

Unwilled Lives:
The Etiology of Poverty in Eighteenth-Century Literature

by

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Affecting up to three-quarters of Britons in the eighteenth century, poverty was both a constitutive feature of the body politic and, for many, a disruptive, unpredictable force that, many feared, threatened to undo the fabric of civil society. This fear, I argue, was not of the poor in and of themselves, but what the poor represented: an anxious reminder of the unruliness of eighteenth-century bodies and spaces. This dissertation is about how advances in eighteenth-century medical understanding about the nature of the body and disease shaped attitudes towards the poor and informed poverty management strategies in British towns and cities. As understandings of illness moved away from a moral to a more recognizably modern medical framework, there was a corresponding shift in representations of the poor: away from lamenting their inherent immorality to speculating on how they might be improved, redeemed, and saved from their condition.

I argue that eighteenth-century novels, medical, and architectural discourse worked together to define and produce an ideal of subjectivity in the period that I call “the voluntary subject:” one for whom self-mastery is coextensive with security from uncertainty and the unforeseen, from accidents that violate the Enlightenment ideal that the project of cultivating the mind and body is a matter of choice, not of circumstance. The poor radically disrupt this ideal in their vulnerability, serving as a reminder of the porousness of bodies, and of the threats lurking in disordered urban environments. Pushing back against the popular idea of the autonomous Enlightenment subject, I argue for the importance of “the involuntary subject,” and ask the reader to consider how the poor were integral to consolidating an idealized model of voluntary subjectivity.

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Introduction: The poor in eighteenth-century literature and culture

I begin with the words of the sixteenth-century preacher William Perkins, whose rhetoric unlocks many of the themes that are central to my study of the correlation between representations of the poor and disease in discussions of the body politic in the eighteenth century. Speaking of “rogues, beggars, [and] vagabonds,” those people on the periphery of civil society, Perkins likens the poor to “rotten legges, and armes, that droppe from the body;” they “wander up and downe from yeare to yeare... to seek and procure bodily maintenance,” and have “no calling, but the life of a beast” (Lis and Soly 116). For Perkins, as for many of the authors I examine in this dissertation, the poor exist as a burden on the desirable, healthy operation of society, and deserve the appellation of “beasts” for their presumptive lack of rationality. While nominally addressing the indolent and criminal poor, Perkins’ metaphor addresses what is perhaps the central tension in class relations in the eighteenth century: on the one hand, the reliance upon the poor to supply all the labour necessary to society’s healthy functioning, and, on the other, the perception that they are fundamentally unreliable and a danger to civic harmony and wellbeing. It is no coincidence that the labouring poor are represented as the arms and legs, since practically nothing would get done without them.¹ The poor, after all, encompassed practically all of society apart from the upper classes: farmers, artisans, sailors, soldiers, and servants (Crawford 8). Setting aside for the moment the focus on “rogues, beggars, [and] vagabonds,” Perkins’ metaphor touches on a fundamental idea that carries forward through the eighteenth century: that the poor lack any meaningful capacity for self-direction. Peripheral from the mind and heart in this analogy, the poor have neither the capacity for self-determination nor the need: they have no real purpose

¹ Patricia Crawford provides a detailed breakdown of who exactly “the poor” included, which is worth quoting at length: “There were differences between men and women, and many subcategories, including rural and urban, arable and pastoral, north and south, and people of different ages. Some had settlements (formal entitlements to relief), while others were unsettled. The labouring poor included agricultural labourers, charwomen, hawkers, artisans, sailors, soldiers, and servants” (8). Mary Fissell, in her study of poor patients in eighteenth-century Bristol, defines the poor “as those who might have been at risk of dependency,” recognizing that “poor-ness,” so to speak, was a fluid category that was “very closely linked with life-cycle” (3). That is, a couple might have difficulty providing for their children in their early years, but find some stability later on; this stability might also then be threatened at some point. “Poorness” is not a rigid state, but a relative one that reflects the precariousness of life for many in the eighteenth century.

but fulfilling their instrumental role. The poor, according to Perkins, require the benevolent guiding hand of the well-educated, wealthy class – the mind and heart – without which they are but “rotten legges.”

Although writing in the sixteenth century, Perkins touches on ideas that carry through well into the eighteenth: the body’s role as an organizing metaphor in political discourse, and the period’s overwhelming interest in producing rational subjects. Michael Schoenfeldt provides a valuable analysis of “the widespread analogy between the state and the body” from the Middle Ages through to the eighteenth century, tracing the interplay between ideas about the organization of society and those of the nature of the body, in particular the organization and relation between its constituent parts (221). The analogy between the body and the state was a “primary strategy for making sense of the world,” and for sustaining political order. The notion that the body and the state shared a common nature was used as a means of stabilizing meaning and order in the political sphere, since “physiology allowed politics to assume the mantle of nature,” just as “politics bestowed upon the messy complexities of bodies the solemn dignity of deliberate social order” (221). Instead of a body characterized by the “subtle interdependence of related parts,” the organic metaphor – of the state as body – was imagined hierarchically, and naturalized the idea of the upper classes, or the mind, as the true seat of power (224). As Schoenfeldt argues, this metaphor, “buttressed by a pernicious blend of common sense and medical ‘fact,’” performed critical ideological work: it “successfully mystified domination as the tender and self-interested care of a head for its body,” and “managed to make other forms of government appear monstrous, deformed, or diseased” (232). The sharp contrast that Perkins draws between man and beast brings into focus the value that was placed upon the cultivation of rationality through education, and evidences the way in which attitudes towards the poor were predicated on a hostility towards the “lesser” organs of the body.

This hostility was not very well founded. Poverty in the eighteenth century was a fluid state that most people could expect to experience at some point in their lives, but it was one that was nonetheless freighted with concern over the person’s morality. These concerns expressed themselves in the popular distinction between the “deserving” and

“undeserving,” idle or improvident poor: those whose morality, situation, and conduct either entitled them to relief or to nothing at all. These distinctions were part of a broader cultural dialogue about the poor, but they also had a foothold in the law. As Steven King and Allannah Tomkins have shown, England’s poor laws distinguished between the impotent, those who required assistance because they could not work – whether due to age, disability, or disease, for example – and the indolent, those who could work but did not, for whatever reason (123). “The poor” was a diverse category, encompassing virtually everyone that today we would consider part of the working class.

The English Poor Laws were designed to contain the ubiquitous problem of poverty and to manage it as best as possible, with a view to discouraging vice and indolence. The purpose of the Poor Laws can be interpreted three different ways, according to economic historian Paul Slack: as a response to economic circumstances and population growth; because of changes in public attitudes about what could and should be done about and/or for the poor, inspired variously by humanism, Protestantism, or Puritanism; or because of governmental ambitions to control its subjects (3). Lynn Hollen Lees agrees that the origin of the poor laws can be found in “the intersection of humanist aspirations with rising economic hardship and state paranoia about the poor” (19). It is difficult to separate these motivating factors, as well as unnecessary; together, they allow for a more dynamic understanding of the array of pressures at work. However, such difficulties did not stop historical British writers from expounding with definitive certainty on all the social, economic, and political problems that the poor caused in Britain. Whether one focuses on their immorality, their indolence, or their lack of rationality and understanding, “the problem of the poor,” as it was understood in the eighteenth century, was principally one of upbringing and education.

The value and importance of a good education is at the forefront of doctor-philosopher John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), a child-rearing manual that also serves as an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the body proper and the body politic. Positioning *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* as a guide to those “who profess themselves at a loss how to breed their Children,” Locke imagines his work as nothing less than an indispensable service to his country, since “the Welfare

and Prosperity of the Nation” intimately depends on the proper education of its members (xii-xiii). The stakes could not be higher, as Locke argues that “nine Parts of ten [in the population] are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their Education” (4).

Education, in his view, was more than just book-learning. Certainly, it is important to educate the mind in order that a child may eventually become a reasoning adult, but one must also tend to their body: encouraging the child to play in the open air, so that they may become accustomed to heat and cold, and guarantee their bodies become hardier; dressing them in good clothing to ensure they do not get too warm or too cold, and that they are not too constricted in their movements; eating plainly and simply; getting enough rest; and ensuring that they make regular evacuations (12-23).² The connection between these issues – the organizing metaphor of the body politic and the increasing importance assigned to cultivating rational subjects – is in the theory and practice of medicine in the eighteenth century.

Notwithstanding scientific advances in the knowledge of the body proper throughout the eighteenth century, much of the knowledge of the body in this period, as it concerned daily medical practice and popular understanding, continued to be structured by the teachings of the ancients. Drawing on Hippocrates and Galen, the two greatest touchstones of medical understanding throughout the period, physicians understood the body according to the logic of humoral theory, in which health was a measure of the balance of the humours, and “treatments” generally involved expelling of the toxic afflicting substance (21). In addition to the four humours, physicians understood the importance of the six “non-naturals” to one’s overall health: air, motion and rest, sleeping and waking, food and drink, and the passions. Locke addresses all of these elements in his educational treatise, emphasizing with equal measure the importance of a child’s traditional education as well as the balance of their non-naturals. “A sound mind in a sound body, is a short, but full description of a happy state in this world,” and so one

² My intent here, in briefly discussing Locke’s views on education, is to gesture towards the broadly accepted view that the whole of one’s upbringing shaped the adult one would become, but especially the importance of the body in that formulation. If we accept that the body is so easily disrupted simply by being in the world of the eighteenth century, particularly if that body is a poor one, I ask what consequences these disruptions might hold for cultivating an idealized rational subjectivity, and how they might shape our readings of “poor” characters in eighteenth-century literature.

must take care to direct wisely all the “little, or almost insensible, impressions on our tender infancies, [since they] have very important and lasting consequences” for the rest of one’s life (6-7). Taken together, the balance of all of these elements was required to produce the ideal state of health. Locke, like most other practising physicians in the period, endorsed the wisdom of the ancients in his understanding of health.

Of course, matters of the health and illness had much wider significance beyond the body itself. As Roy Porter has shown in his extensive studies of medicine and disease in the eighteenth century, for this period “the body and healing practices... supply metaphorical commentary upon the wider world of politics and the body politic” (20). In this light, Locke’s prescriptions for child rearing are notable for how they outline a certain approach not only to family-making but to nation-building. The trope of disease or monstrosity afflicting the body politic became, particularly during the long eighteenth century, a common way for authors to talk about the dire consequences of an unruly population for the overall “health” of society. Representations of ill health, therefore, are typically manifestations of some kind of disorder on the part of the poor, whose bad habits, vices, or lack of industry – the cause of disorder depends on the nature of the problem being addressed by the speaker – imperil the present and future health of the individual or even the nation. In their grotesquerie, the poor served as a reminder of the manifold dangers of straying too far into vice. However, these representations were tempered by those of the virtuous, hard-working poor, whose characters exemplified the virtues of industriousness, plain diet, and exercise. Paradoxically, the poor represented the greatest impediment to social order at the same time that they supplied a model for a simple way of life: the disease as well as the cure. As Juliet McMaster argues, “disease in the novel is never morally neutral,” and neither are the poor (10).

Representations of the poor in eighteenth-century literature are consistent with what Deidre Lynch and Dror Wahrman have written about character and identity in the period. Lynch, in *The Economy of Character*, shows us how character was used to reinforce political and cultural hierarchies, wielding “images of the disfigured, overloaded body apotropaically, aiming to reinforce ostensibly natural proportions between land and money and between labour and commodities” (25). The grotesque

bodies of the poor helped to define more desirable, normative models of subjectivity: ones that communicate the importance of mastery not only over the mind and body, but also over one's immediate environment. In *The Making of the Modern Self*, Dror Wahrman makes the compelling case that our ideas about identity underwent a sudden, radical shift in the late eighteenth century, away from what he terms the "ancien régime" sense of identity as an essentially "mutable, malleable" thing to a more distinctly modern conception of identity primarily characterized by interiority (198). We see some evidence of this transformation in the level of detailed characterization found in William Godwin's novels, which are far more particularized than those we find in earlier representations of the poor, such as in Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, in which the poor serve as simple models of virtue and vice. More broadly, this shift is confirmed in the ways in which the relationship between class and poverty is imagined: away from the malleable notion of poverty as a "life-cycle stage" for many people, reflecting the notion that mastery over one's economic and social circumstances was subject to a great deal of flux, to one in the late eighteenth century where poverty is understood as more central to the truth of one's character: that the poor are poor because they are too fundamentally lazy or stupid to become anything more.

Despite Enlightenment ideals of the rational, autonomous subject, against which the poor were so often defined, it was widely understood that there were many ways in which one could be affected by persons and things beyond them. Certainly, anyone who lived in London, or who had even heard stories about living in London, understood the dangers that the city posed to one's virtue, besides all of the filth and disease that one would be guaranteed to encounter. Campaigns for urban reform in the eighteenth century sought to address this issue by focusing on remediating the irregular design, lighting, and cleaning of city streets and buildings. They found justification for their project in the firmly-held belief that they were ridding public spaces of hidden and apparent dangers to individuals' health, but also on the basis that they were helping to improve the circulation of goods and services: creating more rational, orderly spaces, and guaranteeing the production of more rational, ordered individuals, insulated from threat of accident and involuntary influence. The response of these urban reform-minded individuals gave

expression to the understanding that cities were not just filled with moral dangers, but physical dangers as well. No one could walk through London unaffected.

In recent years, eighteenth-century scholars have increasingly challenged this idea of autonomous subjectivity, most recently and influentially Sandra Macpherson and Jonathan Kramnick. In *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form*, Macpherson traces the co-evolution of the novel alongside developments in liability law, asking us to consider why it is that, in a period that makes self-consciousness into “the precondition for a peculiarly modern form of affiliation,” “novel characters are so often connected to others *accidentally*” rather than deliberately (3). Kramnick’s *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson* similarly complicates the idea of the rationally-directed, autonomous subject through his exploration of “the importance of... *externalism* in the literature and philosophy of the period” (6). Working against the argument that eighteenth-century ideas about subjectivity were primarily characterized by a preoccupation with inwardness, Kramnick points instead to “the largely unacknowledged role of external factors in the period’s conception of mind” (2). That is, instead of asking how desires or thoughts become the basis of actions, he is interested in how eighteenth-century writers understood and explored the relationship between mental states and things in the world: a relationship that seemed to be causal, even though the precise causal relationship was quite often unclear (7).

What I sought to address in this dissertation were those people whose lack of meaningful control over external factors in their immediate environment, and their “non-naturals,” was compounded by their lack of education and inclination to “superstitious” beliefs and practices: the poor. The poor as a class are relatively under-discussed in eighteenth-century studies. Of course, the labouring class poets are a glaring exception, but for my purposes I was less interested in the “exceptional” poor, as one might term them – the kind of poor people who are celebrated as examples of virtue and resilience – than in the unexceptional. If the eighteenth century is most famously, if also contentiously, the era of the rise of the individual, it only seems natural that we should grapple with the impact of poverty on the trajectory of this “individual” in the period’s literature and culture. Since the poor have nearly always been defined negatively as a

drain upon the resources of the State, as some kind of disease or grotesque condition afflicting the body politic, I wondered how the theory and representation of disease may have informed ways of talking about and understanding poverty. Working from Julia Kristeva's insights about the importance of abjection to the foundations of the subject – that the "I" comes into being only "amid the violence of sobs, of vomit," and that this "I" operates as a boundary that constitutes and allows the subject to be – I wanted to pose a question from the bottom-up: asking, much like Judith Frank, how "the poor" as a group, as individuals, and indeed as their own separate category of humanity, as they were often represented, exerted pressures on the formation and articulation of the new subjectivity of the eighteenth century (4). In the eighteenth century, we move from an understanding that poverty is a natural feature of society – a nod to the reality of poverty as a "life-cycle stage" for many – to one in which poverty is increasingly viewed as antithetical to and disruptive of civic harmony, productivity, and prosperity: a kind of disease which must be eliminated to protect the healthy functioning of the rest of the body politic.

The four chapters of this dissertation trace the co-evolution of representations of disease and the poor, demonstrating how shifting understandings of the body, and particularly of the body's unintentional relations with the built environment, shape the discourse surrounding treatments of the body politic. My dissertation sought to understand how this transformation in our understanding of poverty took place, and as such it required that I turn my gaze to sources outside of the traditional domain of literary studies: economics, social history, and the history of medicine more generally, but also to the more specific domains of poverty studies, architectural history, and eighteenth-century urban reform. However, this is not to say that there have been no studies of poverty in eighteenth-century literary scholarship. Judith Frank's *Common Ground: English Satiric Fiction and the Poor* (1996) was a crucial touchstone in the early stages of this project. One of Frank's key arguments, that anxieties about class levelling emerge from the reality that the poor were never all that far removed from the gentry economically or physiologically, was formative of the early direction and ultimate shape that this project took on. More recently, Scott Mackenzie has taken up this argument in modified form in *Be It Ever So Humble: Poverty, Fiction, and the Invention of the*

Middle-Class Home (2013), which traces the idea of home in eighteenth-century literature and culture. Mackenzie affirms Franklin's thesis that poverty is constitutive of the period's ideals surrounding subjectivity; he argues that "to be homeless is to embody an unspeakable exteriority, one that the very syntax of English refuses to accommodate," "a calamitous state... [that] generates fierce social anxiety and the most urgent collective demands for remedy or removal" (6). Both Frank and Mackenzie encourage us to see how the "subject" of eighteenth-century literature is ineluctably formed by the experience and fear of poverty. Their insights shaped my investigation into the transformation of eighteenth-century attitudes towards poverty, as I sought to understand how these fears manifested across literature, politics, and medicine. My dissertation shows how the bodies of the poor and marginalized were instrumental in authors' efforts to consolidate models of health and illness that, in turn, informed broader discussions about the proper nature of the body politic.

Chapter one explores the relationship between the representation of the poor and debates about the nature of the plague in Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*. I trace the debate on the nature and origin of the plague, which oscillated between the miasmatic theory that located its origin in the Levant, and its transmission through the air, and the animalcular theory of contagion which supposed the plague to be transmitted by tiny "insects." The former explanation, advanced by Dr. Richard Mead and supported by Daniel Defoe in the novel, accounts for the plague as arising from the squalid conditions of Eastern cities before being carried through the air and settling on London, where it is greatly exacerbated by the poor's own filthiness. The latter explanation, advanced by the botanist Richard Bradley and the physician Benjamin Marten, is rejected by Defoe as "the Effect of manifest Ignorance and Enthusiasm" (64). The question of the plague's origin, for Defoe, operates within a larger providential narrative that places responsibility for both its transmission and its cure on the two kinds of poor: the undeserving and deserving, respectively. The undeserving poor are culpable for its spread because of their filthiness, irrationality, and inherent viciousness. The deserving poor, by contrast, serve as models of civic duty in the post-apocalyptic landscape of plague-stricken London. For Defoe, the incidence of plague among the poor serves as confirmation of their

unsuitability for civil society, and confirms that the relationship between the poor and the plague is not accidental but essential. By undervaluing the influence and importance of external and involuntary factors in the production and transmission of the plague, I argue that Defoe reifies the narrative of the poor as a kind of plague on the body politic. This chapter demonstrates that Defoe relied upon medical understandings of the body and disease to inform his representations of the poor, and shows how medical advances in the early eighteenth century were beginning to unsettle well-established associations between immorality and disease.

Chapter two shifts the focus from the poor to prostitutes in the mid-eighteenth century, demonstrating how the rise of charitable associations for the support of penitent prostitutes embodies a seemingly positive shift in attitudes towards the poor and health, while also exposing the desire for social control behind this benevolence. This chapter makes its primary literary focus the anonymously written *The Histories of Some of the Penitents of the Magdalen House* (1760), a series of four narratives that detail the lives of young women who are seduced and then abandoned, and who become, or come close to becoming, prostitutes for lack of any other means of supporting themselves. I demonstrate how contemporary charitable associations' goals of reclaiming and rehabilitating underused bodies, such as those of the poor, orphans, and prostitutes, reflects the growing interest in moving away from understanding social disorder in terms of a virtue/vice framework and toward recalibrating efforts to repair the bodies of the poor, and by extension that of the body politic, based on principles of political arithmetic. I argue that the representation of the prostitute, in both the novel and in the literature supporting the Magdalen cause, manifests the narrative logic undergirding popular medical accounts of the origin of venereal disease and its cure. Venereal disease was hypothesized to be the materialization of illegitimate sexual activity: the natural byproduct of the intermixture of multiple men's semen within the corrupted, torrid womb of the prostitute. Its preventative treatment emphasized, according to one writer, avoiding "Excess and Luxury of Diet" combined with a commitment to monogamous sexual relations (Desault 34). We find this prescription enforced in the by-laws governing the Magdalen Hospital charity for penitent prostitutes, which coupled restrictions on outside

contact with men with rules that governed every aspect of the women's non-naturals, promoting simple dress and diet, regular sleep and activity, and strict religious education. As well, we find the correspondence between the narrative logic of venereal disease and the stories of the *Histories*, wherein the dangers associated with women's sexual autonomy are resolved only after each woman finds her way into the protective, well-regulated embrace of the charity. In the case of the Magdalen Hospital and its penitents, the softening of popular attitudes towards poverty is largely superficial. The main object of sympathy for the Magdalen writers is the fallen middle-class woman, and they do not extend their thesis about the terrible economic choices available to these marginalized women to the poor more generally. In this way, the Magdalen charity and its surrounding narratives embody the ideological underpinnings of benevolence, reifying the dichotomy of the deserving and undeserving poor while superficially extending sympathy only to a romanticized image of the downtrodden. This chapter develops my thesis that representations of the poor – in this case, marginalized, fallen women – were actively shaped by advances in medical understandings about the body and disease.

Chapter three focuses on the affinities between preventative medicine and urban reform in Tobias Smollett's novel *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). I trace the neoclassical architectural and aesthetic foundations of Smollett's argument for more regulated urban spaces, and demonstrate how his concern for the bodily integrity of the old, infirm, and otherwise helpless in an under-regulated urban environment provides a critical revision of an otherwise familiar Augustan argument against the monstrosity of the city. In his persistent critique of the architectural and urban planning failures of places like Bath and London, Smollett foregrounds the threat to bodily integrity that uneven roads, uncovered walkways, and under-regulated public spaces represent for those of delicate constitution. Smollett supplements this argument against with a call to emulate the simplicity of the peasant as the definitive model of good health. Just as the mid-century physician William Cadogan advocates for the importance of prevention over purgatives, of leading men "to that plan of life which alone can lead them to, and preserve them in, permanent health," the narrative of *Humphry Clinker* finds its resolution in annexing the habits of the deserving poor, the eponymous Humphry Clinker,

as a means of remedying bourgeois excess (ix). Tobias Smollett makes a compelling case for the connection between urban regulation and public health, and argues that national prosperity cannot flow from regulations alone, but must instead first proceed from the inside out, cultivating piety and self-discipline. With its qualified embrace of urban reform as a tool for improving the health of the body politic, Smollett's novel signals the problems with relying upon external political solutions to the dangers of the external environment, and looks to the simplicity of the poor as a panacea for contemporary moral and physiological decay.

Finally, in chapter four I examine the representation of the poor in two of William Godwin's novels, *Caleb Williams* and *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling*, alongside Godwin's political philosophy and contemporary advances in anatomical study. This chapter takes up the major strains of thought in Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, specifically the role that political institutions play in shaping the individual, and how he accounts for poverty and the poor in his political philosophy. Working from Godwin's stated interest in the "analysis of the private and internal operations of the mind," and his identification with the pathological anatomist rather than the novelist, I explore how Godwin's understanding of the poor, and their health and wellbeing, overlaps with and diverges from the understanding of an actual eighteenth-century pathological anatomist, Giovanni Battista Morgagni. In particular, I am interested in Morgagni's accounts and diagnoses of the labouring poor which correlate their ailments and diseases with their work, and the stark contrast between his work and Godwin's much more narrow view of health and wellbeing that is grounded almost exclusively in the cultivation of reason and education. Godwin privileges reason and education as the solution to class conflict, but also to the problem of disease, identifying a rational body politic with a healthy one. Confusion and sadness, for Godwin, are not isolated problems of the mind, but instead are responsible for producing disease and for causing disorders of the body. In this chapter, I explore the links between confusion, disease, and disorder in both *Caleb Williams* and his later novel *Fleetwood*. In the former, I demonstrate how a lack of foresight and reason corresponds with the disease or disorder of their bodies. With *Fleetwood*, I focus on the narrative of Ruffigny, and his brief

childhood imprisonment as a labourer in the silk mills of Lyons, to illustrate the limits of Godwin's political philosophy with respect to the poor. This section extends my analysis of *Caleb Williams* to illustrate how Godwin's solution to the social "disease" stemming from poverty, and the exploitation of the poor, is not the elimination of the material conditions that produce their relative misery, but rather giving the children of the poor a holiday from class difference until they reach a more reasonable working age. Given the time to develop their minds and bodies properly before being sent to the mills and factories, the pasture-raised poor will then have the requisite physical strength and mental dexterity to carry out their monotonous labours with cheerful aplomb, able to combat the misery of their situation with a stronger identification with the good of others, and to imagine a happy place to take them away from the miserable one they are in. This chapter demonstrates how Godwin uses pseudo-scientific reasoning about the nature of disease and the body to underwrite his theory of the origin and nature of class divisions.

This dissertation is ultimately about the convergence between medical knowledge about the body and disease with conceptions of the body politic in the eighteenth century, and how these two discourses come together to shape and delimit the possibilities of imagining the world and its less fortunate inhabitants: the labouring poor and the otherwise downtrodden. As the precariousness of life under late capitalism has become an inescapable fact for so many, it is a moral and civic obligation to rethink our attitudes about poverty and the poor, both in our own time and in the past.

Chapter 1:

“brutall creatures” and the limits of the social in Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year*

This chapter explores how discourses on the plague shift from a proximal relationship between the poor and the plague to an essential one, such that the poor themselves become a kind of plague. I argue that this shift largely grew out of the spatial coincidence of the poor with the plague, and a transfer of longstanding negative associations between disease and the East onto the poor. The contagion, which was widely believed to have originated in the disordered cities of the Levant, on account of their climate and poor management, became aligned with the kind of undesirable economic activity, and undesirable economic actors, that many like Defoe feared would weaken the nation. The ambivalence of British attitudes towards the poor, whether seeing them as sympathetic or hostile or, in some cases, both, was paralleled by developments in medical knowledge about the transmission of disease. In the *Journal*, Defoe rejects the notion that the plague was transmitted by microorganisms, termed animalcula by contemporary writers, preferring to ascribe instead to the popular miasmatic theory, which held that the plague was simply transmitted through the air. Both explanations, however, ultimately lead to reinforcing the same conclusion, that the poor are uniquely situated to cultivate disease. Defoe’s preferred miasmatic theory, and the emerging animalcular theory, both point towards the problem of poor habits of cleanliness and order as the main culprits enabling the plague’s transmission.

While it is nearly impossible to discuss disease in the early eighteenth century without discussing morality, Defoe also drew freely upon contemporary medical literature on the plague as he wrote the *Journal*. These medical writings speculate on the etiology of the plague, but also comment on the challenge that the poor present to maintaining public health. Here, the symbolic overlap between the body and the body politic maintains its rhetorical power, and is used to support an argument for the specialized treatment of the poor. While in the poor laws there is a distinction made between the deserving and the undeserving poor, in matters of public health surrounding

the plague they are regarded as a monolithic entity. In their inability to provide sufficient material care for themselves and their immediate environment, the poor became emblematic of the disease itself to these writers. This chapter demonstrates how Defoe relied upon medical understandings of the body and disease to inform his representations of the poor, and shows how medical advances in the early eighteenth century were beginning to unsettle the well-established associations between immorality and disease.

My consideration of *A Journal of the Plague Year* takes up three interrelated concerns: the gendered controversy surrounding the microscope in the popular imagination, especially with respect to its tenuous status within natural philosophy; the status of the ill-educated and the poor in early eighteenth-century political philosophy; and the positioning of the poor in medical discourse on the plague. My argument draws together the political theory of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* and John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* as a basis for understanding the theological and moral content of eighteenth-century political and medical writing, and examines the resonance of these works in Daniel Defoe's *Journal* as well as contemporaneous plague writing. Hobbes's "state of nature" provides the basis for interrogating the figure of the animalistic other in relation to the eighteenth-century subject, as well as how it reverberates within models of public governance suggested in the plague treatises. In this chapter, I suggest that Defoe views the poor as inherently incapable of reason, and that their incompatibility with civic order is explicitly constructed along gendered lines.

* * * * *

Written during the height of a renewed fear of plague in 1721, when an outbreak in Marseilles rekindled fears of a repeat of 1665, Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* is an information pamphlet in dramatic form. H.F. wishes "this Account may pass with [the reader], rather for a Direction to themselves to act by, than a History of my actings," in the hope that people will be equipped with the best possible information, rather than superstitious speculation, upon which to base their decisions given the very real possibility of the plague's return (11). The London that Defoe presents is a city in crisis, gripped by the scourge of the plague, with its social, economic, and political structures stretched to their breaking points. As the narrator H.F. wends his way through

the streets of London, he presents the reader with a grim portrait of the catastrophe with official records in the form of the Mortality Bills, as well as more informal, affective tales of the grief, suffering, and pain experienced by the victims of plague.

Scholarship on Defoe's *Journal* has been diverse, but much of it, perhaps unsurprisingly, tracks along the problems that concern his narrator H.F.: how to think of the plague in both religious and secular terms; the meaning and value of community; and the problems of governance that arise in a public health crisis. Margaret Healy has emphasized the literariness of the novel in terms of its close ties to the plague writing tradition in England, reminding us of the religious underpinnings of Defoe's novel. Nancy Armstrong, Lennard Tennenhouse, and Peter DeGabriele all take up the question of the novel's relationship with the political theory of Thomas Hobbes, and how it dramatizes some of the tensions between state control and the formless multitude of the public. Similarly, George Drake examines how Defoe engages with the emergence of biopolitics in early capitalism. Closely related to these issues of governance and the body politic, Scott Juengel makes an argument for the central role of disgust in the formation of bourgeois subjectivity and ideas of the nation. For all of their diversity, however, their concerns circle around a figure that is ever-present but almost never named: the poor.

This chapter is, in some ways, an attempt to amalgamate the related concerns of these scholars by focusing them through the figure of the poor in both Defoe's novel and the sources he draws upon. The commoner is affected in unique ways by the emergence of biopolitical modes of governance, as one who is subject to its laws, but who is deprived of the presumption of rationality and humanity. When Thomas Hobbes describes "Subjects... in the Kingdom of God," he does not include "Bodies Inanimate" or "Creatures Irrational; because they understand no Precepts of his" (181). While Hobbes, in his definition of the "irrational" includes infants, 'idiots,' and animals, Defoe is far more inclusive. If the minimum qualification for inclusion in the body politic is understanding of and respect for God's law, the poor of Defoe's novel must be said to stand outside of the bounds of civil society. Defoe takes up Hobbes's rhetoric in the *Journal* in his description of the poor, who possess "a Sort of brutal Courage," denoting their proximity with 'brutes'; moreover, lacking "Religion or Prudence," they lack those

two qualities which Hobbes defines as necessary for inclusion in the kingdom of God: understanding and respect for His word, and the kind of rationality that their “brutal Courage” precludes them from having (Defoe 75). For Defoe, the poor are not just difficult to manage; by their very nature, as “creatures irrational,” they are essentially disruptive of producing and maintaining civic order.

If the poor, in good times, are a pernicious, if ultimately benign, threat to the body politic, in times of crisis, they are an active threat to it. In *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Defoe recalls similar arguments that he made nearly twenty years earlier in *The Poor Man’s Plea*. Like the conventions of the plague narrative tradition that he draws upon in the *Journal*, his argument in the *Plea* is predicated on the equivalence of immorality and disease. In this excerpt, Defoe underscores the symbolic link between the body and the body politic when he writes that “Immorality is without doubt the present reigning Distemper of the Nation: And the King and Parliament, who are indeed the proper Physicians, seem nobly inclin’d to undertake the Cure” (25):

In searching for a proper Cure of an Epidemick Distemper, Physicians tell us ‘tis first necessary to know the Cause of that Distemper, from what Part of the Body, and from what ill Habit it proceeds; and when the Cause is discover’d, it is to be removed, that the Effect may cease of its self; but if removing the Cause will not work the Cure, then indeed they proceed to apply proper Remedies to the Disease it self, and the particular Part afflicted. (25)

While in *The Poor Man’s Plea* Defoe argues that the rich should lead by example by living more moral lives, the nature of the argument posed by the *Journal* is slightly different.³ In the *Journal*, Defoe joins an argument for more robust public policy measures with an emphasis on the importance of building civic order by example, as represented in the characters of the poor but civic-minded men, since the wealthy have fled London well in advance of the plague’s worst effects. While the poor are principally figured as the source of plague, Defoe also seems willing to concede that they are not all disordered; if only they could model the rationality of their social betters, they could restore order to a city in crisis.

³ The “Vices of a Poor Man affect only himself; but the Rich Man’s Wickedness affects all the Neighbourhood” (32).

The characters of individual men in the *Journal* serve as occasions for sympathy or demonstrate exceptional persistence in the face of suffering: a man who is broken by the death of his wife and children; the waterman, Robert, who delivers goods to quarantined people in order to support his family, and thereby demonstrates the moral necessity of maintaining economic activity in a time of crisis; and the parable-like story of the three wandering men, Thomas, Richard, and John, whose example demonstrates the virtues of self-sufficiency, and, by spurning charity, the true foundation of a virtuous society. In his representation of women, by contrast, Defoe's narrator notes that, while the plague drove many people to madness, "Women were in all this Calamity, the most rash, fearless, and desperate Creatures" (71). As bearers of superstition, irrationality, and false vision, women's unreason ranges from the relatively benign belief in apparitions to the madness of "murdering their own Children" (69). Not only does their irrationality undermine their own self-government, their matricidal inclinations symbolically threaten the reproduction and continuation of the commonwealth. Their irrationality is fed and maintained by their superstitious beliefs, which are propped up by "Prophecies, and Astrological Conjurations, Dreams, and Old Wives Tales." This "blind, absurd, and ridiculous Stuff" spread by "Oracles of the Devil" links the content of such prophecies, and those who place their faith in them, to pre-Enlightenment modes of thought (27). The contrasting representations of the good and unruly poor are, for Defoe, constructed explicitly along gendered lines. The unruly poor are beholden to superstition, and resist the kinds of knowledge and rationally-minded practices, like keeping clean dwellings, that render them as threats to the kind of civic order that is required to combat the plague: a practical problem, on the one hand, but also, for Defoe, a profoundly moral one.

In *The Poor Man's Plea*, the stress that Defoe places upon leading "Reformation by Example" rather than through punitive laws that "put a Force upon Mens Minds," emphasizes the importance of moral reformation, which is embodied in the Men of Good Example in the novel, and actively resisted by the women Defoe claims murder their own children (24). But this is only part of his response to the problem of social disorder, since it does not address the problem posed by those who are beyond the reach of such "Persuasive and Gentle" means. It is for these individuals, like those men who taunt the

father who has just lost his family to the plague, that solutions must come from without, such as through the more punitive aspects of the poor laws (57). Managing the poor, to take the case of London as an example, was regarded as integral to guaranteeing the social and economic vitality of the city, and the question of economic support was overtly framed in moralistic terms. It is in this respect that the King and Parliament effectively take on the role of physicians of the body politic, and the irrational, disruptive men and women the role of disease-inducing agents who must be eradicated in order to restore civic order.

While critics such as Maximilian Novak have argued that Defoe's novel is sympathetic to all afflicted by the plague, especially the poor, the way that Defoe actually talks about the poor does not fully support such a sympathetic view. Certainly, there is some measure of sympathy in the notion that the poor are simply without the financial and intellectual resources to help themselves. In earlier writings such as *The Great Law of Subordination, Consider'd*, written only a few years after the *Journal*, Defoe finds that the labouring poor "are indeed the Grievance of the Nation, and there seems an absolute Necessity to bring them, by severe regulations, to some State of immediate Subordination" (85). In this piece, he seems to abolish any distinctions between "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, which were commonly expressed and, moreover, codified in the poor laws, but rather figures the labouring poor more generally as a pernicious threat to the economic vitality of the nation. Taking into consideration his attitudes expressed outside the *Journal* must give us pause about such optimistic interpretations.

In the *Journal*, Defoe makes the common argument that the poor are largely irrational and stupid, suggesting that this defect has much more grave consequences in a time of crisis. H.F. takes a similarly strident position when he notes that even "wholesome Reflections" which would normally beget confession and prayer in ordinary people, "had a quite contrary Extreme in the Common People; who [were as] ignorant and stupid in their Reflections" during the time of the plague "as they were brutishly wicked and thoughtless before" (29). The very end of the novel, as the spectre of the plague has been lifted and people are beginning to go about their lives once again, is

haunted by the threat of its possible return. Invoking Psalms 106, H.F. worries that these people will inevitably be visited by a repeat of the plague: “for the Generality of the People it might too justly be said of them, as was said of the Children of Israel... That *they sang his Praise, but they soon forgot his Works*” (192). H.F. laments, “it was impossible to make any Impression upon the middling People, and the working labouring Poor” during the time of plague because “their Fears were predominant over all their Passions,” though it could just as easily be said of them during any time whatsoever (27). Despite their best efforts during the plague, Ministers and preachers were unable to turn the poor away from the “wicked Practises” of deceptive charlatans to correct their understanding and save their souls. Defoe sees the poor as being uniquely gullible, with their superstitious beliefs erecting a wall that is nearly impervious to reason and good sense. The problem here is not simply that they hold the wrong beliefs, or persist in their defective understandings, but that their irrationality helps to form real barriers to action. Given his identification of irrationality and superstition with women elsewhere in the text, Defoe seems to be suggesting that it is these women, who are in thrall to outmoded ways of thinking, that stand in the way of much-needed reforms. In this respect, Defoe connects the defective understandings and poor self-governance of the poor, in particular poor women, with broader issues of public governance, since their ignorance inhibits their efforts to safeguard the public’s health.

These irrational, feminine-identified poor are seen as one of the greatest challenges to managing public health crises in both the past and the future, by Defoe as well as other plague writers. Defoe’s novel draws freely and heavily from contemporary and seventeenth-century plague treatises, in particular those of Richard Mead and Nathaniel Hodge, entire sections of whose works are reproduced in the *Journal*. Both Mead and Hodge emphasize the plague’s foreign origins, and its means of transmission through the air as well as by contact with infected goods, but they are particularly united in locating the blame for its spread in the common people, who are intellectually and physiologically ill-equipped to respond to the threat of the plague. Their habits of living render them prime targets for disease. As Richard Mead writes in *A Discourse Concerning Pestilential Contagion* (1720), “as Nastiness is a great Source of Infection, so Cleanliness is the

greatest Preservative: which is the true Reason, why the Poor are most obnoxious to Disasters of this Kind” (48). Moreover, the poor’s ignorance compounds the poverty of their material circumstances. As Hodge argues, in their willingness to believe in astrologers’ predictions and signs from comets, “such Fears, rendered their Constitutions less able to resist the Contagion” (4). Perhaps worse than the spread of such erroneous, evil thought is that there is no real solution or cure for it. H.F. calls it a “horrid Delusion” for which there was “no Remedy,” unless “the Plague it self put an End to it all; and... clear’d the Town of most of those Calculators” (27). His wish for a culling of those quacks and charlatans who spread such superstition, and peddled false cures for the plague, is inseparable from a wish to clear the town of those who were taken in by these people. Superstitious thinking, and the common people who are infected by it, are a threat to the body politic which seemingly has no cure but death. The theory of contagion that runs through the works of Defoe, Mead, and Hodge, and which informs official government policy, is predicated not only on reducing the spread of disease through better sanitary practices, but also on the supposed irrationality of those most susceptible to infection.

Pragmatic concerns about the management of plague and its victims are likewise foregrounded in Richard Mead’s *Discourse Concerning Pestilential Contagion*, in particular the use of so-called “women-searchers,” poor women who were used during the plague of 1665 to find and record the number of dead, as well as their cause of death. Mead abhors the practice, and argues that

instead of ignorant old Women, who are generally appointed *Searchers* in Parishes to enquire what Diseases People dye of, That office should be committed to *Understanding and Diligent Men*, whose business it should be... to give notice [of their findings] to the Magistrates; who should immediately send skillful Physicians to Visit the Houses in the Neighbourhood, especially of the Poorer sort, among whom this Evil generally begins. (38-9)

As with Defoe’s concern about deceptive charlatans who spread superstitious beliefs, and undermine the important work of those more scientifically-minded men who are tasked with combating the plague, Mead’s resistance to the use of women-searchers tracks along

the same set of issues. The failure of vision that underlies Mead's concern over the use of the women-searchers is directly related to the importance of reinforcing and maintaining governmental control over public space and public bodies in a time of crisis. Women-searchers are untrained in their task, and their use does nothing to bolster the public's faith in the responsiveness and competence of governmental authorities. To rely upon old women to perform the task of "Understanding and Diligent Men" is to court unnecessary risk to the health of the body politic. As Paul McDowell argues, Defoe's elision of the women searchers' role in producing the Mortality Bills is part of his strategy to promote his readers' trust in the official reports by purging them of their questionable, low origins (101). However, while it is a sensible enough proposition to want to employ actual physicians rather than poor old women, Mead's proposal belies the insensitive nature of the plague, and the fact that its eventual abatement was owing to factors other than the deployment of "skillful Physicians," as H.F. acknowledges:

It is doubtful to this day, whether in the whole it contributed any thing to the stop of the Infection, and indeed, I cannot say it did; for nothing could run with greater Fury and Rage than the Infection did when it was in its chief Violence.... But the Case was this... that the Infection was propagated insensibly, and by such Persons as were not visibly infected, who neither knew who they infected, or who they were infected by. (127)

The inefficacy of physicians' interventions during the plague speaks to the quality of the solutions offered by those such as Hodge and Mead who, for all of their certainty, both concluded that the best physic is to run away.

