to become a living soul suggests that being may potentially be primordial, quiescent and euphoric. As Lionel Trilling has noted, Wordsworth took pleasure in the world and in the mind, but he also

“loved to move down the scale of being, to say that when the sentient spirit was sealed by slumber, when it was without motion and force, when it was like a rock or a stone or a tree, not hearing or seeing, and passive in the cosmic motion—that even then, perhaps especially then, existence was blessed” (131). Wordsworth enters that passive and blessed state by writing, for the more he writes, the further his “I” slips toward the peripheries of the unknowable. In “Tintern Abbey,” the poet’s slow extinguishment is palpable but his exit is not final. Never permanently buried, never fully embodied, the poet is himself anachronistic, existing both now and in the past. Moving among the copses “with gleams of half-extinguished thought, / With many recognitions dim and faint” (61-62), the poet has assumed the figure of a feeling. He has become what Hegel identified as the subjective essence of the romantic:

The external side of things is surrendered to accident and committed to the excesses of the imagination, whose caprice now mirrors existence as it is, now chooses to distort the objects of the out world into a bizarre and grotesque medley, for the external form no longer possesses a meaning and significance, as in classical art, on its own account and for its own sake. Feeling is now everything. (327-8)

The implication remains that the poet-turned-feeling of “Tintern Abbey” has produced a metonymic form of autobiography written from the grave. But the poet is not dead, nor does he consciously beckon death. He says, in fact, nothing at all about death.³⁹ At the same time, autobiography substantively courts a form of suicide because it perpetually reenacts, as Garrett Stewart explains, “life giving out by being given up to its reembodiment as history” (29). “Tintern Abbey” mediates the appearance of autobiography through constant concealment, which does not settle easily into recollection or reflection. The poem is not commemorative, nor does it leave undisturbed a Western metaphysics of presence because the subject, like the ‘now’ and the ‘now no more’ it simultaneously inhabits, diminishes by degrees, escaping finally into the duration between time and eternity that is incommensurate with either worldly or cosmic time. The result, for both the subject and the moment, is the “not quite” of ontological ambiguity.

Wordsworth's use of symbolic language appropriates meanings generated by figural elements that surprise and negatively affirm even the poet himself. As Jonathan Culler has suggested, we need to look into "what the poem *itself* has to say about its own nature or the process of interpretation, granting special authority to the answer one discovers" (879). With formal substitutions of paragraph for verse and uncountable number for meter, the poem's form constitutes its several meanings, a point I will explore below. For now I will suggest that Wordsworth is not writing about death, but rather from within something very near it. The discursive essence of Wordsworth's psychology, in other words, is ontological and its substance a systematic process of self-reflexive effacement. Whatever referential language may exist in the poem meets with strong opposition by the poem, for "Tintern Abbey" performs an aesthetic resistance to closure both temporal and formal. It gathers momentum and sustains proclivity toward never-ending activity in and through the dynamics of syntax, repetition, and suspended predication. Less a poetics of presence than an ongoing melody of disappearance, "Tintern Abbey" is a chasing after, a fantastic quest doomed to hunt a silence too elusive to be abstracted from the catch. In what follows, I will conclude by exploring the temporal dislocations that emerge from the poet's self-estrangement and map the poet's diminished presence as he escapes through dissociative forms of sound.

Conclusion

Language may be used to express what exists in reality. Language may also be used to say the thing which is not. Though I may talk with some small confidence about tomorrow, for example, tomorrow is only today ahead of schedule, which means that language is a ready-to hand tool that is yet imperfect in its truth. As a system of signs, language allows a writer to create what does not exist in reality or to express what does, but language is itself limited to nominal convention; without any substantive truth of its own, language ultimately exists independently of knowledge and may therefore claim no stake in reality at all. That said, "Tintern Abbey" says the thing which is not by conceptualizing

death in terms of what the poet knows, which is only ever what he perceives. In what follows and to conclude, I will suggest that “Tintern Abbey” comes into being as language—existing beyond the reach of all experience and all thought—from the poet’s unspoken debt to time and immortality, which he pays back through sound.

In *The Prelude*, the poet encounters a series of events that leaves him feeling “misguided and misguiding,” a form of knowledge that abandons him to the “ministry of fear” episodes in the first book of the poem. The poet of *The Prelude* is not the poet of “Tintern Abbey,” however. In the latter, older poem, the poet’s perception of place and time is less dubious because the poet is more confident in his knowledge. But the sounds of “Tintern Abbey” tell a different story still, and they contradict what the poet thinks he knows by producing temporalities of which he is unaware. The poem’s acoustic subtleties, sonorous cadence, rhythmic phrasings and slow-to-stop aspirants, mirror the “sweet inland murmur” that surrounds the poet in his solipsistic repose. These sounds also accompany an awareness of time that Wordsworth perceives as running low and soon to stop. In haunting the valley Wye and creating the thing which is not, Wordsworth writes a great poem that works not only to halt the “motion” (45) of his blood and break “the breath of this corporeal frame” (46), but to hide the visual. In keeping the abbey, a religious symbol, confined to the poem’s title, the poet’s “blessed mood” and hopeful “food / For future years” must originate from somewhere else. Not surprisingly, no sooner have we glimpsed the “mystery” thing which is not—“nor harsh nor grating” (95)—we glimpse it again.

As dramatic lyric, “Tintern Abbey” substitutes an expansive, open-ended present for a fixed and closed past through an aural poetics that conforms to Wordsworth’s remark, in the 1815 Preface, that lyrical forms need rhythm, harmony, and melody: “. . . for the production of their full effect, an accompaniment of music is indispensable to the lyric” (177). In “The Power of Sound,” Wordsworth charts the genesis of music (gendered feminine), and notes the restorative effects of music and the earthly “delegates of harmony” (190) that ensure music’s persistence and possibilities: “. . . though Earth be dust / And

vanish, though the Heavens dissolve, her stay / Is in the Word, that shall not pass away” (222-224). Harmonies linger and sounds stay the course, such that “Tintern Abbey” echoes Orpheus who kept on singing though his head was severed. The echoing sounds preserve the presence of voice and self without the need for either. The poem is addressed to his sister, yet even she remains a presence denied until the final stanza. As a systematic violation of borders, including those separating death and life, “Tintern Abbey” seems the incantation of “unacknowledged selves” that Nicholas Roe finds lingering between paragraphs in *The Prelude* (94). The lines written a few miles ‘above’ the missing abbey addressed to the absent sister are liminal and unmotivated. Hovering like “unripe fruits” (12) on the strange and unseasoned vine, “Tintern Abbey” engages in a process of movement and expansion only to reveal its ultimate stasis and decay. On the surface, the poem is a spirited yet sober song of “sweet inland murmur,” victorious over the internalized din of memory and chaos, but beneath its song, the poem choreographs a dance macabre with “ample power / To chasten and subdue” (95). The emotion of “Tintern Abbey” does not approach the sublimity of loss and fear found in *The Prelude*, but the two poems share the “dim and undetermined” (*Prelude* 1: 419) zeal with which past knowledge—“misguiding and misguided”—no longer answers to the demands of the present.

Celeste Langan and Maureen McLane note that the title of “Tintern Abbey,” specifically *a few miles above*, shares with other eighteenth-century poems “entirely etherealized locations” (249). There is something otherworldly about the spot where Wordsworth stands—a “simple hue” (14) lost to “wreathes of smoke” (18) that drift above “rolling” (3) waters of invisible and “lonely streams” (71). Seen from afar, “a wild secluded scene” (6) marks the poet as estranged. The same scene and cliffs bear “thoughts of more deep seclusion” (6-7), which Carol Jacobs suggests either anthropomorphizes the landscape “by endowing it with the capability of thought” or paradoxically serves to introduce “the human observer at the very moment of insisting on his or her exclusion” (161). The poet

then imagines “. . . some hermit’s cave, where by his fire / The hermit sits alone” (20-23), which brings a sudden and strange philosophical study to the paragraph: Plato’s cave now inhabited, now emptied, but soon to be apostrophized through the figure of a mythical spirit, “O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods” (58). The romantics were contemporaries with the production and consumption of the Gothic novel. And though Wordsworth disparaged the public taste for “stupid and sickly German tragedies” in “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Anne Williams makes the compelling case that Wordsworth used Gothic diction to describe his early relationship with nature (3-5). Spiritual and supernatural figures such as the hermit and Sylvan in “Tintern Abbey” are generally persistent, “inherent in man’s nature,” according to Goethe, “When we think it is suppressed, it takes refuge in strange holes and corners, from which it peeps out all at once” (qtd. in Siebers 23).

As place is etherealized, so awareness of time’s passage finds itself in competition with a Romantic ‘vision’ that is paradoxically auditory in “Tintern Abbey,” but that speaks at large to the phenomenology of reading. “In after years,” the poet notes, “with what healing thoughts” will Dorothy remember her brother and be made joyful at “These [his] exhortations” (150), but not crucially before the poet “no more can hear” (151). Memory and thought are poor substitutes for sound, which is the poem’s life and landscape. Structured through an aural poetics that works to disrupt the temporality grounded in the half-extinguished mind, the poem’s sounds echo the plurality of voices in the lyric. The linearity of narrative falls apart, or is rather soothed into complaisance by Wordsworth’s sonorous inventions.

In the first twenty-three lines of the poem, there are thirteen verbs and sixty-five sibilants. Of the verbs, only four reference the action of the poet—hear, behold, repose, see—and stop at line ten. The hiss that hangs like mist to “impress / Thoughts of more deep seclusion” in the opening stanza is the auditory equivalent to the poet’s recovered sublime. The “mystery” and “purer mind” (31) that have replaced the poet’s “glad animal

movements” and “Appetite” (83) are reflected in the poem’s diminished predication, as verbs and predation (appetite) give way to modified perceptions of “hours of weariness” and “sensations sweet “ (29).

In its manipulation of grammar, the poem mirrors the maturity of the poet but alters the time of reading. For the acoustics that bring the first stanza to a close—“wreathes of smoke / Sent up, in silence, from among the trees, / With some uncertain notice, as might seem” (18-20)—also prolong the duration of the voice and deepen the shape of uncertainty. Long sound strokes rolling across referential signs that relax their hold on definite meanings make the images themselves blend with sound and extend the time of their appearance to the mind. The signified, undone by the signifier’s sound, embalms the poet’s pauper-repose among the woods, smoke and trees. No longer subjected to the laws of motion, the poet becomes the poem’s breath of sound.

It should not be surprising then that memory takes a despairing toll on the poet’s desire to remember, because in remembering he hears only “The still, sad music of humanity” (93). The ambiguous ‘still’ raises questions of intention. The poet writes to make audible the ‘still’ music of humanity, but what are verbs that bring motion and time to a stop, such as ‘still’ and ‘stay,’ and what are adverbs—‘still’ and ‘stay’—become part of the poem’s systematic erasure. In the poem, to still (stop) and to still hear (even now) registers an ambivalence toward the progression of time that occurs alongside perpetual displacement. Without a direct relation of word and meaning, objects of the phenomenal world become indirect and superfluous, creating a lapse in referential clarity that “These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows” typifies. In the ongoing poetics of sound and meaning, “Tintern Abbey” speaks of recurrence, or “where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish” (672).

