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Mind, Body, and the Moral Imagination in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World

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Abstract
This dissertation deals with ideas and assumptions about human nature in the cultural life of the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world. Most scholars see in this period a decline of the traditional Western dualism in the understanding of human nature. Empiricist philosophy, we are told, increasingly denied the possibility of distinguishing between the body and reason, much less between the body and "soul." Moralists now tended to locate social and moral reactions in sensation and sensibility rather than in reason. The cultural status of physical pleasure was greatly enhanced. I challenge this wide consensus. I find in eighteenth-century British and colonial culture an alternative story of marginalizing the body and downplaying its role in moral and social life. I see persistent efforts to assert the soul as an independent source of feeling and action, with the activity of spirit defining specifically human relations at all levels from intimate to economic. I analyze eighteenth-century perceptions of love, marriage, and companionate family and find a wide-spread conception of essential difference between the spiritual emotion of love-friendship and physical desire. I argue that desire was often perceived to be a mechanical, secondary, and extrinsic component of love and marriage, rather than the genetic root of both. Since the family was commonly conceived as the foundation of social life, this segregation of desire was a crucial part of a wider social imaginary that did not include the body as an active structural component in interpersonal relations. Society, like marriage, could be seen as a compact of souls and minds, with the body being an object, rather than agent, of social relations. Finally, I interpret eighteenth-century conceptualizations of racial difference as attempts both to acknowledge and to eliminate the body as an agent in its own right. Constructing a progression of human bodies from a crude and active animal presence to a pliant and delicate instrument of the soul helped to assert the essential freedom of human spirit at the top of the hierarchy - in the white race.

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MIND, BODY, AND THE MORAL IMAGINATION  
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Yaroslav Prykhodko  
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in  
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Mind, Body, and the Moral Imagination
in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World

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2011

Yaroslav Prykhodko
Моїй матері,
з любов'ю і вдячністю
This dissertation deals with ideas and assumptions about human nature in the cultural life of the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world. Most scholars see in this period a decline of the traditional Western dualism in the understanding of human nature. Empiricist philosophy, we are told, increasingly denied the possibility of distinguishing between the body and reason, much less between the body and “soul.” Moralists now tended to locate social and moral reactions in sensation and sensibility rather than in reason. The cultural status of physical pleasure was greatly enhanced. I challenge this wide consensus. I find in eighteenth-century British and colonial culture an alternative story of marginalizing the body and downplaying its role in moral and social life. I see persistent efforts to assert the soul as an independent source of feeling and action, with the activity of spirit defining specifically human relations at all levels from intimate to economic. I analyze eighteenth-century perceptions of love, marriage, and companionate family and find a wide-spread conception of essential difference between the spiritual emotion of love-friendship and physical desire. I argue that desire was often perceived to be a mechanical, secondary, and extrinsic component of love and marriage, rather than the genetic root of both. Since the family was commonly conceived as the foundation of social life, this segregation of desire was a crucial part of a wider social imaginary that did not include the body as an active structural component in interpersonal relations. Society, like marriage, could be seen as a
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INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on the pleasures we receive from the moral sense, Francis Hutcheson writes: “It may perhaps seem too metaphysical to allude on this Subject, that other Sensations are all dependent upon, or related by the Constitution of our Nature, to something different from ourselves; to a Body which we do not call Self, but something belonging to this Self. That other Perceptions of Joy or Pleasure carry with them Relations to Objects, and Spaces distinct from this Self; whereas ‘the Pleasures of Virtue are the very Perfection of this Self, and are immediately perceived as such, independent of external Objects.’”1 From the textual point of view, this passage is not so much a statement of an idea, or even a brief glimpse of an inchoate assumption, but rather a moment in which Hutcheson’s reflection on the passions and affections spills onto a different level and hints at establishing a logical structure within which the reflection would make sense. The passage contains the principle of the differentiation of consciousness from the world—the principle that implicitly guides Hutcheson’s approach to the phenomenon of human passions and affections but is at the same time a product of his way of perceiving and assigning meaning to these aspects of the human condition. The discussion moves for a moment from feelings to the structure and constitution of the feeling subject. As Hutcheson’s own opening apology indicates, this passage both does and does not belong in his investigation. It belongs there as the organizing principle or implicit structure of Hutcheson’s reflection, and does not belong there because it operates on a different plane of thought.

General approaches to the problem of human nature, as well as relationships between such “metaphysical” constructions as the matter-spirit dualism and the eighteenth-century moral and social imaginary is at the center of my project. Most scholars see in this period a decline of the traditional Western dualism in the understanding of human nature, and “a creative turn to the sensuous body,” as the great literary scholar Terry Eagleton put it. Empiricist philosophy, science, and even religious authors, we are told, increasingly denied the possibility of distinguishing between the body and reason, much less a “soul.” The status of the corporeal was greatly enhanced, up to reversing the hierarchical mind-body opposition. Moralists now tended to locate moral and social reactions in sensation and sensibility, not in reason. Physical pleasure was being rehabilitated. The modern benevolent moral culture was being born—the culture that to this day values spontaneous affective responses, freedom of expression, and pursuit of individual happiness and pleasure in spheres from politics to sex.2 I challenge this wide consensus. I argue that the body-soul paradigm and the notion of a special, purely spiritual aspect of humanity changed much during the eighteenth century, but remained essential for perceptions of human


nature, morality, and social life throughout this period, influencing such perceptions in the ways which we now tend to ignore. I find in eighteenth-century British and colonial culture a story of marginalizing the body and downplaying its role in moral and social life. I see persistent efforts to assert the soul as an independent source of feeling and action, with the activity of spirit defining specifically human relations at all levels from intimate to economic. Our understanding of the direction of eighteenth-century culture has been selective. It has been driven by our own assumptions about the human constitution, the nature of reason and emotion, and even by the moral evaluation of physical urges and needs.

My focus is on the philosophical content of everyday life. I will deal with general interpretive frames, perceptions and concerns among the educated elite more than with the development of specialized philosophical ideas. However, I see my work as both a history of ideas and a cultural history of everyday human efforts to make sense of lived experience and to find meaning in the surrounding social and natural world. My re-interpretations of the classic works by Locke, Hutcheson, Smith, Jefferson, or Burke are provoked by the reading of letters, diaries, and memoirs of more ordinary educated individuals from different ends of the British Atlantic world. The cases of three landed gentlemen and amateur authors with family roots and estates in different parts of the British Empire will be studied in depth: William Byrd of Virginia (1674-1744), John Boyle, Earl of Cork and Orrery (1707-1762), and Edward Long of Jamaica (1734-1813). Their life-long search for personal moral fulfillment and their efforts to understand themselves in relation to the culture’s system of values, ethical norms, and assumptions about human nature are the backbone of the project.

I am particularly interested in the life of the mind on the Atlantic colonial peripheries, which, with their unsettled societies, fluid social roles, and a lack of established hierarchies, are sometimes seen as more culturally “modern” than Britain. I am curious to see how people in the New World strove to adjust and modify the categories of British culture in order to make human and moral sense of novel realities, such as staple crop economies, the consumer revolution, or slavery. My protagonists took for granted their position as social, intellectual and moral leaders, as well as traditional assumptions about hierarchy, moral duty and restraint. Yet, moving between the colonies and England, they felt with uncommon urgency the need and obligation to realize such commonplace ideas and prescriptions in their lives. The cultural attainments of colonial gentry could be easily questioned; their association with peculiar and “un-British” institutions

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such as slavery was suspect, and their income and social position insecure in the fledgling and unstable communities of the imperial periphery.

My case studies will allow me to write about moral thinking and imagination as part of living social reality rather than a set of abstract principles and concepts developing from one theorist to another. I will read moralist reflections and commonplaces on marriage in conjunction with specific people’s interpretations of their marriages. I will consider the evolution of metropolitan ideas about racial difference together with concrete individual’s encounters with their slaves. I am interested in my protagonists’ financial situations; in their relations with wives, parents, and children; in their sexual lives; in offhand general statements about marriage, family, society, morality, and human nature. Such statements are scattered throughout letters and other personal writings, where we can see them as responses to specific events and circumstances. For all three of my main protagonists, large collections of personal materials are available in published form and in manuscript. But all three also aspired to literary reputation and wrote for publication in various genres: history, travel narratives, fiction, translation, literary criticism, political pamphlets, and so on. In selecting subjects for close case studies, I particularly looked for such combinations of private, intensely personal meaning-making and self-interpretation with public commentary on society, human nature and moral life.

My attention to the relationship between the soul and the body in the human constitution has led me to rethink two important themes of eighteenth-century culture: human variety and companionate marriage. Historians and literary scholars tend to read eighteenth-century interpretations of love and marriage, especially in the culture of sensibility, in terms of a progressive “refinement” and sublimation of sexual desire. I, on the contrary, find in the same discourse a wide-spread conception of essential difference between physical desire and the spiritual emotion of love-friendship. The two forms of attraction were often seen as coexisting in the compound passion of love between the sexes, but were assumed to differ in their operations, nature, and sources. Desire could be imagined as a mechanical natural phenomenon extrinsic to the true, non-physical sentiment of love and to the institution of marriage, rather than as the genetic root of both. I argue that some of the impulse behind the rapid growth of a self-conscious tyranny of the “family values,” which later reached its apogee in the Victorian century, lay in the potential of this idea to change the meaning of the body’s sexual function from the expression of the body’s anti-social nature into a neutrally mechanical, subordinate act. With the family imagined as an essentially spiritual unity, one mind rather than “one flesh,” the act of union became a manifestation of the mind’s victory over the body and an expression of its freedom, rather than a concession to physical desires and a superficial legitimization of reproductive sexuality. The lives of William Byrd and the Earl of Orrery, understood in their wider intellectual contexts, will illuminate the cultural logic of the marginalization of sex in the idea of marriage. This logic clearly influenced Victorian notions about the family, yet it surprises modern scholars, who are used to a more sensual conception of love and intimacy. Further, since the family was commonly conceived as the foundation of social life, this segregation of desire was a crucial part of a wider social imaginary that did not include the body as an active structural component in interpersonal relations. Society, like marriage, could be seen as a compact of souls and minds, with the body being an object, rather than agent, of social interaction.

Finally, I interpret eighteenth-century conceptualizations of racial difference as attempts both to acknowledge and to eliminate the body as an agent in its own right. I explore the ways in which constructing a progression of human bodies from a crude and active animal presence to a pliant
and delicate instrument of the soul could have helped to assert the essential freedom of human spirit at the top of the hierarchy – in the white race. I re-read one of the first extended theories of racial gradation, articulated by the Jamaican planter and amateur historian Edward Long, in conjunction with his autobiographical writings, correspondence, and the wider eighteenth-century discourse on human difference. In doing so, I find efforts to relegate the white body to a purely instrumental role as an unnoticeable and “transparent” servant of the mind, and to distinguish it in this sense from the crude and recalcitrant black body. The white body was habitually represented as less energetic, more delicate, and one that interfered less with the “life of the mind.” Whiteness could be a sign and a “proof” of the intellectual and moral qualities of man, not because those qualities originated in a particular physiological structure, but because the more delicate white body liberated the intellectual and moral potential of man that was not physical in its nature. A persistent differentiation between the material and the spiritual, which, I argue, structured much of the eighteenth-century racial imagination, is rarely taken into account by scholars, especially for the late eighteenth century with its emergence of “scientific” racism. But this differentiation, I will suggest, was an essential part of the potential moral appeal of the concept of race in the period. The idea that early modern racial attitudes involved a fear of the materiality and animal qualities of the human body is not new, and it played an important role in Winthrop Jordan’s seminal work on the history of racial thinking. But it has not figured prominently in recent literature, and Jordan himself did not pay much attention to early modern ideas about matter and spirit.

For a more detailed outline of the project’s plot the reader will have to turn to the conclusion. In the remainder of this introduction I will set forth the methodological basis of my research and argument. The project is set both inside and outside the eighteenth-century process of making phenomena of the natural, social and human world meaningful. I am interested in the eighteenth-century moral imagination, particularly in the interpretations of the family, sexuality, and race. But I approach reflection on the family, marriage, social order, the nature of moral life, or human difference through a more general level of the construction of the world and human nature to which observation and reflection could lead eighteenth-century observers and which could be construed as a sort of intrinsic grammar present in their making sense of the social, natural and human world. Further, in order to explore the work of ontological assumptions in such meaning-making processes, I found that I had to concern myself with matter-spirit dualism not only, or not so much, as an express, consciously articulated idea or concept, but as an abstract and trans-historical principle that has a potential to generate conceptual structures for making sense of the observed world. I became interested in the general principle and logic of the irreducibility of mental activity to the physical processes that underlie it, and in the reflective dimension of the human agent, which makes the agent essentially irreducible to him- or herself. Both eighteenth-century conceptual structures and the dichotomous principle itself are subjects of my investigation, and my efforts to understand the former proceed in part through treating them as potentialities immanent in the dualism of the material and the intelligible.

I have been led to this study by the desire to understand the logic, often not obvious to me, of the processes and regularities that the early modern imagination ascribed to and expected from social life and human behavior. I remain unsatisfied by other scholars’ similarly motivated

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4 For an excellent account of the reflective and other dimensions of the concept of the self see Jerrold Seigel, The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. 5-30.
investigations. So, for instance, John Sekora’s seminal exploration of the concept of luxury in Western, and primarily eighteenth-century, thought began in an attempt to discover the roots of polarities running through eighteenth-century English writing, such as urban-country, feminine-masculine, unnatural-natural, irrational-wise, corrupt-virtuous, unruly-obedient, and others. Sekora argued that the idea of luxury – “a theory of entropy that explains as it describes how men, singly or collectively, lose vitality and fall from grace” – explained much about such polar relationships that organized eighteenth-century interpretation of the social world. However, I found in his analysis of the concept of luxury a detailed description of entropy but not an eighteenth-century explanation of its mechanism. If luxury is the breaking of the natural limits of need leading to chaos, why is the natural limit so prone to be broken? How and why does the break-through happen, and why is it to be expected as inherent in our “nature”? Why does the dissolution of natural limits and order never stop once it begins? Luxury was one (and quite possibly the most basic) of the names of the process of entropy, not the explanation of the process and its mechanism. Invoking the terms of another highly productive approach to the eighteenth-century intellectual culture, why does power always tend to destroy liberty? It may be advisable to turn to the problem of the nature of things and agents involved in the progress of luxury, struggles of liberty and power, and other patterns of eighteenth-century imagination.

I will treat the problem of ontology first of all as a semiotic problem of the relation between the signified and the referent (leaving aside for a moment the question of the signifier). I will agree with the postmodernist view that, for instance, the family “has existed only to the very extent that it was constructed by discourses and institutional practices that were invested by a political and social imaginary, which, in a circular fashion, those same discourses and institutional practices helped construct in the first place.” The family as a concept and a system of concepts is a discursive phenomenon; but it is also an articulation of a world of human practices, relations and connections. A concept endeavors to organize and express the world outside of it (the realm of the referent) in accordance with the logic and norms of the discursive field out of which and in which it is generated. Discourse is the only reality directly accessible to us. But it can be persuasive and productive only insofar as it is understood to be a description of a supposed reality beyond it, or, in other words, insofar as the signified (such as the discursive construction of the family) implies the presence of a “real,” non-discursive referent and carries in itself the idea of its own reality.

In scholarly practice, the focus on discursive construction has often implied the analysis of the articulation and operation of power, the dictate of norms and ideals, especially when it comes to subjects like gender and race. When discourse is analyzed as power, its relationship with the implied referent is of less significance than its status and structure as a social reality of its own (and its relation to the speaker), and the logic of discourse is the logic of social relations, both constituted by and constituting the discursive universe. Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* and the numerous creative misreadings that followed it represent this approach. For the present study, the workings of power are less relevant than a discursive actor’s need to construct the true picture


of the world. Such a picture would both articulate the observed and the felt in a logically plausible way and ensure the verifiability of the deployed concepts. My subject is thus the basic structures of the early modern discursive universe that refer to, construct and articulate the most basic “truths” about the nature of the observed world. Since such basic structures explain, or make sense of, the nature of the world as a meaningful existence, the conceptual networks they generate will be expected to reflect reality (a space of action). In other words, they are expectations about, turned into observations of, reality, in the process of which desirable and undesirable components of the reality are distinguished and prescriptions, norms and rules are created for promoting the desirable and avoiding the undesirable. Why, for instance, could it be expected that a slightest exposure of a child to sexual practices carried in itself an almost certain danger of future moral depravity, and hence specific patterns of education and upbringing had to be created to avoid that possibility? The discourse of human nature interprets and conceptualizes drives and potentialities inherent in a human being as an agent (procreation, spontaneous evaluative reactions to the environment, etc.), but a human being cannot be conceived of as an agent or in any other way outside discourse and its own system of connections, relations, assumptions and presuppositions.

The central problem of this study is the human being as a fact of discourse. But the immediate subject of the study is the structure of the conceptual framework in which the articulation of the human being took place. Following Reinhart Koselleck, I presume that concepts can never encompass the richness of individual experience, thought and interpretation, but at the same time that concepts always contain more than is actually thought, more than what surfaces in the historical process of making sense of the observed world. This “more” is what interests me most and implicitly shapes the direction and method of the study. The material of the project consists of three case studies of individual engagement with the problem of human nature and personal meaning-making efforts, and most of what I will do will focus on the analysis of the matter-spirit and mind-body vocabulary and logic in its concrete articulations in such interpretive problems as the social contract, marriage, family, slavery or race. But, again, my desire to understand the mechanisms of meaning-making in these areas of eighteenth-century culture led me to the need to clarify the structure of the matter-spirit opposition as an abstract and trans-historical concept, as much as to present a new interpretation of the eighteenth-century stance towards specific discursive/social problems. I moved, so to speak, from the “applied” to the “fundamental” view of the dualist world-picture. Hence the discursive structures and codes I will reconstruct in and through the speech of my protagonists I am compelled to see primarily in their status as potentialities implied in what Sartre called the “general and essential structures of human reality” and of the world, as established and articulated in the discursive realm. Practically this means that I do not put much value in strictly confining myself to the things that were said (even though actually I will talk mostly about such things), and will often treat what was imagined and articulated by eighteenth-century agents as instances of things that could be said.

On the other hand, the discursive materials from the eighteenth century were in fact and will be methodologically the starting point of my explorations of the dualist logic. I see potential

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departures from what was said towards the realm of abstractions and logical possibilities as a search for a deeper meaning of the things said – the “underwater” part of the concepts and interpretive frameworks that were, sometimes consciously and sometimes not, deployed by eighteenth-century discursive agents. I am trying to understand why the things my subjects believed would be intuitively plausible to them – or rather how such things could be intuitively plausible, could appear true.

Edward Long, one of my subjects, writes in the course of his argument in favor of the natural inferiority of Africans: “It has been said, that the nature of their governments is unfavourable to genius, because they tolerate slavery; but genius is manifested in the right frame of government: they have republics among them as well as monarchies, but neither have yet been known productive of civility, or arts, or sciences.”10 I will not immediately ask what the function of this statement is in Long’s racist doctrine, one of the first extended arguments for natural racial gradation. I will not ask who may have “influenced” Long, what is the pedigree and subsequent variations of this idea or what is its incidence in the works of racial theory. My main question will be: what kind of an internal constitution of the world and of the human being would be necessary in order for this statement to be true? This question will shape my expositions and analyses in the course of most of the project. And only from the ontological foundations of the statement will I turn to its place and function in Long’s racist doctrine and to its connections with the wider eighteenth-century (and not only eighteenth-century) cultural and intellectual circumstances. And again I will ask how and in what ways this statement creates a world in which Long’s racism would be natural, what can follow from such a statement and what actually follows in Long’s texts. In other words, I will concentrate on the metaphysical aspects of “political” arguments such as the emerging racism, and at the same time will consider the relationship between the “political” and the metaphysical as a two-way street, where discursive constructions of power call forth specific metaphysical postulates and at the same time such constructions have to remain metaphysically plausible, and therefore involve, at least for those discursive agents who value consistency and intellectual validity, a metaphysical level with a centrifugal potential. I will also relate the metaphysical aspect of discourse to the life experience of my protagonists, and will see the former as a nexus between self-perception and individual’s cultural construction of his or her own existence and personal world, on the one hand, and the “political” discourse on human relations and the social world on the other. If one is reflecting on the nature of “man,” one is reflecting on one’s own nature.

So, the project will proceed through a series of interpretations of statements and efforts to recreate or expose the logic required by their referential function – their conditions of ontological possibility. In such statements, I will try to uncover structures transcending the particularities of the “intellectual environment in which [particular texts] were composed,” in the forms in which such an environment “is normally constructed by historians.”11 Obviously, this is not to deny the need for contextualization and the obvious fact that the same sentence written by different people

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11 The quoted sequences come from an anonymous reader report on an essay I have submitted for publication. According to the reader, “the author seems to be putting together an account from his/her own encounters with the texts, with relatively little sense of the ways in which the intellectual environment in which they were composed is normally constructed by historians. It’s good to bring a fresh eye to the material, but this approach here comes across to me as naïve.”
in different contexts constitutes different statements. What would interest me in such a case of similar sentences, however, is the layer of similarity, or rather affinity, that would, I argue, persist not only on the obvious level of the sentence, but also on the level of the statement. Geographical and chronological specificity will not constrain me when juxtaposed with the recurrence of the themes and problems of matter and spirit, however differently resolved in particular cases. I am interested precisely in putting together these recurring themes and considering them as comparable variations on a theme, all the more interesting together because they contain both similarities and divergences, and manifest different potentialities of the theme in different contexts, at the same time establishing lines of logical affinity and difference-in-affinity among different traditions and cultural agendas. When, for instance, I “illustrate” eighteenth-century thinking on race “through quotation from a variety of texts, too heterogeneous to lend themselves to an intellectual history approach,” my intention is rather to elucidate and develop through such variety the logical patterns of relations between mind and body I observe in the eighteenth-century texts that are my more immediate subjects. I find such “illustrations” only more interesting if they come from different systems of discourse and traditions of thought. If I devote so much room in my analysis of eighteenth-century views on love and marriage to a discussion of the seventeenth-century Puritan theological views on marriage and sex, it is not because Puritans directly influenced the culture of sensibility in these matters. On the contrary, I want to show the difference between the two traditions by reading them through the matter-spirit vocabulary that they shared, and consider this difference crucial to the understanding of the nature and peculiarities of the eighteenth-century assumptions about love and marriage.

I will try further to elucidate this method by describing its divergence (or difference-in-affinity) from the scholarly work that deeply influenced my approach to historical materials – Lynn Hunt’s study of The Family Romance of the French Revolution. Hunt is interested “in the ways that people collectively imagine – that is, think unconsciously about – the operation of power, and the ways in which this imagination shapes and is in turn shaped by political and social processes.” In the process of uncovering the meanings that people assigned to social acts or that the social acts were called upon to express, Hunt in fact constructs an archetypal story of general significance: her reflection on the French revolutionary imagination leads her to Freud’s account of the primeval horde and the origins of the social contract. Hunt’s analysis is not an imposition of Freud’s story of the brothers’ killing the father on the raw material of the French Revolution or even on the collective imagination of the revolutionary era. Rather, the revolutionaries’ interpretation of the process in which a new kind of society was supposedly being established and Freud’s myth of the origins of civilization and the social body are in fact treated as two versions of the same story, in which the Freudian version has the priority of conscious articulation, while the revolutionary version has the advantage of a first-hand imaginative interpretation of social acts. What Hunt really wants is to establish a relation between the historical specifics and “the basic metaphors of modern political and social life” hidden in the actualities of the political imagination of the revolutionary era. At the same time, she feels compelled to assert the presence of the archetypal story that we know in Freud’s version in the heads of her protagonists – in an


13 Same reader report.

unconscious form. What are the grounds for this assertion? It helps us to “make sense of the evidence that would otherwise remain confounding and mysterious,” in other words, it presents certain statements and events as part of a conceptual whole that gives them meaning.\(^\text{15}\) If so, Hunt seems to presume, then the whole story should be actually present in the heads of the historical actors – if not in conscious, then in unconscious form, in the background.

Hunt calls Marquis de Sade’s La Philosophie dans le boudoir “one of the most revealing texts about the revolutionary political unconscious,” for, in its pornographic extremes, it “uncovers meanings in the revolutionary experience – much in the manner of dreams – that would be otherwise inaccessible to us.”\(^\text{16}\) Again Hunt feels the need to embed the extreme purity of revolutionary logic of individuals freed from the constraints of the family, which Sade takes farther than anyone else, in the collective mind, or “under-mind,” so to speak, of the contemporaries by treating Sade’s novel as a kind of collective dream. A novel, however, is not really a dream. Logical implications do not have to be in the consciousness and collective culture in order to exist and be subjects of analysis. I will take such implications as inherent in the concepts that are actually present in the culture, but I do not believe it is imperative to look for logical implications in the heads of those who operated with these concepts, on conscious or unconscious level – at least their presence or absence “in the heads” is a question of secondary importance for me. If a certain individual is persistent, honest, brazen, nonchalant, or troubled enough to voice such implications, she does not represent the collective mind of her contemporaries, but explores and exploits on her own the pathways of the cultural universe created by them.

Further, I find largely irrelevant the dialectic between representativeness and uniqueness, which haunts historical case studies (or all historical studies, for that matter, since all general claims in the discipline since the demise of positivism are made on the basis of what are, in relation to such claims, only case studies). More important for me is the dialectic between structure and process, grammar and expression, language and speech. I will not try to argue that my protagonists are pure test cases of dichotomous thinking, or that they embody the general eighteenth-century thinking on this problem. I will not make a point of distinguishing in their statements and life experiences the idiosyncratic from the common, for the society in general or for a particular social group – in this case, the landed elite, or even more specifically, the landed elite of the British imperial peripheries. I do think that all these things could be done to a certain extent, but I am more interested in pursuing the implications of Clifford Geertz’s suggestions about the connection between social acts and culture as a symbolic system: actions (or texts, for that matter) “are comments on more than themselves; [and] where an interpretation comes from does not determine where it can be impelled to go.”\(^\text{17}\) I see a meaningful act as being in a more direct relation to the symbolic systems from which its nature as a cultural fact derives than to other meaningful acts. In this project I design to move not from individual expressions, texts, actions and interpreted experiences to the “larger culture” as a collection of acts, texts and experiences, but from individual texts to the conditions of logical possibility that underlie their symbolic aspect, and only then from that world of logical possibilities to other cultural acts. Geertz himself,

\(^{15}\) Ibid., xiv.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 125.

asserting that we gain empirical access to symbol systems “in their own terms” only by inspecting social events, thought it dangerous to depart too far from the level of acts into abstractions and into the analysis of symbolic systems in themselves. I will not heed the warning. While in practice I am not going to depart very far from the level of the concrete, I will gladly plunge into the dangers of abstraction where an opportunity presents itself, and will generally value the abstract in the concrete.

Finally, it can be objected that some cultural norms whose ontological foundations I explore, such as the pure companionate marriage or the good slaveholder, postulate a human “nature” that virtually no humans possess. Not only do the norms I analyze belong to the numerically small social elite, but they also cannot be said to characterize the conduct of more than a tiny minority within this social minority. I would not want to create the impression that I treat the cultural constructs I deal with as prevailing or at least widespread patterns of living in the eighteenth century. They are not the patterns or rules that dominated the actual social conduct of the majority (of the upper classes) in, for instance, the vast majority of marriages. Historians attach, since the nineteenth century, a special scientific and even moral value to “the way things are,” and, finding a dissonance between an idealized cultural norm and everyday behavior, are prone to characterize the former as elitist and unviable. We also feel the need to reconstruct a “real” cultural norm and actually existing rules for the vast world that does not fit the unviable ideals – not infrequently representing this world as positive cultural resistance to the repressive ideals that, for instance, may exclude virtually all humans from the concept of “human.” But it appears that in practice (especially in cultures that do not turn self-expression and “being yourself” into a supreme value) people are often prepared to take as a given a difference between “culture” and “reality” in everyday practice, the way things are and the way they should be. While certain implicit or often explicit rules govern behavior and life “outside culture,” they are not necessarily perceived as another “culture,” opposed to the norm as an alternative or a form of resistance. What we may perceive as an alternative, contemporaries may perceive as a lack. The existence of marriage separation patterns and customs or even divorce laws does not mean they were perceived as a culture, an alternative to the unviable heightened expectations for marriage. They could just as well be conceived as hard, undesirable, but inescapable reality opposed to culture as such. The cultural meaning of this “reality,” the significance attached to it as to a lack of culture, rather than its internal structure as (in fact and from our point of view) a cultural system of its own, is inconceivable without that norm to which it is related as a lack. From this point of view, the unviable norm is indeed non-existent and at the same time pervasive and all-embracing. The forms of its relation to and participation in “real” social and cultural life are diverse. Thus, throughout the project (see, for instance, the first section of chapter Four) I will be noting a persistent pattern in eighteenth-century moral thinking: a full recognition of the inevitably corrupt reality of the actual human condition combined with the exclusion of this reality from the definition of “man,” “society,” or “marriage” where only our postulated “perfect” state is acknowledged as essential for understanding the true nature of these phenomena. (This is another reason why an analysis of cultural constructs that focuses on the abstract and on internal logical connections rather than on the description of socio-cultural practices can have much to contribute to eighteenth-century studies. Cultural systems for which “the real” is not the supreme test of validity are especially prone to be moved by their internal dynamics.) The ideal is recognized as the true reality, as in the Classicist doctrine of Joshua Reynolds, and, optimistically, as the point

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18 This significance of lack will be at least in part self-conscious in texts that intentionally turn the lack of norm into a “realist” norm and culture of its own, such as the works by Mandeville, Chesterfield, or de Sade.
towards which our condition must be gravitating. Prescription is seen as the true description. On the other hand, the tension and discrepancy between “human” as what we are and “human” as what we are supposed to be could be a source of anguish and pessimism; the limitations of taking prescription for description were apparent.

So, the tension between the real and the ideal, the world and the concept is both an essential part of my method and one of the driving forces of the cultural formation I explore. In the following chapters, the reader will see how such tensions played out in the intellectual and cultural life of three self-conscious, reflective gentlemen of the British Atlantic world who took their moral and social identity seriously and sought to recreate cultural prescription in life.
CHAPTER 1

WILLIAM BYRD: PRINCIPLES, INCLINATIONS, AND THE NATURE OF THE SELF

“…A woman is of greater utility to our life if, instead of being an element of happiness in it, she is an instrument of suffering, and there is not a woman in the world the possession of whom is as precious as that of the truths which she reveals to us by causing us to suffer.”

Marcel Proust, *The Fugitive*19

Having reached the Blue Ridge Mountains, William Byrd and the other members of the expedition to establish a dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina resolved to go back on October 26th 1728. Also on that day, not “unmindful of being all along fed by Heaven in this great and solitary wilderness,” they established the Order of the Maosti (a turkey’s beard in the Saponi language) with the motto *vice coturnicum* (“in place of quail”). As quail was given to the starving Children of Israel in the wilderness, so wild turkeys had supported the expedition for many weeks on its way to the mountains.20

For scholars venturing into the discursive wilderness of colonial Virginia, William Byrd is that turkey. A rare gift of Providence in what he himself called a “silent country,” Byrd’s corpus is taken apart and put back together again by scholars working on virtually all aspects of Virginia’s “golden age” of the first half of the eighteenth century. Of course, Byrd is as much an actor as a chronicler; he is important to the students of early America as a Virginian, and early American, character, one of the few that were documented in text. And if he is too unusual, by the very fact of his writing, to be a representative early American character, he will have to be a quintessential one, embodying the American character as a cultural (that is, written) phenomenon in an indirect but nevertheless expressive relation to the “body” of colonial Virginian life. An attempt to “understand” him, to reach into the recesses of Byrd’s inner life should, in Kenneth Lockridge’s formulation, “suggest how early Virginia’s culture shaped Byrd’s personality, and how that personality in turn found expression in the genres available to him in the transatlantic world of the early eighteenth century,” thus now shaping Virginia’s culture.21 Going along this road, we learn


that for Byrd writing was an instrument of self-fashioning and self-control, used to create and then present to himself and to the world a “perfect gentleman,” an embodiment of the early modern English ideal of man. Mastery over oneself was an essential element of that ideal, ensuring mastery over others – an aspect especially important to fledgling colonial elites unsure of their hold on power. The need to formalize the process of self-fashioning in writing was especially strong in Byrd’s case because he was a colonial torn between his native country and England. He struggled for metropolitan acceptance without sufficient “real” resources to achieve such acceptance and cultural legitimacy (and thus power) as an English gentleman. Self-representation to and within metropolitan culture involved an idealized representation of Byrd’s country and thus was a driving force in the creation of the “myth of Virginia” as a patriarchal Arcadia opposed to corrupt England, which myth was an important stage in the development of an autonomous American identity. Thus the creation of culture itself is problematized, and Byrd’s writings can be seen as an important stage in this process, rather than as documents recording the disembodied status quo that exists somewhere beyond the texts in question.  

I see two major problems in this picture. First, the dichotomy colonial/metropolitan, self-evident and central for the Americanists who today approach Byrd’s texts, is conspicuously absent on the conceptual level from the texts themselves, whose author was bereft of the (unquestionable) benefit of modern post-colonial theory. Byrd’s occasional references to “our country” and “your country” in his letters to England from Virginia may indeed indicate the unconscious dawning of a new identity, but these are not the terms in which Byrd explains his own failures and predilections; consequently, they cannot be central to Byrd’s corpus seen as a (conscious) project of self-fashioning. As our explanation of Byrd’s problems, the terms are certainly valid, but our explanation should not be confused with Byrd’s. It was in search of the terms that shape Byrd’s gentlemanly project that I was drawn to the language of reason, passion, body, soul, and human


23 Michael Warner finds the “colonialness” of the texts written in the American colonies in the dialectic of provincialism and cosmopolitanism, or civilization and savagery, where the establishment of the ideal of civilization in the act of writing by which the author separates him- or herself from the surrounding wilderness also exposes him or her as a provincial who needs to make the terms of civilization explicit and thus alienable. This definition is obviously relational, and Warner admits that the “colonial discourse” understood this way can be very much mediated, indirect, and experienced in different ways and vocabularies. This, I think, should make us wary of disregarding the specifics of such vocabularies in our all-engrossing search for the “colonial.” See Michael Warner, “What’s Colonial about Colonial America?” in Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America, ed. Robert Blair St. George, 49-70 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000).
constitution, that figures prominently in Byrd’s writings. It is, after all, not surprising that building a “self” would attract a reflective agent’s attention to the problem of what a “self” is. The second problem is internal to the language of mind and body deployed by Byrd, and concerns the very notion of the text as an instrument of action, in this case of self-control and self-fashioning. The exercise of self-control through the text implies the unproblematic control of the text as a safe and predictable space where established cultural models are deployed with a specific purpose. I will endeavor to show that the text of Byrd’s self-fashioning was far from safe, pliable and predictable, and that his attempt to draw on the resources of his culture (of which the dichotomy mind/body was one of the most important) to explain his failures and transform himself exposed unsolvable contradictions in the worldview and socio-cultural ideal Byrd inherited. The static and reliable dichotomies in which Byrd’s project was conceived were in fact far from stable; mind and body proved to be impossible to separate. I argue that this impossibility was the main driving force behind Byrd’s writings, especially in his most productive period, starting around 1720 and continuing into 1730s. The first two chapters of this dissertation are a story of how Byrd coped, both consciously and unconsciously, with the paradoxes of the patriarchal world he wanted and needed to build within and around himself.

To put this in a different way, Byrd operated in a given discursive structure, which was not specifically Virginian, and tensions and contradictions within that structure are at least as important for the understanding of his texts (as cultural acts) as the “real-life” tensions that may be found in Byrd’s geographical and political position. This re-reading of Byrd’s corpus opens my exploration of the inner logic of the early modern English moral imagination, where the emerging “Virginian discourse” is a ground on which common concerns and assumptions are acted out. The texts we now use as one of the main sources of knowledge on the patriarchal order of Virginia’s golden age show the logical impossibility of that order in the very process of creating a myth of it; Byrd’s Arcadia is a showcase of a cultural dead end, and thus part of the eighteenth-century story of the ancien regime. I will begin by a biographical introduction to the problem of gentlemanly self-fashioning as William Byrd’s project; move to a conceptual analysis of the terms in which Byrd framed his cultural work with the self; and then explore the ways in which the language of soul and body interacted with Byrd’s experience and exhibited in this interaction its richness, versatility, and limits.

1. The Heritage

William Byrd I, the son of a London goldsmith and the father of our protagonist, was born around 1652 and came to Virginia some time before 1670, to live with his maternal uncle Thomas Stegge.24 Stegge was a rich and influential Indian trader, a merchant-planter, a member of Virginia’s Council, and auditor general of the colony. He did not have children of his own, and William Byrd was evidently supposed to inherit his estate, which he duly did in 1671. In 1673, Byrd married Mary Horsmanden Filmer, the daughter of Warham Horsmanden, a loyalist who fled to Virginia during the revolution and served in the House of Burgesses and the Council

before moving back to England with the restoration of monarchy. Curiously, Mary’s first husband was Samuel Filmer, third son of the now-famous author of *Patriarcha* Robert Filmer. The connection was not accidental; the Filmers and the Horsmandens appear to be close-knit parts of a Tory network, tied together by kinship relations and friendship. Warham Horsmanden and Henry Filmer, Samuel’s uncle and brother of the author of *Patriarcha*, removed to Virginia around the same time in 1653, parts of the same wave of Royalist migration. Samuel likely accompanied his uncle on this journey. In his will, written in 1667 before he married Mary Horsmanden, Samuel referred to her as his “friend and cousin” (which appellation did not necessarily mean such a close kinship) and appointed her the sole executrix and legatee of all his estates, even though he was not certain he would live to actually marry her. Also according to the will, Warham Horsmanden and his wife were among the select few relatives, friends, and cousins who were to receive mourning rings. Most of the overseers and witnesses to the will were also Horsmandens. The marriage did take place but was very short. The couple immediately removed to Virginia, where Samuel’s uncle Henry still resided; and there Samuel died in 1670. Mary stayed in Virginia and soon married the up-and-coming William Byrd. The young trader and planter must have appreciated the opportunity to get closer to Governor Berkeley, to whose circle Mary belonged; in any case Byrd seems to have fit quite well into the Tory networks both in Virginia and in England. Byrd’s letters to “father Horsmonde” and to his brother-in-law Daniel Horsmanden show uncoerced affection and familiarity, as well as possible traces of a shared political sentiment. In the wake of Monmouth’s insurrection, Byrd was “heartily glad it pleased God to deliver our nation so speedily from such a dangerous rebellion”; writing to his father-in-law in 1690, Byrd expressed his “great satisfaction in hearing all of your healths att Purleigh, amidst the late amazeing revolutions, & truly I must acknowledge that it seems apparent to mee, that none can bee so happy or contented as those that are retired from public buisiness, or great traffic.” His own participation in Bacon’s Rebellion was brief and soon forgiven. His children, including son William, were brought up and educated in England under the care of the Horsmandens – since they, as Byrd wrote, “could learne nothing good here, in a great family of Negro’s.”

Byrd himself turned out to be well suited for the role of a great man and patriarch at the edge of a wilderness. The estate he inherited from Thomas Stegge was essentially a frontier outpost, located near the beginning of the Trading Path that led far into the Indian lands of present-day South Carolina. The threat of Indian raids was always imminent, and as late as 1690 Byrd wrote of two of his family of slaves and servants carried away and one killed by the Indians. On the

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25 “Historical and Genealogical Notes and Queries,” *VMHB* 15, no. 3 (1907), 315-16.
27 See an abstract of Samuel Filmer’s will in *VMHB* 15, no. 2 (1907), 181.
28 According to another close friend and relative of the Filmers, Frances Culpeper Stephens Berkeley, the wife of governor Berkeley, Mary liked the country very well and was not willing to leave it after the death of her husband: Frances Berkeley to Robert Filmer, undated, 1670?, in Walne, “Henry Filmer,” 427.
29 William Byrd I (hereafter WBI) to Daniel Horsmanden, 8 March 1685, *Correspondence*, 1:55.
30 WBI to Warham Horsmanden, 25 July 1690, *Correspondence*, 1:120.
31 WBI to Warham Horsmanden, March 1684/85, *Correspondence*, 1:32.
32 WBI to Warham Horsmanden, 25 July 1690, *Correspondence*, 1:121.
other hand, Byrd easily took to the life of trade and exploration. When he was nineteen, only a couple of years after his arrival in Virginia, travelers reported hearing of “Mr. Byrd and his great company’s discoveries three miles from the Totera’s town,” which was 250 miles by trail from Byrd’s plantation.  