The breakdown of epistemological certainty is a recurring topic in scholarly treatments of the *Journal*, and illustrates the stakes of particular ways of knowing, whether informed by medical consensus or superstition. Jayne Lewis and Gary Hentzi take up the possibility of knowing, and the related issue of accounting for seemingly immaterial phenomena. Lewis argues that Defoe's desire to adjudicate between the natural and supernatural dimensions of the plague, to strike some balance between an explanation that relies on God and one that emphasizes the plague's natural origins, is part of a broader project "to find some 'indeterminate' ground between the visible and

invisible worlds” (85). Nicholas Seager finds common ground with Lewis, arguing that Defoe’s *Journal* tries to find this elusive middle ground between the natural and supernatural. This middle ground is “not constructed on the attainability of certain knowledge,” as H.F. makes many observations on the sublime quality of the pestilence and its effects, but rather “endorses a subjective and probable version of events, validating prose fiction as a vehicle of relativized truth” (645, 647). This probable version of events, of course, is constructed on the back of what is implicitly understood to be improbable, or downright impossible, which is the intervention of God in the world by anything other than natural means. The inclusion of countless anecdotes and stories amongst H.F.’s many official sources gives balance to the narrative, but also gives the novel itself access to an affective truth that cannot be accounted for by numbers and charts. At the same time, as Gary Hentzi argues, the *Journal* is an exemplary Enlightenment text in its fixation with counting, a fixation that arises from the plague’s unaccountable nature. The sublime horror of the plague signals the “limits of rational control” and “the continuing presence of other, more ambiguous powers,” which serve to reinforce the pragmatic and political importance of accounting for, or rationalizing, the body politic (421). The seemingly irrational nature of the plague represented a challenge to systems of order, and an opportunity to reinforce the dominion of man over the natural world by bringing it to heel using the knowledge and tools created by rational man.

Despite the valuable insights into the existence and nature of microorganisms offered by microscopic investigation, and the potential value of this work in extending man’s control over nature, the majority of learned men in the period, including Mead, Hodges, and Defoe, roundly rejected the evidence offered by this method because of its associations with the supernatural and fantastic. In the *Journal*, H.F. includes evidence offered by the microscope with other obviously wrong explanations of the plague’s origin and means of transmission, such as it being retribution from God for the sins of mankind. While Defoe and others do not discount the involvement of God, per se, they argue that since God designed the natural world, he does not need to resort to supernatural mechanisms to communicate his will on Earth. Those who interpret the plague as a supernatural event, H.F. explains:

I look upon with Contempt, as the Effect of manifest Ignorance and Enthusiasm, likewise the Opinion of others, who talk of infection being carried on by the Air only, by carrying with it vast Numbers of Insects, and invisible Creatures, who enter into the Body with the Breath (64)

The reason for the rejection of microscopic evidence is complicated, but it turns on the interconnections between models of the state and models of the body. As Marjorie Nicolson has argued, the idea of an invisible world below our senses held dangerous implications for models of the body that held the soul to be the generative source of all action; such a decentralized idea of human physiology and consciousness threatened to upend the analogy upon which contemporary models of the state were founded, with a sovereign directing the operations of government.⁴ Analogies between various organs of the body and different offices of state in seventeenth-century medical literature are, if not always explicitly stated, certainly latent within the discussions about the body in the period. The sub-visible world revealed by the microscope disrupted the easy symbolic correspondence between these two domains; thus does H.F. describe the creatures revealed by the microscope as “Dragons, Snakes, Serpents, and Devils,” thereby affirming their existence only derisively, as he does the old woman who allegedly sees an angel (Defoe 159, 23). God does play an instrumental role in the world, but it is in accounting for precisely how he does so that H.F. departs from the rabble. He acknowledges the role of God in the plague, though he rejects the common explanation that the plague is effected by supernatural means. Rather, H.F. argues that it is a punishment from God that is carried out naturally; since God created the world, and all the laws of motion which govern it, he needs no recourse to supernatural mechanisms,

⁴ Microscopes provoked contentious debate about “profound ethical and metaphysical problems of Nature and God.... Chief among them are the relation of the microscope to the long warfare over *ancient* and *modern* in the seventeenth century; the stimulation which the instrument offered to perennial controversies over *Nature* which show themselves in every age, leading on the one hand to aesthetic queries in regard to the superiority of *nature* or of *art*, and to the question whether *nature* is or is not characterized by *regularity*, *proportion*, *symmetry*, on the other hand to more profound ethical and metaphysical problems of Nature and of God: to such questions as whether Nature shows the limitation, restraint, and moderation of the Deity, or whether Nature – and its Creator – are marked by diversity, variety, superabundance – whether Nature is, as one of the oldest of European traditions had implied, a *plenum formarum* in which all possible varieties of being must exist, because of the nature of the Deity which produced it” (57).

since such things have no mechanism at all. The immanence of God to the natural world for writers like Defoe was explanation enough; the existence of microorganisms was both unnecessary and disruptive.

The lack of acceptance of animalcular theory can be explained at least partly in terms of the decline in prestige of the microscope in the early eighteenth century. Deborah Armintor notes that “the microscope was scorned by Joseph Addison and Alexander Pope as an unproductive ‘toy of the age’ and a reprehensibly unnatural ‘artificial eye’” (632). As Marjorie Nicolson points out, while microscopes were seen as the sophisticated tools of an intellectual elite in the heyday of the Royal Society, by the early eighteenth century the cost of their manufacture had declined such that they became affordable to members of the middling- and upper-classes. They proved exceptionally popular with amateur philosophers and enthusiasts, and quickly became an object of fascination for well-to-do women. Advertisements for microscopes in the early eighteenth century directly targeted women in order to increase their revenues. Jonathan Swift’s journal entry of November 15, 1710, details his plans to purchase a microscope for his lady Stella, “a *virtuoso*” (qtd in Nicolson 42). While the figure of the virtuoso crossed gender lines, the practices of the virtuoso became identified with women by the 1720s.⁵ As the microscope became a novelty, whether as an object for the amusement of the ladies or a tool for use by amateur philosophers, so did its discoveries.

Tracing the history of the microscope in scientific, philosophical, and literary works of the period, Nicolson finds illustrative examples of this phenomenon in two sources. The first is from Thomas Shadwell’s satire, *Virtuoso* (1676), which capitalizes on the popular and scientific enthusiasm surrounding the microscope to suggest the ways in which the device blurs the boundaries between scientific investigation and conspicuous consumption. His protagonist, Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, “[spends] two thousand pounds on microscopes to ‘find out the Nature of Eels in Vinegar, Mites in a Cheese, and the Blue of Plums’” (26). Nearly forty years later, the critique at the heart of Shadwell’s satire still

⁵ Nicolson cites a number of comic representations of the virtuoso figure in the late-seventeenth century including William King’s “Affection of the Learned Lady;” Thomas Wright’s 1693 adaptation of Molière, *The Female Virtuosos*; James Miller’s 1726 satire of “lady Science” in his *Humours of Oxford*; Samuel Butler’s “Hudibras”; Susanna Centlivre’s *Bold Stroke for a Wife*; and, of course, Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*.

proves a potent cultural resource when Joseph Addison writes a fictional will for Sir Nicholas in *The Tatler* No. 216. In it, he criticizes those men who neglect the more profound aspects of life in favour of becoming “conversant among insects, reptiles, animalcules, and those trifling rarities that furnish out the apartment of a virtuoso” (31). While the critique levied by Addison and Pope and others was rooted in an argument against conspicuous consumption, it ultimately stemmed from John Locke’s idea that “all true knowledge is acquired through ordinary unassisted sensory experience” (Wilson qtd in *Armintor* 632). That is, all things worth knowing, that being which God means us to know, must be visible to the unassisted eye. In this respect, Pope’s and Addison’s objections to the microscope were premised on a distinction between true and false vision, good taste and bad, and access to legitimate knowledge was denied the fashionable women and Gimcracks of the world on the basis of their shallow curiosity. The stuff of microscopes, for many writers, seemed too close to the stuff of superstition.

Nonetheless, the work of animalcular theory persisted from the seventeenth century well into the eighteenth, embracing the knowledge of the natural world gained from horticulture and microscopes. The model of the body proposed by these renegade philosophers did not represent a radical departure from accepted knowledge, even though its opponents cast it as such; rather, it represented a decentralization of the relation between body and soul. In the late seventeenth century, Francis Glisson, in his *Tractatus de natura substantiae energetica* (1672), argued that “all matter [is] endowed with a primitive form of life” (Henry 110). Similarly, Thomas Willis theorized in *The Anatomy of the Brain and Nerves* (1684) that the soul is material and coextensive with the body, whose organs are capable of communicating between its different parts and are partially independent of the brain and nervous system (Muri 143). More contemporary to the writing of the *Journal*, we find the spirit of Glisson and Willis advanced in the animalcular theory of the botanist Richard Bradley as well as the physician Benjamin Marten. Both Bradley and Marten published works on the origin and spread of disease that were critical of the predominant scientific understanding, in particular the idea that disease was simply “in the air” and could be counteracted by dousing things in vinegar and smoking out one’s home. Bradley, a botanist and fellow of the Royal Society,

introduced his theory of contagion in *New Improvements in Planting and Gardening*, published in 1718. In his chapter on blights, Bradley sought to provide a more convincing explanation of the origin and nature of this disease, which was commonly supposed to spread through the air indiscriminately. At the beginning of the *Journal*, H.F. accounts for the spread of the disease as being transmitted “by some certain Steams, or Fumes, which the Physicians call *Effluvia*, by the Breath, or by the Sweat, or by the Stench of the Sores of the sick Persons” (3). While Bradley did not deny that the wind was responsible, to some extent, for the spread of blight, he argued that there had to be another primary mechanism at work: namely, “insects.” “[T]he Eggs of those Insects,” Bradley supposed, “are [either] brought to us by Easterly Winds” or the warmer temperature of these winds is necessary to hatch the eggs, which were already there lying dormant (54). In this respect, he agreed somewhat with Richard Mead, who also affirmed that plague was “bred in the Eastern or Southern Parts of the World” (18). However, Bradley held that the winds could not be the primary cause for the simple reason that, if this were so, the effect of blight would be uniform across all vegetative life, “whereas we find the contrary, only a single Branch it may be, or some other distinct Parts of *Plants*” (55). As Melvin Santer observes, whereas Richard Mead’s theory of the plague was informed by mathematical physics, Bradley’s “living agent theory of disease” drew upon “the empirical findings of gardeners, horticulturalists, owners of botanical gardens, [and] the microscopic discoveries of Leeuwenhoek and Hooke” (569, 567).

Bradley’s work is more finely attuned to the unique features of local environments, and non-human agents; he figures the relationship between these “subtil Bodies” and their environment in a way that displaces human authority, or the consequentiality of human action, from a world in which we are wholly immersed and yet from which we are completely alienated. He ascribes rationality to non-human agents, insofar as they were observed to follow predictable patterns of behaviour. The localized nature of blight led Bradley to affirm that “insects,” or microorganisms were the true cause of blight. They did not indiscriminately attack plants, without reason; rather, he observed that “every *Insect* has its proper *Plant*, or Tribe of *Plants*, which it naturally requires for its Nourishment, and will feed upon no other Kind whatsoever,” which is

why “that Wind which brings or hatches the Caterpillars upon the Apple-Trees, will not any way infect the Pear, Plum, or Cherry” (55-6). The apparent connection between the nature and transmission of blights and the plague, in that both were thought to be tied to the wind, was certainly not lost on Bradley. He concludes his chapter on blights by including a “curious Letter relating to Plagues and other Epidemical Distempers” written by a Sir Robert Ball.⁶ He begins his discussion, like many other writers on the plague, by preempting the idea that “pretend[ing] to give a natural Reason for *Plagues* and *Pestilences*... may be thought by some to enter too far into the Secrets of the *Almighty*” (80). Rather, he argues, God “seldom acts contrary to those Laws of *Nature* which he has instituted” (81). Ball goes on to question the prevailing explanation of the plague, according to the same logic that Bradley invokes in his consideration of blights. If it is true that “Quantity [is] only computed to be great and little in Proportion to what Objects our Eyes are capable of seeing without the help of Glasses,” so too, Bradley surmised, “that Space was confin’d to our Understanding by the same Rule” (62). Ball’s letter confirms what is latent in Bradley’s work, namely that the existence of the subvisible world must necessarily give pause to natural philosophers, since it introduces new limits to the scope of human understanding.

Benjamin Marten is less circumspect than Ball in stating the connection between microorganisms and disease. Marten argues that “Animalcula are much more probably the true and direct Cause of the Plague we at this Time so much dread...” (vi). Like Bradley, he rejects the hypothesis of Richard Mead, who attempted to locate the origin of diseases in terms of an imbalance within the individual. Humoral theory, Marten says, “is dark and unintelligible,” and furnishes only a partial explanation of the mechanism of disease. Though he does not completely discard the humoral model, he explains why he finds it unsatisfactory:

an Obstruction of the common Emunctories, or Stoppage of any accustomed Evacuation... may create disorderly Motions in our Fluids... [but] I cannot help thinking, that these are only Secondary Causes that accidentally aid and promote

⁶ There seems to be little available information about Ball. We may suppose, however, that he is a natural philosopher who is well acquainted with Bradley, or at least his work, since he frames his letter as a continuation of a discussion that the two of them had had regarding the similarities between the nature and origin of blights and that of plague (80).

some other *Peculiar, Latent and Essential Cause*, which I suppose must be joined with them... before this Disease can be produced... (39-40).

This cause is difficult to ascertain, but it may be found, by “microscopical observations” (40). He hypothesizes that the cause of many diseases “may possibly be some certain Species of Animalcula or wonderfully minute living creatures” (40). Quoting from Joseph Addison’s *Evidences of the Christian Religion*, Marten finds “it is amazing to consider the Infinity of Animals with which it is stock’d. Every part of matter is peopled: “Every green Leaf swarms with inhabitants” (42 qtd in Addison 118). Like Addison, Marten cannot help but conclude that these animalcula “act and move according to the Natural Instinct the Divine Author of all Beings has implanted in them” (73).⁷ Perhaps because of his faith, and not in spite of it, Marten is able to accept that what he sees before him under the microscope is a continuation of God’s creation, rather than some frightful aberration.

As the microscope revealed a whole ecosystem beyond our vision and easy comprehension, writers like Marten, Bradley, and Ball sought to reconcile this world with contemporary theology and the understanding of the natural world. Marten notes an analogical correspondence between animalcula and human beings; animalcula have “all other Parts proportionable to its Nature, as we have to ours... an infinite Number of Vessels and Canals, as we are, in which Fluids are circulated as in us...” (43). While this correspondence confirmed some essential link between the two, accepting that correspondence was not so simple, since it introduced some theological and philosophical difficulties for supporters and detractors of the microscope alike. For seventeenth-century political theory, which derived much of its explanatory power from the analogy between the human body and the body politic, the idea that tiny creatures share the same biology with us was regarded as threatening to the central authority of the sovereign.

⁷ This passage is itself a modified quotation of Galen’s “A Hymn to the Supreme Being,” which we find in *The Tatler* 119. In this issue, Addison tells the reader that reading the “heathen anatomist” he dreamt of a conversation with Galen, who speaks about the virtues of the microscope, which allows us to “descry millions of species subsisted on green leaf” (no. 119 – p.30). Even in his dream, however, he rejects the focus on such minute creatures, since “it is certain, they are too fine for the gross of mankind, who are more struck with the description of everything that is great and bulky. Accordingly we find the best judge of human nature setting forth his wisdom, not in the formation of these minute animals (though indeed no less wonderful than other[s]...” (31).

Marten articulates one of the central issues of this theological and political dispute when he discusses the cause of motion in animalcula, which “can hardly be suppos’d to regulate their Motions by Rule and Compass, but act and move according to the Natural Instinct the Divine Author of all Beings has implanted in them” (73). That God’s creation extends to these creatures that are invisible to the eye was not, in itself, controversial, since even Addison acknowledged that it is simply more evidence that God touches everything.

Defoe rejects the animacular theory for a number of reasons, precisely because he could not reconcile it with his theology, or with his understanding of the body and the natural world. Less convinced of the microscope’s value, for Defoe the “Dragons, Snakes, Serpents, and Devils” that the microscope revealed, even if they were perhaps part of God’s creations, were still nothing more than curiosities since they were too small to have any consequence in human affairs (Defoe 159). Beyond the issue of relevance, the more troubling thing for Defoe is that animacular theory threatens his understanding of infection and the body. Rather than admitting the existence of these creatures as further evidence of the diversity of divine order, he deems animalcular theory as “a Discourse full of learned Simplicity,” and he derides those

who talk of infection being carried on by the Air only, by carrying with it vast Numbers of Insects, and invisible Creatures, who enter into the Body with the Breath, or even at the Pores with the Air, and there generate, or emit most acute Poisons, or poisonous Ovae, or Eggs, which mingle themselves with the Blood, and so infect the Body (64)

The danger with this explanation is that it cuts against the accepted miasmatic theory, which held that “some certain Steams, or Fumes, which the Physicians called *Effluvia*” were responsible for spreading the disease. Effluvia had the effect of “penetrating the Vital Parts of the Said sound Persons, putting their blood into an immediate ferment, and agitating their Spirits” (64). Miasma theory presupposes that, while the cause proceeds from the outside, the capacity for disease already inheres within the individual; the disease is a ferment or agitation of existing fluids. By contrast, animalcular theory, according to Marten, argues that this agitation is a secondary cause that proceeds from

some other “peculiar” cause. Defoe’s derisive tone in describing the animalcular explanation is effectively a rejection of the idea that disease does not correspond to the character of the individual, or that it does not serve as a token of moral impurity. The true danger of animalcular theory, in other words, is that it has the potential to absolve the sick of the moral responsibility for their condition.

The idea that animalcula, rather than miasma, was the primary cause of disease was controversial for many like Defoe, but it found support in the work of animalcular theorists such as Ball and Marten, as well as others like the seventeenth-century physician Francis Glisson. His ideas, however, like those of Ball and Marten, did not enjoy a very wide base of support. Glisson, rather controversially, proposed “a new metaphysics of living matter” that “hinged upon the notion of natural perception” (465). This theory was premised on the idea that sense perception arises out of the organization and coordination of “increasingly complex and organized modes of matter,” rather than some central, perceiving sense. That is, what we think of as “sense” is the cumulative result of a number of perceiving agents; these inputs are coordinated through the mind and given the impression of coherence when, in fact, sense is more properly understood as a secondary property of being. This theory was controversial since it amounted to claiming that the soul is not the animating principle of man, but rather that the soul is beholden to innumerable, imperceptible little creatures. Glisson does not suggest that these “little creatures” are ensouled; they have “primordial awareness, but not self-awareness.” Glisson developed his theory about animalcula on the basis of the Aristotelian maxim that “nature does not indulge in supplying superfluous acts,” which was consistent with the animalcular line of argument that the forms of life revealed by the microscope provided more proof of the majesty of God’s creation (Gigliani 469). He argued that “the reason why nature shaped so many sense organs, [is] so that the imagination – the public offices in charge of the animal government – may be fully furnished with the knowledge of the actions to perform, seek, or avoid” (Glisson 174, qtd in Gigliani 471). This reasoning did not sway the opinions of many, notably including the Cambridge Platonists Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, who objected to Glisson’s conjectures on the basis that “a peripheral and pluralistic organization resulting from innumerable centers of life and

perception... could be used to justify a condition of moral indifference and political anarchy” (Giglioni 485). The analogy between the human body and models of government, therefore, was not merely a literary or philosophical abstraction, but rather an idea that held serious implications for the work of physicians like Glisson.

Animalcular theory represented a potent threat not only to established medical theories about man and his relationship to the environment, but also to political theories that owed much of their rhetorical power to the perceived correspondence between the body and the state. The most obvious contemporary text in which this idea finds traction is in Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, in which the body is both literally and figuratively the site of power. Hobbes famously held that the “Designe of men” is the renunciation of their individual liberty for their own preservation and a better life (93). Men are politically united by an “Artificiall” covenant whereby they “conferre all their power and strength upon one Man;” the multitude of men “so united in one Person, is called a Common-Wealth,” and the sovereign is entrusted with the power to make laws and to govern (95). The limits of sovereign power, as well as the source of crime, are founded in the body as well. In chapter 29, “Of those things that Weaken, or tend to the Dissolution of a Common-Wealth,” Hobbes claims that political stability depends on men’s reason, which is a tenuous thing at best. He argues that “if men had the use of reason they pretend to, their Common-wealths might be secured, at least, from perishing by internall diseases” (162). Hobbes reminds us of the necessary imperfection of civic order, and that “internal diseases” are nearly inevitable, since men are not necessarily as reasonable as they think they are. “Therefore when they come to be dissolved, not by externall violence, but intestine disorder,” Hobbes argues, “[they] cannot without the help of a very able Architect, be compiled, into any other than a crasie building” (162). Animalcular theory threatened to erect such a “crazy building” because it reorganized the predominant understanding of the body, thereby scrambling the political order that it authorized.

Hobbes explicitly links a defective political constitution with the trope of the diseased body, which shares much in common with the defective mind. In this respect, he locates the origin of “internall diseases,” and “crasie”-ness of the building, in those who are the embodiment of transgression against God’s authority. In chapter 27, “Of Crimes,

Excuses, and Extenuations,” Hobbes defines crime and sin in terms of his political theory. A “Sinne” is a crime by intention, if not action, and encompasses “not only a Transgression of a Law, but also any Contempt of the Legislator;” a crime, on the other hand, is also a sin, but one that is acted upon (146). Both partake of the same source, which “is some defect of the Understanding,” defined by Hobbes simply as ignorance (147). Ignorance sets a man at odds with God and the law because, not understanding or knowing the law, he is quite likely to be at odds with it since he does not know how to behave properly. Closely related to ignorance is irrationality, which Hobbes argues is characterized by a defect “in Reasoning, [which is] Erroneuous Opinion” (147). Here, he clearly identifies irrationality with those who hold a different, or wrong, opinion; that is, you are irrational if you do not believe in God, and if you are a contemptible atheist, you are invariably a sinner, a criminal, or, quite likely, both. Hobbes also distinguishes another kind of irrationality that is more essential to being, such as “Bodies Inanimate” and “Creatures Irrationall” who “understand no Precepts of his” (181). The difficulty of maintaining the separation between the irrational and rational in Hobbes’ model of civilization is owing to the fact that they exist in dialectical relation with one another.

The social also reveals its ambivalent origins in that feeling which, Hobbes argues, “enclines men to peace:” fear. Fear motivates men to give up their freedom for the stability guaranteed by a commonwealth, but fear is also what, according to plague writers, threatens the stability of the commonwealth in times of crisis. Margaret Healy discusses the ambivalent value of fear in the novel, which is closely related to the question of the extent to which the state of nature persists in society. In the *Journal*, the poor are identified with animals in their inability to regulate their fear. The rhetoric of “brutality” associated with the poor in the *Journal* closely corresponds to ‘animality’, two terms which were intertwined in the eighteenth century. The Oxford definition for ‘brutal’ first lists the now-obsolete sense “of or belonging to the brutes, as opposed to man; of the nature of a brute; animal” (“brutal”). Of the examples given for this definition, it cites Thomas Hobbes’s *Philosophical Rudiments* which compares “the consent of those brutall creatures [which] is natural, [to] that of men [which is] by compact only” (V.§5.78 qtd in “Brutal”). This sense of ‘brutal’ continues well into the 19th century, as evidenced in

another example given by the OED in the work of George Stanley Faber, a clergyman and religious writer in the Church of England, which contrasts “human and brutal bodies” (Faber qtd in “Brutal”). Given the shared theological vocabulary of Hobbes and Defoe, this correspondence suggests Defoe is invoking this specific sense of the word. The poor, for Defoe, are therefore simultaneously both human and other, embodying the contradictory persistence of a state of nature within society, as well as the difficulty of maintaining the separation, both symbolic and actual, between “nature” and “civilization,” “human” and animal.” Just as the state of nature haunts civilization, so does the spectre of animality persist within the individual, something which must be categorically rejected, or suppressed in favour of cultivating one’s reason. This ambivalence about the value of fear, and whether it drives men to peace or to faction, is rooted in uncertainty about and disgust towards man’s proximity to his animal, or brutal nature.

H.F. notes the way that the fear engendered by plague, whether in terms of the horror experienced by those who witness its effects, or the extreme dread that accompanies the discovery that one is infected, has such a powerful effect on people as to be capable of distorting the line between the human and the animal. This distinction is ultimately rooted in the difference between the animate and inanimate, as expressed above, where the separation between human and animal is predicated on “having sense” in the Lockean vein. In one passage, H.F. tells of a mother who is driven to extremes of grief upon discovering her daughter is infected. It was not “one Skream, or one Cry,” he says, but rather this terror “seiz’d her Spirits” and caused her to “[run] all over the house... void of all Sense, or at least, Government of her Senses.” This poor woman “never came throughly [sic] to herself again,” having presumably lost all vestiges of her humanity to her fear, and the terror engendered by the plague (50). H.F. deems this “an extraordinary Case” at the same time he lists it as being among one of “innumerable such like cases” that could be identified in the Bills, which identified a few people every week who supposedly died of fear. “Besides those,” he says, who apparently literally died of fear, “there were great Numbers frighted to other Extrems, some frighted out of their Senses, some out of their Memory, and some out of their Understanding” (50-1). The

plague not only upsets social order, but also quite literally rocks the foundation of humanity, as it evacuates people of the very qualities which make them human: sense, memory, and understanding.

While Defoe is, in one respect, perhaps describing a unique psychological disorder wrought by the plague, he is also tapping into a set of tropes that governed depictions of social unrest during the seventeenth century. Diego Rosello notes how Hobbes's contemporaries used the idea of lycanthropy, which was understood as "the delusional experience of turning into an animal, often, but not exclusively, into a wolf," to describe the political and religious turmoil that produced the English Civil War. Lycanthropy is invoked not only as an effect of civil disorder, but also as its cause. H.F. hypothesizes that it might have been, as the astrologers said, "the Dog-days, or... the Influence of the Dog-Star" that brought about the plague or which provided the conditions for its emergence in people who already had the seeds of infection (Defoe 138). Whatever the cause, whether mythological or natural, these writers imagined the loss of civil and political order as a manifestation of "animalistic" tendencies in men, who threatened not only to plunge England into a state of civil anarchy but also served as a terrifying reminder of the immanence of animality within society and the need for its suppression.

Defoe and his contemporaries' desire to manage, or purge altogether, the persistence of the "animal" in man is reflected in the discourse surrounding the management of the poor. The repeated emphasis on the absolute difference of the poor undercuts Novak's and others' arguments for Defoe's apparent sympathy. H.F.'s account of the screaming, wailing, primal desperation of the poor, who are left to suffer in plague-stricken London deliberately calls to mind the non-verbal animal. He observes that the poor go about the city with "a Sort of brutal Courage," which explicitly aligns them with animals rather than men. Having neither "Religion or Prudence," the poor are guided neither by God nor reason (Defoe 75). This is the same sense of "brutal" that Hobbes invokes in his *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*, in which he distinguishes the "consent of those brutall creatures [which] is naturall, [from] that of men [which is] by compact only" (V. §5.78). That is, man is distinguished from beast by

the use of reason, which is the means by which men can rise above a state of nature to enter into political society; “without speech and method, humans cannot enter into contracts and are therefore left at the mercy of their natural gregariousness – living a brutish and predatory existence” (Rosello 260). H.F.’s description of the “poor naked Creature” he encounters in the street is but one of many such encounters with the animalistic poor in Defoe’s text. This man does not stop to rest or eat, and “would not enter into Speech with me, or any one else” (22). While H.F. laments his condition, there is little he can do to communicate with him: this man reinforces the difficulty of governing the poor because of an unsociability that is fundamental to their being. Beyond civilization, and seemingly without reason, the poor are closely associated with the sublime qualities of the plague, in terms of their ability to disrupt social order, and their ungovernability.

Some of the poor are simply disruptive, however, as we find in one scene from the novel. While H.F.’s claim to narrative authority rests on his ability to relate these events in a deliberate, rational manner, while being unaffected, or at least not sent into a frenzy by the horrible sights around him, he seems to be brought to the limits of his patience and good will by some of the men he encounters. Faced with the “hellish abominable Rallery” of the men who he finds mocking the man who has just lost his wife and children to the plague, he notes he is “not at all discomposed at their Treatment of me,” and manages to maintain his composure (57). Such men, however, are evil:

that which was the worst in all their devilish Language was, that they were not afraid to blaspheme God, and talk Atheistically; making a Jest at my calling the Plague the Hand of God, mocking, and even laughing at the Word Judgment, as if the Providence of God had no Concern in the inflicting [of] such a desolating Stroke; and that the People calling upon God, as they saw the Carts carrying away the dead Bodies was all enthusiastick, absurd, and impertinent. (57)

H.F.’s strong rebuke of these men aligns them clearly with enemies of God, although the qualities that distinguish the enemies of God from His friends are somewhat ambiguous. The line between a subject of God and an enemy is joined to the ability to believe as much as it is to holding the belief that there is a God, and that His laws govern the world;

the latter, according to Hobbes, “are Gods Subjects; all the rest, are to be understood as Enemies” (181). These impertinent men, mocking a man’s dead family, Defoe clearly locates within the latter camp. John Locke draws a similar distinction in his *Two Treatises* between God’s subjects and His enemies, and predicates it, like Hobbes, on the capacity for reason. When a man’s life is threatened by another by either word or action, Locke argues, it is “reasonable and just” to destroy them: “Such Men [who make war] are not under the ties of the Common Law of Reason, [and] have no other Rule, but that of Force and Violence, and so may be treated as Beasts of Prey...” (279). Those who are seemingly without reason or rationality are equivalent to animals, and may be justifiably treated as such.

With examples like these, it seems to be easy to say that Defoe identifies the poor as particularly blameworthy for worsening, if not also perhaps causing, a crisis, in their inability to model civic virtues let alone basic human decency. Defoe seems ambivalent, however, about whether the poor are to be blamed for the plague, or whether they are to receive the greatest share of the reader’s compassion. Those who are afflicted by the plague, as H.F. witnesses in the *Journal*, are driven to a particular kind of madness, and are evacuated of their right reason by the immanence of death all around them. It is easy to condemn those who are unambiguously evil in their words and actions, as with the men who jeer at the devastated father, but less easy to condemn others before being struck by the plague. H.F. would no doubt agree with Locke that the afflicted are, in a sense, in a state of war with society, since they not only essentially threaten violence against others by their very existence, but also “must be supposed to design to take away from them every thing else,” either by unintentionally transmitting their disease, or intentionally, as in the case of thieves, by threatening the property as well as the livelihood of their neighbours (279). In this sense, it is difficult for Defoe to separate, as it was for many of his contemporaries, compassion for the poor and fear of them in times of scarcity or, in this case, of disaster.

This same ambivalence towards the poor follows Defoe in his appropriation of the English plague writing tradition, his position in which, Margaret Healy argues, is essential to the reader’s understanding of the *Journal*. In such works as Thomas Lodge’s

A Treatise of the Plague (1603), Thomas Dekker's *London Look Back* (1630), William Bullein's *A Dialogue against the Fever* (1564), and countless early modern sermons on the topic, plague is consistently "construed as punishment meted out by an angry deity incited to wrath and vengeance through man's misdemeanors" (Healy 55). This theme is explicitly taken up by the *Journal*, as H.F. tells the reader that the plague was certainly the manifestation of God's anger, even if he is less definitive about the mechanisms of its causation. By resituating the *Journal* within the Protestant English tradition, Healy reminds us of how Defoe's "aesthetic goals were inseparable from religious and political ones" (26). However, while the *Journal* clearly belongs to the plague writing tradition, Defoe muddles the common moral framework of that narrative, displacing the consequences for the offense against God from the more mobile gentry, who have mostly all fled the city at the opening of the novel, onto the common poor who are left to suffer. If the *Journal* does belong to the tradition of the plague narrative, Defoe places it there with some caveats.

He maintains the integrity of the novel's place within the plague narrative tradition, in one way, by relocating the source of sin in the East. In the opening lines of the novel, Defoe explicitly connects the origin of plague to foreign trade. He is not definitive about its origins, saying only with certainty what "all agreed", which is that "it was come into Holland again" (5). However, the potential sources that he lists, including Italy, the Levant, Turkey, Crete, and Cyprus, places the imagined origin of plague in the south-east. Both Nathaniel Hodges and Richard Mead, plague writers more contemporary to Defoe, identify the disease as a "maker of War," both in itself and in its effects. Mead argues in favour of adopting his plans for managing the plague, because "it is fit, we should be always provided with proper Means of Defence against so terrible an Enemy" (Dedication). Hodges is even more explicit in making this link, and illustrates the destructive capacity of the plague with an analogy to war:

although it seemed once to slay as Parthians in their Flight, it soon returned with redoubled Fury, and kill'd not by slow Paces, but almost immediately upon Seizure; not unlike what is often seen in Battle, when after some Skirmishes of Wings, and separate Parties, the main Bodies come to engage; so this Contagion at

first only scatter about its Arrows, but at last covered the whole City with Death (12).

The metaphor is apt and obvious enough, but the analogy that Hodges draws with the Parthians, in reference to any number of wars and skirmishes between the ancient Roman and Parthian armies, does more than simply ground his metaphor in ancient history.⁸ Rather, the specificity of this link is illustrative of the Orientalizing rhetoric of English plague writers who located the origins of the scourge in the East. Rewriting the plague as an Eastern phenomenon reaffirms their godlessness, and their lack of hygiene and good public policy likewise reaffirms their lack of self-government.

The link between plague and the East was made by Mead and Hodges as well as the animalcular theorists, and illustrates the ways in which, while the mechanisms of the plague's transmission spurred much debate, all could agree on locating the source of the pathology as arising out of the excess and poor management characteristics of the uncivilized East. On the origin of the 1665 plague, Mead writes, "it was generally allowed, that the Contagion came by Cotton imported from Turkey," and was "bred in the Eastern or Southern Parts of the World... chiefly owing to the Negligence of the People in those Countries, who are stupidly Careless in this affair..." (9, 18). Nathaniel Hodges agreed on the origin of the plague, that it "first was brought from Africa, or Asia, to Holland," by way of "Turkey in Bails of Cotton or Silk, which is a strange Preserver of the pestilential Steams. For that Part of the World is seldom free from such Infections" because of the "Disposition of Seasons and Temperature of Air in those Regions" (64, 30). Even Richard Bradley averred that the Orient is directly or indirectly responsible, as either "the Eggs of those Insects are brought to us by Easterly Winds" or the temperature of those winds is necessary to hatch them (54). Benjamin Marten allows that "it may not be impossible but that several Species of Animalcula flying or floating in the Air, may, at their largest Growth and utmost Perfection, be so wonderfully minute to be capable of entering into our Bodies every where permeable;" however, he is certain that "the Plague, Pestilential, and other Epidemick Diseases are caused... by such Volatile Animalcula or their Ova, or Eggs, being deposited in the Bodies, or Cloaths, or Goods of Travellers,

⁸ Parthia refers to a historical region in northeastern Iran.

&c.” (48, 53). The origin is linked not only to climactic factors, and the accepted notion that it is in the air, but also to poor sanitary practices. While the poor were obviously not the source of the infection, and certainly were not among the travellers and traders who brought the plague back to England, they came to be identified with the ignorance and poor self-care that was characteristic of those in the East who allegedly bred the disease. In their relative poverty and lack of understanding, the poor serve as ideal proxies on which to map British fears of foreign excess and contamination.

The poor therefore occupy the ambivalent position of being both English and Other; they are to be rejected, on account of their lack of sense and understanding, but also in some measure cared for, since they are owed certain obligations as English citizens. The question, then, of whether the poor are to be considered “makers of war” is one that depends on the degree to which the poor are identifiably foreign, or antithetical to rationality, religion, and self-discipline. While Defoe presents many examples of how, in Scott Juengel’s words, the plague “present[s] a radical threat to cultural systematization” which can only be tamed through the “effective management of this tragic human waste,” not all of the poor in the *Journal* are portrayed in such negative terms (140). If “repulsion operates as a hierarchical imperative in the construction of bourgeois subjectivity” in the novel, as Scott Juengel argues, just as important to consider are the examples that Defoe presents of the poor who are not superstitious, afflicted, and wailing: those who persist and do not succumb to their baser natures (139).

These exceptions to the rule, the exceptional poor, help us to identify how British subjectivity is negotiated at its margins, and the role that the poor play in signalling what is desirable. One such example is the story of the waterman, Robert, whom H.F. finds walking along the sea wall. H.F. discovers that he has a wife and two children who are afflicted, and while he does not come near them, he is utterly devoted to supporting them. Robert embodies all of the qualities which H.F. finds lacking in the generality of the poor, and his description of him underscores his exceptional nature: “he lifted up his Eyes to Heaven, with a Countenance that presently told me, I had happened on a Man that was no Hypocrite, but a serious, religious good Man” (88). Not only does Robert hold firm to his faith, he also continues to make a living in the plague-ravaged economy, entirely for the

benefit of his ailing family. As a waterman, he lives and works out of his boat, serving the families and merchants living on their own boats outside of town for fear of the infection, “tend[ing] on them to fetch Things for them, carry Letters, and do what is absolutely necessary, that they may not be obliged to come on Shore” (89). He secures himself and his patrons from infection by purchasing fresh meat and eggs from towns outside of London, so far unafflicted, and in this manner contributes in some small measure to maintaining the bonds of civilization through his labour and good will to others. Though he had “parted with no Money all that Year,” H.F. gives them his charity, and the wisdom of his decision is confirmed in their “Signs of the like Thankfulness, as well to Heaven, as to me” (91). A model of selflessness, humility, and hard work, the waterman embodies an idealized mercantilism, possessing those qualities that H.F. finds wanting in others of his kind.

Another example of poor people not at all lacking in religion or prudence can be found in the story of the three men “whose story,” like that of Robert and his family, “has a Moral in every Part” (100). H.F. prefaces their story by reflecting “upon the unprovided Condition, that the whole Body of the People were in,” and the various failures of public management that exacerbated the crisis, particularly in its early phases. While in his journalistic writing, Defoe was a strong proponent of decisive action on the plague, and we hear echoes of that in this passage, it is clear that his advocacy in this regard does not supersede his belief in the firm necessity for individual self-reliance. This story of the three men is given as “a Patern for all poor men to follow, or Women either, if ever such a Time comes again” (100). Peter DeGabriele notes that this passage is exceptional from a narrative point of view, in that it is the longest of the secondary narratives within the *Journal*, and H.F., moreover, withdraws himself entirely from its telling, thus giving it a legitimacy and prominence that he never accords to others’ tales of woe. This story is also of particular note for its allegorical nature:

the three men who make up the party form, together, three important branches of state: Thomas the sail-maker is the treasurer who supplies and controls the ‘publick Stock’; Richard the Joyner is in charge of public works, building dwellings and amenities for the group; and John is a soldier and the leader of this

small military state. (13)

While DeGabriele uses this story to demonstrate the “irresolvable tension between self-sufficiency and survival,” I want to focus on its resonance with the interconnected issues of charity and poverty.

These three men are forced to leave the city for their own survival, but what conditions this choice is a lack of gainful employment. With the evacuation of much of the purchasing power of London to the country, the city’s economy came to a virtual standstill. Indeed, the economic consequences of the plague distressed Defoe as much as its health effects. At the beginning of the story, Thomas is worried about being forced out of his lodging, since his hosts are afraid that, as he goes to work and returns each day, they face a greater risk of infection if they keep him. John faces a similar situation, as his place of lodging is all but completely evacuated save for one maid, who is to leave the following week, and to lock the doors behind her. The men set off, and after much wandering, find themselves outside the gates of Walthamstow, where the Constable will not permit them to enter despite their assurances of being free of the plague. The dispute between John and the Constable of the town centers on the men’s right of movement and the town’s right to preserve its own safety from infection, as well as to safeguard parish resources. The Constable is eventually persuaded to give the men some provisions, and following a short stay they move on to Epping, where they set up camp in the open forest north of the city. There, they are not so fortunate. The next day, after attending the market to buy some supplies, and spending the next several days at their camp without issue, the three men are confronted by many of the townspeople who, justifiably alarmed at the arrival of the plague in their town only a few days previous, demand that the men leave immediately. John responds to their concerns by assuring them they are not among the men who are rumoured to have plundered nearby Walthamstow by force, and attempts to gain their trust by recourse to offering them assurance “that they were ready to give what Account of themselves any Body cou’d desire of them, and to give in their Names and Places of Abode, that so they might be call’d to an Account for any Disorder that they might be guilty of” (116). John’s promise to the townspeople of Epping amounts to an assurance that they will fulfill the terms of the social contract: they will not resort to

stealing or violence, even if the men choose not to give them any charity (116). The townspeople's worry is ultimately about their own security, but the way that they frame it is instructive: "you can give us no Security against your being chargeable to our Parish and to the Inhabitants, any more than you can of being dangerous to us as to the Infection" (116). The conflation of these two issues speaks to the way in which the plague is figured as both an economic and an epidemiological threat to social order, and how the poor embody these intersecting concerns.