CHAPTER FIVE

ROBINSON CRUSOE: ADVENTURES IN TIME-WRITING

In my effort to understand how British writers of the eighteenth century temporalized experience, I have addressed the coordinates of literature and time as they reflect, reproduce, and resist each other in several canonical texts of the long eighteenth century. I began by identifying a paradigmatic shift in temporality with the advent of Joseph Addison's and Richard Steele's diurnal publication in 1710. I then jumped forward to 1771 in order to show how Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* resisted the modern time-consciousness and rationalized timekeeping of *The Spectator*, and how the novel's formal disjunction and storytelling practices were symptomatic of that resistance. In the third chapter, I argued that Richardson's *Clarissa* (1741-45) confronted the real difficulty of living and writing in time, and how writing to the moment left both subjective and objective measures of time inadequate to account either for time's passage or for the subject's experience of it. I then followed the missing moment of *Clarissa* to the grammatical subversions of time in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" (1798) and showed how they offered a specifically linguistic resistance to time, memory, and meaning. In this resistance of language to time, recuperation becomes indefatigably circuitous and returns us finally to the beginning, that is, to this fifth and final chapter on *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

In what follows, I argue that the incessant timekeeping of the earliest periodical is visible in Crusoe's journal while the anxious protest and formal disjunction of Mackenzie's novel are palpable in Crusoe's alternation between sacred and profane time. I recover the lost moment and missing present of *Clarissa* in Crusoe's repeated attempts to start the journal over, which interrupt the novel's progression and produce the same irreconcilable results. The linguistic resistance to time in "Tintern Abbey" coincides, I argue, with Crusoe's inability to tell his story with any degree of coherence. Though Defoe writes *Robinson Crusoe* just two decades into the eighteenth century, I have reserved his text for last because *Robinson Crusoe* serves as a threshold in modern time studies and its influence

on literary and cultural constructions of temporality has been remarkable. Defoe established the modern text as a kind of portal, an uncertain category of time and space for which the future is not quite not yet and the past is not quite not there.

Time and Story

Human life has a biological beginning and a biological end, with a stretch in between that may be brief and beautiful, long and tragic, or dazzling and dim. Nobody gets to choose their beginning because life is chosen for us, but some can and do choose their ending by deciding how and when they will die. Most people, however, know only that human existence is finite, that death is inevitable, and that “All streets in time are visited.”⁴⁰ When a life ends, the only time diverted from its mad course belongs to the one who died. Everything else—from spring flowers and mail delivery to botched elections and human suffering—continues because time continues. It is perhaps time’s immutability and the frail uncertainty of human existence in the face of it that compelled Simone Weil to say: “Time is the most profound and the most tragic subject which human beings can think about. One might even say: the only thing that is tragic” (197).⁴¹ To live in time is to know only that.

What may be less tragic are the sustained attempts to make sense of the only thing that is tragic. Though many disciplines—physics, philosophy, science, and religion—have tried to uncover the secret ingredient of time and explain its role in the unfolding mysteries of the universe, the oldest and most sustained efforts are simple (but in no way simple-minded); they are the stories told of the middle, the stories of what has been endured and by whom. So far, I have addressed two novels in this thesis that tell stories of endurance. But *The Man of Feeling* and *Clarissa* lack the kind of sustained temporal arc that would allow for middles beyond the limited scope of a chapter or individual epistle. Their middles are driven by content, not by structure. *Robinson Crusoe* by contrast is a structural narrative that just so happens to tell a story.

For Paul Ricoeur, stories told of the middle provide the best available means of understanding time because the structural transformations that affect events and characters take time. And as narratives unfold, gaps appear. Gaps are bad because they constitute the seemingly insuperable barrier between the finite time of the individual and the infinite time of the world. At the same time, gaps—called aporias—are also productive because they allow for the contemplation of existential (subjective) and empirical (objective) time at once. In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur begins by dismantling the works of Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger in order to show how neither metaphysics nor phenomenology can account fully or finally for time's enigma, namely, how the always decomposing middle of life, which we perceive as 'now,' is the same fundamental time as that time which seems to exist external to, or even in spite of, it. How does the "I" of mortal time situate and perceive itself in relation to the other of "I" time—the primordial, other time of spring flowers, for example, and their infinite bloom nourished by decomposed carcass? In the abyss imaged here between the grave transience of mortal time and the immortal permanence of cosmic time, the concept of temporality is seemingly difficult to articulate, as there is no way to account for the difference between the two kinds of time that time-bounded consciousness necessarily deems incompatible. It is an epistemological break that consciousness cannot repair and memory cannot forget.

But for Ricoeur, narrative provides the link for articulating our personal experience of time in relation to the endless and seemingly indifferent time of the cosmos. Instead of trying to explain away such incompatibilities, he suggests that aporias actually enable narratives to emerge. In this chapter, I will briefly outline Ricoeur's ideas about time and the aporetics of temporality before turning to *Robinson Crusoe*, the earliest practical model of the modern novel, to see whether and how aporias of time become visible through narrative and how they in turn account for and give meaning to the lived experience of time. I specifically explore the influence of secularization on the eighteenth-century's

preoccupation with time and timekeeping by focusing on Crusoe's navigation of sacred and profane time in his quest for narrative identity.

Ricoeur differs from earlier theorists of time by suggesting that narrated time is the only time of temporal existence: "The common feature of human experience, that which is marked, organized and clarified by the fact of storytelling in all its forms, is its temporal character" (*From Text 2*). Narrative does not ultimately solve the paradox of time, but deepens and enriches our sense of its passage. In the reciprocity between time and narrative that is, the occultation between mortal and cosmic time does not disappear, nor do the resulting aporias resolve the paradox inherent to the two times. Rather, time and narrative work together to alter the fundamental substance of the present. The present of cosmic time, that which is anonymous and interminable, is made reflexive through narrative discourse, deepening mortal time with an inherently human and existential character.

What Ricoeur tells of "narrative identity" then originates from the reciprocity of time and narrative, for together they produce a "third time," the aporia that deepens. Ricoeur's third time preserves the abysmal breach of cosmic and mortal time, but it also removes the two incompatible times from an either/or predicament. Narrative and narrative identity, he argues, reveal how the objective (cosmic/scientific) and experiential (mortal/phenomenological) modes of time overlap in the stories we tell. Even as they exclude each other, objective and experiential dimensions of time come together in narrative. The third time that results from this reciprocity between time and narrative, also referred to as the "historical present," may be understood as cosmic time inscribed and made mortal with narrative time and identity. In this dialectic, the historical present is a temporalizing process that "cannot be separated," Ricoeur explains, "from the account we can give of ourselves. It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity" (*"History as Narrative"* 214).

The historical present is not “now” in the sense that the 6:57 or 3/24/2012 displayed on my computer screen is now; the historical present is an amalgamation of times held together by narrative. The historical present is what paves the streets *not yet* visited in time with the stories we tell, Ricoeur explains, stories that “transmute *natural* time into a specifically *human* time, irreducible to mathematical, chronological ‘clock time’” (*Reader* 463). The historical present gives shape and meaning to the stretch in between the **certainty** of beginnings and the uncertainty of every inevitable end. It gives a name and a face to time’s faceless and anonymous passage. But stories also give shape and coherence, no matter how inauthentic or provisional, to nations, sects, races, religions, families, and so on. The telling of stories construct group identities in the same manner as they do individual identities, namely, by determining what is worth remembering. Stories moreover may encompass one thousand years or one thousand and one nights, but regardless of origin or scope, literature has always been a story about the middle, the story of endurance and protest, subversion and possibility, (re)evolution and despair. Literature has always been the story of time as we live and then leave it, for the most part, “by chance nature’s changing course untrimmed.”

Robinson Crusoe is the story of one character’s struggle against chance to maintain equilibrium in the face of physical, economic, spiritual, and psychological ruin. Crusoe, of course, figures metaphorically as Great Britain, or the capitalist West more broadly, in the sense that he seeks and achieves individual prosperity in the face of austerity, death, disease, and despair. His life sings the greatly misguided, and mightily misused, Western dirge of individual, economic achievement, but Crusoe also accrues ‘cultural capital’ by writing about his accumulating wealth and landed investments—the tobacco and sugar crops in South America triple in size and profit, for example. He also assumes ownership of the Caribbean island—“my new collony” (249)—upon his return in 1694, seven years after leaving it. For the men left to inhabit and work the island, Crusoe brings gifts, including “seven women . . . I found proper for service . . . five cows, some sheep, and

some hogs” (240). A propertied pimp with some “undoubted right of dominion” (199), Crusoe is stunned speechless by the motley “joy” and “fluttering of my very heart,” which leads him to conclude, “the latter end of *Job* was better than the beginning” (224).⁴²

But this chapter is not about the capacity of capitalist ideologies to inculcate the rhetoric of denial that has plagued the political history of the West. This chapter is concerned rather with time and Crusoe’s changing attitudes toward time and the role of narrative in shaping that change. Because *Robinson Crusoe* reads like autobiography, in the sense that the novel’s fictional author, protagonist and narrator are all the same entity, questions of narrative identity and the boundaries of selfhood are made especially fluid and conspicuous. Ricoeur’s “third time,” therefore, may become as visible in *Robinson Crusoe* as it appears to emerge in his focused study of the modernist novel, including *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Magic Mountain*, and *Remembrance of Things Past*. Questions of self and time are inextricable; thus, we must accept Crusoe’s assessment that “my story is a whole collection of wonders” (203) and examine time in the novel as a whole collection of stories that, as narrative acts, generate meaning through the production of aporias.

The Future of Eternity

Elizabeth Ermarth summarizes the experience of reading *Robinson Crusoe* by comparing Defoe’s reader to a viewer watching a movie made with a hand-held camera. In terms of Defoe’s experimental form and its listless effect on modern readers, Ermarth’s analogue captures well the visual and temporal moods of the novel, as the life and strange adventures of Robinson Crusoe unfold and seemingly aspire to the unsteady movement of a lens, crossing lines and losing center, creating multiple frames and narrative forms that compete for the reader’s gaze. Ultimately, the eye finds no place to land in Defoe’s first novel, and whether *Robinson Crusoe* even meets the generic criteria of the novel remains arguable. The text reads more like a syndrome than a specific case, more like a collection of narrative symptoms whose etiology may be traced to spiritual autobiography and conversion narratives but also to travel diaries and how-to books. In the former genres, the

writer turns an inward eye, delineating the parameters of a spiritual self and foregrounding the salvation of its soul. In conversion narratives, the writer further assumes a foundational selfhood, a true and timeless self inherited ultimately from God but descending theoretically (metaphysically) from the philosophy of Descartes. In Descartes' metaphysic, the self is a universal and certain presence, assured of its ontological rightness of being by the subject's own consciousness.⁴³ Defoe conforms to these models of self-definition and identification in *Robinson Crusoe*, as he never considers the possibility of Crusoe's 'I' being authored by somebody other than God.