He soon became a widely acknowledged expert on Indian affairs and the backcountry and the leading Indian trader in Virginia. But he also did everything to diversify his business operations and took up anything that could increase his wealth. During the 1680s, Byrd was getting more and more involved in planting tobacco, slave labor (to the point of having “a great family of Negro’s” in 1685), and even slave trade. In 1684, Byrd shipped to his London agents, the firm of Perry & Lane, 459 hogsheads of tobacco and 10 hogsheads of furs (at least some of the tobacco he would have received as payments for goods sold at his stores). He not only planted tobacco himself but also leased land to tenants. He also sold corn, wheat, and pipe staves to the West Indies and operated a sawmill and gristmills of his own. The sugar, rum, and other goods he received from the West Indies he reshipped further, with the furs and skins from Indians. He imported indentured servants from England and slaves from Africa. Byrd got into the shipping business as well, and owned shares in some of the vessels in which his extensive trading activities were carried out. He was the chief owner of a slave ship captured by a French privateer off the coast of Africa in 1698.  

Office was both another source of income and a sign of social standing and influence – a translation of business success into status. By 1682, when Byrd was appointed to the Council at the age of 30, he had already been a member of the House of Burgesses and had become a colonel in the militia of Henrico County. It was at this point that he sent his son and heir to England, to be educated as a true gentleman under the care of his Cavalier connections. In 1687, Byrd came to England himself; there he competed for and eventually got the very profitable post of deputy auditor of the public accounts of Virginia and receiver general of the colony. He had to receive and report the taxes and quitrents collected in Virginia for the Crown, and he received 7.5% from all the money collected (usually in tobacco). Further, in 1693 Byrd bought the post of auditor from its owner. It brought him approximately £350 to £400 a year. He was by this time one of the richest and most influential men in Virginia. In 1690, he moved to his new estate of Westover in Charles City County, a fine wooden mansion he had built farther from the uneasy frontier and closer to the political center of Virginia. From a great trader, he turned into a great planter.

Public leadership, the role of a pillar and carrier of the social order at the edge of civilization, naturally included not only an economic and political but also an intellectual aspect. We know nothing of William Byrd I’s education, but his life-long interest in the advancement of knowledge is evident – insofar as knowledge is part of building community and establishing a productive social and economic order. In 1678, during his first visit to England since inheriting a Virginia estate, Byrd spent a hefty sum of 60 guineas to acquire from the library of the Earl of Southampton the only existing manuscript copy of the records of the Virginia Company, which

33 Quoted after Correspondence, 1:3.
34 On Byrd’s economic activities, see Emory G. Evans, “A Topping People”: The Rise and Decline of Virginia’s Old Political Elite, 1680-1790 (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 12-13, and Marambaud, “Fortune Built on Smoke.”
35 Evans, “Topping People”, 10-11.
he brought with him to Virginia. This was clearly a public act. Natural knowledge, which, in the words of one of Byrd’s London correspondents, “comes so neer the divine,” was no less a public pursuit. In his home on the frontier, young Byrd welcomed a known naturalist John Banister, who came to Virginia to explore America’s botanical wilderness. Banister enjoyed Byrd’s support till 1692, when he was accidentally shot and killed during an expedition. Byrd acquired the dead naturalist’s library. He developed and cultivated connections with prominent scientists in England, most notably with Sir Hans Sloane and Leonard Plukenett, sending them natural curiosities from Virginia such as rattlesnakes, and requesting books. Among the books Byrd ordered in England were an art manual (William Salmon’s *Polygraphice*), Thomas Burnett’s *Theory of the Earth*, and Robert Boyle’s *Essay about the Origine and Virtues of Gems*. Aspirations to understand the natural world went hand in hand with the dreams of extracting profit from it – with works on natural history, Byrd ordered tools for extracting mineral samples, which he then sent to England. The advancement of the human mind, social interest, and the interest of a great planter were the same – land was the yet untamed foundation of human welfare and a source of personal wealth. What it needed was labor and knowledge, and a polity of men able to organize both into a harmonious whole, where personal wealth would be a social function. A pillar of such commonwealth in the making was William Byrd I, and the same role awaited his son.

The heir’s education combined the classical and the practical. Born in 1674, William was Byrd’s first child. At the age of seven, he was sent from the Virginia frontier and his father’s emerging “great family of Negro’s” to his uncle Daniel Horsmanden in England, to get a proper education. There he went to Felsted Grammar School, under the direction of the highly reputed and experienced schoolmaster Christopher Glasscock. Daniel Horsmanden’s own sons would also attend Felsted later. The school had been a hotbed of Puritanism in the 1640s (Cromwell’s four sons attended it), but Glasscock was a moderate Anglican, and during the Restoration Felsted did not become unfashionable – on the contrary, many “fine gentlemen” attended it. It was small, but known for the quality of instruction in the classical languages and mathematics. As William Byrd I’s correspondence testifies, his son got along well with the schoolmaster and proved a good pupil. He certainly received very good classical instruction and a taste and habit for reading ancient authors. But to continue his education, the boy was sent at the age of sixteen to study commerce in Rotterdam, where a large English community existed. Supposedly, he also found time to visit the French Royal court. We know that he could read Dutch and French in addition to Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But the sojourn did not last long, and William soon expressed a desire to return to London, where he was placed with the firm of Perry & Lane – in the words of his father, “there to learne what may bee further fitting for you and allso to imploy you about business, wherein I hope you will indeavour to acquaint yourselfe that you may bee no stranger to

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37 Dr. Leonard Plukenett to WBI, December 1687, *Correspondence*, 1:72.

38 WBI to Robert Coe, 20 May and 21 June 1684; to Perry & Lane, 21 June 1684, 16 June 1688, *Correspondence*, 20, 23, 26, 82; Evans, *Topping People*, 13.

39 My outline of Byrd II’s biography is factually based mostly on Marambaud, *William Byrd*, and Lockridge, *Diary, and Life*.


41 WBI to Christopher Glasscock and to William Byrd II, 31 March 1685, *Correspondence*, 1:34-5.
itt when necessity will require you to attend itt." After two years of this business training, William took another step and entered the Middle Temple; he was called to the bar in April 1695.

The Middle Temple provided professional legal training as well as a school of gentlemanly social and intellectual life. Byrd took his legal studies seriously, at least if we are to judge by the books he planned to buy, bought, studied, and scribbled in. Byrd’s copies of Edward Coke’s *Complete Copy-Holder* (1641) and John Cowel’s *Institutes of the Lawes of England* (1605) were acquired in the early 1690s and contain his notations in shorthand, probably made in the same years. The first of these works is specifically concerned with landed property, and the second treats of personal rights, forms of dependence, property, and contracts. Byrd also at this time intended to buy, and eventually bought, several works on natural law, including those of Samuel Pufendorf and Richard Cumberland. But no less important for the young gentleman was access to the world of the London literati, to the nobility of mind and of title that congregated at the Middle Temple, coffeehouses around it, theatres, and brothels. William Congreve, Nicholas Rowe, and John Oldmixon (the future author of *The British Empire in America*) pursued legal studies at the Middle Temple when Byrd was there; Isaac Newton, Hans Sloane, and Martin Lister frequented the surrounding coffeehouses; Byrd probably knew Sloane (his father’s acquaintance) personally, and he associated with William Wycherley and Thomas Southerne. He was a connoisseur of theatre, with its free and habitually risqué depictions of the war of the sexes, and with the seedy environs of London playhouses. As he wrote more than four decades later to a former fellow student, now Chief Justice of Massachusetts, “I want to see what alteration forty years have wrought in you since we used to intrigue together in the Temple. But matrimony has atoned sufficiently for such backslidings, and now I suppose you have so little fellow feeling left for the naughty jades that you can order them a good whipping without any relenting.”

Particularly close and valued by Byrd were his relationships with two gentlemen of “colonial” (in this case Irish) roots – Sir Robert Southwell, president of the Royal Society, and Charles Boyle, future Earl of Orrery. The powerful diplomat and bureaucrat Southwell introduced his young protégé to polite society and helped the well-read youth with scholarly ambitions to become a member of the Royal Society in 1696. Byrd and Charles Boyle, to whom the Virginian was also introduced by Southwell, seem to have been kindred souls – only Byrd was untitled, less wealthy, less illustrious, and less accomplished. They were born the same year; both delighted in theatre and rakish pursuits, and both aspired to a reputation as literati and enlightened gentlemen-scholars. Boyle published a play entitled *As You Find It* in 1703, a customarily naughty meditation on the eternal subject of marital discord. His Christ Church edition of the epistles of Phalaris was meant to show off the talents of the only nobleman to graduate from Oxford in a thirty-year period; it sparked off the famous controversy with Dr. Richard Bentley, a key moment in the quarrel between “ancients” and “moderns” in England, reflected in Swift’s *Battle of the Books*. Like Byrd, Boyle was an avid book collector, renowned for his huge library. The two became life-long friends. Like Byrd, Charles Boyle also led an active political life (in the Commons, the Lords, and diplomatic service, for none of which Byrd could hope); interestingly,

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42 WBI to William Byrd II, *Correspondence*, 1:123.
he was a staunch Tory most of the time, and eventually a moderate supporter of the Jacobite cause (more on this in Chapter Three).  

With the exception of a short sojourn in Virginia in 1696-1697, Byrd continued his metropolitan life until 1705. Several aspects of his gentlemanly persona become especially prominent in his texts and activities during this period. His public role was that of a member and representative of Virginia’s political community in London, both in practical and intellectual terms. In 1697, he returned to London as the representative of the Virginia Assembly (to which he was elected during his short stay in the colony), and in 1698 the Council of Virginia officially appointed him agent for the colony. In this role, he mostly defended the interests of great planters against the governor. He actively engaged in court politics, petitioning, for example, on behalf of the colonists against the Crown’s order to send money and soldiers to New York to help that province in its war against Indians. Apparently, during this period he also wrote a history of Virginia, which he shared with his fellow templar John Oldmixon when the latter was gathering materials for his work on the British Empire in America. Byrd’s early effort in descriptive and historical writing has not yet been found, but Oldmixon acknowledged that his chapters on Virginia were “very much indebted” to it, except for “some Places” wherein he followed other guides. It is thanks to Byrd and to his ability and exactness that the account of Virginia turned out to be “one of the most perfect” in Oldmixon’s work. Byrd also very much valued his membership in the Royal Society, attended its meetings, contributed descriptions of American natural curiosities and artifacts, and in 1697 was elected to the Royal Society council, in the company of Newton and Martin Lister. From his trip to Virginia, he brought with him and donated to the society a live rattlesnake and an opossum. The latter was eventually dissected and described in print by the renowned anatomist Edward Tyson.

Byrd seems to have displayed even more enthusiasm for the life of London’s fashionable society. The public arena of political probity and learning (or demonstrations thereof) could not, of course, be strictly distinguished from the beau monde. Robert Southwell, who opened for Byrd the doors of the Royal Society and could be useful as a political patron, also introduced the grandson of a goldsmith to Charles Boyle, to Charles Wager, who would eventually become First Lord of the Admiralty, to John Campbell, from 1703 duke of Argyll, and other members of the high society. These connections would prove politically useful later. Byrd both did a service to his patron and demonstrated his suitability for the role of mentor, gentleman-scholar, and noble connoisseur when, in the summer of 1701, he accompanied Southwell’s nephew Sir John Perceval, future Earl of Egmont, on a tour of England. Customarily for such journeys, the two visited country estates, notable libraries, curiosities and antiquities, and intellectual luminaries such as Dr. Bentley (Boyle’s adversary) and Richard Cumberland, whose work on the law of nature Byrd presumably knew well.

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46 Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7:65-67; see also the article on Robert Southwell, 51:718-721. Southwell’s father was a royalist during the Civil War.


But educational tours and dinner conversations during which “philosophy flew around the table faster than wine” also prepared ground for other conversations and exchanges, dealing in gallantry, wit, and parody, and related to gentlemanly learning and connoisseurship as form to substance. Acquisition of a fund of knowledge and training in aesthetic discernment and quickness of the mind gave qualifications for the play of signs, forms, and conventions that was at the center of “fashionable” life and that took on a life of its own in the service of pleasure rather than of virtue. Byrd eagerly took part in this play. His literary inclinations found expression not only in the high-minded labor of describing the natural and civil history of his native country. He also wrote character sketches of society men and women, which were supposed to display both wit and reason in judging virtues and vices and to entertain other society men and women by the familiarity of the portraits. Dances, plays, card games, teas, and visits to fashionable spas such as Tunbridge Wells were occasions for producing witty verses in praise of ladies or indecent satires and parodies such as “Upon a Fart,” printed in Poems on Affairs of State in 1704 and found in one of Byrd’s notebooks. The poem may or may not be his, but he most certainly wrote similar ones. In this everyday literature, highly formal gallantry and a ritualistically refined language of love fused with no less stylized grossness, with the desire to expose the sordid body behind the ritual of love-play. At Tunbridge Wells, Byrd could write: “Cold Phebe’s too neglectfull air, / The humble Crowd of Lovers mourn: / Obsequiously her Chains they wear, / And much for Eys & acres burn.” Behind a “Phebe’s” back, the admirers of eyes and acres (with Byrd among them) could give vent to their feelings thus: “Shapeless Fart! we ne’er can show Thee / But in that merry Female sport / In which by burning blew we know Thee / Th’ Amusement of the Maids at Court.” Such free literary amusements were part of belonging to the high social circles. Many years later Byrd boasted to his Virginia neighbors that Colley Cibber’s play The Careless Husband, produced and published in 1705, had been written “by the Lord Carteret (afterwards Earl of Granville), the Duke of Argyle, Lord Orrery (the same who was sent to the Tower in the Reign of George the first) and himself in Concert,” and that the four presented this “elegant Performance” to Cibber. The story may not be entirely true, but it is not intrinsically implausible. It was something a group of irreverent young friends of high birth and standing could very well have done to kill time.

Relations between the sexes were the main subject of this culture of wit and amusement, and matrimony was its main concern – as a continuation and/or end (in more senses than one) of gallant sociability, as well as an object of transgression and irreverence. In a self-portrait drawn up perhaps around this period but revised in the 1720s, “Inamorato l’Oiseaux,” Byrd reflected on himself in the third person: “In some frolicks no state appear’d so happy to him as matrimony, the convenience, the tenderness the society of that condition, made him resolve upon his own ruine, and set up for a Wife. He fancy’d it too sullen too splenatique to continue single, and too liable to the inconvenience that attend accidental and promiscuous gallantry. In this humour he’d work himself violently in love with some nymph of good sense, whose Understanding forsooth might

49 As it did, according to Byrd’s report, during dinner at Bentley’s: Byrd to Robert Southwell, 5 August 1701, Correspondence, 1:212.


keep under all the impertinent starts of a Woman's temper.”

Marriage signified good (tender) sentiment, regularity, and good sense, but, as an aim of a young gentleman of Byrd’s kind, did not seem essentially different from everyday gallantry, similarly combining in itself the desires for sex and society. A desire for “acres” that would be necessary to sustain sociable life in the world of fashion should also not be forgotten. Longing for matrimony thus did not leave the realm of fancy, illusion, and violent passions. The main episode of Byrd’s social life in England before 1705 was his wooing of Lady Elizabeth Cromwell, the only daughter of the Fourth Earl of Ardglass and Baron Cromwell, and an heiress of two thousand pounds a year. Then 29 and the same age as Byrd, Betty Cromwell was lively and witty, apparently very popular among the high society. She had all the characteristics, from wealth to easy natural sociability and intelligence, to charm Byrd. His pursuit of Betty’s heart and hand was highly conventional and stylized, but at the same time genuine and, with time, increasingly desperate; he did indeed “work himself violently in love” and did not manage to hide the “violence” of his feeling. When Elizabeth Cromwell left for Ireland, Byrd wrote to her: “The instant your coach drove away, Madam, my heart felt as if it had been torn up by the very roots, and the rest of my body as if severed limb from limb…. My soul was perfectly put out of tune, my senses were all stunned, & my spirits fluttered about my heart in the last confusion. It was well for me that my faculties were in that hurry, for had I retained the power of reflection, I should have run distracted.”

The strength of expression did not help Byrd. He continued to send letters to Ireland for months, filled with pleas, cajoling, gallant confessions, social gossip that was supposed to keep Elizabeth Cromwell interested in the correspondence, and “characters” of the members of London society to entertain the lady. She replied only once, commanding Byrd to stop the correspondence, and eventually she married Byrd’s friend Edward Southwell, the son of Byrd’s patron.

Kenneth Lockridge, in his impressive attempt to explore Byrd’s inner world, characterizes the affair, the one-way correspondence it produced, and generally this period of Byrd’s London life as a series of frantic and hysterical efforts to achieve genuine recognition, both social and political, as an English gentleman, and to reassure himself and others of his right to high status “by recapitulating obsessively the performances expected of a gentleman.” The way Lockridge sees it, the roots of Byrd’s failure were both in his colonial origins and, more importantly, in the emotional handicap of his early separation from his father and the lack of a “significant other” that would have been a role model of the gentleman in Byrd’s early life in a strange land. Byrd absorbed the role of a gentleman, required to fulfill his distant father’s ambitions for him and his own ambitions to outdo his father, as written, formal precepts – as book learning rather than living metaphors and human behavior. And so Byrd’s performance of the role was brittle, unconvincing, alternating between form, constraint, “obsessive and mannered clichés” filling his gallant correspondence, and outpourings of emotion and neediness such as in the above letter to Elizabeth Cromwell. He was never fully “accepted.”

What goes unnoticed here is the tension and conflict within the accepted patterns of genteel life between learning and wit, virtue and gallantry, the substance of the gentlemanly self and the show of fashion. If we leave for a moment twentieth-century psychological constructions and ask how Byrd himself interpreted the quality and results of his gentlemanly performance, this potential

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53 Byrd to Facetia (Lady Betty Cromwell), 12 June 1703, Correspondence, 1:217.
54 Lockridge, Diary, 26-39.
conflict becomes important. It is indeed quite possible that Byrd navigated the rift with more difficulty, and felt it more keenly, than, say, Charles Boyle, Fourth Earl of Orrery, and that Lockridge’s psychological explanations for that difficulty are correct. Then Byrd’s case is all the more interesting for exploring the existential significance and meaning-making potential of the tension between form and substance in the gentlemanly self. I will return to the problem later, but now will only note that Byrd’s failures on which Lockridge mostly concentrates were the failures of per-form-ance and self-presentation, and that his inadequacy in elegant writing, wit, gallantry, and the ritualized “war of the sexes” in high society could without difficulty be construed as a form of virtue, and turned against the high society. So, in his self-portrait, Byrd reflected at length about his falling short of “that life and gaiety, that freedome and pushing confidence which hits the Ladys.” He admits his proclivity to “look like a fool, & talk like a Philosopher, when both his Eys and his Tongue shou’d have sparkled with wit and waggery.” But these failings turn out to be elements of a pattern. Byrd’s Inamorato is also “sincere to an indiscretion himself, and therefore abhors dissimulation in other people.” He “never cou’d flatter any body, no not himself, which were two invincible bars to all preferment.” Similarly, “[h]is religion is more in substance than in form, and he is more forward to practice vertue than profess it.” So is, in part, Byrd’s own self-justifying interpretation of the lack of political or matrimonial success in his London life.

2. Patriarch and Lover

Byrd’s father died in December 1704, leaving his son an estate of more than 26,000 acres. Byrd immediately went to Virginia to take possession of the property, and made efforts to secure the political offices that had “belonged” to his father. He was not immediately successful in the latter task. Still in England, he was confirmed in the offices of Virginia’s auditor and receiver general. But the two posts, whose concentration in the same hands presented obvious opportunities for defrauding the Crown, were almost immediately divided. Byrd remained only the receiver general. He also had to wait four years before taking his father’s seat on the Council. But, despite these setbacks and delays, Byrd already occupied his most important positions as a landlord, one of the richest men in Virginia, and a pillar of Virginia society. His transition from the London and Tunbridge beau monde to Virginia country life was a transition from the threatening emptiness of form, which he guiltily loved but at which he did not excel, to the substance of true gentlemanly life, inseparable from its roots in the estate, land, labor, and patriarchal family.

Byrd still could not imagine relations between the sexes without gallant literary conventions, which raised their head again in his ritual letters as a love-struck suitor to Lucy Parke, whom he began courting soon after his arrival in Virginia. But this correspondence was more clearly an ornament to his dynastic and affectionate union with the daughter of the newly-minted governor of the Leeward Islands Daniel Parke, who had left his family and estate in Virginia. Byrd gradually moved in his letters to “Fidelia” (Lucy Parke) towards discussing love in general, trying to avoid a direct description (necessarily formulaic) of his own passion. When the language of

55 “Inamorato,” 278-80.

56 So for instance: “Tis above a month by loves calendar since I had the happiness to see you, & methinks the sun loiters in his course, and seems as loath to leave this side of the globe as I was to leave you. The nights too appear as long as if Jupiter were getting another Hercules, to rid this country of our monsters. I tumble and toss and woud faign sleep, to supply those wants by imagination which you will not let me supply in substance,” Byrd to Fidelia (Lucy Parke), ca. 1705-1706, Correspondence, 1:252.
love was called upon to *express* the substance of love, it was soon devalued; it necessarily verged on excess when juxtaposed with the substance which it was supposed to formulate. So, Byrd both invoked the language of love in talking about others and distanced himself from the language:

“Thus my dear Fidelia I have given you an account of the state of love amongst other people. I need not tell you how thoroughly I feel it myself, because I have mentioned it before, and fear least the repetition of it should prove sickly & mawkish to your stomach. However pray do me the justice to believe, that… I have the most tender passion in the world for you, tho perhaps I don’t stuff my letters, with those fond flourishes, with which the common herd of lovers spoil a great deal of paper.” Byrd rhetorically refrained from the multiplication of forms. He wanted the “substance” to express itself directly, to “leave my actions to speak for me.”

And it was (material) substance that created the necessary foundation for happiness: “I dont question,” wrote Byrd to Lucy’s father, “but my fortune may be sufficient to make her happy, especially after it had been assisted by your bounty.”

Marriage as a social act was certainly supposed to increase further the substance on which Byrd’s gentlemanly self relied. We do not know what dowry Byrd received after he married Lucy Parke in May 1706, but Daniel Parke’s last will, which had to be produced sooner than expected, after Parke was killed in a riot in Antigua in 1710, sorely disappointed Byrd. Lucy inherited only £1,000 in cash, while Parke’s Virginia estates went to her sister Frances, the wife of Byrd’s friend John Custis. Byrd, however, had already been working to expand his own estate, and, through the dynastic connection, felt entitled to a part of Parke’s plantations. Since part of the land in question was to be sold to pay off Parke’s numerous debts, Byrd decided to assume and pay off the debts in exchange for taking over the lands and slaves that were to be sold. Money is a fleeting and insubstantial sign, it comes and goes. On the other hand, landed property (with slaves to cultivate it) is true substance, the permanent source of wealth. The decision turned out to be wrong, the debts proved to be significantly larger than Byrd had been led to believe (fraud on the part of Byrd’s and Parke’s London agents is possible), and till late in his life Byrd would keep trying to get out of this embrace of the money economy.

However, these financial problems were to emerge in full force only later. In the meantime, the new planter was busy organizing a genteel and elegant country life for himself without the excesses of London. One of the main improvements that he made to his father’s mansion was a library – a long spacious gallery, separate from the main house, which Byrd built in 1709 (and, apparently, designed on his own). It took Byrd several days of work to move his book collection, which was already one of the largest private collections in North America, to the new structure. This abode of a gentleman-scholar and a connoisseur became a part of the mansion but at the same time a space distinct and distanced from the space of the family, where Byrd ruled (or tried to rule) his wife, children and other subjects. Of course, the separation from the family life was, so to speak, only traced, not firmly drawn. At least one of the famous “flourishes” that Byrd “gave” to his wife happened on the couch in the library. Lucy used the library for its intended purpose as well. Byrd did not hide his books from others, but rather invited others, beginning with the immediate family, into his intellectual universe. He endeavored to make the library a center of elegance and order, decorating it with portraits of the family and genteel London friends.

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57 Byrd to Fidelia, ca. 1705-1706, *Correspondence*, 1:256.
58 Byrd to “Seignor Fanfaroni” (Daniel Parke), ca. 1705-1706, *Correspondence*, 1:256.
and gilding most of his books to give the full shelves a uniform, orderly, and beautiful appearance. The garden was another center of connoisseurship and purely aesthetic work of improvement on the estate. Already in the time of William Byrd I, Robert Beverley had called the Westover garden the finest in Virginia – blending refinement and Americanness with its elegant “Summer-House set round with the Indian Honey-Suckle, which all the Summer is continually full of sweet Flowers,” in which hummingbirds delighted exceedingly. The heir continued making improvements, and his collection of books on gardening was the largest in colonial America.

In these surroundings and beyond them, Byrd continued a very active social life of visits, trips, and conversation. According to Michael Zuckerman’s calculations, from 1709 to 1712 Byrd had visitors at Westover almost two days out of every three and spent almost one night out of three outside Westover, visiting his neighbors, spending time in the colonial capital, and inspecting outlying plantations. He remained an utterly public man who put little, if any, value in domestic intimacy. But there was a significant difference between his social life in England and in Virginia. In England, Byrd was alone, a wealthy heir far from home, in a circle of friends and acquaintances not in any way related to him. His social circle in Virginia was an extension of his large plantation family, and his social life was an immediate extension of his role as a planter and Virginia grandee. His friends were also likely to be his relatives from the closely connected clans; his “neighbors” did not live, like Byrd, in rented quarters on the nearby London street, but were, like Byrd and his wife, masters and mistresses on the nearby plantations; his servants were not London strangers but family whose lives were tied to Byrd’s estate. In London, Byrd belonged, or endeavored to belong, to the beau monde whose only content was its form. In Virginia he was one of the main players in an economic, political, and social community in which socializing was based on more than personal desires and caprice. As Zuckerman observes, Byrd’s social pleasures in Virginia “had about them an aura of purpose,” while in London they “only betrayed his aimlessness.” In London, Byrd’s “distance from all sense of social efficacy drove him to throw himself more madly into mere activity and, at the same time, sharpened his awareness of the disjointed dullness of his days.”

But in Virginia as in London, intensive social intercourse had to be balanced with the private cultivation of the gentlemanly self. Any kind of community and sociability potentially fosters empty formality. Sociability had to be kept close to its true content – to the intellectual and moral being of a human agent which social intercourse was supposed to reflect, express, and promote. So, in his self-portrait, Byrd reflected on his own social life in third person: “Too much company distacts his thoughts, and hinders him from digesting his observations into good sence. It makes

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60 Quoted after Hayes, Library of William Byrd, 47.
62 Ibid., 140, 142. I would however stress that I see the difference between Byrd’s social life in England and in Virginia as a difference in kind, rather than degree. It was not so much, as Zuckerman interprets it, a difference between the more settled, established and developed society of England and the thin, still tentative and undeveloped society of the colony where Byrd had to consciously construct and foster a community. It was a more a difference between the “city/court” and “country.” This distinction was more salient for the contemporaries than the one between the “metropolitan” and “colonial” that has preoccupied American studies; the same kind of estate socializing that swallowed Byrd whole in Virginia could have been found in the long-settled English countryside. For a salient example from Buckinghamshire, see Susan E. Whyman, Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys, 1660-1720 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially pp. 17-37.
a man superficial, penetrateing no deeper than the surface of things. One notice crowds out another, having no time to sink into the mind. A constant hurry of visits & conversation gives a man a habit of inadvertancy, which betrays him into faults without measure & without end. For this reason he commonly reserve'd the morning to himself, and bestow'd the rest upon his freinds.  

63 These were mornings of reading, thought, reflection, and of composing himself, presumably in the orderly and elegant atmosphere of Byrd's library, for his daily rounds. It was usually in these hours that Byrd wrote in his famous diary, reviewing his conduct on the day before. Along with letters to friends, relatives, and business partners, the diary became almost the sole form of writing for Byrd, to the exclusion of the witty and gallant epistles, courteous verses, and characters that occupied him in London. Together with obligatory morning readings, usually in Greek and Latin, prayer, exercise, and moderate meals, the diary was a crucial instrument in the shaping and maintaining a regular gentlemanly self, balanced, moderate in everything, free from strong passion and disease, a unity of a cultivated mind and a healthy body. The diary was part of the regimen, but it also embraced the regimen as a whole as an utterly simple and concise written record of it – or rather a transparent reflection of the regimented self as such.

But the moral and social existence that Byrd was building for himself proved fragile. Byrd's marriage did not quite live up to the image of a patriarchal social union of property, affection and mutual confidence. Lucy Byrd continually "showed her temper" and challenged (or rather sabotaged, at least in Byrd's view) her husband's authority in the household. An even graver threat to the marital core came from the peripheral, but inseparable from marriage, area of the greater household when Byrd, as was the custom among the great men of the country, took into the Westover family Mary Jeffreys Dunn. A deserted wife of a pastor from the neighborhood, she found refuge and subsistence in Byrd's household. She sometimes looked after Byrd, and she served as a friend and companion to his wife. As Byrd wrote in a remarkable fake letter of complaint probably designed to be left open and read by Lucy or Mrs. Dunn, the latter, like an evil serpent, "with seasonable flattery, and humouring all my wife's foibles, and easing of some of her domestic troubles," gained an entire assent over Mrs. Byrd, and instigated marital discord. Among other things, she "preacht up a very dangerous doctrine, that in case a husband dont allow his wife mony enough, she may pick his pocket or plunder his scrutore to do her self justice, of which she is to be her own judge. I leave it to you Madam whether this be doctrine very conducive to the peace of familys, and whether those that propagate it don't deserve to be expell'd from all well-govern'd societys in the universe?" Byrd conceived the family as a social structure defined by a skeleton of property, governance, and subordination that framed the no less tangible sexual relation of "one flesh." This tangible system of relations integrated the human into the social through the sense of duty and the feeling of confidence: the emotional content of the marital union was determined by this material skeleton. So, Byrd warned both women of the potential of this course of behavior to "root out all confidence betwixt me and my wife. This heavenly confide[nce] is the only tye of affection, and when that is bro[ken] farewell love, farewell peace, farewell happ[iness]. T'is impossible to love those we can't trust, and therefore t'is the most absurd thing in nature f[or] a wife to forfeit that sacred fidelity, not only [to] her husbands bed, but also to his interest..."  

64 Human (of course, first and foremost female) fragility,

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64 Byrd to “Dunella,” ca. 1711-1715?, Correspondence, 1:276, 279. The same relation between emotion and the tangible material connection can be applied to offspring, where the physical (the fact of generation) and the social (a relation of property) are even less distinguishable. So consider an anonymous late seventeenth-century "person of quality": "...Where there is a distinct property, it naturally creates love, and love maintains protection; so that if we run
foibles, and excess of passion or temper created the possibility of a gap between the social selfhood, defined by relations, and the imperfection of humanity. We will see below that Byrd’s view of marriage as a phenomenon remained for a long time highly pessimistic.

But external threats were even more serious. They came from Byrd’s pursuit of social and political status, implicitly a measure of human (gentlemanly) worth. Mastery (internal and external) and social preeminence were the essential elements of the self Byrd was fashioning for himself. His achieved eminence in Virginian society, directly related to his landed wealth, proved not sufficient for Byrd in another frame of reference – the English one, where Byrd had associated with the likes of the Duke of Argyle and Earl of Orrery, aspired to intellectual and social fraternity with them, but was not their equal in property or “external” social status. Byrd was a Virginian, but not only a Virginian. His efforts to obtain the governorship of Virginia or at least that of Maryland, intensified in the 1710s, I do not see as “the only way in which a colonial gentleman could establish beyond doubt his status as an English gentleman” as such. Rather, it was the only more or less realistic way for Byrd to become an English gentleman of a high status on par with his titled acquaintances. I will not speculate to what extent Byrd’s intense ambition reflected a desire to surpass his father, as Kenneth Lockridge proposes. But money and power did become for Byrd a kind of nagging obsession, as Lockridge colorfully describes. For instance, in the aftermath of almost receiving the lieutenant-governorship of Virginia for £1,000 from the absentee governor Earl of Orkney in 1710, but being thwarted by the Duke of Marlborough, Byrd records in his diary how he “dreamed last night that the lightning almost put out one of my eyes, that I won a tun full of money and might win more if I had ventured, that I was great with my Lord Marlborough.” Curiously, the dream about wealth and high places combines here with an image of physical loss, an injury to the body. About this relationship I will speak later on. It was also around this time, early in 1712, that Byrd made a deal acquiring his father-in-law’s lands and slaves together with his debts. Lockridge stresses the symbolic meaning of acquiring the estate of nearly the only colonial who held in this period a governorship in America, and thus assuming his status in Virginia. But increasing Byrd’s “real substance” seems no less important a motive. His standing in the colonial community was also under threat, and his social and political power and influence were being sorely tested. Having lost the opportunity to become a governor himself, Byrd developed a very tense relationship with the more fortunate Alexander Spotswood, who was determined to assert the influence of the Crown in the colony and viewed with mistrust and distaste the dense web of propertied interest and dynastic connections that underlay the status and assertiveness of the great families of Virginia. Byrd was in the forefront of the “aristocratic” opposition to the governor, and he and Spotswood became personal enemies. When Spotswood began to challenge Byrd’s position as the receiver general of the colony, the threat became

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65 Lockridge, Diary, 74.
66 Marion Tinling and Louis B. Wright, eds., The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712 (Richmond, VA.: Dietz Press, 1941), 31 March and 29 August, 1710.
67 Ibid., 2 February, 1712.
serious, because the income from that office was vital at the time when Byrd faced the unexpected “inflation” of Daniel Parke’s debts. Politics, money, and family all seemed to go awry and threatened to pull down Byrd the great planter.  

In 1714, Byrd went to England, in order to sort out personally the problem of Parke’s debts, to protect his office and political standing against Spotswood’s attacks, and possibly even to unseat the latter and become governor himself. The stay in England, which lasted much longer than Byrd had probably expected, eventually turned into a series of failures and disappointments. Despite some tactical successes, Byrd failed to undermine Spotswood’s position. He had to sell the office of the receiver, the possession of which was less and less respectable and politically tenable the longer Byrd was away from the colony, and to use the money to finance his political struggles. Spotswood eventually petitioned to have Byrd removed even from the Council of Virginia; faced with this grave threat, Byrd had to go on a humiliating trip to Virginia in 1719 in order to make peace with the governor. His own ambition for the governorship had to be buried. Meanwhile, the Parke debt continued to grow towards more than triple Byrd’s annual income. Further, in 1716, when it became clear that Byrd could not return to Virginia in the near future, Lucy traveled to England to join him, and very soon died of smallpox. “Gracious God what pains did she take to make a voyage hither to seek a grave,” wrote Byrd. However stormy, the marriage was affectionate, and Byrd seems to have been sincerely grieved.

But almost immediately after Lucy’s death Byrd embarked on a search for a wealthy English heiress to marry. Early in 1717, the middle-aged widower began courting Mary Smith, a 24-year old daughter of a wealthy commissioner of the excise, who lived across the street from Byrd in the Strand. The affair, which included meetings at masquerades, gallant letters in invisible ink, and making “distant love” from the window, proved disastrous. In her blunt letters, “Sabina” (Ms. Smith) never spared the feelings of the ageing suitor. Her father was firmly against the marriage. When Byrd gave him an account of his estate, stressing the possession of 43,000 acres of land (compare with 26,000 acres in 1704), 220 negroes, and on average almost £1,700 of clear annual income, but forgetting to mention Parke’s debts, Mr. Smith replied that an estate in Virginia was no better than an estate on the moon. The strength of Byrd’s desire to possess Ms. Smith clearly appears from his attempt to borrow, despite his existing debts, another £10,000 to impress her father by settling this sum on her if they got married. Byrd’s carefully cultivated self-control failed miserably under the assault of passion, which deprived him of financial circumspection, gentlemanly rationality, and pride. He often dreamed of “his mistress,” as he called her, tried to catch her at the theatre, opera, or in the park, and at least on one occasion consulted a conjurer or seer who gave him hope his mistress would be kind again. Writing to

68 Lockridge, Diary, 76-77.
69 Byrd to John Custis, 13 December, 1716, Correspondence, 1:296.
70 For a detailed account, see Another Secret Diary, 298, n. 2, and generally pp. 298-359, where the correspondence relating to this affair is collected; also Lockridge, Diary, 87-95. For “distant love,” see William Byrd, The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings, ed. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 9 April, 1718.
71 Byrd to “Vigilante” (John Smith), 18 February, 1718, Another Secret Diary, 321-324; London Diary, 7 April 1718.
72 For the conjurer, see London Diary, 4 April 1718; in another case Byrd’s female acquaintance consulted the same conjurer, “Old Abram,” about Byrd’s case, 1 May, 1718. For a salient example of dreaming about Mary Smith, see 12 March, 1718: “I dreamed this night that I kissed Miss Smith very much and that her father would die this morning.”
Ms. Smith that his love was “so violent as to be ungovernable,” Byrd was not simply deploying another gallant phrase.73 And when Mary Smith sent a lawyer to inform insistent Byrd that he should not bother her any more, Byrd, as he writes in his diary, “cried exceedingly.”74 The affair eventually ended in May 1718, when “Sabina” resolved on Byrd’s rival, Sir Edward Des Bouverie, the heir of a wealthy merchant and a member of Parliament. It also left behind perhaps Byrd’s finest poetical work, a song full of sincere anger and disappointment about “Sabina with an Angel’s face,” who charms and destroys men. Byrd wishes: “Let Age with double speed o’retake her; / Let Love the room of Pride supply; / and when the Fellows all forsake her, / Let her gnaw the sheets & dy.”75

So, 1718-1719 became for Byrd a period of deep personal crisis and of financial, political, and personal disappointments. His London life in the early 1720s, after returning from a short trip to Virginia, was not especially different, beset with debt problems and another failed courtship. And all these vicissitudes took place amidst endless and pointless social rounds, masquerades, trips to Tunbridge Wells, and visits to brothels and nights at bagnios with women picked up in the streets, all recorded with mind-numbing regularity in the diary.76 In terms of sex, the years in London were quite a change compared to Byrd’s married life in Virginia in 1705-1714: if in the 1709-1712 diary Lawrence Stone has counted on average twenty-five sexual episodes a year, in 1718 the diary records fifty-seven orgasms, and in 1719 – eighty-nine.77 Byrd’s interpreters certainly noted the correlation, and drew connections in line with the (post)modern psychological imagination and gender sensibility. I will however argue that, if by the active pursuit of illicit sexual encounters Byrd really “buoyed his flagging sense of his own virility” in “displays of sexual prowess with women he could dominate,”78 the strategy was far from deliberate. More indicative of his own perception of his activities may be an evening in June 1718, when Byrd “walked home and endeavoured to pick up a woman, but could not, thank God.”79 There is a certain resignation and sense of helplessness in these words, even if references to God in Byrd’s diary are usually rather formulaic. His libido got the better of him in London, and there are reasons to believe that his previous sex life in Virginia was constrained more by circumstances and lack of opportunities than by self-control or sexual constitution. The 1709-1712 diary records his advances whenever an opportunity arose, and once (in the excitement of a game) even in front

73 Byrd to “Sabina,” 17 April, 1718, Another Secret Diary, 343.
74 London Diary, 30 March 1718.
75 “A Song,” in Another Secret Diary, 202-203.
76 As an example of a regular social round, see 12 March 1718: “…My man brought me a letter from my dear Miss Smith that gave me abundance of concern because therein I was forbid to write any more. About 5 o’clock I went home and from thence to Will’s Coffeehouse, where I stayed about an hour and then went to visit Mrs. S-t-r-r but she was out. Then I went to Mrs. C-r-y but she was out. Then I went to Mrs. U-m-s and they were out; then to Mrs. L-c-b-r where I stayed till 9 o’clock and then went to Court where was abundance of company. From thence I walked home about eleven and found a letter from my Lord Dunkellen to inform me that Miss Smith would be in the park tomorrow.”
78 Brown, Good Wives, 332, 328.
79 London Diary, 11 June 1718.
of his wife with another woman. Lucy Byrd was frequently pregnant or otherwise “indisposed,” but even that did not always stop Byrd. However, it was the “sexual underworlds” of London that revealed to him the full extent of his self-perceived weakness. There the diary virtually loses its controlling function as the performance of a gentlemanly identity and becomes a matter-of-fact record of the routine of vice over which Byrd has no power, with an occasional “God forgive me.”