The townspeople's apprehensions at letting in the three men enacts the same principles upon which the English Poor Law was based; they are only willing to dole out their sympathy and support to those who can be said to "deserve" aid within the framework established by the state: those who are not material threats to the social and economic health of the commonwealth, and who are not immaterial threats to its moral integrity. Not only are the townspeople worried about the prospect of infection from these strange men, but they are also, crucially, unwilling to relieve those who do not deserve their kindness. In the absence of a material assurance in the form of a certificate of health, such as were issued during the Plague to those of sound health, the townspeople have no external guarantee that these men do not threaten their health and wellbeing. In this respect, the management of the diseased as described in the *Journal* bears certain compelling similarities to the management of the poor as outlined in England's Poor Laws. The Poor Laws were premised on the idea that "there is nothing so Destructive to any Kingdom or People, as Sloth and Idleness," and that each individual should therefore be obliged "to be Useful to themselves, and the Commonwealth" (45). They distinguish between different kinds of poor people: those who are poor by defect, sickness, or misfortune, and those who are poor by thriftlessness and criminality; the former are to be relieved by alms and taxes, while the latter are to be set to work or punished. In doing so, these laws created a system of rewards and punishments that were intended to facilitate the creation of a Christian commonwealth. By distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate poor parishioners, the Poor Laws were designed to guard against the reproduction of sin and vice either by denying aid to the poor or publicly beating them.

That the men are finally able to win over the good will of the townspeople in the

absence of external guarantees of their character signifies that they are not the bad kind of poor people. John is ultimately able to persuade them out of their fears “by talking thus rationally and smoothly to them,” and explaining that “as we all liv’d without Charity when we were at home, so we will oblige ourselves fully to repay you, if God please to bring us back to our own Families and Houses in Safety” (116). This pledge of economic self-sufficiency is ultimately what wins over the compassion of the townspeople and, after a few days, the men’s “quiet inoffensive Behaviour, began to get them the good Opinion of the Country, and People began to pity them and speak very well of them,” and they are given many bundles of straw by one man, and some food by a parish minister (117). By persuading the people that they would not be a burden on the town’s resources, and by making a promise to repay their charity, John is able to convince them that they are poor by circumstance, and not by choice. In this respect, they present themselves as respectable poor, who wish only for their survival insofar as they are not a burden to others. It is no wonder that this story is offered up as having “a Moral in every Part,” as the reasonable and good-natured John responds to the suspicions and abuse of the townspeople with grace and understanding, eventually winning them over by virtue of his unblemished character. This is how all the poor should be, Defoe is undoubtedly saying.

Defoe’s inclusion of the *Orders... concerning the Infection of the Plague 1665* within the main body of the *Journal* also takes up the issue of how to manage the poor in a section “concerning loose Persons and idle Assemblies” (42). Not only does this passage in the *Orders* conflate the poor with disease by noting the strong correspondence between their movement and that of the infection, but it also provides further evidence of the ways in which the poor exist within a continuum of animal objects, in the sense previously discussed. This part of the *Orders* sets out restrictions on the movement of beggars, who “swarm in every place about the City, being a great cause of the spreading of the Infection,” and grants authority to city constables the power to “duely and severely” execute the laws against such persons. Defoe echoes the danger that the *Orders* identifies, writing in “Giving alms no charity,” that England is “burthen’d with a crowd of clamouring, unemploy’d, unprovided for poor People, who make the Nation uneasie.” The poor, in their thriftlessness and disorder, are a burden on the nation, “and make

themselves worthy of Laws, and peculiar Management to dispose of and direct them” (9).

The management of the poor is necessary because they lack the self-government to direct themselves, and in this respect are in special need of direction, not unlike animals. The section of the *Orders* just prior to that on beggars, on the “care to be had of unwholesome fish or flesh, and of musty corn,” stipulates:

That no Hogs, Dogs, or Cats, or tame Pigeons, or Conies, be suffered to be kept within any part of the City, or any Swine to be, or stray in the Streets or Lanes, but that such Swine by impounded by the Beadle or any other Officer, and the Owner punished according to Act of Common-Council, and that the Dogs be killed by the Dog-killers... (42).

This regulation, concerning animals as well as potentially spoiled food, including “stinking Fish, or unwholesome Flesh, or musty Corn, or other corrupt Fruits,” is essentially for the management of those objects that are without the capacity for self-government. While the *Orders* align the poor with animals and spoiled food, they are not wholly unsympathetic to their case; however, this sympathy is premised not on a recognition of the poor’s intrinsic worth as human beings, but rather on the imperative to preserve social order that is at the heart of the *Orders*’ purpose. Later on in the *Journal*, H.F. lauds “the Good Management of the Lords Mayor and Justices [which] did much to prevent the Rage and Desperation” that afflicted so many of the poor (105). That is, the management of the poor is important because it suppresses the kinds of desperation that turn men into animals, preserving the safety of others and the stability of social order. H.F. describes those who became “so Desperate by the Calamity... that they were with great difficulty kept from... tearing all in pieces where-ever they came” (105). By preserving the poor against such desperation, the spread of disease, both literally and figuratively, can be kept at bay.

* * * * *

Less than a decade after Defoe wrote the *Journal*, an exterminator named John Southall published his *Treatise of Buggs*, a text filled with his observations and theories about the nature of the bedbug. The circumstances surrounding its reception tell us something about the state of animalcular theory after the *Journal*, but also underscores

the way that negative moral judgments accrued disproportionately to the poor, who were the most vulnerable to the precarious conditions characteristic of urban living in this period. Lisa Sarasohn argues that in the first few decades of the eighteenth century, bedbugs were quickly becoming objects of revulsion to a rising middling class who associated the “reputed pungency” of the bedbug with “growing disapproval of human body odor and the odiferous and filthy lower classes who now smelled bad to their betters” (517). Southall hypothesized that “bedbug bites become inflamed only when a person has ‘an ill Habit of Body,’” and therefore indicated “when someone lacks a ‘right order of Blood’ (524). In this way, the presence of the bedbug denoted the moral impurity of the individual in a way that encouraged the conflation of cleanliness and Godliness. This connection was especially significant for an ascendant middling class for whom the bed served as an important marker of one’s status; bedbugs were reviled for their capacity to ruin such symbols of middle-class belonging. While the bedbug “revealed the precariousness of [middling class] claims to higher status,” the growing association between cleanliness and moral purity signaled a much broader shift in cultural attitudes towards the poor (524). The poor, already viewed in moral terms as either deserving and undeserving, were now beginning to be seen in more homogenous terms as threats to public health which could not be avoided, but must be prevented because they threatened economic productivity and social order.

As ambivalent objects of both sympathy and scorn, characters of the poor serve as occasions to reaffirm shared values or shared boundaries, as we find in Defoe’s *Journal*. In times of crisis, Defoe reminds us that the poor are always already a form of excess life, and one that is perhaps best abandoned, since usually “it [is] impossible to beat any thing into the Heads of the Poor... madly careless of themselves” (164). The notion that poverty is the result of carelessness underscores the ways in which, as we move forward in the century, poverty will be increasingly viewed not as a natural condition of societies, but as an individualized failure of self-government and control over one’s relationship to their environment, as though both were legitimately subjects to be made more rational and regular in service of national goals of economic prosperity. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that the establishment and subsequent rise of the London Foundling Hospital in the

middle decades of the century, which took in and cared for abandoned children before binding them into apprenticeship, coincides with the rise of the discourse of prevention in both medicine and urban police.⁹ The imperative to regulate and promote the economic vitality of the nation by eliminating those elements that plagued its body reminds us that the emergence of biopolitics is inscribed on the bodies of the poor.

⁹ The sense of “police” I use in this dissertation refers to the original definition from the eighteenth century: “the regulation and control of a community; the maintenance of law and order, provision of public amenities, etc” (“police, n.3”). Urban reform, which I talk about in the next two chapters, was about ensuring greater regulation and order of public space, but also, crucially, extended to regulating and restricting the activities of those whose bodies or lifestyles could be considered disorderly or disruptive to an ideal economic and social order.

Chapter 2: “a complication of disorders”: venereal disease, urban reform, and the Magdalen House for Penitent Prostitutes

“[P]leas’d as we are, to conceive our own [society] one of the most *civilized*, and the most *Christian*, how can we suffer such a reproach to disgrace at once our *police* and our *Christianity*?”

-Rev. William Dodd, from *A Sermon Preached at the Magdalen-House, Before His Royal Highness Prince Edward Augustus*, p.47 (1761)

“These [bawdy-houses], Sir, are the nests of debauchery and villainy, which, whether a Magdalen-Charity takes place, or no, should be immediately exterminated.”

-Jonas Hanway, *A Plan For Establishing a Charity-House... Called the Magdalen Charity*, p. xxxii

This chapter examines the intersection between prostitution narratives and the etiology of venereal disease in mid-eighteenth-century Britain. Focusing on the rise of the Magdalen House for Penitent Prostitutes, and the anonymously written *The Histories of Some of the Penitents of the Magdalen House* that was written in support of the charity, I demonstrate how the Magdalen supporters’ methods and goals of “saving” prostitutes shared much in common with the methods and goals of preventative medicine, which was oriented towards improved self-governance as the best means of safeguarding the individual against unnecessary harms. The coincidence between these two projects was hardly coincidental, but in fact continued the trend in the eighteenth century of writers drawing upon the world of medicine to situate their understanding of social relations and to justify their social projects. I argue that the Magdalen charity’s radical sympathy for the prostitute reflects the growing interest in moving away from an understanding of social disorder in terms of virtue and vice, and turning instead towards one that recognizes the ways in which people can fall into poverty and distress through practically no fault of their own. By the estimation of the charity and its supporters, it is only through preventative management, including the regulation of one’s diet, dress, and sexual

relations, that a young woman may avoid social and bodily disaster. That the prostitute is almost universally imagined to be the victim of seduction allowed Magdalen supporters to relocate the origin of her sin in the men who wantonly deceive and ruin innocent women, and to reimagine the prostitute as an involuntary, tragic victim of her own desire for love and security. This chapter attempts to address the ways in which the sexualization of vulnerable young women provides the ultimate representation of the involuntariness and penetrability of poverty. By highlighting the ways in which preventative care is used as a disciplinary technology by the Magdalen charity, I demonstrate how a failure of self-governance, so often the lot of the poor, is implicitly presented as the underlying cause of these women's downfalls.

Using eighteenth-century literature on venereal disease as a critical framework for reading *The Histories of Some of the Penitents of the Magdalen-House*, this chapter shows how the novel as well as the charity itself relied upon a medical understanding of the relationship between disease and the body to support its goals of identifying and rehabilitating a threat to the body politic. The popular consensus about venereal disease was that it was the byproduct of the intermixture of multiple men's semen within the corrupted, torrid womb of the prostitute: literally, venereal disease was the material result of illegitimate sexual activity. Its prevention was to be found, according to one doctor, in the avoidance of "Excess and Luxury of Diet" combined with a commitment to monogamous sexual relations (Desault 34). In this chapter, I show how the spirit of this prescription was enforced in the by-laws of the Magdalen charity for penitent prostitutes, which coupled restrictions on outside contact with men with rules that governed women's dress, diet, and education. As well, I compare the narrative logic of venereal disease and its cure with the four stories found in *The Histories of Some of the Penitents of the Magdalen House*, in which the dangers associated with women's sexual autonomy are resolved when each woman gives herself over to the regulated, protective embrace of the charity.¹⁰ This chapter enriches the scholarly consensus surrounding the cultural

¹⁰ Cure, here, is understood to mean not the modern sense of eliminating a disease that has been acquired, but rather the sense, now obsolete, of preventative and recuperative treatment: "the medical treatment of a disease, or of a patient;" "a particular method or course of treatment directed towards the recovery of a patient, as in *water-cure*, *milk-cure*, etc;" "a means of healing; a remedy; a thing, action, or process that restores

significance of the Magdalen Hospital by identifying how its mission overlaps with medical tracts that address (il)legitimate reproduction, and the continuity of both with the goals of the urban reform movement.

* * * * *

In a passage that might sound remarkably charitable to modern ears, the author of the preface to *The Histories of Some of the Penitents of the Magdalen House* (1760) exhorts the reader, in light of the perceived epidemic of prostitution afflicting London, to reconsider their simplistic notions of virtue and vice.¹¹ The vice of prostitution, he argues, can never be suppressed or prevented as long as a man “who seduces a woman into guilt and shame and abandons her to disease and poverty, obtains no other appellation by such villainy, than that of a man of gallantry.” Invoking the sexual double standard so unfair to women, the author rails against the man who “breaks thro’ the ties of truth, faith, and humanity, in the destruction of one, whose greatest weakness was believing him incapable of the vileness to which she falls a sacrifice” (xv). Surely, the author argues, no reasonable person can suppose that a woman wants to become a prostitute; it is a terrible life that is defined by penury, disease, and eventual death. At the same time, the novel illustrates the continuity between the street-walker and the respectable woman of good family and good intentions who has fallen into disrepute: the woman being reclaimed and saved by these projectors has only temporarily descended to infamy on account of some bad man. The Magdalen novel’s ultimate goal is to broaden the sympathies of its readers by showing how an ordinary young woman can find herself on the path to ruin.

Beginning in the 1740s, and reaching the forefront of public consciousness in the 1750s, charitable organizations for the relief of the sick, the labouring poor, orphaned children, and prostitutes were founded by sympathetically-minded benevolent associations of wealthy merchants and statesmen. The Magdalen Hospital for Penitent Prostitutes, founded in 1757, was one part of “a whole complex of charitable endeavours” which included such institutions as the Foundling Hospital (1740) for orphaned children; the Lock Hospital (1746) for the treatment of venereal disease; the Lying-In Hospital

health” (“cure, n.5a, 5b, 7”).

¹¹ In eighteenth-century Magdalen literature, the number of prostitutes in London is generally estimated to be around 4% of the city’s population.

(1749) and Lying-In Charity (1757), which sought to increase the number of women and children who survived birth; The Marine Society (1756), which trained poor boys to go to sea; and the Asylum for the Reception of Orphaned Girls (1759), which was created with the goal of preventing them from becoming prostitutes (Ogborn 47). These charitable associations shared a common desire to safeguard and promote the integrity of the British imperial project at home and abroad. Their mission to promote British wealth – both the number of its subjects and the products of their labour – focused on correcting the perceived sources of private and public disorder by encouraging domestic harmony as well as greater industriousness on the part of the lower orders. Achieving these goals would lead to a reduction in the state’s financial burden of caring for the poor as well as producing and maintaining the subjects needed to work as well as to fight.

In this period, benevolence, forged out of mercantilist interests and with mercantilist¹² frameworks, is oriented towards reclaiming and rehabilitating underused bodies in the service of national goals. Prostitutes in particular were the site of many overlapping cultural anxieties, in large part because of the large financial and demographic drain of the Seven Years’ War, and the renewed urgency which this imperial project necessarily gave to matters of population and productivity. Widespread unease among the nobility and the gentry about depopulation and economic stagnation served as the primary motivation behind the founding of such charitable institutions as the Foundling Hospital (14-15). David Owen’s study of English philanthropy from the seventeenth century onwards traces the evolution of charitable giving, and the ways in which philanthropy evolved from private charity to more organized collective activity beginning around the turn of the eighteenth century. Organizations like the one that founded the Magdalen Hospital, for example, drew formal inspiration from the joint stock

¹² Mercantilism is “the economic theory that a nation’s wealth... is increased by a favourable balance of trade, and that a government should encourage such a balance by promoting exports (esp. of manufactured goods) and restricting imports” (“mercantilism, n.2”). Efforts to rehabilitate prostitutes by regulating their lifestyle, including the food they ate, what they wore, and the schedule and company they kept, were with the goal of cultivating virtue and industriousness. The benevolent aim of the charity to “save” women was predicated on a number of factors, but especially on the importance of putting them to work in a legitimate trade, like textiles, as a means of more positively contributing to economic activity.

company model.¹³ He argues that “Puritan piety, a benevolently humanitarian outlook, and concern for the national interest all contributed to the complex of eighteenth century philanthropy,” particularly in the period between 1740 and 1770 when we see the emergence of more coordinated efforts to address problems like prostitution (15).

Literary scholars have attributed the surge in humanitarian interest in the prostitute in this period to the widespread influence of the sentimental novel, in particular the works of Samuel Richardson, which made it fashionable to be concerned for the downtrodden. The seduction narrative popularized in the 1740s by *Pamela* and *Clarissa* had, in the years following, entered into the public consciousness and exerted considerable influence on the argument about London’s prostitution problem. Markman Ellis argues that the Magdalen Hospital was a “significant cultural event in which sentimental novelists and sentimentalist arguments were consistently employed,” evidencing a convergence between sentimental literature and the politics of social reform (252). Sympathy for the prostitute was therefore created from and sustained by the fictional model of the fallen woman. Not only did prostitute narratives of the period draw upon the conventions of sentimental fiction, but, in the case of *The Histories*, they even saw the direct involvement of Samuel Richardson himself. Martha Koehler notes that Richardson was not only one of the greatest supporters of mid-century reform projects such as the Magdalen Hospital, but he also published and wrote the preface for *The Histories of Some of the Penitents of the Magdalen House*.¹⁴ Sentimentalism was therefore very important to the charitable activity surrounding the Magdalen Hospital, but it is still but one aspect of the rhetorical appeals issued by its supporters. What all scholars of Magdalen literature agree upon is that “the Magdalen Hospital project was simultaneously a financial, philanthropic, and imperial endeavor” (Batchelor 6). The

¹³ *The Rules, Orders, and Regulations, of the Magdalen House* (1760) includes descriptions of its organizational structure and the various roles to be filled, which include a president, four vice-presidents, a treasurer, a general court, and a general committee of twenty-one governors. Each of these roles and duties are described, as well as those of the workers in the Magdalen, including the chaplain, physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, the Matron, and more.

¹⁴ Markman Ellis points to contemporary reader and Richardson correspondent, Elizabeth Echlin, who believed that he wrote the preface. Jenny Batchelor and Megan Hiatt, editors of the Pickering and Chatto edition of *The Histories*, affirm that Richardson did write the preface. The author of the narrative is not definitively known, but Batchelor and Hiatt highlight evidence suggesting that Sarah Scott is the author based on, as Katherine Binhammer notes, the “tone, theme, and ideology of the text” (509).

complex motivations of charitable endeavours at mid-century therefore evidence the broad range of concerns occupying the thoughts of those who considered themselves to be actively engaged in safeguarding British interests both at home and abroad. As a result, proposals for charitable projects were crafted to respond to financial necessity, humanitarian ends, and the enrichment of Britain.

However, the benevolence of charitable projectors did not, and perhaps could not, overcome the perceived threat of female sexuality except by sublimating it in the figure of the hapless, would-be virtuous victim. As Vivien Jones pithily puts it, “the prostitute’s poverty and exploitation on the one hand, and her status as an independent sexual tradeswoman on the other, make her a site of multiple cultural anxieties” (204). Her “capacity for remorse,” which is integral to the appeal of *The Histories*, among other works of Magdalen literature, as well as being a requirement for women’s admission to the Hospital, “signals the prostitute’s actual or honorary middle-class status, and the point of identification with the reader,” who is likely unable to imagine the prostitute as being capable of redemption unless she is a victim of circumstance (205). Similarly, Sarah Lloyd finds that sympathy was key to securing charitable support for the Magdalen Hospital, but argues that it was complicated in some respects by the difficulty in identifying the “proper objects” of its support, or, in other words, in finding the “perfect victims” who would most easily elicit the pity and support of the donors who the Hospital relied upon for financial stability. This problem was “one aspect of a wider shift which left poor, labouring women in an anomalous relation to definitions of femininity,” in which the largely middle-class provenance of sexual difference left poor women on the periphery of this ideal (67). This shift, as Jennie Batchelor argues in one essay, saw “concerns about women’s sexuality... displaced onto foreign and labouring class female others,” but also defined in and through these Other bodies (159). Elsewhere, Batchelor looks at the ways in which the early eighteenth century prostitute narrative was variously contested and upheld, pointing to the ways in which the sentimental rhetoric of the Magdalen pamphleteers was enabled “through the suppression of her potentially unruly sexual and consumer desires” (4-5). She argues that the charity’s success was secured by “its ability to transform the prostitute’s commodified body into a sentimentalized

spectacle” (7).¹⁵ Katherine Binhammer extends this reading with her own compelling critique of *The Histories*, which emphasizes the way it breaks with this portrait of “the prostitute as infantilized and agentless victim” (515). She argues that the four narratives contained in the *Histories*, and the female protagonists of each of them, by contrast, demonstrates a greater degree of complexity and a blurring of the lines between “sentimental whore and the bourgeois wife” (515).

While it is important not to deny the important role that sentimentalism played in securing charitable support for the Magdalen House, this project was one which was heavily predicated upon the regulation of public space for the purposes of promoting commerce: both by removing the illegitimate commerce of prostitution from the streets and by rehabilitating these women into proper, legitimate commercial activity, such as needlework. This chapter therefore charts the emerging concern for the prostitute as it relates to the contemporaneous urban reform movement, and the ways in which the prostitute becomes subsumed into the built environment as another feature that urban reformers sought to reform: a kind of filth, both figurative and literal, that needed to be washed away. Daniel Defoe, thirty years prior, though he wrote about prostitution in terms of its essential wickedness, described “the Reformation of these Things” as being “highly worth the Care of the publick Magistrate, if it be an Act of Justice or Policy to cleanse our Streets” (2). Even the Magdalen’s most ardent supporters, such as the Reverend William Dodd, who served as the Magdalen Chapel’s in-house preacher, acknowledged the reality that eliminating prostitution entirely was an unrealistic goal. Instead, he justified the quixotic nature of their project along the same lines as Defoe, by arguing that it would serve to supplement the work of police. The charity, after all, could not have “the immediate power to cleanse [all] the streets” of this menace; the best they could hope for was “to expel this scandalous defilement from the grand and most public streets” (47).

¹⁵ Not only was the Magdalen made into a readerly spectacle through the use of pamphlets and novels supporting her cause, but also into a visual spectacle for the consumption of Magdalen Hospital supporters and the general public. The Magdalen Chapel, where penitents were required to attend daily, was purposely engineered as a public spectacle where people could come to witness these former prostitutes exhibit their penitence. This spectacle was one of the many ways that the charity committee in charge of the Magdalen Hospital leveraged public sensibility for financial benefit, exploiting the bodies of those whom they had founded the Hospital to save from such pitfalls.

The work of “saving” the prostitute is therefore intimately connected with the slow, ongoing work of urban reform and, by extension, with the production of a stable, ordered body politic. Since the prostitute’s (re)productive activity comingle[d] the sexual and the economic spheres, we can read Magdalen literature and the corresponding arguments about prostitutes and prostitution alongside eighteenth-century venereal disease tracts. Venereal disease was understood in the mid-eighteenth century to be the materialization of illegitimate sexual activity, the natural byproduct of the intermixture of multiple men’s semen within the corrupted, torrid womb of the prostitute. Not simply a sinner, the prostitute literally embodies and materializes through her sexual labour the social, economic, and medical anxieties of the period. Defoe observed that “there seem[ed] to be an Alteration of Nature in this [city’s] Climate,” which led prostitutes to behave unlike either ancients or moderns (2). This accidental change in their character would later become absorbed as an essential feature of their biology, as the prostitute’s womb was described by physicians studying venereal disease as climactically similar to torrid countries, thus rendering them doubly unnatural (2). Taking in “the Seed [which] is the most precious Liquor in the body of the Animal,” the prostitute’s disordered womb encouraged the production of the new, terrifying scourge of the venereal worm: yet another unnatural, ungodly thing like the prostitute herself (Desault 31).

Writing about the origins of syphilis in eighteenth-century England, Marie McAllister remarks on the tendency of writers in the period “to value myth more than science” in their explanations of this venereal disease. While sin and sickness were slowly becoming uncoupled throughout the period, cultural prejudice against the sinner remained alive and well as venereal disease, that most potent materialization of sin, was imprinted on the bodies of women and racialized Others (23). McAllister writes that most British medical writers followed the lead of the most influential writer on venereal disease, the French court physician Jean Astruc, in accepting an origin story that traced the pox’s arrival in England to the 1490s, with Christopher Columbus bringing it back with his men from their encounter with the New World (22-5). Astruc explained how in hot countries, the discharge of menses in the women there is “very sharp” and “virulent,” and deemed it “unsafe to go near [them]” (33). In a warm climate, the inherent qualities

of vaginas towards putrefaction increase greatly, with a higher degree of inflammation for the women as well as for the men who lie with these women (34). It was for this same reason that Astruc argued, because of its temperate climate, that the average European woman did not pose such a risk. In John Sparrow's *A Mechanical Dissertation upon the Lues Venerea*, published in 1731, he maintains continuity with this idea that the disease is foreign-born, even though he argues that medical writers have misspent their time "attempting to discover the Rise and Progress of the Distemper, through the several Nations infected with it" (1). John Douglas's *A Dissertation on the Venereal Disease*, published in 1737, leaves the question of the disease's origin to others, to decide whether it is "as old as the prostitution of women" or is "an active poison" (1). He finds that all appearances of the disease have the same first cause, a "contagious venereal poison," which causes an infection to arise by the "copulation of a sound with an infected person" (2). Pierre Desault avers that "no nation cares to own its Birth" but affirms that "this Disease has arisen from the Prostitution of Women" (31). The contagion was, not unlike the plague which visited London in the mid-seventeenth century, widely considered to be a foreign threat arising from hot foreign climes, and allowed to develop into a state of even greater virulence owing to the poor management practices of the East. Whether it actually came from these places, or whether it did in fact arise from prostitution, in both scenarios it was posited as an essentially foreign threat: prostitutes were as antithetical to civil society as anyone from the East.

The contrast between East and West, or between superstition and reason more generally, also arises out of the self-conscious advances of medical practitioners in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Pierre-Joseph Desault, in *A Treatise on the Venereal Distemper* published in 1738, attributes recent advances in medicine to geometrical reasoning. In the preface, he draws an analogy between the work of the artificer and the physician, arguing that just "as all Artificers improve daily their Machines and Works," physicians should not be beholden to "the Rules of our Fathers and Ancestors, without endeavouring to improve them" (Preface). The physician should be more like the tradesman, constantly working to adopt the latest advances in knowledge and techniques related to working with the human body. Thomas Garlick, in his

Mechanical Account of the Cause and Cure of a Virulent Gonorrhoea, published in 1727, laments that “such is the perverse Nature of many, that Truths... shall be opposed with the greatest Art and Ridicule.” He compares the pushback against his uncommon methods to the “Same Fortune [that] likewise attended the great Copernicus, when he first asserted the Mobility of the Earth” (iii). John Sparrow, like Desault, attributes the best work being done in medicine “to the Industry of those... who have endeavour’d to establish Medicine on the solid Basis of Geometrical Principles,” including the physicians Lorenzo Bellini, Archibald Pitcairn, George Cheyne, James Keil, and Richard Mead (2-3). He concedes that while the success of both ancient and modern physicians’ methods “appears to be founded upon the same Principle,” “the Advantage of the latter, has been chiefly owing, to some later Discoveries in the Circulation, and the Art of knowing how to apply, the *Geometrical* Knowledge they are Masters of, to *Animal Oeconomy*” (20).

In what, then, did this geometrical knowledge consist? The new medicine was an outgrowth of the advances secured in the seventeenth century by predecessors such as Andreas Vesalius, Thomas Sydenham, William Harvey, and Herman Boerhaave, who rejected the humoral model of the body as a work of fancy. Pierre-Joseph Desault summarizes the difference between medical knowledge and practice between ancient and modern times as consisting in a greater priority being given, in the latter instance, to the importance of observation. He writes that

Observations have an Advantage over Systems, in as much as they are Copies of the Motions and Operations of Nature which doth not vary; they are true at all Times, but Systems are subject to the Caprice of Imagination and the Inconstancy of the human Mind. They are faithful Copies, where every one may discover the Resemblance of the Evil which afflicts him... (Preface)

This emphasis on the importance of observation was central to the practice of many, including Thomas Sydenham, a highly influential seventeenth-century physician who was regarded as the English Hippocrates, and the popularity of whose methods persisted well into the eighteenth, as evidenced here in Desault’s work. As Roy Porter notes, by the time that Desault is writing in 1727, advances in anatomy and physiology “had created the

dream of a scientific understanding of the body's structures and functions, drawing on and matching those of the new and highly prestigious mechanics and mathematics" (142). Such advances undergirded Herman Boerhaave's model of the body, a physical system that "comprised an integrated, balanced whole in which pressures and liquid flows were equalized," and in which sickness was regarded as the result of "obstruction or stagnation" of these fluids" (143). Thus, while medical advances were grounded in careful observation, experimentation, and analysis, the model of the body continued to follow the old humoral paradigm's emphasis on "balance" as the individual's key to good health.

The analogous relationship between the body and the body politic in the British cultural imagination is especially germane at this moment, when the regulation and regularization of urban space is proceeding nearly in lock-step with simultaneous efforts to regulate unruly elements in the body politic through the application of state power in the realms of both medicine and municipal policy. It is therefore appropriate at this point to invoke the work of Michel Foucault, who argues for the emergence of biopolitics in the eighteenth century, which is preceded by what he calls "anatomy-politics" (243). Biopolitics, that political phenomenon that sees the state's interest in the management of the body politic grow to encompass fertility as well as morbidity, epidemics as well as "endemics," is concerned not with discipline – not at this moment in history – but with regularization (243, 247). He argues for a conception of medicine as "a political intervention-technique with specific power effects," and that a biopower system wields its power in terms of "the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on" (256). In the mid-eighteenth century, the characterization of the prostitute as a medicalized source of social disorder is remarkable for its specificity, and for the way in which it departs from earlier attempts by the state to discipline unruly bodies. The typical solution for dealing with the idle poor – that is, those who were able and unwilling to work – consisted in forcing them into the workhouse, a treatment which was aimed at harnessing excess labour for national economic benefit and introducing greater regularity in civil society. This policy-based "treatment" for the poor was predicated upon the

understanding that the poor were like a “plague” on the body politic because they drained parish coffers and obstructed the full, vigorous circulation of labour and capital. The subordination and treatment of the prostitute, by contrast, represents a departure from the metaphorical sense in which she is a “plague,” and is predicated instead upon her literal status as a vector of disease. This evolution is not a coincidence, but rather is a consequence of the ways in which the body of the prostitute was conceived of as inherently different from that of an idle poor man, and thus presented a new set of problems for her maintenance.

The nature of the problem posed by the prostitute is not that she lacks a work ethic; rather, she represents a compound problem that is understood anatomically, in the first instance, and politically in the second: her inherent tendency to spread disease, and the complex set of economic and social problems engendered therefrom. It is therefore through the figure of the prostitute that we can come to a greater, more particularized understanding of Foucault’s idea of “anatomy-politics.” He argues that this view is “centered on the body as a machine” and is premised on “the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, [and] its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls” (261). If the prostitute is a problem to be solved, the problem is one characterized by the question of how to optimize her body for legitimate commerce, and for further (re)integration into the social body. Following contemporary physicians’ praise for the geometrical, mechanical model as representative of a more objective, rational understanding of the body, the nexus of social, economic, and political concerns which circulate around the prostitute are very much oriented towards her optimization and integration as a docile member of a patriarchal economic system.

To gain a greater understanding of how, precisely, the prostitute is situated at the dawn of anatomy-politics, we must turn to the literature of venereal disease to examine the ways in which female reproductive sexuality is constructed as inherently pathological. The popular understanding of venereal distemper in Desault’s *Treatise* comes straight from Dr. Thomas Sydenham, and he makes no qualms about copying Sydenham’s description which is “so concise and correct... that I thought I could not do better” (2).

Sydenham writes that venereal disease is “propagated either by Generation... or by the touching of some soft and porous Part of a Person infected” (2). That is, it comes into the world through the offspring of infected parents, who pass on the disorder to the gestating child, or simply by proximity to those who are infected. Children, he writes, are especially susceptible to the disease, since their pores are more open. The contagion, which originates in the woman, is originally contained in “an Ulcer or Pustule hid in the Vagina, [which contains] the [venereal] Venom,” and is communicated to the male during “conversation,” when it penetrates “the porous Substance of the Glans” and from there works its way inward and corrupts other organs such as the prostate (3). The man becomes afflicted with pain in his genitals, and “an Eruption, which resembles... a Spot of the Meazles” from which “a Liquor distils gently like Seed,” changing colour as it grows more virulent (4). Moreover, the distemper sometimes “obstruct[s] the urinary Canal in such a Manner that the Patient cannot make Water... a Disorder more formidable than Death itself,” or even causes the virulent matter to run off into the scrotum, where it “brings on a Swelling and Inflammation” (5). These are but some of the symptoms brought on by the venereal distemper, which are terrible, to be sure, but especially remarkable because of their tendency towards disrupting the proper circulation of fluids in the body. Rather than being able to urinate normally, the infected male is no longer able to “make water;” his genitals swell up or manifest buboes and sores that ooze unnatural “seed,” a perversion of their normal function and appearance. Finally, Sydenham concludes, “after he has led a miserable Life, through the Stench, Pain, Rotting, and Shame more horrid than Death itself... the mangled Carcase odious to God and Man is hid under the Ground. (6-7). Sydenham’s description of the venereal distemper, precise though it is, demonstrates that eighteenth-century advances in medicine did not preclude moral judgment, but rather gave such judgments greater weight by virtue of their gruesome detail, demonstrating to the sinner how their body will be racked by the torments of hell.

Despite the ostensible commitment to observation as a foundational principle of modern medicine, many writers were of the opinion that the originating cause of venereal disease, the “Venereal Leaven,” or “Venom,” which produces it, “consists in

imperceptible Worms, which upon approaching are communicated from one Body to another, and afterwards multiply in the Person” (10). This view Desault acknowledges as paradoxical on its face, but that “Supposition for Supposition ours ought to be preferr’d, which makes us admire the Hand of GOD, who is able to produce well organized Insects, although less than the Particles of the thinnest Liquid” (11). “This Idea of the pocky Worms,” he writes, “although they come not under the Cognizance of our Sense,” is not so far-fetched, since “modern Philosophers are of the Opinion, that Lice, Fleas, and Crablice have upon the Surface of their Bodies other Insects which plague them as much as they do us” (11). Here he not only defers to a common refrain cited in cases involving the microscopic, that nothing is beyond God’s abilities, but also reasons by analogy that since the same symptoms occur in ulcers, and the same remedies obtain for both ulcers and venereal distemper, that worms must be the primary agent of the disease. Indeed, he writes, “Surgeons of Credit” attest that “they have seen without Microscopes Worms crawl in Ulcers” (11-12). While the new medicine expressed a commitment to observation, the scant evidence concerning the role of “insects” did little to dissuade physicians such as Desault from enthusiastically embracing conjectures based on little more than reasoning by analogy: precisely that which had supposedly been abandoned as fancy and superstition.

This “worm” or “insect” theory of disease, as Desault makes clear, is an extension of the “animalcular” theory of disease which circulated in plague treatises earlier in the century. He references “those Animalcula which the Slaver of a mad Dog is full of,” and how the means used to treat “the Bite of mad Dogs, is composed of Plants which we daily make use of to destroy Worms” (12). Further on in the text, he makes this connection even more explicit, stating that “the Plague according to several Authors is produced by Worms,” recounting the theory advanced by Richard Mead and others that climactic factors are principally responsible “for the Generation of the pestilential Worms” (13). Having established the common connection between plague and venereal disease, he proposes that it is “enough for us to allow that in one single Malady, the Contagion comes from Worms, to establish a Proof, that all contagious Diseases arise from them” (17). Since “Nature is uniform in her Operations,” and “performs Generation by means of

Ovula,” it is reasonable to assume that “she likewise makes use of Worms,” which propagate in much the same way, “to communicate Infection in all Diseases bearing the Character thereof” (17). Therefore, Desault concludes, “the System of Worms” allows one to understand the etiology of venereal disease and the means of its transmission and reproduction.

Worm theory, however, reveals a conceptual slippage between reproduction and disease, which is figured as a corrupted version of a natural biological process. In *An Inquiry into the Original Production of Insects in Human Bodies, Especially of the Seminal Animalcula* (1727), the anonymous author begins with the assumption, more or less correct by our standards, that “the Sperm is only a Croud of Animalcula, or small Worms, with long Tails, like Tadpoles, swimming in a viscid Scrum” and that “these were [pioneering microscopist] Leewenhoeck’s Animalcula, or little perfect Men” (6). The venereal leaven is produced, according to Desault, by the prostitution of women, whereby “various kinds of Seeds received by the same Womb, of different Characters and Temperature, are disposed by their Heterogeneity to ferment and corrupt there, and to hatch Venereal worms” (31). Thus it is in the prostitute’s womb where “the Seed [which] is the most precious Liquor in the Body of the Animal,” and which is meant for proper, natural generation, is corrupted by heat and mixture into worms, as opposed to good, reproductive animalcules. There, instead of fostering the generation of “little perfect Men,” the prostitute obstructs God’s will with her sexual impropriety and produces unnatural monstrosities that not only corrupt her sexual partners, but also threaten the health of others. The unruly mixing of many men’s animalcula effectively transposes class anxiety onto the womb: it is because of their combination that the woman’s womb becomes disordered, rather than the womb being essentially disordered itself. This explanation of the disease makes it clear that the venereal worms are produced by women’s commerce with more than one man, and that, by stepping outside of the bounds of a monogamous sexual relationship such as marriage, they are practically inviting the production of disease.

However, monogamy is not enough. Desault is quick to remind the reader that not all “Commerce with infected Persons” leads directly and inevitably to the manifestation

of symptoms; these can lie dormant, like a tape worm, for many years (19-20). In consideration of the transmission of venereal worms “from Generation to Generation,” he writes that it is possible that the “pocky Worms may either circulate with the Blood, or fasten to certain Parts,” lying dormant, “without producing any bad Symptoms” or “troublesome Accidents, until the Juices of the Blood being weakened” bring about the circumstances favourable to their propagation” (21-22). He attributes their suppression to “the good Juices of the Blood, or the Elasticity of the Solids [which] hinder them from increasing much;” it is only when “through Age or Excesses [that] the Constitution is weakened, [that] they have an Opportunity of multiplying” (20). Desault therefore identifies temperance and morality as being most conducive to maintaining good health, and it is for this reason that even a former prostitute, if she is authentically penitent and resolved to changed her life, can become forever free of the disease.

Desault’s *Treatise* emphasizes avoiding the “Excess and Luxury of Diet [which] have very much heightened this Evil,” thus joining his understanding of the disease to the disordered modern lifestyle (34). It is the importance of temperance that informs his understanding of the limitations of contemporary “cures” for venereal disease. Salivation, he wrote, referring to the use of mercury to quicken the blood and to thereby speed up the dissolution of obstructions, might kill some of the worms, but it “was not capable of insinuating itself into their Eggs,” and killing off the offending material altogether (23). Rather, it is more important to prevent the disease in the first instance. It is fitting, then, that later in the *Treatise* Desault suggests a few ways of preventing venereal disease that go beyond medical solutions to touch on social and policy-based remedies for the foul disorder. Citing Solomon’s example, he extols the benefits of polygamy, by which Solomon avoided the pitfalls of potentially mixing and corrupting his seed. It is for this reason that marrying girls very young, as was standard in polygamous societies, and as “is practiced among the Jews to this Day” that “[young women have] not time to prostitute themselves,” and remain pure for their husbands-to-be (35). By stripping women of any vestige of social or sexual agency, venereal disease can be prevented and social order secured. To take care of any lingering, stubborn exceptions to such regulations, Desault positively cites “the Severity of the [ancients’] Laws against

Adultery, [which served] as a Barr to the Generation of this Evil;” unfortunately, Desault writes, “the Severity of the Laws has cooled upon this Article, [and] the Shame which went along with the Prostitution is become fashionable” (35). Finally, he recommends the example of the Russian emperor Peter the Great, who banished brothels from Petersburg and thus “he did at the same time the Duty of a good Christian, and of a great Politician,” by eliminating the spaces, conditions, and people which gave rise to the disorder (36). Desault’s recommendation for the strict regulation of women’s sexual and social freedoms is presented as a more effective cure than all purely medical remedies combined, and, in this respect, anticipates the convergence between medicine and urban reform, where the desire to restore balance to the social and the actual body in the mid-eighteenth century is carried out in a systematic way, through the founding of various hospitals, and derives its authority and persuasive power from the analogy between the two.