In the traditions of spiritual autobiography and religious conversion, writers often express more concern with life everlasting than with the temporal life of here and now, suggesting the phenomenal self is embodied, certain, and stable but not limited to the material world. Burton Pike has argued that the early impulse to autobiography in modern Europe was an attempt to relieve the "burden of temporal linearity" which the ideas of Newton and Locke had placed on the individual (330). Newton's subversive definition of time as the measurement of duration in equal and mechanical increments left little room for thoughts of eternity, or the time of God. Locke defined man as measured over time by these equal and mechanical increments, meaning consciousness itself was introduced as an inherently temporal process. In this alone consists personal identity. Measured over time, whether by minutes or by years, "as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person: it is the same self now it was then" (II 27.9). From the paradigmatic shift in time and self brought about by Newtonian science and Lockean psychology, time was distilled into a series of discernible moments, each moment infinitely divisible and self-contained, serving a single, intelligible and coherent continuity.

The sovereignty of sequence and measured duration combine to complicate the relationship of time to identity in the eighteenth century. According to Pike, the absence of eternity in mathematical time created "an obsessive preoccupation with the

chronological aspect of time” (327). Writing and reading about the self in time fed this obsession for chronology because “the act of writing is linear; so is the basic time pattern within the narrative; so is the act of reading” (327).⁴⁴ In the case of a modern writer such as Defoe, life writing allowed for narrative work in chronological time, but Defoe’s trenchant inquiry into the nature of eternity complicated the notion of time and self. In the sequel to *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, Crusoe travels upward and out to glimpse a “Vision of the Angelick World” (1720) only to “come down again the same short sighted Wretch, as to Futurity and Things belonging to Heaven and Hell, as I went up” (46). For Crusoe, thoughts of eternity “are meant only to give us a clearer View of what we *are*, not of what we *shall be* (47). Thus, life writing allowed for the possibility of eternity, but Defoe recommends that eternity be grounded in the historical present. In other words, life writing may have provided the illusion of eternity in the absence of God and God’s time, but Defoe positions eternity to include the immortal life of books, as books memorialize the ‘who’ from and for whom books originate and mean. Since books outlive people, that is, Crusoe’s upward journey to “the World of Spirits” maps Defoe’s own creative excursion into the everlasting life of the novel and the new cultural authority that it signified. Nonetheless, the self and soul remain the presumed and stable center—“the same short sighted wretch”—in the eighteenth century’s quest for a time that lies beyond the measurable and finite units of its empirical design.

In contrast to spiritual autobiography and conversion narratives, travel diaries and technical manuals do not take up time as a central concern. In these genres, the eye of the writer looks outward, describing various manifestations of the real, eschewing the inward self and the atemporal world of God (or immortal life of books), by focusing instead on historical and tangible designs visible in this world. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe employs both points of view: Crusoe looks inward toward eternity and salvation just as he looks outward toward existence and physical preservation. In this sense, Crusoe exists and writes both historically and biblically. Grounded in a particular time (1600’s) and specific place—

“9 degrees 22 minutes north of the Line” (52)—Crusoe borrows from the past to measure the relative gravity of his situation and to calculate the probability of his deliverance not only from the island but from “a certain stupidity of soul” that rules his godless past (71). Crusoe’s time, however, is equally susceptible to influences that are inscribed as immaterial and timeless. “What am I?” he asks, following the fever dream that leads him to question “*Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus us’d?*” (74). His conscience censors this entreaty, he writes, “and methought it spoke to me like a voice; *WRETCH!* . . . ask thy self *what thou hast not done?*” (75). Crusoe’s ‘why me’ question belongs to all times and all places, meaning it belongs to no time or place in particular. By asking “What am I?” Crusoe moreover seeks the essence of his humanity and not an explanation for traits particular to the ‘who’ of his identity. The passage as a whole intimates a turn from earthly time toward the timeless realms of God, but Crusoe, “struck dumb” by the reproach and suffering still, returns to his cave to read the bible, yet finds his spiritual conversion incomplete, his prayers still “broken and imperfect” (76). “As for being delivered,” he adds, “the word had no sound; . . . the thing was so remote, so impossible” (76).

Crusoe’s early days on the island reflect changing attitudes toward time. When Crusoe is “Bob” (9), he is a young sailor without a marine vocabulary and without seafaring experience. In struggling to define ‘founder’ and in trying to avoid the experience of it, Crusoe makes multiple references to hours and minutes. His first voyage to London begins “in an ill hour, God knows, on the first of *September* 1651” (8). The storm that approaches at “noon” eight days later, “sending the waves “mountains high, . . . broke upon us every three or four minutes” (11). He adds, “we were not much more than a quarter of an hour out of our ship but we saw her sink, and then I understood what was meant by a ship foundering in the sea” (13). Taken prisoner off the coast of Africa, Crusoe notes the pirates had launched their attack “about three in the afternoon” (17). Two years later, he escapes by ship and “I made such sail that I believe by the next day at three a clock . . . I first made the land” (21). Though nine years are being recounted during this part of

the novel, Crusoe offers few details about their passage beyond a kind of repetitive, elliptical, metafiction: “To make short this sad part of my story” (10) for example, or “to cut short this melancholy part of our story” (17). He further provides indistinct measures of time that account for himself but without providing much detail either of time or self: “In this state of life I remained some time” (15), or “it was a great while before I came to my self” (12). Hours soon give way to days, however, once Crusoe arrives to the “life of misery which was to befall me,” as he announces on the first page of the novel (5).

Crusoe’s accounting of time changes when he reaches the island. He does not abandon counting hours and minutes altogether, for when he travels by raft to the other side of the island, he notes it was “about four a-clock in the evening” with “about another hour” to go before reaching the shore (112). Longitude is pivotal to maritime, and the historical setting of Crusoe’s journeys sets course with the seventeenth century’s search for a marine chronometer that, as Stuart Sherman explains, “would amount to the apotheosis of clockwork as arbiter of global space and time” (165). John Harrison offered the solution, making “each tracked moment more momentous: the central point of reference within the nexus of science, trade, navigation, and conquest in which Britain was increasingly constructing its identity” (166). Harrison’s invention does not materialize until 1749, but Defoe was clearly aware of the (nationalist and economic) stakes driving its inception. When Crusoe is landlocked, however, he turns his attention more toward the passage of years, weeks and days. The seafaring passages charted in hours and minutes gives ways longer temporal spans and he is especially attentive to days.

After drowning his fever with rum and turning less successfully to God for answers, Crusoe loses track of calendar time: “But certainly I lost a day in my accmpt, and never knew which way” (76). Crusoe’s sudden preoccupation with the timekeeping of his calendar may have been motivated by an awkward realization of his battered self and faith. He does not know, after all, where or what he is. Sick and spinning down a spiritual spiral of attack and reprise, and facing mortality in the eye, Crusoe’s anxiety over the loss of a day

paints Crusoe as an archetypal figure in the Christian tradition of religious conversion who has seemingly misplaced his cell phone. The oddity of sacred and profane time competing for Crusoe's attention may explain why Elizabeth Ermarth finds Crusoe's obsessive timekeeping and his suspected loss of one day "almost comical" (107). Crusoe oscillates between heaven and earth by reading his experience in two ways, she notes, "as prophetic allegory and as a series of survival problems" (104). As Crusoe transitions out of mortal (or profane) time into sacred time, Crusoe's alternate readings of his own experience become "laminated together rather than reconciled, a fact that is proof of the fragility of consciousness in time" (104). The "comedy," she adds, "lies partly in his confessed attempt to close the very gap that made possible his passage to the other side of time" (108).

When Crusoe reaches the other side of sacred time, however, he contemplates his own complicity and marks the indulgence that finally abandons him to the Island of Despair. Crusoe's temporal disengagement from the lived world may be imminent, but not because mortal time in the sanctity of a providential time is "meaningless," as Ermarth suggests (106). Rather, mortal time continues to be meaningful but suspended, as it were, because Crusoe is simply living and not thinking about it. It may be helpful here to consider Henri Bergson's *Time and Free Will*, which suggests that an individual's experience of duration cannot be contained by objective measures. In fact, objective measures of time alienate an individual's sense of time's passage. As Crusoe dives deep into thoughts that materialize "like a voice" from somewhere else, he is experiencing what Bergson calls "succession without distinction," an unmediated experience of time that "consciousness reaches immediately" (127). Succession without distinction is an intuition of duration in its "original purity" (121). As Bergson writes: "Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states . . . but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole" (100). The apprehension of pure duration offers a freedom that is not amendable to measure and that is often thwarted by "habit" (109, 231).

By habitually distinguishing conscious states successively even when they occur simultaneously, Bergson writes, “we create for them a fourth dimension of space, which we call homogeneous time” (109). In measuring time, he explains, “we unwittingly replace it by space” (106), which ultimately “corrupts . . . our feeling of outer and inner change, of movement, and freedom” (74).

Crusoe’s abrupt and compulsive return from his own fleeting state of introspective freedom to his measured “account” of the calendar is exemplary of the distinction Bergson is making between time as quality (unmediated) and time as quantity (measured). Crusoe’s equivocation and confessed anxiety about the possible loss of a day—“and never knew which way” (76)—is a quantification of time that arrives at the expense of time’s “original purity.” By noting the error, Crusoe frames time as succession *with* distinction; he has replaced time with space, that is, losing the freedom and deep introspection that pure duration offers and that the novel needs. Defoe recognizes the problem here; as Crusoe approaches his first-year anniversary on the island, he notes, “I had all this time observ’d no Sabbath-Day” (83). He subsequently counts the notches engraved upon the calendar and “set apart every seventh day . . . tho’ I found at the end of my account I had lost a day or two in my reckoning” (83). As before, Crusoe objectifies time in ways that inhibit his movement forward and prevent the novel’s manifold plot from unfolding. Crusoe’s inexplicable preoccupation with “a day or two” bears an alarming resemblance to Facebook, a journal-like forum in which every visionary, or user, may acquire an audience. But the act of making public, or telling the audience what it wants to hear, leaves the habitual visionary no time to do anything else. Not surprisingly, Crusoe’s second recognition of a timekeeping error brings the Journal to a close, for “A little after this my ink began to fail me . . . so I contented myself . . . to write down only the most remarkable events of my life, without continuing a daily *memorandum* of other things” (83).