3. Soul and Body

In Byrd’s feeling of powerlessness against the urges of his flesh I see a key element of his understanding of himself, his life, and his place in the world. We may seek the roots of Byrd’s political, economic, or matrimonial failures in his colonial status and/or unsatisfactory relationship with his father, and conclude that such failures prompted compensatory sexual activity necessary to reassert virility or construct a “masculine persona.” But in Byrd’s world the arrow of causality pointed in the opposite direction. Of course, it would be difficult to determine to what extent Byrd’s sexual activity was physiologically conditioned. But he himself clearly thought that it was, as the opening of his “Inamorato l’Oiseaux” testifies: “Never did the sun shine upon a Swain who had more combustible matter in his constitution than the unfortunate Inamorato. Love broke out upon him before his Beard, and he cou’d distinguish sexes long before he cou’d the difference betwixt Good & Evil. [...] Tis well he had not a Twin-sister as Osyris had, for without doubt like him he wou’d have had an amourette with her in his mothers belly.” It was the violent “civil war” between Inamorato’s principles and his inclinations that “hinder’d him From reaching that Eminence in the World, which his Freinds and his Abilitys might possibly have advancit him to.”

Kenneth Lockridge, in his relentless pursuit of the colonial dilemma in Byrd’s writings, dismisses this statement as an “initial tendency” to lay the blame not where it really belongs, although he does have to acknowledge that it reflects Byrd’s deep-seated fear of his emotional and sexual impulses. A psychological explanation is not far behind: according to Lockridge, such fear is “often found in personalities haunted b...
human individuality and the inner constitution (structure) of the human agent to which, perhaps, a consistent social reflection necessarily led. Already in the first fundamental Western attempt at political philosophy, Socrates tied his investigation of political regimes to establishing the basic structure of the human soul and differentiated it into three parts: calculating, desiring, and spirited. The first two, in Socrates’ view, opposed each other, and the third, representing the energy and emotions of the soul (not to be confused with physical needs and desires), was by its nature an auxiliary to the calculating part, unless corrupted by bad rearing. These parts corresponded to the three classes in Socrates’ city (or rather the classes corresponded to the parts of the soul): the money-making, the auxiliary (guardians and defenders of the city), and the deliberative. In both cases, men will achieve justice and happiness when the calculating and spirited part “will be set over the desiring – which is surely most of the soul in each… and they will watch it for fear of its being filled with the so-called pleasures of the body and thus becoming big and strong, and then not minding its own business, but attempting to enslave and rule what is not appropriately ruled by its class and subverting everyone’s entire life.”

Perhaps Byrd feared that his life had become an example of such subversion.

The struggle between principles and inclinations, between reason and desire, seen as the content of our moral life, reflected an essential complexity and heterogeneity of “man.” Plato’s writings were perhaps the first to register so forcefully the emergent and very lasting preoccupation, in Western reflection on man, with the problem of the coexistence, union, and conflict of two independent and different phenomena – soul and body, or, more broadly, spirit and matter. It seemed plain to most, before the modern age of natural sciences, that human reason, understanding, cognition, and the ability to discover and follow the laws of nature and moral principles were simply irreducible to animal bodily functions and had to represent a specific form or level of existence, differentiating man in kind from the animal creation. As the famous eighteenth-century physician George Cheyne said, “I take it for granted, that the intelligent Principle is of a very different, if not quite contrary, Nature from this organisical Machin which contains it; and has scarce any thing in common to them, but as they are Substances.”

The advances in the understanding of the human body since the sixteenth century did not significantly undermine the basic dualism. It was natural for Byrd, in a short sketch of human anatomy in his commonplace book (the source has not been identified), to assert that human nerves were “the channels thro’ which the animal Spirits are conveyd to all Parts, and are the cause of every Sence and Motion,” as well as to identify two other kinds of spirits: “vital,” which “flow with the artereal Blood thro’ the arreys, & give life and heat to the whole Body,” and “natural,” which move via the veins and “are employd in nourishing every particular member.” But it was important for him to note, in this anatomical description, that, regarding all these spirits, “we are sure they are only the fine parts of matter, because they are common to all living creatures, and

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utterly distinct from the Reasonable Soul, which is peculiar to man, & makes him the Image of his Maker. All the acquaintance we have with this divine part of us, depends upon some of its Qualities & effects. We discern it to be the Power by which we think, reason, decide, and will any thing, & particularly the faculty by which we arrive at the Knowledge of the Supreme Being.” Such faculties animals most certainly do not have, although they have instincts engrafted in their nature, which partly supply the place of reason.\(^{87}\)

The apparent confusion between the dualist and “tripartite” approach to the human being that the reader may have noticed in the above paragraphs is really the central tension of the dualist world-picture. It is based on the difference between the consideration of substances and the consideration of the human constitution. In the latter, the material and the spiritual, even if conceived as substantially different from each other, must somehow unite and interact. The “third” component of the human constitution (the point of conjunction) could be seen to partake of both matter and spirit, or, more likely, to be a very refined degree of matter, so refined as to be able to somehow directly interact with the spiritual substance. It was not likely to be understood as a third kind of substance, essentially different from both matter and spirit. Precisely where this point of interaction was and how it could be described was the great intellectual and imaginative problem that substance dualism faced when trying to make sense of human nature. So, for instance, the connection between the immaterial soul and the material body could be imagined in the form of “spirits” – the lightest forms of matter that could be seen as the material analogue of the soul, an “animal soul,” the source of energy and life. The recurring semantic confusions, splits and parallels between spiritual substance and animal spirits, the pure immaterial soul and the animal soul underline the imaginative difficulties that human nature posed for dualist thinking.

According to Byrd’s commonplace book, one of the reasons why the eating of animal blood was forbidden in ancient times was “because the Soule of all Brutes consists in the fine parts of the blood, & we are only permitted to devour their Bodys.” And further, “as the Soul or Essence of the Brute is in the Blood, the eating of it might in some measure graft it in our Selves.”\(^{88}\) The animal essence that brings our selves and our blood so closely to brutes as to make a direct contamination possible, also serves as a representation, or the agent, of the other, immaterial, kind of spirit in the body. Through it, and only through it, can our soul act in the material world. Even George Cheyne, who doubted the practical value and validity of the idea of animal spirits, had to make certain conclusions from the postulate of “Nature’s never passing from Positive to Negative Quantities, till it goes thro’ the Medium of Nothing, or infinitely small of the same Denomination; its never passing from Motion to Rest, but thro’ infinitely small Motion: In a Word, its never acting in Generals, by Starts, Jumps, or unequal Steps.” It might not be improbable that “in Substances of all Kinds, there may be Intermediates between pure, immaterial Spirit and gross Matter, and that the intermediate, material Substance, may make the Cement between the human Soul and Body, and may be the Instrument or Medium of all its Actions and Functions, where material Organs are not manifest.”\(^{89}\) The views of so superlative a Puritan as Cotton Mather on this problem were not much different from those expressed by a fashionable London physician

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\(^{88}\) *Commonplace Book*, [538].

\(^{89}\) Cheyne, *English Malady*, 87.
and those carefully recorded by a Virginia cavalier. In November of 1705, Mather, another great American diarist, inserted in his journal a “self-examination,” which was essentially an attempt at a Protestant theory of the human constitution. “The Oracles of God,” wrote Mather, “make a Distribution of Man, into three Parts, the Spirit, the Soul, and the Body…. The Spirit is the rational Mind; created and infused, by an immediate Operation of God. The Soul is a vital Flame, convey’d from our Parents; the next Seat of our Passions; of so fine a Temper that it can strike the Spirit, and yett of so gross a Temper, that it can also move the Body; tis the Soul by which all meer Animals are actuated. The Body, is the obvious Receptacle and Habitation of these wonderful Agents.”90 Despite the terminological differences, the identity of the basic tripartite/dualist system is evident.

Mather’s “soul” here is much like the brute soul residing in the blood, which we have seen in Byrd’s commonplace book. It is the energy of life that we share with the brute creation and, in Mather’s view, the means by which our reasonable, divine self acts in the world. What distinguishes us as human is our intellectual nature – the “rational Mind,” “created and infused, by an immediate Operation of God.” However, understanding our intellectual and moral life and the operations of our mind or soul (our humanity) is impossible without considering the role of our animal nature in the life of the spirit. The medium through which our connection with the world is solely possible remains in its essence a material substance, a means through which our animal nature ensures its presence in the life of the mind. This presence is a central moral, epistemological, and even psychiatric problem. It is through such superfine, “subtile, spirituous, and infinitely elastic” substances, which are “the Medium of the Intelligent Principle,” that the disorders and imbalances of the body reach the mind to produce the mental diseases studied by Cheyne.91 Or, in the words of Cotton Mather, “a Man bitten with a mad-Dog, has not only his Body, but his very Soul also poisoned.” The materiality of this medium, this-worldliness of the “sensitive soul,” is the source of its power in our mind, and of the dominance in our moral life of the passions, affections, and aversions connected and responding to bodily existence. This bodily existence by itself signifies our otherness from God who left in us his presence: “The Soul of every man is Dog-bitten, or, which is as bad; Serpent-bitten, or Divel-bitten. Original Sin has depraved it; the Venom of original Sin has over-run it.” The rational mind, as Mather sees it, does not lose its essential identity and distinctness, and can comprehend the individual’s depravity, yet can do nothing on its own, lying knocked under and fettered by the sinful energy of the sensitive soul, or indeed actively participating in its passions. The only way for the immaterial spirit to break the chains is, of course, divine grace. The main characteristic of grace is the ability of the spirit to abhor, reject, and deny the “criminal Gratifications” of the soul, and to act in a different direction, out of pure considerations – based solely on understanding that such desires and gratifications are offensive to God. A regenerate spirit is that which chooses above all to glorify God; in the act of this choice, and in the ability to make it, the spirit demonstrates that it “has gotten an Empire over the Soul.”92 To do this without a direct intervention by the divine Providence is impossible; without such an intervention, the essential immateriality of the rational mind is, so to speak, only potential energy, not kinetic.

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91 Cheyne, English Malady, 89.
92 Diary of Cotton Mather, 1:526-7.
In this, Mather is quite different from Plato in *The Republic*, who considers the structure of the soul only, rather than that of the human being as a whole, and within the soul itself distinguishes the part prone to act on the dictates of the body (the desiring part) and the part committed to the pursuit of reason. For Plato, control of the latter over the former is both natural and possible, even if it does not often take place in everyday life; the “spirited part” of the soul, its energy and will, is naturally a servant of the calculating part. Mather, on the other hand, seems much less optimistic about the power of the immaterial spirit; the concept of grace implies an acknowledgement of the powerlessness of the spirit to act on its own. John Locke appears even more pessimistic than Mather in his effort to think through the consequences of embodiment. The depraved and irredeemable nature of the body in which we are confined was the basic fact of the human condition that Locke’s religion taught him to accept (or so he thought). “Men alive are flesh & bloud, the dead in the graves are but the remains of corrupt flesh & bloud. But flesh & bloud can not inherit the kingdom of god, neither can corruption inherit incorruption i.e. immortality,” comments Locke on St. Paul. 93 It is instructive that in Locke’s interpretation of Paradise and the Fall, the first couple initially refrained from sin because they had no occasion for it. There were no objects they could desire against the divine will and the order of creation, “where in the full use of the creatures there was scarce room for any irregular desires but instinct & reason carried [man] the same way & being neither capable of covetousness or ambition when he had already the free use of all things he could scarce sin. God therefor gave him a probationary law whereby he was restrained from one only fruit, good wholesom & tempting in itself.” The consequences are well known. 94

Even before the Fall, God’s law and human instinct, reason and desire were essentially different, and their unity circumstantial. The body may walk in the path of reason, but that does not make it good; “good” may be only its *behavior*, as a result of compulsion or lack of stimuli to desire. Law is understandable, but external and alien to the flesh. True, all men are created rational, that is, are endowed with the ability to discern and comprehend the law of nature, which is also the general law of preservation and rational interest. That ability lies in the mind. But the body does not know its real good; it can lead us to self-destruction in our “Natural Propensity to indulge Corporal and present Pleasure, and to avoid Pain at any rate.”95 In the state of embodiment, human will, which is the immediate engine of our actions, follows the body and not the mind, immediate desires and not distant, external-to-our-body considerations of natural law and rational interest.96 Alexander Pope put it succinctly: “What we resolve, we can: but here’s the Fault, / We ne’er resolve to do the thing we ought.”97 In order to move our will in the right direction, we need to channel in that direction our desire, with the help of a stimulus or punishment: “Let a Man be never so well perswaded of the advantages of virtue… yet till he *hunger and thirsts after righteousness*; till he

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96 So for Cotton Mather: “The Spirit of an ungodly Man may refuse to gratify the criminal Desires of his carnal Soul, in many Instances. But then tis always upon Considerations that arise not above the Level of Carnality” – for the preservation of health, estate, or reputation, or for the comfortable assurance of one’s own righteousness, *Diary*, 1:527.

feels an *uneasiness* in the want of it, his *will* will not be determin’d to any action in the pursuit of this confessed greater good…” 98 Virtue is not an inner quality or part of human constitution; it is a pattern of behavior, an act or learned habit of “denying our selves the satisfaction of our own Desires, where Reason does not authorize them.” 99 Instilling this habit by subtle control, rewards and punishments is the task of moral upbringing.

The problem of the body was not only moral but also epistemological. Of course, the subject of this project is not the history of the matter-spirit dualism in the long eighteenth century, but the diverse and complex forms that the basic duality *could* take in the course of the imaging and conceptualizing of moral and social life – both in eighteenth-century culture in general, and in concrete human efforts of self-understanding, such as those of William Byrd. I am interested in the problems that the dualist view of human nature could pose, in logical patterns and possible ways in which it could shape the understanding of the natural, social, or moral world. In order to comprehend on their own terms Byrd’s self-perception and vision of the world, I will dwell some more on the *potential* of those terms, moving from the sphere of moral reflection to epistemology, again with Locke’s help. Even sensationalism, so forcefully and influentially formulated by Locke, did not necessarily mean materialism (although for many it did, especially in France). The human reason accessed the world only through the body, the physical senses. Locke rejected innate ideas and worked his way from sensation upwards, demonstrating how the person discovered the idea of itself and of morality through the consciousness of its own continuity and the consciousness of and responsibility for past actions. 100 But discovery did not mean creation (the mistake that contemporaries were quick to make). Locke’s project in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* involved exploring the limits of knowing that can be reached by *embodied* and social individuals, and both the body and social convention are, if anything, obstacles that make pure understanding (the prerogative of God) impossible and that need to be studied if we want to discover the limitations of our understanding. Understanding, consciousness, perception are not the essence of the soul, but merely its operations. 101 As Lock observed in his early years, “tis our passions that bruteish part that dispose of our thoughts and actions, we are all Centaurs and tis the beast that carries us, and every ones Recta ratio is but the traverses of his owne steps. When did ever any truth settle it self in any ones minde by the strength and authority of its owne evidence? Truths gaine admittance to our thoughts as the philosopher did to the Tyrant by their handsome dresse and pleasing aspect, they enter us by composition, and are entertaint as they suite with our affections…” 102 Compare the great naturalist Buffon on the “internal sense” that distinguishes humans from other beings: “But how shall we give to this sense its full extent and activity? How shall we emancipate the soul, in which it resides, from all the illusions of fancy!

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99 Locke, *Thoughts Concerning Education*, 107; also 103, 119.


101 Ibid., 128.

We have lost the habit of employing this sense; its activity is repressed by the tumult of corporeal sensations, and parched with the heat of our passions; the heart, the imagination, the senses, all conspire to annihilate its exertions. Unchangeable, however, in its nature, and invulnerable by its essence, it continues always the same.”

The relationship between the soul and body is that between the potential for knowing and understanding, inherent in the soul as a pure immaterial substance, and the limits of knowing and understanding, determined by the constitution of our senses and the capacity of the brain. Speculations as to what that immaterial potential could be like may not seem, or have seemed, to many early modern people or modern scholars productive or urgent, but they followed naturally from the dualist interpretation of the present condition of man. So, Joseph Addison, in the famous essay on the pleasures of the imagination, serialized in The Spectator, reflects on our inability to imagine the very great and the very little (such phenomena as the universe or microbes): “It is possible this Defect of Imagination may not be in the Soul it self, but as it acts in Conjunction with the Body. Perhaps there may not be room in the Brain for such a variety of Impressions, or the Animal Spirits may be incapable of figuring them in such a manner, as is necessary to excite so very large or very minute Ideas.” But it is probable that in a different state and under different circumstances the soul will be “indefinitely more perfect in this Faculty,” and, in the soul’s forming and representing to itself such ideas, “the Imagination will be able to keep Pace with the Understanding.” In our present condition, the imagination has a vital function of the mediation between the world of ideas on the one hand and the material senses on the other. It represents sensual impressions as ideas from which the soul is peculiarly predisposed by the Creator to receive pleasure. And this is a pleasure of a peculiar kind: it is different from (“not so gross” as) the pleasures of sense as such, and also from those of the understanding, which belong wholly to the mind. The pleasures of the imagination, most importantly the perception of beauty in the material world, are in the soul, but are probably inseparable from the soul’s bodily existence. They are designed to make our embodiment more delightful: “Things would make but a poor Appearance to the Eye, if we saw them only in their proper Figures and Motions: And what Reason can we assign for their exciting in us many of those Ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the objects themselves, (for such are Light and Colours) were it not to add Supernumary Ornaments to the Universe, and make it more agreeable to the Imagination?” Without such illusions, appearing in the process of perception, nature would seem rough and unsightly; and “it is not improbable,” speculates Addison, “that something like this may be the State of the Soul after its first Separation, in the respect of the Images it will receive from Matter; tho’ indeed the Ideas of Colours are so pleasing and beautiful in the Imagination, that it is possible the Soul will not be deprived of them, but perhaps find them excited by some other Occasional Cause, as they are at present by the different Impressions of the subtle Matter on the Organ of Sight.”

Beauty is the manifestation of both the unity of the soul with the material existence, and its difference from that existence; it is, at least in the form in which we experience it now, inseparable from material impressions, but at the same time exists only in the (embodied and therefore sensitive) soul, not in the world itself. Both the material universe and the pure human understanding, which should be able to grasp the things of that universe “in their proper

104 The Spectator, no. 420 (2 July 1712).
105 The Spectator, no. 413 (24 June 1712); see also nos. 411 (21 June 1712), 421 (3 July 1712).
Figures and Motions,” free of both the limitations of sensual perception and of its aesthetic compensations, are deprived of beauty. Imagination and its illusions exist in an uncertain mental-physical space of its own.

The faculties and functions of the soul (many if not all) could certainly be imagined in pure and immaterial form, and approached as operations, such as thinking, reflecting, comparing, or judging. But the nature of the soul itself, in which sensual impressions continue to exist while at the same time transformed into something new, becomes difficult to conceive without integration with its material host and mediator. So, in his work The Religion of Nature Delineated (1722), widely read at the time, William Wollaston comes to see the soul as

a cogitative substance, clothed in a material vehicle, or rather united to it, and as it were inseparably mixt (I had almost said incorporated) with it: that these act in conjunction, that, which affects the one, affecting the other: that the soul is detained in the body (the head or brain) by some sympathy or attraction between this material vehicle and it, till the habitation is spoil’d, and this mutual tendency interrupted (and perhaps turned into an aversion, that makes it fly off) by some hurt, or disease, or by the decays and ruins of the old age… happening to the body.\footnote{106}

The statement on the inseparable mixing of the soul with its material vehicle Wollaston supports with a quotation from Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding: “It is worth our consideration, whether active power be not the proper attribute of spirit, and passive power of matter. Hence may be conjectured, that created spirits are not totally separate from matter, because they are both active and passive. Pure spirit, \textit{viz.} God, is only active; pure matter is only passive; those Beings, that are both active and passive, we may judge to partake of both.”\footnote{107} This inseparable fusion may well mean, in Wollaston’s opinion, that the soul simply cannot exist in a state of total separation from the body – but not the body in its entirety. Rather, and precisely because we know our immaterial soul to be sensible of material impressions, “there must be some matter within us, which being moved or pressed upon, the soul apprehends it immediately” – a special kind of matter to which the soul is as “immediately and intimately united” as it cannot be united to any other matter. But such a “refined and spirituous vehicle,” of course, could never possess in its own right the immaterial faculties of intellection – the soul remains essentially different from the body even if it “cannot exist and act in a state of \textit{total separation} from all body,” not only during, but also after life.\footnote{108}

And it is “[w]ith this Vehicle of pure matter,” writes William Byrd in his commonplace-book summary of Wollaston’s ideas, that “he [Wollaston] imagins the Soule to fly away, at the Death or dissolution of the Body, to the Region allotted for departed Spirits.” Byrd continues his notes: “And when the soul comes to be disentangled from the grosser matter of the body, its activity will exert it self in a Surprizeing manner, all its Sensations, whether of pain or pleasure, will be vastly quicker, than we find them at present, and its ideas will be more clear and extensive. Then we Shan’t know things by the \textit{slow} assistance of the Sences, and by the tedious deductions of Reason but by Intuition, that is an instantaneous apprehension of every thing we have an inclination &


\footnote{107} Ibid.; see Locke, \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding} ii.XXIII.28. Sections 15-32 of chapter XXIII contain a comparison of our ideas of spiritual and material substances, which makes Locke’s dualism very clear.

\footnote{108} Wollaston, \textit{Religion of Nature}, 196-7. Note the equation of spirit with activity and matter with passivity – herein lies the potential for the conceptualization of the body as a generally tractable instrument of the soul, which I will explore in the later chapters. This potential did not play out in Byrd’s moral imagination.
capacity to know.”109 Thoughts on the relationship between the body and soul occupy a prominent place in Byrd’s two-page summary of Wollaston. It is also notable that Byrd does not exactly repeat Wollaston: the latter says nothing about the soul’s immediate sensations of pain or pleasure after its separation from the body (the soul’s being “disentangled from the grosser matter of the body” is also Byrd’s own formulation), and focuses mainly on the question of knowledge and intuition in the disembodied state.

The power and extent of the soul’s activity is in proportion to the “subtlety” of the matter with which it is joined: “A Gross Body is very rarely the habitation of a great Soul, for she is mired in that foul situation, and can never exert her sprightly Facultys. She is heavy, she is cloudy, and Sympathizes, with her unweildy organs. From hence t’is observd, that a Spare Body is most commonly the Lodging of a Sprightly mind.”110 Further, that power of the soul (Mather’s “spirit”) “by which we think, reason, decide,” and arrive at the knowledge of the Supreme Being, is in contradiction with the passions and desires that are born in the spirit’s interaction with the spirits/humors of the body. The tension between passion and reason in the soul is, for Byrd, at the center of the problem of moral life and the self. It is especially amply reflected in the commonplace book, the surviving portion of which covers the first half of the 1720s. Along with the diary as the normative record of practice (which was evidently failing Byrd in this period), the commonplace book was another instrument of active self-fashioning available to him – an individualized record of the cultural norm. “A conquest the most difficult, as well as the most glorious any Hero can obtain, is over his own unruly Passions,” records Byrd; the commonplace book was to be an instrument of this conquest. Byrd does not tire of collecting statements of cultural authorities on the subject, such as: “Pythagoras was wont to inculcate, that no thing is so tyrannical as our Passions, when they have dethroned reason, and usurped the government of our actions”; or: “Mortify your Passions continually, said Isocrates, or sometime or other they’ll mortify you.”111 To recall Byrd’s self-reflections in the “Inamorato l’Oiseaux,” he very likely saw something of himself in the case of Demosthenes, who endeavored to wean “himself from hankering after Pleasure, which clouds the understanding, and cloggs all those Talents, which might otherwise distinguish us from the rest of our Neighbours.”112 Hankering after pleasure is detrimental both on pragmatic grounds, distracting as it does from the public realization of the soul’s potential, and on existential grounds – however beautiful pleasure may appear (especially to young people), it is in reality the mother of sin and the grandmother of death and damnation,113 the power that will “mortify” one’s being and identity, centered in the reasonable self. Our soul is attracted to beauty, but the pleasures of the senses offer only apparent beauty, which nonetheless is apt to captivate and destroy/enslave114 the soul (Plato’s calculating part, Mather’s spirit). The danger of the passions is in the fact that they are the way for the body to infiltrate the soul itself (compare Plato’s “desiring part” of the soul): we love and hate that which is good or bad (or much

110 Ibid., [298].
111 Ibid., [325], [332], [337]. See also [85], [88], [188], [291], [336], and below.
112 Ibid., [172]. The conflict between the principles and passions, in Byrd’s view of Inamorato, was “an unhappy Clogg to all his Fortunes,” an obstacle of the way to the worldly eminence that would be commensurate with his abilities, Another Secret Diary, 276.
113 This time it is St. Basil: Commonplace Book, [296].
114 “To be Subject to an arbitrary Prince is a more honorable Slavery, than to be Subject to his own more arbitrary Passions,” Commonplace Book, [162].
rather pleasant and unpleasant) for the body, and love in particular is apt to compromise the essence of the soul, subjugating it to the pleasure principle (the principle of the body): “[W]hat we hate, if it do its Worst, can but destroy our Bodys, but what we love, may destroy both Body and Soule.” What is pleasant is rather likely not to be objectively good even for our physical being, and is a poison for the soul. In a similar movement of thought, “Socrates advises very sagely to avoid the kisses of a beautiful Woman as you woud the bite of a deadly Serpent, this may putrify your Body, but that will poison your Soul.”

4. Flesh, Sex, and Power

The quotation that finished the previous section was especially topical for Byrd when he was filling his commonplace book. According to Lockridge who searched numerous other commonplace books of the period, Byrd’s is almost unique in its attention to women and sex. If “Love is the Distemper of an unexercised Mind,” this compilation of common wisdom, facts and stories is Byrd’s exercise book, a weapon against all the “combustible matter” in his constitution. And his personal project of self-control turns most conspicuously against those who provoked the distemper. The book records several stories of female sexual appetite run amok. Thus a certain Queen of Egypt was “so generous that she wishd every Male Subject in her Dominions might have a tast of her Charms,” and managed to build a pyramid by asking each lover to contribute a stone. Some of the women one meets in Byrd’s collection of wisdom seem literally to represent and embody the slavery, mortification, and destruction that are the natural ends of victorious passions. Messalina “obliged 25 men in 20 hours, and Cleopatra – 105 in one night. The passionate Semiramis, to preserve her reputation, instantly buried alive her every lover, and a Roman noblewoman Faustina murdered the gladiator she loved in order to cure her passion with his blood. But men are perfectly capable of destroying themselves on their own, when the “pleasure principle” and the temptations of luxury subvert even the instinct of self-preservation. Byrd records a story of “a certain great Performer with the Sex,” who, “finding his vigour begin to abate was so unwilling to part with any part of that dear Pleasure, that he causd one of his Legs to be cut off, that so the bloud and Spirits which usd to nourish that Limb, might add strength to those which remaind, and increase his abilitys with the allureing Sex.”

The entries on female lust and procreation are just a small part of the material that enabled the editors of the commonplace book to speak of “an unresolved misogyny, which, in its extreme phases, projects a contempt for women so profound as to suggest fury.” It is the first thing the twenty-first-century gender sensibility is likely to notice. But Byrd’s commonplace book is not about women; here as everywhere else, Byrd’s main concern is human nature “in general” – that is, first and foremost men. The “invectives against women” are always present in his writings, ubiquitous as they were in early eighteenth century, and he almost certainly believed what he wrote (and read). But Byrd’s need for salvation was too strong to be satisfied by an imaginary

115 Ibid., [297], [205].
116 Lockridge, On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage, 5, 123-125.
117 Commonplace Book, [201].
118 Ibid., [377], [498], [495], [441].
119 Ibid., [440].
displacement of fault. For him, consciously or unconsciously, female desire, contemptible and irremediable as it is, was dangerous first and foremost because it abetted male desire, which really raised for him the problem of the human condition as an uncertain equilibrium between the physical and the spiritual.

I will finish this initial exposition of the basic dichotomies of Byrd’s self-understanding by setting out a problem that proved central for Byrd in the concept of reason-passion or mind-body tensions. This problem presented itself with special clarity with regard to love and sex, with which Byrd was very much concerned, and went to the heart of the patriarchal social order in which Byrd was much involved as well. Passion underlay life and procreation, and at the same time threatened life. As inseparable as our spiritual faculties were from our physical being, moral greatness itself could be seen to rely on the passions. So, “S’ Chrysostome usd to say, t’was impossible to be a Saint or a Hero without strong passions, but then those passions must, like a high-mettled Horse, be brought to the manage, Else instead of a Saint, the owner may prove a Devil, and instead a Hero, a Tyrant.” A wise man is not one without passions but one who keeps them “in due Subjection” (just like he should keep his wife). Without the strength of the body, the strength of the mind is impossible, and the strength of the body Byrd cannot help but measure by its sexual ability and power: “Age should therefore be dated from the declension of our Vigour, and the impairing of our Faculty, rather than from the time we have lived in the world, otherwise a battered Debauchee that is fairly worn out at 40, woud be calld as young as an orderly Heart of Oak, who long after that retains all the strength and gaity of youth, and as able to do the Ladys very handsome Justice.”

Sexual power is the source of both the strength and weakness of “man” (here simultaneously as a human being in general and as a male). Sex and power do go hand in hand, although in this case in a way somewhat unexpected for those who equate patriarchal control with male sexual dominance and prowess. Far from seeing women as sexually powerful because he himself was sexually inadequate, Byrd implies that women derive their sexual power from male desire that finds response in female insatiability and is reinforced by unnatural social intercourse. The sources of sexual irregularities and deviations from nature are, first, luxury (socially encouraged pursuit of pleasure), and, second, social vanity that encourages men to seek sexual intercourse as a mark of distinction, underlying the social presentation of the self, for “rather than suffer him Self to be inconsiderable, [man] is vain of his follys, & had rather glory in his Shame, than not distinguish him Self at all.” And “amongst the rest of our Vanitys, there is none more ridiculous than when we make ostentation of our Exploits with the women.” Such ostentation and display of sexual power is essentially a sign of weakness; its ridiculousness Byrd underscores with the simple fact that, however much men brag, they cannot overcome the limits imposed by nature on our species: “The Emperor Proculus pretended that he had laid with an Hundred Sarmatian Women, which he had taken in wars, in less than a Fort’night. Mighty Feats for an Emperour to glory in, when a Ram will tup that number of Ewes in one night & impregnate them all!”

Evaluating themselves through sexual abilities, men place themselves on the level with animals, with which they cannot compete.

121 Commonplace Book, [331], [330], [91].

122 Ibid., [497]; see also [437]. References to natural limits are characteristically absent in Byrd’s discussions of female desire.
On the other hand, if physical vigor (including the sex drive) does lie close to the root of man’s self, the latter being only ultimately expressed in the energy of reason and the moral strength of a saint or hero, then abstinence and self-restraint as the assertion of the power of reason over the urges of the flesh also have dubious implications. So, Byrd notes that “tis said the Privitys of man grow less and dwindle away by excessive abstinence.” Thus St. Martin “observd such strict Rules of abstinence, & exercisd such Austerities upon himself, that when women came to lay him out after he was dead, they cou’d hardly find out any Penis at all, at most not larger than a moderate Clitoris.” Considering that “the Clitoris in a woman is in many things like a mans Penis,” the transfer of power is dangerously near even on the level of anatomy, while social selfhood necessarily involves power over both one’s passions and one’s women. But then again, “tis a standing observation, that men on whome nature has bestowd the largest Privitys, have the least understanding.”

Two kinds of power are opposed here – the power of the body and the power of reason. The distinction is not noticeable when we identify sexual power with control and both with male sexual ability and consider them to be essential elements of patriarchy as the focus of all kinds of power, from sexual to political to intellectual. The confluence of power is indeed implied in patriarchal vision, but it is precisely this confluence, the fact that power is essentially one in all its different manifestations, that is the main problem of patriarchy coming to the fore in Byrd’s writings. This confluence of power coexists with the essential separation of the power of mind and the power of body as a fundamental condition of self-control and social order. Among other things, how do we “let Reason have some Share in our Love, to direct [a]nd keep it with in bounds,” but at the same time demonstrate our sexual ability? The solution might lie in the phenomenon of procreation: “The ancient Philosophers were much in disgrace with the fair Sex, for recommending moderation in the pleasures of Love: but none so much as A eas who was marryd 6 years and yet solaced his Wife no more than thrice the whole time. Yet this was pure continence in him, & and not the least incapacity, for he Struck out a child every Flourish he made.”

Procreation is the crucial point where the law of nature and the power of the body meet and either contradict or reinforce each other. Procreation is also the physical foundation and root of social structure and order in a patriarchal society in which the family is the social model and the source of social relations – recall the already quoted late seventeenth-century “person of quality,” for whom “the whole band of civil society, and of a regular communion betwixt Men in the World, proceeds from the succession of a Lawful Issue.” In the following chapter I will describe Byrd’s cultural encounters with procreation and marriage/family as a dualist moral problem and explore the ways in which these phenomena undermined, rather than strengthened, his efforts to formulate and stabilize a gentlemanly and patriarchal social self.

123 Ibid., [470], [469], 472.
124 Ibid., [498].
125 Marriage Promoted, 9.
CHAPTER 2

THE BODY IRREDUCIBLE:
PATRIARCHY AND THE SEEDS OF DISORDER

“The philosophical subject is this: a whole society rushing to get sex.”

Emile Zola, preliminary notes for Nana

In the previous chapter I already outlined the main cultural themes of Byrd’s biography and his own understanding of his life, and so this chapter will not contain much biographical detail. The remainder of Byrd’s life, from the mid-1720s, was less eventful and taken up mostly with business pursuits and political bickering. While still in England, he married a woman of modest wealth, and returned to Virginia in 1726, his political ambitions now subdued though not extinguished. The major public event of Byrd’s remaining Virginian life was his leading a surveying expedition to establish the correct boundary between Virginia and North Carolina in 1728. He continued to dream about the post of the governor, but without much ardor. He tried to solicit, through his influential English friends, the position of surveyor of the customs to supplement his income. In the last year of his life, he became President of the Council as its most senior member. But most of Byrd’s attention, if we are to judge by the extant correspondence and travel essays, was devoted to mining projects, ideas about diversifying Virginian agriculture, and plans to attract sober and industrious settlers from Germany and Switzerland to Byrd’s lands. Increasing the value of his lands, attracting labor, and, more generally, populating the colony were foremost on Byrd’s mind. It is on the problem of the relationship between human reproduction and social order, between reproduction and the self that I will now focus. For Byrd’s perception of the logic of this relationship, the categories of reason/desire and body/soul were crucial, and I will use his personal concerns to continue parsing out the logical problems that arise when the seemingly trivial concept of soul-body duality is taken seriously.

1. The Pleasures of the Imagination

I will begin by observing the potential conflict between the sexual impulse and the work of human procreation: desire can potentially compromise the task of procreation. In Byrd’s commonplace book, it is barren women who are “commonly more lascivious than fruitfull ones, because the Heat of the womb, which is often the cause of Sterility, & at the same time the fomenter of wantonness.” And all women “are most lascivious about the time their Terms begin to flow, because of the irritation which the flux of blood and Spirits gives their Parts at that time.” However, “if a child shoud be got at that time it would be a miserable Weakling, that woud


be hardly worth the trouble of bringing up, & tis odds but it woud come dead into the world.” In
the next entry, Byrd enumerates the medical dangers of copulation after conception and
emphasizes that “nature shews by the Instinct she puts into other animals, that after a woman has
once conceiv’d she shoud no more approach a man til she is deliverd & passt her time of
purification.” It is reasonable and expedient for women to “abstain from the greediness of
craving more when their Belly is full already. This piece of Prudence is strictly observd by the
atives of Brasile & several other parts of America where the dictates of Nature are more
inviolably observd than in the politer parts of the world where pleasure & Luxury have got
intirely the better.”

Women are certainly not the only ones at fault; a strategy of “shifting the blame” may be evident here, for the sexological wisdom recorded in the commonplace book differs somewhat from Byrd’s own experience during his first marriage. There Byrd himself, rather than his wife, was, in the words of Paula Treckel, a “selfish lover,” who recorded in his
diary “rogering” his wife during her pregnancies, sometimes only days before she was delivered. In at least one case Byrd notes that Lucy “took but little pleasure in her condition.”

Supported by the common wisdom of the age, Byrd ascribes (his) excessive sexual urge to women, opening
for himself that possibility of control over the dictates of the body and reasonable regulation of
sexual activity which he virtually denies to them. Control could be expressed in the conscious
subordination, or rather limitation, of the sexual impulse to its function of generation; luxury and
licentiousness mean going beyond that function in the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake. So,
Byrd notes that “Luxury has taught men to caress their wives before: but Nature woud rather
 teach them to caress them behind.” Though “When he attacks her before he has more pleasure,”
the womb of a woman “is better situated for conception, when she rests upon her hands and Knees.”

A basic pattern underlying these entries on sex and procreation is an opposition between bodily,
physical pleasure (the end of luxury) and nature. The opposition does not mean that pleasure (and
thus luxury as one’s submission to pleasure) is unrelated to nature; but it would be more correct
to say that pleasure is a material phenomenon, and lust has material roots. The material is not the
same as the natural if the latter is implicitly defined as the intelligent ordering of the material
world around the basic organizing principle of the preservation and perpetuation of life.

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129 Ibid., [438], [439].


and both with beauty and universal mind (of course, commonplace for early eighteenth-century thought) we could turn to the Earl of Shaftesbury’s Platonic aesthetic theory. For Shaftesbury, the natural order is more than anything else a manifestation of the universal mind as the organizing principle opposed to base, senseless matter: “There is nothing so divine as beauty, which, belonging not to body nor having any principle or existence except in mind and reason, is alone discovered and acquired by this divine part, when it inspects itself, the only object worthy of itself.” The full extent of this intelligent design, expressed in the universal “great chain of being,” is incomprehensible to us because of our position within it: “Think of the many parts of the vast machine in which we have so little insight and of which it is impossible we should know the ends and uses, when, instead of seeing to the highest pendants, we see only some lower deck and are in this dark case of flesh, confined even to the hold and meanest station of the vessel.”

The place of man between matter and reason is perhaps the most crucial source of tension in the idea of the great chain of being as a manifestation of God or universal mind. If rising above the limits of the physical world itself is necessary in order to contemplate it and thus to bring ourselves closer to the understanding of its overarching design, such an alienation at the same time takes us farther from the design, embodied in the natural world that we contemplate as if from outside. A repeated return into the pure and unmediated natural order is necessary. Thus, in the words of Alexander Pope: “Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutor’d mind / Sees God in cloud[s], or hears him in the wind; / His soul proud Science never taught to stray / Far as the solar walk, or milky way; / Yet simple Nature to his hope has giv’n, / Behind the cloud-topt hill, an humbler heav’n… / To Be, contents his natural desire, / He asks no Angel’s wing, no Seraph’s fire; / But thinks, admitted to that equal sky, / His faithful dog shall bear him company.” The Indian experiences the divine immediately in nature, his picture of the world does not separate the principle of order from the surrounding world. But to such a separation an intelligent creature will eventually come, insofar as spirit is not reducible to matter and order – to what is ordered (see Chapter One).

Byrd shares Pope’s respect for the untutored natives of America, at least concerning their sexual habits. Procreation is a basic principle of natural order, which organizes the physical processes in our (or animal) bodies and is felt and respected by the untutored primitive mind. But society in the “politer parts of the world” has freed itself from the natural order, and this alienation manifests itself in indulging the body and its unruly flows of humors for their own sake, just because “their own sake” can be conceived of and thought. The procreative principle has been bracketed off from the basic drives inherent in bodily matter. The alienation from the natural order that manifests the work of the universal creative mind means relapsing into matter. Modern civilization, with its pride, indulgence, luxury, and materialism, represents this relapse. In the case of animals, the imposition of order upon the body takes the form of instinct. According to Byrd’s anatomical notes, while brutes are devoid of the power to think, reason, and will, they do

133 Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 331, 275-276. The Characteristics were first published as a collection in 1711.


“have some Instincts ingrafted in their Natures, which supply the place of Some” of these qualities. In the task of self-preservation and procreation, instinct “serves them instead of Reason, and sometimes so much resembles it, that ’tis mistaken by small Philosophers for Reason.”

Raised above animals, the dangerous women of Byrd’s commonplace book are free from instinct, but that does not necessarily mean that their reason fulfills its mission, guiding us in the proper course of nature: “Popilia being askt by a very curious Person of her own Sex, why Brutes woud never admit the male after they had once conceivd? answerd with the true Spirit of a woman, because they are Brutes, & know no better.”