* * * * *

While the precise origins of the new concern for prostitutes and for the prevention of this social disorder are debated, scholars generally agree that much of the chatter and enthusiasm about rescuing prostitutes began with a letter in *Rambler* 107, dated March 26th, 1751. In it, the author Amicus writes of his experience one morning, when, in a bid to escape his “unusual pensiveness” he “took a ramble in the fields,” where he came across “the hospital for the reception of deserted infants.” Letting his sentiments take their natural course, he describes how he started to think of the mothers of these children, and the lack of recourse they must have had against their libertine betrayer. In what is later taken up as the most common leitmotif of Magdalen literature, the author laments the descent which must necessarily follow from initial, “deluded virtue to shameless guilt... to hopeless wretchedness” (no. 107). These women, who are abandoned to the caprice of “their tyrants, the bully and the bawd, who fatten on their misery, and threaten them with want or a gaol,” are daily “overlooked and neglected, with equal disregard of policy and goodness.” The author calls on government, the “great end” of which is “to prevent evil,” “to stop the increase of this deplorable multitude.”

While the reader is clearly meant to understand that this multitude are the

prostitutes, the nature of the problem was, in fact, a compound one comprising a chain of responsibility that, quite arguably, should end with the prostitute rather than begin with her. The “multitude” could just as likely refer to the multitude of libertines who make a habit of debauching women; to the infamous, depraved bawds who ran brothels and reportedly preyed on innocent young women coming into the city desperate and without support; to the scores of children born out of wedlock and abandoned to the charge of the state, the extent of which represented an increasingly burdensome financial and demographic strain, particularly in light of Britain’s lagging economy and growing imperialist commitments abroad. That the prostitute, or the would-be prostitute, was singled out as the problem to be solved is indicative of the attitude that these women do not have the power, the means, or the general wherewithal to extract themselves from their miserable circumstances, an attitude that, unfortunately, was not very far removed from the reality since the options available to labouring class women in the mid-eighteenth century were sorely limited. Chronic underemployment in Britain meant that, for the labouring poor, there were few options available for work other than occasional labour, the range of which would have mostly been limited to low-paid textiles or service work. A woman’s access to the former would depend on her proficiency with a needle, and the latter would be a possibility only if she had a good reference, the likelihood of which, in her distressed situation, would have been unlikely given the social stigmas involved. Indeed, despite the character of the fallen woman invoked in the majority of sentimental, popular Magdalen literature – the woman who is identifiably middle class before her fall into wretchedness – this woman was far from typical, as “the majority of the capital’s prostitutes were born into pauperism,” “more often than not outside London, [and were] frequently orphaned or deserted by their parents” (Pearce 131). Thus it was more likely than not that she would have no recourse to family for support, and, with little to no formal education or skills to her name, would be unable to find “legitimate” work.

As Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly argue in their study, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, the transformation of the relationship between the poor and the state in the 1750s, which witnessed a veritable explosion of philanthropic charitable

foundations, owed as much to a surge in humanitarian interest as to the fact that official poor relief was wholly inadequate and demanded alternatives. Many prominent thinkers “agreed that destitution was not the result of laziness or individual misfortunes but arose through economic and social abuses” (194). While support for and interest in the labouring poor continued to be “of a condescending and paternalistic variety,” there was an increasing recognition that the problem of underemployment and poverty was not a natural but an artificial condition (195). Interest and support for the Magdalen Hospital project was founded on similar thinking: Magdalen supporters believed that the prostitute's fall resulted from either seduction or ignorance, and that the women could not reasonably be held accountable for the sins that followed from the actions of those who actively and knowingly took advantage of her innocence.

Proposals addressing potential solutions for the problem of prostitution did not originate in the 1750s. In 1726, Daniel Defoe published *Some Considerations upon Street-walkers*, in which he identifies himself as firmly “against that winking Indulgence” towards prostitutes, who have taken over “our most publick Streets,” endangering the young and obstructing many from conducting their business (2). Defoe’s solution annexes the problem of prostitution to other concerns of public order that are “highly worth the Care of the publick Magistrate,” and, though he criticizes would-be reformers who can “think of no Cure for Lewdness, but Amputation,” concedes that if “Encouragements to Virtue” will not succeed that it is prudent to “[cut] off the Rotten Branches in this season, to prevent the Corruption of more in the next” (8). The imperative to “treat the disease” was balanced alongside a concern for women which was principally utilitarian rather than humanitarian at this point. Defoe argues that “the great Use of Women in a Community is to supply it with Members that may be serviceable,” as well as for the labour they provide for themselves, their husbands or their parents; since a “street-walking whore can never answer either of these ends,” she is, naturally, as useful as a rotting branch on a tree (6). Bernard Mandeville proposed his own ironic solutions in *A Modest Defence of Public Stews* in 1724, arguing that the problems associated with prostitution – disease, illegitimate commerce, and the murder of bastard infants – are not “the necessary Effects of Whoring... but only proceed from the Abuse and ill Management of it” (6). His plan

for regulation – by setting up brothels in some convenient area, making provision for an infirmary and physicians, and for subdividing the women by classes, according to their beauty and the fees they could reasonably charge – is, ironically as well, not very far removed from the plan that would ultimately emerge from the various Magdalen proposals.

John Fielding penned *A Plan for A Preservatory and Reformatory, for the Benefit of Deserted Girls, and Penitent Prostitutes* in 1758, and dedicated his pamphlet to Grace Charlotte, the Duchess Dowager of Somerset, who was the first subscriber to the charity (Dedication). In his *Plan*, he joins together the specific problem of prostitution with that of the labouring classes more generally, identifying its origins in parental and regulatory neglect. He identifies the neglected sons of the poor, gaming houses, and brothels as fit objects of control via public policy, especially because they are only good for debauching the morals and draining the purses of apprentices and journeymen, who are each “decoy’d into a Snare, injurious to his property, fatal to his Constitution, destructive to his Family, and... to his Peace of Mind” (2). The nature of this problem is not only moral but economic. Fielding writes that “[t]he Preservation of the common People” is important because it is “from this Fountain, [that] [the nation’s] Manufactures, Fleets, Armies, and domestic Servants are supplied” (3). Thus to amputate these rotten limbs, as Defoe would suggest, is not only counterproductive but damaging to the nation’s interest. Rather, Fielding argues, “Evils of all Kinds in public Societies are only to be cured by being prevented:” “*venienti occurite morbo*, is as good a Maxim in Politics as in Physic” (7-8).¹⁶ His plan for the Magdalen Hospital, while ostensibly dedicated to prevention rather than amputation, was predicated on taking in only “the Daughters of the industrious Poor,” aged seven to fifteen, who were “Uncorrupted, and free from Blemish of Constitution and Intellects” (11).

Like John Fielding, Saunders Welch, another government official who presided over Middlesex County in Westminster as the Justice of the Peace, penned his own proposal to solve the problem of prostitution. He too traces the root of the problem to the education of “the children of those in the next sphere of life to labourers” which supply

¹⁶ Translation: confront disease at its onset.

the bagnios and bawdy-houses, and whose pride and idleness renders them “unfit” for suitable work (4).¹⁷ In this way, Welch agrees with Fielding in identifying poverty, underemployment, and prostitution as a compound social problem that originates in the mis-education of the poor. The natural, or unnatural, consequence of this is the overproduction of disordered subjects who attack the social body; the “general depravity of morals” produces prostitutes as well as “a constant supply of sharpers and robbers to infest our streets” (7). Welch proposes a number of legislative changes to provide justices of the peace with greater powers of arrest, and greater punishments for “the keepers of common bawdy-houses, their agents, and servants” of up to seven years (20). By amending police to afford greater prosecutorial power to the governors, in combination with the reforming institution, they may more effectually “[strike] at the root of the evil” (29-30). Thus, in the future, instead of “punishing those who have already transgressed the laws of virtue,” they will preserve those “who must hereafter transgress” such laws unless “charity does not snatch them out of the snares of poverty” (45). We should not be so quick to condemn those who “suffer by the crimes of others” or who, because of “the poverty or negligence of their parents [are] expose[d] to the temptation of hunger or nakedness... and whose minds, untaught and unsettled, are open to the influence of every tongue” (45-6).

Despite the humanitarianism underpinning Welch’s call for greater sympathy for those who are trapped by poverty, like his contemporaries his sympathies are not boundless. The benevolence of Welch’s sentiments is undercut by his *de facto* diagnosis that “the bodies of these women are generally a complication of disorders” (15). Besides their foul mouths and poor manners, which threaten to corrupt the morals of the youth, Welch likens prostitutes to “a virulent contagion [which] precipitates the body into immediate destruction” (16). This comparison is not entirely unfair, as contemporary

¹⁷ “The maxim of the parents of these children is, to give them what they call a good education; and if Miss happens to be pretty, her vanity is indulged by dress, &c. in hopes that she may mend her fortune by captivating some rich gudgeon, or be qualified to wait upon a lady, or at least to be a chamber-maid. The truth of this observation [re the wrong turn in their education] will sufficiently appear, from the great difficulty of getting servants for all work; and the vast number of candidates for higher stations. Thus a useful education is sacrificed, and the fond deluded parent lays the foundation of the child’s destruction in pride and idleness...” (4)

theories of venereal disease laid bare the debilitating effects of such immoral activity on the individual's constitution; however, the effect of drawing this equivalency, where the disease and the person are taken together as one indissoluble whole, is more than a mere rhetorical flourish, especially when the rhetor is in a position to effect changes to the law.

Welch was not the first to make a pressing case for the need for more coordinated efforts between charities and the law in redressing social issues. Henry Fielding, writing *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* earlier in the decade, similarly wrote on the challenges brought about by rapid urbanization. However, unlike many who casually invoke the "constitution" of the country and the nature of the "disease" afflicting it, Fielding is much more circumspect in his use of the term, acknowledging that "there is no Subject on which our Ideas are more confused and perplexed" than how his fellow writers conceive of the nation (v). He then lays out his own taxonomy of the nation, first identifying Britain's "Natural Constitution" as all the original laws and customs of the people, and then separates "the people" into their three acknowledged classes: the nobility, the gentry, and the commonalty, the latter of which "are greatly changed," though they have historically "been very low and mean" (vi-viii). The historical narrative that Fielding proposes identifies the origin of present day problems in the commonalty's shaking off of vassalage, especially through the introduction of trade, which has "subverted the former State of Affairs, and hath almost totally changed the Manners, Customs, and Habits of the People, more especially of the lower sort" (xi). The nature of this uniquely modern problem demands a modern solution: the present state of civil power, he argues, is inadequate to deal with such fundamental changes to the constitution of the country, which has seen the numbers and power of the lower orders increase with no corresponding increase in the scope and power of civil authority (xiv). The nature of the remedy to this problem Fielding leaves open, but the clear message is that the policy solutions must be formulated to restore ancient models of social order so that the commonalty can flourish without endangering the social and political prestige and power of their betters.

Proposals for the Magdalen House, in their focus on prevention rather than cure, being the more financially and morally prudent choice of the two, engineered solutions

for this dynamic social problem that were predicated on changing the environment. By removing the penitents from all commerce with the outside world, and by strictly regulating their daily lives, the Magdalen House removed the potential for immorality as well as the dangers represented by the many kinds of “accidents” that threatened the women’s self-preservation. Robert Dingley, in what was the first formal proposal for the establishment of the Magdalen House, acknowledged the reality that prostitution is an intractable problem, and that it can only be remedied by removing those “snares” which surround young women. The “snare” appears in nearly all Magdalen literature, and represents the omnipresent dangers that threaten to entrap the young woman, body and soul, into sin. It is not just the moral snare, “laid by those endowed with superior faculties, and all the advantages of Education and fortune,” but also the compound circumstances of her life which make her removal to a safe space all the more necessary. Just as Henry Fielding underscores the importance of bolstering the constitution of the nation, through rational reforms aimed at restoring the balance of powers between the gentry and the commonalty, Dingley’s solution to the problem of the snare encompasses a number of overlapping protections. Prostitution, that is, is definitely a moral problem, but also one that arises from the corruption of the social body. It is not that women are inherently sinful; “the seeds of virtue would exert themselves, but alas! the possibility is removed” (4). Once seduced, Dingley argues, they move swiftly from innocence into despair and utter penury, and are then forced by economic necessity “to prey on the unwary,” which ultimately “diffuses the contagion... and spread[s] ruin” (4). Therefore any real, lasting solution must begin by remedying the soil, so to speak, and removing those impediments to bodily and spiritual health. Thus does Dingley’s plan center on the rehabilitative value of work: by employing the prostitute in some form of work other than prostitution, you can simultaneously reform their morals, rescue their bodies from disease and death, and ultimately save their souls from misery (6).

The effectiveness of such a plan, however, hinges on creating a regulated environment. Dingley’s plan to “improve the soil” consists, like all the others, in a strict regulation of the domestic oeconomy of the Magdalen House, and begins, as well, with restrictions on the kinds of women who are to be admitted into the House. The “Proper

Objects for Admission” must apply by petition to the Committee of the Magdalen for approval; they must provide, “if possible, a Certificate of their place of Settlement, real Name, Age, &c”; and they must first “be rendered clean and healthy” (12-13). Once they have gained admission to the House, Dingley writes, they are to be strictly regulated in terms of their dress -- “a uniform of light grey, black, or sky blue... as plain and neat as possible,” presumably so as not to encourage their vanity – as well as separated according to social distinction, with “a Superiority or preference of Wards,” “according to the Behaviour and Education of the Objects; and that they be clothed and fed accordingly” (13). This division is also evidenced in other plans for the Magdalens. Joseph Massie classified the women into four categories: the virtuously, genteelly educated; servants or those a degree above the meanest sort; the “very ignorant, rude, untractable, or audacious;” and those of impaired strength or health (38). It is thus that plans for the Magdalen House were directed not towards saving women, but rather towards restoring the class divisions that the fast-changing constitution of the country, per Fielding, had sapped of their significance.

The Rules, Orders, and Regulations of the Magdalen House, published shortly after its inception, set out the conditions of the disciplinary regime under which the penitents could labour for their salvation. The introduction, borrowed from Dingley’s *Plan*, makes the case for the importance of providing a space where “the Seeds of Virtue” may grow, where “pests, [may become] useful members of society” (5). This document invests the governors and the general committee of the House with the power to admit or deny petitioners, to “give orders concerning the manner in which the persons admitted shall be employed most properly, for the advantage of the charity,” and to hire and fire any of the officers and servants of the charity (11).¹⁸ Aside from the committee’s more general oversight of the operations of the Magdalen House, the *Rules* set out the duties of those who worked more directly with the women, which are largely characterized by auditing their behaviour, dress, and work. The chaplain, entrusted with the spiritual care of the penitents, is charged with leading the women in prayers, and with educating “the

¹⁸ Governors of the Magdalen House were appointed purely on the basis of financial contribution: “a subscription of twenty guineas is a qualification for a governor for life;” five guineas bought you a governorship for the year, and gained you a governorship for life after five years’ annual subscriptions (12).

sick and illiterate... according to the principles and duties of the protestant religion,” as well as making recommendations to the committee on what he thinks necessary for the penitents’ improvement (13). The matron, who is perhaps the most central figure of the House as a kind of surrogate mother, oversees the House oeconomy in all respects. She ensures that the rules of the house are “strictly observed, with regard to the time of rest, diet, [and] hours of devotion,” as well as that the women are “neat and decent in their cloaths and persons, and properly employed, and discharge their duty” (14-15).

Moreover, the matron serves as the intermediary between the penitents and the outside world. Both the porter and the messenger are required to report to her, and cannot pass “any letter, message, or other thing into the house” without her inspection and approval (16). Although the Magdalen House was not conceived of as a prison, it combined a rigid disciplinary regime with a general prohibition on contact with the outside world.¹⁹

Penitents were not allowed to leave, even for short periods of time, without clear written permission from at least three members of the committee (17).

Beyond these particulars of the House’s disciplinary regimen, the women were arranged into different wards. Upon admission, women would be assigned to a ward for new penitents, where they would remain “for some time, for a trial of their behavior,” before being assigned to their appropriate station in the House. The different wards, separated “according to the education or behavior of the person admitted,” created clear divisions among the penitents. Lower wards were reserved for “inferior persons” and women who misbehaved (18). Apart from this higher-level ranking of women, within each ward one woman would be “appointed to preside, and be accountable for the conduct and behavior of the rest” (18). This system of checks and balances, from the general committee to the charity officers and finally to the women themselves, effectively created a surveillance culture which facilitated the goal of disciplined reform. This culture was not only integral to the internal system of discipline in the Magdalen House, but also to its appeal to the public. Attendance at chapel was required for all of the penitents, where they “sat behind a screen with their faces shielded further by the large

¹⁹ The word “penitentiary,” before it became synonymous with “prison,” referred to “a priest appointed to or delegated to administer penance” (“penitentiary”). A penitentiary is thus a dedicated space in which one does penance for their sins.

straw bonnets which formed part of their uniform” (Arnold 77). Soon after its founding, as Dana Arnold writes, Sunday service at the Magdalen Chapel became very popular among the well-heeled, who travelled to hear the Reverend Dodd speak, as well as “to gawk at the screened figures of the penitents themselves” (77). Arnold argues correctly that the Magdalen’s “the cultural practice of visiting and viewing was part of a process that established and reinforced social hierarchies” by “keep[ing] matter in its place” (77). While the Magdalen House combined the principles of urban reform – order, proportion, and cleanliness in the built environment – with those of religious discipline, it continued to perpetuate class divisions which reaffirmed its role as a primarily socioeconomic rather than spiritual enterprise.

Thus, we find that William Dodd, the reverend in residence of the Magdalen, invokes and conflates economic and medical rhetoric in his sermons. He decries the “general and Fatal prevalence” of the vice of prostitution, and “the many thousand women yearly perishing, in all the extremities of disease and distress, by means of it” (vi). This crisis is as much economic as it is medical, as he implores the listener to “consider how our capital streets, for many years past, have been thronged” with countless prostitutes, thereby inhibiting legitimate commercial activity, as Defoe had argued decades prior (vi). Dodd further laments that “every corner of our metropolis [is] infested by these miserable wretches, to the shame of good order, decency, and religion” (vi). To discern the nature of the difference between Dodd and Defoe, between whom there seems to be very little daylight, we must focus on the how each writer characterizes the primary cause of the woman’s downfall. While both presume a lack of understanding that precipitates their fall, the role of ignorance differs. For Defoe, ignorance and evil are effectively one and the same, since if one is ignorant of God’s word, and conducts one’s life in a manner contrary to religious principles, one is evil and does not deserve to be included in civil society. For Dodd, their ignorance is a product of their innocence, and it is the world that is corrupt, not necessarily the individual within it. Therefore the most Christian thing to do is to fix it, rather than to condemn those who are ensnared into sin because of their innocence. Here, a key difference is in the way that “the snare” is imagined: Defoe writes of prostitutes as “Snare[s] to the Innocent,” while the mid-

century reformers like Dodd flip the script and redefine the terms of innocence in favour of women who lack the necessary education to be able to recognize and dispatch threats to their virtue.²⁰ Dodd preempts the objections that these women who are to be saved by the hospital are simply opportunists taking advantage of the public's goodwill. Just as one would not suppose that "a mason would be careless how he mounted the ladder, and indifferent, whether he fell down or not, and broke a leg, because there is an hospital ready to receive him," so does he question how it is that some would believe that women would willingly endanger themselves by becoming prostitutes simply "because there is a house of penitence and industry to receive her" (vi-vii). He urges his listener to consider why it is that they place so much stock in the good education of children, and its preservative effects, and yet hold that a like education cannot have the same effect:

All parents and friends suppose the advantage of education great; and the bias of religious principles such, that it is sufficient to preserve the mind from deviating into the paths of error and folly. If not, why are we so solicitous for giving our children good education, and an early tincture of virtue? – and why should we not presume the same in regard to these women? – Many of whom have entered the house, utterly ignorant of and uninstructed in the religion of their country (viii)

To save these women, they must first be re-fashioned into children, because otherwise they lack the self-governance to be considered anything other than 'wretches'. Rather than abandon them to misery, it is better that these women, after a probationary period in which they demonstrate their virtue and learning, be reclaimed as moral, contributing members of society.

Despite the apparently great strides of sympathy that helped the Magdalen House to make the leap from concept to reality, the reforms proposed by Dodd and his compatriots were hardly seismic. They represent an evolution of sentiment rather than content: thirty years prior, Defoe declared "the main Cause [of prostitution to be] that Neglect of Matrimony which the Morals of the present Age inspire Men with" (6). What

²⁰ "[F]act abundantly demonstrates to us, that men for the most Part are the Seducers, and the generality of those, who now claim our aid, have been introduced to their misery, by the complicated arts of seduction, and by every unjustifiable method" (13). Dodd is keenly aware of the double standard affecting women: "One false step for ever ruins their fair fame" (14).

links the moralizing of Defoe to the sermonizing of Dodd is an investment in affirming legitimate over illegitimate forms of labour and commerce. Just as prostitution, for Defoe, is anathema to commerce, since it can never “supply [civil society] with Members that may be serviceable, and keep up a Succession,” Dodd stresses the importance of “preserv[ing] [women] from present and afflictive death,” and “to restore to the state many useless members” through rehabilitation under the control of the Magdalen House (6, 19). Symbolically and pragmatically, monogamous marriage was regarded by physicians as the greatest preventative for venereal disease, giving the moral dimension of marriage an added justification based in scientific rationality. Not only does marriage help to curb the reproduction of disease by discouraging promiscuity, it also rids society of disordered bodies while defraying the costs to the state. Understood in Foucauldian terms, women’s amenability to marriage is a precondition for whether the state lets them live or die: this is Foucault’s essential reminder, that biopolitics is defined positively as well as negatively, where “[f]rom the point of view of life and death, the subject is neutral, and it is thanks to the sovereign that the subject has the right to be alive or, possibly, the right to be dead” (256). In *The Histories*, the father’s authority is sovereign, and the young Magdalens’ distance from marriage-ability, and the extent of their downfall, are determined by the extent to which she strays from her father’s will or more generally from the orbit of his protection.

The anonymous novel *The Histories of Some of the Penitents of the Magdalen House*, adopts this moral framework while also critiquing its terms. While it explicitly makes no claims about the truthfulness of the tales related within its pages, they are offered up as representative examples of the kinds of experiences typical of those who have ended up within the protection of the House. Therefore, while it is undoubtedly a work of fiction, it is a carefully constructed one that is meant to offer insights into the experiences of those women who have been ensnared within prostitution. Even if it does tend to romanticize its subjects, the novel demonstrates a sustained engagement with the social, economic, and political issues surrounding prostitution, marriage, and gender during the mid-eighteenth century. Accordingly, the novel’s preface encourages the reader to move beyond absolute notions of virtue and vice, and to recognize that while “the first

step into that way of life oftener proceeds from weakness than from vice” (vi-vi).²¹ Poverty and desperation, rather than inherent vice, expose one to greater temptations and snares, and offer less opportunity for the exercise of virtue. This argument, like those found in previous Magdalen literature, turns on women’s relative innocence and ignorance, their “inferior advantages towards repressing [temptations],” and makes no claims on the ability to address the true cause: the man “who seduces a woman into guilt and shame and abandons her to disease and poverty” (x, xv). This man is not to be stopped, since “all that the best man can do, is, as far as possible, to repair the ravages others commit” (xvii). The regulation of prostitution, and the curbing of social disorder, is thus to be carried out via the victims rather than the perpetrators. By introducing greater order and discipline into the material organization of these women’s lives, coupled with encouragements to virtue in terms of religious education and observance, the Magdalen House offers the possibility of “amend[ing] the human heart, in opposition to its own inclinations” by providing a place “secluded from temptation, and secured from distress and insult” (xiii). The nearly mechanical relationship between conduct and virtue is reinforced here, as the author notes that “decent behavior, will proceed to purity of mind” (xiv). Through discipline one may find salvation.

While the preface to the novel reinforces the common wisdom generally espoused by Magdalen literature, the four narratives presented within resist the explanation that their downfall is wholly owing to ignorance and vanity and demonstrate the extent to which they are the victim of circumstances beyond their control. As Katherine Binhammer argues, the novel encourages the reader to reconceptualize prostitution “from an act of sexual volition to an act of economic necessity,” and to recognize the insufficiency of vice as a metric for discussing social disorder (508). The four narratives of *The Histories* certainly supports this reading, as they demonstrate how a lack of social support combined with economic deprivation quickly drive a woman to desperate measures. The would-be prostitute serves as an urgent, material reminder of the importance of other kinds of bodily security to maintaining one’s virtue.

The etiology of venereal disease provides us with a critical framework for reading

²¹ Most likely written by Samuel Richardson, according to Jennie Batchelor and Megan Hiatt, editors of the Pickering and Chatto edition of *The Histories*.

The Histories that brings the implicit goals of the Magdalen Hospital into stark relief. Accepting that the goal of the charity was not merely to help women in need, but instead to control women's bodies and their circulation in the sexual and commercial economy, the correspondence between the origin and cure of venereal disease and the disciplinary regime of the Hospital is too close to dismiss as mere coincidence. The generation of venereal disease is explicitly linked to women's sexual autonomy, and its prescribed cure, if the woman does not die first from disease, misery, or want, is temperance, self-discipline, and, most importantly, monogamous sexual relations. This explanation of venereal disease clearly overlaps with the narrative structure of *The Histories*. Concerns about women's circulation in a sexual economy – the overall message being that she shouldn't, because it's so dangerous to her spiritual and bodily health – are resolved when she finds her way into the comforting, protective embrace of the charity. Not only does the Magdalen Hospital's mission touch on all of the required elements to prevent venereal disease, it also literally quarantines women from the outside world, helping to secure others against their moral, and potentially physiological, contagion. Though the women are arguably spoiled for marriage, they become, through their stay in the Hospital, models of self-disciplined living to be emulated by the novel's readers, and thus by the circulation of their characters in the stable confinement of the novel, promote the inoculation of the general public.

The first and longest narrative, told by Emily, demonstrates the ways in which a young woman of seemingly virtuous upbringing can, if she is lacking the protection and guidance of her father, easily become a sexualized target for others. She begins by recounting her modest upbringing as the daughter of a West England clergyman. Her father's devotion to his work required him to travel to the surrounding parishes, necessitating a horse, and his travel expenses, combined with the repair costs on their parsonage house, meant that the family's finances were "barely sufficient" to support them, even though her father earned roughly a hundred pounds annually (8-9). Ill health plagued the family, as well, taking the lives of many of her would-be siblings and her mother by the time she was fourteen; her father would die the following year. Abandoned to the world, the beginning of Emily's story locates the origins of her downfall not in

vice, but in want of domestic oeconomy precipitated not by extravagance but out of pious devotion. The author effectively inverts the conventional link between illness and vice: her father's piety and hard work are not rewarded with grace and good health, according to the typical narrative ascribed to the virtuous poor, but with penury and disease.

The narrative world being crafted by the anonymous novel is one that is curiously indifferent to the morality of its inhabitants, where virtuous behaviour is not necessarily rewarded and vice not necessarily punished, as evidenced by the turn the story takes after Emily leaves the orbit of her father's protection. Her elder, and only, sister asks a family friend to take Emily in, but is rebuffed: "if she had no sons, or [Emily] was less handsome," then the Lady might have taken her in herself, but she instead offers to recommend her to another friend in the county over (11). Adrift without a father, and without any prospects of marriage, Emily loses whatever social protections she may have been afforded and becomes a sexual liability to herself and others, despite having acquired no such character. Thus thrown into the world, she finds herself "left to [her] own guidance and support," though she "had been bred up in religious principles... at that age they could not be deeply grounded, nor so fixed as to stand against the temptations of the world" (10). She soon becomes a servant to George and Lady Markland, who are "very good natured and indulgent," but too indulgent, and therefore have cultivated an immoral environment, destructive of all the souls within (18). Not long after arriving, Emily discovers that the Marklands' other two servants are sleeping with each other while everyone in the household looks the other way. The servants' lack of good sense, she finds out, is derived from the Marklands' poor example: the servants are encouraged to indulge the Lady's vanity with flattery, and Emily finds herself regarded as dull when not imitating her mistress (18). Within this unnatural state of affairs, Emily's sexualization continues apace as Sir George takes to nicknaming her Lady Markland's Venus (19). The Marklands' son proves himself to be just as terrible as his parents; while he effects polite airs in mixed company, Emily finds that he "vents some libertine sentiments" and becomes much more bold and lecherous in private (20). In a letter to her sister, Emily observes that the Marklands, "by winking at the intrigues of their servants, and speaking lightly of religion and virtue, [they] banished both from their family, and

became not only answerable for their own faults, but for those which their examples encouraged in their domestics” (22). Emily’s critique of the unnatural social order cultivated by the Marklands recalls Defoe’s argument that a failure of example in the gentry leads to dissolute behavior in the servant class, and is one of the prime causes of social disorder.

However, the narrative flips this convention as well: moral disorder is not communicated by emulation on Emily’s part, but on the part of her son, whose sexual designs on the poor orphan ultimately leave her exposed to even greater harms. The moral disorder of the Markland household at first raises Emily’s alarm, and gradually begins to wear her down spiritually and physically. She has an increasingly difficult time avoiding the son, Mr. Markland, who becomes infatuated with her, and finds herself torn between following her heart and her religious principles, “which grew weaker every day” (24). On a trip into London, the situation worsens for Emily as she is disproportionately left alone with Mr. Markland, and learns of the full scope of Lady Markland’s indifference to libertinism. Emily finds her correspondence with her sister becoming more and more difficult to sustain, as her spiritual resolve and physical health grow weaker in tandem. “[M]y style grew so constrained, and my letters so short.... [S]hame for the weakness I felt in my heart made writing to her so difficult to me,” and eventually, when guilt displaced her shame, she ceased writing her altogether (37-8). As her distance from religious observance and the comfort of family grows, her physical health becomes increasingly perilous as she “grew pale and thin,” and “the little colour I retained... was obliged to my blushes” (38). Mr. Markland is not insensible to her distress, and pledges to propose to Emily in the hopes of alleviating her melancholy (40). They start a family, settling into a new home in London, and are happy for a few years until Markland begins to lose interest in her, eventually accepting a foreign post under a British ambassador.

Left with no support, Emily spends what little money she had saved during her marriage on opening a haberdashery, but even her good oeconomy is interrupted as her past comes back to haunt her. Within two months of opening, bailiffs arrive to arrest her and seize her goods in partial satisfaction of debts from her previous home with Mr. Markland. Facing prison, Emily experiences a surprising turn of fortune when an old

woman next door offers to settle her affairs with the bailiffs and to offer Emily a place to stay as one of her servants (70). It quickly becomes apparent that these other women are not servants at all, but prostitutes, and that the woman is running a bawdy house. Despite her initial attempts to temper her situation, Emily is beaten at the command of the old woman, and her child is sent away as a reminder “that money only can obtain justice... [and] the redress of the law is out of the reach of poverty” (98). There she languishes until the old woman eventually dies, setting all the young women free; however, with no recommendations or family willing to help her she finds herself left “to starve for want of employment... a hard fate, [which] touched no heart but my own” (113). She finds little success as a beggar, discovering “that beggars had a society amongst them” with different people “appointed [each] to their particular district.” Even in those areas where she is not driven out by other beggars, she is “reproache[d] for my idleness in begging at an age” when she could be working (114). With little success as a beggar, she turns back to prostitution as “the severe pains of hunger, and the still sharper pangs I endured from those my [son] felt, got the better of the little delicacy I had remaining” (119). Emily’s story demonstrates how the prostitute’s sin is produced by her simple need to survive, making her story legible as a challenge to contemporary narratives of vice as well as poverty: she is not inherently depraved, but only engages in vicious behaviour because she needs to work to survive; she is poor not because she does not want to work, but because she cannot find any that is respectable, and none that is respectable will have her because of the hard choices she has had to make to survive. Poverty is represented as the consequence of the man who “breaks thro’ the ties of truth, faith, and humanity,” leaving the woman he seduced without protection from the world (xv). It is only when she discovers “the new Hospital” recently opened that she is saved from this fate, reinforcing the dangers of poverty and the necessity of a stable environment for one’s physical health and spiritual wellbeing.

Following Emily’s story is that of a young woman in her early twenties who like Emily is duped into a sham marriage, and whose cautionary tale highlights the perils of not seeking your father’s guidance, as well as the dangers of aspiring above one’s station. This woman comes from a good family – her father is “a very rich trader in a country

town” – and she is the prettiest girl there, by her own estimation, but she has difficulty attracting suitors nearer her own station (131). She gains the favour of a young man from the university, Mr. Monkerton, who she finds charming, and who, most importantly, “had a good estate, and no father; that insurmountable obstacle to a young girl’s marrying to advantage” (142). Their courtship takes off, and they move to London and marry privately there, but she is unable to leave the house for a year, he tells her, without being regarded as his mistress (157). Monkerton’s deception continues for over a year until she questions him and he denies they are married, because according to “The Marriage Act... neither of us [was] of age; and therefore no marriage between us could be valid, without the consent of our friends” (173). The woman reprimands herself for “transact[ing] an affair of so much importance without [her father’s] advice,” soon finding herself “a prey to despair, to rage, and grief” such that “by the fourth [day] my body was grown so weak, with the agonies of my mind, and want of food” (177). Like Emily, this woman’s violation is met with a physiological reaction that mimics the experience of poverty: she loses her senses and her bodily strength, and exposes herself to the dangers of falling further.

The efforts of Monkerton’s friend Mr. Senwill, who steps in shortly afterwards to redeem her by marriage and thus to restore her to her mind and body, are ultimately ineffective for a number of reasons. Senwill’s pious father soon receives word of his son’s impending marriage to a woman of disrepute and arranges for him to marry someone else. His reasons for objecting to the marriage can be ascribed to her impurity – one that is more than spiritual, extending to the sense that she is somehow polluted. Though we do not learn of his reasons specifically, except that news of his son’s impending marriage “had disturbed the peace of his retirement,” they do not seem to stray very far from those that drive the woman’s own sister to flee from any association with her (201). One evening when Senwill and his would-be bride go to see a play, they run into the woman’s sister, who becomes “filled with horror, as she said, to think she was near so shameless a wretch; and gladly would she have fled, for fear of contagion” (192). While on first reading it is clear her sister’s fear of contamination is based on her disapproval of her sister’s disreputable conduct, her reaction is underwritten by the

rhetoric of disease, which marks the severity of her transgression in her sister's eyes. At this point, of course, she has not delved into the world of prostitution, and nor does she later on in the story: her transgression is against propriety. However, it is also consistent with the etiology of venereal disease: her disease is both figurative and literal since, by lying with two different men, she breeds the venereal poison. Senwill's father's objection to the impending marriage is thus intelligible both as an objection to the moral stain on his family and his son's reputation, as well as to the potential of passing on this contagion to their future sons and daughters. Mr. Senwill, unable to contravene the word of his father, agrees to marry the other woman and leaves her, but not before giving her a settlement in parting – though she is robbed before she can carry out her plan to retire to the country. Her attempts at getting a service job fail, as she has no recommendation, and searching for plain work proves even less fruitful (234). Finally, she remembers Senwill mentioning “this blessed asylum” and applies for admittance to the Magdalen.

The story of the third woman serves as a cautionary tale about the social consequences of illegitimate children, who were most often left to the charge of the parish and poorly cared for. This woman describes how she was raised by a labouring class family until she was thirteen, and discovered at the age of eight that her supposed mother was not her real mother at all, but “of a rank far superior” – something that turns out to be a lie, but which shapes her eventual desire to run away from home in search of her true family (243). Her adoptive family were “simple and ignorant to an excess,” and had no employment but spinning (246). When her adoptive mother dies, and her father becomes too sick to support the family without parish help, she is sent back to the parish where she was born, as her adoptive one was all too “glad to get rid of me” (247). Once returned, she is “consigned over to [an old gentlewoman named Madame Selton],” who lived on so little that “she half starved herself, and quite starved her servant” (247). This woman delighted in telling all who would hear it the story of her new servant's birth:

it gave her an opportunity of animadverting on the supposed imprudence of my mother, and the consequences of man's deceit, woman's folly, and the wickedness of both; blessing herself, all the time, that she had preserved herself from female frailty and male art; then there was enough of the marvelous in it, to

make no unentertaining part of conversation; and what perhaps pleased her the most of all, was, that it gave an air of distinction to her servant, which her imagination reflected back on herself (251-2)

Selton invokes all the familiar tropes of the seduction narrative in what effectively doubles as a metacommentary on the novel itself, and Magdalen literature more generally. Her reasons for helping the young woman evidence the limits of public sympathy by showing how it is predicated on a false distinction between the rich and the poor that is based on biology, loosely understood, and which grants sympathy only on the basis of lineage. To wit, Madame Selton deems it “the duty of people of fashion to do what they [can] for young persons of birth,” not because it is the proper thing to do, but because “there was a nobler way of thinking in people who had good blood in their veins, than in the vulgar, whose ideas were as mean as their birth” (252). Selton’s reasons for taking in the young girl parallel those which, in the second narrative, lead the woman’s younger sister to recoil with horror at her “contagious” sister (192). These differing responses embody the ways in which the burgeoning medical-moral regime of the 1740s and 1750s infiltrates and shifts public sentiment about both prostitutes and the poor in general. Madame Selton’s sympathies for her poor servant are elevated only by the belief in the young woman’s genteel provenance. Her decision to help the young woman is motivated out of her desire to preserve and reproduce those of good stock, while presumably doing nothing for the children of the underserving vulgar sort. The reaction of the sister in the second narrative makes the biological imperative explicit: she regards her own sister’s infamy as contagious, thus underscoring how the rhetoric of disease becomes instrumental in reinforcing social and cultural boundaries against prostitutes and the poor. Moral deficiencies are read as essential rather than incidental: they are unsuitable for marriage because they can transmit their contagion down the family blood line, and they are unsuitable for civil society because their conduct and very existence endangers the stability and health of the body politic.

If the narrative contends that poverty naturally follows directly from sexual promiscuity, as the community rejects the offending woman, it also presents the argument that it will follow the child, long after the parents’ original sin, by shaping the

circumstances of the child's formative years. At 15, after being cast out of her adoptive family, the young woman decides to go to London in search of her birth mother, who, it is clear to the knowing reader, is a bawd, and who happily receives her into her home to live amongst her and her "other children" (5). This bawd, Madam Tent, supports the young woman's misunderstanding while she lines up a "suitor" for her long-lost daughter. Her first, Mr. Mastin, is struck by the young woman's situation and rescues her from Tent's control, but after a period of time together he, like the others, grows tired of her and sends her to live with his sister, Mrs. Lafew, as her servant. Though she has an affair with her husband, Mrs. Lafew responds in divine fashion by introducing Fanny to the "fundamentals of religion, of which [she] had before but a scanty knowledge," setting her on a path to redemption and, ultimately, the Magdalen House (50). Through the dazzling example of her personal conduct, Mrs. Lafew saves the young woman from herself by showing her a way of living that was never available to her in her simple, brutal upbringing. This narrative's conclusion demonstrates the value of corrective education, and that even those who seem irredeemable can be saved as long as they want to be.

The final story features a woman who is somewhat older, in her 30s, who wants to marry for love but is instead sent by her parents to be with "a battered rake, whose body was worn out, [and] his mind unreformed" (60). This narrative challenges the idea that a woman should be forced into marriage, acknowledging the value of mutually loving relationships, but ultimately continues the common thread of the previous three stories: pursuing desires not endorsed by legal marriage brings only poverty and misery. This old man, Mr. Merton, takes her to his country seat, "where all is magnificent," but which she is unable to enjoy because "he was there; and that was sufficient to change the nature of everything about me" (64). Some time into their marriage, they attend at Tunbridge Wells, where Merton travels yearly to repair his constitution. There, she runs into Captain Turnham, her love interest from home, and they run off to be together. She gives birth to a sickly boy, sickly perhaps because of his disordered parents, and they are only able to live together for six months before Merton finds them and imprisons her in a dilapidated old house, the state of which she focuses on in some detail. She finds the wainscot "rotted to pieces," the walls decaying and covered with mold, and the floors "so full of holes,

that one could not walk but at the peril of one's limbs" (102). Surrounding the house was "a bog, wherein large families of frogs had fixed their abode," which, together, with the sounds of crickets and owls, gives her no peace. All this, she writes, "turned grief into horror, and I could scarcely preserve myself from distraction" (103). As the season turns to winter, her situation becomes worse, as the housekeeper "would not let any coals be left in the room," and "the dampness of my room gave me a very violent cold, which I could never get free from while I was there" (103-4). Her diet, too, is terrible, as "great endeavours were used to render my food a means of mortification; for the little that was given me was of the very worst sort, and designedly dirty," making it "very difficult for me to eat enough to keep me alive" (104). "Perhaps," she writes, linking her external environment with her own state of mind and body, "had I been permitted to take either air or exercise, or had any indulgence allowed me which could have proved of a little service to my health, or relief to my mind, I might have been better able to bear my sorrows" (104). Her poverty leaves her "in continual fear of losing my senses" and "almost blind with crying and want of sleep" (105). Her situation eventually improves, thankfully, after the sinister housekeeper falls ill with a fever, and, after some additional deceptions, she reunites with Captain Turnham, seeking asylum in Scotland where they live for several years before shipping out to Gibraltar; however, he dies, leaving her penniless three years later. After much difficulty securing passage home, the woman finds she cannot support her and her children and applies to the Magdalen House to avoid returning to the distresses of poverty that made her a prisoner of her own body's limitations, in the loss of her senses, as well as of her own circumstances.