From this vantage point, we sense that Crusoe is dissatisfied with being a mere mortal, that time on earth is indeed subordinate to a timeless otherworld where

“remarkable” things happen. Crusoe’s resignation also sounds familiar. In seventeenth-century Restoration narratives, demands for historicity came often into conflict with apparitional, supernatural, or providential interruptions. For Michael McKeon, selectivity in spiritual narratives impinged upon credibility; in limiting one’s account to remarkable, or divinely inspired events, the resulting “‘history’ risks the charge of recapitulating the absurdities of ‘romance’” (*Origins* 92). The generic tension surfacing in *Crusoe* between the faith-based content of the spiritual autobiographer on the one hand, and the unremarkable materiality of the diarist and diurnalist on the other, epitomizes the eighteenth-century’s *sine qua non* negotiation of time and form. Though novelists of the eighteenth century, according to Stuart Sherman, expressed ambivalence toward diurnal form by reflecting “both a gravitation . . . and a calculated resistance to it” (224), Defoe’s diurnal record—Crusoe’s journal—eventually dissolves under the weight of religious conversion, giving way to both “textual authenticity” (233) and a “topos of narrative futility” (234). Sherman’s textually based criticism convincingly argues that the “dialectic of diurnal form—the opposition between copious continuity and critical selectivity—carried over into the novel early, and shaped it in important ways” (224).

Crusoe’s journal does indeed fall short of meeting the demands of novel time, but the sum of Crusoe’s parts is greater than the whole of the text. In Defoe’s gestalt, Crusoe exists both historically and beyond the scope of temporal limits, existing simultaneously as paperback hero, spiritual autobiographer, and capitalist ideologue. To exist both within and beyond time, as Erich Auerbach explains, is to be “simultaneously something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future” (64).⁴⁵ Thus, Crusoe writes about the past within a chronology that *simultaneously* denies that chronology any meaning beyond the “will be” of the future. In this sense, Crusoe is also a post-historical, disembodied prosthetic (metaphor) of the eighteenth century; he is islanded in the way the eighteenth century is stuck between the religious assumptions guiding seventeenth-century perceptions of time as eternal creation and the nineteenth-century’s internalized eternity of individual

consciousness. Between *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Prelude*, in other words, time in the eighteenth century worked like a broken clock—right twice a day and yet unreadable.

Without the end assurance of eternity to confer meaning on the middle, the eighteenth century had to forage transcendence from somewhere else. As former consolations of life-everlasting were slowly erased, swept away by linear chronology as the ultimate measure of man's existence, Rousseau articulates the lasting sting of time's complicity in the betrayal of life. In the mid-century *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Rousseau writes: "Always ahead of us or behind us, our feelings recall the past which no longer exists or anticipate the future which often is not to be. There is nothing solid to which the heart can attach itself" (32). Rousseau seems unwilling to settle for the idiosyncratic, for temporal distinctions that are disconnected from affect and experience. To achieve freedom from Locke's notion of sovereignty and sameness—"the same self now it was then" (II 55)—Defoe may therefore have indulged in non-linear, non-causal thinking to recover what had been lost. For George Starr, causality is undermined in *Robinson Crusoe* by casuistry, leading to a series of disjointed fragments that "tend to be connected chronologically, not causally" (*Casuistry* x). For David Marshall, linearity in *Robinson Crusoe* is distilled into a tension between the 'now' of the island narrative and the 'then' of autobiographical fiction. Crusoe's present-tense inscription onto the calendar—"I come on Shore here on the 30th of September, 1659"—not only doubles as a journal entry, according to Marshall, but "preserves the instantaneousness of a present experience despite the fact that it is actually retrospective" (901).

In the long shadow of temporal dislocation cast without origin or cause, Defoe's novel, like Rousseau's heart, finds nothing to which to attach itself. Though *Robinson Crusoe* runs the risk of episodic overkill, the chronology that Starr points to as Defoe's method of coherence is itself subject to scrutiny. What can happen only once in a person's life, may happen several times in a person's *Life*. Defoe achieves transcendence by writing Crusoe into the novel over and again, by "telling the same life story in different modes" as

Marshall notes, drawing specific attention to Crusoe's many sublimated acts of autobiographical inscription. Moreover, Crusoe's "deliverance" from the sea mirrors his deliverance from sin and death, suggesting that "different modes" may occur at both thematic and narrative levels. Though Crusoe has the resilience of any antagonist in a horror film—he simply won't die—his (narrative) renewal and (religious) rebirth happen so many times that one begins to question his authority to reproduce the past as past. In Crusoe's elusive chronology, events plotted along micro-levels of minute description seldom occur only once, producing a chronology that houses Auerbach's "will be" and "has always been." The recurrence of events makes recuperation of the past difficult for it posits a second temporality that is bound to undo the first. As a result, the fragility of consciousness in time is less a "fact," as Ermarth argues, than a certainty Defoe demands his reader accept, and accept from the start. Defoe's novel thus begins, "I was born in the year 1632" (5), giving Crusoe's existence a specific beginning and historical origin. But the character of Robinson Crusoe—the character that *will be* Robinson Crusoe, for example, and not the Robinson Kreutznaer, "by the usual corruption of words" (5), that he might have been—eludes historical specificity, for Crusoe exists outside of history and inside the timeless realms of imagination, fiction, and desire.

Crusoe's navigation of sacred and secular time in *Robinson Crusoe* produces aporias that not only disclose the fractured and tenuous nature of consciousness in time, but also show it searching for local (temporal) and religious (atemporal) compatibility. The two times are inseparable (laminated) yet ultimately contradictory (distorted). As Vincent Pecora argues in *Secularization and Cultural Criticism*: "The society that produces Enlightenment never fully outgrows its desire for religious sources of coherence . . . and continually translates, or transposes them into ever more refined and immanent, but also distorted and distorting, versions of its religious inheritance" (22). The lamination that wraps without reconciling Crusoe's identity thus both preserves and spoils the clarity of the picture beneath—the "I" that binds, illuminates, and distorts Crusoe's worship as he moves

toward the limits of the secular. As a syndrome, *Robinson Crusoe* thus presents an historical character who demands an ahistorical reading that is simultaneously tied to and at odds with the linearity of the reading process. Somewhere between this world and the “angelick” world of visions yet-to-be, Crusoe’s life is historicized by chronological time. Yet chronological time remains surreptitiously linked to Crusoe’s thoughts of deliverance and desires for life eternal that simultaneously deny the time of chronology any meaning beyond the “will be.”

Now, No More, Not Yet

In addition to worlds yet to come, or the “country infinitely beyond” that Crusoe spies in “Angelick Visions” (42), the “I” of autobiography is only ever an “I” yet-to-be. As Bakhtin explains, “I can remember myself, I can to some extent perceive myself through my outer sense, and thus render myself in part an object of my desiring and feeling—that is, I can make myself an object for myself. But in this act of self-objectification, I shall never coincide with myself—I-for-myself shall continue to be in the act of this self-objectification, and not in its product” (*Author* 38). The storytelling that contributes to the emplotment of “I,” or the organization of its origins and ends, derives for Bakhtin from an aesthetic impulse to give form to the mute and chaotic experience of life—in Crusoe’s wordless speech, “the word had no sound, the thing was so remote” (76). Bakhtin and Ricoeur seem to agree that narratives give aesthetic coherence to identities, but Bakhtin differs from Ricoeur by insisting that the perspective of another human being, or the internalized other of consciousness, is necessary to validate the I-for-myself that is otherwise “aesthetically unreal” (*Author* 188). In other words, a third-person perspective is needed to validate identity, a validation which in turn grants cohesion, stability, and continuity not only to life, but to the novel as a whole. Instead of getting to the verb, so to speak, Crusoe projects onto humanity questions he cannot answer about himself, i.e. “What am I?” He also records his experience as “memorandum” but seldom moves beyond the borders of his own limited perspective to explain what those experiences mean. Yet, Bakhtin’s and

Ricoeur's analyses would "be meaningless," writes Mark Muldoon, "without our prior immersion in the action of life and hence, the felt passage of time" (186). Crusoe must re-imagine the configuration of time in narrative form in order to translate his strange and surprising adventures into something meaningful by charting the internal changes that follow from experience, but without corrupting "the felt passage of time," as his timekeeping has a tendency to do.

Recalling Ricoeur, "the act of telling a story can transmute *natural* time into a specifically *human* time, irreducible to mathematical, chronological 'clock time'" (RR 463). The possibility of human time evolves from language, and Ricoeur acknowledges that language is not a transparent tool of communication, but rather mediated by "the seemingly senseless signs offered to interlocution" (*Freud and Philosophy* 429). Elsewhere, he notes that the self understands and possesses itself only through "the fakery of immediate consciousness" (*Conflict of Interpretations* 243). For "human time" to emerge from "the fakery" of Crusoe's consciousness, his narrative must transform the time of human action and thought into something meaningful, which requires an intentional reorganization of discrete moments into a unified whole. Crusoe accomplishes this rhetorically by offering the possibility of what could have been instead of confirming what actually is or was.

When introducing the journal, for example, Crusoe praises the timeliness of its writing, "for indeed at first I was in too much hurry . . . in too much discomposure of mind, and my journal would ha' been full of many dull things" (56). He takes refuge in being spared the record of his earliest impressions and reactions, for "I ran about the shore, wringing my hands, and beating my head and face, exclaiming at my misery, and crying out, I was undone, undone" (56). By postponing the journal until having first secured the fundamental provisions of food and shelter, Crusoe could calmly record in tranquil recollection the peril of surviving what nobody else did. The rhetorical device of *occupatio* (or *paralipsis*) reduces Crusoe's intention to a flourish, however, for by writing what he claims to have not written, he has obviously written it.

But the journal itself is also written retrospectively, evidenced by entries like November 6th, where he writes: “After my morning walk I went to work with my table again, and finish’d it, tho’ not to my liking; nor was it long before I learn’d to mend it” (59). Had the journal been a daily account, the sentence should have ended before the semi-colon. Again, on June 16th he recounts going to the shore and finding a turtle: “I might have had hundreds of them every day, as I found afterwards” (69). The journal is Crusoe’s initiative to give shape, meaning and coherence to his life on the island, but the journal frustrates that initiative because Crusoe has fictionalized the history of his writing it. Though he acknowledges the journal is only a copy, his references to when he began keeping a journal and why he stopped suggest that the journal coincided with his island life. Crusoe is eighty-seven when he writes *The Life*; he is eighty-seven when he writes the journal. If he seems troubled by the fact that day-to-day reportage is less interesting than working with time in more imaginative ways—in the two entries above, the words “afterwards” and “before long” reference time in ways that daily entries cannot—he arrives at this conclusion by observing that the fictionalized account of his journal’s history and writing creates a temporality at odds with “the just history of fact” that he calls *Robinson Crusoe*. Finding the journal a failed means of recuperation in the telling of his tale, he subsequently abandons the journal and opts for the kind of narrative that is quintessentially modern and novelistic.