Freedom from the regulative power of instinct, given to us by being human, means, especially in the case of women, submission to the dictate of our bodies and our libidinal urge. Such is the fate of our reasoning faculties left vis-à-vis the body, the senses, the passions. This submission is intensively encouraged by society in the “politer parts of the world.” A social animal has in fact become an animal without instinct and without reason; “social” comes to mean “left outside of the natural order.” Instead of instinct we have society – for it is society that sets us apart from animals and from the realm of nature in general. But corrupt civilization, in its unthinking pursuit of pleasure, is itself a deviation from the natural order.

So, separating the mind from the flesh only makes clear the constraints of physical reality which continue to limit our immaterial nature and to poison the spirit. Separated by the flesh from its divine source of vitality, spirit is vulnerable to the decay and death inherent in physical life. Pride and imagination (phantoms and illusions born in the mind under the influence of the senses) are the mental products of this separation from the source. In the words of Alexander Pope again, “as Man, perhaps, the moment of his breath, / Receives the lurking principle of death… / As the mind opens, and its functions spread, / Imagination plies her dang'rous art…”

Dwelling in more detail on the concept of imagination may help elucidate the mechanism of this relapse of “distilled” mind/reason back into matter.

A crucial point to keep in mind is that Byrd or his sources do not draw a simple picture in which the inherently virtuous mind, as a whole, opposes the physical urges and drives whose home is the inherently depraved body. In the Platonic scheme briefly discussed in Chapter One (and quite a few of the entries in Byrd’s commonplace book are attributed to the “divine” Socrates, whose wisdom Byrd is eager to internalize), the “desiring” part of the soul is precisely a part of the soul, a part whose activities respond to the senses, needs, and pleasures of the body but exist within the soul. Corruption is born in the union of matter and spirit, because in our mind, essentially unlimited by any constraints of time, space, and possibilities, the natural and morally neutral desires and pleasures of the body acquire an existence of their own. Invading the realm of the res cogitans, things of the body can be set entirely free from, and blown out of, their natural

136 Commonplace Book, [517].
137 Ibid., [493].
138 Pope, Essay on Man, 71-72 (II.133-143).
limitations, ends and purposes. So, a situation could be possible, where, for instance, Emperor Tiberius “lovd lewdness more than Women, & his mind was more tainted wth uncleanness than his body. For this reason he caus’d all the various Postures that he found in the naughty book of Eliphatis (the most illustrious Harlot of his Reign) to be painted round his Bedchamber, & woud often be servd at Table by naked women: but all these moveing Prospects could not stir his feoble constitution."140 Having settled in the mind, desire becomes in fact independent of the body and its actual needs and possibilities; it becomes essentially limitless. Desire produces, and is in turn inflamed and encouraged by, lewd representations and ideas. It is not in any immediate relation to the reality of the body, even though the body stands as the ultimate object, the only horizon of such mental activity. It is not about the body, it is about the image of the body that is inflated and permeates the mind.141 Corruption is properly in the head: “When a woman can stand an obscene story without recoiling, can be tickled with lewd Images, & make the most of a double meaning, her Imagination & her Soul are already debauch’d, and if she don’t prostitute her Body too, she won’t owe it to her modesty, but to her Pride or her Politicks.”142

Love, as Byrd jots down, “is a longing desire to injoy any Person, whome we imagine to have more perfections than she Really has.” Our soul is predisposed to love the ideal and the perfect; and so the basic, natural sexual desire, when it settles in and occupies the soul, becomes “fancy” – illusions of beauty and perfection through which desire bends the soul to its will. Love is “a kind of Natural Idolatry, by which our Fancy sets up an Imaginary Deity, and then we falls down and worships it. Fancy will needs have a Woman to be an Angel, when perhaps, if Reason might have leave to speak, twoud tell us she was a Devil…” Fancy is the soul’s perverse form of love, a “Distemper of an unexercised Mind” that is drawn by the body towards (the phantom of) the body, instead of pursuing its own courses. Such illusions are not the same as relying solely on the senses in order to perceive and understand the world. Comprehending reality is the proper work of the mind, indeed possible only through the use of the body’s senses, but this work of the mind sets aside the passions and is not driven by the body. And so in the relations between the sexes, “[i]f men woud therefore please to make a little use of their understandings when they judge of Females, or even of their Sences, they might discover in them so many imperfections of mind, so many impurities of body, & so much perverseness of Temper, that they would never agree to sacrifice their Innocence, their character, their health, their Quiet, and Estates to injoy them.”143

Here is the core of Byrd’s cultural predicament. Reason becomes an enemy to procreation as such, enemy to the permanence of marriage perhaps even more than to the lewd and lascivious behavior of bachelor rakes.

140 Commonplace Book, [488]. See also [146] on “old Fumblers” who fancy they need women and continue to pursue them despite actual impotence.

141 These observations should be applicable to modern pornography as well – after all, it was becoming a recognizable “phenomenon in itself” in the early modern period.


143 Commonplace Book, [201-202].
About a decade after the composition of Byrd’s commonplace book, Jonathan Swift evidently had like thoughts, taking a male protagonist on a frightening tour of a “Lady’s Dressing Room” – the backstage where the fiction of female purity and beauty is fabricated. Here Strephon, our observer, finds out “how damnably the Men lie, / In calling Celia sweet and cleanly.” Among other remarkable artifacts, he finds “the various Combs for various Uses, / Fill’d up with Dirt so closely fixt, / No Brush could force a way betwixt. / A Paste of Composition rare, / Sweat, Dandriff, Powder, Lead and Hair…” There also “a filthy Bason stands, / Fowl’d with the Scouring of her Hands; / The Bason takes whatever comes / The Scrapings of her Teeth and Gums, / A Nasty Compound of all Hues, / For here she spits, and here she spues.” The tour goes on for more than a hundred and ten lines, and causes an upheaval in Strephon’s worldview: “Thus finishing his grand Survey, / Disgusted Strephon stole away / Repeating in his amorous Fits, / Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!” He is punished for his indiscretion: now “his foul Imagination links / Each Dame he sees with all her Stinks.” Strephon’s love life obviously suffers from his inability to submit to the illusory charms of the female sex, and Swift ironically advises his protagonist to stop his nose; then, like the author himself, Strephon would soon learn to “bless his ravished Sight to see / Such Order from Confusion sprung, / Such gaudy Tulips rais’d from Dung.” The necessities of flesh may prove stronger than knowledge. Perversely, in order to procreate and follow the lines of natural order, the truth may have to be ignored in favor of a gaudy fiction, of an illusion that order can possibly emerge out of chaos. So as to maintain natural procreative order, reason will have to subdue or suspend itself.

Once in marriage, the truth cannot be ignored. Here it is always in view, as Swift observes a year later in another exploration of the “dark side” of femininity. In marriage, amorous effusions soon disappear, and the prose of life takes their place; the husband and wife “learn to call a Spade, a Spade. / They soon from all Constraint are freed; / Can see each other do their Need. / On Box of Cedar sits the Wife, / And makes it warm for Dearest Life. / And, by the beastly way of Thinking, / Find great Society in Stinking.” In this parody of marital confidence, the gross underside of the physical urge gets the better of the empty poetic dissimulation that is the product of that same urge: “To see some radiant Nymph appear / In all her glitt’ring Birth-day Gear, / You think some Goddess from the Sky / Descended, ready cut and dry: / But, e’er you sell your self to Laughter, / Consider well what may come after; / For fine Ideas vanish fast, / While all the gross and filthy last.” Marriage, an institution both natural and social in its procreative function, turns out to be a prison, where the exposed nakedness of flesh kills the desire that has led one into the trap.

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145 Ibid., 529.
146 Ibid., 530.
148 Ibid., 591. On the relationship between the senses, imagination, and spirits see also Swift’s early satire on “The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit.” The artificial production of enthusiastic spirit is based on the principle that “the corruption of the senses is the generation of the spirit; because the senses in men are so many avenues to the fort of reason, which in this operation is wholly blocked up. All endeavours must be therefore used, either to divert, bind up, stupify, fluster, and amuse the senses, or else to justle them out of their stations.” In Swift’s view, such violence over the senses can be willful, but, apart from outside manipulation, there are also inclinations of the body itself: “Persons of a visionary devotion, either men or women, are in their complexion of all others the most amorous; for zeal is frequently kindled from the same spark with other fires…” After all, “the spinal marrow being nothing else but a continuation of the brain, must needs create a very free communication between the superior faculties and those below:
Byrd’s invectives against marriage in his correspondence and commonplace book are well known. They are usually explained by his repeated courtship failures and his conflict-ridden life with Lucy Parke Byrd, both injurious to his patriarchal self-esteem. But even much later, in 1730, Byrd writes to his young friend John Boyle (the main character of the next two chapters of this dissertation) on the subject of marriage: “So many are shipwrecked in that sea, that it has now quite lost the name of the Pacific Ocean, in which they say there are no storms or intemperate weather, but all is smooth, calm, and undisturbed. But if I may be permitted to carry on the comparison, marriage, as it is commonly managed is more like the Bay of Biscay, where the sea is perpetually disturbed, and the waves run mountain-high, making every body sick that comes near it.”

This is fourteen years after the death of Lucy, six years after marrying the meek and submissive Maria Taylor (who, albeit after his death, described William Byrd in a letter as a “Complacent Generous tender Husband”), and, moreover, in response to a letter describing his friend’s happiness in marriage. Neither Byrd’s own experience nor that of the people around him is able to undermine the idiom. Something other than experience, however important the latter might have been in shaping Byrd’s cultural attitudes and concerns, is at stake here.

Marriage, in the Byrdian world, was a social union through which physical human reproduction was involved in the task of the perpetuation of the structures of kin and property that were the texture of social life. Reproduction, both physical and social, was the essential function of marriage, translating the natural phenomenon into the social sphere. For a colonial like Byrd, very much concerned with peopling his young country and thus acquiring labor and increasing the value of land and estates, this was a vitally important point which it would not have been possible to forget. A little earlier than the above letter to Boyle, in a jocular epistle to his sister-in-law Byrd asserts himself to be a “fast friend to matrimony” (perhaps protesting against an established opinion about him – we do not have the beginning of the letter). He offers in jest measures to improve the quality of matches, to make marriage obligatory, and encourage procreation, which is “ever for the public good.” Begetting more children in marriage should be encouraged through taxation, and fornication should be severely punished by putting the guilty on the diet of thin water gruel for six months, “to quench the excessive heat of their constitutions.”

In the same way as in the commonplace-book entries on best sexual positions for conception, procreation is separated from promiscuous sexuality (luxury) as the lawful from the unlawful, public good from pernicious excess. The letter is written in jest, but in this “spin[ning] something out of my own bowels for my dear sisters entertainment” Byrd recycles his cultural baggage and familiar patterns of thought, and brings up themes that have been important to him for decades.

So, the two apparently contradictory stereotypical opinions Byrd holds about marriage are: marriage is good as an institution giving a regular and social meaning to reproduction, but it is


149 Byrd to John Boyle, 28 July 1730, Correspondence, 1:432.

150 Maria Byrd’s letter is quoted in Brown, Good Wives, 341.

151 Byrd to Mrs. Anne Taylor Otway, ca. June 1729, Correspondence, 1:401–402. For earlier concerns with peopling Virginia, which preoccupied Byrd even during his time in London, and around the time when the commonplace book was being compiled, see for example Byrd to Philip Ludwell, 31 January, 1717/18, Correspondence, 1:310.
(usually) bad as a personal act, interpersonal union, and human situation. Why? Because men (usually) enter into this indissoluble social relation as a result of love—a distemper of the mind, fancy, and empty illusion of happiness, born out of desire. This is not only practice representing a deviation from the positive nature of the institution—this is part of the nature of the phenomenon of marriage when the latter is defined as two people becoming one flesh.\footnote{While “one flesh” was in Byrd’s time the principal Christian metaphor for marriage, for St. Paul (the main New Testament authority on the subject) the term refers to sexual intercourse as such, marriage being thus virtually reduced to sex: “What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh” (1 Cor. 6.16). For a detailed study of Paul’s conception of marriage, see Will Deming, \textit{Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For an overview of early modern ideas about marriage, see Chapter Four of this study.} It is essentially a socially sanctioned and perpetuated realization of “a longing \textit{desire to injoy} any Person, whome we imagine to have more perfections than she Really has” (my italics). For this desire men give up, among other things, their quiet and their estates. Recall Byrd’s already quoted interpretation of his own desire to marry: to the unfortunate Inamorato, driven by passion, “\textit{in some frolicks no state appear’d so happy... as matrimonie, the convenience, the tenderness the society of that condition, made him resolve upon his own ruine, and set up for a Wife. He fancy’d it too sullen too splenatique to continue single, and too liable to the inconveniences that attend accidental and promiscuous gallantry}.”\footnote{William Byrd, “\textit{Inamorato l’Oiseaux},” in Maude H. Woodfin, ed., \textit{Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1739-1741, with Letters and Literary Exercises, 1696-1726} (Richmond, VA: Dietz Press, 1942), 277-278.} Marriage is a public good founded on private folly.

Illusions about the particular “persons” are fleeting and unstable (“\textit{fine Ideas vanish fast}”), and the remaining union of the flesh is only a prison for the mind, which by itself does not create a ground for a true union of the souls: “A Bachelour unknowing in the cloying charms of the Female Sex, was asking a marryd man what was meant by a man and his wife’s being one Flesh? Oh say’s the Husband when you come to be marryd you’ll find out the reason, for when you lay your hand upon your wives Belly, twill give you no more disturbance than if you laid it upon your own. But to make you amends youll find, that tho’ you are but one Flesh, you will be 2 Spirits.”\footnote{Commonplace Book, [257].} In this, marriage is opposed to friendship: “\textit{Aristotle being askt what Friendship was? Said it was one soul animateing 2 bodys, so much ought friends to be animated with the same sentiments \& inclinations}.”\footnote{Ibid., [215].} Marriage is supposed to create a similar relationship socially, through a legally binding union of property and interest between two people, through duty and (ideally) supposed confidence in the other’s fulfillment of duty. But this connection is artificial and unstable—recall Byrd’s letter to “Dunella,” discussed in the previous chapter. On the human level (as differentiated from the social), marriage is essentially relations of the flesh, sadly perpetuated by a legal bond. Notably, Byrd directly juxtaposes and opposes sexual connection and friendship with a woman in describing his own history of relations with the opposite sex. Typically, when Inamorato’s courtship efforts failed because of the ridiculous excess of passion, his efforts “\textit{moved the Nymphs pity at least, if [they] cou’d not move her inclination. If she cou’d not be kind to a man to whome she had created so much disturbance, yet she cou’d not forbear being civil. Thus whenever Inamorato lost a mistress, he got a freind by way of equivalent, and so Providence made a good Bargain for him when he wou’d have made a wofull one for himself}.”\footnote{“\textit{Inamorato l’Oiseaux},” 279, Byrd’s italics.}
The asexual emotion of pity is a better foundation for the “civil” phenomenon of friendship (or a relation of souls) than erotic “inclination” and the “kindness” of consenting to desire. Is a pure connection and unity of souls possible at all when desire and/or the actual physical relation is present, inevitably penetrating the soul itself?

On Friday, July 27th, 1711 “Mr. Spectator” wrote: “Men and Women were made as Counterparts to one another, that the Pains and Anxieties of the Husband might be relieved by the Sprightliness and good Humour of the Wife. When these are rightly tempered, Care and Cheerfulness go Hand in Hand; and the Family, like a Ship that is duly trimmed, wants neither Sail nor Ballast.”

Marriage is a work of nature, uniting and harmonizing “the different Inclinations and Endowments which are bestowed on the different Sexes,” and thus helping both men and women to “keep a Watch upon the particular Biass which Nature has fixed in their Minds, that it may not draw too much, and lead them out of the Paths of Reason.” Here too, both men and women are imperfect, but perfection can be achieved or at least approached through the union of imperfections that neutralize each other. However, this idyllic picture of the ideal marriage as a harmonious union that perpetuates reason and serves nature’s intentions notably excludes sex or passion – this phenomenon of exclusion I will explore in detail in Chapter Four. In focusing on the fact of marital union (a social bond), it also leaves out the act of union, the moment of entering the relationship and the criteria of choice. A little after his panegyric to the good marriage, Addison himself admits that “if we observe the Conduct of the fair Sex, we find that they choose rather to associate themselves with a Person who resembles them in that light and volatile Humour which is natural to them, than to such as are qualified to moderate and counter-balance it…. To be short, the Passion of an ordinary Woman for a Man, is nothing else but Self-love diverted upon another Object: She would have the Lover a Woman in every thing but the Sex.” He backs up this observation with John Dryden’s impersonation of a female voice: “Our thoughtless Sex is caught by outward Form / And empty Noise, and loves it self in Man.”

This is how the joining of imperfections is apt to perpetuate imperfection. Even if a union of spirits should bring harmony, balance, and improvement, marriage is very likely not to be such a union, and to be founded on empty form, noise, and illusion. If men cultivate in themselves gaiety, wit, “waggery,” and gallantry to be accepted by women they want (and they want illusions that do not exist), women, in their turn, are likely to encourage male fancy and thoughtlessness not only because they sympathize with it but also because they need the social position and security marriage will bring: “When a Mistress wishes her Gallant every thing that is good, she excepts always good Sence, which might open his Eyes, and make him dispise charms, which owe their being to imagination only.”

Women’s adherence to form, ornament, and illusion is quite practical; it is not only a result of a predisposition. Even at the end of his life, Byrd kept repeating the same ideas, writing that

the ladys study all the arts of dress and disguise more than the men. They have the secret of setting off their charms with more advantage, and covering their irregularitys. They know how to place their perfections in the fairest light, and cast all their blemishes in shade, so that the poor men who know no better, take them to be cherubims, and gems without flaw. But when upon a better acquaintance we come to discover, that the fair

157 The Spectator, no. 128 (27 July 1711), Addison’s italics.

158 Commonplace Book, [424].
creature has some failings and we begin to judge a little by sence and not altogether by fancy, our vast expectations are disappointed, upon which the appetite will naturally pall...  

But it will be too late. The basic institution of patriarchal society, the foundation of social order, turns out to be based on desire and illusion, formalizing and perpetuating that prison of the soul to which, according to Byrd’s Socrates, men are confined by the kisses of beautiful women.

The relations between the sexes are one, perhaps the most salient, instance of men being drawn to outward forms and pleasures of the senses against reason and to their own detriment. Mistaking the ornament for the essence, or simply preferring the pleasures of the ornament to the work of the understanding, can have even more perilous consequences when it takes place in public life. Consider Pisistratus, the Athenian tyrant, of whom it is said “that he had so much address, so much eloquence, so much good breeding, & every part of his behaviour was so engageing, that he made even Tyrany, the greatest of humane calamitys, very tolerable. This charming Tyrant renderd the Athenians so happy under oppression, by his insinuateing manner that they were in danger of forgetting the name of Liberty forever.” Here, as in courtship, at work are mechanisms of dissimulation and persuasion through the senses. Rhetoric and eloquence are another prominent theme in Byrd’s commonplace book, and are usually contrasted with reason – as ways of addressing the senses rather than the mind directly, and of captivating and influencing others through the use of pleasure. So, Demosthenes said that the great force of rhetoric lay “in addressing your Self to the Eyes of the audience by gracefull action and to their Ears by harmonious sounds, rather than to their understanding by Solid argument.” And Cicero, with however benevolent motives, subdued his listeners with sweetness and harmony, beautiful voice, engaging address, and beautiful person: “[n]obody ever understood the passions so well, & knew how to touch them so powerfully.”

Engaging address, refined manners, outward beauty, proliferation of forms and signs, play with the senses – these are also things that define modern “polite society,” where gallantry and coquetry in the relations between the sexes become, on some level, the model for social life itself. In this society women not only seek but also successfully find themselves in men. To an object of his courtship, Byrd could write about himself: “He often frequented the company of Women, not so much to improve his mind as to polish his behaviour. There is something in female conversation, that softens the roughness, tames the wildness, & refines the indecency too common amongst the men. He laid it down as a maxime that without the Ladys, a schollar is a Pedant, a Philosopher a Cynick, all morality is morose, & all behaviour either too Formal or too licentious.” But it is questionable whether, given the insinuating nature of appearances and forms, which transcend the body’s crude, uncomplicated indecency and tempt the mind itself into illusory pleasures, the mind will be able to retain the balance of, and the boundary between, reason and pleasure. Byrd’s “Inamorato” is also the man who “knew how to keep company with Rakes without being infected with their vices” and “cou’d return from one of the Convents in

159 Byrd to Mrs. Jane Pratt Taylor, 20 March, 1736/37, Correspondence, 2:505.
160 Commonplace Book, [399].
161 Ibid., [171].
162 Ibid., [391].
163 “Inamorato l’Oiseaux,” 281.
Drury Lane with as much innocence, as any of the saints from a meeting.” But such self-
description of a suitor intended for the eyes of a woman might itself represent the illusion of
safety fostered by the discourse of gallantry and politeness. Byrd’s commonplace book is much
less sanguine on the subject: there, it turns out that “tis easier to approach Persons that have the
plague with out catching the Infection than to converse with vicious People, without being tainted
with their Vices.” Contrary to Inamorato’s placid self-assurance and confidence in his own power
to discern vice and separate himself from it, “if a man well-inclind converses much with lewd and
dissolute Persons, he’ll find it much easier to suck in their Vice, than to instil his own vertue,
because our frail nature disposes us to receive the Infection of Evil, much sooner than of
good.” Polite manners and female conversation may portend the danger of a similar infection,
poisoning the mind while polishing it, both on the interpersonal level and in the society at large –
where, as we remember, “a constant hurry of visits & conversation gives a man a habit of
inadvertency, which betrays him into faults without measure & without end.” The possibility of
contagion is much higher in the “politer parts of the world,” where endless diversions and
exercises in wit, gallantry, and imagination “bind up, stupefy, fluster, and amuse” the senses (to
recall Swift’s words) and leave little room for the understanding. (For Byrd’s perception of his
own practice of social intercourse, note, for instance, the diary record for November 6, 1709,
when, entertaining a company, Byrd “told abundance of lies by way of diversion.”)

The identification of the development of new forms of polite sociability, commercialism, and
consumer culture in early eighteenth-century Britain with women as the primary agents and
targets of these developments was a commonplace among contemporaries. For the Augustan
intellectual elite, often belonging to or culturally identifying themselves with gentry and
aristocracy, the post-1688 society was a world of materialism, unrestrained acquisitiveness,
luxury, and general corruption of moral and aesthetic standards, and women were the symbol of
this decline. They entrapped men such as Byrd, awaking in them the desires of the flesh and
corrupting their souls. However, “symbol” may be the key word here. Women could be seen not
only as tyrants but also as victims. Too susceptible to temptation, unable to control themselves,

164 Ibid., 280.
165 Commonplace Book, [158], [263], also [264].
166 “Inamorato l’Oiseaux,” 281.
167 Secret Diary, 103.
168 Recent synthetic works on eighteenth-century British society and culture include Julian Hoppit, A Land of Liberty?:
England, 1689-1727 (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 2000); Paul Langford, A
Giroux, 1997). On the place of women in that society and culture, see G. J. Barker-Benfield, The Culture of
Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); Women’s
History: Britain, 1700-1850: An Introduction, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London and New York:
Routledge, 2005). See also Consumption and the World of Goods, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London and New
169 Susan Gubar summarizes the symbolic significance of misogyny for Tory intellectuals: “Pope, Arbuthnot, Gay, and
Fielding frequently portray their disgust with middle-class materialism in the female’s capitulation to her body; their
horror of a society dedicated to acquisitive enterprise is pictured in female pride; their anger at the end of classical and
Christian humanism and the imminent death of culture, characterized by effeminate, corrupt genres and a sentimental
audience lacking both taste and learning, is revealed in female mindlessness and the lazy delusions of love she
they used their bodies, all the tricks of persuasion available to them, to gain power over men and thus access to more and more physical pleasures. But, in the world of rampant material excess, their bodies betrayed them, too, always ready to expose dissimulation and overflow the boundaries of propriety established by women to conceal their impurity and physicality from men.

And so a certain “transcendence of misogyny” is apparent in “The Female Creed,” probably Byrd’s last literary work written in England. It is a satire in the female voice, where the world as a woman sees it is portrayed as full of omens, sorcerers, portents of fate, lucky and unlucky numbers, ghosts and spirits; they “appear for the most part to Women and children, their Faith and Imagination being exceeding Strong…. Hence it comes to pass that so many Females in all countries can scarce hold their precious water, having been terrify’d in the Nursery with Bub-Geggars and Apparitions.” Excessively strong faith (enthusiasm) and imagination, as we have seen before, are supposed to have physical roots; they are the signs of the body’s power over reason. “The Female Creed” is not simply a collection of society gossip, a parody of female credulousness, or an example of eighteenth-century bawdy humor. It is also a picture, impressive in its scale and thoroughness, of a society governed by superstition and illusion, not reason. This is Byrd’s fullest vision of a social dystopia, set in early eighteenth-century England. The style is rambling and muddled, reproducing the characteristics of a “female discourse,” but the structure is fairly consistent and simple: in each paragraph, Byrd introduces a female “article of faith” (“I believe…”) and then cites “real-life proofs” and “supporting cases” from the world of stupidity, greed, lust, and general corruption where even the most absurd superstitions seem to work. The woman is properly the oracle of this world, the bearer and articulator of its nonsensical unnatural “laws”; but everybody is implicated and nobody escapes the power of those laws. “The Female Creed” is a work of misanthropy more than misogyny.

Women may govern men and their resources in this kind of world – when the omens are propitious. The “agreeable Decora” got lucky – she “fancy’d she saw count Gimrack riding Bare-backt upon a colt which galloping up directly to her, cast his feeble Rider plumb into her lap. This dream was too plain to need a Daniel or a Joseph to interpret it. Both her merit and her Destiny conspird to make her a Countess, with the charming prospect too, of being soon a Douager.” When propitious dreams do not occur, there are other tools in the arsenal, such as lucky numbers. There is, for instance, number one: “Fine Mrs. Lurewell Understands the power of this lucky number, and knows she shall give most pain when she wears but one Patch. For this reason she never Sticks on more on a Sunday morning when she gos to church, tho’ she have never so many Pimples to conceal.”

The road to the enjoyments of life can be bumpy; thus “if a Wenche’s right Eye happens to itch, she’ll be cross’t in some darling inclination, that will make


171 “Female Creed,” 456, 467, my italics.
her weep bitterly. Either that formal old Fellow her Father is positive she shan’t go to the Masquerade, or else her Stingy Husband, like Baron Slouch, will refuse to pay a Debt of honour, contracted by her ill fortune last season at the Bath.” Of course a woman can nag her husband, as does the “plaintiff Spouse” of General Swagger, because “she has not so smart an Equipage as Mrs. Gawdy, who is no more than a Simple Colonels Lady;” and that is already a man’s misfortune, that could be prevented by scrupulously following the portents – or by obeying your wife, for instance, in “the nightly civilities which all loving Husbands ought to pay to their Wives, to preserve the peace of the Family.” Because if the husband does not do so, there are others who know better how to satisfy: “The Reverend Mr. Arse-Smart is one of these Sons of Art, who works wonders among ye Ladys by strokeing them gently with his hand in some sensible part, by which he dispossesses them of all their distempers. He has most success among those Wives, who have Fumblers for their Husbands, and gains their hearts by prescribeing Bath or Tumbridge [sic], where they’re sure to meet with more agreable company than they leave at home, and have opportunities of trying the most effectual Remedy.” This is a world tuned to the rhythms of the (female) body, and those men succeed who know its ways, since “so very frail is the strongest female Resolution, at a time when all the humours of the body flow to the weakest part, and all the passions of the Soul are ripen’d into Love.”

The unstoppable flow of humors – urine and blood – is Byrd’s most persistent and powerful image of the loss of control, from the very first page of “The Female Creed,” where the unfortunate Dripabunda lost her “Retentivefaculty” when she “fancy’d She saw the Ghost of her decest Husband [and] dy’d away for fear the good man was come to life again.” In Byrd’s dystopia, control over one’s body is not even an option. If the point of a pin dropped on the floor “lye towards a poor Girle, every thing that day will fall out wrong, she cannot stoop but she'll squeeze out a f…t, or laugh but she'll be-piss her self.” And if one tries to trick fate by, say, staying in bed on an “ill bodeing” day, like Mrs. Straddle, the punishment is swift: when she “perch[ed] with all her weight upon the Pot, the brittle Utensil flew to pieces, filling the Bed with water of high-perfume, and at the Same time makeing a Wound, which none but a female Surgeon cou’d have the honour to dress.” Men are not immune; the same laws apply to both female and male bodies: “…Enthusiasts tell us we are most dipos’d to see visions when we are fasting and full of Wind, our souls being then most alert and aptest to ramble out of our Bodys. For this reason we are told the French Prophets us’d to f…t in their Raptures and vagarys after a most indecent manner…. So likewise our Friends the Poets, who sometimes make very slender meals, see the muses dance stark naked.”

Such mock life of the mind, be it enthusiastic religion or romantic poetry, follows the movements of the body, and builds its illusions of spirituality upon grossness and filth. But by warming up the poets’ imagination the Muses “teach them to

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Ibid., 461, 468.

173 Ibid., 469-470, 464.

174 Ibid., 449, 465-466, 462.

175 Ibid., 457. The supposed physicality of excessive imagination and faith made scatology an important instrument of aesthetic criticism in the early eighteenth century. Even the refined Shaftesbury did not escape the temptation when talking about the decline of modern public discourse: “For to discharge frequently and vehemently in public is a great hindrance to the way of private exercise, which consists chiefly in control. But there, instead of control, debate or argument, the chief exercise of the wit consists in uncontrollable harangues and reasonings, which must neither be questioned nor contradicted, there is great danger lest the party, through this habit, should suffer much by crudities, indigestions, choler, bile and particularly by a certain tumour or flatulency, which renders him of all men least able to apply the wholesome regimen of self practice.” Shaftesbury, Characteristics, 75-76.
flatter our [women’s] vanity most agreeably.” In a world upside down, the lack of self-control and “retentive faculty” and the surrender to your animal self may be a way toward success.176

The dizzying maze of mutual seductions, deceits, gains, and losses in the war of all against all culminates in the last article of female faith, “more incredible than all the rest”:

I believe in the constancy and Fidelity of Man. Just as my mother and Grandmother did before me, I believe all the dear creature urges about his Passion is punctually true, that his Sighs flow directly from his heart, that his Flames are unfeigned, and his addresses have never the least squint upon my Fortune, but are all fairly meant to my Person…. I believe these Eyes of mine will fix his Wandering heart, tho’ till the moment it felt their power, it was more wavering than the Wind, and rather than not change at all, wou’d change for the Worse, like the roving Fly, which after being cloy’d with honey, wants something Savory, and longs to finish its Repast upon a T…d.177

Here the ostensibly anti-female satire most obviously turns into a bitter statement about human condition and civilized society, where the frailty and gullibility of women, governed by their bodies, corresponds to, and encourages, the moral corruption of men who are moved by fickle illusions. It has been argued that, having assumed female voice in order to dump onto women his own uncivilized physicality, Byrd as a colonial eventually assumes that voice in earnest, condemning from a position on the social and cultural margins (which he shared with women) the British society and establishment that rejected him.178 But I believe that the intensity of Byrd’s attacks on contemporary Britain reflects no less the shame caused by belonging than an anger caused by rejection. He lost; but even before he lost in the political and matrimonial game, he lost the bearings of reason and endangered his soul when he accepted the rules of the game. The humiliation of defeat fuses with the humiliation of moral and sexual looseness (and so the commonplace book: “To be subject to an arbitrary Prince is a more honorable Slavery, than to be Subject to his own more arbitrary Passions”).179 Both in the “Inamorato L’Oiseaux” and in the commonplace book, Byrd’s own explanation of his failure to achieve prominence has little to do with his colonial background, contrary to what scholars who now interpret his writings generally assert.180 The dystopia of “The Female Creed” used to be his world. Recall, for instance, how Byrd records in his diary consulting a “conjurer” who “gave me hope that my mistress would be kind again.”181 He visited Tunbridge, providing perhaps (at least in his imagination) “more agreeable company” to the ladies there than their fumbling husbands, and “flattering their vanity” with verses.182 He frequented masquerades.183 Byrd’s failure, especially at courtship, “opened his

176 “Female Creed,” 470.
177 Ibid., 474-475.
179 Commonplace Book, [162].
180 I have already cited the entry in the commonplace book relating the story of Demosthenes, who hoped to wean himself “from hankering after Pleasure, which clouds the understanding, and cloggs all those Talents, which might otherwise distinguish us from the rest of of [sic] our Neighbours,” Commonplace Book, [172]. For prevailing interpretations of Byrd in the historiography of the last decades, see Chapter One.
181 London Diary, 4 April and 1 May 1718.
182 See Byrd’s contributions to Tunbrigalia: Or, Tunbridge Miscellanies, for the Year 1719, in Another Secret Diary, 397-409.
eyes” – and “a man never begins to be Wise, til he has first found himself out to be a Fool.” The truth he is compelled to see by the time he leaves London for Virginia in 1726 is the pervasive power of his body and the weakness of his mind. He discovers the subversive potential of the imagination and illusion – these operations of the mind that are provoked by the flesh and testify to the body’s ability to insinuate itself deep into the psyche.

3. Account of the Evil: Fatherhood and Moral Order

Shortly after his return to the colony, on the 5th of July 1726, Byrd writes the now famous letter to the Earl of Orrery – perhaps the most quoted document from pre-Revolutionary Virginia, a mythic description of a perfect world, perfect polity, and perfect gentleman opposed to what Byrd has left behind:

Like one of the patriarchs, I have my flocks and my herds, my bond-men and bond-women, and every sort of trade amongst my own servants, so that I live in a kind of independence on everyone, but Providence. However tho’ this sort of life is without expence yet it is attended with a great deal of trouble. I must take care to keep all my people to their duty, to set all the springs in motion, and to make every one draw his equal share to carry the machine forward. But then tis an amusement in this silent country, and a continual exercise of our patience and oeconomy.

Economic self-sufficiency, industry, and order replace the empty entertainments of London and the pursuit of costly pleasures. With no need for such empty signs and unreliable representations as money (in the enclosed economic world of the plantation, “half-a-crown will rest undisturbed in [Byrd’s] pocket for many moons together”), there is no need to hunt wealthy heiresses or to seek lucrative posts in corrupt administrations. Byrd still would not abandon his dream of becoming the governor of Virginia, but he emphasizes several times in this and subsequent letters to England that in Virginia “we are… so frugal of the publick money, that we are neither to be flatter’d nor frightened out of one penny more than the established salary [for governors]. We give nothing more to one who uses us ill, nor are we more liberal to one who uses us well, having learnt from our mother country, how easy it is to draw publick liberalitys into presedent.”

When there is no money, there are no robbers public or private, and no “vagrant mendicants to

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184 Commonplace Book, [207].

185 Byrd to Charles Boyle, Earl of Orrery, 5 July 1726, Correspondence, 1:355.

186 Ibid.; Byrd to Orrery, 2 February 1726/27, Correspondence, 1:358-359. See similar statements about Virginians’ relationship with their governors on p. 355 and in another letter to Orrery, 5 February 1727/28, Correspondence, 1:371. The excessive power of the executive, derived from its control of financial resources inconsiderately granted to it by Parliament itself, was one of the main criticisms of the English constitution in the writings of the early eighteenth-century Tories like Bolingbroke. Such criticisms were inseparable from the condemnation of money in general as an artificial, unnatural means of exchange that disrupts natural power relations and corrupts the economic and social structure of a polity. The overall picture of the social order in Virginia that Byrd draws in his letters to England, mainly to Orrery, reproduces very closely the social vision of Augustan Tories as analyzed in Isaac Kramnick, Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968). See also Linda Colley, In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party, 1714-60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 85-117; Christine Gerrard, The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); the chapter on “Cosmic Toryism” in Willey, Eighteenth-Century Background, 47-59.
seize and deafen us wherever we go, as in your island of beggars.”¹⁸⁷ Everyone is functional, everyone helps to move the machine forward, the society is wholesome, orderly and coherent. Governorship here is just another form of patriarchal authority founded on natural distinction and consent. It would be a natural progression for Byrd, who has found a firm and secure identity as the organizer and mover, the self-sufficient and independent center of the natural order occupying, in his little world, a position corresponding to the Platonic and Shaftesburian ideal of the universal mind as the original source of order.

The very “elements,” the environment of Virginia, restore the right circulation in Byrd’s body, poisoned by the atmosphere of corrupt London, where “tis miraculous that any lungs can breath in an air compounded of so many different vapours and exhalations.” In Virginia, “each of the four elements seems to have more youth and excellence than in your northern climate, and the whole face of nature smiles with quite another air….From hence our air receives a springiness and purity very friendly to our lungs, and beneficial to the circulation both of our blood, and spirits.” In the land of natural perfection, “our plants have juices more refined and better digested, our fruits are more sprightly flavoured, our meats are more savoury, and I doubt not but when we come to find them, our metals will prove all ripened into gold and silver. Thus nature is very indulgent to us, and produces it’s good things almost spontaneously.”¹⁸⁸

But this is where the trouble begins anew. The problem is not only that natural abundance leads to laziness and indulgence,¹⁸⁹ or that the dream of riches surfaces in Byrd’s account of natural idyll. The warm Virginian sun softens and relaxes, but it also agitates – unfortunately, not solely in a way that contributes to industry and diligence. Byrd did bring an English wife to Virginia – not a rich heiress, but a modest gentlewoman Maria Taylor. In February of 1727/8, he writes to Orrery, comparing his newly born daughter Maria to Anne, his first child with Maria Taylor, born in England:

Here is a little Virginian that I fancy is much more a romp than her sister. She is so lively that unless her nurse were very carefull she would spring out of her arms. Like the children of Languedoc and Gascony, she dances before she can walk, and sings before she can speak. If she lives we must get her a husband as soon as the law will allow, which makes females forbidden fruit before ten years old. But that statute was calculated for your northern clmate, and not for the latitude of 37….

It is very strange, but such is the warmth of our atmosphere that no matron… dares trust to her age, but is forced to be chast to preserve her character. These disadvantages to gallantry make well for matrimony, which thrives so excellently, that an old maid, or an old batchelour are as rare among us, and reckoned as ominous as a blazing star.¹⁹⁰

This is the other side of the Virginian paradise. The strength of nature translates into the strength of the body; the distinction between natural order and the power of desire threatens to crumble in this land of abundance. In Virginia more than in England, the laws of propriety and the familial

¹⁸⁷ Byrd to Orrery, 5 July 1726, Correspondence, 1:355.
¹⁸⁸ Ibid., and 2 February 1726/27, Correspondence, 1:357.
¹⁹⁰ Byrd to Orrery, 5 February 1727/28, Correspondence, 1:370.
order can hardly contain desire, and marriage is an excuse for lust rather than a union of souls. It thrives because of the peculiar restlessness of the flesh, not the feeling and consciousness of social responsibility. In the July 1726 letter to Boyle Byrd recalls philosophically the temptations of England that “inflame the appetite and charm the senses” and kept him “so long from the more solid pleasures of innocence, and retirement.” He thought he had left that world behind; but, little by little, the natural abundance of Virginia proves no less a danger to innocence than the luxuries of foggy London.

Maria Taylor Byrd was to be, in a sense, another step on Byrd’s way from inclinations to principles. She may have represented a defeat in his struggle for wealth, but she also represented a victory of the spirit. She did not have a substantial dowry, but she wrote Greek. Here is Byrd’s reaction to the fact – a billet doux written in that language: “When I thought you knew only your mother tongue, I was passionately in love with you: but when indeed I learned that you also spoke Greek, the tongue of the Muses, I went completely crazy about you. In beauty you surpassed Helen, in culture of mind and ready wit Sappho. It is not meet therefore to be astonished I was smitten by such grandeur of body and soul when I admitted the poison of love both through my eyes and my ear.” Their marriage is a challenge (whether it was a voluntary challenge, we can only speculate) to the distorted matrimonial customs of the metropolitan society, owing to which, as Byrd put it five years later in a letter to Maria’s sister, “so many straight agreeable wenches pine to skin & bone in a state of virginity, because they have not their weight in gold to hire a man to come to bed to them. Tho’ the poor jades have ten thousand good qualities, yet without they have likewise ten thousand pounds, they may dress and go to church, it will be to no manner of purpose…” There, the dictates of luxury and the artifice of wealth stand in the way of natural sexual relations and procreation. Byrd’s second marriage is (at least professedly) a result of passion that has been stirred both by the qualities of the body and the endowments of the soul. It is thus a union of both flesh and spirit, managing and directing natural sexual drive into the channel of orderly, socially beneficial reproduction. But it begins to fulfill its reproductive function even too well. Writing to his sister-in-law in 1729, Byrd notifies her that Maria “is advanced above 4 months towards her fourth child. I vow to God if she goes on at this rate, I believe she will live to see as many of her descendants as my Lady Honiwood, yet she do’s not eat fish above once a week, nor rabit above once in six months. It is certainly owing to the climate, in which even Mrs. Perry or Madam Smith wou’d be pregnant without the assistance of Dr. Johnson, or any Irish acquaintance.” That fish enhances female fertility is another piece of wisdom from the commonplace book; but in Virginia such encouragements are unnecessary. What is supposed to be a public good in need of encouragement happens by itself, unregulated and hardly controllable.