* * * * *

Katherine Binhammer argues that "unlike Evelina and many of her courtship narrative sisters, these women trust that their sexual desires speak a truth about their emotional attachments, and they claim a right to act upon that knowledge rather than having to learn to control, restrain, or silence these desires" (510).²² The difficulty in making this kind of resistant reading of the novel is that, far from being celebratory of women's sexual desire, the arc of these four narratives suggests that women who act on

²² The character of the novel by the same name, written by Fanny Burney.

their emotional attachments are endangering themselves body and soul, either because they are aspiring beyond their station or because they have disobeyed or run afoul of their father. Each of these stories, in some way, emphasizes that the consequences of this disobedience, of following one's desires outside of the community's norms, is poverty, and that the parent's sin follows the child, feeding into and protracting a vicious cycle of misery. Women bear a special onus for slowing down and ultimately stopping this cycle, by abstaining from immoral sexual conduct, by not following their desires, and by modelling the kind of pious behaviour that feeds into the stability of the community. Neglecting this duty, they expose themselves to all kinds of risks to their bodily and spiritual health because of their poverty, and further endanger their communities.

The Magdalen Hospital's role in saving these fictional women emphasizes the influence of ideas about the importance of urban reform. The regulated and orderly space of the Magdalen Hospital is the precondition of their penitence and eventual salvation: exposed to the dangers and snares of the city, these women have no hope of reform, because the realities of economic deprivation within the space of the city make it extremely difficult to act virtuously. It is the comforting, controlled embrace of the charity that enables them to commit to the kind of self-discipline and self-care that will free them from their immoral past. While the penitents' reformation is ostensibly religious, the conditions of admittance into the Magdalen Hospital go beyond merely instilling piety to the control of their diet, dress, and deportment. The disciplinary regime of the Hospital is another aspect of the urban reformers' nostalgia for social deference which undergirds their belief in the importance of order in the built environment to producing and maintaining public morality, specifically that of the lower orders.

By providing a controlled environment for those women whose lack of economic and social support endangers their health and wellbeing, Magdalen supporters effectively inoculate the body politic: removing this disease from the streets, but also, once brought into the fold of the Hospital, from the women themselves by restricting their contact with anyone from the outside world. The rhetoric of disease that pervades the writing of urban reform and Magdalen charity supporters draws an explicit connection between the etiology of venereal disease and the relationship between the prostitute and the body

politic. To recall Pierre Desault for a moment: “various kinds of Seeds received by the same Womb, of different Characters and Temperature, are disposed by their Heterogeneity to ferment and corrupt there, and to hatch Venereal worms” (31). Here we are reminded that upper-class fears about the collapse of social distinctions are literally inscribed on women’s bodies, as the origin of venereal disease is used to underscore the importance of maintaining monogamous sexual relations as well as self-discipline more generally: the generation of venereal poison threatens the health of men, women, and their eventual offspring. The disordering effect of women’s disobedience on the social body is materialized through the foundling, that living proof of sin which constitutes both a threat to the natural order of inheritance as well as a form of excess life outside the proper bounds of legitimate marriage, and which creates additional strains on the state for its maintenance. Thus does the Magdalen movement yoke together, in compelling and innovative fashion, the rhetoric and etiology of disease with the moral and economic crisis represented by the threat of women’s sexual autonomy, and in doing so creates a uniquely bio-political imperative for disciplining women’s bodies.

At the same time, it raises the possibility that the dangers faced by these women are not unique to the seduced or fallen woman, but instead arise out of the more pernicious social evil of poverty. Though the Magdalen Hospital appropriates the poor’s humble style of living, the poor themselves are regarded in an unforgiving light, in spite of the novel’s supposed commitment to a primarily economic explanation of these women’s downfall. While the respectable, middle-class fallen women of *The Histories* serve as the inspiration to charity, the truly poor are beyond contemplation, and appear only to reinforce these women’s exceptionality: the “people too low and brutal to regard my tears” that Emily is threatened with following her disobedience; the beggars Emily is forced to compete with for her bare subsistence on the streets; and the poor family who raises the young orphan girl of the third narrative as a relative simpleton, who sell her off to an old rake, and effectively doom her to a life of hardship. By fetishizing poverty as the cure for modern excess, the novel demonstrates that the reformers’ commitment only extends to those who are not too far removed from their relatively respectable origins, reinforcing the idea that there are those who really just deserve to be wretched and poor.

Chapter 3: Preventative medicine and urban reform in Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*

This chapter illustrates how Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* engages with two complementary strains of social reform in the mid-eighteenth century: the campaign for urban reform and the newfound importance placed on self-discipline as a guarantor of good health. In the first part of this essay, I trace the roots of Tobias Smollett's argument for urban reform in the context of contemporary architectural theory and the public policy debate over the paving, cleaning, and lighting of the streets. I show how Smollett actively draws on the conventions of geometry and architectural theory in support of an argument about the correspondence between the health of the individual and disorder in the built environment. The critique of urban disorder in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* invokes many familiar tropes about the relationship between luxury and the monstrosity of the general public. Tobias Smollett draws on this satirical tradition when his protagonist, Matthew Bramble, complains that the capital has "become an overgrown monster; which, like a dropsical head, will in time leave the body and extremities without nourishment and support" (118). However, despite the conventionality of the rhetoric Matthew Bramble uses to describe this crisis, its origins do not lie in the growing population of the city, or at least not exclusively. Rather, Smollett traces an alternative explanation for the origins of social decay which locates the blame substantially in the character of the urban environment, which alternately bolsters or degrades the civility of its inhabitants according to the degree of responsibility with which it is managed. Although we can choose to consume objects of art and literature, Smollett's argument in this novel is that we cannot choose what consumes us. Thus does he reserve his strongest criticisms for those in the position to ensure the proper regulation of the urban environment, and so to mitigate the public's vulnerability to those things which are entirely within man's control. Since the elderly couple, the poor chairmen, and the young foundling are more vulnerable to, and cannot regulate their interactions with, the corrupted spaces of such places as London and Bath, there is a corresponding moral, social, and economic imperative to enforce the rules of order, proportion, and

convenience in the built environment.

By looking at the architectural foundations of Matthew Bramble's critique of luxury, and characters' descriptions of and encounters with 'modern' spaces, this chapter explores how the novel conceptualizes bodily vulnerability as the product of aesthetic failures in the built environment, and their amenability to "mathematical" and rational cures.²³ In the case of Bath, in particular, Smollett demonstrates the necessity of urban reform as a means of preventing the disorder it aims to cure; however, this example also demonstrates the limits of urban reform, as it takes place ten to fifteen years after the implementation of a number of reforms there in the 1750s. In the second part of this essay, I examine in greater detail the kind of ideal subject that is posited by mid-eighteenth century medical discourse, and how the labouring class is simultaneously fetishized and disavowed as both a model of healthy living as well as of a lack of self-discipline. By reading the character of Humphry Clinker through the lens of contemporary medical theory, I argue that the period's ambivalence about the poor is rooted in the misapprehension of individual agency in the eighteenth-century understanding of disease. If we acknowledge that "accidents" primarily befall those who are most susceptible to the charge of poor self-government, we can better understand how the growing emphasis on self-discipline is predicated on a refashioning of old prejudices towards the poor.

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The neoclassical aesthetic conventions of eighteenth-century British architecture presupposed that the essence of divine creation could be understood, reproduced, and communicated according to a set of rational, mathematical principles. Brook Taylor's work, *Linear Perspective* (1715), reimagines the terminology and practice of perspective in architecture and painting with the aim, as the subtitle denotes, of "Representing justly all manner of Objects." A painting "in its utmost degree of Perfection," Taylor writes, "ought so to affect the Eye of the Beholder, that he should not be able to judge whether

²³ The sources used to discuss the architectural foundations of Smollett's critique of luxury in *Humphry Clinker* are admittedly not standard for the period. They have been chosen because they support my argument that Smollett is purposefully drawing on classical architectural thought to advocate for the importance of well-regulated space, in contrast to the disordered, unplanned kind of development that he observes at Bath.

what he sees be only a few Colours laid artificially on a Cloth, or the very Objects there represented” (1-2). The faithful reproduction of light and shadow, distance and nearness, means that the represented object is engineered such that it can fool the viewer: “every Ray of Light ought to come from any Point of the Picture to the Spectator’s Eye... as it would do from the corresponding Point of the real Object, if it were placed where it is imagined to be” (2). This faith in the ordering power of perspective reflects an investment in the idea that geometrical principles allow for the perfect representation of real objects.

While Taylor’s treatise makes no claims on the social function of artistic representation, Joshua Kirby, in his revision and re-presentation of Taylor’s ideas in his 1761 work *The Perspective of Architecture*, remarks that the proper function of perspective and design is to produce agreeable sensations in the observing subject. He writes:

Amidst the infinite variety of beauty, observable in the works of nature, there are some forms or shapes which seem so nicely adapted to the feelings of our own minds, as to excite in us the most pleasing and agreeable sensations: and there are others of an opposite, or indelicate nature, that obtrude themselves upon us like disagreeable companions, and give a degree of pain instead of pleasure.... [I]n drawing the perspective representation of any object, the utmost care should be taken to avoid disagreeable or unnatural forms, and especially those which would in general be displeasing. (1)

His emphasis on the centrality of pleasure to the work of the architect, as well as to the work of the artist, defines their work principally in terms of a responsibility to maintain fidelity to nature. This responsibility is framed in terms of the architect’s ability, like that of the artist’s, to provoke feelings of disgust or pleasure. Taylor’s ideas reflect his faith in the ability of thoughtful design to produce moral subjects. If “disagreeable or unnatural forms” in painting are indeed “like disagreeable companions,” then bad design at the level of the built environment is invariably disruptive of social harmony.

In an early-eighteenth century reprinted translation of *The Theory & Practice of Architecture* (1727), influential seventeenth-century French architect Claude Perrault explicitly draws this connection between architecture and painting. Architecture, he

writes, is “a Science which has a near Relation, and is absolutely necessary to the Art of Painting” (Dedication). This belief was rooted in the classical relationship between architecture and the human form. As Perrault writes another work, *A Treatise of the Five Orders of Columns in Architecture* (1708), “the Rules of those Proportions, which make the Beauty of Buildings, were taken from the Proportions of humane Bodies” (i).

According to this reasoning, if man is made in the image of God, then the proportions of the body can be harnessed to reproduce the principles of divine order in the built environment (46).²⁴ Perrault writes that just as musicians cannot disagree on “the Truth of a Consonance,” so too are architects agreed on proportion (iii). If the goal of music, as in architecture, is to elevate the sentiments by surrounding the individual with beautiful forms, then the aesthetic failures of the built environment and social discord are mutually productive of one another.

The close relationship between the built environment and social order is evident in the 1771 introduction to the *Architecture of M. Vitruvius*, in which the editor writes that the neglect of the art of architecture in Britain in recent years follows from “intestine commotion and the unsettled state of the nation” (Newton iii). The general commotion he refers to is, at least for the moment, of secondary concern to his observation of the close relationship between political and spatial-architectural disturbance; we might identify the general cause of this disturbance in “the rise of the individual,” or more particularly in the experience of disorder, or disorientation, arising from the social and economic reorganization of Britain. In this respect, Vitruvius’s stance on the purpose of architecture carries considerable weight: “every building should by its appearance express its destination & purpose, and that some character should prevail therein” (vii). That buildings must have not only a purpose, but also a destination, places the practice of architecture at the nexus of city-building and something more transcendent: the capacity to order society.

The regulatory function served by architecture, and this ideal of the architect as both a creator and guarantor of civic harmony, is derived in part from the view that

²⁴ All measures of architecture, according to Vitruvius, are “derived from the members of the human body; as, the digit, the palm, the foot, and the cubit; these are divided into the perfect number... ten; because ten is the number of fingers.”

architecture is the foundation of all the arts and sciences, and of civilization as well. The architect is therefore, according to Vitruvius, one who must be a master of drawing, geometry, optics, arithmetic, history, philosophy, music, physic, the law, and astronomy: mastery of the natural world is requisite to the calling of the architect, since he is one who shapes the world (2). Jeremy Till traces this connection further in an essay on architecture and contingency. Drawing on Stallybrass and White's work on transgression, Till argues that "the classical body signifies an ordered body of knowledge as well as an ordered system of form. The Vitruvian body, on which so much architecture still leans for support, is thus much more than a nice metaphor of coherence" (123). Indra McEwen agrees that while the dominating metaphor of Vitruvius's *Ten Books* is the body, its scope reaches beyond the metaphorical to the imperial (122).²⁵ She cites Vitruvius's own correspondence in which, in a letter to Emperor Augustus, he urges him to recognize that that the Emperor's responsibility was not only for the life and security of his people, "but also for the fitness of public buildings... [which] provide eminent guarantees for the majesty of empire." In this respect, McEwen and Till link the practice of architecture in its earliest stages to "the imperial programme of expansion and authority," in recognition of the ways in which power is guaranteed and reproduced in the built environment (122).

The story of architecture is thus a myth about the origins of civilization: "from the art of building, [mankind] gradually proceeded to other arts and sciences, and from a savage and rustic way of life became humane and civilized" (25). In his reverence for classical form, Perrault, like other architects of the eighteenth century, understood that the practice of architecture linked Britain historically and materially to the achievements of ancient Rome. By reproducing the material and aesthetic standards of Roman society in the built environment, British architects maintained fidelity to, and continuity with, recognizable forms of civilization. Of course, the reality of architectural practices in the eighteenth century was far from the ideal set out in the works of Perrault and others. This tension between history and reality demonstrates the reasons why these broad shifts in social and economic life were perceived as horrific by Smollett and his contemporaries:

²⁵ "Bodies were wholes,' [McEwen] notes, 'whose wholeness was, above all, a question of coherence. The agent of coherence – in the body of the world and in all the bodies in it – was *ratio*.' Right from the beginning, then, we get the identification of architecture as an act of imposing order, of taking the unruly and making it coherent."

without a recognizable historical referent, the emergent aesthetics of modern life are grotesque.

This perceived convergence between aesthetic and social disorder is produced out of a nostalgic relationship with history. Nostalgia certainly animated eighteenth century architectural theory, in particular the simmering debate over whether classical forms were given undue deference. In his work on elegiac and pastoral nostalgia, Aaron Santesso identifies nostalgia as a strategy for remembering which focuses on enjoyment of the form rather than the content; the memory itself, he argues, is incidental to the palliative function of nostalgia. Along similar lines, Claude Perrault takes up this issue in his comparison of music and architecture, in which he remarks that it is difficult to know whether our love of both are, in fact, founded on consonance and proportion, or whether, like a fetish, “upon custom only” (v). Since most architects, he writes, are men of letters who follow the example of the ancients, Perrault wonders whether it is reasonable to presume that the ancients “did nothing but for good Reasons, though we cannot find them out,” and a blind adherence to classical example constitutes an ill-advised kind of enthusiasm (xv). This critique of the seemingly “natural” quality of customs evinces the emergent skepticism towards, and flagging reverence for, old modes of social organization. It also serves as part of a broader refiguring of the eighteenth century’s relationship with history, one aspect of which takes place through architectural theory and practice. In the following pages, I will consider the relationship between space and the subject in Smollett’s representation of Bath, in the context of the failure of contemporary goals of urban reform to help secure the physical and moral wellbeing of those within the resort town.

Bath not only serves as the setting for many of the most memorable passages from the novel, but it also reveals, in its grotesquerie, the transformative effects of economic progress on the built environment. It is appropriate that one of the most memorable sections of the novel, and the source of some of Smollett’s most strident critiques of architecture and urban space, is based in Bath. As Paul Elliott argues, Bath was the most influential townscape in the second half of the eighteenth century. It had a relatively uniform character, such that even for cranks such as Bramble it had its redeeming

qualities, and yet its “new landscape” sprung from the imagination and work of thousands of independent developers and craftsmen (238). Despite this flurry of activity, as Simon Varey has argued, Bath’s most influential architect was John Wood. Arriving in Bath in 1727, Wood was a central animating force in the construction of the resort-town, creating such distinctive architectural features as the Circus. Within fifty years, Varey details how Bath had been transformed from “a rather squalid, cramped provincial town into an elegant and fashionable resort,” in large part because of Wood’s vision (72).

This transformation demonstrates the interconnection between social and economic power and the construction and regulation of space. In 1765, John Wood wrote, in his *Description of Bath*, a history of the spa town as well as the various laws and regulations governing its roads, buildings, and public spaces. Beginning in 1702, Bath incorporated itself as a town, striking up “Laws for Constituting a common Citizen, and Governing him” (405). It instituted regulations to impel its inhabitants to “keep the Streets and Publick Ways of the City clean and in good Order,” which were conjoined with those regulating the baths, preventing spoiled meat from being sold in the market, and for “Expelling and Restraining certain Inhabitants” (373, 405). Fines were levied for infractions, which were directed to the support of the poor in the town, of which there were plenty, despite Bath’s claims to refinement. The town’s by-laws were particularly directed towards the elimination of filth, but this directive also extended to the social body in the form of laws governing proper social decorum. Men and women were forbidden from entering the baths without decent coverings, from throwing other people into the baths unawares, and “disorderly or uncivilly demean[ing] themselves... or abus[ing] any Person” (408). Animals were subject to equally stringent regulation as well, with the interaction between animals and water especially targeted. Dogs were not to be thrown into the baths, and horses and other animals were not to be washed in the streets; neither was any person to “cast or lay any Soil, Dung, Filth, or Carrion in or near any open Street” (409). These regulations governing cleanliness and order served the purpose of minimizing the cross-contamination between beast and man, reducing the exposure of the gentry to general filth and disorder, and of limiting the exposure of its well-to-do guests to anything unbecoming of their rank or sex.

Such regulations not only protected Bath's visitors, but also worked to construct an environment that supposedly fostered greater social harmony. There was previously no interaction there between the nobility and the gentry, Wood writes, which was happily changed by the introduction of changes to the built environment. He writes, "when proper Walks were made for Exercise, and a House built for Assembling in, Rank began to be laid aside, and all Degrees of People, from the Private Gentleman upwards, were soon united in Society with one another" (411). Regulations against filth and disorder, which enabled greater sociability, were joined to those governing social interaction amongst the upper classes as a means of creating a more comfortable, refined experience. The honorary laws which informally governed social relations in Bath until mid-century were formally declared in 1742, coinciding with the completion of the Grand Parade. These laws served as a code of conduct for the gentry and nobility, variously establishing that gentlemen were to "shew Breeding and Respect" to the ladies, that "no Person take it ill that any one goes to another's Play, or Breakfast, and not to their's," "That all Whisperers of Lies and Scandals be taken for their Authors," and "That no Gentleman or Lady take it ill that another dances before them: -- Except such as have no Pretence to dance at all" (412). These regulations were apparently effective enough in preserving civility at Bath, though they did not account for the disruptive behaviour of the lower orders.

While gentlemen, at one time, regularly carried swords, Wood writes that this practice was discontinued on account of the disturbances provoked by insolent chairmen, those men whose job it was to ferry the upper classes about town in sedan chairs. The impertinence of the gin-soaked servant class, Wood notes, rather than any breach of decorum on the part of the gentry themselves, figured as the primary obstacle to social harmony in Bath. At the center of prohibitive, targeted regulations in Bath were the notorious chairmen, "it having been usual with those turbulent People to provoke Gentlemen to draw their Swords upon them; and then, by Defending themselves with their Chair Poles... frightened the Ladies" with the prospect of violence (412). Regulating the chairmen was justified for many reasons, among them ensuring that they would not be drunk while operating the chairs, as one account he gives of one who was unable "so much as to hold up the Head of the Chair while his Grace was quitting it" (412).

The regulation of the chairmen served a similar function to that of the regulations governing the paving, cleaning, and lighting of the streets: making the most agreeable, comfortable experience possible for the gentry who visited the town. Their regulation was, in fact, enumerated alongside those provisions governing the regulation of space, effectively incorporating them as features of the built environment rather than as individuals in need of protections themselves. John Wood concludes his account of the laws and by-laws of Bath arguing that “the Inhabitants of Bath may, by the Laws which they now enjoy, stand in Competition for the Blessing with the Inhabitants of any other City in the Kingdom” (414). He does not assert that Bath is some kind of earthly paradise; to the contrary, he acknowledges the need for more improvements to correct the remaining “Defects in the Laws” in order to guarantee the happiness of its citizens and visitors (414). Chief among these defects, however, are “particularly those... for Licensing and Regulating the Chairmen,” the lack of which, in one infamous case, “prevented the Commissioners from Discovering the Ruffians” in an apparently infamous episode that occurred in the spring of 1743, when “[a] most Noble Duke, [who] with several other great Personages... refused to make use of Chairs and determined to Walk to their respective Lodgings.” Because of this decision they were “soon Insulted, by some invisible Hands” that threw dirt on them, “which every Body believed to have been those of the disappointed Chairmen” (414-5).

In Smollett’s novel, Matthew Bramble’s critique of the disorder at Bath proceeds along a number of fronts, beginning with its architectural failures. While John Wood may have been the most notable architect working to transform Bath in this period, the rapid expansion of Bath could not have proceeded without the efforts of countless middling-class businessmen and entrepreneurs. The civic dedication of these countless men, however, had resulted, in Bramble’s estimation, in an awful gothic mess. He laments that the “rage of building has laid hold on such a number of adventurers,” and the scale of development in Bath has been “contrived without judgment, executed without solidity, and stuck together with so little regard to plan and propriety” that the result is nothing short of chaotic. In violation of the architectural principles of Vitruvius, elaborated by Perrault, Bramble complains that the “different lines of the new rows and buildings

interfere with, and intersect with one another in every different angle of conjunction” (65).

While Matthew Bramble’s critique of Bath is characterized by his marked disapproval of its aesthetic failings, this concern cannot be separated from how it affects individuals’ health and bodily integrity, particularly those who are most exposed, and therefore most vulnerable, to disorders produced by a lack of regulation and planning. Smollett further demonstrates his familiarity with neoclassical architectural discourse and norms in Matthew Bramble’s remarks on the Circus at Bath, proving that even the work of John Wood is not immune to Bramble’s barbs. He writes that the “Circus is a pretty bauble, contrived for shew, and looks like Vespasian’s amphitheatre turned outside in,” thus figuring this central architectural feature of Bath as a literal inversion, or perversion, of the classic building (64). Bramble goes on further to enumerate its defects according to the standards of Vitruvian theory. The “great number of small doors,” “the inconsiderable height of the different orders” of columns, “the affected ornaments of the architrave, which are both childish and misplaced,” and numerous other features “destroy a good part of its effect upon the eye” and damn it even more in terms of symmetry and convenience (64).

However much Bramble’s critique is premised on a reverence for classical form, his comparison of the Circus to Covent Garden suggests that his critique is not merely aesthetic, but also to a large extent pragmatic. Bramble suggests that the Circus might be more amenable to all if it were more like Covent Garden, a “corridor with arcades all round” that is not only more aesthetically pleasing, but which also provides “an agreeable covered walk, and shelter[s] the poor chairmen and their carriages from the rain” (64). His critique of thoughtless design is ultimately born of concern for public health, even that of the lower orders, and a prudent desire to prevent needless exposure to the elements in addition to other manufactured sources of danger. The absence of a covered walkway, Bramble fears, “produces infinite mischief to the delicate and infirm;” even the entrance to the Circus, “through Gay-street, is so difficult, steep, and slippery, that in wet weather, it must be exceedingly dangerous” (64). In this respect, poor design not only produces buildings of questionable aesthetic value, but also quite literally imperils the well being

of those who will come to inhabit the space. Just as Joshua Kirby argues that unnatural or disagreeable forms will cause “a degree of pain” in the viewer, poor design, as Bramble remarks, “will naturally strike,” with a deterministic certainty, “with exaggerated impression on the irritable nerves of an invalid” (63). In this way, Matthew Bramble, following Kirby and others, conflates aesthetic pleasure and “pain” with their physiological counterparts.

While Bramble’s focus is on cataloguing the aesthetic failures of Bath, it is precisely for these reasons that the town is also such an important example of the relationship between the individual and the built environment, and more broadly of the transformative effects of capital in the eighteenth century. Underlying Bramble’s critique of the form of Bath is his belief in a mechanical relationship between the form of the city and its inhabitants. It is an argument that is later adopted by Lewis Mumford, in the twentieth century, who writes that “[m]ind takes form in the city; and in turn, urban forms condition mind” (5). Though writing in the 20th century, Mumford expresses what John Wood, Matthew Bramble, and their contemporaries in the urban reform movement understood very well: the design of buildings, roads, and the general engineering of public space has a necessarily profound impact on social organization. The process by which the mind takes its form in the city is implicitly taken up in eighteenth-century architectural theory. For the architect, this process is an aesthetic question that reflects the natural affinity between art and architecture. Man-made spaces and buildings have the capacity to provoke pleasing or displeasing sensations in the viewing subject, and so to affect the psychological and physiological condition of the individual.

In *Humphry Clinker*, we see some of the more common iterations of this critique in the association between luxury and immorality. Using tropes of monstrosity and decay which evoke Swift’s “Description of a City Shower,” Bramble worries that “the numbers of people, and the number of houses [will] continue to increase... till the streams that swell this irresistible torrent of folly and extravagance, shall either be exhausted, or turned into other channels, by incidents and events which I do not pretend to foresee” (66).²⁶ Bramble’s anxieties about class leveling, as Judith Frank argues, can

²⁶ Swift’s poem describes the shower that washes away the “Filth of all hues and odors”

be understood more generally as emerging out of the reality that the middling classes, and even the poor, were not very far removed from the gentry both physically and economically (12-13). His inability to maintain his composure in the face of the grotesque scenes presented by the town, while it seems to confirm his argument about the deforming effects of modern living, evinces the thin line between him and the plebeian masses. Bramble is quite literally rendered “Non-compush,” as his sister Tabitha remarks; “this,” he writes, “is a subject on which I cannot write with any degree of patience” (73, 66).²⁷ It is in this sense that his critical belief in the salutary benefits of urban reform is legible: he counts himself among the “delicate and infirm” who, ironically, come to the spa town and leave not restored but only more broken (64).

Bramble’s description of the monstrousness of Bath, which arises from “the general tide of luxury,” is not unlike his account of the disastrous effects of the building craze. In this respect, he rehearses the predominant complaints about luxury and fashion in this part of the period: namely, the supposed lack of understanding on the part of the *nouveaux riches* about what to do with their money. Both complaints are effectively rooted in what Bramble regards as a shared lack of history. Just as the architecture of Bath exhibits no due deference to classical architectural standards, he laments the collective lack of interest on the part of these *nouveaux riches* in emulating upper-class behavior, and thereby maintaining, at least, the semblance of social continuity and order. He complains about “upstart[s] of fortune,” “clerks and factors from the East Indies,” “planters, negro-drivers, and hucksters,” “agents, commissaries, and contractors” who have enriched themselves from Britain’s war exploits, “usurers, brokers, and jobbers,” “men of low birth, and no breeding,” all of whom have found themselves enriched in a short span of time, but “discharge their affluence without taste or conduct” (66). These men, “intoxicated with pride, vanity, and presumption,” forming amongst themselves “a mob of impudent plebeians, who have neither understanding nor judgment,” disrupt social order, swallowing up the “very inconsiderable proportion of genteel people” who

that contains “Sweepings from butchers’ stalls, dung, guts, and blood, / Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud, / Dead cats, and turnip tops...” (ln 55-63): in short, the byproducts of folly and extravagance that Smollett complains about.

²⁷ Tabitha’s corruption of the Latin phrase, *non compos mentis*, meaning not of sound mind.

still visit Bath (66). Their lack of judgement and understanding renders them as both symptom and cause of the architectural failures of Bath, in which “one sees new houses starting up in every out-let and every corner of Bath,” crowding out the old, which are “contrived without judgment... and stuck together with so little regard to plan and propriety” that “they look like the wreck of streets and squares disjointed by an earthquake” (65).

In a rather violent episode, Bramble confronts the Creole Colonel Rigworm to contest his presumed right to have his black servants play the French horn for his diversion. Bramble’s nephew Jerry notes rather sardonically that they are “in the very first rudiments of execution, [and] produced such discordant sounds, as might have discomposed the organs of an ass.” Rather than stopping, the “sable performers” flout the request to be quiet, “continued their noise, and even endeavoured to make it more disagreeable; laughing between whiles, at the thoughts of being able to torment their betters with impunity.” Colonel Rigworm flouts Bramble’s request to quiet his servants, asserting his right to enjoy the “common staircase,” and dismissing Bramble’s concern by replying he “might look for lodgings elsewhere.” Bramble, in uncharacteristic fashion for an ailing old man, responds to the amateur musical stylings of the servants with “such astonishing vigour and agility, that both their heads and horns were broken in a twinkling, and they ran howling down stairs to their master’s parlour-door” (60). In what is essentially a proxy battle between old and new money, this moment of slapstick provides comic relief, albeit at the expense of the “beating [of] two black-a-moors,” who stand in as the unfortunate proxy for the true objects of Bramble’s frustration: the invasion of new money, who either do not know or do not observe the honorary laws governing Bath, threatening the social order of the gentry, and the porousness, and overlap between, public and private space in a crowded urban environment.

The notion that cities are inherently corrupting seems to be specific to London and Bath, however, as Bramble’s descriptions of Edinburgh fail to register anything approaching the level of vituperation he reserves for English cities. Not only is Edinburgh more beautiful, better-governed, and more moral than London, it is also a “hot-bed of genius;” the implication here, of course, is that there is a direct correlation between these

qualities (269). Of its defects of convenience and cleanliness, he remarks, much more charitably than he does of Bath or London, that “our fellow-subjects are a little defective” (254). Although “from the nature of [Edinburgh’s] situation, [it] can never be made either very convenient or very cleanly, it has, nevertheless, an air of magnificence that commands respect,” which evidences its good management (270). The implicit contrast with Bath and London in his description of the Scottish city is stark:

The castle is an instance of the sublime in scite and architecture. – Its fortifications are kept in good order.... The castle hill, which extends from the outward gate to the upper end of the high street, is used as a public walk for the citizens, and commands a prospect, equally extensive and delightful, over the county of Fife.... Edinburgh is considerably extended on the south side, where there are divers little elegant squares built in the English manner; and the citizens have planned some improvements on the north, which, when put in execution, will add greatly to the beauty and convenience of this capital. (270)

The beauty of its environs is surpassed only by the quality of its people, “among whom,” Bramble writes, I have met with more kindness, hospitality, and rational entertainment, in a few weeks, than ever I received in any other country during the whole course of my life” (267-8). Bramble clearly links the excellence of Edinburgh to the quality of its architecture, urban planning and management, and finally to the integrity of its judiciary, legislature, and public officers. Even the poor are taken care of through the workhouse where they are “employed, according to their different abilities,” and thus are made able to contribute to the prosperity of the city (269). Its political economy is calibrated to guarantee the security, dignity, and prosperity of all individuals.

His positive representation of Edinburgh works to reinforce what Thomas Keymer has identified as the complex nationalism of the novel, “an unprecedentedly far-reaching exploration of Britishness” that “explores and expresses views of nationhood too intricate and vexed to be classed as pure persuasion” (120-1). Similarly, the example of Edinburgh demonstrates the complexity of Bramble’s argument against luxury, which adopts a recognizably Augustan framework while simultaneously complicating the contempt the Augustans had for the ordinary man or woman. Bramble does not believe

that capitalism is inherently immoral, but rather that it can be tamed and harnessed for the public good by the conscientious application of public policy. His debate with Lismahago reinforces this point. Bramble maintains, against Lismahago's strident stance to the contrary, that "by proper regulations, commerce may produce every national benefit, without the allay of such concomitant evils" (319).²⁸ His focus on urban regulation offers a means of approaching the question of how to save the public that does not rely upon the remediation of individual tastes and habits of consumption, but instead on creating an environment that is conducive to both commerce and public health, thus creating the conditions for civilized economic prosperity.

This focus places him squarely within the camp of those who advocated for issues such as the paving and lighting of public streets. Miles Ogborn argues that these debates shed light on "the conjoint, and problematic, conceptualization of political authorities and 'privatized individuals'" (91). The campaign for urban reform advocated for the regulation of public space, commerce, and private individuals in service of concerns about public health and morality. In one respect, the campaign for urban reform represented an opportunity to reintroduce the ideals of classical order and proportion into the maintenance and improvement of existing and future buildings and infrastructure. John Spranger's 1754 plan for paving, lighting, and cleaning the streets of Westminster is a representative example of similar proposals during the period. As Ogborn argues, his "plan and the legislation that followed... reveals the beginnings of a new organization of space and power, and a new way of figuring a public authority within which private individuals could participate in the construction of an urban public sphere" (93).

Spranger's plan is also characterized by its appeal to the sensibility of the public in an attempt to recover, through aesthetic and material improvements, a lost ideal of community. Spranger's rhetorical appeal is based not in securing the individual against the real and perceived dangers of unregulated urban public space, but instead on an appeal to "a certain Connection, a Regard to the public Good," which was at the heart of the campaign for urban reform:

²⁸ The likely sense of allay used here is the "admixture of something undesirable," as per the now-obsolete definition of the word which refers to the combination of metals, "esp. admixture of a valuable with a less valuable metal."

Every sensible Man, who lives under our most happy System of Government, must naturally be interested in all Things, that concern the Public; because he, sooner or later, more nearly or remotely, must be affected by every degree of Prosperity or Adversity, that attends the Community, of which he is a Member (Preface).

He calls on the public to recognize the interconnection of the public and private spheres, and to enlarge their sympathies to feel their connection with others. Spranger shares Smollett's faith in policy to promote and secure the wellbeing of the individual and the community, which can be achieved "without Means of tyrannizing" over the individual who is already "sufficiently guarded, by having his Rights and Liberties, civil and religious, secured within... the Laws of his Country" (Preface). This initiative not only provides practical benefits like improved navigation in the city, but also distinct health benefits. Keeping the streets clean of filth not only makes navigating the city less treacherous, but also improves commerce by allowing for the easy flow of goods and people. Thus, by creating the conditions for more "wholesome Air," one can address a public health issue while also helping to dispel those "manifold Evils, to which we are exposed from these Defects in our political Oeconomy" (Preface).²⁹ Considered in terms of the relationship between space and subject, the successful application of public policy raises the prospect of eliminating defects in the health of the other less economically engaged portion of the body politic, as well. If health hazards can be removed from the built environment, even the least fortunate members of society can be protected from the ravages of poverty.

However, despite the enthusiasm of its boosters, the urban reform movement, as it was really implemented through the enactment of similarly directed by-laws in places across Britain, experienced a fairly wide gap between rhetoric and results. Ogborn argues that while urban reform legislation codified as law "the old duty to carry a torch after dark," the fragmented implementation of these laws was at odds with their ostensible

²⁹ Adam Smith defines political oeconomy in *The Wealth of Nations* as having "two distinct objects: first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and secondly, to supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services. It proposes to enrich both the people and the sovereign." (IV.I.1)

purpose of creating regular urban public spaces (92). Writing during the mid-1760s, when Smollett's novel is widely acknowledged to take place, Bramble's observations of Bath provide an opportunity to survey the culmination of nearly sixty years' worth of reforms in the resort town dating back to the time of Queen Anne and of its incorporation, and they appear to be wanting. While Bramble sets aside his scorn to praise "the Square," which, "though irregular, is on the whole, pretty well laid out, spacious, open, and airy," he observes that "the avenues to it are mean, dirty, dangerous, and indirect" (63). The streets leading from the inn to the baths require the older and more infirm to be carried in chairs and, in the tumult of these passages, they are constantly in danger of being overturned. When the open chairs are not in use, they are left out in the open and exposed to the elements. The closed chairs suffer a similar fate, as their linings are "impregnated like so many sponges, with the moisture of the atmosphere" (64). Bramble's complaints speak to a common frustration in the period about the irregularity of public space, particularly in front of private buildings, but also more broadly the failure of public policy to remedy the ills of city living.

While the novel, through the character of Matthew Bramble, obviously demonstrates its sympathy for the paving politics of those such as Spranger, and, by extension, their argument for public health, commerce, and civic unity, Bramble is resolutely cynical about the capacity of such reforms to mitigate the loss of community. In his letter of May 20 in London, Bramble writes of the changing landscapes of British cities. London has replaced its "open fields, producing hay and corn" with "streets and squares, and palaces, and churches," and Westminster has added eleven thousand new homes within its boundaries (117). He remarks approvingly on the paving and lighting of London and Westminster, as well as Blackfriars Bridge, and yet these laudable additions and improvements cannot stem his sense that "the capital is become an overgrown monster; which, like a dropsical head, will in time leave the body and extremities without nourishment and support" (118). The sheer scale of change undermines Bramble's hope that policy could remedy some of the more harmful effects of modern space, and ultimately motivates his withdrawal from society towards the end of the book. If the urban reform movement predicated itself on restoring public space, and thus the body

politic, to an ideal state of health, Smollett raises the objection that it is really only chasing after the symptoms rather than the true source of decay: the fractured family.

* * * * *

William Cadogan, in his *A Dissertation on Gout* (1771), asks the reader: “What can the best physician do more than discover and point out to his patients the real causes of their diseases?” (95) Though ostensibly speaking of medical matters, Cadogan’s dissertation can productively be read as an appraisal of the state of the body politic in London at the time, that city which was perhaps the most infamous example in the eighteenth century of the consequences of excess and vice on both the moral and physical health of its citizens, and which necessarily provoked much discussion and hand-wringing about the best ways of correcting disorder in the general population. Cadogan is conscientious of the importance of getting men “better informed of the real causes of their diseases, [so that] they might be less unreasonable in their demands” and submit themselves “to that plan of life which alone can lead them to, and preserve them in, permanent health” (viii-ix). His emphasis on the link between health and happiness is achieved, on the one hand, by the doctor “lifting their eyes up to Nature” and “consulting her book,” and on the other by the patient’s submission to the doctor’s authority, as well as adoption of a more humble style of life (vi).

The social ideology underlying Cadogan’s prescription can be traced at least as far back as the medical rhetoric of John Dryden, who argued nearly a hundred years earlier that “if the body politic have any analogy to the natural... an act of oblivion were as necessary in a hot distempered state, as an opiate in a raging fever” (Preface). Dryden’s enthusiasm for cutting off diseased “limbs” indicates his belief in the necessity of social control to regulate the health of the body politic. A few decades later, Bernard Mandeville would make the countervailing argument that vice is necessary to the “well order’d Society,” which is a beautiful machine “raised from the most contemptible Branches” rather than corrupted by them (54). To a great extent, Cadogan agrees with the substance of Mandeville’s idea that the typical “cure” of purgation, like amputation and bloodletting, was an increasingly unfashionable relic of humoral theory, and ultimately of little use. When the body “begins to wear out,” Cadogan argues, such “remedies will

answer no longer,” if, in fact, they ever did, or could (96). The emphasis on prevention in works such as Cadogan’s *Dissertation* is indicative of the state of medicine in the late eighteenth century, and the steady shift away from humoral theory to a greater emphasis on clearing “obstructions” from the various pipes and flows within the human body through better practices of self-government. His *Dissertation* offers a reconfiguration of the doctor-patient relationship as one that is primarily calibrated to address the moral health of the patient, which is regarded as coextensive with their physical health. It is not enough to treat the body; one must begin by treating the soul. Or, as Mandeville writes, rather than bothering to “[teach] Men what they should be,” we should be “telling them what they really are” (77).

The continuity between individual health and the wellbeing of the nation is an old trope, but one which took on special significance for physicians in the mid-eighteenth century. Though he would later become well known for his studies of gout, that notable disease of excess and vice, William Cadogan made his first strides as a physician in his role of caring for children. It was this experience that would inform his arguments tying national prosperity to the physical welfare of the dispossessed. As a young physician in the 1740s, Cadogan served as an honorary medical attendant caring for abandoned babies in the London Foundling Hospital, where he would later become governor (Levene 7-8). In his 1748 work, *An Essay Upon Nursing and the Management of Children from their Birth to Three Years of Age*, Cadogan argues that the common way of nursing children, as practiced by women, is wrong, since it is based upon the received wisdom of long-discredited physicians. He proposes “a more reasonable and more natural method” based on the proper observation of nature (3). Cadogan’s intervention was calculated to correct defective nursing practices, on the one hand, but above all to address a child mortality problem that he regarded as a crisis of national proportions. One look at the Mortality Bills revealed a grim sight: “almost half the number of those, who fill up that black list, die under five years of age: so that half the people that come into the world, go out of it again before they become of the least use to it, or themselves” (6). In this way, Cadogan connected the local issue of child mortality to the wellbeing of Britain, since their deaths represented a real loss to labour productivity. Each death thus constituted a symbolic,

mortal blow to national prosperity.