But the temporal registers of *Robinson Crusoe* contain several other vantage points that produce temporal (historical) and non-temporal (eternal) perspectives, creating an uneven distribution of time that allows for the simultaneity of disparate occurrences and objects. The text moves uneasily for most modern readers between and among, for example, salvation and pigeon fat, organized goods and “horrors of the soul” (79), corn bread and killing, cannibalism and beer. For contemporary readers of Defoe, disparity in the proximity of unlikely things may not have seemed unnatural or unseemly because time was still being worked into a linear model, owing largely to the newspaper and daily

dissemination of time itself. The advent of print culture, Newtonian physics, and scientific determinism all played a part in the aesthetic impulse to make sense of the silent little scream that passes through every existence, desire and effort. In terms of the novel, the paratactic nature of the periodical and the newspaper—each issue or article able to stand on its own—combined with scientific, metaphysical, and mathematical fictions that imaged time as linear, unified, and irreversible, failed to accommodate configurations of time in the novel. There was no place on time’s arrow for an “historical present,” no place for narrative identity to say who, or what, one is.

John Locke was committed to the notion and necessity of objective measurements of time, arguing that without them, “a great part of our Knowledge would be confused, and a great part of History be rendered very useless” (*Essay* 113). Defoe may not have been acquainted with Locke’s text, but *Robinson Crusoe* suggests he harbored doubts about the essentializing role of time’s rule-bound grammar in the emergence of history and knowledge. Crusoe’s running out of ink suggests as much, for it brings the objective measures of journal time (journal-ism) to a close. Defoe’s doubt about the ability of measured duration to adequately tell Crusoe’s story, however, begins to manifest itself before the journal ends, as dates begin to crowd one another and entries are compiled. “May 10, 11, 12, 13, 14,” for example, constitutes a single entry while “the 3rd of January to the 14th of April” is altogether remanded to an italicized footnote in paragraph form (61). The fractured nature of form in the journal’s system of dating may be symptomatic of Defoe’s finding objective measures of time inadequate to account for any *Life* or life.

Because identity includes a past woven into a present that simultaneously imagines a future, identity is not merely sequential or locked into a ‘now,’ ‘not-yet,’ and ‘no-more’ paradigm. It can be all these times at once, meaning identity is irreducible to objective measurement alone. Defoe finds himself trying to define the nature of identity through constructions of fictional time and to localize the latter’s difference from serial publications. In doing so, he discovers that he must abandon time’s arrow (and Journal) to

science, and work instead toward emplotment, or any narrative act, Ricoeur explains, that “extracts a configuration from a succession” (TN I: 66). In the journal entries noted above concerning the turtles and chair, a few reckless adverbs do the trick. They configure the mind of Crusoe and guide the reader’s experience toward an aesthetic understanding, for it is the essence of plot in general to bring together “goals, causes, and chance within . . . the temporal unity of a whole and complete action” (TN I: ix). The disparity between events, goals, causes, and chance in Defoe’s first novel makes *Robinson Crusoe* especially suited for studies in temporality. In fact, Defoe ultimately confronts what A. A. Mendilow would later define as the authenticating aspect of fiction: “Every good novel has its own temporal pattern and values, and acquires its originality by the adequacy with which they are conveyed or expressed” (63). All other techniques and devices of fiction, ranging from structure and language to plot and theme, are reducible to the novelist’s treatment of time (63). Defoe intuits but never resolves the problematic of how to bring a blank page to life when time is the only available ink, and prose the only available tool.⁴⁶

To Think That This Was All My Own

Defoe pours Crusoe into a seventeenth-century moral mold of man as superior to nature and inferior to God. For Crusoe, “’tis certain I was superior” (183) to the archetypal other Defoe helps create, but Crusoe maintains a deference to God, for “he did not call me to take upon me to be a judge . . . much less an executioner of his justice” (183). For “the poor affectionate creature” given the moniker Friday by the called-upon Crusoe (189), capitalist and religious indoctrination is so nearly complete as to be mistaken for loyalty: “Me die, when you bid me die, Master” (183). Crusoe gets to decide what counts as human and what does not, but his authority extends beyond his own species and into the flora and fauna that Crusoe exploits for monetary gain and kills for sport (233). Prior to Friday’s arrival twenty-six years into Crusoe’s island life, and harboring regrets about a youth misspent in rebellion and sin, Crusoe dwells frequently upon the state of his soul. His historical presence—the where and when of his circumstances—merges often

enough with thoughts of deliverance and salvation, but as Crusoe begins to “seriously consider” the state of his soul, external realities and appearances fade (53). What the island looks like, or how things appear—the qualities of light, texture, or depth that give definition to objects—are supplementary considerations left to readers’ imagination. Few descriptions of the island include assessments of its aesthetic appeal. Upon climbing a hill to better survey the Caribbean coast, for example, Crusoe “perceiv’d a strong . . . a most furious current, which run to the *east*” (110), and that is all. Unlike later poets of eighteenth-century sentimentalism, whose loco-descriptive modes of poetry eventually fused with the topos of memory fueled by nineteenth-century romanticism, Crusoe’s observations turn upon a pragmatic and scientific objectivity that seldom disclose a deeper sense of place. There are certainly no breathtaking scenes, no Polaroid moments in Crusoe’s *mise-en-scene*. Only the “sublime,” a highly charged aesthetic in eighteenth-century moral codes, rumbles close to the surface as Crusoe waits out the “terrible” earthquake that leaves him feeling “like one dead or stupify’d” (65).

The novel’s ironic lack of aesthetic attention to the geologically unique profile of the island makes *Robinson Crusoe* a novel concerned less with place than with time. I am not suggesting that place is ignored altogether or that time takes precedence through a negation of place; rather the novel exhibits a preference for ‘when’ something happens (or doesn’t happen), as opposed to ‘where’ it happens unless that ‘where’ is figured into what is calculable, e.g. where is the best place to hide, pray, plant seed, or sleep. The notion of selfhood is gaining cultural pertinence in the early eighteenth century owing to Locke’s delineation of the faculties of the mind, but Defoe’s concern with moral causes and effects takes precedence over character invention and intention, as *Robinson Crusoe* is more emblematic than “real.” Kevin Seidel, in fact, calls Crusoe the “great avatar of our age” (637), a fitting nomenclature for a body in search of a soul. George Starr describes Defoe’s characters in general as interesting but inaccessible: “They tell us directly rather little about themselves or their external world, but they create an illusion of both by projecting

themselves upon their world in the act of perceiving it” (280). If Crusoe sounds a universal chord undistinguished by personality or cultural particularity, he draws that chord from a single note because Crusoe is not only intrinsically human, but an *individual*, in Lukacs’ terms, “the product of estrangement from the outside world” who strives to create a world that fits disparate parts together (66). Yet Crusoe remains more iconic than human because his (intrinsically human) individuality lacks a fundamental interiority. As Leo Dambrosch explains, “So long as we imagine ourselves looking outward with Crusoe, we see what he sees and feel what he feels. . . . If we try to look into [Crusoe], we find ourselves baffled” (195). The cult status that eventually accrues to Crusoe as iconic personality happens many years after the novel’s publication, conceived by and for generations other than Defoe’s.

That questions of personality, taste, or aesthetics seldom emerge from a post-Reformation, conversion tale of human resilience and survival should not shock. In the dull momentum of life, Crusoe explains, “with patience and labour I went thro’ many things; and indeed every thing that my circumstances made necessary to me to do” (92). Necessity informs his pragmatism, while his perceptions remain universally beholden to what nourishes continuity and life. Crusoe’s perceptual language is tied to instinct, in other words, and instinct is often antithetical to logic or rationale. Heroic acts are sometimes accompanied by the observation that the individual who did the act didn’t think about what he or she was doing. They just did it. Survival instincts as such may serve as catalyst of change, altering an individual’s system of values and beliefs, and affecting his or her behavior as a result.

When Crusoe attempts escape from Sallee, for example, he tells one of the men tossed overboard: “Make the best of your way to shore, and I will do you no harm, but if you come near the boat I’ll shoot you thro’ the head; for I am resolved to have my liberty” (20). The invested threat of this utterance presents a different, more desperate, Crusoe than the Crusoe who, early in the novel, seems the perfect candidate for graduate school,

equipped with all the moral goods, health, family, and money necessary for settling into a middle-class life of law and study, subsisting as it were “between the mean and the great” (6) and sliding “silently and smoothly thro’ the world, and comfortably out of it” (6). Crusoe is moreover remorseful for not heeding his father’s advice to seek the “middle station.” Once he is confronted with turbulent weather while sailing his first voyage, he notes, “All the good counsel of my parents, my father’s tears and my mother’s entreaties came now fresh into my mind, and my conscience, which was not yet come to the pitch of hardness which it has been since, reproach’d me with the breach of my duty to God and my father” (9).

Crusoe takes responsibility for the decisions he has made, but he also notes the temporary nature of self-reproach; the consequences borne of his choices will eventually wring remorse and regret from his thoughts, and he will dispose of a conscience altogether. But Crusoe also suggests that threats to bodily integrity and fears of dying are not enough to harden a conscience; for Crusoe, his moral compass is changed irrevocably by his captivity and subsequent loss of freedom, prompting him to level the murderous threat noted above. Once upon the island, Crusoe’s illness launches a second round of thoughts concerning guilt and retribution: “When my spirits began to sink . . . and Nature was exhausted with the violence of the fever [sic]; conscience that had slept so long, began to awake, and I began to reproach my self with my past life, in which I had so evidently, by uncommon wickedness, provok’d the justice of God to lay me under uncommon strokes, and to deal with me in so vindictive a manner” (72-73). Void of all but death itself, Crusoe’s former identity as the mariner of York who “would always go on board in the habit of a gentleman” (15) no longer fits.

In the present malaise, shackled first with chains and next by illness, Crusoe bears all the deathbed scars of uninvited change, a realization that prompts him to prayer, “the first prayer, if I may call it so, that I had made for many years” (73). Crusoe’s only recourse is to ritual, in other words, but the time of ritual—circular and self-contained—is not the

lived time of experience and retrospection that narrative, especially autobiography, condones and privatizes. Because ritual evokes mythic time and the time of immortality, Crusoe is dehistoricized, thrown back into the mythic loop where time as a continuum ceases and temporal disjunctiveness begins. The reader must subsequently settle for a series of events that may not be guided by meaningful patterns, events that may in fact seem unrelated and arbitrary. The reader, like Crusoe, is bounced along from event to event, from case to casuist case, without knowledge of the outcomes or awareness even of their relevancies. In this way, *Robinson Crusoe* and its fragmented, disjunctive form reads much like epistolary fiction.