The wise woman Diotima of Mantinea taught Socrates, here in a mid-eighteenth-century translation: “All of Human Race, O Socrates, are full of the Seeds of Generation, both in their Bodies and in their Minds: And when they arrive at Maturity of Age, they naturally long to generate.” The work of reproduction is, by its nature, divine. It produces immortality out of that which is mortal and perpetuates the general order of creation through the fleeting generations of

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191 Byrd to Maria Taylor, ca. 1724, Correspondence, 1:348.
192 Byrd to Mrs. Anne Taylor Otway, ca. June 1729, Correspondence, 1:401-402.
193 Ibid., 402.
mortal creatures. Humans and animals are in this the same—the desire to be immortalized is inherent in live but mortal nature. It was a matter of course for an early modern observer to suppose that the principle of generation, the function of perpetuating natural order in the human creation and thus transcending the confines of a particular body, belongs to the male. It was the father who was, in the words of Sir Robert Filmer, “the nobler and principal agent in generation.”

According to Carole Pateman, “the patriarchal story is about the procreative power of a father who is complete in himself, who embodies the creative power of both female and male.” It was natural for Byrd to seek proofs of the potency of one of his classical characters in the fact that, while he “solaced his wife” only three times in six years, he “Struck out a child every Flourish he made.” Or, Byrd could console himself that the more successful rival who married the woman Byrd had courted, even though he “did beget a child upon her Body,” still “had not vigour enough to give it life.”

This power of life and generation seems, in all of its varieties, to bring man closer to the divine. The sexual power of men, when employed properly in procreation, signifies the presence of the immortal in the mortal. But there soon appear essential rifts within what, superficially, seems to be the single and indivisible principle of generation and immortality. So, Diotima teaches:

But tho Immortality be thus sought by all Men, yet Men of different Dispositions seek it by different Ways. In Men of certain Constitutions, the Generative Power lyes chiefly and eminently in their Bodys. Such Persons are particularly fond of the Other Sex, and court Intimacys chiefly with the Fair; they are easily enamoured in the Vulgar Way of Love; and procure to themselves, by begetting Children, the Preservation of their Names, a Remembrance of Themselves which they hope will be immortal, and Happiness to endure for ever. In Men of Another Stamp, the Facultys of Generation are, in as eminent a Degree, of the Mental Kind. For Those there are, who are more prolific in their Souls than in their Bodys; and are full of the Seeds of such an Offspring, as it peculiarly belongs to the Human Soul to conceive and to generate. And What Offspring is This, but Wisdom and every other Virtue?

Poets and founders of arts are men of this kind; but “by far the most excellent and beauteous Part of Wisdom is That, which is conversant in the founding and well-ordering of Citys and other Habitations of Men; a Part of Wisdom, distinguished by the Names of Temperance and Justice.” The body and soul, as different agents, imply and long for different kinds of immortality. The kind of offspring that “peculiarly belongs to the Human Soul” and distinguishes men from animals has in and of itself nothing to do with physical generation, and vice versa. According to an entry in Byrd’s commonplace book, the longer is the penis, the shorter is the understanding. At the same time and in the same entry, “the longer a Penis is, the surer work tis like to make in the business of Generation, because the Seed is injected with more certainty into the womb by reaching nearer to it.”

However, if without the bodily generation and “the Vulgar Way of Love” the perpetuation of life and nature is impossible, then the mind and its work are, in a way, opposed to life itself. Efforts to assert the power of reason over that of the body, efforts to rein in the libido that threatens to

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196 Ibid.
197 *Commonplace Book*, [498], [508].
198 *The Banquet*, 188-191.
199 *Commonplace Book*, [472].
overflow the dictates of reason, are potentially efforts against life. Witness Byrd recording the recipes that may be followed by men “who have found themselves of too amorous a complection.” Such unfortunate men are known to “have wore for Example a Leaden Girdle upon their Loins,” or “have applyed a Plaister of White Lillys to the Small of their backs, and taken them inwardly to dry up their Seed, and Stiffe their disorderly Inclinations. A Decoction of Hemlock moderately taken will have the [s]ame effect…” Controlling libido means drying up the seed; male procreative ability and even life is imperiled by the exercise of reason. Socrates, who, for someone like Byrd, was the embodiment of philosophy as a way of life, died from hemlock. Between drying up the disorderly seed and extinguishing life, the essence of nature, there is only a difference of degree. Here the tension that underlines Byrd’s writing is perhaps most visible. Byrd’s commonplace book may be an attempt to harness his own disorderly self through the power of common wisdom, sometimes contradicting directly his personal experience. But the logic of the commonplace, invoked in the sequences on sexuality so obviously and with such persistence by Byrd’s needs and anxieties, transcends his experience not only on the level of content. The whole effort to find balance between nature and matter, reason and libido at this crucial juncture – sex and procreation – is thwarted by the logic of discourse that operates independently from Byrd like a genie that has been let out of the bottle.

And so, already in Virginia, Byrd is troubled, ostensibly in jest, by his wife’s fertility and ascribes to her this explosion of life. In another letter, again complaining that he knows “nothing but a rabbit that breeds faster,” Byrd concedes (even if in jest) that Maria may have “her reasons” for procreating at this rate. “By leaveing [Byrd] to [sic] great an encumbrance,” she may prevent him from remarrying should she die first. The echo of the belief that marriage is a cage of flesh may be heard here. But all this is only a joke. Byrd knows perfectly well whose life-power must be responsible for this fertility, and whose patriarchal libido has grown disturbingly “Irish” in the Virginian paradise.

Family, love, and procreation are indispensable roots and engines of productive labor and social order, of society itself in the unsettled American wilderness. Byrd is ready to encourage procreation in America by any means necessary; he is widely known, for instance, to have advocated vigorously, and somewhat unusually, the intermarriage of English settlers and Indians. The country would become populous and considerable as a result of such policies, and civilization and Christianity would be advanced. A good example could already be found in the French colonies, where King Louis XIV “thought it not below even the dignity of a Frenchman to become one flesh with” the Indians and actively encouraged such marriages. As a consequence, the French interest has been “very much strengthened amongst the savages, and their religion, such as it is, propagated just as far as their love.” In truth, “a sprightly lover is the most prevailing missionary that can be sent among these, or any other infidels.” The problem of the reproachable skin color of the Indians would be solved as well, “for if a Moor may be washed white in three generations, surely an Indian might have been blanched in two.”

200 Ibid., [501].
201 Byrd to Mrs. Jane Pratt Taylor, 3 April 1729, Correspondence, 1:391.
This is how, from the point of view of Byrd the pragmatist, the family should work in the American setting. More generally and outside of the problem of American development, however, Byrd did feel a distinction between different kinds of generation, with a potential rift between the reproduction of population and the reproduction of order and virtue. Perhaps recalling his own experience, he records in the commonplace book the case of Alexander the Great, who “declared he owed more to his Master Aristotle, than to his father Phillip, because he only made him live, but the other made him live with glory and reputation. His father gave him mortality, but his master immortality.”

The phenomenon of fatherhood seems to be especially problematic for Byrd precisely in the social/public context, when the metaphor of bodily reproduction and family invades the public realm, dangerously mixing the two kinds of “immortality.” In the entry 312, he returns again to Alexander’s opinion about his father and his tutor, and in the next entry writes of Cicero, who received “[t]he greatest Title that was given to Man” – that of “Pater Patriae, the Father of his Country.” But not everything is rosy about this pater patriae: there immediately follows an entry on Cicero’s brand of eloquence and persuasion, based on the ability of this “charming Orator” to touch the passions of his listeners and capture them with “the enchantment of Eloquence, and the sweet art of Perswasion.” In this consisted Cicero’s greatness and public power, and, evidently, because of these abilities, and not only for his deeds for the good of the public, he received the honor to be called the father of his country. Can public influence, won by such methods as appealing to the passions of “the public” as a whole, be essentially a good thing, even if used for good? Is it possible for a truly philosophic man to gain public influence and the attention of the multitude by any other methods? After all, only a few entries previously, we meet with the divine Socrates who, according to Byrd, does not think so: “Socrates once harangd the Mobb in a manner that pleas’d them extremely: but their applause was such a Surprize to Him, that turning about to his Friends, surely, said he, I must have been talking very foolishly, else I shou’d never have been thus honour’d with the approbation of the multitude.”

Power and popularity may be used reasonably, but their source is not in reason. Fatherhood, biological or metaphorical/social, seems too close to passion, illusion, and inclination; it cements society by that kind of generative power which “lyes chiefly and eminently in [the] Bodys,” even if its final aim is to establish order and the rule of principle. Is there a seamless transition from generative power to principle? After all, writing in the 1730s about the “whitening” of Indians through intermarriage, Byrd very likely remembered another anecdote from the commonplace book, about a “wicked West Indian,” who

boasted that he had washt the Black […] White, and being askt by what art, he did it, he replyd, that in his youth he had an Intrigue with an Ethopian Princess, by whom he had a Daughter that was a Mulatto. Her he lay with, believing no man had so good a right to gather the Fruit as he who planted it. By this he had another Daughter of the Portuguese complection and When she came to the 13 years old he again begot Issue Female upon her Body, that was perfectly white; and very honourably descended.

This “wicked” assertion of father-right only pushes forward, as a joke, the implications and imaginative possibilities of a social order founded on physical descent. In Absalom and 207

203 Commonplace Book, [29].
204 Ibid., [312-314].
205 Ibid., [288].
206 Ibid., [173].
207 Compare Cotton Mather’s puritan doubts about whether individual human goodness and godliness (of the immaterial spirit) can originate in the vile circumstances of physical reproduction: “Tis a Consideration that should find
Achitophel, John Dryden demonstrated the interpretive possibilities inherent in the position of a patriarch at the center of power in all its forms, as the image of God, or the mediator between God and mankind: “In pious times, e’r Priest-Craft did begin, / Before Polygamy was made a sin; / When Man, on many, multiply’d his kind, / E’r one to one was, cursedly, confin’d; / When Nature prompted, & no law deni’d / Promiscuous Use of Concubine and Bride; / Then, Israel’s Monarch, after Heavens own heart, / His vigorous warmth did, variously, impart / to Wives and Slaves; And, wide as his Command, / Scatter’d his Maker’s Image through the Land.”

Many decades later James Boswell, that most unfit candidate for a patriarch, contemplated the relationship between Christianity and adultery: “My passion, or appetite rather, was so strong that I was inclined to a laxity of interpretation, and as the Christian religion was not express upon the subject, thought that I might be like a patriarch; or rather, I thought that I might enjoy some of my former female acquaintances in London.”

The distance between Dryden’s mythic vision of scattering the image of God through corporeal reproduction (very much resembling Byrd’s anecdote about the wicked West-Indian) and Boswell’s perfunctory justification for his life of vice exemplifies what Byrd may have sensed in the late 1720s: the Tory socio-political ideal of Swift, Bolingbroke, or Byrd in reality carried within itself the seeds of the very corruption they all detested in modern society.

Byrd’s first literary attempts since his arrival in Virginia can be read as a tacit acknowledgement of that fact and a search for a better foundation for social order. They are a reflection on an important event in Byrd’s new life in Virginia – his leading an expedition to establish a clear boundary between the royal colony of Virginia and the proprietary colony of North Carolina in 1728. For the first literary adaptation of his journal kept during the expedition, Byrd chose the genre of secret history, which in post-1660 English culture embraced the histories of the private passions, vices, and foibles hidden behind the smooth official surface of political order and invisibly directing the course of events. In theory, a “secret history” is impossible in a well-organized polity where appearances do not conceal essences and vice has no place. But, contrary to what Byrd wrote in 1726-1727 to his friends in England, Virginia was not such a polity.

208 [John Dryden], Absalom and Achitophel, 2nd ed., augmented and revised (London: Jacob Tonson, 1681), 7.
210 Having begun during the Restoration as a form of Whig denunciation of the corrupt monarchy of Charles II and James II with its Dryden-like patriarchal pretensions, secret history became in the early eighteenth century an essentially Tory genre, taking on the entirety of the post-1688 social order founded on the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure in all senses of the word. The classic of the genre in its Tory version was the two-volume collection of social gossip and outright fiction, Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of Both Sexes. From the New Atlantis, an Island in the Mediterranean, by Mary de la Riviere Manley (1709). It is one of the few books his reaction to which Byrd records in his diary, however vaguely: he was “much affected with it.” Secret Diary, 278 (December 29 1710). On Whig secret history, see Annabel Patterson, “Marvell and Secret History,” in Marvell and Liberty, ed.
The expedition of 1728 was to become an important event in the history of Virginia or even the entire British America, a civilizing mission that would extend the (patriarchal) Virginian order further into the chaos of America and at the same time protect that order from the chaos still beyond it by a “dividing line.” The members of the expedition baptized children and performed marriage ceremonies for the white settlers who had almost gone wild in their “state of nature,” measured the land, preparing it for more organized settlement and cultivation, and described natural phenomena and resources. But at one point in Byrd’s *Secret History of the Line* the author encounters Rachel, a daughter of a frontier settler: “She was a smart lass, and, when I desired the parson to make a memorandum of his christenings that we might keep an account of the good we did, she asked me very pertly who was to keep an account of the evil? I told her she should be my secretary for that if she would go along with me.”

Byrd does not really need a secretary—the evil they are doing is important enough for him to later devote to it *The Secret History*. But here, as in “The Female Creed,” the voice of a woman exposes the reality of ambition, stupidity, greed, and lust behind the mask of the social and political order the Virginians bring into the wilderness.

Women are always chaos; but, unable to participate in true order, they are also unable to support the appearance of order, the imperfect copy of the work of the bodiless universal mind that men (stuck as they are between order and chaos) create, ostensibly to regulate, but in reality to conceal the chaos of their libido. If “The Female Creed” is a condemnation of the obvious corruption of England, *The Secret History* exposes the still hidden, inchoate corruption of patriarchal Virginia, more obvious on the frontier where the artificial constraints (and smoke screens) of politeness and laws is absent. The sexual undertones of patriarchy become explicit in the numerous instances of “taking liberties” with local women, ranging from committing sin only “in heart” to near rape.

Certainly Byrd himself, named “Steddy” in the *Secret History*, does not break outward laws of propriety and rules of hospitality. The role of the chief villain is assigned to another Virginia commissioner, Firebrand (the name is an allusion to Lucifer). A drunkard, liar, rapist, and Irishman, he represents all that is wrong with Virginia’s new “aristocracy.” The struggle between Steddy and Firebrand, which takes up a significant portion of the *Secret History*, in many ways represents another form of the same familiar inner civil war between principle and inclination that has become the theme of Byrd’s life and now is the focal point of the struggle over patriarchy itself. It is not even fully exteriorized: if Firebrand acts, Steddy fantasizes, committing sins in his heart and mind. Again as always, the two parts of the dichotomy cannot be fully and safely separated; corruption is already present in the soul as a fantasy. With the above-mentioned Rachel, Byrd not only discusses the moral meaning of the expedition but also exchanges some smiles “that were to be paid for in kisses”; he wishfully jokes about the

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212 For the idea of this argument, and thus, I hope, for a better understanding of the meaning of “The Female Creed” and especially of *The Secret History of the Line*, I am indebted to Natalie Zemon Davis, who discusses the potential for social criticism inherent in the early modern image of the disorderly woman in “Women on Top,” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 124-151 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

213 It has been remarked that Firebrand may represent Byrd’s alter ego: Robert D. Arner, “Westover and the Wilderness: William Byrd’s Images of Virginia,” in *Southern Literary Journal* 7, no. 2 (1975), 116-118.
desirability of sharing the commissioners’ bed with her and her sister, instead of a disagreeable
captain from Carolina. After a rainy day spent in idleness, Byrd records, unwittingly evoking
what he himself said about the dreams of poets in “The Female Creed”: “I dreamt the three
Graces appeared to me in all their naked charms; I singled out Charity from the rest, with whom I
had an intrigue.”

No less importantly, Byrd sexualizes even the landscape around him, where nearly all the lures
and pitfalls of libidinal urge can be found in a symbolic form, if one is eager enough to look. A
suggestively shaped hill is named by the commissioners “Maiden’s Breast”; a particularly noisy
creek becomes Matrimony Creek; a steep rock offering splendid possibilities for suicide – a
Lover’s Cure. A nearly fatal encounter of a woodsman with a female bear is described in jest as a
“romantic adventure,” and echo is “that prating slut.” Fat bear meat becomes an important part of
the expedition’s diet – but “whoever makes a supper of it will certainly dream of a woman or the
devil, or both.” The primeval physical power of nature lurks in every corner, both as Eros and
Thanatos. The body that overpowers order and reason precipitates its own decay, self-destruction,
and death – that is what happens to the North Carolinians, who live in a virtual state of nature. Fat
pork, which is their main diet, not only makes them “extremely hoggish in their temper” (so that
“many of them seem to grunt rather than speak in their ordinary conversation”), but also makes
their bodies rot and their noses fall in. The extent of decay became obvious when the
commissioners invited a local wench to drink with them and “examined all her hidden charms
and played a great many gay pranks. While Firebrand, who had the most curiosity, was ranging
over her sweet person, he picked off several scaps as big as nipples, the consequence of eating too
much pork.” What Byrd finds in the wilderness of North Carolina is not much different from
what Swift discovers behind polite English appearances in a “Lady’s Dressing Room,” and even
more obviously in the bedroom of a prostitute in another savage satire.

The hope for Byrd lies in the fact that he is not alone in his existential struggle. When talking
about the disagreements with Firebrand, Byrd uses the pronoun “we”, not “I”: “To say the truth,
we had rather have drunk water the whole journey to have been fairly quit of such disagreeable
company.”

4. The Band of Brothers “and Its Discontents”

The hope for Byrd lies in the fact that he is not alone in his existential struggle. When talking
about the disagreements with Firebrand, Byrd uses the pronoun “we”, not “I”: “To say the truth,
we had rather have drunk water the whole journey to have been fairly quit of such disagreeable
company.”

214 Secret History, 77, 67, 120.
215 Ibid., 132, 123, 132, 135, 66, 141.
216 Ibid., 60. The implied danger of self-destruction for manhood in particular is perhaps evoked here through the
connection between the nose and penis, which can be found in “The Female Creed,” p. 458 and was probably quite
familiar in the eighteenth century; it is famously magnified to hilarious absurdity in Lawrence Stern’s Tristram Shandy.
discussion of “The Lady’s Dressing Room” see above.
218 Secret History, 79.
For the rest of the journey to the mountains and back, harmony and concord reign in the expedition. “Gay pranks” are now innocent (after all, there are no women around), and on the royal birthday they drink the king’s health with pure water. Byrd portrays himself wisely distributing the workload and justice and curing the sick and injured, the same way he supervised the health of his slaves, children and neighbors at home. The hierarchy is implied but does not have to be formal; it ought to be based not on ambition but on the necessity of clear and uncontested leadership in challenging circumstances. It is compatible with the equality of rights. At one moment Byrd juxtaposed his and Firebrand’s approach to hierarchy: he believed that an accused should “have the English liberty of being heard in his turn. But Firebrand said a gentleman should be believed on his bare word without evidence and a poor man condemned without trial, which agreed not at all with my notions of justice.”

This relationship may be something more than just a model of the English polity or a replica of the Virginian compromise between the ruling elite and white common planters. With warmth and affection Byrd tells the reader how the others, with “much care,” concealed from him the unconfirmed news about the death of his son (later it proved false), “being unwilling to make me uneasy upon so much uncertainty.” What emerges on the frontier is a quasi-family, sharing difficulties, joys, and often a bed. In the first section of the Journey to the Land of Eden, Byrd with an almost palpable relish dwells at length on the process of assembling his band, traveling from house to house, snatching his old friends from their “real” families and promising the wives to take care of them. The relationships in this community are governed by manly laws of travel: be cheerful, brave, do not complain, do not do anything that would make the lives of your fellow travelers more difficult or would saw discord. Not everybody is equally fit. Once at the outset of the expedition to his “land of Eden” Byrd and his friend Major Banister “took possession of the bed, while the rest of the company lay in bulk upon the floor. This night the little Major made the first discovery of an impatient and peevish temper, equally unfit both for a traveler and a husband.” Not all are manly enough: “Peter Jones had a smart fit of an ague which shook him severely, though he bore it like a man; but the small Major [this time Major Mumford] had a small fever and bore it like a child. He groaned as if he had been in labor…” But even if so, things are not as hopeless as in the prison of marriage. As Byrd reflects in the Secret History, “when people are joined together in a troublesome commission, they should endeavor to sweeten by complacency and good humor all the hazards and hardships they are bound to encounter and not, like married people, make their condition worse by everlasting discord. Though in this,

219 Ibid., 71.
222 Secret History, 145.
indeed, we had the advantage of married people, that a few weeks would part us.”224 Marriage is based upon a wrong foundation. It is a social union that allows one to indulge inconstant desires and makes such indulgence legitimate, because bodily reproduction is the essential purpose of matrimony. The extreme but temporary conditions of the frontier, on the other hand, make self-restraint an (achievable) necessity. This is the time for pure duty and service, when desire has to be left unsatisfied. Byrd found a new community and a new matrix for social order, something better than family.

It is only after this, after the discord of the Secret History is overcome and exorcised and the shape of the frontier community is discerned more clearly in The Progress to the Mines and Journey to the Land of Eden,225 that Byrd writes the final account of the 1728 expedition – The History of the Dividing Line (c. mid-1730s). If the Secret History is full of conflict and action, the History is all meticulous observation and description, about twice as long as the first text. This may lead one to see it as a step back from the Secret History and as a text that is less “American” in its form, tailored more to the tastes of the English audience.226 But it is a logical development of Byrd’s discursive project. The newfound communal harmony helps Byrd (and supposedly the other travelers as well) to elevate themselves to the role of disinterested observers and thus both to discern and to create intelligible order in the material chaos that threatens to subsume those who do not attain the distance necessary for reflection. Instead of the action and immediacy of the Secret History, the History encounters the American wilderness through the prism of contemplative classical wisdom, with incessant references to Greek and Roman authors and their natural histories. Instead of chasing country wenches around and “ranging over” their “sweet persons,” the travelers exercise their curiosity by looking into the mysteries of generation with a perfectly disinterested scientific eye, contributing to the stock of knowledge about the wonders of nature. Thus Byrd writes about the opossum, whose “greatest particularity” is

the false belly of the female, into which her young retreat in time of danger. She can draw the slit, which is the inlet into this pouch, so close that you must look narrowly to find it, especially if she happen to be a virgin…..

This is so odd a method of generation that I should not have believed it without the testimony of mine own eyes. Besides, a knowing and credible person has assured me he has more than once observed the embryo opossums growing to the teat before they were completely shaped, and afterwards watched their daily growth till they were big enough for birth. And all this he could the more easily pry into because the dam was so perfectly gentle and harmless that he could handle her just as he pleased.227

The body of a female opossum is certainly a safer object for the exercise of curiosity and mastery than the body of a woman, in more senses than one.

Finally, the band of industrious explorers, whose sublimated energy is employed in discerning the lineaments of natural order and preparing its resources for cultivation, may be a promising model for Virginia itself. Unlike the Secret History, the History begins with a brief sketch of the

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224 Secret History, 72.

225 The frequency of references to his “friends and fellow travelers” and the “laws of travel” in the Land of Eden suggests that they are used quite consciously and represent Byrd’s conceptualization of his frontier experience.


development of British North America, where Byrd finds no small measure of folly, sloth, greed and “secret history” which led to the dismemberment and fragmentation of “Virginia” (originally the entirety of claimed British possessions on the continent). As a new event in this history, the expedition may carry in it the possibility of change, a prospectus for a new kind of social life.

This possibility is an illusion. The virtuous band of brothers that replaces marriage and family can exist only on the frontier – eventually they will all come home. Upon the return of the dividing line expedition into the relatively densely populated areas, Byrd discharges some of his men but then accidentally meets them the next day: “I was a little shocked at our first alighting with a sight I did not expect. Most of the men I discharged yesterday were got here before us and within a few good downs of being drunk. I showed so much concern at this that they had the modesty to retire”228 (my italics). While the Secret History makes it seem that Steddy had won over Firebrand, this was not quite the case. Firebrand and his minions did not disappear – they only left the expedition. They returned to Virginia and North Carolina because they got tired of work and had no more liquor. And back there liquor was clearly plentiful, and work unnecessary. A kind of natural selection occurred, and only the conscientious continued into the wilderness.

And the wilderness continued its work on the travelers, even before their return to Virginia that would really question their virtue. Aside from the fact that these virtuous explorers did not drink alcohol mainly because they did not have any, the “liquor Adam drank in Paradise” was not without its own side effects. Byrd and the others “found it mended our appetite, not only to our victuals, of which we had plenty, but also to women, of which we had none.”229 So did bear meat, which also enhanced male fertility: “And thus much I am able to say besides for the reputation of the bear diet, that all the married men of our company were joyful fathers within forty weeks after they got home, and most of the single men had children sworn to them within the same time…”230 The libidinal urge that developed in the midst of natural plenty disregarded the formalities of marital status. It is in the last part of the expedition that, instead of pursuing women, the travelers saw in the surrounding landscape a Maiden’s Breast and Lover’s Cure. The pattern noticeable in Byrd’s 1726 and 1727 letters to England recurs: the natural purity and abundance of the land, water, air and food only makes the body stronger, and sublimation is only too clearly a result of the absence of temptation. Even the History notes that, after returning to civilization, Byrd and his men “from a primitive course of life… began to relapse into luxury.”231

One of the last natural wonders of Virginia to occupy Byrd’s attention in the final years of his life was ginseng – or a close relative of “that noble Tartarian plant,” discovered in Virginian mountains in 1729. We find the first discussion of it in a letter to Viscount Perceval in August of 1730. Byrd had not yet made an “experiment of its virtue,” but even reading the Jesuit accounts of the wonderful curative powers of the Chinese original immediately invoked in his mind “that extraordinary plant mentioned by Theophrastus, by the help of which a man was enabled to out

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228 Secret History, 147.
229 Ibid., 113. Compare the same remark in the History of the Dividing Line, where Byrd carefully downplays the disturbing effects of the “pure element”: “We had now no other drink but what Adam drank in Paradise, though to our comfort we found the water excellent, by the help of which we perceived our appetites to mend, our slumbers to sweeten, the stream of life to run cool and peaceably in our veins, and if ever we dreamt of women, they were kind,” p. 239.
230 History of the Dividing Line, 278.
231 Ibid., 319.
do a ram in the repetition of his favours.”232 Five years later he is already able to send his brother-in-law an ounce of the plant and a recipe for the best way of taking it, in order to fight a sluggish circulation of the blood and low spirits. Byrd advises his correspondent to follow his instructions for seven days, “till you have taken the whole ounce, liveing temperately all the while, and rideing out every day; and if by giving you a flush of spirits, it should provoke you to do the Lord knows what, be sure to be a philosopher, and govern your passions.”233 The pattern is again repeated. A natural curative agent, in combination with reasonable regimen, temperance, and exercise, restores the health and energy of the body and its animal spirits. Reason combines with nature in the work of healing and restoration; but the body appears not to know the boundary between salutary restoration and excess, which boundary must be established externally. Health and life itself, which are essentially good (as is that which enables us to extend them), carry in themselves the possibility of multiplying transgressions; and it is only proper that a plant such as ginseng is so rare: “its vertues are so great that mankind is not worthy to have it in plenty. We play the fool […] 50 or 60 years, what prodigys then should we grow up to in double that time? and why should the vigour of our constitutions be lengthend out, when the odds are great, we should make a bad use of it?”234 Human life itself, insofar as it is understood as an essentially biological phenomenon, turns out to be nearly alien to the harmony and purity of reason.

Byrd did not sustain this pessimistic outburst. In subsequent mentions of ginseng in his extant correspondence, he stressed one aspect of the melancholy reflection quoted above: the role of the human will in the choice of the uses to which one will put the health and vigor given by this “plant of life.” Byrd suppresses the sexual parallels and connotations he drew previously: “All the merry effects that I ascribed to [ginseng], or like King Charles might have hoped to find, are purely peculiar. It is certainly very cordial, & recruits the spirits exceedingly, without letting them sink low again. It sensibly warms the blood, maintains the natural heat, and feeds the flame of life impaired either by age or by straining our faculties too much.”235 It is also good against “all vapours and melancholy inspiring joy and good humour”; it works against “all the diseases of the head, and [enlivens] all the senses”; it is “friendly to the lungs and comfortable to the stomach.” In short, as Byrd writes to Peter Collinson, upon taking a course of ginseng “you will find your youth restored as if you had been boil’d in Medusa’s chaldron.”236 Curiously enough, especially considering Byrd’s previous intellectual history, the one function of the body on which ginseng now seems to have no appreciable effect is sexual. It performs all its curative feats “with out any of those naughty effects that might make men too troublesome and impertinent to their poor wives.” And Byrd was able to make such statements “by [his] own experience.”237 He was sixty-four years of age at the time of writing.

This (newly-established) lack of sexual effects from ginseng is certainly quite fortunate, for, notes Byrd, “man is so depravd, that in case this noble vegetable had any such vertue, I’m afraid a very
bad use would be made of it.”238 At the end of his life, Byrd creates an image of an ideal natural agent, a plant of life, whose function and natural purpose is to prolong and reinvigorate life and restore youth to the body and even to the mind, and which at the same time does not function as an aphrodisiac. The effect of this natural agent is an ideally instrumental body – a body that is strong, fully functional, and able to serve the purposes of the mind, but at the same time does not have inclinations that would deviate from the goals and intentions of consciousness. This is a body that will not enslave the mind, but will readily serve it. The image of ginseng and of the ginseng-taking body, to which Byrd comes in the last years of his correspondence, is an ephemeral solution to the problem of life. It remains ephemeral and unstable because artificial. It simply does not fit into Byrd’s picture of the world and his understanding of the human constitution. Doubts and a sense of danger remain; Byrd almost never mentions ginseng without mentioning – and immediately denying – its possible sexual effects. And in his last extant discussion of the plant, in 1741, he concedes again: “Perhaps some mighty feats may be expected from these noble plants, for which Providence never intended them, such as King Charles the 2d fondly promised himself from the cordial quality of the ginseng.”239 However, traces of a change are apparent here. Danger comes from man’s will. It does not come from nature itself, its internal structure and design, or the intention of Divine Providence. The sexual effects of the plant of life are an unintended consequence, a result of human choice, of the uses to which life is put by a willing subject. And if, for instance, Byrd did not experience such undesirable side-effects, it is because of his character, his unwillingness to misuse the gift of life. Consciousness becomes the deciding factor. Here Byrd prefigures the intellectual developments I will consider in detail in the last chapter of this project.

But in Byrd’s “real” life in frontier expeditions, just as in John Locke’s vision of Paradise discussed in Chapter One, the lack of stimuli for desire works better than the power of consciousness. The solution Byrd finds on the frontier is fleeting and unstable, possible only there. He returns to the wilderness again, and such expeditions become the sole subject of his formal writing, reproducing time after time the conditions of virtuous male companionship. Meanwhile back in the more “civilized” parts of Virginia, where he has a wife, children and slaves, Byrd continues to get richer and builds a new Westover mansion, one of the first brick mansions in the colony – conspicuous consumption at its most conspicuous and explicit statement about formal hierarchy at its most explicit. This was his patriarchal legacy to his son, born in 1728. Amidst all these riches, the heir (William Byrd III) grew up a dissolute gambler and eventually committed suicide in 1777, deep in debt. The ending of Byrd’s own story of the search for order was rather anti-climactic. In the last surviving fragment of his diary (1739-1741), there are no traces of Byrd’s sexual relations with his wife. Whether it had to do with age or with everything he thought about the physical trappings of marriage is not quite certain, for he continued to record “playing the fool” with house servants. And if we are to believe the findings and conjectures of Margaret Pritchard and Virginia Sites, Byrd was writing or at least preparing to write a large-scale description or history of the Americas – the ultimate act of creating his own version of intelligible order in the New World.240 Perhaps in the physical infirmity of old age he finally felt himself prepared to generate more in soul than in body. As he wrote to his old Middle

238 Byrd to Sloane, 31 May 1737, Correspondence, 2:512.
239 Byrd to Sloane, 10 April 1741, Correspondence, 2:585.
Temple friend Benjamin Lynde in 1736, “I hope your conscience, with the aid of threescore & ten, has gain'd a compleat victory over your constitution, which is almost the case of” Byrd himself.  

Freud tells us the archetypal story of a transition from the original, pre-social patriarchy to civil society and social contract as a story of parricide. In that story, society is founded by a band of brothers who, dissatisfied with the full control that their father exercised over women in the “primal horde,” team up, kill the father, and take possession of the women, which possession they subsequently deny to themselves by law and custom to avoid civil strife over women. Thus the universal law prohibiting incest is born. Drawing on that story, Carole Pateman has argued that social contract as the foundation of modern Western society with its principles of liberty and equality for all (male) citizens, is based on a prior “sexual contract,” on the subjugation of women and assertion of the male sex-right, which is transmitted safe and sound from patriarchy to contractual society.  

But incest is not the problem; sex is the problem. If human society as such is envisioned as a contractual community, exogamy is in fact impossible, because there can be no “outside” supply of women; relinquishing access to the women from within the community would mean relinquishing access to all women. That would also remove the cause of the conflict that leads to parricide. William Byrd created on the frontier his own version of the band of brothers, where the father is not killed. In that story, Byrd is both the father and one of the brothers, and society is to be founded not on the subjugation but on the rejection of women. In Byrd’s world, power over women is always a realization of the libidinal urge and thus it always eventually leads to men’s losing control over themselves and to the collapse of the intelligible order. Women cannot both be confined to a private sphere (where desire is to be satisfied) and at the same time serve as safe objects of exchange in the public sphere, as the original form of social currency, and as first signs of value.  

But in this, Byrd perversely resembles Marquis de Sade in Lynn Hunt’s interpretation – the philosophe that brought the revolutionary ideal of fraternity and freedom from patriarchal constraint to its logical extreme, the utopia of total promiscuity. Swift, in “Strephon and Chloe,” ends his description of marriage as a hopeless cage of flesh with an advice to found marriage not on desire but on something more permanent: “On Sense and Wit your Passion found, / By Decency cemented round; / Let Prudence with Good Nature strive, / To keep Esteem  

241 Byrd to Benjamin Lynde, 20 February 1735/36, Correspondence, 2:474.  


and Love alive. Then come old Age whene’er it will, Your Friendship shall continue still: And thus a mutual gentle Fire, Shall never but with Life expire. Friendship is the key word here. “Cemented round” by successive layers of sense, wit, and decency, passion is utterly epiphenomenal to this kind of marriage, reduced to the “gentle fire” of friendship where there is hardly anything to differentiate the relationship between a man and a woman from a friendship between men. This “marriage” looks more like Byrd’s comradeship of the frontier, based on the suppression of sexual attributes and on the relinquishing of the male sex-right. The only woman or man suitable for it would be one that somehow managed to transcend his or her sex. Swift wants to believe that passion, while inescapably part of human nature, is controllable and compatible with sense and reason, but his idea of control entails virtually banishing what has to be controlled. Any union between man and woman, however controlled, however reasonably ordered, however “procreative,” can be seen as the victory of entropy, of inclinations over principles – insofar as it simply contains sex, which necessarily underlies the relations of two selves in marriage. Plato’s solution was a homo(sexual?) relationship where the discourse of virtue replaces sex, and the offspring of which is purely intelligible, opposed to the children of the real marriage. Eighteenth-century efforts to incorporate marriage into this model of pure human relationship will be the central subject of the next part of this project.

For his entire life, Byrd resisted, not very successfully, the logical conclusion later joyfully embraced by the likes of de Sade: it is impossible to transcend nature and be human at the same time, libido is life, and if reason is opposed to matter, then life is death – the death of reason and individuality that set us apart from the material world and make us the image of God. Moreover, if reason is the order that organizes matter and perpetuates life, then life is quite simply its own death, as the images of bodily decay in the midst of abundance in the Secret History suggest especially clearly. Susan Sontag notes that “death is the only end to the odyssey of the pornographic imagination when it becomes systematic; that is, when it becomes focused on the pleasures of transgression rather than mere pleasure itself.” But in Byrd’s world, any pleasure is essentially a transgression, and eventually the destruction of both mind and body – the correlation between pleasure and rational and social purposes is only external. Imagination that was too systematic and the inability to ignore the logic of his own thought were Byrd’s problems.

In Chapter One, I suggested that the source of these problems might lie in the particular intensity of Byrd’s need to draw on the resources of his culture in order to explain and change his life, behavior, and self-image. Whether that intensity was the result of his social and political place in the British Atlantic world or peculiarities of his circumstances, his personality, or even physiology is a secondary question for this project. Indeed, I would argue that his first-hand experience of an infant patriarchal society striving to stand up on its feet in a world that was moving in a different direction played an important role in the evolution of his worldview. But what interested me here was the ways in which Byrd pushed the boundaries of his culture and

245 Swift, “Strephon and Chloe,” 593.

246 See the analysis of this passage in Gubar, “Female Monster,” 385-386.


was at the same time driven by the logic of this culture in directions he did not expect. His quest for order exposed the inconsistencies in the socio-cultural ideal of his class and in the visions of society and polity that strove to replace that ideal but accepted its anthropological assumptions. Byrd himself did not relinquish those assumptions and the balance he found between patriarchy and social contract was highly unstable and utopian.
CHAPTER 3

JOHN BOYLE, FIFTH EARL OF ORRERY: THE PROPER REALM OF THE MIND

George Edward Cokayne’s *Complete Peerage* lists my next character as “John (Boyle), Earl of Corke, Earl of Orrery, Viscount Dungarvan, Viscount Boyle of Kinalmeaky, Lord Boyle, Baron of Youghal, Baron of Bandon Bridge, and Baron Boyle of Broghill [I.], also Baron Boyle of Marston [G.B.].” At first, as well as second, sight, this Anglo-Irish nobleman of moderate means appears to be a much less exciting object for contemplation than the other two protagonists of this project. He has a place in eighteenth-century literary history, but he does not stand out—neither because of the sheer amount of his writing, nor because of an odd or conflicted character, nor because of titillating revelations or scandalous theories. He is not among the main or well-known characters of a particular historiography—early Americanist or Caribbeanist, in the cases of William Byrd and Edward Long. A “minor literary figure” of his century, he is mostly remembered for his translation, with commentaries, of the letters of Pliny the Younger, and for critical and biographical commentaries on Swift, whom the Earl of Orrery knew personally. The translation of Pliny’s letters was overshadowed even before it came out, by a better one belonging to William Melmoth. The remarks on Swift were widely read, discussed, and commended immediately after the publication, and caused something of a scandal among Swift’s inner circle and devoted admirers, who retaliated in print. But this brief moment of fame was due more to the intrinsic interest of Orrery’s subject. Finally, a posthumous edition of Orrery’s travel letters from France and Italy went unnoticed in 1773. On his contemporaries Orrery was apt to make an impression of a shy, good-natured, very decent and correct man of weak character and unoriginal thought. Samuel Johnson reportedly described the fifth earl as “a feeble-minded man,” whose “conversation was like his writing, neat and elegant, but without strength.” Horace Walpole considered him “a very worthy man,” but “not a bright man, nor a man of the world, much less a good author.” The one twentieth-century scholarly attempt to revive critical interest in Orrery and his literary legacy was not a success. For my purposes, however, this reflective and highly self-conscious gentleman is eminently suitable. “Strength” and originality of thought matter much less to me than the need to think, to find meaning, and to conceptualize. In this chapter, I will try

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249 George Edward Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom, extant, extinct, or dormant*, new ed., revised and much enlarged (London: St. Catherine Press, 1910-1959), 3:422. Names and titles may become a source of some confusion. Both John and his father Charles were titled “Lord Boyle” before inheriting the earldom, and I will occasionally use this designation for Charles before 1703 and John before 1731. Until 1731, “Orrery” will refer to Charles, the fourth earl. When both Charles and John are present in the narrative at the same time, the first names will be used. In 1753, John inherited a senior title of the Earl of Cork and signed his letters thus until the end of his life. But he is usually remembered as the Earl of Orrery, and I will retain this designation in the last part of the biographical narrative.


to show why his social existence, place in the world, intellectual being, and emotional life were pressing problems for this reserved and mild man who nevertheless, in the eyes of some, “grasped at more than his abilities could reach” and “tried to pass for a better talker, and a better writer, and a better thinker than he was.”