Cadogan's sensitivity to this issue was no doubt heightened by his experience working in the London Foundling Hospital, where mortality rates ranged from 60% to 90% of its charges (Levene 141). The sheer amount of death, combined with the utter indifference of the public, belied "the maxim in every one's mouth, that a multitude of inhabitants is the greatest strength and best support of a Commonwealth" (6). While poverty and its attendant ills were often regarded as a natural fact of life, Cadogan countered that the problem represented by the Foundling Hospital "is entirely owing to mismanagement" (7). His solution for the proper management of foundling bodies contrasts rational direction by sober physicians with the irrational, "superstitious" practices of old maids. Cadogan argues that the current crisis in the Foundling Hospital is owing to the practice of nursing being "too long fatally left to the management of Women, who cannot be supposed to have proper knowledge" of it (3). When we consider his later *Dissertation* in light of this earlier, similarly directed work, it becomes clear that for William Cadogan, as for many of his contemporaries in the mid-eighteenth century, the disciplined, well-managed body at the center of new models of civic order could only be achieved by rationally informed intervention by predominantly male practitioners, to the exclusion of feminized forms of knowledge.

Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, published in the same year as Cadogan's *Dissertation*, touches on many of the same issues. In the form and content of the narrative, Smollett demonstrates the connection between urban regulation and public health, and the dangers posed by feminized luxury and excess; further, he argues that national prosperity cannot flow from regulations alone, but must instead arise from the repair of broken family ties. In this way, Smollett's novel is firmly engaged with the socio-medical discourse of disease and prevention. His satirical, epistolary travel narrative follows the journey of Matthew Bramble and his family around the country. Bramble, the ailing patriarch, viciously criticizes the state of architecture, urban planning, and the utter disregard for public health that he sees in London and Bath, especially. Along the way, the family takes in a destitute young apprentice and itinerant preacher, Humphry Clinker, as their postilion, who is later revealed to be Bramble's long-lost son

who was conceived during a period of youthful indiscretion. The novel's conclusion reaffirms Smollett's embrace of the servant class as a model of health and moral clarity; the marriage of Clinker and the Brambles' maidservant Win Jenkins coincides with the family's retreat to the healthful rural idyll of Brambleton Hall, the family estate, and Bramble's own return to health. The Bramble family, once broken and now repaired, serves as an analogy for Britain's own troubled union, and illustrates the idea that national wellbeing cannot be brought about by "King and Parliament", but must come from within.³⁰ The novel's ending, which portrays Bramble taking up farming at his country estate, joins William Cadogan in locating true health and wellbeing in a combined regimen of physiological and spiritual discipline, one which is continuous with the popular understanding of the reciprocal relationship between body and mind. It is there that homosocial bonds are affirmed, honest masculine forms of labour are taken up, and the social body is consequently restored.

As conventional as the novel's ending is, its resolution demonstrates the extent to which its solutions fetishize the "lower class of Mankind" whose "want of superfluity" limits their incidence of disease, and renders them more moral (Cadogan 8). On the one hand, this fetishization is so conventional as to be unremarkable. Disease in the eighteenth century was widely understood and represented as the consequence of moral failure, and its proper cure envisioned in the prescription to correct one's "mistaken habits." As Juliet McMaster argues, the moral significance of disease is inescapable in *Humphry Clinker*, noting how Bramble's return to health coincides with "com[ing] to terms with his own filth and the sins of his youth" (10). The Earl of Shaftesbury, whose influential *Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit* identifies virtue with nature, and both with the practice of religion, wrote that "there is in reality a right and wrong state of every creature" but that "his right state is forwarded by nature and affectionately sought by himself," while the wrong state is shaped by unnatural affections (4). Virtue, Shaftesbury argues, depends on the right application of the reason and the knowledge of good and evil to ensure that nothing "horrible," "unnatural," "unexemplary," or

³⁰ The various critiques and representations of political corruption scuttle the potential argument that Smollett may have had faith in the environmental regulation as a "cure", but rather as just yet another preventative measure that can help, but not cure, the real problem ailing Britain: a lack of domestic harmony.

destructive of social bonds is to “be pursued or valued as a good and proper object of esteem,” and that such things “will always be [regarded as] horrible depravity, no matter what support it gets from fashion, law, custom, or religion” (8). Contemporary medical writing similarly posits a subject whose health is understood in these aesthetic, and fundamentally moral, terms: the ideal subject is one who successfully avoids excess consumption of food, drink, and luxuries, particularly when said consumables are foreign. Such choices not only reflect contemporary understandings of the humoral nature of disease, but also the paucity of understanding surrounding their true cause; in the absence of a truly medical account of the nature of disease, aesthetic and moral explanations filled the gap. The broad emphasis in lay medical texts on the necessity of correcting mistaken habits as the true path to health is founded on a conception of individual autonomy that discounts the effects of poverty, and that hardens the public’s sympathies against those who are perceived to be too simple, lazy, or craven to alleviate their own troubled circumstances. From my reading of *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, it is evident that Smollett is playing with the conventions governing the relationship between morality and disease, or is at least aware of their limitations.³¹

Just as Tobias Smollett recognizes the limits of urban reform in addressing the problems of public health, morality, and economic prosperity, and those who would propose to cure society’s ills by rationally-directed, externally-focused reforms, he is similarly aware of the limits of investing too much faith in physicians. Despite the fact that his best friend and confidante is a doctor, Bramble does not disguise his frustrations with Lewis’s prescriptions, and declaims that “the pills are good for nothing” in the very first lines of the novel. This letter introduces the possibility that Dr. Lewis is actually a quack, which Cadogan’s *Dissertation* confirms in his description of the practice of “a

³¹ Judith Frank argues that the novel manifests an anxious relationship to the poor, reflecting the contemporary reality that downward mobility was a common experience for most male children of the landed gentry. In this light, the specificity of the novel’s political critique takes on a particular pall, one that is calculated to “absorb, mute, and deny the real origins of the misery of the time” (90). Susan Jacobsen agrees that the novel’s conclusion “is ultimately pessimistic and nostalgic,” reaffirming that the “gentry cannot stop ‘the tide of luxury’; they can only remove themselves from it” (88). Likewise, Evan Gottlieb has recently argued that even an optimistic reading of the ending cannot overcome the fact that, for Smollett, the dependence of sympathetic relations on familial ties underscores the limits of sympathy, and perhaps suggests the limits of the national project (104).

skillful and honest Physician:”

[he] will employ those intervals of relief to introduce the powers of life and nature to act for themselves, an insensibly withdrawing all his medicines, and watching carefully over his patient’s whole conduct, leave him confirmed, from conviction of their necessity, in such good and salutary habits, as cannot fail to establish his health for life. (viii)

The novel’s critique of modern architectural practices, luxury, and failed public policy is intimately connected with its critique of preventative medicine and analogous techniques imposed by the state-as-physician on the bodies of poor and abandoned children through the voluntary hospital system. This system, a prime example of which was the London Foundling Hospital, was explicitly founded as a means of addressing a child mortality problem: one that was understood in terms of a loss of real, potential labour power, and thus as a threat to Britain’s economic potential. What the Foundling Hospital represented, as one of many schemes of eighteenth-century political arithmeticians, was a rational approach to a complex social problem. In this section, I will demonstrate the role that individual agency played in physicians’ understandings of disease in the mid-eighteenth century, in particular the idea of the “accident” or “snare” which involuntarily affects the individual’s health, and the extent to which Tobias Smollett cultivates sympathy for those who are so unlucky as to be snared.

In 1771, the year of publication for both William Cadogan’s *Dissertation on the Gout* and Tobias Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker*; these men reach similar conclusions about the effectiveness of eighteenth-century medicine, and the appropriate remedies for illness. Both men are skeptical of the ability of the physician to do much more than to relieve symptoms, and of the physician’s ability to address the root causes of the individual’s suffering, which can really only be effected, as Cadogan argues, by “reform[ing] your life” (97). Cadogan’s “cure” recalls the narrative resolution of *Humphry Clinker* with the Bramble family’s retreat into the countryside, a move that at once signals Matthew Bramble’s achievement of inner peace and reflects Smollett’s feelings about the necessity of cultivating a simpler and more sustainable way of life. As William West observes, Bramble undertakes Cadogan’s prescription almost to the letter, evincing Smollett’s

implication in the broader shift towards appreciating the role of maintaining good habits in the regulation of one's overall health (1203). This coincidence of opinion is analogous to a more general and pervasive trend in *Humphry Clinker* towards questioning the efficacy of external "solutions" for internal problems, whether it is the ability of medicine to cure disease, or of the adequacy of public policy to redress the corruption of Britain's urban spaces.

Smollett, like Cadogan, is nothing if not skeptical on the question of the efficacy of medicine. William Cadogan begins his *Dissertation* by criticizing those "industrious men" who have "plunged into the immense abyss" of ancient learning, only to find "endless heaps of rubbish;" the ancients, he writes, were "very ingenious in guessing wrong" because they never actually studied nature in any systematic or meaningful way (vi). For this reason, Cadogan maintains that people should rightly be suspicious of physic, given that it has been around for two millennia and "there is not yet discovered any one certain remedy for any disease" (14). In lieu of a medical solution, his prescription for the cure of gout hinges on the idea that "every man [is] the real author of all or most of his own miseries," and can therefore remedy his own ill health through sheer force of will by correcting his "indulgences, excesses, or mistaken habits of life" (11). This diagnosis, such as it is, unites a pointed skepticism about the efficacy of modern medicine with an assertion of the individual's complicity in his own suffering, while relying upon a common-sense approach to health.

On its face, this prescription is convincing in its simplicity. After all, a doctor cannot cure a patient of a problem that is ultimately behavioural; by Cadogan's own estimation, the source of all disease can be traced to individual behavior. If you are sick, it is likely owing to a lack of self-discipline or insufficient attention and care for your own health. All chronic diseases, he writes, are effectively caused by three related phenomena: indolence, intemperance, and vexation. Indolence, the disregard of labour, which is the "first principle of nature," leads one to "sacrific[e] health to indulgence and dignity;" intemperance, which is produced by indolence, "blunt[s] all our sensations" and leads us to desire "the whip and spur of luxury to excite our jaded appetites;" and vexation generally produces "diseases of inanition," which are more difficult to cure or

relieve (28, 40, 60). The remedy, Cadogan suggests, is “Activity, Temperance, and Peace of Mind,” a solution that is as obvious as it is of questionable value, and that can be more readily categorized as advice than as “cure.” His answer simultaneously places responsibility for healing on the individual while allowing the doctor to disavow the very bases of accountability should his advice fail to produce any results (81). In this respect, Cadogan’s writings here are symptomatic of the idea that man can control his responses, both voluntary and involuntary, to the world around him, regardless of circumstance.

Cadogan’s arguments here, as well as the trajectory of Matthew Bramble’s wellbeing, accord with Juliet McMaster’s observation that the process and cure of disease was understood narratively, with the cause usually being of moral significance (7). The moral significance of Bramble’s disease is clear, as he acknowledges that it originates in his misspent, indulgent youth, and is confirmed yet again by the cure he finds in his late-in-life spiritual and bodily reformation; the trajectory of Bramble’s health aligns with Cadogan’s argument about the importance of personal habits, and reinforces the novel’s ambivalence about the value of medicine. If the nature of the disease is ultimately moral, then the cure must be as well. We see in the novel how Matthew Bramble’s “sensible friend” Dr. Lewis, to whom all of his letters are addressed and to whom he implores for relief from his ailments, seems to be a hopeless failure at his job. Indeed, the novel begins with Matthew Bramble bemoaning that his friend prescribes “pills [that] are good for nothing” (33). If, as McMaster argues, “disease in the novel is never morally neutral,” Smollett’s representation of its cure, including those who facilitate it, is similarly fraught (10). If “every man [is] the real author of all or most of his own miseries,” the novel’s argument about the dangers of luxury is unabashedly hung up on how to account for the diverse exceptions to be found in the “or most.”

The essential ambivalence that Smollett seems to have about this point is, in some respects, symptomatic of the ways in which the novel’s understanding of agency is caught up in the tension between classical and “modern” models of medicine. Even though Cadogan, like Matthew Bramble, is dismissive of the value of ancient medical knowledge, these ideas about health and medicine persisted throughout the eighteenth century. “[P]assions and affections of the mind were still considered as among the six

‘non-naturals,’ conditions beyond the body... which nonetheless affect it” (McMaster 5). These non-naturals, as defined by Galen, included air, food and drink, sleeping and waking, motion and rest, excretions and retentions, and the dreams and passions of the soul (Mann 367). The persistence of the humoral model can be seen, for example, in Bramble’s classic case of hypochondriasis. Otherwise known as the English Malady, its causes were ascribed to a humorally-inflected understanding of disease, and arose when, as the explanation goes, the solids, fibres, or nerves of the individual had become too dry or moist, or when there were “improper, hard, solid, and noxious Particles” causing obstructions (Cheyne 10).

The continuing relevance of humoral theory in eighteenth-century medicine is evidenced in George Cheyne’s work on irritability theory. His 1733 text, *The English Malady*, speculated on the cause and cure of this strange disease which seemed to be on the rise in Britain’s cities, “being computed to make almost one third of the complaints” of the affluent members of society (ii). Characterized by “nervous Distempers, Spleen, Vapours, and Lowness of Spirits,” Cheyne hypothesized that this particularly English malady derived from a number of sources, including moisture, the soil, food, and more generally from living in large, unhealthy towns. As Annika Mann argues, advances in medicine and technology in this period complicated the idea that the body could perceive and control how it participates in its physical environment (364). Cheyne’s theory of the sensible subject thus reframes humoral theory within recent scientific advances in nerve theory to produce a theory of the “reactive organism” mechanically affected by external stimuli:

the Intelligent Principle, or Soul, resides somewhere in the Brain, where all the Nerves, or Instruments of Sensation terminate, like a Musician in a finely fram’d and well-tun’d Organ-case; that these Nerves are like keys... [or also] like a Bell in a Steeple, to which there are an infinite Number of Hammers all around it, with Ropes of all Lengths, terminating or touching at every Point of the Surface...(4-5)

Here, Cheyne imagines his nervous disorder as a disorder of the soul; the body and soul are joined by the nervous system as part of one elaborate, finely-tuned instrument, acutely responsive to touch, and seemingly open to an infinite number of dangers.

Jane Bennett provides a useful means of reconceptualizing the role that these “Hammers” play in the eighteenth century’s understanding of the subject. Drawing on the work of Bruno Latour, she argues that the idea of “agency” is a fuzzy concept, and provides a means of rethinking the complex interactions between the sensible subject and the sensory minefield that comprised, for many, the experience of urban space. Bennett traces the idea of the legal *actant*, which is “neither an object nor subject but an ‘intervener.’” Historically known as the “‘deodand,’ a figure of English law from about 1200 until it was abolished in 1846,” the actant is an intervener in the sense that it refers to “a materiality ‘suspended between human and thing’” (9). The category of the actant recognizes the agency of non-subjects in terms of their ability to affect the individual. As an example, Bennett cites cases of accidental death or injury in which the decisive factor is nonhuman, such as a carriage that tramples a pedestrian, which incidentally forms a serious source of concern for Matthew Bramble in Bath, and for the gentry more generally (9). According to William Pietz, the deodand served an important function in English law by establishing a framework of “compensation, expiation, or punishment to settle the debt created by unintended human deaths whose direct cause is not a morally accountable person, but a nonhuman material object” (Pietz 97).

The prominent place of deodand within eighteenth-century English law was owing to the recognition that accidents were a regular and troublesome feature of life, and the question of how to do away with this problem similarly troublesome. For George Cheyne, the “Contrary State,” the malady of which he writes, is brought on by “Accidents” of various kinds that “may introduce Humps, Distortion, &c, and alter the natural good Configurations of the Parts” (23). This idea operates in contrast to the cause hypothesized by William Cadogan, in particular, as well as lay medical texts generally, such as the Methodist minister John Wesley’s *Primitive Physick* (1743), which emphasize the decisive role of individual decisions and habits. Cheyne’s explanation partakes of Bramble’s worry that the built environment of Britain has introduced unnecessary risks to the individual. The “accident,” like the deodand, offers a way of accounting for the agential force of non-human actors. The difficulty, however, is that while the idea of the accident has explanatory power, it does nothing to illuminate the causal relationship

connecting the individual(s) to the accident-inducing object. In the absence of a clear chain of causation, Cheyne, like Bramble, fills in the gaps with his best guesses. Bramble incorporates Cheyne's idea into his theory of the subject. Bramble's concern for the wellbeing of the sick, the old, and the chairmen of Bath, in terms of their heightened risk for dangerous accidents, assigns agential force to the built environment. This theory reinforces the extent to which wellbeing is judged according to the proportion, order, and "natural good Configuration of the Parts," whether those parts are of the human body or of the built environment.

Cheyne goes on to suggest that these distortions also may be produced by factors such as poor diet, hard work, and exposure, and that the "poorer Sort, who are deprived of the due Necessaries and Conveniencies of life," including travelers, prisoners, and monks, who are over-represented in this regard; however, he makes the dubious claim that Britain is "pretty free from such Cases" (24). Not only does the testimony of British social history tell us otherwise, since as much as 75% of the population could be counted among the "poorer Sort" at this time, but so too does the character of Humphry Clinker (Frank 9). Cheyne, while recognizing the deforming effects of urban space and the deprivations of poverty, although not quite in these words, also maintains, following Locke, that children are irrevocably linked to their parents, since "the Streams or Outlets must partake of the same Qualities with the Spring or Fountain Head" (19).³² The discordant theory of the subject that emerges from this formulation demonstrates considerable ambivalence or confusion about whether accidents, brought on by poor urban design as per the issues discussed in the first part of this essay, or brought on by deprivation, have some kind of moral content. Accidents that befall an individual can be understood in terms of the consequences of poverty, or even just unfortunate circumstances; however, there is another category of accident which follows from the recognition that "the Faults, Follies, and Indiscretions of their Parents" can greatly increase the odds that the children will be exposed to accidents of all kinds, owing to

³² Locke, in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), writes that "The little or almost insensible impressions on our tender infancies, have very important and lasting consequences: and there 'tis, as in the fountains of some rivers, where a gentle application of the hand turns the flexible waters in channels, that make them take quite contrary courses; and by this direction given them at first in the source, they receive different tendencies, and arrive at last at very remote and distant places."

their less fortunate material circumstances (19).

The most compelling illustration of this theoretical problem, and of this prevalent social problem, is the character of Humphry Clinker, who is both affected, and to some extent determined, by his less than desirable beginnings, and who is more generally a victim of misfortune:

He had been a love begotten babe, brought up in the work-house, and put out apprentice by the parish to a country black-smith, who died before the boy's time was out: that he had for some time worked under his ostler, as a helper and extra postilion, till he was taken ill of the ague, which disabled him from getting his bread... (113).

Though clearly one of the "poorer sort" who Cheyne identifies as being more susceptible to distortions, one cannot, to return to Cadogan for the moment, identify which mistaken habits of life Clinker could correct and thereby restore his health. This fiction of choice presumes the complicity of the individual in his own suffering, and relies on the elision of those material circumstances that limit his agency. After falling ill, Clinker makes every attempt to remedy his situation, and relies on nothing but his own resources to see him through; however, "having sold and pawned every thing in the world for his cure and subsistence, he became so miserable and shabby, that he disgraced the stable, and was dismissed" (113).

It is not difficult, with a reasonable understanding of British social history, to read Humphry Clinker as sympathetic character, and yet we certainly must acknowledge the complications and difficulties in doing so, given that the novel encourages us to read him as a punch line. We can overcome these difficulties, however, by reading the character of Humphry Clinker in terms of the novel's engagement with medical discourse, and the relationship between the individual's character and their social conditions. It is in this respect that, despite the encouragement to read Humphry Clinker as a joke, from the beginning of the reader's acquaintance with him he is presented as something more; this is not to say that Smollett actively humanizes him, but that the reader is encouraged to forgo easy laughter by being forced to recognize that this fool has a past, and to think about the combination of parental neglect, social indifference, and various accidents

which have left him in his present condition. Smollett encourages this reading from the first time that Clinker is introduced. We see the limits of his employer's sympathy when he explains that Clinker was dismissed because "such a miserable object would have brought a discredit upon my house" (113). Not unlike the bedbug, the presence of which denoted one's proximity to the filth and disorder of the lower classes, Clinker in his ill health is treated by his employer not only as a threat to his own health, but also, perhaps more significantly, as a potential stain on his character as well. Moreover, if activity, temperance, and peace of mind are held as the most important aspects of reforming one's life, Clinker's example reveals a critical aporia in this line of thinking, not only because his problems extend beyond Cadogan's simplistic moral framework, but because he is also the very embodiment of this framework's ideas and ideals. As a member of the servant class, and as a Methodist, he possesses all three of these qualities in abundance: activity, in terms of the labours he must perform for his survival; temperance, in terms of his more general simplicity of mind and diet; and peace of mind, as evidenced by his calm attitude in the face of adversity. However, his inability to reform his life, in terms of achieving an ideal of Britishness, calls into question the soundness of this model of subjectivity as a meaningful ideal when weighed against the material realities, or deprivations, of eighteenth-century British life. Humphry Clinker is the embodiment of eighteenth-century ambivalence about the poor, who are simultaneously fetishized for the bucolic simplicity of their way of life, and reviled for the state of wretchedness that their deprivation inevitably produces.

The imperative to correct one's mistaken habits makes much more sense if we understand these habits to be essentially aesthetic in quality, rather than behavioural: where the desired objective to be reached by correcting "mistaken habits" is to attain the behavior, appearance, and moral clarity of the ideal British subject. The exchange between Tabitha and Matthew Bramble about Clinker's "bare posteriors" dramatizes the twofold nature of the problem Clinker must resolve in order to win some measure of security against his precarious situation. Tabitha reproaches Clinker for having "the impudence to shock her sight by shewing his bare posteriors," and Bramble asks, ironically, whether the young man is not ashamed. He replies that he is, but that "it was

an accident – My breeches cracked behind, after I had got into the saddle” (112). In deference to polite society, Bramble advises Clinker to obtain a shirt, so that his “nakedness may not henceforward given offence to travelling gentlewomen.” Equipping himself “with a narrow brimmed hat, with gold cording, a cut bob, a decent blue jacket, leather-breeches, and a clean linen shirt, puffed above the waist-band,” Clinker “metamorphose[s] himself” into the picture of respectability (113-4). Clinker resolves Tabitha’s concerns, on the one hand, by adopting a mode of dress that is more appropriate to his station; on the other, he also incorporates into his apology a vow that, “with God’s assistance, I shall take care that my tail shall never rise up in judgment against me, to offend your ladyship again” (115). Clinker attempts to placate Tabitha’s offended sensibilities by adjusting both his appearance and his behaviour to the Brambles’ desire for propriety and order, effectively changing both of his “mistaken habits” in the hopes of attaining the stability promised by being a servant to a relatively wealthy family.

This convincing display of supplication not only effects a change of heart in Tabitha, but also inspires the admiration of Matthew. Although he finds Clinker’s list of qualifications to be a little ridiculous, his nostalgia for established social hierarchies and the deference of the lower orders certainly plays a significant role in appealing to Matthew’s sympathies. Even while Smollett sets up Clinker as a sympathetic figure, he undermines the audience’s identification with him with recourse to slapstick:

The fellow’s natural awkwardness and the flutter of his spirits were productive of repeated blunders in the course of his attendance – At length, he spilt part of a custard upon her right shoulder; and, starting back, trod upon Chowder.... Poor Humphry was so disconcerted... that he dropt the china dish, which broke into a thousand pieces (115).

This episode not only demonstrates Humphry Clinker’s relative simplicity, in terms of his unfamiliarity with the conventions of polite society, but more importantly his incongruity with the scene. Clinker’s decision to subordinate himself fully to the whims and wishes of the leisured class effectively reveals the novel’s investment in the disciplining of problem bodies: those bodies that do not conform, in their behaviour or appearance, to the demands of polite society. By willingly and enthusiastically taking on the task of

managing his self-presentation, Clinker is able to insinuate himself into the family precisely because he understands the limits of the Brambles' sympathies.³³

This scene supports a reading of the period's conflicted attitude towards the labouring poor who are often regarded as witless fools, but who also, as it becomes revealed later in the novel, represent a wellspring of vitality that is absolutely crucial to reinvigorating the nation. Robin Ganev's exploration of popular depictions of rural figures such as the milkmaid and the ploughman are instructive in this regard. In the eighteenth century, such figures serve as "exemplars of a wholesome, natural, and vigorous sexuality" in contrast with the "impotent nobility" and middling classes who are debauched by luxury; at the same time, however, the stereotype of the rural bumpkin was also a target for moralists and reformers alike who looked on the country with a dark view, seeing "promiscuity, illegitimacy, and overpopulation... as symptoms of a moral crisis" (42). The sexuality and bodies of the labouring class were therefore the source of much anxiety in the mid-eighteenth century, the severity of which ebbed and flowed according to economic and social pressures: a shortage of labour, or a period of perceived overpopulation problems. The poor are at once a lost ideal as well as an ever-present threat to urban bodies who depend on their labour and national wellbeing more generally.

In this respect, Humphry Clinker's Methodism offers a key to understanding how Smollett comes to position Clinker as a model of the ideal subject for the labouring poor and, by extension, as a model of the kinds of qualities that can be adapted for the betterment of the middling sort. It also offers a bridge between the novel's sentimentalism and the specificity of its social and political critiques, as well as between religion and medicine. The radical nature of Methodism should not be understated, and was found not only in its leveling tendencies, as evidenced by Clinker's ability to attract devotees of all types, but also in the kind of subjectivity that it modeled. Methodism, which originated out of the Oxford Holy Club in the 1730s, was premised on carefully structured devotional practices that emphasized asceticism as a means of spiritual improvement. Misty Anderson argues that Methodism took "a reasoned empirical approach to self-

³³ As Deidre Lynch remarks of mid-century moral philosophy, sympathy works to "guarantee social harmony by rendering people copies of one another.... Sympathy socializes and redeems particularity" (95).

making” which “harnessed modern philosophy to Christianity” (35, 51). This connection was in no small part because its founder, John Wesley, was as much a religious enthusiast as he was a close follower of eighteenth century philosophy and medicine. His lay medical text, *Primitive Physick*, was one of the most popular books of the period, and drew upon the most well respected medical authorities of the time, including George Cheyne. Not only was Methodism a kind of new, “experimental religion,” according to Wesley, but it was also mystical, “sensuously immediate,” and “antimodern” (3). Methodism represented “a populist, religious adaptation of Lockean consciousness that, paradoxically, emphasized the vulnerability of this self in its own secular terms” (4). By focusing on the importance of disciplining the body as well as the mind, Methodism promised a model of subjectivity that reconciled Enlightenment rationality with religious enthusiasm.

The convergence of Methodism and medicine, and the questionable divide separating rationality from enthusiasm, is dramatized in the relationship between Bramble and Clinker. Smollett deliberately plays with this division in Bramble’s criticism of Clinker’s religious practice: “If you are a quack in sanctity and devotion, you will find it an easy matter to impose upon silly women, and others of crazed understanding” (171). Invoking the term “quack” in his dialogue with Clinker, Bramble plays on the connection to the ancient Greek figure of Methodicus, derided as a quack in his day, which animated satirical depictions of Methodists as those who peddle false or questionable cures and advice about physic (Anderson 42). This exchange, however, belies the fact that Clinker plays a therapeutic role in the text, as Paul-Gabriel Boucé has observed (209). If we consider the fact that Bramble comes to adopt the very kinds of asceticism and self-discipline called for by Methodism and contemporary medicine alike, as well as the spiritual and moral clarity that these practices were believed to bring forth, we cannot deny the irony of Bramble’s critique. Moreover, the salutary benefits of Clinker’s habits of life function in stark contrast to the ineffective pills and prescriptions that Bramble receives from his “real” doctor, Dr. Lewis, whose utter failure to treat and to cure his patient signals not only Smollett’s implicit critique of the failure of contemporary medicine, but also the efficacy of Methodist practice as a mode of being that is much

better adapted to negotiating the threats and uncertainties posed by modern living.

As Anderson argues, the threat of Methodism was located “in its disposition of openness that undermined the autonomous, cognitively confident, and legally accountable self” (57). The dramatization of Matthew Bramble’s de facto conversion to Methodism, or Methodist habits of asceticism, is characterized precisely by a gradual move away from a heightened fear of his porousness and lack of agency that characterizes the beginning of the novel, to an embrace, in the novel’s pastoral ending, of a more immediate connection to the landscape and to his own physicality. This shift is important because it allows for a way of thinking through what seems to be the disjunction between these two distinct parts of the novel. While Bramble does not make a pledge of faith, by any means, through his actions he all but renounces his dogged insistence on the need for reform from the top down, if only because he comes to recognize that what Britain needs is not a change of policy, but a change of heart combined with greater self-discipline. In this respect, perhaps, Bramble comes to recognize the folly of believing in the capacity for urban reform to effect substantial changes in individual behavior, and in believing that aesthetic, architectural reforms can reproduce in the individual the lost ideal of civic duty that such buildings symbolize. At mid-century, with most urban reform projects proceeding locally in an uneven fashion around the country due to the lack of a centralized authority, it is no wonder that, even if Smollett recognized the wisdom of such projects, that he would be, with many decades’ hindsight, ultimately left cynical about the pace and scale of change. Matthew Bramble’s withdrawal from society at the end of the novel evidences a certain acceptance of John Wesley’s belief that that the “uncritical worship of reason... could lead man into superstition, delusion or nervous disorder,” characteristic of, respectively, the ignorant, the mad, or those who live a life of luxury (168). It was in the lifestyles of the poor and the humble, or at least in the romanticized image of the poor and the humble, that the debauched could find solace.

Smollett’s sense of the destructive potential of reason is present in his sympathy for the victims of, for instance, unsustainable farming practices, brought on by the English taste for luxury. The effects of these practices impoverished the countryside and

exacerbated the effects of enclosure, turning the rural poor, as Denys Van Renen argues, into “almost a separate form of human being” in order to rationalize the appropriation and development of the commons (399). Of course, the effect of Bramble’s discourse against luxury in the first half of the novel, and the implication of his withdrawal from society in the second half, is that nearly the whole public is othered entirely. The representation of the public as grotesque effectively discounts the possibility of forming the kind of community that Bramble so desperately longs for; however, at the same time, the idealization of a different form of community based on sympathy is predicated on an erasure of the material conditions of its members, and on fetishizing the deprivation of the poor as a kind of freedom, rather than to confront deprivation as a lack of choice. We can observe this same aestheticizing process take place in his description of the prisoners that Jery encounters when Clinker is falsely imprisoned:

I never saw any thing more strongly picturesque as this congregation of felons clanking their chains, in the midst of whom stood orator Clinker, expatiating in a transport of fervor, on the torments of hell, denounced in scripture against evil-doers, comprehending murderers, robbers, thieves, and whore mongers. The variety of attention exhibited in the faces of those ragamuffins, formed a group that would not have disgraced the pencil of a Raphael (184).

Instead of the language of the gothic and the grotesque, this scene focuses on the delight that Jery seems to take in seeing a group of criminals being transported by Clinker’s sermonizing. Matthew Bramble, too, commends Clinker’s “obliging deportment” along with “his talents of preaching, praying, and singing psalms, which he has exercised with such effect” without “any thing like affectation or hypocrisy in this excess of religion” (186). That this group of felons is so “strongly picturesque” coincides with, as Misty Anderson argues, Smollett’s “lingering hopes [for] some meaningful form of community based on sympathy;” however, the fact that this scene takes place in a prison is likely indicative of Smollett’s estimation of the likelihood of such a state of affairs coming to pass (206). The pastoral conclusion of the novel, in which the family withdraws from society entirely, constitutes a kind of perverse mirror image of the ideal community that Bramble locates in prison, but one which serves to underscore the utopian nature of his

yearning.

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The novel's formal closure depends on annexing an idealized vision of lower-class morality to bourgeois values in a way that cannot escape its own utopianism: not only is the setting representative of utopian stasis, a literal "no place" of imaginative fancy in its generic conventionality as well as in its literal self-containment, but also in that its solution for social repair can only be realized between blood relatives. The repair of the British family, imagined through the Brambles, and carried out through the reunion of the forgotten, ragged orphan Clinker with his long lost family, is as unrealistically fanciful as the portrait of the old Matthew Bramble taking up agriculture is unintentionally hilarious. Of course, we must acknowledge that the rural retreat is consistent with Bramble's nostalgia for a simpler time, and with the satiric conventions that Smollett is clearly playing with. Byron Gassman notes the ways in which the novel is aligned with classical representations of the rural ideal, including the "happy husbandman" motif, as well as its direct references to Horace's idealized rural retreat (99-101). Smollett's establishment of rural calm, the guarantor of his physical and mental well being, is predicated on a double maneuver, one that is both ideological as well as formal: the elimination of the working class by means of its incorporation into the family. The marriage of Humphry Clinker and Win Jenkins annexes lower-class moral clarity and simplicity to the gentry, and Matthew Bramble appropriates the ascetic habits of the Methodists he earlier derides, while his long-lost son discards his shabby habits for those of the gentry: the past, like the flawed present, is washed away and forgotten.

Though we are perhaps encouraged to read the ending, on some level, as the triumph of a genuine community based on sympathy, this reading discounts the extent to which this reconciliation is forged out of a disavowal of proletarian fear and loss. The recuperation of community based in sympathy and self-discipline is predicated on forgetting the reasons why the community was first in need of repair. Smollett's novel, as Judith Frank persuasively argues, aims "to absorb, mute, and deny 'the real origins of the misery of [its] time,'" which is carried out by "the rejection of mourning" (90,103). This disavowal, I argue, is accomplished by a re-reading of social disorder that is predicated

on a lack of self-discipline. While Bramble seems to abandon his social critique at the end of the novel, it is, in fact, simply transformed from an advocacy for an externally-imposed regime of social discipline into one that is internally guaranteed. It is at Brambleton Hall that we see how self-improvement emerges as the flawed answer to the failed promise of urban reform.

Chapter 4: The unwilling lives of the poor in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and *Fleetwood*

In his philosophical writing and his novels, Godwin foregrounds reason, understood as one's access to and embrace of education, as the definitive force that shapes minds, bodies, and worlds, to the exclusion of all other alternatives. Reason, in particular, is the key to "lifting up" the labouring poor and making their lives less miserable: the poor would be made less brutal and more content, and society as a whole, as a result, would be more peaceable, if they were simply given the time to engage their imaginations and to broaden their minds. In this chapter, I will argue that the place of reason in Godwin's anatomy of the body politic evidences the continuity of his thought with longstanding cultural ambivalence towards the labouring poor. While Godwin distances himself from the well-established dichotomy of the virtuous / vicious poor that we find in eighteenth-century literature and political thought, he replaces it with something arguably more insidious. By acknowledging every man's equal claim to reason, Godwin transforms a question of morality into one of failed or realized opportunity, where the latter is coextensive with morality, and the former with vulnerability to being involuntarily co-opted and shaped according to the (principally immoral) will of others. The degree to which a man is able to rise above and overcome his inherent brutality through the exercise and application of reason is, for Godwin, a predictor of happiness, fulfillment, and safety from accident – the kind of co-optation that turns otherwise harmless simple men like Grimes, in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, into instruments of other men which can be used to inflict social harm. In this chapter, I have made a strategic decision to examine several minor characters, rather than the namesake protagonist Caleb, to demonstrate that Godwin's ideas about education and the value of reason are not universally available, particularly to the poor. These fringe cases, as one might call them, are valuable precisely because they illuminate features of his thinking that are not adequately addressed by a more traditional reading focused on Caleb. I argue that, despite his genuine philosophical radicalism, Godwin advances some troubling ideas about the nature of the poor that elide the material hardships they face, and that he insufficiently addresses how bodily suffering

and sheer exhaustion might undermine some of the claims he makes about how to achieve greater social harmony.

Using the work of the pathological anatomist Giambattista Morgagni as a counterpoint illustrating the real material difficulties facing the labouring poor, I argue that Godwin's overvaluation of reason over other "non-naturals" governing the individual's health demonstrates the limits of Godwin's arguments about the nature of the body politic. His inability or unwillingness to account for the impact of other, more material non-naturals on character creates a tension between the proposed "cure" for the body politic and the brutal nature of the problem that Godwin identifies: "the peasant and labourer [who] work, till their understandings are benumbed with toil... and their bodies invaded with infirmities," before finally returning home "to a family, famished with hunger, exposed half naked to the inclemencies of the sky, hardly sheltered, and denied the slenderest instructions" (424). By reducing "the problem of the poor" to one of education, Godwin disavows the importance of the suffering body, and consequently makes industrial labour morally palatable.³⁴ This chapter explores how Godwin's benevolence belies a troubling shift in cultural responses to the issue of poverty.

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There are two types of climates in William Godwin's thought: climate in the ordinary sense of the word, designating the relative heat and moisture of the atmosphere in a particular area, and climate in the sense of the virtual environment that is created by the application of men's reason in shaping the world. This second environment is what we talk about when we refer to Godwin's understanding of the role of political institutions in shaping the character of individuals. While both work together to produce the world that the individual inhabits, Godwin separates the two on the basis of a distinction that is fundamental to his political philosophy: the distinction between voluntary and involuntary action, or between reason and the absence thereof. In his political philosophy as in his novel, there can be no action in the world – no meaningful

³⁴ Industrial labour refers to the kinds of hard labour Godwin features in the part of *Fleetwood* about Vaublanc's silk mills. More broadly, the labouring poor are those who are employed primarily in physically demanding jobs that include, but are limited to, work in such factories. As Patricia Crawford notes, "the labouring poor included agricultural labourers, charwomen, hawkers, artisans, sailors, soldiers, and servants" (8).

shaping force – that does not originate from some individual exercising their reason. As Peter Logan puts it, reason for Godwin is “less a theoretical abstraction than a physical force” which “operates through the same mechanism as sensation” (215). This conception of reason operates to the exclusion of nearly all other forces. “The most numerous and lasting of our associations,” as Godwin argues, “are intellectual, not accidental” (39). Since man is first and foremost a reasoning being, his character cannot be meaningfully shaped but by reasoned reflection on his own thoughts or on his external circumstances. There is an exception to this rule, however, and it is the “few, whose treatment has been tender enough to imbue them with extreme delicacy” and “who can thus be blindly directed” by elements such as climate, or other accidental circumstances – namely, the poor (39).

To understand the full import of what William Godwin says about climate and the individual’s relationship to it, we must first begin by tracing his understanding of human nature, how people receive and process sensory input, and any exceptions to the rule. His rejection of climate as a key influence on character is a good place to start, since it sets out the limits of what Godwin is prepared to accept. Godwin argues that “if men were principally governed by external circumstances such as that of atmosphere, their characters and actions would be much alike,” a point that, on its face, is not particularly controversial (39). He gives the example of two siblings raised under the same conditions in the same household, but who later in life have very different characters. In this line of reasoning, Godwin continues David Hume’s argument from his essay “Of National Characters,” modifying its terms only slightly. Hume admits of both moral and physical determinants of character: moral, aligning with Godwin’s account of the influence of political institutions; and physical, referring to the operations of climate that “work insensibly on the temper” (I.XXI.2). While Godwin mostly throws out the argument from climate, Hume allows that “though reflection and reason may sometimes overcome [the influence of climate], [it] will yet prevail among the generality of mankind” (I.XXI.2). He is “inclined to doubt” that men’s “temper or genius” are related “to the air, food, or climate,” even if it may seem superficially true. Although “these circumstances have an influence over every other animal,” they do not have the same result in men. Though

Hume acknowledges that “poverty and hard labour debase the minds of the common people,” or the generality of mankind, “and render[s] them unfit for any science and ingenious profession,” he does not connect this observation to his argument about the effects of physical causes, even though the influence of mind is clearly diminished in his estimation of the common people (I.XXI.3).

The distinction between those of hardy constitution and the extremely delicate that is operating in Hume’s and Godwin’s argument about the influence of physical causes draws upon the same discourse that animates eighteenth-century representations of the poor: the contrast between the virtuous, hard-working, temperate poor, and the lazy, indolent, wretched poor. This distinction comes up in Godwin’s chapter “Of Health” in *Political Justice*, in which he draws the connection between accidents and indolence: “How common is the remark, that those accidents, which are to the indolent a source of disease, are forgotten and extirpated in the busy and active?” (521) Godwin begins his discussion of the importance of activity in response to Benjamin Franklin’s assertion that “mind will one day become omnipotent over matter,” which Godwin understands to refer to “the improvements of human invention, in relation to machines and the compendium of labour” (520). He finds something unsatisfying in Franklin’s idea and asks the reader if it is not possible that, “if the power of intellect can be established over all other matter... [then] why not over the matter of our own bodies?” (520) In asking this question, Godwin raises the possibility of regarding the human intellect as itself a kind of technology, one with its own substantive material effects. If the invention and use of machines is indicative of man’s eventual ascension over matter itself, Godwin is asking whether we should not regard the mind itself as the original technology of man, and the key to unlocking human potential.