But Crusoe changes in other ways. Once on the island and recovered from illness, his changing system of values becomes apparent when he finds a parcel of money and other “nasty sorry useless stuff” (103) while rummaging the wreck: “They had been of no manner of value to me, because of no use” (103). Although Crusoe censures the “vice of covetousness” (103), he pockets the money all the same, and whatever pleasure he admits of finding on the island invariably merges with ownership, as he explains later: “I descended a little on the side of that delicious vale, surveying it with a secret kind of pleasure, to think that this was all my own, that I was king and lord of all this country indefeasibly, and had a right of possession” (80). Crusoe’s need for accumulation and patent ownership, along with his newly defined system of worth—“all I could make use of, was, all that was valuable” (103)—persists and applies, not only to things (and persons) in the world, but to the principles of narration. If style must be present in the text, the base derivatives of utility and function supply its value, for utility and function must be achieved at the level of language if Crusoe’s silent and solitary life is to be heard, its narratability to be believed.

“What [Narrative] Need Had I?”

Crusoe’s story and the narratability of his life are complicated by Defoe’s temporal designs in the novel. Once Crusoe begins his island narrative and provides exhaustive

accounts of tasks accomplished during the first thirteen days of his stay, he abruptly interrupts the chronology of this narrative to begin anew: “And now being to enter into a melancholy relation of a scene of silent life, such perhaps as was never heard of in the world before, I shall take it from its beginning, and continue in its order” (52). Here, in the pages leading up to the journal, readers become aware that events already reported will be reported again, though Crusoe offers no explanation for the return to the beginning. Stuart Sherman suggests that Defoe was confronted with a crisis in representation “as [Crusoe] labors both to represent and to interpret his experience in retrospect” (233). By introducing the journal, Sherman notes, Crusoe “is opting away from the task-oriented model that has posed his present narrative problems in favor of a time-governed form better suited to the representation of concurrent tasks and ‘Thoughts’” (229).

Defoe’s rhetorical gesture, however, his narrative attention toward narrative acts of writing and employment—“I shall take it from its beginning”—mirrors Crusoe’s own growing concern about timekeeping early in his island stay. “After I had been there about ten or twelve days,” he writes, “it came into my thoughts, that I should lose my reckoning of time for want of books and pen and ink . . .” (52). As I suggested earlier, Crusoe’s objective measures of keeping time interfere with the lived experience of time, in Bergsonian terms of “pure duration,” and further prove inadequate in the production of new narrative time. In the absence of pen and ink, which Crusoe will later salvage from the wreck, he constructs a calendar, “my . . . weekly, monthly, and yearly reckoning of time,” to prevent the anticipated loss of time (52). Crusoe’s express desire to restart the narrative echoes his desire to construct the calendar, as both journal and calendar supply a chronometry that Crusoe tracks by day and fills with story; however, the journal and calendar internally disrupt both Crusoe’s states of consciousness and the chronology that has already been textually established. The new narrative mapping that will launch the journal and recount the silent life is introduced to readers after numerous events have been reported and after the reader has settled into the island plot. The problem endemic

to eighteenth-century time and form is again revisited because 'after' is antithetical to 'before,' while both temporal registers are understood as unalterable, irreversible. Once orientations of time are reorganized with disregard for chronology and sequential ordering, distinctions among past, present and future are made obscure. "Tomorrow, I went to the park," for example, makes grammatical sense but renders a useless semantic. For the reader, disparate events in the novel become disparate readings of the novel, ultimately troubling the interpretive process.

For Bergson, the possibility of a confused temporality is not only rare but desirable. For Ricoeur, such a time smacks of mysticism. The difference between the two theorists derives from Bergson's metaphysical assumption that time is an *a priori* condition of thought and language and that duration is limited to an experience exclusive and subjective. In the absence of sequence, which Bergson's theory allows, any given moment at any given time may stand alone, making Ricoeur's historical present an impossible proposition. Without temporal demarcations, the dubious and displaced moment disassembles the asymmetry of time (moving in one direction) because there can be one moment *or* another, but there cannot be both. Without the possibility of two moments, seen either as simultaneous or sequential, the relationship of time to intervals of duration fundamentally disappears, taking with it the possibility of a third time. What comes sooner or later, earlier or after, before or meanwhile, cannot be decided because time can no longer be narrated in ways that are intelligible.

In an effort to renew the relationship of sequence and duration, Crusoe builds the calendar *after* being on the island "ten or twelve days." Similarly, Crusoe launches the journal *after* he organizes his goods. The journal itself is written many years *after* his rescue, as evidenced by the many redactions, interpolations, compressions and omissions that displace its temporal register from the present of journal writing to the past of retrospective biography. In the after-ness of Crusoe's narration, time serves as the successive orderability of life and action, meaning time fulfills what is generally understood to be its obligation

and function. It allows Crusoe to order his actions. Yet, in Crusoe's construction of these timekeeping devices—journal and calendar—time is quarantined and made explicit because his actions are directed toward managing time in ways that are visible. In other words, Crusoe employs temporal, i.e. grammatical, markers to order the sequence of his experience, but his experience is wholly consumed with constructing objects that track time.

Writing both *in* time and *about* time, Crusoe turns time into an object of contemplation that is simultaneously authored by the time it takes to narrate that contemplation, preserving both the subjective and objective experience of time. Seen differently, time is synonymous with autobiography here as time both authors the text and serves as its theme. But time doubles in yet another way. Time in the text (time as author) allows Crusoe to plot and order his actions—"after ten or twelve days"—but time also orders Crusoe's space. From "a large post . . . set up on the shore . . . upon the sides . . . everyday a notch" (52), Crusoe's calendar assumes the shape of a cross, but only according to Crusoe's report since a single post, no matter how large, does not a cross make. Extending beyond the physical space of the shoreline, the horizon, and natural environment, then, the calendar signifies an otherworld of timeless time, but Crusoe also manipulates the physical page itself. With the advent of the journal, the text we are holding (and imaginatively inhabiting) also changes shape, as block paragraphs give way to dated entries of varying length. Visually, the printed page seems to turn from a barrage, a sea wall of print, to a fence lettered with numbers and holes. Similarly, the beach turns from secular landscape to a sacralized time-space continuum, literally transformed into and by a calendar meant to mirror the Christian symbol of persecution, death, and rebirth. At bottom, time becomes visible, a material product ordering the action and bringing both kinds of time—structural (narrative) and material (calendar/journal)—to view at once.

Yet, as the island life of Robinson Crusoe is told again, repeated forward from "its beginning," so too will the reader's history be revisited and revised. For modern readers,

row after row of the same may grow not only corn, but tedious. In *Boredom*, Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that all forms of writing and reading are efforts to avoid tedium, to stave off that “essential category of experience” known as boredom (23). In fact, she writes, “all endeavor of every kind takes place in the context of boredom impending or boredom repudiated and can be understood as impelled by the effort to withstand boredom’s threat” (2). The literary history of boredom is traceable to Defoe for reasons that coincide with Spacks’s. In keeping the “journal of every day’s employment” (56), Crusoe may have been wrestling with an encroaching sense of boredom that, in the eighteenth century, translated into “moral failure,” according to Spacks (37). The journal may have been Crusoe’s attempt to thwart this impending doom, and to assure his readers of the same, but boredom is also a state of mind that implies a differentiation of time. Listing several causes for boredom’s status as a new concept (if not a new event) in the eighteenth century, Spacks explains boredom in terms of a new relation to time (19). Boredom, and the threat of boredom, resulted in time’s compartmentalization—as examples, she cites ‘work time’ and ‘leisure time’: “Once kinds of time . . . become sharply distinguished, further differentiation proves necessary” (19).

Boredom, a potential side-effect of leisure, presented a new relation to time that precipitated further temporal divisions. Spacks notes that the advent of broad scale entertainments, from puppet shows to equestrian circuses and canary breeding, were efforts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to keep leisure from devolving into corrupt moral behavior. These events and activities were “helping spectators or participants to separate spaces of time” (*Boredom* 19). Like Crusoe’s goods organized and made “so ready at my hand” by shelves, time is compartmentalized to maintain a good moral conscience. Crusoe, it seems, wants to ‘separate spaces of time’ by beginning the narrative again in journal form, which enables further differentiation of time in the form of dates, but which also proves futile.

Spacks's reading of boredom as developing partly in tandem with aristocratic and middle-class satiety may help to explain why Crusoe postpones writing the journal until his cave "look'd like a general magazine of all necessary things, and I had every thing so ready at my hand, that it was a great pleasure to me to see all my goods in such order, and especially to find my stock of all necessaries so great" (56). With desire sated in the propertied land of organized plenty, Crusoe has few needs not met by the external world. At the very least, he notes, "I had a tolerable view of subsisting without any want as long as I lived" (52). His contentment continues to grow as he considers what he has, which is what he needs, and what he lacks but can do without, including competitors to "dispute sovereignty or command with me." He is summarily convinced, dragging a gratuitous gratitude that does not last, that "I had no room for desire" (103). The one thing Crusoe has, in more abundance than he needs or wants, is time enough and "leisure to repent, [but] none to assist" (7, 73), as his father had warned when Crusoe was young and impressionable, "fill'd very early with rambling thoughts" (5). Content yet impoverished by remorse, Crusoe may be "condemn'd" (124) to the status of legendary stoic or capitalist ideologue, but Spacks's analysis of boredom offers the possibility that the great avatar of our age was simply middle-aged and bored. Pen and paper serve a purpose when enough has passed, but too much still seems like not enough.

But Crusoe has a different experience of tedium prior to and after the advent of the journal. Initially, Crusoe points to the tedium that accompanied his first year construction of a house. In cutting, carrying, and driving wood spikes into the ground, he notes "I found it . . . very laborious and tedious work," adding "But what need I ha' been concerned at the tediousness of any thing I had to do, seeing I had time enough to do it in, nor had I any other employment . . ." (53). Proceeding the journal, which ultimately charts Crusoe's conversion and the "pure productions of Providence" (63) that prompt the conversion, Crusoe announces that his third year on the island has come and gone, noting that "tho' I have not given the reader the trouble of so particular account of my works this

year as the first; yet in general it may be observ'd, that I was very seldom idle" (91). The activities that keep Crusoe busy include fulfilling his "duty to God," reading the Scriptures, searching for food, and "ordering, curing, preserving, and cooking" what he kills (91). From Crusoe's list of activities emerges the new and pseudo-converted Crusoe who continues to build his island paradise. But the division of time and labor in his third year—the year he skips over—brings him to a new evaluation of time and tedium that differs from his earlier, pre-conversion experience. In his attempt to grow corn, he discovers "the strange multitude of little things necessary," including the need for a fence to secure them, and the means to thrash, cure and save the corn (94-95). Crusoe's changing evaluation of time also revolves around time's division. Prior to his conversion, Crusoe had "time enough" to deal with whatever tedium presented; but confronted with the multitude of tasks necessary to grow corn, he writes, "All this . . . made every thing laborious and tedious to me, but that there was no help for; neither was my time so much lost to me, because as I had divided it, a certain part of it was every day appointed to these works" (95). Thus, Crusoe resolves threats of boredom and the implication of moral failure—"time so much lost"—through a division of time that the Journal precipitates and puts permanently onto paper but that fails to satisfy the post-conversion Crusoe of *Crusoe*. The visual alternatives made by the Journal to the physical space of the page were not enough. The differentiation of time required a new narrative tone. What this means is that Crusoe's need to keep track of time while on the island—journal, calendar—coincides with his need to control—thrashing, curing, saving—the elements of the island. Time and labor are therefore inseparable in Crusoe's negotiation of them. Together, they are inseparable further from Crusoe's identity, as he passes from sacred to profane time and back again. Explicit concerns about timekeeping, coupled with incessant thoughts about fences and fortifications, suggest that time is inseparable from the preservation of integrity and identity.