In the next chapter, I will weave Orrery’s efforts to make sense of his experience into his and other’s more general reflection on the human condition, to which the earl, as a man of letters, was irresistibly drawn.

1. The Heritage

Richard (1566-1643), the progenitor of the Anglo-Irish clan of the Boyles, came to Ireland in 1588 to seek fame and fortune. He began with little more than an ancient pedigree, but by the end of the 1620s, he was the Earl of Cork, Lord Justice of Ireland, a member of the Irish and the English Privy Councils, and one of the richest men in Ireland. The founder of the Orrery branch of the Boyle family was Roger (1621-1679), Richard’s third son, known among his contemporaries as “the great man of Munster.” He supported the royalist cause in the Civil War, then switched to Cromwell’s side, then again allied himself with the royalists in 1659, and was created Earl of Orrery in the aftermath of the restoration of Charles II in 1660. Despite, or thanks to, his repeated shifts of allegiance, he became one of the most influential Irish politicians and Lord President of his home province of Munster. In 1676, if estimated by the tax payments, Orrery’s property was the fifth largest in value in Ireland. Following the Restoration, the newly-minted earl renamed his principal seat Charleville in honor of his sovereign, and designed and built one of the “finest and largest” mansion houses in Ireland for an estimated sum of £20,000. He founded a Protestant school in the newly-incorporated borough of Charleville and worked to revive the textile industries in the area, inviting artisans from France and the Low Countries.

Projecting himself as a statesman, courtier, and wit, the first Orrery aspired both to the vice-royalty of Ireland and to literary fame. He excelled and achieved prominence in a very aristocratic, courtly genre of rhymed heroic romance, which enjoyed a short flowering in the Restoration era; the modern editor of the hefty two-volume collection of Orrery’s dramatic works calls him “one of the central figures in the dramatic experimentations” of that time. In the exotic settings of such lengthy works as Mustapha, The General, Tryphon, Henry the Fifth, or Parthenissa, Orrery again and again returned to the themes of honor, loyalty to the sovereign, and betrayal. These issues not only had a relation to the facts of his own “external” political history but also evidently touched him on the more immediate level of emotion and self-understanding. The reputation of his literary work was high among his contemporaries, and he was well

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253 Pottle and Bennett, Boswell’s Journal, 202.

254 He also thought his story remarkable enough to write memoirs late in his life: “Sr Richd Boyle Earle of Corke His Remembranes,” Houghton Libraray, Harvard University (hereafter Houghton) MS Eng. 218.18.


remembered (if not necessarily read) in the eighteenth century. His image as an outstanding aristocratic man of affairs and letters was a source of pride and emulation for his descendants. Dryden was perhaps the most notable admirer of the elegance and versatility of Orrery’s poetic talent. Orrery also authored political pamphlets on Irish affairs and an important *Treatise on the Art of War*, published in 1677. When early death found him in 1679, he may have been working on an even more ambitious project, a history of his times—a public project befitting an important statesman in retirement. At the age of 22, his great-grandson John wrote down a contemporary characterization of his illustrious ancestor: “In the Lives of the Poets Lord Orrery bears this Character. A Nobleman of a distinsh’d Character both in Arts & Arms & also as a Poet & a Patron. He has publish’d six Plays in Heroick Verse, wherein true English Courage is exactly delineated, & Morality and Virtue truly illustrated.”

Roger Boyle’s eldest son, also Roger, was not so fortunate or talented. He was reluctant to enter politics and not very effective at the management of his estates. He also had a very tense relationship with his wife, the strong-willed, tempestuous, and profligate Mary Sackville, daughter of the Earl of Dorset. The couple eventually separated for good in 1675, and the financial state of the family was rather deplorable by that time. Charles Boyle, the future fourth earl and William Byrd’s friend, was born in 1674, shortly before the separation. The youngest son, he was brought up in England, with his maternal grandmother Lady Dorset. Like Byrd, he scarcely knew his father, who died in 1682, passing the title to Charles’ brother Lionel. To the expenses of the lawsuits, mismanagement, and parental separation were added the vicissitudes of civil war in Ireland. Lionel barely escaped the Jacobite troops that sacked and burned the grand Charleville mansion in the autumn of 1690. Meanwhile, in England, sickly Charles devoted much of his time to learning, received a thorough education in the classics under the direction of Thomas Gale, a renowned Greek and Latin scholar, and entered Oxford at the age of fifteen. He was placed under the tutelage of Francis Atterbury, a widely known pillar of Toryism and High Church Anglicanism. Charles was diligent and energetic in gaining, as he wrote to his famous uncle Robert Boyle, “a competent stock of learning & good sense.” Early on he began acquiring the reputation of a connoisseur and a (noble)man of letters, with extensive knowledge not only in the classics, but also in physics, mathematics, astronomy and medicine. He had the Boyle tradition to follow, emulate, and continue—the examples of his grandfather and uncle, both of whom he knew barely, if at all.

It was Charles Boyle who, in compliance with the college tradition, was selected by Dean Aldrich in 1693 as the brightest undergraduate at Christ Church to undertake an edition and translation of a classical text—in this case the *Epistles of Phalaris*, only recently praised by William Temple in his “Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning” as a prime example of the ancients’ literary

258 John Boyle, notes in his copy of Roger Boyle’s *Herod the Great* (1694), ca. 1729-1731, Houghton MS Eng. 218 13F.

259 For a thorough biography, see Lawrence Berkley Smith, “Charles Boyle, 4th Earl of Orrery, 1674-1731” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Edinburgh, 1994).

superiority over the moderns. I will not dwell on the details of the ensuing controversy over the genuineness of the Epistles, and the “battle of the books” between the Christ Church group and Richard Bentley, the keeper of the King’s Library – it has been described and analyzed many times over. Important for us at the moment is the opposition between polite learning and academic antiquarianism, the ideological prominence of which in the battle of the books was highlighted by Joseph Levine.261 Richard Bentley’s exhaustive studies demonstrating the spurious nature of the Epistles of Phalaris may have been later regarded as triumphs of scholarship. But in the eyes of the London public of the 1690s, these studies,262 spurred by a perceived personal insult from Boyle, were a moral and social failure. Bentley’s learning was mixed with graceless hostility. The collective rejoinders to Bentley by a group of Christ Church “wits,” with Charles Boyle as the “official” author,263 enjoyed wide success among the polite public not schooled in the classics, and the controversy itself was among the prominent topics of public conversation. A contemporary Grub Street writer professed:

You and I, and every Body has been charm’d with the Honourable Mr. Boyle’s Answer to a stiff Haughty Grammarian, that shall be nameless, but is known well enough. Never did Wit and Learning Triumph so gloriously over Dullness and Pedantry… all the Polite Judges in Europe were pleased to see an Arrogant Pedant, that had been crowding his Head twenty Years together with the Spoils of Lexicons and Dictionaries, worsted and foiled by a Young Gentleman, upon his own Dunghill and by his own Criticisms. Thus one would have thought that Mr. Boyle’s Merit and Quality would have secured him from any scurrilous Treatment; and that his Enemies, if he could have any such, wou’d be content with Envy him in Private, and never have the Impudence to Attack him in Publick.264

In this partisan way, the symbolic import of the case and its uncommon appeal to the public was formulated with extreme clarity. For a time, the promising young nobleman became a symbol of the elegant mastery of knowledge and of polite learning, the real value of which was not in itself, but in the fact that it expressed quality— inseparably personal and social. Boyle was confidently moving into a specific social position and image — that of a connoisseur, amateur, and patron of the arts and sciences, a man of affairs and letters like his grandfather — and he clearly did not mind that movement, even if his actual financial resources were not quite up to the role. He fitted the image too well for the public to pay much attention to the fact that Boyle was, as his biographer puts it, “simply the younger brother of an impoverished Irish nobleman, whose principal Irish country house had just been utterly destroyed.”265 Boyle was already working to acquire a substantial library. He regularly attended Will’s Coffee House, where noble wits and poor writers mixed together under the presiding gaze of Dryden, and patronized poets and playwrights such Thomas Southerne, George Farquhar, and Elijah Fenton. Apart from

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263 Dr. Bentley’s Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris, and the Fables of Aësop, Examin’d by the Honourable Charles Boyle, Esq. (London: Thomas Bennet, 1698). Three editions were published in two years, and one more in 1745.


participating (we do not know how extensively) in the anti-Bentley polemics, he dabbled in poetry. “The Honourable Mr. Boyle,” observed a contemporary, “tho’ grandson to the famous Earl of Orrery, is yet more distinguished by his Learning, Politeness, and Affability, than by his illustrious birth. He understands Greek and Latin like a University Professor, of those languages; and writes English as well, as if he had never studied anything but his Mother-Tongue. He has like his Grandfather, a happy vein in poetry.” Boyle’s first foray into the theatrical arts was also appropriately an homage to his grandfather, who contributed so much to Boyle’s own reputation. In 1701, he revised for production Roger Boyle’s heroic tragedy The General, now presented to the public at the theatre at Lincoln’s Inn Fields as Altemira. The reception was rather indifferent, but this did not stop Charles from composing a play of his own. As You Find It, a stereotypical ribald comedy, was performed at the same theatre in April 1703. Perhaps discouraged by the limited success of this offering, Boyle did not publish anything else under his own name, although it is possible that a few anonymous early-eighteenth-century plays and poems may be attributed to his pen.

He continued the life of a connoisseur and patron, mixing with writers, buying books for his huge library, and dabbling in science and medicine. Like Byrd, he was a member of the Royal Society (although, unlike Byrd, does not seem to have made any contribution to its scientific work). Most of Charles’ huge and unique collection of scientific instruments, still preserved at Oxford, were made specifically to his orders, although we do not know how, or if, he ever used them. One of the instruments, a system of rotating spheres for charting the orbits of planets and stars, was named “orrery” by the master who made one for Charles, although this was probably not an entirely new invention.

Charles’ grandfather was not only a litterateur but also a soldier and a politician; and “the younger brother of an impoverished Irish nobleman” certainly needed a career to support himself. The early dream of the elegant and polite Boyle was the royal court. At the age of nineteen, he professed: “There is no post in the world I could be better pleased with than a groom of the bedchamber’s place; but I doubt it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to get one in any time. When I come to town, I will wait upon Sir William Temple, and let him know my pretensions are wholly at court, where I know his interest is very good; and not in the army, if I can make my fortune any where else.” Boyle needed patronage too; and the choice of the epistles of Phalaris, recently praised by William Temple, for Boyle’s undergraduate project was probably Dean Aldrich’s way of helping his student. The dream of a court sinecure did not come true, and Boyle had to seek other methods to, as he wrote, “put myself in some way of getting bread.” He began a political career, first in the Irish (1695-1699) and then in the English Parliament (elected as MP for Huntingdon in 1701). He received a minor post in the Irish Treasury. And, at the outset of the War of Spanish Succession, he did finally purchase a colonel’s commission. (Byrd considered signing up for service in the Irish regiment his friend was raising.) But the real stroke

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267 Altemira: A Tragedy. Written by the Right Honourable Roger, Late Earl of Orrery and Revised by Honourable Charles Boyle (London: John Nutt, 1702).
268 As You Find It: A Comedy, as It Is Acted at the New-Theatre, in Little-Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields, by Her Majesty’s Servants (London: R. Parker, 1703).
270 Lord Boyle to Francis Atterbury, [1693], Epistolary Correspondence, 2:19-20.
271 Ibid., 18.
of luck was the death in 1703 of Charles’ brother Lionel, with whom Charles was never particularly close. The earldom would bring Charles’ formal standing and, at least to some extent, material circumstances up to the level with his self-projection and polite accomplishments.

Relating London gossip to Betty Cromwell, Byrd wrote: “They say that Lord Orary has now several mortal symptomes upon him, which give Mr. Boyle a near prospect of his being a count; he begins to put on the ayr of it too soon & when he has occasion to speak upon that subject, he shows almost as much satisfaction, as he did at the seing his own play.” (Making fun of the common acquaintance, whose foibles both he and Lady Betty probably knew quite well, Byrd also testifies that Boyle’s early literary ambitions and vanity must have been quite strong indeed.) And three weeks later: “Lord Orrery dy’d 2 days ago, & his brother has succeeded to that long expected honour. The very hopes of it sweetend his bloud extremly, so that it has been observd, that his health has grown better, in proportion to his brothers growing worse. Pray heaven a certain nymph, called Pearlinda from her haveing been an oyster wench, have not too great a share of this fortune.”

There certainly was no way Byrd could have a fortune quite like that; the status and “honour” of his friend, fellow rake and theatergoer was now unreachable for the Virginian.

The new Earl of Orrery did not quit his political and military career, and he was still far from rich by the demanding standards of the English aristocracy. He distinguished himself in battle, most notably in the fierce engagement at Malplaquet. He developed a conflict with the Earl of Marlborough, and, having already voted fairly consistently along Tory lines during his early parliamentary career, by the 1710s he joined the anti-war efforts of influential Tories such as the first minister Robert Harley. He received an appointment to the Privy Council and served, in 1711-1713, as the envoy-extraordinary in Brussels and The Hague. Harley also got him a seat in the British House of Lords as Baron Boyle of Marston. But Orrery’s political loyalties were unstable, and, dissatisfied with Harley, in 1713 he followed another of his powerful friends, the Duke of Argyll, into opposition. (It was Orrery who originally helped to bring Argyll, who had his own tensions with Marlborough, into the Tory camp.) The switch came just in time, and the soon-following Hanoverian succession brought Orrery, for a short moment, the place at court that he had long dreamed about. He became Lord of the Bedchamber to George I and Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, where his English seat, Marston, was located. However, his closeness to the court proved short-lived. When Argyll fell from grace because of his close association with the Prince of Wales, Orrery fell with him, losing even his regiment and colonelcy. For someone with a Tory upbringing (by no means preventing, but also not eradicated by, political opportunism and careerism), it seems to have been an easy transition from being a “dissident Whig” under Argyll’s leadership to even more dissident Jacobitism. Orrery was a very cautious Jacobite, but a key figure in numerous Tory parliamentary protests directed at Whig ministries. He was involved in the Atterbury conspiracy of 1722, and, while the evidence against him was not entirely conclusive, his long association with Francis Atterbury and other participants led to Orrery’s

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273 William Byrd drank chocolate with the oppositionaries Orrery and Argyll at Orrery’s house in December 1717, Byrd, The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings, ed. by Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 20 December 1717. Orrery was at this time already testing the ground for inviting Argyll to join the Jacobite movement, see Anne Ogilthorpe to the Duke of Mar, 16 (27) December 1717, in Calendar of the Stuart Papers Belonging to His Majesty the King, Preserved at Windsor Castle (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1912), 5:336-7.
arrest and half-year-long imprisonment in the Tower. Only the grave deterioration of his health gained Orrery his release on £50,000 bail. If so, the path Orrery chose was highly ineffective. The circumstances that led to his downfall in 1716, after the very brief period of success in the first years of the Hanoverian regime, were certainly beyond his control. The prospects of returning to power seemed good to the opposition before 1720, and even Jacobitism seemed to offer real political possibilities, given the initial instability of the Whig regime. But afterwards Orrery only kept drifting to the margins, as did many Tories who turned to Jacobitism after being virtually deprived of the possibility of finding high-ranking positions in the government, army, or church. Orrery’s drift became irreversible after he failed to attract his powerful patron, the Duke of Argyll, to the Jacobite movement, and the duke returned to the Court Whigs, gradually distancing himself from Orrery. The (failed) political opportunism, however, does not preclude the existence of genuine Tory leanings in Orrery’s understanding of political life and social order, just as the latter do not preclude an inner disposition of the urbane and sophisticated nobleman towards the court life.

Instead of giving him wealth and influence and enabling him to lead a life of a true aristocratic connoisseur, Orrery’s public pursuits in England only diverted his attention from the management of his Irish estates, which already were not in the best shape when he received them in 1703. His brother Lionel, shortly before his death, had to sell some parts of the Orrery lands to pay off debts, and, when he died, his personal possessions, such as a coach, china, and books, had to be sold at a public auction. If Charles visited Ireland at all after assuming the title and estates, it was surely a rare occurrence. In the management of his Irish properties, he relied completely on agents, in the choice whereof he proved singularly unlucky. The first of them, John Honohane, was an Irish Catholic who had served Lionel and may have already been involved in embezzling rents from the third earl. Orrery fired him nine years later, but a legal dispute with Honohane about fraudulently set leases dragged on for many years more. An even more spectacular example of venality and dishonesty the fourth and fifth earls found in another Irishman, Brettridge

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274 On Orrery’s Jacobite activities before 1722 and on his arrest see Eveline Cruickshanks and Howard Erskine-Hill, The Atterbury Plot (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), passim.


276 For Orrery’s assessment of the situation in England as favorable for the Stuart cause, his finding the hatred of George I to be “pretty general” and the prospects of a restoration very real, see Orrery to the Duke of Mar, 11 (22) December 1717, in Calendar of the Stuart Papers, 5:305-306.


278 Although Byrd still drank chocolate with Argyll at Orrery’s house in April 1718, two month after Argyll was appointed Lord Steward of the royal household: London Diary, 13 and 16 April 1718. As late as February, the Pretender still hoped to use Orrery to convert Argyll to the cause, see James III to Orrery, 7 February 1717/18, and Duke of Mar to Orrery, 11 February, Calendar of the Stuart Papers, 5:446-7, 456-7.

279 Smith, “Charles Boyle,” 492.
Badham, initially highly esteemed by Charles. Badham used Orrery’s patronage to get elected to the Irish House of Commons from Charleville in 1713 and afterwards. But even when Orrery began receiving reports of massive manipulations with leases, embezzlement, and fraud on the part of Badham, he was almost powerless to do anything about his agent, being too deeply involved into his Jacobite affairs in England and France.

Charles’ correspondence from shortly before his death presents a rather striking picture of the relationship between the nobleman and his Irish representative. Charles felt powerless against his own unprincipled agent; despite having been defrauded “of very considerable sums of money,” he had to scheme and dissemble to get at least something from the man who had concentrated in his hands Orrery’s affairs. “I must not,” wrote Charles, “appear too much exasperated, I must try by gentle means to prevail upon him to own his misbehavior and to make any reasonable satisfaction in his power, least he shou’d still further embroil my affairs, by secreting or detaining papers, or other yet more wicked methods which if these facts he is accus’d of, are true I fear he wou’d not scruple to make use of. Tis prudent therefore to get from him gradually, and if possible without too much apparent animosity” the acknowledgement of his faults. The earl found himself in a humiliating position of having to depend on the good will of a man both wicked and inferior in status. The good will was not forthcoming, and Orrery had to wait interminably for a personal meeting with Badham that would (he rather groundlessly hoped) clarify and settle the affair. All he could do was to pile up hopeless complaints in unstoppable run-on sentences: “Mr. Badham therefore was very much to blame when he told Mr. Taylor he believed I was already gone abroad when he knew I had already waited long, but must still wait longer, were my health almost never so bad before I leave England, in order to setle as well as possible those affairs which he has brought into so much confusion, but after all ye. uneasiness he has given me, very undeserv’d on my part, I wonder he can still continue to disappoint me, and break his word with me, which he has done often since he went over by not paying my bills nor coming over, which he promis’d to do long ago, and my many other unaccountable proceedings, God knows why he stays and what he is doing.”

Because of Badham, Orrery could not leave England for the salutary climate of France. Five months later, after a meeting with Badham that led to nothing, Orrery still found himself “in ye same suspense for some weeks that I have been in for some years.” He died three month later. Orrery’s first, and very loyal, biographer Eustace Budgell conjectured that Badham embezzled approximately half of the income from several of Orrery’s estates over the years. Orrery’s entire Irish income, or at least that which was spent outside Ireland, Thomas Prior estimated in 1729 at £4,000 per annum. This was a respectable sum in comparison to most of the other lords listed, but far behind the £17,000 received yearly by Orrery’s relative, Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington and Cork, a much more famous patron of the arts and connoisseur.

282 Eustace Budgell, Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Charles, Late Earl of Orrery; and Likewise of the Family of Boyle, 2nd ed. (London: W. Mears, 1734), 249. In a 1732 letter, speaking of John, the fifth earl, Jonathan Swift calls Badham “the chiefest rogue of his calling,” but that was probably from John’s words rather than direct experience, Swift to Charles Ford, 9 December 1732, in David Nichol Smith, ed., The Letters of Jonathan Swift to Charles Ford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 144.
283 Thomas Prior, A List of the Absentees of Ireland, and the Yearly Value of Their Estates and Incomes Spent Abroad (Dublin: R. Gunne, 1729), 2.
Orrery was more attached to his landed property in England, which was more prestigious, but did not bring in much money. His English seat was Marston Bigot, a country estate near Frome in Somerset, about 95 miles from London. This Jacobean mansion with gardens, orchards, and woodlands became the property of the Orrery branch of the Boyle family in 1641. The fourth earl received it in a rather neglected condition and expended a lot of effort on restoration, alterations, and maintenance of the house and grounds, including adding an entire wing in order to “complete the Fabrick” of the house. Orrery also employed a renowned gardener, Stephen Switzer, who was one of the main proponents of the “natural” style in English landscape design. Both the fourth and later the fifth earl loved the elegant mansion they inherited and improved; for both, it was a regular summer residence. But while the mansion and gardens were being fashioned in the elegant style, the more mundane aspects of estate management and communal life remained neglected and the rents were collected randomly and inefficiently, as the fifth earl was later to complain. Marston’s main significance was in any case not economic. In 1728, the manor was valued at approximately £550 per annum – not a lot compared to Orrery’s Irish holdings – the actual receipts were probably much less. Neither was Orrery trying to exercise a landlord’s influence on the local community, as he did at Charleville. Marston was primarily a sign of status and a decorative estate – a retreat for the elegant mind, a familial legacy, and a noble title that brought Orrery into the English peerage.

2. Early Familial Life, or Lack Thereof

The elegant surroundings, connoisseur lifestyle, and troubled Irish affairs were among the fourth earl’s legacies to his heir. John Boyle, future Earl of Orrery, was Charles’ only child from a very short-lived marriage with Lady Elizabeth Cecil, the sister of the Earl of Exeter. Lady Elizabeth was approximately 19 years old (13 years younger than Charles) when the marriage took place in March 1706, and she gave birth to the couple’s only son about nine months later, on 2 January 1706/07. In June 1708, she died of an unknown illness.

At the age of 22, John Boyle would reflect:

> My Fate from my Cradle has been a strange one: I lost my Mother before I knew I had one: I have a Father but he seems not to know he has a Son: yet I must do him justice, most certain it is he loves me, nor is it less certain that I love him. But our wayward Fate keeps us at a Distance from each other: When perhaps, were we truly and familiarly acquainted together, and thoroughly cemented by the union of that Friendship which I am sure both our hearts are capable of, we might be – what might we not be! – but oh what an airy vision! – let it avant – the enchanting view only makes me more wretched in this Labyrinth of briars and brambles wherein I wander...  

From his childhood, the future mild, sensitive, and emotional man registered by John Boyle’s voluminous personal correspondence was growing up without seeing much of his father, who was too preoccupied with politics, diplomacy, the arts, promiscuous sex, and a new quasi-family. In

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285 Lord Boyle to William Cecil, 12 June 1726, in Emily Charlotte De Burgh-Canning Boyle, Countess of Cork and Orrery, ed., *The Orrery Papers* (London: Duckworth, 1903), 1:66. This edition includes a significant part of the fifth earl’s correspondence, but is expurgated and far from complete. Hereafter I will usually cite the manuscript letters, most of which are now at the Houghton Library (Harvard), and will indicate the cases where a printed version of the letter is available.

Boyle’s case, the emotional strain of a fatherless life is not, as in Byrd’s, solely our speculation. It is reflected in the letters, which are much more personal and expressive than Byrd’s. It has been suggested that the fifth earl’s numerous friendships with older men of his father’s generation, such as Thomas Southerne, Jonathan Swift, and William Byrd, look very much like attempts at substitution.\(^{287}\) (Sometimes, as with Byrd and Southerne, such friends were directly “inherited” from the fourth earl, and the acquaintance began in John’s childhood. So, for instance, we find Byrd in 1718 visiting “my Lord Boyle” in London, and transmitting letters and messages between the eleven year-old John and his father.\(^{288}\) To this suggestion we may add the young Lord Boyle’s inclination towards older women, apparently known among his friends and a subject of good-natured private jokes. As he writes to Byrd in 1727, “as to myself I begin to disdain the old Ladies, and to look upon the young.”\(^{289}\)

The lack of a mother-figure in John’s life may have been even more severe than that of a father. The fourth earl never remarried, never re-created a proper genteel and noble family, which fact might have something to do with his rather unattractive financial situation. We find traces of his promiscuous inclinations in the writings of his life-long friend. Already in 1704, Byrd refers to the elder Orrery in his letterbook (though probably not in the letter he actually sent to the earl) as “the Lord Bordelio.”\(^{290}\) Byrd’s London diary, among many coffeehouse and theatre visits in the company of Orrery, records three certain and one probable episodes of shared adventures in the capital’s “sexual underworld.” In one case, after dinner and a bottle at Orrery’s, the two “went to Will’s Coffeehouse and from thence my Lord Orrery and I went to visit two gentlewomen we had met at the play and my Lord rogered one of them but I did nothing.” In another, again after (one presumes) an exchange of news and political opinions at Will’s, Byrd “went with Lord Orrery to Mrs. B-r-t-n where we found two chambermaids that my Lord had ordered to be got for us…”\(^{291}\) A few years earlier, discussing the indiscretions of Lord Bolingbroke, who was famous for his licentiousness, another nobleman mentioned that this notable statesman “has now Bell Chuck, a blackguard girle, in high keeping, who was first kept by Lord Orrery.”\(^{292}\)

But more interesting, and more significant for the life and sensibilities of his son John, was Orrery’s relationship with Margaret Swordfeger, the wife of Orrery’s personal secretary. With or without the approval of her official husband, Margaret was Orrery’s life-long mistress and

\(^{287}\) Smith, “Charles Boyle,” 505.

\(^{288}\) *London Diary*, 13 and 20 July 1718.

\(^{289}\) Lord Boyle to William Byrd, 1 September 1727, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:65 (Orrery Papers, 1:56). And from another letter to Byrd: “The whole World seems gay; and even old M’ Lowe has hobbled down through this nibbling Frost, in order to being at the Ball with which our Evening is to conclude. Her Affection seems so rooted to my Person, that there are few Favours, within her Power of which I need despair. But my Passion, strong as it was for such peices of Antiquity, is now almost ceased; The Coquetry of her Daughter (a Virgin just entered into her forty-seventh Year;) does I confess give me a pleasing Pain about my Heart… But not to surfeit You with my Amours, which to a Man who has a Goût for younger Women, can be no ways entertaining…” 2 January 1727/28, ibid., 1:67 (the passage proved too flavorful to be included in Orrery Papers, 1:63).

\(^{290}\) Marion Tinling, ed., The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 1:244.

\(^{291}\) *London Diary*, 30 March 1718; 11 November 1719. The other two cases are 28 January 1719 and 29 July 1719.

confidante, and she was known as such to Orrery’s friends. Byrd recorded two extended stays at Britwell (Orrery’s second country residence close to London). These were very intimate gatherings where he, Orrery and Margaret were intermittently joined by Colonel William Cecil – another close friend and, accidentally, a relative of Orrery’s deceased wife. Byrd initially referred to Margaret in shorthand as P-g-y (as when “my Lord Orrery and P-g-y played at billiards against Colonel Cecil and me till 1 o’clock”), and in later entries as “Madam” (“in the evening I took a walk and Madam walked with me”); at the end of the first of these stays he even recorded that he “took leave of my Lord Orrery and my Lady and returned to London.” Margaret Swordfeger also took part in Orrery’s Jacobite activities and even corresponded with the Pretender on her own. Over the late 1710s and 1720s, she also bore four children whom the fourth earl clearly believed to be his own – Charles, Clementina, Boyle, and Martha Sophia. This certainty on Orrery’s part may indeed signify that the marriage between Margaret and his secretary was a purely formal affair, perhaps arranged by Orrery himself as a way to continue keeping the mistress of low birth and/or reputation whom he did not want to lose and could not marry.

Accepted though it may have been as a fact among Orrery’s friends, the whole relationship was certainly a highly disreputable one by the standards of polite society, and it may have only added to Orrery’s reputation for licentious behavior. Bishop Atterbury was later reported to denounce Orrery for showing “his weakness so much in being attached to a lewd woman whose husband’s indiscretion and weakness he was no stranger to.” Whether Margaret’s reputation was related to her murky past (perhaps as an actress and/or a prostitute) or, in the instance quoted above, stemmed simply from her “unusual” and equivocal situation, we cannot know, but John Boyle certainly would have subscribed to Atterbury’s reported characterization of her. Long after the death of his father, he remained deeply ashamed of the affair and of society’s common knowledge of it. How close was his familiarity with Mrs. Swordfeger and her children we do not know. His father and Margaret had their second child when John was probably twelve years old, and the youngest one was born when John was eighteen or nineteenth. In his last will, the fourth earl justified his generous provisions for Margaret and her children as an appreciation of Margaret’s “long services, her fidelity to me,” and also her “tender care of John,” who had been a sickly child. Whether or not “tender care” was a formal rhetorical flourish, the grown-up John later certainly did not accept Margaret as his stepmother, and held the worst opinion of her character. After Charles’ death, Mrs. Swordfeger removed to France with her children, whom she brought up Roman Catholics (another testimony to her active Jacobite position). When the children came again to John’s attention after the mother’s death, he writes to a friend that “they have lived some years at Boulogne in France under the misconduct of a wretched Mother.” And the small fortunes

293 London Diary, 13-19 July 1718 and 7-25 September 1718.
295 Ibid., 505.
296 Quoted after ibid., 382.
297 Byrd stood as godfather to “Mrs. S-w-b-r-g daughter” at Orrery’s house on 18 July 1719. This is likely Clementina. The unusual Flemish last name of Simon Swordfeger was transcribed in many different ways, and Byrd’s shorthand may not have been deciphered correctly. On the other hand, confusion remains, for in 1741 John wrote that Clementina was nineteen years old, which would mean she was born sometime around 1722 (Orrery to the Rev. Mr. Trevanion, 5 September 1741, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 4:10). John may have simply made a mistake.
298 National Archives, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/646/341-42.
they possess have been left to them “by a Nobleman, who either was, or I presume Imagined, he was, [their] Father.”

The fifth earl further writes: “During the Mother’s Life, I was resolved not to see, or concern myself about the Family, but She is now Dead: and Compassion will make me Act a Brother’s Part,” particularly in trying to find worthy husbands for the two girls. In sum, Charles had built up a new quasi-family life, with a “wife” and children, a life into which the close circle of his friends such as Byrd and William Cecil were integrated (perhaps in more ways than one), but a life that was not socially acceptable or proper. From this life John distanced himself, longing for familial intimacy and friendship with his father but not accepting what had become his father’s most intimate circle. Margaret Swordfeger remained alien to him, despite his likely emotional and cultural need for a mother. Later, after the death of his own first wife, John bemoaned, both theatrically and sincerely, the fate of his own two children: “O miserable Infants who are now upon the Point of being undone! – What have I suffered heretofore by a Mother’s Death! Hence arose the Source of my tedious Calamities.”

The fourth earl’s illegitimate children were not John’s family; in 1741, the general feeling of compassion could only prompt him to act the part of a brother. He wished his half-siblings well, and believed that, despite the fact that they had “seen nothing but Wickedness and Folly” during the life of their mother, “as yet their Judgements, not their Inclinations are Faulty” (except the eldest one, Charles, whom John believed to be “very worthless”). In the memory of his father, John was ready to supervise the affairs of the two girls, if they agreed to “retire [from London] and live as Modest, virtuous young women ought to live.” But first and foremost he was fulfilling a duty to his dead father. He felt no deep familial affection and was easily irritated and discouraged by the girls’ Catholicism, which made it difficult to find proper husbands for them in England. After more disagreements about the Swordfeger children’s attempts to get out of the fourth earl’s trustees the money he left for them, John eventually wrote in exasperation to one of the trustees that he “was determined to have no more to do with, or for the Family, since I had great Reason to believe that after all my endeavours to do ‘em service I was likely to meet with very unsuitable returns.”

Motherless John himself had grown up deep in academic studies, bestowing his affection on teachers and school friends such as Rev. Trevanion and John Kempe, his constant correspondents.

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299 Orrery to Trevanion, 5 September 1741, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 4:10-11. Of course, Margaret’s lewdness and infidelity are implied here by a rather prejudiced observer. The only more or less first-hand testimony of her behavior (consensual or not) is the following record in Byrd’s diary: “Then I went to my Lord Orrery’s but I found only Madam there and kissed her for half an hour and then went home and danced my dance,” London Diary, 5 December 1718.

300 Same letter as above.


302 Orrery to Trevanion, 14 October 1741; to Mrs. Hixon, 28 September 1741; to Clementina Swordfeger, 7 October 1741, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 4:11-17. To Clementina he writes, likely recalling their acquaintance before the fourth earl’s death: “I remember the last time I saw you, how much you despised and laugh’t at those Idle ceremonies to which you now have enslaved yourself. All I can do is to pity you since you have put it out of my Power to serve you…. I wish you both very happy, for the sake of a certain Person, who if he had lived would have taken Care to have instructed you in the Religion of your Country too well to have been deluded from it. In memory of him, I will do all that I think he would wish I should do, according to your present situation…”

303 Orrery to Walter Pryce, 4 May 1742, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 4:42-43.
for many years to come. The fourth earl chose Elijah Fenton, his secretary and a poet, to tutor John in English and Latin from 1713 to 1720. This period of home schooling ended when John was thirteen, but, as the fifth earl wrote in 1756, when he “became a man, a constant and free friendship subsisted between him and his former tutor. In John’s recollection, Fenton was “one of the worthiest and modestest men that ever belonged to the court of Apollo. Tears arise when I think of him, though he had been dead above twenty years.”

Having left Orrery’s employ, Fenton later proceeded to collaborate with Pope on the famous translation of the *Iliad*, with mixed success. A gentleman by birth (if not by circumstances) and an elegant poet, Fenton was “never named but with praise and fondness as a man in the highest degree amiable and excellent.”

He seems like someone who would have easily gained the affection of a sentimental boy such as Lord Boyle. One thing that brought Fenton close to the fourth earl in the first place was their shared Jacobite sympathies, which the tutor may have begun inculcating in his young charge.

Lord Boyle then continued his education at Westminster School and thereafter, in 1723-1725, at Christ Church, like his father. When, without receiving a degree, he had to leave Oxford and follow his father to Paris on a Jacobite mission, he wrote to a former Westminster schoolfellow: “I am sorry I left Christ-Church just at a Time, when you were coming there; My Departure from thence was malgré moi, and with infinite Regrett. That College caused two Years of my Life to slide away in a very agreeable Manner, and as much to my Profitt and improvement, as my idle Temper would permit…”

Lord Boyle was not particularly happy when “bidding Defiance to all Seriousness and Thought” among the gay diversions of Paris, which was more suited to the tastes of his father.

While the fourth earl may have needed the pretext of his son’s curtailed version of the Grand Tour to help disguise secret treasonous dealings, the relations within the family did not seem to improve significantly, and they definitely grew much worse when John married Henrietta Hamilton, daughter of the Earl of Orkney. Although at the time of the marriage (May 1728) no objections seem to have been raised, soon afterwards the Earl and Countess of Orkney forbade their daughter to maintain connections with her father-in-law because of his relationship with Margaret Swordfeger, of which perhaps they only now learned. Orrery was furious. He retaliated by drawing up a will in which he authorized his executors to withhold from John £5,000 if his son “lives, Cohabits or Corresponds” with his parents-in-law, whether before or after Orrery’s death.

The fourth earl also made generous provisions from his heavily encumbered estate for Margaret and her children, including, in a later codicil, a hefty sum of £6,000 in “India and South Sea bonds.” Orrery ordered to “Subject all my personal Estate to make good” the provisions for the Swordfegers; he also stated: “…It is my will & Desire that my son the Lord Boyle shall have no benefit or Advantage from the Residue of my personal estate” until Margaret received her due. As additional slaps in the face for Orrery’s legitimate heir, Margaret was to receive another £4,000 if John sought in any way to interrupt or delay the settlement, and John was also obliged “to make a Proper addition” to the inheritance of the woman whom he strongly disliked, if that

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305 Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland; and a Criticism of Their Works* (Dublin: J. Moore, 1793-1802), 1:374.


307 Lord Boyle to Mr. Trevanion, 2 January 1725/26, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:10 (*Orrery Papers*, 1:43).
inheritance proved insufficient.\textsuperscript{308} This was deliberate humiliation. The bookishly sentimental Lord Boyle probably suffered most in this conflict, although one supposes he had no strong objections to the idea of a social boycott of Margaret. He complained to a friend: “My Heart is heavy, and all my Mirth is Affectation and Hypocrisy. The Days of my youth are Days of Sorrow: My Affection to my Wife, and my Duty and filial Love to my Father, tear me different Ways. My health too is impaired, and my body sinks under the load of my misfortunes.” It would be impossible for him “to enjoy either Health or Tranquility, whilst our mutual Parents are in a state of War and Dissention. Whatever I have done to disoblige my Father, Lady B. has done nothing to disoblige either her Father or her Mother, yet she is equally punished with me.”\textsuperscript{309} But the conflict provoked by the Earl and Countess of Orkney only exacerbated John’s alienation from his father’s “other” family and the circle of intimacy to which the rightful heir did not belong.

The rift between Orrery and his son, at least on Orrery’s side, appears to have been even deeper than familial relations as such. Giving vent to his feelings in the will, the fourth earl deliberately humiliated his legitimate son in its the financial provisions and went out of his way to insult John on a point on which the young lord was rather sensitive. Orrery stated: “I having with Great Expence and trouble made a large Collection of usefull Books and of Mathematicall Instruments Machines and Optical Glasses of Value which I wou\d have carefully preserved for the benefit of Posterity and having never observed that my son has shewed much Taste or Inclination either for the Entertainment or Knowledge which Study and Learning afford I give and bequeath all my Books and Mathematicall Instruments… to Christ Church College in Oxford…” Since the Boyle dynasty was renowned for “study and learning” and included illustrious authors, patrons of the arts, and one world-class scientist, this statement was especially strong, presenting John as an outcast who had failed his father and his ancestors. Naturally for a noble family, the will immediately became public knowledge. Orrery’s pointed contempt for his son’s talents turned into a lasting eighteenth-century literary anecdote, invoked by such illustrious men as Samuel Johnson and Horace Walpole and much later used to spruce up even such dry works of scholarship as \textit{The Complete Peerage}.\textsuperscript{310} Long after John’s death, when a collection of his letters from Italy to William Duncombe was published, Horace Walpole could opine that “Pliny would not give him his library for writing them, no more than his father did for thinking he could not write.”\textsuperscript{311}

Orrery’s comment on his son’s inclinations was patently (and perhaps intentionally) unfair, for, putting the question of \textit{ability} aside, John certainly exhibited plenty of \textit{inclination} for arts and

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\item \textsuperscript{308} National Archives, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/646/341-2. The will was proven on 6 November 1728. Orrery certainly used the genre of the last will and testament for a strong and expressive personal statement: “And I depend so far on the Gratitude and good Nature of my only Son John Lord Boyle to [Margaret] and her Children that if what I have given to them for their Support and Maintenance be not sufficient to enable them to live handsomely in the world he will make a proper Addition to the Provision I have made for them Mrs Swordfegers long Services her fidelity to me and tender care of him from his Infancy in my Opinion deserving a more than Common Regard from us both.”
\item \textsuperscript{309} Lord Boyle to John Kempe, 29 October 1728, and to the Rev. Trevanion, 1 February 1728/29, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:93, 1:108.
\item \textsuperscript{310} Cokayne, \textit{Complete Peerage}, 3:422.
\item \textsuperscript{311} Horace Walpole to William Mason, 15 May 1773, \textit{Yale Edition}, 28:89. Samuel Johnson also showed a fine knowledge of the episode, see Pottle and Bennett, eds., \textit{Boswell’s Journal}, 202-203.
\end{itemize}
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letters. But Orrery’s heir may have indeed not conformed very well to the standards of extroverted, polite, and not always decent demonstration of learning, wit, and elegance of taste natural to Orrery, whose dress, as his loyal first biographer found it necessary to note, was “sometimes gay,” and who “kept a most elegant table in a French way” both at home and in the public station of the Envoy Extraordinary in Brussels.  