While Godwin clearly links activity and temperance to good health, and indolence to disease, he places particular emphasis on “the power of the mind in assisting or retarding convalescence” (521). Key to good health, he argues, “is cheerfulness:”

Every time that our mind becomes morbid, vacant and melancholy, our external frame falls into disorder. Littleness of thought is the brother of death. But cheerfulness gives new elasticity to our limbs, and circulation to our juices.

Nothing can become stagnant in the frame of him, whose heart is tranquil, and his imagination active. (522)

Rather than giving equal place to the different non-naturals, Godwin very clearly and deliberately gives the mind priority, arguing that “disease seems perhaps in all instances to be the concomitant of confusion” (522).³⁵ It is no surprise, then, that Godwin locates the ideal model of health in the rational, benevolent man: “the man who is perpetually busied in contemplations of public good, [and who therefore] can scarcely be inactive” (523). A “benevolent temper,” Godwin argues, essentially guarantees good health since it “is peculiarly irreconcilable with those sentiments of anxiety, discontent, rage and despair, which so powerfully corrode the frame, and hourly consign their miserable victims to an untimely grave” (523).³⁶

Happiness, Godwin argues, does wonders for the individual’s feelings of vitality precisely because the mind is such a powerful governing force over the body, and modifies our bodies whether we intend it or not. This reasoning undergirds his example of the old man who has lost “that elasticity of limb” of his youth. This man, who is “visited and vexed with the cares that rise out of our mistaken institutions,” is forced by his association with these institutions to “[assume] an air of dignity” that is “incompatible with the lightness of childish sallies,” so that eventually “his limbs become stiff, unwieldy and awkward” before he finally succumbs to old age and death (522). Godwin’s remedy is “cheerfulness,” which makes man feel light, imparting “new elasticity to our limbs, and circulation to our juices” (522). The absence of “clear and distinct apprehension” is closely linked, in its effects on the body, with a lack of good cheer, as Godwin observes that disease nearly always appears to be accompanied by confusion (522). The reasons why a lack of reason would produce disease are not elaborated; Godwin hedges his association between unclear thinking and disease with qualifying

³⁵ These included “food and drink; air; rest and movement; sleep and waking; bodily excretions and secretions; and passions of the mind and movement of thought” (Morgagni xl).

³⁶ This model of health is not only important for the welfare of the individual, but also extends to and guarantees the health of the body politic through the fortification of its members. Godwin links this ideal state of affairs to “other improvements” beyond those of health and longevity, and in doing so reaffirms the importance of rationality to his political philosophy: “There will be no war, no crimes, no administration of justice, as it is called, and no government. Beside this, there will be neither disease, anguish, melancholy, nor resentment” (528).

phrases like “seems,” “perhaps,” “appears.” Sadness is most effectively cured by benevolence, since it is “irreconcilable with those sentiments of anxiety... which so powerfully corrode the frame” (523). By turning his mind to charity and dedicating himself to the good of others in the community, the benevolent man rids himself of the “deathlike apathy” that afflicts the aged, making them “cold and indifferent” to their neighbours (523).

William Godwin’s recommendations for health and good living, then, are predicated less on such things as self-discipline, temperance, and hard work than on the individual’s relation to others which is governed by reason alone. By prioritizing the mind above all else, Godwin fashions a subjectivity that is curiously disembodied, and disconnected from its material relationship to the world, while he simultaneously draws our attention to the continuity between body and mind. All motion in the body arises from voluntary or involuntary causes originating in the mind: actions are either willed, or the result of some involuntary modifying cause such as the passions. Though he does not deny that there is a continuum between voluntary and involuntary action, that perhaps such matters are not so cut and dried – “our involuntary motions gradually becoming subject to the power of volition, and our voluntary motions degenerating into involuntary” – he argues that “the true perfection of man [is] to attain, as nearly as possible, to the perfectly voluntary state:” that all of our actions should be voluntary, willed actions by the individual (524). This is the state of perfect autonomy and self-regulation, one which coincides with eliminating the need for government. This ideal state is not only defined in terms of the absence of involuntary motions in the human frame, where even the circulation of the blood is subordinated to the control of properly regulated passions; it is also defined negatively as a rejection of an unthinking kind of being: we “should remove ourselves to the furthest distance, from the state of mere inanimate machines, acted upon by causes of which they have no understanding” (524).

This unthinking, inanimate machine is clearly aligned with man in his involuntary state – best exemplified by the child, but more generally by the labouring poor. His discussion of involuntary motion is centered around the figure of the child, and their capacity for foresight. Involuntary motion “is so called, because the consequences of that

motion, either in whole or in part, did not enter into the view of the mind when the motion commenced” (161). This definition is key: the infant is the perfect model of involuntary motion because it lacks foresight, which is requisite for voluntary motion. In his novel *Caleb Williams*, Godwin explores these ideas through his depiction of characters like Tyrell, whose petulance and lack of impulse control mark him as child-like. Not only that, many of Tyrell’s actions are characterized as involuntary, as if he is not in full possession of either his body or mind. We find this principle explored early on in the novel when Tyrell and Falkland first come into conflict with one another. Tyrell “accidentally [sits] at the extremity of this [reading] circle,” and is gradually drawn in with increasing jealousy towards Falkland and the praise he has received for his poetical talents (83-4). Though Tyrell appears to want to leave, “there seemed to be some unknown power that, as it were by enchantment, retained him in his place,” as he becomes exceedingly distressed by Falkland’s elevated prestige in this circle. The childishness of Tyrell’s jealousy and hostility towards Falkland is underscored by the involuntary way that he seems to be held there, stewing in his feelings, by some force he cannot understand.

The escalating conflict that ensues between Tyrell and Falkland hinges upon the two men’s differing claims to reason as well as foresight. Barnabas Tyrell, Falkland’s closest neighbor, and a man of equal wealth, “might have passed for a true model of the English squire,” as we are told early on (74). The story of his birth and his upbringing, however, make it clear that Tyrell was, from a young age, encouraged to habits of life and learning which precluded him from freely and easily associating with those who were his natural peers. In recounting the origins of his birth, the narrator explains that he was, from a very early age, “left under the tuition of his mother, a woman of narrow capacity,” who took an unrestrained approach to his education: “Every thing must give way to his accommodation and advantage,” and “he must not be teased or restricted by any form of instruction” (74). While we are meant to identify the connection between this lack of moral guidance and his later mis-development, Godwin also notes that from a young age “he was muscular and sturdy,” as if genetically predisposed to a more physical, less rational life. When he later comes under the influence of the family’s groom and game-

keeper, we are meant to understand this episode in his development not as a failure of education, but of parental guidance, since his quickness in taking to shooting, fishing, hunting, boxing, cudgel-play, and quarter-staff belies the notion of some “want of capacity” (75). He has a great deal of capacity, clearly; it has simply been directed towards more physical ends, and away from the cultivation of reason. The failure is attributed to his mother, whose contempt for learning is reproduced in her son as a lack of impulse control and emotional instability, the unfortunate result of which is the corruption of his inborn “sagacity and quick-wittedness” (75). Tyrell finds his social position challenged by Falkland’s arrival in town, whose equal claims to wealth and superior claims to eloquence endear him to the local women, and spur Tyrell’s increasing resentment. Tyrell’s lack of impulse control is directly connected to the lack of guidance in reason and moral education that comprised his upbringing.

In *Caleb Williams*, the incomplete cultivation of the mind, or its neglect, is marked not only by lack of access to voluntary action, but also by the absence of foresight. The inability to see what’s coming indicates an incomplete understanding of the world in which one moves, and insufficient understanding of one’s own motives, as well as those of others, and how these contesting priorities will likely play out. During his quarrel with Tyrell, Falkland weighs the consequences of their continued dispute and concludes that it can only lead to future harms for the both of them. “A strife between persons with our peculiarities and our weaknesses includes consequences that I shudder to think of,” he tells Tyrell, fearing “that it is pregnant with death at least to one of us, and with misfortune and remorse to the survivor,” perfectly predicting the succession of events (88). Moreover, Falkland frames his warning as an act of benevolence, telling Tyrell “it is necessary to your happiness” (88). In the following chapter, Clare’s foresight validates Falkland’s forebodings, as he warns him to be on “guard against a mischief I foresee to be imminent” if he continues in his antagonistic relation with Tyrell (94). Clare and Falkland are the only ones who seem to have any understanding of or foresight about what is to come of this dispute, since, for his part, Tyrell rejects Falkland’s “prophecies and forebodings” as a sign of duplicitousness rather than diplomacy (88).

The way that Godwin stages this dispute recalls his argument about the solution

for strained relations between rich and poor. Tyrell's "destructive passions" that arise simply from being in the same room as the more literate, genteel Falkland, place him in the same category as the poor in Godwin's political philosophy. That Tyrell is susceptible to the same destructive passions that Godwin identifies as unique to the poor underscores the dangers posed by a comparable lack of education in the case of those who are in the middling and upper classes.³⁷ As a member of the class that bears a moral responsibility for the care of the less fortunate, Tyrell's failure is all the more spectacular and his actions more horrifying on account of his petulance.

Godwin's point is that being poor does not necessarily mean one is brutish. As his example of John Clare demonstrates, to remain in a state of brutality, as Tyrell does, is to choose not to exercise and improve one's mind. Clare is proof that class is an artificial construction that separates men, and that education can elevate the meanest pauper to the same level as someone like Falkland. Education is not only what allows him to overcome his station, but also to overcome the feelings of bitterness and unhappiness that Godwin alleges are natural to the poor. Much of the poor's destructive passions, he argues, originate in "hav[ing] the privileges of others forced on their observation... while they are perpetually and vainly endeavouring to secure for themselves and their families the poorest conveniences" (29). It is no wonder, then, that the poor man should

be induced to regard the state of society as a state of war, an unjust combination, not for protecting every man in his rights and securing to him the means of existence, but for engrossing all its advantages to a few favoured individuals, and reserving for the portion of the rest want, dependence, and misery. (28)

³⁷ Robbery and fraud, he argues, two great vices in society, emerge out of the confluence of extreme poverty and the unjustly ostentatious lifestyles of the rich, which both produce "destructive passions" on the part of the poor which exacerbate their already awful situation. His portrait of poverty in general is dire: "vast numbers of [European] inhabitants are deprived of almost every accommodation that can render life tolerable or secure," no matter how hard they work (28). In England, as compared to the continent, it is only slightly better, as he cites the commonly accepted calculation, for his contemporaries, that "one person in seven of the inhabitants of this country derives at some period of his life assistance from [poverty relief]" (28). This situation clearly emphasizes the impact of other forces on the bodies and minds of the poor: they are miserable because they are overworked, under-rested, and cannot afford enough food and drink for themselves or their family. Godwin, however, draws a connection between the poor's "perpetual struggles with the evils of poverty" and the "painful feeling of their oppressed situation," which "deprives[s] them of the power of surmounting it" (28).

This “painful feeling,” Godwin argues, rather than the distributed effects of poverty, is responsible for producing the “destructive passions by which the peace of society is interrupted” (28-9). While this explanation gives a nod to the structural inequalities of British society, it is not the distribution of wealth so much as the poor’s feelings of resentment, Godwin says, that are to be blamed for their “painful feeling,” even if Godwin categorizes the material struggles of poverty as distinct from their resentment of the wealth of others. The example of Tyrell reinforces this idea that the most dangerous kind of poverty is intellectual: that the cultivation of the mind is the most important means of achieving social harmony, and that material inequalities of wealth are secondary to the more pernicious, socially destructive threat represented by defective minds and “diseased imagination[s].” His embrace of education as a panacea for class conflict can easily be understood as a project for pacifying the lower orders. Insofar as Godwin frames the problem as one of curing a disease, one that is disproportionately identified with the poor, he seems to regard the feelings of the poor – with respect to their station, and towards the upper classes – not as indicative of some fatal flaw in the organization of the social body, but rather as a temporary, undesirable state that can be “cured” via the application of education. After all, by his own logic, Godwin cannot take seriously the feelings of the poor as the source of a legitimate critique: if their imaginations are diseased, and their understandings narrow and limited, how can their complaints be regarded as anything other than signs of their maladaptation to the state of the world? Even if we allow, as Godwin himself does, that their situation is terrible, their complaints nonetheless come from a place of limited understanding. The poor need a benevolent protector not only to lift them up, but also apparently to articulate their own suffering.

* * * * *

In this section, I look to the work of the physiognomist Johann Casper Lavater, whose assumptions about the powers of the mind closely track alongside Godwin’s notion that education and cultivating happiness are sufficient to improving the lot of the British labouring poor. In contrast, I examine how the detailed case studies of the labouring poor, by the pathological anatomist Giambattista Morgagni, offer a subtle critique of the brand of Enlightenment optimism represented by Godwin and Lavater. By

highlighting the real material constraints and physical suffering affecting the poor, Morgagni's work enables a more accurate diagnosis of the problems afflicting the poor, and the nature of their solutions: namely, that education is only part of the problem, and does not address the material factors that produce much of the misery they face.

The intimate correspondence between surface and interior is the definitive feature of Johann Caspar Lavater's pseudoscience of physiognomy: the idea that the face tells a story about the soul, transparently and without reserve. Translated into English in 1789, Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* was very well received, and he became a household name nearly from the moment it was published (Tytler 293). As John Graham notes, it was "reprinted, abridged, summarized, pirated, parodied, imitated, and reviewed so often that it is difficult to imagine how a literate person of the time could have failed to have some general knowledge of the man and his theories" (562). It seems that Godwin was reluctant in his embrace of Lavater's thought, although he would order a physiognomical reading of his daughter Mary several years after writing *Caleb Williams*, eventually acknowledging the legitimacy of physiognomy as a science in his *Thoughts on Man* some forty years later (Juengel 74). Graeme Tytler cautions against reading a direct connection between Lavater and Godwin, since it is difficult to separate Lavater's influence from "time-honoured literary conventions" which codified the correspondence between beauty and ugliness with virtue and vice, respectively (296-300). However, we can see, at least with respect to Lavater's ideas concerning temporary changes in appearance, or pathognomy, the spirit of his thought demonstrated in the representation of characters in the English novel after 1789. Tytler argues, on this front, that Godwin makes "complex use of pathognomy to show the decline or degradation of characters by changes in their facial features," as in the example of Falkland's gradual decline (300-1). It is not, however, the purpose of this chapter to rehash prior readings of Godwin via Lavater, but rather to point towards a different interpretive lens that illuminates some of what Lavater and Godwin collectively work to obscure: the role of the non-naturals in shaping character, and of the limits of explaining character with recourse to reason and the passions.

While many have, at length, detailed the correspondence between Lavater's

physiognomic theories and the representation of character in Godwin's work, I want to argue that a more revealing antecedent is to be found in the work of Giovanni Battista Morgagni. The famed Italian physician and anatomist, whose pioneering work on pathological anatomy is credited with inaugurating modern medical practice as we know it, was not the household name that Lavater was in the late eighteenth century.

Morgagni's influence did not extend into popular culture in quite the same way that Lavater did, but his work nonetheless was instrumental in leading a tectonic shift in the theory of medicine.³⁸ In this section, I will begin by addressing Morgagni's anatomical investigations into disease, and identifying the connections that he makes between the individual, their habits, and their external environment in cases dealing with people who are recognizably of the labouring poor. I will then demonstrate the ways in which Lavater's semiotic theory derives some of its legitimacy from its analogical correspondence to the work of anatomy. Godwin's metaphorical "dissecting knife" is a critical interpretive resource that authorizes his characterization on the basis that it lays bare certain underlying truths about his subjects; however, it also derives its authority from the similarity between the work of the physiognomist and that of the physician. By more fully accounting for the medical antecedents of Lavater's semiotic theory, and the kinds of unwilling lives that it glosses over, we can better understand how Godwin's political philosophy operates in his fiction.

The ideal physiognomist, Lavater writes, is like a well tuned instrument: he possesses a good figure, a well proportioned body, and a delicate organization; his senses are easily moved and capable "of faithfully transmitting to the soul the impression of external objects" (119-20). Joined to these physical characteristics, the physiognomist

³⁸ Dr. John Morgan, "one of the original faculty of the College of Philadelphia, an institution that was to become America's first medical school, visited Morgagni in 1764. He wrote in his diary... [that] *De Sedibus* was 'in ye highest Estimation throughout all Europe, and all ye Copies of the last [third] Edition already bought up'" (Ventura 794). Rolla Hill and Robert Anderson write, "Indefatigable academic physicians took up where Morgagni left off. The French school, including Corvisart, Bichat, Laennec, Bayle, and others, performed many autopsies in the early 1800s and made enormous discoveries. Also important was the British school, which included John and William Hunter, their son-in-law Matthew Baillie (who wrote the first systematic textbook of anatomic pathology, published in 1801), Hodgkin, and others. This era of discovery climaxed with Karl von Rokitansky in Vienna. Between 1830 and 1860, Rokitansky performed 30,000 autopsies and supervised as many more, wrote reams of papers and books reporting his own findings, and used them to interpret the meaning of the anatomy of disease" (224).

must also be well versed in anatomy, “not only with the parts which are exposed to view, but likewise with the relation, the arrangement, [and] the separations of the muscles; he must be able to distinguish accurately the proportion and the connection of all the vessels and members” (122). Moreover, the individual should be exceptionally knowledgeable about “the perfection of the human body in a state of health, and also be well acquainted with the Temperaments,” including “the colour, the air, and all the appearances which result from the different mixtures of the blood and humours” (123).

Given this specific list of skills and experience, it is difficult to see what appreciable differences separate the practice of the physiognomist from the physician, apart from the site of their application. An even more appropriate comparison aligns physiognomy with the work of anatomy, since the “true object” for the physiognomist is “the animal at rest” (Advertisement). As Michael Shortland argues, “ideal, for Lavater, would be if his own science could confront a world populated only with dead bodies,” since “their settled features are much more prominent than in the living,” and therefore easier to diagnose (393). Caroline Warman agrees, writing that Lavater understood the work of anatomy and physiognomy to be complementary. Rather than unsettling the claims of physiognomy, anatomy, or “Anatomical Physiognomy,” as he terms it, can actually be used to determine “certain internal qualities” of the individual and thereby validate the work of the physiognomist (Warman 96). For Lavater, therefore, “the interior of the body merely becomes another exterior, another series of interpretable surfaces that also owes its character to the intangible soul” (97). Every surface of the body, whether external or internal, no matter whether or not it is immediately visible to the observer, is rendered effectively transparent by the gaze of the physiognomist. Using this interpretive lens, however, disease becomes remystified precisely at the moment that anatomical investigation lays the body bare; rather than clarifying the true origins of disease, Lavater’s anatomical physiognomy, like the work of physiognomy more generally, is less a tool of discovery than one of aesthetic production, reifying aesthetic judgments concerning the relationship between pathology and morality in a way that simply confirms pre-existing knowledge.

The pathological anatomist Giambattista Morgagni’s collection of case histories,

by contrast, is predicated on something much more “modern:” the discovery, analysis, and correlation of symptoms between individuals or groups of people. One finds several indices in the back matter of his signature work that testify to the precision with which he takes up individual cases, and the importance he places on making his work accessible and useful to physicians as well as the learned more generally: the first lists the cases according to different parts of the body; the second, the diseases and symptoms correlated to their external causes, including employment and other habits of life; the third indexes cases according to postmortem findings; and the fourth highlights what he regards as the most interesting and noteworthy cases. A defining feature of Morgagni’s case histories is that they are presented in epistolary form, in the style of “the greatest anatomists” (xv).³⁹ The epistolary form not only has the virtue of making his writing accessible to a non-specialist audience, but also is critical in terms of articulating the relationship between patient histories, their symptoms, and their diseases. It allows him to include things “such as the previous external causes of disease, the mode of diet, the condition in life, as that of a widow or a virgin, the state of childhood, or decrepid [sic] age, and finally the trade or employment in life” (xxx).

Morgagni’s attention to external causes of disease evidences his indebtedness to the Hippocratic school of thought. As Enrico Benassi notes in his edition of *The Clinical Consultations of Giambattista Morgagni*, the man was principally a physician before he was an anatomist, and his fame as a pathological anatomist obscures the fact his “anatomical study always retained a complete view not only of the morbid entity but above all, of the sick man” (xxxiii). While Morgagni borrowed liberally from different traditions, he consistently emphasized a distinctly Hippocratic regime consisting of the proper care of the non-naturals. The mind played an especially important role in his clinical consultations, as Saul Jarcho notes that attention to mental states was usually “part of the treatment”; however, these mental states were also occasionally implied to be the cause or a principal factor in producing the patient’s illness (lxiv). In one case, he

³⁹ He cites in the preface the works of Antonio Valsalva and Theophilus Bonetus, the latter of whose *Sepulchretum*, which collected together “the dissections of bodies, which had been carried off by diseases,” assembled “into one compact body” for study, is the closest analogue for the ambitions of his own work, although Morgagni was far more methodical (xv).

recommends that a patient, suffering from a pulmonary ailment, “should entirely avoid anger, sadness, and other burdensome affections of the mind” (lxiv). While his clinical work features questionable conclusions of this sort, echoing Godwin’s own focus on happiness as the best remedy for a materially, objectively difficult existence, his attention to the whole person ultimately serves as a positive ground for staging his anatomical work, linking external “symptoms, signs, syndromes, and so on... [to] an observable, predictable anatomic lesion or set of lesions” (224).

The diversity of cases that deal with labourers demonstrates Morgagni’s understanding of the inexorable nature of particular diseases for individuals in difficult occupations. One of the most common threads running through these cases is the labouring poor’s propensity for alcohol, which is not represented as a vice but is instead understood to be a means of relieving the daily stresses of their labours. A case of a fifty year old cloth-bearer in Beluna, Italy, “whose business was to shear woolen cloth” with large, heavy shears, acquired a tumour in his chest, and experienced difficulty breathing. Morgagni writes that it is unclear “whether drinking, to which he was much addicted, gave occasion to it, or the venereal disease, or rather both of them together, being added to the business in which... he continually exercis’d himself” (I.481). However, he admits that the man’s breathing problems “would have been readily refer’d to the man’s trade also,” citing the work of the seventeenth-century anatomist Theodor Kerckring “in the shop of some artists of this kind” (I.481). Another case of a young man working as a wool comber, “seiz’d with a violent fever” and delirium, leads Morgagni to speculate on the unique hazards of working with wool. “Workmen of this kind,” he writes, “are well known to be affected in their lungs, and often to die, from such diseases; by reasons that they take into their trachea, the filthy vapor of the oil” that is used on the wool, “and by reason also, that they spend their lives, almost naked, in hot places, and by the side of the burning stoves; from whence they go out, when they are extremely hot, and at the same time half-naked, into the open air” (I.226)

Occupational hazards consistently crop up in the case histories, but despite the clear connections that he seems to identify, Morgagni is often hesitant to draw definitive conclusions. One example is given of an eighteen-year-old man, who “liv’d in marshy

grounds,” and whose “business was to cut down the weeds” in this area, who had fallen ill from dropsy and eventually succumbs to a complication of disorders, including epilepsy and acute fever.⁴⁰ Morgagni cautions against drawing any conclusions about the origins of the man’s illnesses, since he counts afflictions like fevers as being “among the number [that]... generally escapes the eyes of anatomists” (I.198). He argues that whether “it was really the cause, or was not the cause, is neither my business, nor yours, nor that of any other man, to pronounce, in cases of this kind” (I.198). In this case, as in many others, it can be difficult to distinguish external factors from internal, or pre-existing, conditions and to give appropriate weight to each.

There are a particular class of cases, however, in which he allows himself to be far more conclusive: those dealing with the labouring poor whose work is primarily in textiles. These cases illustrate what seems to be the uncontroversial, accepted point that textile workers are uniquely susceptible to disorders of the lungs, given their regular exposure to various particulates. “A tall and lean man, who was subject to inflammation of the chest, from the trade of hemp-dressing,” lately began to be “so affected in the organs of his voice, by the dust of the hemp... that he seem’d rather to screech than to speak.” This man, rather than mindlessly accepting his condition as a natural one, understood the nature of his problem and, rationally, one might even say, began to pick out “hemp which was less dusty, and comb’d it separately from his companions,” such that he eventually “recover’d his natural voice” (I.137-8). Another man, a forty year old hemp-dresser, “began, two years before, to have a swelling in the lower part of the chest,” and was “extremely pale, though, perhaps, not so much from nature, as in consequence of his trade.” Morgagni notes that “how such an occupation may hinder respiration, and consequently the perfection of the blood, is not difficult to conceive, and has even been already shewn” (I.220-3).

In a similar case dealing with a stone-cutter, Morgagni allows himself to be more conclusive in his diagnosis. The man understands by his trade “how liable to disorder the lungs of such artificers are, from the dust flying into them,” which Morgagni subsequently confirms in his post-mortem diagnosis: “the lungs, being taken out, [are]

⁴⁰ Also known as edema, or the accumulation of fluids in the body.

very heavy, and in their whole posterior and lower surface, of a black colour, the blackness penetrating deeply into the hard and compact substance” (I.619). In yet another case of disorders brought on by trade, he describes a fifty-five year old waggoner who suffered from a rash of escalating ailments before succumbing to his disorders. Morgagni is explicit in drawing a connection here, in a passage that I will quote at length:

Perhaps in no class of men, have I and my friends seen aneurisms of the aorta more frequently, than in guides, post-boys, and other persons who sit almost continually on horseback. Nor is it to be wonder'd at; for even, to omit the other accidents and injuries of air, to which they are expos'd, it must of course follow, that the great concussion and agitation on the one hand, by exciting the motion of the blood, and by urging the sides of the artery; on the other hand, by compelling these parietes, inasmuch as they are shaken, to counteract the strokes of the excited blood, will relax, finally, the structure of their parietes, and make inroads upon their strength. Which so much the more easily happens, where salacity and diseases are added to it, as in it this history. (I.440)

In this example, the work environment of the post-boy and others who spend much of their time on horseback is uniquely calibrated to disturb the regular operations of the body. The constant shaking and rattling about unsettles the blood as well as the means of calming it, as the walls of the organs are degraded and weakened, and this has the effect of impairing the body's resistance to illness. To these conditions are joined the “accidents and injuries of air,” to which they are exposed in the regular course of their duties working out of doors. The hazards encountered by the labouring poor, and of just this one class of workers in particular, distinguish them as peculiarly susceptible to disease.⁴¹

Giambattista Morgagni's innovations in anatomical pathology, as we have established, are grounded in the tradition of Hippocratic medicine, and in the anatomical innovations of his predecessors. With his particular attention to the sufferings of

⁴¹ References to the work of Bernardino Ramazzini can be found in passages dealing with diseases brought about by occupation. The seventeenth-century Italian physician is most famous for his book *De Morbis Artificum Diatriba*, or *Diseases of Workers*, which detailed the health hazards encountered by workers in fifty-two occupations. “Ramazzini is known quintessentially for the admonition to physicians: ‘To the questions recommended by Hippocrates, he should ask one more – What is your occupation.’”

labourers, however, he partakes in the subdiscipline of occupational medicine which has a history stretching back as far as Hippocrates as well. Michael Gochfield, who has recently provided a chronological review of the history of occupational disease going back to the Paleolithic era, finds that during the Classical era, Hippocrates and Pliny “comment on the hazards of mining,” but “since mineworkers were likely to be slaves or prisoners, there was little concern over their health” (99). The social stigmatization of manual labour was uncontroversial for Xenophon, who wrote in *Oeconomicus* that they “are rightly dishonoured in our cities” because “these arts damage the bodies of those who work at them,” causing a “physical degeneration [that] results also in [the] deterioration of the soul” (99). Gochfeld notes, however, that between the time of Galen and the emergence of Bernardino Ramazzini’s book on occupational diseases near the beginning of the eighteenth century, “there is little evidence of attention to occupational health or disease,” perhaps because the connections were not well understood, or because of a general indifference to the wellbeing of labourers (100). Ramazzini’s *Diseases of Workers* compiled clinical descriptions for diseases afflicting many different trades, including

miners, healers and midwives, chemists and apothecaries, potters, smiths, glaziers, mirror makers, painters, sulfur, gypsum and lime workers, cleaners of privies, fullers, oil pressers, tanners, cheese makers, tobacco workers, corpse carriers, wet nurses, vintners, bakers, sifters, measurers of grain, stone cutters, laundresses, flax, hemp, and silk workers, [and] bathmen. (100)

Ramazzini was a pioneer of ergonomics, visited workers in their workplaces to better understand their labour conditions, and made observations on the deleterious effects of poor ventilation, temperature control, and sanitary practices. Following Ramazzini later in the eighteenth century were physicians such as James Lind, “the father of nautical medicine,” best known for his experiments and treatments of scurvy; J.A. Scopoli, probably “the first company physician of modern times,” who provided medical services to mercury miners; Percival Pott, who correlated to their occupation “the high rate of scrotal cancers” in London chimney sweeps; and Thomas Percival, who famously “described conditions in the mills of Ratcliffe, which stimulated parliament to pass the

Factory Act of 1802” in recognition of the problems stemming from poor ventilation and sanitation practices (103-4).⁴²

The diversity of cases demonstrating the perils of life regularly encountered by those belonging to the labouring class, whether in the normal course of their occupations, or because of some events going back to their birth, brings into sharp relief just how fantastic are the fantasies of poverty that we find in eighteenth-century literature. These fantasies are central to the works of writers for whom the poor exist not as discrete individuals with complex inner lives, but as examples of resilience upon which they can erect claims about an idealized human nature that undergird further claims about the proper organization of society. The arguments of Godwin, who privileges reason to the exclusion of nearly all else in his understanding of individual health, are characterized precisely by a failure to reckon with the particularities of class which work to produce significant material differences in the health and well-being, as well as the lived experiences more broadly, of the labouring poor. The notion that we can reason our way out of disease – of the physiological sort as well as that “disease” of the impoverished mind which afflicts the social body – is a fantasy that is predicated not on eliminating manual labour and fashioning the labouring poor into political and social equals with the gentry – which is, I imagine, the only “real” way of bringing about the goals of Godwin’s political project – but rather on the labouring poor’s acceptance of their subjection as necessary to the natural, proper organization of society: getting them to turn that frown upside down.

The relationship of Johann Caspar Lavater’s physiognomical investigations to the more humble claims of Giambattista Morgagni’s anatomical work illustrates this idea, and further serves to illuminate what is unsatisfying about Godwin’s political philosophy as it is exemplified in *Caleb Williams*. The principal difference between Morgagni and Lavater lies in the latter’s emphasis on the “immediate effect of form on every eye,” and the self-evident truth of “the influence derived from this impression on conduct and action” (Advertisement). Instead of unambiguously physical causes having a substantive

⁴² One section of William Godwin’s novel *Fleetwood*, published just a few years later in 1805, centers on how hard, manual labour negatively affects the body, mind, and soul. Clearly, Godwin was concerned with the ways in which the labour practices of the factory lead to the deterioration of the soul.

effect on the body and mind, as Morgagni observes in his investigations, for Lavater, ocular impressions have a kind of materiality all their own that can influence the individual. While Morgagni avers that the true origins of disease will perhaps always be out of reach of human perception and knowledge, Lavater concedes no such thing. The various forms of physiognomical knowledge and interpretation attest to Lavater's faith in the ability of the human eye to determine inner nature from external signs. "What would Medicine be without the knowledge of symptoms," he asks, "and what were symptomatical knowledge without Physiognomy?" (62)

Godwin's understanding of the novelist's work as being akin to that of the anatomist places him within a well established tradition linking anatomy and literature.⁴³ This framing has been taken up by some critics as a sign of an emergent psychoanalytical vein in his writing.⁴⁴ Writing that the first person narrative mode allowed him to analyze "the private and internal operations of the mind, [and to employ] my metaphysical dissecting knife in tracing and laying bare the involutions of motive, and recording the gradually accumulating impulses" that led his characters to behave in the peculiar ways that they did, it is clear that Godwin was aiming for a kind of psychological realism (15). Scott Juengel identifies this metaphor as part of the "system of epistemological tropes in enlightenment aesthetic theory that art historian Barbara Stafford calls 'the visualization of knowledge,' which includes 'metaphors of stripping, marking, graphing, and dissecting'" common to "late enlightenment sciences as physiognomy, pathognomy, and phrenology" (74). But in what appreciable way, understood in semiotic rather than "scientific" terms, is Lavater's project all that different from that of the pathological

⁴³ In "Miscellaneous Reflections" in his *Characteristicks*, Lord Shaftesbury refers to himself as an "Anatomist of the Mind" (1711). In the introduction to "Absalom and Achitophel," John Dryden imagines the work of the satirist as being coextensive with that of the physician: "The true end of Satyre is the amendment of Vices by correction. And he who writes Honestly, is no more an Enemy to the Offender than the Physician to the Patient, when he prescribes harsh Remedies to an inveterate Disease.... If the Body Politique have any Analogy to the Natural, in my weak judgment, an Act of Oblivion were as necessary in a Hot, Distempered State, as an Opiate woud (sp) be in a Raging Fever" (87).

⁴⁴ William Brewer, writing in *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley* (2001), argues that Godwin understood that "literary works can serve as thought experiments in the 'science' of mental anatomy. They are imaginary laboratories in which writers can conduct psychological experiments on their characters... [by] control[ling] the variable of environment, education, and situation" (19).

anatomist? Morgagni, the depth of whose anatomical investigations is matched by his considerable, detailed attention to the histories of the patients under his care, also demonstrates a notable interest in understanding what collection of “impulses” lead to an individual’s disorder. In Morgagni’s work, these impulses can be understood, particularly in terms of those descriptions examined earlier dealing with occupational hazards of the labouring poor, as the constellation of external stimuli that work to disrupt the proper, healthy function of different organs, and which lead to some kind of imbalance that ultimately produces the person’s disease.

But what is the nature of these impulses? The definitions listed for “impulse” in the Oxford English Dictionary roughly fall on one of two sides, where the origin of the impulse comes either from within or without: “an act of impelling; an application of sudden force causing motion;” a “force or influence exerted upon the mind by some external stimulus; suggestion, incitement, instigation;” an “incitement or stimulus to action arising from some state of mind or feeling;” a “sudden or involuntary inclination or tendency to act, without premeditation or reflection” (“impulse”). These various definitions skirt one another, overlapping and diverging, and illustrate a broad uncertainty surrounding the origins of these ‘impulses.’ Either they are voluntary, arising from our thoughts or feelings, or involuntary, working through the individual without mediation to produce a change in the state of the body.

The confusion about the origins of the impulses that guide our body and influence our actions is precisely what leads Morgagni to aver that he cannot with any certainty identify the true origins of disease, but which for Lavater produces no such confusion. If it is true, Lavater argues, “that Man is acted upon, by every thing around him,” he also “in his turn, acts upon all these external objects” so that he not only “receives their impressions, [but] also communicates his own” (25). This is the crucial difference: intentionality. “Lavaterian Man,” so to speak, is willful, purposeful, deliberate in his actions. He is shaped by the world only to the extent that he has already shaped it to his liking, eliminating those defects and potential, lurking accidents that threaten his carefully cultivated autonomy. These externalities are a second text that we can read to understand the man’s character, since they are simply an extension of Man’s reason and

desire: “Nature forms us, but we transform her work; and this very metamorphosis becomes a second nature” (25). That is, while Nature may be formative, the work of Man is transformative. Wild Nature is given structure, tamed into towns and cities; Her materials are taken and transformed in support of civilization. This second Nature that we create includes things like “Rank, condition, habit, estate, dress, [which] all concur to the modification of Man,” constituting a “veil spread over him” which the physiognomist must “pierce through” to find the “solid and fixed principles by which to settle what the Man really is” (25). That is, rank has no formative effect on its own. One needs only to consider, going back to my previous example, the character of Tyrell in *Caleb Williams*, who is brutish and petulant despite being born into a high-ranking family. Such veils are always secondary: “to what,” however, is ambiguous.

Moreover, this interpretive project of moving beyond the veil is hampered by any number of factors that frustrate the act of reading:

By how many accidents... physical as well as moral; by how many secret circumstances, changes, passions; by how many varieties in respect of dress and attitude, not to mention the incessant play of light and shade, may a man be betrayed into an error, and made to see a face in a false point of view! (100)

It is interesting that Lavater does not construct a hierarchy of differences here, where physical accidents, perhaps of the kind that Morgagni discusses in his study, are placed along the same continuum as personality and clothes in terms of skewing one’s judgement about, or potential to know, an individual. To this imposing list Lavater adds one of the most common “accidents” of the period, smallpox, by which “the most delicate and distinctive features [are] deranged and confounded... and every mark by which we knew them effaced” (100).

Accidents such as smallpox, however, were not, as Lavater would seem to imply, randomly distributed and potentially felt by anyone; rather, they disproportionately affected the poor, especially in the latter half of the period. Like the physical accidents that he mentions, and that Morgagni makes the subject of his study *De Sedibus*, smallpox was more likely to affect those of a lower economic station, who are less able to insulate themselves from harm. In their study of the decline of adult smallpox in eighteenth-

century London, Romola Davenport, Leonard Schwarz, and Jeremy Boulton note the dramatic demographic changes underway in the late eighteenth century, most notably “the emergence of class differences in mortality, heralding the modern mortality regime where urban and higher socioeconomic groups enjoy significantly higher survival chances than their rural and poorer peers” (1289). Smallpox was “probably the single most lethal cause of death in the eighteenth century, accounting for 6-10 per cent of all burials,” and forever transforming the faces of those lucky enough to evade a premature death. By reading all visible difference as simple veils, or second natures, Lavater sacrifices a more particularized knowledge of the relationship between the individual and her environment, as seen in the more grounded Hippocratic work of Morgagni, for the sake of bolstering his semiotic theory.

The contrast between Lavater and Morgagni allows us to better understand the problems with Godwin’s ideal of education as a means of ameliorating class conflict. Morgagni’s work offers a corrective to the Enlightenment optimism of Lavater and Godwin: education can only go so far in helping the labouring class to overcome the miseries of their station, quite simply because they live and work in environments that exceed their control. One cannot simply will away particulate matter from invading one’s lungs, for example; education, or positive thinking, is an inadequate response to suffering. Lavater’s argument to the contrary privileges the mind while glossing over the body, and does not pay enough attention to the ways in which people are shaped involuntarily by the environments they inhabit: in the case of the labouring class, all of the attendant dangers and potential lurking ‘accidents’ that threaten to upend what little autonomy they have, not to mention how the physicality of their labours rob them of the mental fortitude to combat the misery of their situation in the ways that Godwin theorizes they could, given the proper educational toolkit.

In his novel *Caleb Williams*, we find how Godwin adopts most of the components of Lavater’s theory of character to suggest that the mind is capable of protecting the individual against all accident, whether moral or physical, and is a truer indication of one’s character than the secondary veils of rank and dress. Godwin affirms that rank is a veil that has no relationship with a person’s character, but instead that it is principally

one's education, understood as both book-learning and sociability, undertaken in their formative years, that is perhaps the greatest determinant of happiness, security, and freedom from injury or "accident." By looking at Godwin's characterization of the orphan Emily, the brutish Grimes, and the tenant farmer Hawkins, we can see Godwin's Lavaterian optimism intersecting with his thinking on class, demonstrating the important ways in which Godwin's ideas depart from previous dichotomous thinking about the poor as exemplars of virtue or vice, or as deserving or undeserving. In the process of working through the examples in this text, we can begin to see more clearly both the promise and the limitations of Godwin's ideas.

The pauper of Godwin's political philosophy can easily be represented as a machine, on account of their relative lack of self-determination, but they are a curious one, at that. The poor are economic instruments, to be sure, since they are instrumentalized, imagined in terms of their physical capacity to contribute to economic production. Not only that, they are also, crucially, instruments of another's will, and therefore less able to circumvent or to predict accidents that they may face, as is the case, we find, in *Caleb Williams*. It is these two features, their role as both a "cog in the machine" of industrial/economic production, and the psychological corollary to that – their lack of the outward characteristics of civility, and/or the inward characteristics befitting some imagined, idealized rational subject – that makes them legible as Other, rather than as belonging, if only imperfectly, to civil society.

There is perhaps no better example of this feature of Godwin's writing than the brutal, "uncouth and half-civilized animal" Grimes, who both confirms Godwin's ideas about education and serves as an example of how the poor's lack of access to voluntary action renders them more vulnerable to exploitation by the Tyrells of the world (109). This young man appears in the first book of the novel as the literal instrument of Tyrell's revenge in the ongoing proxy war between him and Falkland. Unable to send Emily packing, Tyrell settles on a plan that secures his reputation and ensures her punishment for admiring Falkland: marrying her off to a rude-mannered country boy.