Mortal Ends

Although history demands driving hard, albeit imaginary lines between yesterday and today, between last night and last year, narrative crosses the bridge between mortal and cosmic time as it tells the story of Crusoe's emotional and physical response to the miserable hand he has been dealt. *Robinson Crusoe* is contemporary with the daily periodicals and newspapers that were introduced at the turn of the eighteenth century. Crusoe reflects a desire to track time in ways that conform to the genre of diurnal publication. Daniel Defoe, of course, was a journalist; his participation in brave new worlds of time and print is made obvious through Crusoe's various registers of timekeeping, the desire to record events and to explore the ideas underwriting them.

Defoe was also a religious man trying to reconcile what cannot be reconciled—the eternal, immeasurable time of God, and the measurable, brief time of the individual. This brevity is further amplified by statistical idioms that turn death and its causes into currency of the moment: One person dies every seven minutes from heart disease, for example, or fifty-three people die every year from falling out of bed! Yet literate and religious societies alike continue to read *Robinson Crusoe*, suggesting that Defoe reconciled something. One shocking case in point is that undergraduate students seem to “get” *Crusoe* more easily than contemporary fictions or even pulp. But if Defoe's text reconciles the middle-class imaginary with the capitalist regime that enables it, the novel's continued legacy may include a less complicated explanation.

Robinson Crusoe, an imaginative and quixotic little book, may map its moral coordinates along an axis of death and language, which is precisely where Ricoeur's third time becomes visible: “As soon as the individual comes up against the finite limits of its own existence, it is obliged to recollect itself and to make time its own” (*Reader* 465). This third time may disclose the arrival of an aesthetic in *Robinson Crusoe*, both man and novel, both then and now. The variable that captivates the audience of a third time is time's ubiquity in questions of self and stability. For Ricoeur, the self is a variable of time

and an index to narrative; the self poses the question of “who,” narrative offers an infinite number of answers. In terms of self, Ricoeur dismissed Hume by suggesting that Hume sought “what he could not hope to find—a self which was but sameness? And was he not supposing the self he was not seeking?” (*Oneself as Another* 128). Crusoe supposes the self, the novel delivers the sameness. Defoe’s narrative arrival of time and self answered to the demand for accountability. And the eighteenth century had launched its search for the subject, for the self that may or may not be “supposed,” but that invariably asks who.

NOTES

¹ In *Telling Time*, Stuart Sherman provides an overview of seventeenth-century innovations in chronometry, noting that Christiaan Huygens's invention of the pendulum regulator in 1656 made timekeeping more precise, but that changes to the clock's escapement, the mechanism that produces the sound of a clock, did not take place until the mid-1670's. Sherman demonstrates how eighteenth-century writers were encoding time as pattern and sequence following changes in the escapement, but "in such a way as to insist that what is the most salient feature of the clock's report is not simply the single sound but the running sequence" (3).

² *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1: *An Introduction* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980): 58. Foucault uses the term in relation to rituals of confessions mandated by the Catholic church in 1215 and not to late seventeenth and eighteenth century spiritual autobiography, but conversion narratives endemic to such autobiographies harbor the same confessional bent.

³ By the time of Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* in 1771, colonial expansion has garnered some resistance, but the criticism that followed remained equivocal. In the novel, for instance, the main character expresses concern, during a conversation with Edwards, about British imperialism: "You tell me of immense territories subject to the English: I cannot think of their possessions, without being led to enquire, by what right they possess them. You enumerate the spoils of those victories; they are covered with the blood of the vanquished!" (118-119). Resistance to colonial expansion in this instance is clear and unequivocal; however, the chapter's title undermines its credibility: "The Man of Feeling talks of what he does not understand.—An incident" (117).

⁴ Sherman 2. The changing sensation and pattern in the 17th century clock produced not only a change in diction, i.e. from 'jar' to 'tick, tick, tick', but also a change in iteration. As Sherman writes: "Here, the language that mimics the timepiece conspicuously *takes* time, and patterns it in such a way as to insist that what is the most salient feature of the clock's report is not simply the single sound but the running sequence" (3).

⁵ In *Customs in Common*, E. P. Thompson notes that the word custom, in the eighteenth century, was understood as what today we would call culture. He also notes that custom was an operative word often associated with common law, subject to precedents and rule. The word was especially influential in the field of industrial labor, where the custom of a trade could hold as much influence over people and their decisions as could "wages or conditions of work" (5). Over time, and especially by the end of the nineteenth century, however, custom had lost its connotations of ambience, and *mentalite*, and along with it a "whole vocabulary of discourse, of legitimatization and of expectation" (2). Thompson finds this change "symptomatic of the disassociation between patrician and plebeian cultures" (5).

⁶ John Brewer notes that literacy rates differed between men and women. In England at the turn of the eighteenth century, the literacy rate among men was forty-five percent, while the literacy rate among women was twenty-five percent. However, he reports that "the highest levels of literacy were recorded in London, where female literacy grew especially fast, rising from 22 to 66 per cent between the 1670's and 1720's" (168). Given *The Spectator's* popularity in London, Addison's reliance on cultural capital seems justified.

⁷ Pope, Johnson, and Wordsworth offered the most vocal dissent from what they considered to be degraded literary forms. Prose translated into the loss of poetry and of sophistication for both writers and readers. Moralists, on the other hand, worried less about literary tradition and more about the effects of the novel on human behavior, as novels had a pernicious way of upsetting traditional values and disturbing predictable ways of thinking, living, and believing. Too easily did novels tempt readers into wanting more from life than what they were told, by traditional authoritative voices, that they could expect. The novel, in so many words, posed a threat to obedience, piety, reason, and conventional social roles.

⁸ Maureen Harkin argues that combined influence of physiological response and inconsistency in the unfolding and reporting of events establishes a perceived authenticity and truth. (Introduction. *The Man of Feeling*. Ed. Maureen Harkin. Ontario and New York: Broadview Press, 2005.) Ann Jessie Van Sant also addresses the relation of fragmented forms to the role of the reader, but adds to the dialogue by suggesting that the centrality of reader response (in sentimental fiction) determined the kind of narrative that was produced, how it was received, and how the narrative itself was rendered supplementary. When bodily response takes precedence, as it does in sentimental fiction, “such an understanding of reading,” she writes, “affects the demands made on narrative: whatever coherence or continuity exists occurs in the reader’s experience, not in narrative form” (57). (*Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.) See also John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987); Brian Vickers “Introduction,” *The Man of Feeling*, Ed. Brian Vickers, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001); Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1986); John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

⁹ Paul Valery, qtd. in Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. Michael McKeon (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) 83. “Miniatures, ivory carvings, elaborated to the point of greatest perfection, stones that are perfect in polish and engraving ...all these products of sustained, sacrificing effort are vanishing, and the time is past in which time did not matter.”

¹⁰ See Hans-Joachim Voth’s *Time and Work in England 1750-1830* for an incredible survey of labor and consumer practices deduced from court documents and eye-witness testimony reported in the Old Bailey Sessions Papers and the Northern Assize Depositions, the former documents copied in shorthand by Thomas Gurney in 1748.

¹¹ See Maria Torok, “Fantasy: An Attempt to Define Its Structure and Operation,” *The Shell and the Kernel*, ed. and trans. Nicholas T. Rand, Vol. 1 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 28-55.

¹² See Patricia Meyer Spacks’s *Boredom* for a discussion of how boredom was both cause and effect of self-evaluations and how “the inner life comes to be seen as consequential” (23) because of it.

¹³ On the prospect of myth, I defer to Terry Eagleton, who writes in *The Rape of Clarissa*, “Pamela, Clarissa and Sir Charles are not only fictional characters: they are also public mythologies, coordinates of a mighty moral debate, symbolic spaces within which dialogues may be conducted, pacts concluded and ideological battles waged” (4-5).

¹⁴ My choice of ‘antecedent’ to describe a timeline of ableist discourse is based upon Helen Deutsch’s and Felecity Nussbaum’s claim that not until the end of the eighteenth-century did such a discourse emerge, as it was then that “the absence or presence of physical or mental defect helped to define the very nature of the human species” (6). Lennard Davis also locates a cultural and historical transition of disability in the age of Samuel Johnson. Prior to Johnson, “disability per se did not exist,” while later it became “a modality used to explain a great deal” (“Dr. Johnson” 56).

¹⁵ Disability studies has been for some time advocating a space in its discourse for mental disability. In “‘Her Pronouns Wax and Wane’: Psychosocial Disability, Autobiography and Counter-Diagnosis,” author Margaret Price points to Andrea Nicki’s observation in “The Abused Mind” that the cultural demand for cheerfulness is an explicit disregard of the real difficulty of living with a disability. James Harlowe’s demand that Clarissa “cheerfully” obey his unreasonable demands enables a reading a Clarissa as disabled simply by virtue of her being a woman in a patriarchal culture, which is to say that ableist discourse fundamentally informs sexist discourse.

¹⁶ Brooks argues that the idea of closure is desire metonymically charged by the “deviance, extravagance, excess—an energy that belongs to the textual hero’s career and to the reader’s expectation” (108). This desire, that which moves narrative forward, “is ultimately, inexorably, desire *for* the end” (*Plot* 52).

¹⁷ As Thomas Beebee explains, the letter exceeds the function of narrative vehicle in epistolary fiction because it interrupts the transmission between audience and teller. By creating “noise” and becoming an object of interest in itself, “the letter as material signifier intervenes in the process of transmission and becomes the focus of our attention . . . [which] means that the contents of a letter will never be epic, mythic, or magical” (15).

¹⁸ See Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* and Irwin Gopnik, *A Theory of Style and Richardson’s ‘Clarissa’* for a comprehensive analysis of this temporal displacement.

¹⁹ In *The Holy and the Daemonic*, R. D. Stock argues that writers of the eighteenth century, such as Isaac Watts and John Dennis, were engaged in creating an aesthetic of the numinous just as the numinous was being eclipsed by the rationalizing project of the enlightenment. He extends this argument to include the “spiritual horror” found in the novels of Richardson, Radcliffe, Beckford and Lewis (259-513).