312 John was not a man of the world and affairs, as he was the first one to admit: “No Man suffers more than myself in the company of strangers. My Faculties are totally suppressed. I would fly, if decency and manners did not restrain me. My only refuge is Silence. If I speak, I speak in terror. I know not why but I constantly feel uneasiness shame and terror.”  

313 John’s unassuming politeness was closer to the concept of “good nature,” which he esteemed and cultivated, rather than to the idea of elegance. This politeness was not noble enough, as Samuel Johnson observed much later, when comparing different noblemen he was familiar with: “Lord Southwell was the highest-bred man without insolence that I ever was in company with; Lord Orrery was not dignified: Lord Chesterfield was, but he was insolent.” In Johnson’s view, John “was a genteel man, but did not keep up the dignity of his rank. He was so generally civil, that nobody thanked him for it.”  

314 If for the fourth earl true learning was hardly separable from its outward expression, elegant conversation and high noble comportment, then he may indeed have been disappointed with the son whose “faculties” were “totally suppressed” in broad company.

After more than two years of estrangement, the two men did finally reconcile in an appropriately dramatic fashion early in 1731, when John fell seriously ill and was thought to be on his deathbed. So he related to a friend:

I was seized at Brittwell on X-tmass day, and growing worse and worse, my Father sent me to London in his Coach about three days after. As I still lost ground, his uneasiness increased, and He came up in real agonies to see me: I think verily his sorrow gave me pleasure, I am sure it gave me Spirits: He attended my bed side with the constancy of a nurse, and the tenderness of an afflicted Parent: Ah! sic Omnia fecisset! - the remembrance affects me still so much, that I must throw aside my Pencil, and paint the melting Scene no longer, only in general let me assure you that we are now in perfect amity: as seldom as possible asunder, and as happy as possible when together: all his shyness is gone off, and all my fears are banished.  

315 No new rifts opened, although it took time for John to get used to familial happiness. Four months later, he observed almost unbelievingly, “my Father continues still very kind to me.” But now Charles’ own health was rapidly getting worse, undermined, among other things, by financial distress; and John bewailed the imminence of his father’s death in verse: “O Thou too little and too lately known, / Whom I began to think and call my own!”  

316 The fourth earl died in August 1731. Curiously, he did not change his last will, neither the provisions nor the expressions – it was claimed later, correctly or not, that he died before he could make the intended changes. This certainly was the version spread abroad in the world, but John himself was not entirely sure. Despite the “Rage and Disappointment” he felt upon reading the will, the fifth earl resolved to “practice Forgiveness.” He preferred to remember that in the last months of his father’s life they


315 Lord Boyle to Mr. Salkeld, 8 May 1730, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:204 (Orrery Papers 1:87).

316 Lord Boyle to John Kempe, 17 April and 1 June 1731, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:200; 1:208.
“exchanged Sentiments with a Freedom that would have pleased and surprised” John’s close friends, and that “whatever disagreements had been between Us were buried in Oblivion.” And so, writes John, “I am persuaded He intended to alter his last Will in my favour, if He did not, again I repeat… I forgive Him.”

3. Between Affairs and Retirement

The father’s death portended radical and unwelcome changes in the life of the shy, indolent son. Shortly before that event, John reflected on the things to come: “…[A]ltho’ a Father cannot be comforted for the loss of a Child, small are the comforts to make a Child amends for the loss of a Father. What are they? addition of Estate, some new honours perhaps, or such other trifles as are rather an encrease than a diminution of Trouble. For my own part an easy Income and a private Station are what I desire: and at my Father’s demise I shall only acquire an uneasy Fortune and a public Station: an embrangled Estate in Ireland: and a Seat among the Anticourtiers in England.” John’s subsequent life as Fifth Earl of Orrery can be, in a sense, read through a continuous tension between the ideal of private ease and freedom on the one hand, and the troubled involvement in the inhospitable world of uncomfortable public responsibilities and distressed financial affairs on the other.

In addition to his inevitable seats in the two Houses of Lords, the fifth earl “inherited” a position of prominence among the “anti-courtiers” and Jacobites. Being neither suited nor inclined to politics or active social life, he kept a certain ironic distance from his inherited political stance (as, perhaps, when commenting irreverently but light-heartedly on the death of George I, who “has made a Shift to slip thro’ our Fingers”). He reflected on his own character:

The State is of so little consequence to me and I am of so little consequence to the State, that we think of each other as seldom as possible. I find the Goddess Indolence takes possession of me in politics, in poetry, in every Thing. her sister Bashfulness never deserts me; They govern and allure me by the sweet temptations of an honest Inactivity: The Rage of Party I have always abhorred, the Zeal of it I despise, yet I love my Country with a Sincerity that shall rouze me at any Time to serve her, if she should be miserable enough to want such an Assistant.

But from early on, the circle of John’s acquaintances and friends was largely Tory and Jacobite, and numerous traces of genuine Tory sentiment and dislike of the Hanoverian regime are scattered through his private papers, despite his obvious caution. John’s first documented attempt to publish something is a 1726 letter, in the style of readers’ letters to The Spectator, addressed to Nathaniel Mist, the publisher of Mist’s Weekly Journal (later Fog’s Weekly Journal). This was one of the most prominent and long-running Jacobite periodicals of the 1720s-1730s. The unsigned letter from “a young man of tolerably easy fortune and very sober disposition,”

317 Lord Boyle to John Kempe, 15 September 1731, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 2:2 (Orrery Papers, 1:96).
318 Lord Boyle to Rev. Trevanion, July 1731, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:213 (Orrery Papers, 1:90). And on the next day after the fourth earl’s death, he wrote to his wife: “The Prospect before me is a Labyrinth thro’ which I must necessarily pass, altho’ it be filled with various obstacles, and altho’ the roads prove deep and stony, and Tygers with all the other vile Beasts of Prey lurk in holes and Caverns on every side of the Path thro’ which my destiny is resolved to lead me.” Earl of Orrery to Lady Orrery, 28 August 1731, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:224.
Later in the 1730s, John would employ as a tutor for his two sons Thomas Salkeld, his close acquaintance and a committed Jacobite who had at one time followed Francis Atterbury into French exile. Later yet, the fifth earl was among the group of noblemen who in 1743 were asking the French court for military assistance in the restoration of the Stuart dynasty. He was named as a member of the prospective council of regency for Prince Charles Edward. But his enthusiasm and determination were limited – to be sure, not much different in this sense from other high rank supporters of the cause. Rather fitting not only for the group as a whole but also for Orrery’s character in particular seems a Jacobite agent’s characterization of the Pretender’s friends in England in 1740 as “more timorous and backward than heretofore, and as full of good inclinations as ever. It was absolutely impossible to form any plan of business with them; they shudder at the thought of an attempt when it can be compassed, and yet wish it, and even seem to long for it… Lord Orrery has been all the winter in Ireland but left word that he would return if the King [the Pretender] should think fit.”

The problem of saving his crumbling estates from corrupt agents proved more pressing for Orrery than saving the country from the Hanoverian plague and corrupt ministers. If his father preferred to remain in England and engage in secret politics or polite diversions despite the worsening state of his Irish affairs, the fifth earl easily abandoned political struggles in England for no less hateful but more practical legal battles in Ireland. “My Armour is made of Parchment, My Head-Piece, and Breast-Plate are my Mothers Marriage Settlement,” wrote Orrery to his Jacobite friend Thomas Salkeld, bracing himself for the journey in June 1732. Postponing a personal appearance of an Orrery in Ireland was no longer an option; the debts accumulated by the fourth earl and assumed in full by the fifth amounted to a huge sum of over £20,000, and the Irish income was dwindling. The fifth earl had two main goals: to sort out the affairs with his main Irish adversary Brettridge Badham, who had grossly mismanaged and/or embezzled the rents from the Orrery estates, and to renegotiate and resettle low and unprofitable rents and make sure that the rents would in the future be collected properly and timely. Mercifully, the details of the lawsuits do not appear to have survived, but over the course of the 1730s Orrery evidently was losing the struggle against Badham. Orrery actually ended up being Badham’s debtor, and sometime between 1732 and 1735, on the advice of another agent and a relative, the influential Irish politician Henry Boyle, he got himself into paying his father’s former agent an annuity of £300. Askeaton, one of Orrery’s estates, was made the official security for this annuity, and it was also the one estate Orrery was prepared to sell to cover at least part of his father’s debts. But selling it would mean making a one-time payment of £6,000 to Badham in lieu of the annuity, and that would make the remaining proceeds insignificant. Orrery came to resent deeply the deal with Badham and the people who lured him into it (as he believed, with nefarious ends), and his resentment added considerably to his distaste for Ireland and the Irish, Catholics and Protestants alike. And it was during this stay in Ireland that John’s wife Henrietta died, in 1732.

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322 Quoted after Cruickshanks, Political Untouchables, 21; see also 38-42, 46.

323 Orrery to Thomas Salkeld, 13 June 1732, Orrery Papers, 1:113.

324 On Askeaton, the annuity to Badham, and Orrery’s resentment see Orrery to John Kempe, 14 September 1735 and 20 January 1735/36, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:45, 56-59; Counselor Minchin to Orrery, 26 February 1744/45, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 5:165-176.
During his second stay on the island (1735-1737), Orrery once observed that “[t]wo whole years in Ireland amidst Lawsuits, and Difficulties of all Kinds are little better than two Years in the Bastile in Chains and Darkness.” Orrery’s ancestors settled in a wild, crude, and poor land. Travelling through parts of his patrimony, some of the estates from which his income came, Orrery wrote back to England: “…I never saw a more dismal Country since I came into the World. It seems, as if Nature has brought forth a Monster, part of whose hideous Forme Shanakiel & Killquane made up. The Roads are shocking and dangerous; not a Tree, nor a House, to be seen; Nothing but hideous rocks & black Boggs to be view’d on every side…” Orrery’s estate in the vicinity of the town of Dingle was not only beyond civilization but also quite literally at the end of the (European) world itself – a large common that in part belonged to him reached the westernmost point of Ireland and ended at the boundary of the land and ocean “in a horrid Precipice, dreadfull even to think of.” And the people in this “desert” of “Ignorance and Barbarism” were drunk and mad Yahoos, unfamiliar with the very idea of taste and reveling in savage entertainments. Forced to participate in the feats of Anglo-Irish squires and drink toasts to the memory of King William, Orrery described how “Nonsense and Wine have flow’d in Plenty, gigantic Saddles of Mutton, and Brobdingnaggian Rumps of Beef weigh’d down the Table. Bumpers of Claret and Bowls of White-Wine were perpetually under my Nose, till at last unable to bear the Torture I took advantage of a Health at which We were all oblig’d to rise: and slipt away…” An Irish squire is a picture of degradation: “A fiery Dullness shines upon his countenance. He is stupidly gay: The commencement of his Gaiety bubbles up in hoarse Laughs, which gradually increase after every Brimmer: till they join Chorus with Oaths, Curses, and Blasphemies. Thus Harlots are simperingly modest at first, till by degrees They become abandon’s Prostitutes. Filth, Obscenity, and Rudeness of every sort, is the Witt of the Day, and He that can be most beastly, most impudent, and most absurd, carries off the Laurel of the Triumph.”

In this land without “culture” in all senses of the term, the worst human qualities flourish and are even encouraged. Drunkenness, rage, and party fury are straight paths to preferment and honor. Business is a scene of dishonesty, indolence, and corruption, as Orrery concludes from his own experience with Badham and other agents. If in one letter Orrery may extol the virtues of a “most excellent” Catholic tenant who has improved his (that is, Orrery’s) land “after an English manner” and built a “most sweetly situated” house, by the next letter it will turn out that this upright and honest laborer with rudiments of taste has tried to bribe Orrery’s agent to get an advantageous lease for his son, and himself has an excellent bargain on his lease, for which Badham had probably received a large “fine.” It is the selfishness and laziness of the inhabitants of the kingdom that makes Orrery’s personal presence and exertion necessary. After his second arrival in Ireland in 1735, he writes: “I find, upon as thorough Enquiry into my Affairs, as the shortness of the Time I have been here allows me to make, no one step has been taken for my Advantage; or towards disentangling any of those labyrinthous Difficulties that have attended me since my Father’s death: In short, no One seems to have my Prosperity full at Heart.”

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325 Orrery to Mrs. Barber, 10 May 1737, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 7:108.
326 Orrery to John Kempe, 20 August 1735, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:37, 35.
327 Orrery to Thomas Salkeld, 4 May 1736, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 7:33-4 (Orrery Papers, 1:156-8); to Baron Waynright, 12 April 1737, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 7:95-7 (with omissions in Orrery Papers, 1:215-16).
329 Orrery to John Kempe, 17 and 20 August 1735, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:30-34.
Having made this startling discovery, the fifth earl arrives at a firm resolution: “Tis now four Years that I have liv’d without the Receit of a very considerable Part of my Estate: But I will not quit this Kingdom, without putting Every Thing on a sure & lasting Foundation.”

The central source of Orrery’s income was rent, and his prosperity depended on letting profitable leases and on a timely and regular collection of rents. His unceasing efforts to control these processes and to put them on a “sure & lasting Foundation” make for a curious case study in the culture of absenteeism, and discover much about his relation to the surrounding world. Orrery was educated in a tradition that valued the epistolary genre as a supreme form of self-expression, and even his business correspondence often reads like belles lettres. So, in December of 1736, a year and a half after his arrival in Ireland, Orrery writes from Dublin a six-page letter to his agent William Taylor, expressing his chagrin and outrage at “so monstrous an Arrear” on the rents, caused, Orrery is certain, by the procrastination and inattention of the agent. The rents Orrery charges for his lands are, in his view, too low as it is, and he believes that the arrears in question “may be gather’d in for the Trouble of being call’d for: & are due from Tenants, that are much more able to pay their Rents, than I am to pay my Debts.” Orrery stresses his utter dependence on the rents, without the speedy collection of which no frugality and economy can pay the debts accumulated by his father. And the collection of the rents depends solely on the will and industry of the agent. So, writes the earl, “I cannot but attribute a great deal of What has happen’d, & the wretched Situation I am in, to your long Absence from your proper Sphere, your long Residence in Dublin, & the continual Hurry You have been in…” For this procrastination and for not having his rents received, Orrery points out, he pays a handsome salary to Taylor; but that is not all: “Besides This, I am paying high Interest for Money, w[th] I owe You, at the same Time that a much greater Sume is due to me, w[th] can only be collected in by You.” Powerless, Orrery resorts to lengthy complaints, exhortations, and severe orders. “I chuse therefore,” he asserts, “to write thus plainly to You, desiring You to assume the Character of the agent, & the Man of Business, without farther Loss of Time: & to act w[th] That Vigour, Steadiness, Coolness, & Resolution, that Every Man in your Situation ought to do.” And further, “I desire, & insist upon having a speedy Account of the Steps you take to gather [the rents] in,” by gentle means or by recourse to law; “I must, & do, expect Particulars, & will be no longer contented w[th] general Accounts, since there is so little Space betwixt Me & Ruine.” Three weeks later, another resolute letter goes out to Taylor: “And This I do so positively insist upon, that I declare to You under my Hand, if you dont act thus, & get in my Rents as fast as they become due, I must find out some other Person that will.” Orrery does not intend to repeat these directions again, and he will absolutely force Taylor to pay out of his own funds if the agent suffers any tenants to accumulate arrears. Here we find the earl at his most determined and indomitable: “For the Resolution I have taken, in having my Rents punctually paid as they become due, is what I will never recede from as long as I live.”

The smooth and regular working of the rent-colllecting mechanism is indeed for Orrery a question of existence, personal identity, and freedom.

Even after such determined assertions Orrery’s problems with agents and rents did not cease. In the immediate aftermath, instead of exact reports of all the proceedings, he received from Taylor “a very long Letter… fill’d w[th] Nothing; (&, sure, never Man had the Art of writing Nothing, in

330 Orrery to Peter Walter, 26 and 24 June 1735, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:3.
331 Orrery to William Taylor, 9 December 1736, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:78-83.
332 23 December 1736, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:91.
so high a Degree as M’. Taylor:) & I leave You [John Kempe] to judge, how great my 
Disappointment must be, when, instead of money, I receive these full-empty Letters.” The air of
determination and peremptory orders proved ineffective, and now, despite disappointment, Orrery 
just does what his father did in the Badham affair: “living in Hopes, that [Taylor] will alter [his 
conduct], I keep my Discontentment to Myself.” Orrery’s agent is, in this pair, the agent in 
more senses that one – he acts, or does not act, while his employer can only observe, exhort, and 
hope. Orrery does hint, among his complaints to John Kempe, on “proceedings” that Taylor’s 
behavior may force him to make use of; and he seems to have made use of them indeed, for a 
year later he already writes to a new agent: “Your resolutions of acting w th as much expedition as 
possible in my Affairs are very good. Pray, let me see the Effects of them.... [T]he Arrears, is the 
Point I insist upon from You. I shall look for them after the Ninth of January wth great 
Impatience.” Three weeks later, Orrery already hopes that Walter Gould, the new agent, will 
“be now less indolent, & more active” than heretofore. The earl is irate again: “I am weary of 
insignificant excuses from those, whose business it is to carry on my Affairs, w th Assiduity, Care, 
& Resolution; nor will I ever for the future forgive any willful neglect in the Persons concern’d 
for me, having suffer’d too much by such indulgence already; & since it is my Misfortune to have 
agents, who are too idle or above what they undertake, I shall look out for such as will think it 
worth their while to attend to” Orrery’s business.

This time too, Orrery did not follow through on his threat. Twenty-one months later he wrote to 
Gould with a kind of resignation: “I am too well us’d to your Promises, to build any great Hopes 
upon them. You like that way of proceeding with me, and I really think I begin to grow like a 
gaul’d Horse, never the better for being us’d ill, for if I acted as I ought I should not take up with 
your ungenerous, your careless your dilatory, I had almost said your ungrateful way of 
proceeding.” Like Taylor, who had made free with Orrery’s money and could charge interest 
twice on the same debt Orrery owed to him, Gould was not particularly interested in the speedy 
resolution of Orrery’s affairs. “I am sensible and have been long convinced,” wrote Orrery, “that 
Goolde lives upon my Lawsuit. His tavern Bills are paid by it.” Gould was also a drunkard, and 
Orrery’s excuse for his patience was compassion for the agent’s family. The fifth earl complained 
that his humanity was “beyond all reason, sense, or duty” to his own wife and children. A more 
satisfactory agent was found in the person of Richard Purcell already in 1737, but Gould 
continued to serve Orrery into the 1740s, and the “division of labor” between the agents, if there 
was any, remains unclear.

Orrery did sometimes enjoy feeling himself a man of business and a powerful magnate, reviewing 
far-off estates, settling boundaries and adjudicating disputes, considering proposals of prospective 
tenants and studying rent rolls. “I find such pleasure in it,” he wrote in 1735, “that the more

333 Orrery to John Kempe, 6 January 1736/7, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:112.
334 Orrery to Walter Gould, 31 December 1737, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:152.
335 Idem to idem, 24 January 1737/38, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:165.
336 Idem to idem, 21 April 1740, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:228.
337 John Kempe to Walter Gould, 4 May 1738, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:179.
338 Orrery to Richard Purcell, 16 November 1744, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 5:146.
339 Idem to idem, 18 April 1743, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 5:48.
Insight I gain into my Affairs, the more desirous I am to pursue, & set them in order.”

Agency and power felt good. But the pleasurable and creative work of putting things in order had one ultimate aim – to create a “sure & lasting Foundation” that would make such agency and assiduity, as well as Orrery’s presence as such, unnecessary. “Order” ought to be a smooth-running mechanism that can function autonomously, perpetuating once-defined intelligent design. Celebrating the success of a few ejectment suits (which cancelled the leases too disadvantageous for Orrery, presumably let by men who did not have his prosperity “full at Heart”), the earl wrote, a bit too prematurely: “But I am entirely convinced, that without my Coming over, Things would have gone on as slowly as they had done for some Years past. I have now set all the Wheels in Motion, &, by Degrees, shall bring the Machine into such Order, that it will move regularly tho’ I am in England.”

Orrery’s presence as the organizing force in the “machine” of his estates and affairs should be permanently felt, but it should remain virtual. He will be away. On the other hand, the dialectic of the presence and absence of the “machine” in the existence of the Earl of Orrery should be exactly the opposite: it must be present, as the material foundation of Orrery’s social being, but it ought to appear absent. It ought to function so smoothly as to be invisible. The end of Orrery’s social being is fundamentally not running and controlling the machine, nor the continuous creation and recreation of a material order. On the contrary, an essential condition of that existence is freedom from the material order. Freedom, in its turn, is conditioned upon order, as opposed to disorder, since it is the latter that makes the material realm present and urgent.

Orrery’s sentiment was rather the opposite of the famous passage from William Byrd’s letter to the fourth earl, already quoted in the previous chapter: “Like one of the patriarchs, I have my flocks and my herds, my bond-men and bond-women, and every sort of trade amongst my own servants, so that I live in a kind of independence on everyone, but Providence. However tho’ this soart of life is without expence yet it is attended with a great deal of trouble. I must take care to keep all my people to their duty, to set all the springs in motion, and to make every one draw his equal share to carry the machine forward.” Such constant care and direct engagement Orrery would have very likely considered a form of dependence, rather than independence. Beyond (ideally) brief interventions, the earl was not supposed to be the actual “mover” of the vast machine of his estates; this role was conferred on others, and Orrery found himself in a position where he observed the work and movement of the whole mechanism from outside. In Orrery’s words to Taylor: “But if You, who are the chief Spring by wch all my Wheels are to be put in Motion, do not move regularly & wth alacrity; Every Thing must stand still, except the Importunity of my Creditors; wth never will, till they are paid.” Orrery was quite conscious of the paradox of depending on the selfish will and agency of others to ensure his own illusory freedom from the low concerns of estate management. But he did not change his ways; unlike Byrd, he stayed outside. He left the mechanism free to malfunction and succumb to its corrupt inclinations. But at the same time he could feel himself clean, not implicated in that corruption and malfunction. Such cleanliness was more culturally valuable than material comfort and ease. If the mechanism was not functioning well, Orrery would not, and perhaps could not, have changed his place without compromising the nature of his social self, save for short and not necessarily unpleasant moments of direct intervention. The only form of economic agency directly and

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340 Orrery to Thomas Saunderson, 9 September 1735, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:42.
341 Orrery to Peter Walter, 5 August 1735, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:28.
342 Byrd to Charles Boyle, Earl of Orrery, 5 July 1726, in Correspondence, 1:355.
343 Orrery to William Taylor, 9 December 1736, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:80.
naturally available to him was virtuous and prudent frugality: “& all I can do, is, to live upon £1200p annum, if it is possible; (& possible it is, & shall be;) & the rest of my Estate must go to Selwyn, & other Creditors.”

The state of Orrery’s affairs was certainly not encouraging, as may be judged from the anecdotal evidence available. At the time when the above-quoted letter was written, his various debts amounted to £16,000; almost two years later, Taylor calculated Orrery’s clear rent income for 1737 to be £2,800. Strict economy was a palliative, and selling Askeaton, encumbered with Badham’s annuity, was less advantageous than Orrery would have liked (although this was eventually done). But there was another option available, the urgency of which William Taylor outlined in no uncertain words in mid-1736:

You have no possibility or retrieving yourself but by marrying nor I but by doing the same or selling my Estate. Your Lordship must not hold out for too much Fortune if you can gett enou [more?]hgh to make you easy. It will not be prudent to run the much manifest hazard of being undon at present & indeed forever because it is possible you may get ten or twenty thousand [more?]. Pardon me my Lord for writing thus freely it is what I wou’d not do by Word of Mouth. But you as well as my self are upon the Brink of the Precipice our Credit is pretty good now But it is in the power of any of our Creditors by doing an ungenteel thing to blow us up. (& I vow to God I am at a loss how to keep touch with them so as they shall not).

Orrery’s credit hinged on the expected sale of Askeaton, and “when that is sold & leaves so many Debts behind it, what will there then be to stop their mouths, will they not be clamorous & importunate?” This remarkable letter, hasty, long, and full of cross-outs, was apparently a result of Taylor’s “great Pannick” about his and Orrery’s affairs, on account of which he could not “sleep at nights nor think of anything else at Day.” The earl was quick to point out that his agent’s assiduity and speedy collection of rents would make the situation a lot less dire, and Taylor himself would feel better later. But a new marriage was indeed a financial necessity, happily suited to Orrery’s character. As he put it, “no Man was ever more form’d by disposition for a matrimonial Life.” This statement was amply confirmed by Orrery’s long and apparently happy life with Margaret Hamilton, daughter and heir of John Hamilton of Caledon, county Tyrone. The marriage took place in June 1738, and the Gentleman’s Magazine, reporting the event, referred to Margaret as “one of the largest fortunes in Europe.” This was an overstatement; in 1741, the net rent for Caledon amounted to £1,635, and the estate suffered from the same problems with low rents on long leases as Orrery’s ancestral lands. But this was certainly a much welcome addition to Orrery’s income, which, together with Margaret’s other personal qualities, opened prospects for the kind of pure and orderly domestic bliss Orrery lacked.

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344 Orrery to John Kempe, 20 January 1735/36, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:59.
345 Ibid.; Orrery to Richard Purcell, 15 November 1737, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 8:144.
346 William Taylor to Orrery, 25 August 1736, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 6:3. It is unclear why the fate of Taylor’s own estate (and was not only an agent but a landed gentleman in his own right and a member of the Irish House of Commons) was so closely connected to that of Orrery’s.
347 Orrery to the Lady Viscountess Allen, 8 February 1735/36, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 7:23 (Orrery Papers, 1:147).
348 Gentleman’s Magazine 8, July 1738, 380.
virtually since his birth. “A fine Estate, a sweet Temper, good Sense, many engaging Accomplishments, such as singing, playing, working, reading, in perfection; and all this without a grain of Affection; so that if we have not a Helen, we are sure of a Penelope: and that’s a much more preferable Choice,” wrote the fifth earl about his second wife. A less excited observer, Mary Granville Delany, would say the same ten years later: Orrery’s “lady (whose fortune was near 3000 pounds a year) is very plain in her person and manner, but to make amends for that she is very sensible, unaffected, good-humoured, and obliging.” Jonathan Swift, who personally knew Margaret and corresponded with her, in a letter to Pope called her “a person of very good understanding as any I know of her sex.” And so Orrery prepared for a new life at Caledon: “I defy ill omens, and look upon the bad Weather that usher’d us into Caledon, as the last Effort of my angry Fate, which expir’d, as Witches go to Hell, in Lightning Rain and Thunder.” Even Ireland itself was now different, turning from a place of toil to a place of familial retirement: “This Island, which I had then most Reason to hate, I have now most Reason to love, and the Kingdom in which I was most curst, I am now most blest in.” As Margaret gave Orrery “a Heart fill’d with Love, and a Hand with Money,” so the two notable characteristics of Caledon were “infinite Beauties, and much Land.” Thus endowed, the estate left Orrery free to engage in the labor of art rather than production – the labor of adding to and developing a purely aesthetic kind of order, and turning the natural beauties into the beauties of art. Orrery’s own version of Byrd’s celebratory “retirement letter” is markedly different in emphasis:

I am charmed with Caledon: and when I should be writing to my Freinds I am moving an old Gate, or cutting down an ancient Apple Tree for a Prospect: in short I am lost amidst the various Pleasures of inglorious Ease. The morning dawns, and my little Pad ambles with Me thro’ all my various Groves, and verdant Feilds: At noon I lean upon my Pitch-Fork, and eat my oaten Cake: the Afternoon is pass’d at the Pitch-Ax, and the Spade: and at Night Lady Orrery’s Voice and Harpsicord, in sweet Delights transport my Soul to Rest. My Days are innocent: my Nights are happy. Cheerfullness sit smiling round me, and Plenty keeps close to my Side. My Gate stands open to the Widow, and the stranger.

The rustic labor of the good earl was decorative and aesthetic, not managerial. He was not dealing with Irish nature as a productive power whose life force had to be managed and directed because it could break out of control. Rather, he treated his estate as a natural form, beauty to be further improved. As Lady Orrery wrote to her husband in 1741, “if I ever wish myself at Caledon it is your own fault, for correcting the irregular beauties of Nature in so noble, so sweet a Taste.” Describing the flourishing trees and new construction at Caledon, Orrery wrote: “Thus you see I am fixed amidst the Bounties of Nature,profuse to me in every Blessing that this Earth affords:

350 Orrery to John Kempe, 2 August 1738, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 4:5.
351 Mary. Delany to Mrs. Dewes, 2 August 1748, in Lady Llanover, ed., The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany: With Interesting Reminiscences of King George the Third and Queen Charlotte (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), 2:492.
353 Orrery to John Kempe, 2 August 1738, Houghton MS Eng. 218.4, 4:2, 4.
354 Idem to idem, 1 July 1738, Orrery Papers, 1:240.
amidst this Scene of uninterrupted Joy, I am glad to feel now and then a pain in my Toe, least I should fancy myself already in Heaven, because I have certainly passed thro’ purgatory.” The bounties of nature were a source of heavenly innocence, rather than a source of concern about potential excess, because they were being integrated into Orrery’s intellectual and aesthetic identity, rather than reverberated through his physical being. We do not have Orrery’s own detailed description of Caledon, but perhaps more interestingly, there is a description by an outside observer, Mary Granville Delany. She visited the spouses in 1748 and found that they are both fond of the country; she delights in farming, and he in building and gardening, and he has every good taste. They have a lodge about a mile from their house, where they spend most of their time; it has all the advantages of water, wood, and diversified grounds: and there the new house is to be built. Nothing is completed yet but an hermitage, which is about an acre of ground – an island, planted with all the variety of trees, shrubs, and flowers that will grow in this country, abundance of little winding walks, differently embellished with little seats and banks; in the midst is placed an hermit’s cell, made of the roots of trees, the floor is paved with pebbles, there is a couch made of matting, and little wooden stools, a table with a manuscript on it, a pair of spectacles, a leathern bottle; and hung up in different parts, an hourglass, a weatherglass and several mathematical instruments, a shelf of books, another of wooden platters and bowls, another of earthen ones, in short everything you might imagine necessary for a recluse. Four little gardens surround his house – an orchard, a flower-garden, a physick-garden, and a kitchen-garden, with a kitchen to boil a teakettle or so: I never saw so pretty a whim so thoroughly well executed.\footnote{Mary Delany to Mrs. Dewes, 2 August 1748, \textit{Autobiography and Correspondence}, 2:491-2.}

In this elegantly rustic setup, even the kitchen garden plays a primarily decorative role. The contents of Caledon’s wealth are invisible or at least forgettable, they enable their own denial in the beautiful simpicity of the hermitage with its wooden platters and tree roots. And with the freedom from material encumbrances thus underscored, a space for the mind is freed, with the bookshelf, mathematical instruments, and especially the strategically placed manuscript on the table becoming the center of Orrery’s world – carefully private, but readily demonstrated to the right kind of visitors. It is this kind of wealth, immaterialized and turned into a space of freedom for the mind, that Orrery is prepared to love, cherish, and turn into a moral maxim. “Fortune has been ex tremely kind in her Favours and I have no other Way of shewing my Gratitude, but by living on the spott from whence those Favours flow. Where our Treasure is there will our heart be also,” he writes to Swift in 1739.\footnote{Orrery to Swift 29 September 1739, \textit{Orrery Papers}, 1:267.} (Note that the flow of favors appears here to be an independent process that does not imply Orrery’s involvement; his physical proximity to the “flow” (living on that spot) conceals a lack of internal connection.) Orrery repeats the phrase, almost exactly, more than seven years later, when describing the “daily additions” he is endeavoring to make to the beauties of Caledon: “…Here is my treasure, \textit{and where my treasure is, there must my heart be also}.\footnote{Orrery to Dr. William King, 30 November 1746, \textit{Orrery Papers}, 1:302.} It is difficult to imagine him writing something similar in the mid-1730s.

What Caledon (or Marston, for that matter) offered Orrery was an approximation of the state of Paradise, a glimpse of the other world removed from sorrows and toils of everyday circumstances. So, in Caledon, “[g]randeur and magnificence we have none. Ours is Paradise in its first formation. And methinks, I am the man whom the Lord God put into the Garden of Eden, to dress it, and keep it: But, how much happier am I than Adam, when no serpent exists within
our limits, nor would Eve be beguiled, although serpents were as plenty, as apples."360 The conscious and free innocence of such a life includes not only freedom from the invisible material foundations of genteel retirement but also freedom from – or natural and uncoerced refusal of – other kinds of worldly disturbances. Life in Orrery’s Paradise is a familial life, and this familial life is construed, by him and by Margaret, as a life of the spirit, of order and duty naturally and freely pursued. The relationship between John and Margaret (as we remember, a Penelope rather than a Helen) emerges from their correspondence as tender but cerebral, prudent, and spiritual affection, a love that is domestic rather than romantic. So in Margaret’s words: “…I really believe we Love [each other] as much as the fondest Lovers, but with more reason, and less passion.”361

Sending to her husband, perhaps as a form of gossip, a collection of somebody’s romantic letters (which have not been preserved in the Orrery papers), Margaret comments: “How dull must my Affection, how poor, how little appear, after you have read these highflew Love Letters I send along with this Epistle. or rather how great, how true, how unalterable, because it is founded upon the contrary virtues, to the detestable passion of these wicked wretches.”362 Reason, tender affection, and esteem are at the root of this love, which is essentially and expressly marital, founded on being united by the bonds of marriage to a meritorious, virtuous soul. Passion is excluded from the prehistory of this union and love exists essentially within it. So, comparing the letter she is writing to one written before marriage, Margaret observes: “…But in justice you should have much more joy in reading this, than the other from an idle Girl, who cared but a little for you, but I will ever with pride boast that no Wife can have a more tender Affection; for no Husband can have more merit” (my italics).363 And conversely: “…[M]y only pride on Earth is, that I am yours, not only from your affection but approbation.”364

In the discourse of affection unseparated from, and to an extent assimilated into, approbation, the body (which supposedly dominates the passion-love that overcomes “wicked wretches”) can be rhetorically removed. And further, the remaining immediacy of spiritual communication can erase the distinction between the marital and the familial – the distinction that comes down to sex. Physical proximity can be unfavorably juxtaposed with spiritual proximity, and in the latter, immediacy between parents/children/siblings is blended, and interacts, with the (spiritual) immediacy between spouses, as in this rather ungrammatical example: “And indeed your Letters give me so much pleasure I breaking the Seal, opning, and reading the amusing, witty, & tender matter they contain, that at the time I receive them, I scarce wish myself with you, because I could not then be possessed of this inestimable Picture of your Mind, which as they are filled with your Affection to me must of course stir up in my heart the highest gratitude, and perhaps in our children may raise a laudable ambition to think, Act, and write like their Father.”365 (Margaret’s perception of written correspondence seems to coincide with Samuel Richardson’s; he once

361 Lady Orrery to Lord Orrery, 29 March 1743, Houghton MS Eng. 218.26, letter 56. This fairly large collection of Margaret’s letters to her husband, written between 1738 and 1745 and preserved as bound originals, warrants a much more detailed attention.
362 Idem to idem, 5 June 1743, letter 65.
363 Idem to idem, 30 October 1738, letter 2.
364 Idem to idem, 28 May 1741, letter 47.
365 Idem to idem, 25 February 1740/41, letter 23.
remarked that letter-writing “makes even presence but body, while absence becomes the soul.”

In this immediacy and discursive openness, minds interact, and new minds can grow, imbibing tenderness, affection, thought, virtue, and beauty of expression that naturally permeate the familial space founded on virtues contrary “to the detestable passion.” The children were not the only beneficiaries of such education through intimacy: the ease and freedom of familial intercourse, at least one observer noticed, changed something in Orrery himself. According to Mrs. Delany in 1748, “Lord Orrery is more agreeable than he used to be; he has laid aside the ceremonious stiffness that was a great disadvantage to him.”

Perhaps it was helpful that neither of the spouses possessed the physical attractiveness that would make the body too “noticeable,” intrusive and disruptive, a source of disorder and unhappiness. As Margaret observed after the death of their daughter Kitty, “perhaps had she lived, that uncommon beauty, which bloomed in so young a Child, might have been the source of endless misfortunes both to her and to her Parents.” However, it is not the absence of temptation or ignorance of it that matters most, but the free rejection of the evil seen and theoretically known, at least in Margaret’s opinion: “[F]or my particular part I have no other joys at this time of Life than yours and Edmunds [their youngest child] company, the Gay vanities of London are no more pleasures for me, a Married woman past thirty is wors than a brute who lends a single thought to any thing but the wellfair of her family…”

Locking oneself naturally and voluntarily within the compass of moral and intellectual familial intimacy is a testimony to the strength of the mind that rejects the temptations of corrupt social life. It is this power, the essential and normative (for true humanity) freedom of the mind from “temptation,” that prevents the knowledge of good and evil from disrupting and ruining the state so much resembling Paradise. And it applies not only to women but also to men in the situation when the public life that they have to deal with is hopelessly corrupt and degenerated, as, one feared, it was in Hanoverian England. In such unfavorable conditions, “[l]et our Wise men Retire into some charming Solitude with their Wives and their Children, let their Lives be passed in the manner the Author of Cyrus describes the Magi to spent their Time, Study, Musick and Conversation. the care of instructing the young, and making the declining years pass happily to the Old, Virtuous Love, peacefull minds, healthfull Days, quiet Nights, nay indeed the first Paradise with the addition of the Knowledg of Good and Evil.”

And so Orrery did, secure in the enjoyment of the freedom of the orderly mind and in the conscious rejection of temptation. Back in 1733, recently widowed and taking a respite from the Irish troubles, Orrery extolled, with a mild irony, his short retirement at Marston: “…Like my first parent, I stand in the garden which my great Creator hath planted for me, and where he hath made every tree pleasant to sight, nor can I fall but by disobedience, from which perhaps your prayers, and my own endeavours, may preserve me. I well remember that my mother Eve tempted my poor weak father Adam, and lost him Paradise: wonder not therefore, my good friend, if I

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367 Elizabeth Granville Delany to Mrs. Dewes, 2 August 1748, Autobiography and Correspondence, 2:492.

368 Lady Orrery to Lord Orrery, 22 February 1743/44, letter 81.

369 Idem to idem, 28 May 1743, letter 62.

chuse Paradise, and refuse woman.” Margaret Hamilton, sober, tender, virtuous, and “very plain in her person and manner” (in the words of Elizabeth Granville Delany), would not be “beguiled” herself, and would not create that world of illusory material beauty, fancy and temptation about which Orrery can easily be imagined to have been warned by his older friend William Byrd. The new marriage did not destroy the Paradise but added greatly to it.

It would only be natural for the harmony and intelligible order of familial retirement to find discursive expression. Writing was a public act, but of a different kind compared to political wrangles and schemes, and it was in this sphere that Orrery felt especially hard-pressed to enter the public world. His father’s will was public knowledge, and Orrery himself felt compelled to comment on it, when addressing his own son in print: “…Give me leave to own how sensibly I felt the force of an arrow directed from [the fourth earl’s] hand. The wound, I believe, was not designed to be lasting. It was given in a passion, and upon an extraordinary occasion: but afterwards he was so desirous to heal it, by a return of the greatest degree of friendship and affection, that he had directed the remaining scar to be entirely erased, when his unexpected and too sudden death, prevented the completion of his kind intentions, and the perfection of my cure.” Orrery survived “the shock” only with difficulty. But: “I have since thought, that I could not offer a more grateful sacrifice to [father’s] manes, than by exerting those faculties, which he had, at first, cultivated with so much care; and had depressed, at last, perhaps only to raise them higher….” Commenting in private on this passage from Orrery’s Remarks on Swift, Margaret was more explicit about the consequences of the fourth earl’s last will and testament: “…Certainly this stroke has been beneficial to the world, by being the occasion which forced your modest and reserved nature to shew the world that tho’ a Library was left from you, Books had ever been your favourite amusement, that you both had and could make use of Books.” And as Samuel Johnson once noted to Boswell, “My friend, the late Earl of Corke [and Orrery], had a great desire to maintain the literary character of his family.” The burden was great, given the reputation of the previous literary representatives of the clan in literary circles and in high society.