He was not precisely a lad of vicious propensities, but in an inconceivable degree boorish and uncouth. His complexion was scarcely human; his features were

coarse, and strangely discordant and disjointed from each other. His lips were thick, and the tone of his voice broad and unmodulated. His legs were of equal size from one end to the other, and his feet misshapen and clumsy. He had nothing spiteful or malicious in his disposition, but he was a total stranger to tenderness; he could not feel for those refinements in others, of which he had no experience himself. (109)

The innovations of Lavater are seen here especially: the common association of vice and deformity is supplanted by an emphasis on the correlation between unreason and outward form. In one later fragment of Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, he draws connections between the composition and proportions of the body and how they correlate to inward states, writing that "the proportion of the body, and the relation of the parts to each other, determine the moral and intellectual character of every individual" (vol 3, page 204). If we take it that Godwin is adopting Lavater's semiotic theory without reserve, it would seem that Grimes is being set up as a criminal; he is not inherently vicious, or criminal, but he has the potential to be.

Of course, Grimes is neither. Contrary to the expectations set out by Lavater's theory, Grimes is not inherently disposed to criminality. Godwin's character may be a grotesque man to look at, but his chief defect is that he is a "total stranger to tenderness." That is, the problem is not that he is brutish in form – Godwin is not so deterministic, as we see with Emily – but that he has "no experience" with refinement and so cannot recognize it in others and relate to them in a civilized way (109). Grimes may be a simple man, with a "moral and intellectual character" as unrefined as his body, but a criminal he is not – until he is effectively made into one by Tyrell. In Grimes, Tyrell finds "an instrument sufficiently adapted to his purpose," a man "without an atom of intentional malice," who "was fitted, by the mere coarseness of his perceptions, for the perpetration of the greatest injuries," not unlike the insensible cogs in a factory (121). Grimes may be a brutish man, but his brutishness is involuntary; by contrast, it is Tyrell who ultimately bears moral responsibility for Grimes's actions, since he voluntarily chooses to carry out his brutal scheme.

Emily's downfall is certainly orchestrated by Tyrell with the cooperation of the

blunt instrument Grimes, but it is also aided to a considerable degree by her lack of foresight, a quality she shares with her easily manipulated captor. The lack of foresight is a marker of their lack of refinement and education, and perhaps signals that their transformation is incomplete: they have some way to go before they can live truly voluntary lives free of accident. In the interim, they require the intervention of a benevolent protector, such as a Falkland, to rescue them from the predations of the Tyrells of the world. Emily's failed escape attempt, in which she is suspiciously aided by her captor Grimes, demonstrates her innocence as well as her lack of foresight. Emily is just barely able to escape Grimes before she encounters Falkland "by the most extraordinary accident" (128). But if Emily experiences this encounter as an accident, for Falkland it is precisely the opposite: "he took with him two servants, because, going with the express design of encountering robbers... he believed he should be inexcusable if he did not go provided against possible accidents" (129). Falkland demonstrates great foresight, in contrast to Emily, in planning for potential dangers in the woods.

A similar sequence of events plays out in the case of Hawkins. A tenant farmer as well as a man who owns a small freehold estate, and thus has voting rights in the county elections, Hawkins comes under fire from his landlord, Squire Marlow, after refusing to vote for him. While Tyrell takes on Hawkins as his tenant ostensibly to protect him from Marlow's wrath, Tyrell's true motivations are soon revealed when he comes to demand that Hawkins' son be his servant. Hawkins "cannot bear to think that this poor lad of mine should go to service," since he does "not see any good that comes by [them]," and "cannot bear to risk my poor boy's welfare" (135). Though Hawkins understands "it is main foolish of me to talk to [Tyrell] thus," his insistence on asserting his humanity, and his family's equal claim to health and wellbeing, falls on Tyrell's deaf ears and serves to sign his son's virtual death warrant – all but assuring that he is put into harm's way (135).

Hawkins clearly seems to understand the consequences of his disobedience, and yet he pursues this path regardless. While the narrator remarks that it "was mere madness to think of contesting with a man of Mr. Tyrell's eminence and fortune," and that "it was of no avail for him to have right on his side, when his adversary had influence and wealth," it is no less tragic (137). In this moment of dramatic irony, the reader

understands that Hawkins, “hurried away by his resentment,” has no chance (137). Later on, when Tyrell cuts off the Hawkinses’ access to a road on his property with a padlocked gate, forcing them to travel over a mile simply to leave their home, Hawkins’ son reacts by breaking open the barrier, and is jailed shortly thereafter under the Black Act.⁴⁵ “This,” Godwin writes, “was the finishing stroke to Hawkins’s miseries,” as Hawkins clung to hope rather than reasonable expectations in desiring that he would prevail in his case over Tyrell, and thus “his heart died within him” (141). While Hawkins should have seen it coming, according to the narrator, his resistance to Tyrell was justified, even if it was destined to fail. His resistance to Tyrell’s aggression is “madness” only insofar as one accepts that Tyrell’s application of the law is reasonable and just, which it most clearly is not. Motivated by the desire to protect his son against being put into the service of a man he does not respect, and who likewise has no respect for him, he effectively deals himself “the finishing stroke to [his] miseries” (141).

This episode with Hawkins shows some of the limits of Godwin’s faith in the poor. Despite his belief in the power of education to help the poor lead more accident-free lives, Godwin’s so-called solution cannot address the larger problem that they face: the impunity with which the rich flout the law, and shape the world according to their cruel preference. The inescapable message here is that, yes, the poor need education, but they also truly need a benevolent protector, if only to help them bridge the gaps in their understanding as they work towards living a more voluntary life. That is, even if Hawkins understands Tyrell’s corruption and the nature of the problem he faces, Hawkins cannot confront the problem on his own in any adequate way. When Falkland later confronts Tyrell about his offenses against Hawkins, Tyrell is indignant that he should have to treat a mere tenant as an equal, and Falkland reminds him of the hardships of poverty in a piece of dialogue that is lifted virtually word for word from Godwin’s *Political Philosophy*. The discourse of “machines” comes up again here, as Falkland, notably, defends the distinction of rank as “a good thing, and necessary to the peace of mankind,”

⁴⁵ Tyrell has him arrested under the Black Act, “which declares that ‘any person, armed with a sword, or other offensive weapon, and having his face blackened, or being otherwise disguised, appearing in any warren or place where hares or conies have been or shall be usually kept, and being thereof duly convicted, shall be adjudged guilty of felony, and shall suffer death, as in cases of felony, without benefit of clergy’” (Godwin 140).

but something that cannot allow them to forget that the lamentable condition of the poor is “without any demerit,” and one must do their best “to lighten the yoke of these unfortunate people” (143).⁴⁶ That is, rather than exploit them for one’s own personal gain, it is the responsibility of those in the upper and middling class to be more conscientious about their suffering, and to work towards their relief. Moreover, he reminds Tyrell, there is not much that separates the rich from the poor except the “advantage that accident has given us” (143).

But this exchange raises an important question: if everyone’s position in the world is a result of accident, what is the place of reason and rationality, that which shapes us in the most meaningful ways? Godwin provides us with one clue to this answer in Falkland’s recourse to the metaphor of the machine: “Poor wretches! they are pressed almost beyond bearing as it is; and, if we unfeelingly give another turn to the machine, they will be crushed into atoms” (143). That is, Godwin seems to admit that reason can only take one so far: that the levers of power, controlled by the upper classes, ultimately place much of the responsibility for the suffering or relief of the poor in their hands: that the poor, even if they are able to recognize the severity or hopelessness of their situation, lack the means of changing it in a material way. Falkland’s argument is that the upper classes have a moral responsibility to lighten the yoke of the poor, rather than to continue to make the world more hostile to their interests, happiness, and well-being: what separates the rich from the poor is their ability to avoid accidents as well as their ability to create them. Falkland’s foresight enables him to avoid them, whereas Tyrell gleefully, willfully manipulates “things” – people, processes, structures – in his power in order to advance his own interests, which directly increases the likelihood of accidents befalling those such as Emily and Hawkins.

Godwin’s solution to involuntary living, rife with accidents, of course, is education: given the right amount of knowledge and foresight, even the labouring poor could live more intentional lives. Their suffering, after all, as Falkland argues, is “without any demerit,” and it is the duty of the upper classes “to lighten the yoke of these unfortunate people” (143). Falkland, like most people, is uncomfortable with making the

⁴⁶ The underlying assumption here is that poverty is a natural feature of civilization.

poor responsible for their own suffering. That they are uniquely disposed to all manner of accidents is beyond their control. As Sandra Macpherson argues, “accident... is above all what machines produce” and, for Godwin, what the poor cannot avoid (179). Tyrell understands this truth and turns it to his advantage, with terrible consequences for those without power. He knows that responsibility can be diffused through the law, and his desires effected by indirect means, and he uses this machine to achieve his vengeance against Emily for her perceived slighting of him. Hence when Emily finally dies – after he escalates his plans against her, and he is confronted by Falkland – Tyrell is able to dismiss the imputation that he had a hand in her death. “Murderer? – Did I employ knives or pistols? Did I give her poison? I did nothing but what the law allows. If she be dead, nobody can say that I am to blame!” (159) His ability to diffuse his actions through the more abstract mechanisms of the law affords him plausible deniability, as the actions which lead to her downfall are indirectly effected by him. He uses this same power to harass his tenant Hawkins, who, like Emily, lacks the foresight and understanding to navigate his dangerous situation.

Hawkins’ blindness is intelligible as a lack of education, certainly; he just hasn’t had the opportunity or occasion to learn about the law because of his occupation as a labourer. But his lack of foresight is cast as more fundamental than that; it’s not simply a lack of opportunity that accounts for the power differential between these two men, but something more essential. Hawkins himself draws the distinction between “great” and “little” people, counting himself among the latter, internalizing these social divisions. Imagining in himself the power to create a more just society, the power to effect changes that could help reshape the balance of power among men, Hawkins laments that “if we little folks had but the wit to do for ourselves, the great folks would not be such maggoty changelings as they are. They would begin to look about them” (189). Hawkins misdiagnoses the problem, of course, but he effectively articulates one of Godwin’s core ideas: that the poor’s lack of access to education and leisure time leaves them without the “wit” to live happier lives free of accident. This state of affairs leaves them dependent on the upper-classes for protection – the Falklands of the world – and vulnerable to those who would manipulate them for their own ends – the Tyrells.

While Sandra Macpherson analyzes the “accident” in terms of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Frankenstein*, addressing the question of how the gothic affects how we define the ethics of personal responsibility, I want to suggest that her analysis is equally applicable to Godwin’s novel, and to his philosophy as well, which is very interested in accidents, harms, and the question of responsibility and agency. For Godwin, “accident” seems to be what is produced by “unfeelingly giv[ing] another turn to the machine” whose levers the upper classes control.⁴⁷ And yet, if distinctions of rank are natural, and the machine must inevitably lurch on, what alternative does Falkland offer to the present state of affairs? To “feelingly” turn the machine, and crush the poor more gently? One cannot stop the machine, nor is it seemingly desirable to do so. What, then? As I will demonstrate in the following and final section, while Godwin’s sympathies are ultimately with the poor, they are limited in their scope.

* * * * *

In *Fleetwood* as in *Caleb Williams*, we see how Godwin sets up the middling and lower orders as an unruly element of the body politic, a self-interested political force that continually threatens to corrupt a barely functional political order that operates only haltingly under the strain of their ambitions. In this section, I examine two characters who are made victim of the self-interested, myopic middling sort, albeit in different ways: the

⁴⁷ This “machine” that Falkland refers to could be what Quentin Bailey identifies as the complex of power and legal authority that enables Falkland’s pursuits of Caleb Williams later in the novel. Bailey points to the escalation of police powers in the 1780s following the Gordon Riots as forming the pretext for Godwin’s anxieties about the state’s response to perceptions of contemporary lawlessness and disorder. A rise in crime in the latter half of the eighteenth century gave rise to concerns about public safety, prompting William Pitt to introduce the 1785 London and Westminster Police Bill, which significantly shifted the structure of law enforcement from a policy of hanging and transportation to one of “vigilance and prevention” (528). While this specific bill did not become law, it was nonetheless passed in “less ambitious” form in 1792 as the Middlesex Justices Bill, preserving the spirit of the bill and the state’s interest in preventative care. Bailey argues that Godwin’s concern about the “extraordinary and dangerous powers” of the state “were as much part of an established discourse about lawlessness and public order as they were a response to the oppression of Jacobin sympathizers in the 1790s” (529). That is, Falkland is as much a manifestation of old patrician society values as he is, in his “adroit manipulation of the legal and penal systems,” “part of that ‘system of police altogether new and arbitrary in the extreme’” that was shut down in its undiluted form in the 1785 bill (531). Bailey makes a strong case that the “concern with the growing number of coercive techniques available to the government of the day – the increasing use of imprisonment; the expansion of the police force... and the dissemination of (false) information in the newspapers, pamphlets, and circulars – is at the centre of Godwin’s novel,” and constitutes the machinery with which Falkland is concerned.

fraught relationship between the newly elected MP Casimir Fleetwood, whose desire to root out bad legislation and craft better policy to contribute to the “elevation of the character of my country” are stymied by the perversity and self-interest of the middling and lower orders who exert the greatest influence on him (227). Further, Godwin’s narrative following the orphan child Ruffigny’s descent into the horrors of a French silk mill continues to develop his thesis on the socially destructive, immoral nature of the middling sort’s ambitions. These two sections of *Fleetwood*, taken together, extend Godwin’s argument about the corrupting influence of the middling sort, and the ways in which their voluntary brutality perpetuates moral travesties of the kind that condemn a child like Ruffigny to indentured labour. Just as Fleetwood laments that England has sacrificed its moral center for the sake of economic growth – that as an MP he must “soothe their prejudices,” and overlook their “perverseness” – Ruffigny is appalled at the inhumanity of the silk mills, the engines that generate wealth for these perverse men, and which are fueled by the disposable bodies of the poor (226).

Fleetwood offers the reader an account of his rise to office, springing from his increasing distaste for the acquaintance of vain, literary men. He contrasts the inauthenticity of bookish men with the more refined company of senators, who, “inspired me with the desire of becoming myself a representative in the English parliament,” and seeing in public office an opportunity for “studying the humours and predilections of the middling and lower classes of the community,” accordingly endearing himself to the lower orders (224). He thus “laughed at the rude jokes of handicraftsmen,” “smoked my pipe, and toasted Church and King, and the wooden walls of old England,” observing that by “complying with the plain, coarse manners of my constituents,” he could avoid the risks of taking on “the [corrupted] manners of the Oxonians and the Parisians” (224). To study the characters of the lower classes, the tradesmen in particular, allows him to gain access to a truer notion of the British character, which is of course important to understand as a newly ordained member of parliament.

Fleetwood’s great plans are sabotaged, however, before he ever begins his task of bringing the full force of his reason and judgment to his new role as an MP – to “study the principles of legislation,” to “detect bad laws, and procure their abrogation,” to “bring

forward such regulations as the present state of manners and policy demands,” and to “unfold... such maxims as may insensibly tend to the correction and elevation of the character of my country” (227). He soon fails in this project, as he finds the character of parliament to be greatly different from his idealized notions of it: men who are more interested in driving “ministers in possession out of office, that they might take their places,” and men who “objected to many things, not because they were bad, but because their defects, real or apparent, afforded plausible subjects of declamation” (225). Besides the continual contest for power which characterizes parliament, Fleetwood finds that none are exempt from an even more insidious concern: that members of a party “must accommodate themselves to the views of the dullest and meanest of their adherents, -- to their impatience, their perverseness, and their acrimony; they must employ a thousand arts to soothe their prejudices and keep them in temper,” and that this task is made all the more difficult because “as, in every party that ever existed, the fools greatly outnumber the men of understanding.” The result is that the latter are “made the tools and dupes of the vilest of the herd” (226). The problem is essentially the same one that Hawkins identifies in his letter to Falkland: the middling and lower orders drag down the “great” men in office, corrupting them with their foolish ideas and demands. Their foolishness is not, however, the fashionable foolishness of the Oxonian crowd, but rather is characterized by ignorance, self-interest, and blind striving after wealth and power. This more dangerous kind of foolishness is dangerous precisely because it has a foothold in the halls of government, rather than being relegated to the salon.

Godwin pins a substantial portion of the blame for the erosion of “the public character of England,” one effect of which is this kind of foolhardiness in governance, on the pressures placed on parliamentary leaders by these men. Fleetwood laments the deterioration of English political society from the former greatness one finds “in the best pages of our history,” and blames its downfall on the country’s growth into “a commercial and arithmetical nation,” which has “extended the superficies of our empire,” and, as a result, caused the country to lose “its moral sinews and its strength” (226). An empire with seemingly no bounds – and no bonds – the body of Britain has become bloated, attacked from within and without. Fleetwood complains that the enlargement of

“both houses of parliament [has] destroyed the health and independence of its legislature,” and the great stream of foreign wealth from the Indies which “has been poured upon us” and has “smother[ed] that free spirit which can never be preserved but in a moderate fortune” (226). So too does he find, in this climate of new wealth, a legion of predatory “contractors, directors, and upstarts” who have been “fattened on the vitals of their fellow-citizens” (226).

The vigour of Fleetwood’s condemnation of the state of England is retrospective, written many years after he had become a senator. His initial outlook was hopeful, and, he writes, his entry into political life characterized by an affirmative belief in the power of the rational individual to shape the world around him, but his actual experience demonstrates the limits of reason in combating the widespread corruption he finds. His desire to take an “active part” in reforming British society by “study[ing] the principles of legislation,” “detect[ing] bad laws, and procur[ing] their abrogation,” evidences his faith in the power of the individual to effect “the correction and elevation of the character of my country” (226-7). And yet his greatest laid plans unfold sooner than he expected, as he writes that he couldn’t tell “whether it was owing to any radical vice in my disposition,” or some other unforeseen cause, “but I did not long persist in these gallant resolutions,” as he encountered more and greater barriers than he could have imagined (227). Disabused of his nostalgic image of England “as I found her in the volumes of her history,” and “England as she now was, and had insensibly become for more than a hundred years,” he quickly loses any faith in his ability to make a difference (227).

His initial optimism and subsequent lapse into a kind of hopeless depression cannot but raise the question of how any one person can be effective in combating broader structural forces that exceed the individual’s comprehension or amelioration. Fleetwood, a quintessentially intelligent, rational man, cannot figure out why it is that he fails so spectacularly, but it seems to fall somewhere between some “radical vice” and something more difficult to identify: the confluence of forces that have “insensibly” directed the evolution of England, over the previous century, into this weakened version of itself (227). These are the same forces that Tobias Smollett identifies in *Humphry Clinker* – the cumulative effect of the ambitions of countless men directed towards no

one particular aim but their own personal enrichment. The gothicism of Bath evokes both horror and nostalgia in the elder Matthew Bramble, but his feelings are underwritten by the sound observation that city construction and “improvement” was characterized by a jumble of competing interests. While Smollett is arguably satisfied by the “radical vice” argument, with Bramble identifying in his fellow, modern man an irredeemable corruption that necessitates his own retreat in the countryside, for Godwin the answer is more complicated, even if he arrives at similar conclusions and is afflicted by a similar sense of despair.

We have to turn to the novel’s first volume, in which we are presented with the story of Ruffigny’s childhood, particularly the early years in which he is left to the care of a French mill owner, to more fully account for how Godwin understands the situation of the poor, and therefore the relationship between the destructive ambitions of the middling sort and the poor via the kinds of accidents they create. These disparate parts of *Fleetwood’s* narrative – the disillusionment of a senator, on the one hand, and a relatively privileged child’s temporary detour into the impoverished life of the factory worker, on the other – are not as far apart as one might think. Both offer variations on the same perspective: that the self-interest and ambition of the middling and lower orders are responsible for creating a perverse state of affairs that simultaneously corrupts political leaders and consigns the poor to a life of misery.

The young Ruffigny – a very thinly disguised Jean-Jacques Rousseau – is taken by his uncle to Lyons, where he is eventually left to live with the silk mill owner M. Vaublanc. As Ruffigny recalls, his uncle showed him around the best parts of the city, so that to the young eight-year-old boy it appeared the most agreeable place. “He had... shown me the best buildings, and the handsomest of the suburbs, conducted me to the public gardens and the theatres,” showcasing the best that Lyons had to offer (137). The splendor of Lyons, he writes, served as “a perfect contrast to the wild and severe faces exhibited by the canton of Uri” in Switzerland, and thus “appeared like fair land” to his “foolish and inexperienced heart” (138). And yet there is something sinister here which Godwin foreshadows, where the appearance of fairness conceals some hideous truth which is soon revealed.

Ruffigny soon discovers that the man his uncle hands him off to, M. Vaublanc, lives in “the meanest part of the city,” down “a narrow and silent alley” (141). Ruffigny finds the man’s family to be alternately plain and coarse, his sons especially, as “the rudeness of their countenances, and ungainliness of their carriage, well corresponded to their dress” (141). Ruffigny’s disgust at his new living situation, and Vaublanc’s boys, makes him long for “the mountains, and cascades, and cheerful cottages of the Swiss,” and lament how his “youthful senses had been idly dazzled with the gaudiness of [the] artificial life” of the city (141). Although he is able to overcome the squalor of his situation, attending school at “one of the most respectable seminaries of education in the city of Lyons,” he is nevertheless transported back to the Vaublancs’ “miserable alley” at the end of every day (142). Ruffigny cannot but notice the “contrast between [Vaublanc’s] manners and those of my instructors.” Despite their financial wealth, he finds M. Vaublanc’s children to be impoverished in mind and spirit, “sordid and groveling in their habits, compared with the generous minds and spirited tempers of my school-fellows” (142). Despite being financially well-to-do, the Vaublanc children suffer on account of their father’s lack of interest in their development.

His ability to look down upon the Vaublanc children, however, does not last long; after three months, a letter arrives from his uncle with the news that “he has had repeated misfortunes in the world,” and can no longer pay for young Ruffigny’s education while supporting his own children. Though his uncle offers a small amount to keep Ruffigny from starving, the young boy is quickly apprised of his new circumstances: that he must work, because “people who have nobody else to maintain them, maintain themselves” (144). Of course, in one important sense, this is a lie. Ruffigny asks M. Vaublanc whether the money he earns from the mill will “be enough to save every body else the trouble of paying any thing for my food, and my lodging, and my clothes,” but is told “it will not,” on account of his lack of strength. After all, Vaublanc tells him, a boy can only “do what he can,” which is not even enough to maintain his own life (144-5). What is most galling about this lie is not just how plainly false it is, but rather the complete disavowal of moral responsibility towards the development of the young that Vaublanc’s cold logic demands.

In this episode, which recounts young Ruffigny’s descent into the exploited

labouring class, Godwin dismantles the notion that children have a reasonable obligation to provide for their own maintenance, showcasing the abuse of mind and body that the silk mill enables through his description of its operations and the toll it has taken on its workers. His rigorous account of the human costs that follow from the misguided imperative of self-maintenance – which swallows up the promising young Ruffigny, however briefly – serves as an indictment of the kinds of environments that treat people as if they were machines. That is, the danger represented by the silk mill is not only that people become ignorant through a lack of attention to their mind and body, but that this kind of industrial practice, rooted in profound indifference towards human dignity, represents a grotesque assault on human potential, and sacrifices a more educated, happy, and prosperous society for the sake of enriching a small group of industrialists and profiteers.

This state of affairs is tragic, and the solution that Godwin presents is education. Ruffigny has to work, but at least at the beginning of his stay with the Vaublancs he still enjoys his uncle's support, allowing him to stay in school. The tragic turn in his story occurs when his uncle, through some "accident" that befalls him, is unable to continue supporting his nephew. While Godwin's focus on the mind-numbing, body-breaking labour of the factory suggests that he recognizes the inherent moral perversity of industrial capitalism, the conclusion that he arrives at laments not that this brutal work must be done, not exactly, but that its labourers do not receive the kind of education that would inure them to the hard realities of their occupation. Ruffigny is insulated, for the most part, and is able to resist the mind-numbing effects of industrial labour in large part because of his ability to recall his experiences in nature; his education provides him with an imaginary refuge from the dull work of counting threads.

The description of Vaublanc's silk mill affords the reader a stark contrast between the rural pleasures and instruction by nature detailed earlier in the novel, and the artificiality of the factory, which makes machines of men, and consequently deprives them of their humanity, their vitality, and ultimately their souls. By subordinating the human body's natural function to that of a machine, to which the human must be made responsive and responsible, the human body becomes mechanized, dulled, devalued. The

silk mill, as Ruffigny describes it, is a well-organized, purposeful machine, consisting of four rooms, floor above floor, with several thousand bobbins being driven by a horse, “all these, by means of wheels and other contrivances in the machine, [which] were kept in perpetual motion” (147). There is nothing “very cheerful or exhilarating in the [so-called] paradise we had entered,” with its walls bare, its inhabitants poor, and “[o]ne perpetual, dull, flagging sound [which] pervaded the whole,” like the hand of a clock urging each labouring body forward (147-8). It is a wicked contrivance, against nature, but one that M. Vaublanc vigorously defends through decidedly rose-coloured glasses, as he sees it as the best of many bad options in a manner that echoes the defenses of the Magdalen House which I discussed in chapter three.

Vaublanc’s defense of the silk mill calls upon the same logic underpinning the arguments of the Magdalen supporters. His argument that industrial labour offers the best possible solution for poverty and its attendant social ills strikes Ruffigny as absurd, and is worth quoting at length.

You cannot think what an advantage these mills are to the city of Lyons. In other places, children are a burthen to their poor parent; they have to support them, till they are twelve or fourteen years of age, before they can do the least thing for their own maintenance: here the case is entirely otherwise. In other places, they run ragged and wild about the streets: no such thing is to be seen at Lyons. In short, our town is a perfect paradise. (146)

A world in which child labour is used to solve the problem of a city’s orphaned youth is, of course, not one that most people would call a perfect paradise, but this kind of tradeoff – where the temporary amelioration of social problems is had at the expense of the childhood and future lives of countless people – is certainly a paradise for men like Vaublanc, whose concern for society only extends as far as his concern for his own comfort and wellbeing. His lack of benevolence, in contrast to Falkland, for example, is chilling.

To read Vaublanc’s justification for child labour is to read a kind of perversion of the program of education forwarded by John Locke’s *Of Education*, which emphasizes meticulous attention to the mind as well as the body in order to instill obedience and

virtuous behavior in children. As Vaublanc explains, “We are able to take them at four years of age, and in some cases sooner,” at which point “their little fingers... are employed for the relief of their parents,” who can scarcely maintain their own children, much like Ruffigny’s uncle, who abandons his charge to Vaublanc when he falls into financial distress (146). In the silk mill, unlike in the streets, children “learn no bad habits; but are quiet, and orderly, and attentive, and industrious” (146). Vaublanc connects the discipline of the silk mill to the “prospect for their future lives,” and the positive social uplift whereby poverty is eliminated, and there is “no such thing as idleness, lewdness, or riot, or drunkenness, or debauchery of any sort” (146-7).

But if there are any positive moral and social outcomes to be gained from the use of child labour, they come at the cost of the children’s humanity and bodily health, to say nothing of the detriment to their future lives, as Ruffigny reflects at length in the following pages. The means of producing this state are vicious, indeed: children’s main responsibilities include fixing broken threads, a task which requires much concentration, continuously monitoring “the progress of these fifty-six threads,” the child limited to moving “backward and forward in his little tether of about ten feet” (148). Ruffigny records the “stupid and hopeless vacancy in every face,” on account of their “anxious and monotonous” labour, and the lack of “any signs of vigour and robust health” in any of the workers there in the mill: their bodies “all sallow; their muscles flaccid, and their form emaciated” (148). This “perfect paradise” of discipline and hard work is achieved by blows, since “the mind of a child is essentially independent” and cannot “frame to himself the [necessary] ideas of authority and subjection” that the space of the factory requires (149).

Although Ruffigny is clear-eyed in his condemnation of the factory, his entire argument turns on his objection to child labour, rather than on the drudgery of factory work more generally. It is children who deserve to be and should be saved, because there still inheres in them the light of possibility. It is children for whom Ruffigny, and Godwin, reserve their sympathy, and on whom they stake their radical politics. “The child, from the moment of his birth, is an experimental philosopher,” Godwin writes, and who requires the “perpetual employment” of “his organs and his limbs” to exercise and

improve his understanding, but whose improvement requires his liberty: “put him into a mill, and his understanding will improve no more than that of the horse which turns it” (150). In this section, Godwin adopts the rhetoric of Mary Wollstonecraft’s argument for the education of women:

I know that it is said that the lower orders of the people have nothing to do with the cultivation of the understanding; though for my part I cannot see how they would be the worse for that growth of practical intellect, which should enable them to plan and provide, each one for himself, the increase of his conveniences and competence. (150)

And yet, in the same breath, he abandons this note of hopefulness for one of resignation, acknowledging that “the earth is the great Bridewell of the universe, where spirits descended from heaven are committed to drudgery and hard labour,” and that we cannot hope for a world without hard labour, since our world is a fallen one (150).

Ruffigny’s reaction to being condemned to the mills, at least for a few months, is striking for his sheer disgust, and the classist impulse that underpins it. The inevitability of hard labour, and of the existence of a permanent labouring class, sits uncomfortably alongside Godwin’s argument for the elevation of the poor through education. The children left to the mills are betrayed by their parents, and rendered passive victims of circumstance, “made sacrifices, while yet tender,” and effectively condemned from birth. What state of society is this, Godwin asks? None at all, except as we find “in the manufacturing towns” where children are not quite children; rather, these “children of gipsies and savages” are little beastly things that “run like lapwings, and climb trees with the squirrels” (151). Slightly jarring is the way that Godwin’s forest-children are at once a part of nature and yet also caught up within the factory, “members in this vast machine,” existing below “the level plain of human society.”

The overarching narrative that sees Ruffigny through these tortured months in the factory is his belief in the power of education to preserve the precious core of being against the senseless world of the factory – a place that deprives human sense of its proper, necessary stimulation, both in kind and amount. Here, Ruffigny imagines himself alongside “those victims of Circe that we read of in Homer, who, though they had lost the

external symbols of a superior nature, retained the recollection of what they had been, and disgust at what they were” (151). His education, and his faith in his superior nature, form the bulwark that preserves him through this trying period: “it was by remembering [these memories] only, that I felt the difference between myself and the squalid beings around me” (152). These memories provide him with a means of resisting the force that seems to have such control over the others, as he “felt like one of those unhappy beings we read of in books of supernatural adventures, who are placed in the hands of some powerful genius invisible to mortal sight” (153-4). The Gothicism of this passage is obvious, and furthers the argument about the lower class: that they are perpetually at the mercy of invisible forces beyond their control, completely lacking the means to extricate themselves from their situation, or indeed to imagine for themselves a better state of affairs.

The senselessness of the silk mill has an immediate and profound effect on Ruffigny’s young mind, bringing it near to the point of losing the thread of language which keeps him tethered, if only barely, to his humanity. Ruffigny describes the feeling by comparing the mind to the mill, a machine not unlike the mind, but much clunkier in its operation. “The sensorium of man,” he writes, “has in it something of the nature of a mill,” he concedes, “but it is moved by very different laws from those of a mill contrived for the manufacture of silk threads.” He characterizes the mind as a swift, nimble kind of machine, much quicker than the machinery of the mill. The torpor of the silk mill is a violent constraint which limits the “succession of ideas... [and] its circumvolutions,” “produc[ing] by degrees weariness, ennui, imbecility, and idiotism” (156). The effect, he writes, is “impossible to describe,” no doubt because it steals away from the labourer the facility for language, much less the need for it, “whose incessant office it is... to watch the evolution of fifty-six threads” (156). The labour required by the mill deadens the mind: it “shuts out, and embroils, and snaps in pieces, all other thoughts,” slowly depriving the mind of the capacity for rational thought (161).

The factory also refashions the body of the labourer, who “becomes a sort of machine,” and whose “limbs and articulations are converted, as it were, into wood and wires” (161). In other words, the operation of the mill turns the labourer into a *de facto*

automaton. At this point, we see a shift in tone from disgust to benevolence, pausing momentarily to note his relief at escaping his fate; had he “continued much longer in the silk mills of Lyons, I should have become such a being myself,” one of many amongst “a class of animated machines” (161). Ruffigny’s relief at being spared marks the end of his period among the savage machines, as well as a turning-away from and identification against the labourer, but the moral dilemma presented by the factory – how does Godwin square his optimism about the perfectability of human nature, and the necessity of education to individual happiness and collective wellbeing, with the space of the factory, which can only really disrupt these ends – is explained away in fatalistic terms. That is, it simply “seems necessary that there should be such a class of animated machines in the world” (161). The necessity of labour in a fallen world is indisputable, but its true cost seems to be difficult for Ruffigny to account for, turning, as he does, to the conditional in his description of these faceless men. “Tamed, lower, torpified into this character, [the labourer] may be said, perhaps, to be content” – the speaker seeming to distance himself from his own words as soon as they appear on the page (161).

If there is any doubt about the author’s willingness to embrace the full extent of this hypothetical, it is put to rest later on when Ruffigny, who has engineered his escape from Lyons, finds himself briefly imprisoned as an itinerant child. There, in the prison, he has a flash of recognition:

It struck me, that the scene was not new to me, but that it was very like a silk-mill; the same meanness in the building, the same squalidness in the inhabitants, the same dejection in every countenance. Presently, however, I perceive a difference; the people there [in the mills] were employed, and here were idle; there were vacant and incurious, and here eagerly crowded about a new tenant of their wretched mansion. (166)

The difference that Ruffigny observes here is astonishing. In prison, these “wretched” folks display a much greater degree of humanity, with an eager curiosity that is completely foreign to the mill-worker. Though contained by the prison walls, these criminals encapsulate the threat of the lower orders. Lacking education, and lacking a task to direct their bodies, they are an eager, disruptive force that moves to collectively

examine the newly imprisoned child. Placed in the factory, these same poorly educated people would be much more effectively siloed, their energies and curiosity contained and redirected towards more productive ends. While *Fleetwood* laments the inhumanity of the mill, he argues that the brutality of factory work can be ameliorated by education, and its workers made happier.

In these two sections of the novel, Godwin forwards an etiology of a social cancer, whereby the corruption of the body politic emanates from the middle out, exploiting the labouring class and corrupting their political rulers. The social cost of this state of affairs, Godwin suggests, is incalculable, and constitutes a tragedy on a scale far greater than whatever social disorder industrialists like Vaublanc purport to contain, since their solution, such as it is, deprives the body politic of the vitality of an entire class of people, and all the labour and capital potential that that represents. And yet, for Godwin, the poor are ultimately expendable, and their labour necessary; it is only the children who can and must be saved: this is the precondition that makes industrial labour palatable, if not to the poor themselves then to those who talk about them. That is, if the children of the poor can be brought up well, educated and given the freedom to refine their senses in nature, then it is morally justifiable to condemn them to industrial labour. Given the education to recognize the necessity of their labours, and to help them withstand the soul-crushing boredom, the poor children who will inevitably fill the ranks of the labouring class will be able to retreat, in their minds, to a happy place that can counteract the real misery in which they find themselves. Ultimately, Godwin's conclusion on the inevitability and necessity of "a class of animated machines" demonstrates an inability to recognize the moral perversity of industrial capitalism, and the limits of his political philosophy as it relates to the poor.

Conclusion

If the eighteenth century is popularly imagined as the rise of the autonomous individual, the poor in this period represent a powerful counterpoint to this argument. The poor, whose exposure to the material dangers and deprivations of eighteenth-century living made them more susceptible than most to injury, disease, and disability, serve as living, breathing rejoinders to optimistic accounts of eighteenth-century progress and achievement, and illuminate truths about the vulnerabilities of eighteenth-century living that contemporary writers anxiously wished to explain away. Their place within eighteenth-century ideas about the body politic, about the proper organization of society in politics, economics, and domestic life, tells us a great deal about the period's aspirations and fears: a great deal more than it does about the poor themselves.

Demonized for their indolence, on the one hand, and praised as a model of health and wellbeing for their simple way of living, on the other, "the poor" operated as a limit as well as an ideal. As limit, the indolent, wretched poor, existing in the present in London and other urban centers, served as a kind of call to action: a living moral fable that reinforced the importance of virtuous, plain living, and hard work. As ideal, the poor operated almost outside of time: a fantasy of agrarian living, of a simpler, more peaceable time in English history before the corruptions and decadence of modernity spoiled an entire culture. Representations of the poor communicated cultural anxieties about the transformation of society across culture, politics, and economics, changes which played out in and on the bodies of those most exposed to injury, and ill equipped to deal with the pace of change.

In exploring the shift in attitudes towards the poor over the course of the eighteenth century, and the intimate relationship of these attitudes with gradually changing ideas about the body and disease, this dissertation has shed new light on the "involuntary subject" of the eighteenth century. By attending to what Jonathan Kramnick has called "the importance of... *externalism* in the literature and philosophy of the period" (6), through my readings of medicine, bodies, and spaces – in particular the bodies of the poor, and the spaces they inhabit – I have sought to demonstrate the

significance not just of contemporary understandings of how we inhabit the world, but also how the world inhabits us. In the eighteenth century, there was a growing recognition that the outside world contained innumerable dangers that, given the correct degree of management, might be disarmed, and the individual preserved from their worst effects. In a time when the attainment of good health was understood to require the proper balance of humours, the importance of regulating the six “non-naturals” was understood to be just as important, if not more so. These non-naturals, derived from Galenic physiology, included such things as air, motion and rest, sleeping and waking, food and drink, and the passions: everything outside of the individual, whether they be objects or forces, that acted in some way upon the body and mind. As John Locke wrote, there is nothing more important to proper human development than “a sound mind in a sound body,” and yet, perhaps, nothing more elusive to achieve, given the manifold dangers of eighteenth-century life, particularly for the poor. While the poor were not uniquely unable to guard against threats to their body, they were certainly more susceptible than most, and their failure or success in this regard was often held up as confirmation of their inherent backwardness or virtue. The poor, in the eighteenth century, serve as a reminder of our inherent vulnerability; of the porousness of the body; and of our limited ability to inhabit the world completely willfully, or voluntarily. Whether marked by fierce anxiety, condescension, or a strange kind of hope, the narratives examined in my dissertation share a conflicted opinion about the poor: that they are redeemable souls in need of saving – some of them, at least – but at the same time are also desperately in need of containment. Despite the difference in moral posturing that these narratives adopt, what unites them is the sense in which to save is also to contain: strategies of benevolence mobilized for/against the poor are always already strategies of containment, of disciplining and managing unruly bodies in the service of the civic harmony and prosperity.

These narratives share a common fascination with the poor’s proximity to suffering and disease – one that is most certainly accidental rather than essential, a product of the unmanageability of the space and circumstances they found themselves in – and illustrate the movement away from regarding them as a gangrenous burden on the

state, in the early part of the century, to a more benevolent attitude reflecting Enlightenment optimism in the rehabilitative value of education: away from the notion that the poor are irredeemable beast-like things to embracing the idea that they simply have not been given the tools to reach their potential. In the pseudo-historical fiction of Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, the work that forms the basis for my first chapter, and a counterpoint against which I measure the narratives that follow, we see how the poor are accidentally associated with plague by virtue of their proximity to unclean spaces, but are, in the Defoean imagination, principally responsible for the plague's spread because of their filthiness and inherent viciousness. The four narratives contained within the anonymously penned *History of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen-House*, written a few decades later, continue this fascination with the poor's proximity to disease, but represent their characters' fall into prostitution more sympathetically as a natural outcome given their utter lack of options and resources, rather than as the result of some inherent defect in their character. What makes these women's stories especially remarkable is the way they manifest the narrative logic underpinning popular medical accounts of the origin of venereal disease, where it was understood to be the material consequence of illegitimate sexual activity, and its preventative cure located in the virtuous pursuit of monogamy and a simpler, less decadent lifestyle. These women's lives were seen to be rehabilitated only when they gave themselves over to the Magdalen House, whose disciplinary regime was founded on contemporary ideas concerning regulating and cleansing the urban environments of dangers to bodily wellbeing and commerce. Tobias Smollett's novel *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* ties a critique of modern, disordered urban spaces to the hypochondriac patriarch Matthew Bramble's anxieties about the porousness of his body, and its vulnerability to the outside world. Much like we see in the *Magdalen-House* text, Bramble's concerns are only resolved when he finally retreats, at the end of the novel, to the idyllic walled gardens of his country estate and adopts a simple, rugged lifestyle not unlike that of the virtuous poor. Finally, in the novels *Caleb Williams* and *Fleetwood*, we find William Godwin's sympathetic, but flawed portrait of the plight affecting the labouring poor. Working from the premise, explored in his philosophical writings, that all

the poor require is a good education to inure them from the material struggles of their lives, Godwin reinforces the notion that the poor cannot care for themselves, but that given the right tools, and the careful hand of a benevolent protector, they can find happiness and ease even in the dark, lifeless world of the factory.

This dissertation asks the reader to consider the significance of how and why the poor came to be so closely identified with disorder in the built environment, and to recognize how this connection became mobilized in contemporary discussions of the body politic: why it is that writers in the eighteenth century found it increasingly reasonable to individualize responsibility for mitigating and managing the impact of these non-naturals. As poverty increasingly came to be seen, over the course of the century, as something improvable and eliminable by the application of rational principles of managing the body, the mind, and the built environment, a failure to adjust or to adapt became legible as a failure of character. No longer beasts, the poor became “a class of animated machines” whose value was measured by their ability to adapt to their circumstances and to perform their labours (Godwin 161).

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