²⁰ Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, from which Lovelace draws his inspiration, adds to the irony of his choosing it. The play, originating from Homer’s *Iliad*, achieves its ironic effect, according to Walter Cohen, by “self-consciously drawing on the various ways of retelling the familiar story” (1823). Lovelace is ironically retelling the self-conscious retelling that the play quarters, supplanting the *Iliad* as source by making Shakespeare’s play the familiar story—the story that is, moreover, circulating in the familiar letter. Also, the resemblance between the names and characters of Cressida and Clarissa runs parallel to plot, as both characters have been abandoned by their fathers and pushed into the laps of men they don’t want.

²¹ Cressida, again, has no relation to these lines in the drama itself. “No man alive can love in such a sort / The thing he means to kill more excellently” (*Troilus and Cressida* 4.1 23-25).

²² Janet Altman, in *Epistolarity*, distinguishes between metaphoric and metonymic letters in amorous discourse, as the former, generated by the epistolary situation, “conjures up interiorized images and comparisons [of the lover],” while the metonymic letter stands for the lover once it falls into the hands of its recipient (19). Though *Clarissa* is a seduction novel, Altman points out that Lovelace’s conquest of Clarissa does not happen through an exchange of letters, for only six of the letters in the novel are exchanged between Clarissa and Lovelace (22). Her point is that both types of letters “act in specific catalytic and inhibiting ways upon the seduction process,” which is analogous to the ways in which time fundamentally alters the kind of narrative and resulting communication that *Clarissa* enables.

²³ Irwin Gopnik argues that Richardson’s writing to the moment—in spite of the deferral that is conditioned by the time it takes to write something, and the time required to actually live it—is a narrative technique that ultimately serves as “a faithful presentation of actual ‘lived time’ as opposed to the merely conventional narrative time” (67). Arguably, there is considerably more to narrative time than the ‘merely conventional,’ but Gopnik captures the spirit of the age and the role writing came increasingly to serve in the daily lives of ordinary people. If ‘psychological authenticity’ is possible, time is assumed to protect it.

²⁴ Paul Alkon makes a similar observation regarding Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *In The Labyrinth*, a novel that “challenges readers to locate events in time while also denying them the information essential for doing so” (7).

²⁵ George Cheyne, Richardson’s physician, felt that diversion was the best treatment for mental and physical disorders, and suggested Richardson buy a hobbyhorse to cure his ailments. Richardson seems to have concurred with Cheyne’s prescription for motion, as Richardson wrote to a friend: “As to my health, I write. I do anything I am able to do on purpose to carry myself out of myself” (*Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, London: 1804, 3:190-191). Current accounts of Richardson’s health suggest he had Parkinson’s disease, a chronic disorder of the central nervous system that may explain why his works are so long, i.e. ‘anything . . . to carry myself out of myself.’

²⁶ Richardson wrote conduct manuals before undertaking *Clarissa*. Conduct books were considered necessary to the education of women, which, for Nancy Armstrong, consisted of making “a woman desire to be what a prosperous man desires . . . a female” (59). Because these manuals appeared to have no political bias, “these rules took on the power of natural law, and as a result, they presented—in actuality, still present—readers with ideology in its most powerful form” (60).

²⁷ See Lennard Davis’s *Factual Fictions* for an intriguing survey on three types of (unconscious) methodologies he finds at work in studies concerning the origins of the novel. As Davis explains the three models—osmotic, evolutionary, and convergent—each method relates differently, and for Davis, inadequately, to intentionality, or linear constructions of cause and effect. He favors a discursive model that would allow room for an “ensemble” of texts, ranging from parliamentary statutes, advertisements, and handbills, to newspapers and letters (7). “In opening the field in this way,” he writes, “it is possible to trace a discourse which may be considerably wider, with different limits and rules than our modern conceptions of fiction and the novel would allow us to apply to the eighteenth century” (7). Such an approach does not remove the question of intentionality, but rather redefines it in terms of power structures and shifting power relations (9).

²⁸ Although the letter is received posthumously, Clarissa's observation on the status of tense remains true for all letters. In a sense, all letters written are received posthumously.

²⁹ Wordsworth, William. "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal," an eight-line poem written at Goslar in Germany during late fall or early winter of 1798-1799. For a deconstructive reading of the poem, see J. Hillis Miller's "On Edge: The Crossways of Contemporary Criticism." Miller argues that the poem does not allow for a hierarchical subordination of binary oppositions, meaning the poem "forbids" the possibility of a synthesis in its dialectic interplay of oppositions. Miller identifies eighteen semantic oppositions, but notes that the play of oppositions involves also the poem's syntactical and formal structure. The Wordsworth poems referenced throughout this essay are taken from the first edition of *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, edited by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984). In-text citations will identify Wordsworth's poems by books and line numbers when they prove more helpful than citing page numbers from *The Major Works*. Unless otherwise indicated, Wordsworth's prose materials—letters and essay—are taken from *The Major Works* and referenced by page numbers.

³⁰ "An Evening Walk" (ll 36-37)

³¹ "The Ruined Cottage" (ll 492).

³² In "The Ruined Cottage," Wordsworth's interlocutor denies that he is "a dreamer among men" because his tale of Margaret has more value than "a momentary pleasure never marked / By reason, barren of all future good" (225-226).

³³ See Norman Kemp Smith's *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* for a full discussion of why Kant's treatment of time "is the most vulnerable tenet in his whole system" (137).

³⁴ In writing about consolation in "Tintern Abbey," Marjorie Levinson argues that the "still sad music of humanity" scene "associates a freethinking resistance to ritual and institution with the creation of a rootless, dispirited populace, a menace to cultural values Wordsworth esteemed. This class is for Wordsworth a kind of metonym for all that threatens significant place and being" (144-45).

³⁵ The French Revolution influenced both generations of Romantic poets in their expressions of an apocalyptic sensibility voiced in such as Coleridge's *Religious Musings*, Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and Wordsworth's own *The Prelude*. The apocalyptic longings for escape from the harsh realities of existence that inform these works, and that generally accompany Romantic configurations of apocalypse, are subordinate here to apocalypse as a violent or overwhelming loss of time. Common to both types of apocalypse is the idea of paradigmatic change and the idea that life has been (or will be) irrevocably altered because of it. Apocalyptic thinking, however grounded, anticipates that life will never be what it once was.

³⁶ Charles Burney's review appeared in *The Monthly Review*, 2nd series on the 29th of June in 1799. Reprinted in *The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers*, 1972.

³⁷ In "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface to *Poems*" (1815), Wordsworth observes that reading a book invites enchantment and that time plays a paradoxical role in the reader's ability to access it. On the one hand, Wordsworth explains, reading offers a means of

recuperation in which old passions are regenerated and lost pleasures restored. In doing so, reading gratifies a desire to remember. On the other hand, reading a book offers escape from the unwanted spoils of this world by providing refuge in another. It gratifies a desire to forget. Implicit to both forms of readerly pleasure, memory becomes constitutive of the subjectivity that emerges as an effect of reading. But memory alone cannot sustain the producibility of the reading subject; something more is needed to substantively mediate the interpretive process through which remembering and forgetting are made possible. Accordingly, reading a book fosters a third term that, according to Wordsworth, is uniquely temporal. As spines bend and pages turn, books hold over readers the “power to make the present time vanish before them, and to throw the mind back, as by enchantment, into the happiest season of life” (*The Major Works* 642).

³⁸ Plot also refers, of course, to the dynamic established by prose narratives, especially the novel. The term “novel” was not circulating during Wordsworth’s time, however, and the idea of plotting was equally under-stood. This is not to say that “Tintern Abbey” is without a plot, for its narrative tendencies suggest as much; but the only leap worth taking here is to suggest that the end in “Tintern Abbey” is embedded in its beginning, but an end that relates only metaphorically to Wordsworth’s desire for immortality, which, of course, begins with the end that is death.

³⁹ Theodor Adorno argues that the absence of explicit social and political reference in modern lyric poetry should not preclude our looking into formal difficulties that do, albeit implicitly, offer resistance to what is culturally normative. I find this applicable to the Romantic lyric, in that the absence of actual death in “Tintern Abbey” should not discourage our looking into formal and stylistic devices that deal with death in an off-handed way, which might be the only, way. See Adorno, “Lyric Poetry and Society” (1957).

⁴⁰ Philip Larkin, “Ambulances” 1964.

⁴¹ James Boswell might have agreed with Weil, for in 1783 he wrote that “time is the most difficult of all subjects on which our thinking faculty can be employed” (*Hypochondriack* II 248). As for Weil, she never had to read this dissertation. If she had, time would have been the second most tragic thing.

⁴² Capital accumulation necessitates narratives of imperialism, for Crusoe’s labor is magically accomplished by half-starved workers, slaves and prostitutes both in Brazil and on the island; these individuals remain anonymous while Crusoe justifies the means of capital acquisition by denying the costs of deprivation. When nations follow suit, more means are justified and ever greater costs are incurred until, as Crusoe unwittingly notes, man finally becomes a squirrel, “hurry’d about, as differing circumstances present!” (124). He also observes a tightening in his own noose upon discovering his riches in England: “I had more care upon my head now, than I had in my silent state of life in the island, where I wanted nothing but what I had, and had nothing but what I wanted” (225).

⁴³ Mark Muldoon, in *Tricks of Time* (2006), notes that the philosophical development of the consciousness of self led to the temporalization of time, such that “after the Enlightenment period, the question of time becomes more and more a problem associated with the machinations of the epistemic-knowing subject. Philosophers and thinkers became more preoccupied with time as a basic constituent of human subjectivity rather than something independent of the subject” (13).

⁴⁴ Pike's article, "Time in Autobiography," published in 1976, does not acknowledge the work of Robbe-Grillet and other experimental writers that by then had worked to dissociate the linearity of the reading process from its representation in texts. By eliminating causal connections between events, for example, or in offering alternative narratives and forms of enumeration, such as lists, phone books, receipts, calendars, and schedules, postmodern interrogations of time leave Pike's assumption of linearity defensible but incomplete. Ursula Heise, for example, suggests that "a narrative structured in numerical terms . . . runs the risk of disintegrating into mere enumeration" (95), such that "narrative progression is replaced by a potentially infinite recursion that self-consciously foregrounds problems of narrative sequence" (96). At the same time, Pike may defend the reading process as linear because any connection and coherence that obtain in the mind of the reader, in spite of a writer's narrative or sequential manipulations, according to Heise, are "not dictated by any abstract logic other than that of the reading process itself" (97).

⁴⁵ Auerbach is referring to a medieval understanding of time that is radically different from our own because medieval time is non-linear and non-causal, vertical and not horizontal. The present of medieval time is less a moment between the past and the future and more of a fulfillment of what has been promised and what is yet to come. So, I'm not suggesting that Crusoe is reverting to a medieval time-scheme, but he does work aggressively against what Benjamin calls 'homogenous, empty time,' the antithesis to the medieval time (*Illuminations* 263-264).

⁴⁶ Cynthia Wall, in *The Prose of Things*, traces changes in eighteenth-century descriptive practices. The inadequacy of existing, familiar words to account for a proliferation of global commodities, she argues, is reflected in the increasing use of description throughout the century.

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