Literary inclinations were natural to Orrery, as natural as his friendships with Swift, Pope, Bolingbroke, Southerne, and other literary luminaries, who also shared Orrery’s political stance and social views. Swift and Pope appear to have felt unfeigned affection towards Orrery, and, at least early on, high opinion of the young earl’s literary promise. So Swift wrote to Pope in 1733 from Dublin: “We are all here so fond of my Lord Orrery’s good qualities, that we think if he had leisure and inclination for verse, he would not fail as to the want of a genius and in all other points. I have not known for his age a more Valuable person.” But the genre most suited to Orrery’s temperament and character was private correspondence, and his preferred mode of writing was critical rather than creative: judgment, appreciation, and correction. This was what Orrery presented to the public when compelled to enter print in order to vindicate his own

571 Orrery to Thomas Southerne, 1 November 1733, printed in Duncombe, Letters, by Several Eminent Persons, 2:37.

572 Orrery, Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick’s, Dublin, in a Series of Letters from John earl of Orrery to His Son, the Honourable Hamilton Boyle (London: A. Millar, 1752), 323-4.

573 Lady Orrery to Lord Orrery, 20 November 1751, Orrery Papers, 2:272-3.

574 Boswell, Life of Johnson, 862.

575 But then, Swift’s letters were not necessarily written with only one addressee in mind, and Orrery’s patronage was valuable.
character from the parental insult and to “maintain the literary reputation of his family.” Orrery’s “big” works were, first, a translation of the letters of Pliny the Younger, with critical and historical observations addressed to Orrery’s eldest son Charles, and, second, “remarks on the life and writings” of Swift, addressed to Hamilton, the second son. These texts may well be attempts to “catch” the literary eminence that Orrery, in Johnson’s opinion, “had not power to grasp.”376 But their design and literary justification lay in projecting into the public that beauty and orderly moral freedom which was born and cultivated in familial retirement and intimacy. In this intimate intercourse, founded on deep and rational affection, the true, the beautiful, and the good thrived; and the false, the ugly, and the bad were considered, understood, and freely cast out.

So, in his comments on Pliny Orrery drew his son’s attention to the moral and aesthetics beauties, as well as occasional failings, of a truly noble man, bringing this exemplary character closer to Charles and to the public through the mediation of Orrery’s own admiration and intimate, conversational mode of writing. “Pliny,” wrote Orrery when explaining his intention to translate the Roman’s personal correspondence, “is an Author I have long studied, long admir’d and long lov’d: His Sentiments charm me: He had a Soul that was an Honour to human Nature; He was learned, and an Encourager of Learning: He was a fluent, and a persuasive Orator: He was noble, generous, and goodnatur’d.”377 Swift’s case may be even more interesting for a moral observer: “I originally chose the topic, my dearest Hamilton, because few characters could have afforded so great a variety of faults and beauties…. From the gifts of nature, he had great powers, and from the imperfection of humanity, he had many failings. I always considered him as an Abstract and brief chronicle of the times: no man being better acquainted with human nature, both in the highest, and in the lowest scenes of life.”378 In both works, the focus of Orrery’s attention is on the man and the character, and only then on the writings; his intention is deeply moral rather than “aesthetic.” The beauty of the text is a reflection of the beauty of the mind. And studying the failures is, for the purposes of education and moral upbringing, no less important than contemplating the perfections. The familial and intimate mode was not a purely formal device in Orrery’s works, and I would argue that this familial mode is the essential component of his inability to free himself “from a tyrannizing responsibility to turn every literary effort into a practical achievement in moral instruction.”379 I will discuss the problem of moral intimacy and its cultural implications in more detail in Chapter Four.

4. The Return of Troubles and a Change of Mind

Orrery’s financial problems eventually returned to haunt him. The famed and wealthy patron of the arts Richard Boyle, third Earl of Burlington and fourth Earl of Cork, died in December 1753, passing on to Orrery the title of the Earl of Cork (which is how John would sign his letters until

376 Boswell, Life of Johnson, 445.

377 Orrery to Dr. William King, 27 August 1739, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 4:59 (Orrery Papers, 1:265). And around the same time: “His [Pliny’s] Sentiments are fine, his way of thinking open, humane, and noble: His Freindships sincere and well-chosen: His Fortune easy, & well manag’d; and his whole Life a Scene of Virtue and honourable Acts,” Orrery to Baron Waynright, 13 October 1739, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 4:63-4 (Orrery Papers, 1:268).

378 Remarks, 337-8. Orrery’s Remarks on Swift made him quite a few enemies among Swift’s inner circle, who accused the fifth earl of disloyalty and betrayal. For a detailed study of public reactions to this text, and of Orrery’s literary career generally, see Mildred Weeks Prince, “The Literary Life and Position in the Eighteenth Century of John, Earl of Orrery” (PhD Diss., Smith College, 1948), esp. 150-190.

379 Ibid., 115.
his death). As the fifth earl later told Horace Mann, the British ambassador in Florence, he had repeatedly received assurances from Burlington that the ancestral Boyle estates in Ireland, which belonged to Burlington, would not be separated from the title of the Earl of Cork. But Burlington left all of his estates to his daughter. Certain of such a large impending increase in his fortune, Orrery in the meantime “involved himself into difficulties which the strictest economy was the only remedy left to extricate himself from, when he found his disappointment,” as Mann reports from the earl’s words.\textsuperscript{380} The precise nature of the difficulties is not apparent from Orrery’s own correspondence, but he once again had to relinquish much of his annual income to creditors. In order to live as economically as possible, Orrery and his wife moved to Italy and settled near Florence in late 1754. There, the earl could both be frugal and play the role of a connoisseur in the place best suited for it. He wrote travel letters about France and Italy to William Duncombe, a friend and fellow writer, with the clear intention of eventually publishing them. (For some reason, this was not done during Orrery’s life, although the manuscript was fully prepared for publication, with the author’s marginal notes on it; the \textit{Letters from Italy} were published only in 1773 by Duncombe’s son.) Moreover, Orrery seriously considered the idea of writing a full-blown history of Florence. But the plans for a serious scholarly work were cut short by financial circumstances. Less than a year after arriving in Florence, the earl abruptly left Italy and headed back to Britain after receiving troubling news from his banker and relative, John Hoare. As Hoare later communicated to his friend Horace Mann, the Orrery family’s “agent in Ireland made an ill use of his power, and... their presence was absolutely necessary to prevent some very bad consequences.”\textsuperscript{381} Old problems of distance, unreliable agency, and Irish corruption came back, and Orrery’s financial affairs may have now been even worse than they were twenty years previously. And this time, the earl resorted to a source of much-needed money that had hardly been imaginable a decade earlier.

Before departure, Orrery met with Horace Mann, with whom he had been getting on very well, and asked for a favor. In Mann’s words, the earl “desired I would give testimony in my letters to the ministry of his conduct here, saying that he knew that he had been formerly misrepresented to the King, and assured me, that though his early connections with certain people might have given cause to suspect his principles, yet nobody was more sincerely attached to the present establishment than he was, being convinced from his heart that the nation could only be happy under it; and indeed the whole tenor of his conversation, since I have known him, has been agreeable to that assertion.” Mann did write to London about Orrery’s great veneration and personal respect for George II, and Orrery praised him unreservedly in his \textit{Letters from Italy}.\textsuperscript{382} Of course, it was prudent of the fifth earl to secure reliable testimonies of his “proper conduct” in Florence, since his Jacobite reputation made his moving so close to the court of the Pretender appear suspicious. But his designs may have already gone further; in England, he solicited the patronage of the Prime Minister, the Duke of Newcastle, and secured through him an annual pension of £800 from the court beginning in 1756. We also know that in 1757 he solicited a judicial post from Newcastle.\textsuperscript{383} So, once again finding himself in difficult financial

\textsuperscript{380} Horace Mann to Horace Walpole, 10 April 1756, \textit{Yale Edition}, 20:545-6.

\textsuperscript{381} Idem to idem, 10 April 1756, \textit{Yale Edition}, 20:545.

\textsuperscript{382} Idem to idem, 20 September 1755, \textit{Yale Edition}, 20:499, and editor’s footnote.

circumstances late in his life, Orrery resorted to the very system of ministerial corruption, pensions and places that it was a duty of a true man of the Country to detest.

Getting drawn into the system of government patronage was certainly a self-interested move, but it likely coincided with the growing acceptance of the Hanoverian status quo on Orrery’s part and signaled his alienation from politics rather than any deeper involvement in it. Orrery’s desire to testify to the King “how earnest I am in retrieving all past misbehavior, and in strict duty and adherence to his sacred person, and no less sacred commands”\textsuperscript{384} certainly goes counter to his earlier contemptuous remarks about the Hanoverians and the quality of their “divine right.” But the earl’s commonplace book, begun in Florence in 1755, also registers his growing distaste for Tories (a “Set of People obstinately bent to follow their own inclinations,” “[n]oisy in Taverns, indolent in the Senate,” [r]ough, sullen, and ignorant”) and attention to the negative consequences of retirement, which makes a man savage and sullen.\textsuperscript{385} In his 1759 contribution to \textit{The Busy Body}, a weekly paper, Orrery gives a character sketch of an “odd man”: “Next to foreigners he abhors courtiers. The Court is a scene of politeness. The odd man seldom or ever appears at court. He calls his absence patriotism. If he called it perverseness, oddness, or sheepishness he would give it the true name.”\textsuperscript{386} This badly concealed hint at the old unreformed Tories reads differently when we know that its author received a secret government pension. But a shift in Orrery’s perception of “the world” is nevertheless noticeable in these years. He did not become a “practicing” courtier (aside from the pension), but came to appreciate in theory the polishing quality, and with it the intellectual and moral effects, of “society” in the narrow sense of the term. Given the worsening state of the fifth earl’s health, neither such abstract appreciation nor the pension entailed a more active practical involvement in politics or the life of the court and high society. The gout, another “material” encumbrance inherited from his ancestors, followed Cork for many years and finally finished him off in 1762.

For much of his life, the fifth earl had been distancing himself from the model of politician, soldier, courtier, and promiscuous man of the world that so appealed to his father and great-grandfather. He looked for the excellence of mind not in the public world but in the freedom from it – in retirement, intimate friendship, and orderly, pure familial life. This was for Orrery the circle in which morality, good nature, sentiment, and, in essence, the mind as such were cultivated. The outgoing and promiscuous (in more senses than one) life of his father was not for him. More importantly for this project, John rejected not only the practice of this life but also the key anthropological postulates that came with it.

Eustace Budgell, the fourth earl’s devoted client and biographer, responded thus to the accusations that Charles was prone to take “too great \textit{Liberties} with respect to \textit{Women}”: since some of the greatest men of all ages were guilty of this fault, then perhaps “those very \textit{animal Spirits}, which by their \textit{Fineness} and \textit{Quantity}, are the immediate \textit{Cause} of \textit{Wisdom}, \textit{Wit}, and \textit{Courage}, do naturally and strongly incline those Men, in whom they reside, to the Commission of

\textsuperscript{384} Idem to idem, 16 October 1756, BL Add MS. 32868, Newcastle Papers, vol. 183, f326.

\textsuperscript{385} Houghton MS Eng. 218.12, R1-2, T7-9.

\textsuperscript{386} \textit{The Busy Body}, no. 11, 1 November 1759, the original of the letter in Houghton MS Eng. 218.6. Compare a commonplace-book characteristic of Tories: “Hating business, they decline It. Unfit for a court, They avoid It: and think that they shield themselves by the specious, but prostituted, name of Honour. Did they truly love their country, would they not endeavour to serve it?” Houghton MS. Eng. 218.12, T9.
If William Byrd had read this statement, he perhaps would have acknowledged, reluctantly and with regret, that it could be true. His intellectual and moral life passed in efforts to decouple the mind and body, but those efforts were rarely convincing. John Boyle endeavored to do the same, but he never quite accepted the basic assumption behind Budgell’s statement. In this chapter, I have outlined his life as a series of efforts to minimize and segregate away his material concerns, and to gain intellectual, moral, and emotional freedom from them in the privacy of his simple and refined home, orderly family, and a narrow circle of close friends. It was in such privacy that the fifth earl found his literary and critical voice, and it was in such freedom that he found his own intellectual and moral strength as well as the possibility of continuing the reputation of his dynasty. Orrery’s acceptance of an annual pension from the Court was of a piece with his quest for freedom from material encumbrances. I will later try to show that this acceptance coincided with his growing attention to implications of the social nature of the free mind, refinement, wisdom, and morality, inherent in Orrery’s own cultivation of privacy and interpersonal mental immediacy. Orrery’s moral and intellectual upbringing sorely lacked such immediacy of a genteel family. His father’s perceived play of “animal spirits” only got in the way of the son’s proper familial education and indirectly led to a public questioning of John’s intellectual endowments. So, the cultivation of a mental and emotional private society was personally significant for the fifth earl. In the next chapter, I will explore in more depth the world of anthropological assumptions behind John Boyle’s intimate ethics and aesthetics.

387 Budgell, Memoirs, 248.
CHAPTER 4
THE BODY DISPLACED: EMOTION, MARRIAGE, AND THE NATURE OF INTIMACY

Given what has gone before, I would sum up the recurring elements of Orrery’s personal relation to his experience as: first, a desire for freedom from the world, including public life, economic circumstances, and bodily disorders (in the medical, rather than moral, sense of the word); and second, a desire for emotionally charged intimacy within a narrow private society. In this chapter, I will develop the themes of mental freedom and intimacy on a more theoretical, general level, through Orrery’s writings and into the wider discursive world of the eighteenth-century. I will argue that Orrery took for granted the essential separation between the world of matter and body (human and otherwise) and the world of human spirit. He looked at the material as something external to the mental, rather than as an alien but insidious and ineradicable presence within the mental world. In this, he was very different from Byrd, and he will allow us to follow a different logical path in the conceptualization of the marriage, family, and the relation between the human libido and social life. The chapter will move in concentric circles, narrowing the focus of an analysis from a dichotomous vision of social structure, divided between “the vulgar multitude” and “the better sort,” to the companionship and interpersonal closeness of the refined “private society” of friends, to the family and marriage as the logical limit of interpersonal intimacy, both containing the body and free from its power.

1. The Trapped Soul

After the account of Orrery’s life and attitudes given in the previous chapter, his opinion of the human condition in general will not surprise the reader:

...Are not the many temporal calamities with which we are harassed from our Cradle almost a proof that this world is rather a state of punishment than of probation? our highest pleasures are so uncertain, so im bitter’d, and so transitory that they rather appear as Dreams, than as Realities: but our miseries are inevitable and constant: they encircle us at our birth, and they bear us down in our old Age, they grieve us harder as we draw nearer to our enlargement: and to the last moment, Pangs, Ravings, Convulsions, and all the horrors adapted to our species attend the eager struggles of a departing Soul.

And so Orrery concludes that “we may humbly hope that the Pains we suffer here, entitle us to immediate rest and happiness hereafter and from that hope may have little dread of eternal Tortures.” 388 Hell is here, in the state of mortality alien to our true nature. We know we are not born for this world because we find inherent in us a desire of freedom and of “complete and perfect happiness.” To this freedom every action of our lives tends, but it exists “only in our own thoughts, and cannot be found on this side of the grave,” where we are “imprisoned in a wretched slavish body.” The very fact of the body, of material limitations is inconsistent with the logical extent of our idea of liberty, as Orrery observes in his commonplace book: “Who has the liberty to add one [inch?] to his height? one hair to his head? one hour to his life?.. Liberty is not of this world. It is a Fantome known only by tradition: – visionary: – & if existing must be in Heaven.”

It would only be logical (and, more importantly, highly satisfying) to believe that these ideas and desires are not given us in vain and are destined for satisfaction beyond the limits of this world.  

The assumption underlying these convictions, which Orrery held firmly throughout his life and expressed on many occasions, is simple: “We are composed of a mind, and of a body, intimately united, and mutually affecting each other. Their operations indeed are entirely different.”390 The disparity between the two, the physical disorders intrinsic to our material frame, against which our goodness and our moral and intellectual endowments are powerless, troubled Orrery throughout his life. Already in 1729 he wrote to one of his closest friends: “Nature has formed you in one of her finest Moulds; She has imprisoned your Soul in a very feeble Piece of Machinery: and if you are not minutely carefull of yourself. [sic] We shall lose you.”391 In the Letters from Italy, upon praising the elegance, politeness, kindness, and general excellence of character of Horatio Mann, British ambassador to Tuscany, Orrery continues: “Sigh with me, that such a man should be subject to perpetual head-achs, and to that delicate frame of constitution, which is so often, and so easily, dislocated; even to a degree that almost unhinges life itself, or at least weakens and renders it difficult to repair.”392 But, of course, it was Swift whose fate could touch off particularly poignant reflections on this aspect of the human condition: “But what are superior Talents, what is an envied Understanding, or a superlative Genius, if they can be reduced to idiocy, to lunacy, and to slavery! What are the art of poetry, the strength of language, or the power of reason if at last they are to fall a sacrifice to dotage and inebriety! If a glass of wine can destroy all sense and memory, surely Man is the lowest and most miserable of the known creation. What has he to be proud of, or what has he to hope for? Nothing on this side of the Grave.”393 There is no direct connection between what we deserve and what we receive. On the other hand, what can be a better argument for another, more just world for which we have to wait with patience, than a mortifying comparison of a misshapen Alexander Pope with a straight and lusty Heliogabalus?394

However, such melancholy reflections on the human condition were set aside in the face of Swift’s much deeper, “intolerable,” “venomous,” and “severe” misanthropy. Orrery’s dualism provided an explanatory framework for the woes and sufferings of a gentle soul, but, unlike Swift’s, it did not lead to the questioning of man’s moral potential, his very ability to be gentle and good. It is true, concedes Orrery, that our spirit often finds itself too immersed in matter to resist the lower passions, and may degenerate into the greatest vice. Such effects “take their source from causes almost mechanical. The soul, in our present situation, is blended and enclosed

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390 Orrery, Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick’s, Dublin, in a Series of Letters from John Earl of Orrery to His Son, the Honourable Hamilton Boyle (London: A. Millar, 1752), 185 (hereafter cited as Swift).

391 Orrery to John Kempe, 29 August 1729 Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:134.

392 Orrery, Letters from Italy, in the Years 1754 and 1755, by the Late Right Honourable John Earl of Corke and Orrery (London: B. White, 1773), 107-108.

393 Orrery to Mrs. Whiteway, 4 December 1742, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2 4:340-41.

394 Orrery to Baron Waynright, 12 April 1737, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2 7:97, also in Orrery Papers 1:216.
with corporeal substance, and the matter of which our body is composed, produces strange impulses upon the mind…” But “it is no less evident, that this immortal spirit has an independent power of acting, and, when cultivated in a proper manner, seemingly quits the corporeal frame within which it is imprisoned, and soars into higher, and more spacious regions.” Vice and error are epiphenomenal and external to the soul, from which assumption Orrery draws theological conclusions as well. In his Letters from Italy, Orrery observes: “The Almighty has permitted himself to be worshipped in so many various ways, that we may rest assured, a remnant of all religions will be saved. I must go farther, and presume to hope, that, in due time, that remnant may become the whole. Eternity of punishment is a shocking thought.” The last sentence was not intended for the general public and did not make it into the published version of the Letters. Orrery was unwilling to cause offence by such an outright dissent from “the orthodoxy of our Church.” But the opinion was too important not to put it on paper. If the soul is essentially good, its punishment cannot last forever; its temporary presence in the material world is a trial enough.

Swift’s misanthropy, given free rein in the last part of the Gulliver’s Travels, stresses and generalizes one possible state of man, a soul serving the appetites of the body, an uncultivated soul. However, rising above those appetites is not only the proper end of humanity but also often man’s practice. The whole edifice of human culture and industry is a result of and a testimony to the power of the immaterial spirit to “disengage itself from the fetters of matter”:

> It is from this pre-eminence of the soul over the body, that we are enabled to view the exact order, and curious variety of different beings; to consider, and cultivate the natural productions of the earth; and to admire, and imitate the wise benevolence which reigns throughout the whole system of the universe. It is from hence, that that we form moral laws for our conduct. From hence, we delight in copying that great original, who, in his essence, is utterly incomprehensible, but, in his influence, is powerfully apparent to every degree of his creation. From hence too, we perceive a real beauty in virtue, and a distinction between good and evil.

It does not matter that our material nature “often” conquers spirit, or that moral and intellectual perfection cannot be found in any particular human being; what defines human nature is the ideal, our potential for virtue, the intention of our existence, even if it is never fully realized in anyone. What matters is that in our species as a whole “we discover such an assemblage of all the great, and amiable virtues, as may convince us, that the original order of nature contains in it the greatest beauty. It is directed in a right line, but it deviates into curves and irregular motions, by various attractions, and disturbing causes” – that is, embodiment and the potentially corrupting social circumstances in which our soul finds itself.

This approach to “the human” from a generalized ideal takes comfort and strength in what we are supposed to be rather than obsessed about what we are. It performs no mean feat of taking the corrupting potential of embodiment out of the definition of “man” (our true nature) while fully acknowledging the grim reality of corruption in the actual circumstances of existence. This is a double vision of which Swift, or Byrd, for that matter, would hardly have been capable. Orrery was not alone in this logical undertaking, which established a basis for an optimistic

395 Swift, 134, 185-6.
396 Houghton MS Eng. 218.9, p. 57; compare Orrery, Letters from Italy, 173.
397 Swift, 189, 187-8.
398 Ibid., 133.
reinterpretation of humanity; consider Francis Hutcheson, a prophet of the future culture of sensibility and the moral sense:

If we are to care at all about our use of words, the ‘state of nature’ ought to denote either that condition to which men are for the most part brought through the exercise of all the natural appetites and powers, or else that most perfect condition to which men can rise by the most sagacious use of all their powers and faculties, a use that seems to be enjoined by the innate desire for the greatest happiness and by whatever benevolent and kind affections that may be natural to men…. But it is certainly this most perfect state that has a better claim to be called natural.\textsuperscript{399}

It is not, of course, all pure escapist idealism. Against the Swiftian reality of an \textit{individual} vis-à-vis the corrupting body, this approach posits another defining reality – that of a \textit{collective} human culture and an “assemblage of different virtues” that “may still be collected from different persons” and thus exist in a shared space, and “are sufficient to place the dignity of human nature in an amiable, and exalted station.”\textsuperscript{400} Hence the importance of \textit{cultivation} in Orrery’s discussion of human nature – as the development and realization, through an introduction to the collective achievements and norms of moral conduct, of the mind’s inherent potential for virtue. Without cultivation, the mind will “degenerate” into vice and “go astray from the end and intention of [its] being. The true source of this depravity is often owing to the want of education, to the false indulgence of parents, or to some other bad causes, which are constantly prevalent in every nation.”\textsuperscript{401}

2. The Social Transmission of Humanity

Orrery’s views on social structure and the civil polity replicate his anthropological dualism. The lower sort, the vulgar, “the inferiour classes of human nature,” as Orrery denominates them in a manuscript essay, “without the benefits arising from education, and the advantages produced by polished society, are drawn to and fro by their inward passions, and easily become a prey to every error that presents itself to their imagination.”\textsuperscript{402} Education and politeness go with wealth and social status and leave the vulgar, in the words of Swift approvingly reported by Orrery, “much more of the brute, than of the human species,” once again underscoring the cultural nature of the distinction between the “human” and the “bestial.” After all, the difference of abilities between man and man may not be as great as some think; if we open the heads of a common carter and

\textsuperscript{399} Francis Hutcheson, “Inaugural Lecture on the Social Nature of Man,” in Hutcheson, \textit{On Human Nature}, ed. Thomas Mautner (Cambridge, 1993), 131. The debates about the nature of man are, of course, only one instance of a more general eighteenth-century identification of “nature” with the general idea, original design of creation, and not the reality of this world below, with all its imperfections and corruptions of the original plan. Joshua Reynolds put it with particular clarity in his aesthetic teaching: “General ideas, beauty, or nature, are but different ways of expressing the same thing, whether we apply these terms to statues, poetry, or picture. Deformity is not nature, but an accidental deviation from her accustomed practice. This general idea therefore ought to be called Nature, and nothing else, correctly speaking, has a right to that name,” \textit{Seven Discourses Delivered in the Royal Academy by the President} (London: T. Cadell, 1778), 276-7.

\textsuperscript{400} \textit{Swift}, 190.

\textsuperscript{401} Ib., 134, 190.

\textsuperscript{402} Orrery, “Essay on English History” (c. 1760), Houghton MS Eng. 218.8, 57.
Isaac Newton, “their formation will be found alike. Is not Educn therefore the sunshine that matures ye Philos. & is not the Winter of Ignorance, the frost that nips the Clown?”

Unsurprisingly, the lower sort within the social body represent for Orrery the flesh. The role of the spirit is assigned to, in the apt words of David Hume, the “elegant Part of Mankind, who are not immers’d in the animal Life, but employ themselves in the Operations of the Mind.” It is on this social level that the existential threat of corruption truly manifests itself. First, there is the danger of contamination, of social mixing that will poison the upper class, which, like a soul, is trapped inescapably within the unity of the high and low that is the social body and feels the effects of its commotion. Reporting on the vulgarity of the Tuscan lottery, which Orrery thought subsisted on the cupidity and superstitions of the people and had become a significant branch of government revenue, Orrery noted that “it is true, none of the nobility are presumed to throw away paolos, or zeccheens, in so low a manner. Perhaps they do not. Be it so. Their servants and their tradesmen do; and the ill consequences of the vices in the lower people, will be felt, sooner or later, by the higher.” Mixing tempts; the possibility of abandoning the obliging restraints of social differentiation and sinking into indiscriminate vulgarity carries in itself erotic overtones. Such are the perils of the Italian Carnival, the dregs of ancient Saturnalia: “Feasts, balls, operas, comedies, reign, and roll by turns, throughout the whole licentious season; but the chief joy consists in the liberty of going masked, of which the consequences are so easily guessed, that they need no recital. At noon, during the three last days of the Carnival, there is a masked assembly in the piazza under the gallery, where, for the space of two hours, the highest nobility, and the lowest mechanics, meet and jostle each other, keeping all distinction and pride closely sealed up under their masks.”

No less importantly, the vulgar masses are a social force and a potential foundation of tyranny. The power of “the richest and the wisest of the people” is natural. It approximates, to the extent to which this is possible, a rule of conscience and reason, since education, knowledge, and virtue reside in this class. The educated wealthy (whatever might be the moral failures or imperfections of individuals belonging to this group) carry in themselves the whole of human culture; they are humanity, and their power equals true freedom for the polity. On the other hand,

the first step towards the establishment of tyranny is the destruction of virtue, knowledge, the sciences, and the arts. Liberty is a tree, that receives nourishment from those roots, and to them therefore the ax must first be applied…. Ministers of arbitrary power act according to this system: they begin by burning and suppressing all kinds of literature in general, but in particular such books and papers, as tends either to explain or establish that freedom, to which every man has a right by the law of nature, and which he ought to give up only with his latest breath.

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403 Orrery’s copy of the 1st edition (1752) of Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift (dated on the flyleaf 14 September 1751), Houghton MS Eng. 218.14, 34; Commonplace Book, Houghton MS Eng. 218.12, Q1.
405 Orrery, Letters from Italy, 244.
406 Ibid., 168. On the Roman feasts of Saturn as the time when slaves were permitted to act as masters and “riot, dissoluteness, and all the extravagance of pleasure reigned,” see Orrery, Letters of Pliny, 1:174.
407 Ibid., 1:xxxvii.
408 Ibid., 1:20.
So, since “the first buddings of slavery must sprout up amidst the weeds of ignorance and sloth,” the natural social base of tyranny is the lower sort. Power-hungry Roman kings and first consuls knew this, asserts Orrery in his sketch of Roman history prefacing the letters of Pliny. Those like consul Publicola knew that, in order to overcome the senatorial rights guarding against arbitrary power, it was necessary to court the plebeians and give real power to them, at the same time captivating their attention and gaining their allegiance by trifling forms and useless ceremonies. The ambitions of the first consuls thus allowed the lower sort to accumulate too much power and undermined the balance of the constitution. Tyranny subsists on popular power by artifice and low schemes, but a tyrant is essentially a slave of the people, forced to indulge their whims in order to maintain his illusory authority; one could say that tyranny is akin to human will abandoning the realm of consciousness and reason and following the dictates of the body.

Social preeminence (distinct from, but ideally coinciding with, constitutional power) relates to “virtue, knowledge, the sciences, and the arts” as form relates to content. Maintaining and perpetuating the moral and intellectual standard is the function of the social elite, and, from the standpoint of the individual, the existential meaning of being “noble.” Few were in a better position to feel this point than Orrery, whose name was inseparable from the reputation of his ancestors — statesmen, gentlemen scholars, and literati: “There is a secret Pride, and sure a very just One, in being descended from Ancestours that have distinguished Themselves from the common Herd of Mankind, by their Writings or their Actions. The Sons of such Men glow with inward Joy whenever they read, or hear the Praise of their forefathers. Such is my Happiness that I find my Vanity in this Particular often gratified.”

Form and content certainly were not the same, as Margaret Orrery observed to her eldest stepson when she sought to encourage his studies at Oxford: “It is a surprising thing how few of our Peers have an ambition of obtaining any other appellation than that of my Lord: there are few of them known except in the Heraldry Books. They are Born, Married, have so many Children, have a few Court Places, and Dye. How Noble then must those few appear who pursue knowledge and the Wellfare of their Country!” Social status is perpetuated through birth that automatically places an individual in a specific social niche; the realm of culture, of course, is a different matter. Superficially, it is transmitted through education, as Orrery notes many times. But education itself is only an external form for something else, something we may call a contagion of humanity.

If “man” is defined by the “pre-eminence of the soul over the body” and by his potential perpetually to lessen the distance between the embodied specificity and the “right line” of the moral existence (even while not being able to eliminate that distance altogether), then the words and actions of the best of men, those who come closest to the universal standard, are essentially projections of that standard, which permeates even their everyday interaction with family and friends. Thus “there is scarce any branch of moral duty, that may not be found fully expatiated in Pliny’s letters. With very little pains, such extracts might be drawn from his epistles, as must form a complete system of ethics.” This can be done because the soul of Pliny, which achieved

410 Lord Boyle’s preface to an ms copy of his father’s translation of the Life of Lysander, 1730, BL Add MS 10388, 14-15.
412 Letters of Pliny, 2:328.
preeminence over his body and therefore was primarily responsible for his actions, was in itself a “complete system of ethics.” Such expressions of inner goodness are ideally indistinguishable from the objectified, rationally known standard of moral behavior and expression, and thus may easily be accused of emptiness and hypocrisy. Even if artificial, they would still be useful: “Pliny stands condemned of never sitting down to write an epistle, without an intention of publishing it. Admitting the accusation to be true, he sat down to a very good purpose; and the polite world are much obliged to him, for the pains he has taken to transmit his thoughts, with elegance and correctness, to posterity.” But if Orrery’s basic conception of human nature is true, perfection in action and expression is not necessarily artificial. It may and at least in some cases will express a man’s inner moral perfection, which a true connoisseur is likely to detect. Thus Orrery is “apt to think” that the excellence of Pliny’s letters is not due to any public design: “His heart flowed through his pen; and if his sentiments are more refined, his turns more easy, and his stile more delicate than ordinary, these beauties are owing to the excellence of his genius, and the perfection of his nature; and not to that vanity, which makes a man try to appear better and wiser, than he really is, either in inclination, or capacity.” As a kindred soul, Orrery knew what he was talking about, having experienced Pliny’s predicament a decade before. When it was reported to him that the Duke of Argyll imagined Orrery’s letters “could not be wrote off-hand,” the latter replied with becoming modesty: “My letters are not worth shewing; I make no copies before hand nor even take the least Pains about them: My Heart, as Mr. Pope says, flows thro’ my Quill, and when I have the Image of a Freind before me, In the warmth of my Soul I am never at a loss what to say to Him.” From the point of view of moral discourse, if a distinction between public and private expression exists, it is not in favor of the public. The social sphere, structured by power relations and material interests, is indeed a seedbed of empty formalism, ignorance, spite, and ambition (or vanity that “makes a man try to appear better and wiser, than he really is”), which constrain expression. True immediacy can subsist only in the circle of the select, friends and “men of sense,” among whom “subjects of the greatest consequence, when treated in an easy and familiar way, lose nothing of their weight and importance, by being devoid of that solemn stiffness, which is so acceptable to the sons of ignorance, and pride.”

Any artistic expression as such – for instance poetry, the formal “harmony of numbers” – is essentially an artifact of human goodness. It is a voice of the soul in the state of nature, pre-existing society and abstracted from the constraints of material existence and necessities of the body: “Harmony of numbers naturally arises from minds filled with pleasure, and joyful in repose.” In such cases, just as in more private writings, form and content are one. Generally anything written by a free, virtuous and good man, with or without a public intention, provides a

413 Ibid., 1:190-1.
414 To Thomas Southerne, 24 February 1735/6, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 7:25, Orrery Papers 1:148-9. Compare Pope’s later epistle to Orrery: “My Lord, Your Letters are Things that deserve a better Name than Letters; they are Emanations of the best Mind, and the kindest Heart in Nature…” 10 April 1744, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 3:129.
416 Ibid., 1:406. And in more detail elsewhere: at the beginning of the world, in the virtual state of nature, “after the Toils and Cares of Life [men] expressed the sudden Raptures of their gratefull Minds to the Gods. – Harmony of Numbers naturally flows from Minds thus disposed. Nature first gave Rise to them which Art and Observation corrected and made more uniform,” Birch Collection, no date, BL Add. MS 4466, 13v. See a similar sentiment expressed in Orrery’s undated “Essay on Poetry,” where “th’ illustrious Fathers of Mankind / E’er yet they were in social leagues combin’d / With Wondring Eyes survey’d this glorious Frame,” and “By Heav’n inspir’d to Heav’n returnd ye Song,” “Lusus Poetici,” Houghton MS Eng. 218.11.
window into his soul, an immediate access to it. Consider Margaret Orrery, who, during her husband’s absence, filled the void by reading “either Pliny’s epistles with some charming Notes on them, or the agreeable Love Letters I received in the year 1738, or the D’ Letters from my most Tender and Affectionate Husband.” Further, insofar as from such writings a “complete system of ethics” can be extracted, they provide a sufficient and full access to the author’s human essence, transparent communication in which the channel is indistinguishable from the message.

Private society of the elect men of sense and good nature, which transcends the limits of human social interaction and partakes of the divine, is the sphere in which and for which culture and knowledge exist, and outside of which it functions only as a binding form, as social instruction in external propriety for the common herd that is unable to grasp its true content. (Thus, reprimanding Swift for his often low amusements, Orrery observes that “a man of Swift’s exalted genius ought constantly to have soared into higher regions. He ought to have looked upon persons of inferior abilities, as children, whom nature had appointed him to instruct, encourage, and improve.”) But true education is more than a transmission of cultural forms through personal communication in the private society, which highlights the human meaning of cultural artifacts; it is a contagion of humanity. In an educational institution such as Oxford, a young man “will be able to adorn [his] mind, and give it a serene and a just way of thinking” because he will reside “amidst the best authors, and in a free conversation with men of letters.”

The family is no less important, adding as it does the warmth of familial love and the power of emulation to the general circulation of humanity in the realm of private society. This familial environment, a living tradition of virtue and sense, is the link between the status continuity of noble lineage and the inner nobility of the heart. As we already know, Orrery himself, a descendant of a family widely known in the polished society of the age for its cultural accomplishments, was deprived of this familial component of polite education, his very inclination and ability to continue the tradition of noble literati publicly questioned by his father. Not yet twenty years old and strolling through the grounds of the family’s ancient estate, the then Lord Boyle fantasized about direct interaction with his illustrious ancestors as a living transmission of virtue—interaction that he lacked in real life:

There is an ancient Fir-Tree in the Garden, to which I pay religious Worship: imagining that, from a green seat that is under it, my Great-Grandfather views his former Estate in Somersetshire. If in my Rambles by Moonlight… I should meet an old venerable Gentleman, clad in Armour and reading a Romance, I should no longer envy Aeneas his Descent to the Elysian Fields: and as I should be overjoyed to see the once Earl of Orrery; so, perhaps, the sight of his great Grandson, tho very unworthy of the Honour, might make his

417 Lady Orrery to Orrery, 5 March 1740/1, Houghton MS Eng. 218.26, letter 26.
418 “…Where good nature… is guided by reason, and directed by judgment, it is a godlike attribute, which puts us a degree beyond the common herd of mortals, and makes us worthy the peculiar care and providence of that great source, from whence it springs,” Letters of Pliny, 1:28.
419 Swift, 283. On form binding the lower classes see also Locke.
420 Swift, 1-2. On the eighteenth-century search for genres and forms of communication that would be able to transmit not only content but also feeling, personal relation, see David S. Shields, Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), e.g. xvii.
Lordship throw aside his Book, to try to instill that Virtue into Me, for which He himself was so much beloved in our World, and is certainly so well rewarded in the Regions above.\textsuperscript{421}

In educating his own children, Orrery certainly strove to avoid his father’s unfeeling errors.\textsuperscript{422} He expressly addresses both of his major works published during his lifetime to his sons. Orrery consciously fuses the public and private in his commentary on Pliny and critical remarks on Swift, both imparting a feel of intimacy to these exercises in literary didacticism and giving a public dimension to personal father-to-son instruction in virtue and taste. In the Remarks on Swift, it appears that Orrery was actually the first among his contemporaries to use the epistolary form for the purposes of biography and literary criticism.\textsuperscript{423} And giving to both works a form of father-to-son instruction, while making this instruction public, was Orrery’s initial design, not a sentimental ornament or a perfunctory tribute to a discursive convention. Shortly before beginning his work on Pliny, Orrery writes about his son Charles: “I am resolved to dedicate my time in Ireland to his service, and to publish something in usum mei Delphini: for to you I dare own he is a boy of infinite hopes: One who will prove, if his maturity answers his Blossoms, the most worthy of his Name…”\textsuperscript{424}

Perhaps the most illustrative example of Orrery’s peculiar approach to the moral upbringing of his offspring is a humorous essay about the misadventures of an excessively curious little girl, which he contributed to a periodical entitled The Old Maid in 1756. On the margin of his own copy Orrery notes that the essay was “Designed as a Lesson to a particular Person,” which person, we may safely conjecture, was his eleven-year-old daughter Lucy.\textsuperscript{425} Orrery moves from the intimate to the public, imparting an aura of published authority to parental precepts, crystallizing a personal relationship in a disembodied form. He often complains in his correspondence about the burden of public status and the lack of privacy that comes with a title. But he does not scruple publicly to write to Hamilton, in only slightly veiled and generalized form, about the shock he received from his father’s last will and testament, adding: “The name of my honoured father has insensibly drawn me into this digression, which, to speak the truth, I look upon as due to his memory, to my own sentiments, and to your filial tenderness.”\textsuperscript{426} He also inserts into his comments on Pliny a heartfelt epitaph on his first wife Henrietta (Charles’ mother), written long before. The epitaph brings Pliny’s experience (he also lost a wife) closer to Charles’ own familial history: “The death of an affectionate wife is indeed a very deep affliction! A friend of yours, my dear Charles, had once that misfortune. It pleased heaven afterwards to

\textsuperscript{421} To William Cecil, 12 June 1726, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 1:21-2. Orrery envies Aeneas who met in the Elysian Fields with his father Anchises. The letter is printed in the Orrery Papers (1:66), but this passage is left out.

\textsuperscript{422} Orrery also makes a necessary provisions for possible father substitutes in case of his death: “Yet if I should fall, whenever Lord Boyle, or Hammy come in your Way, force yourself into an Intimacy with ‘em, and warm them into Virtue, and an equal love of your two fair Mistresses, Truth & Religion.” To the Rev. Archdeacon Russell, 26 June 1737, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 7:126, Orrery Papers 1:233.

\textsuperscript{423} Mildred Weeks Prince, “The Literary Life and Position in the Eighteenth Century of John, Earl of Orrery” (PhD Diss., Smith College, 1948), 93, n3.

\textsuperscript{424} To Baron Waynwright, 20 July 1739, HL MS Eng. 218.2, 4:53-4; Orrery Papers, 1:264. Contemplating the possibility of another literary effort in 1752, Orrery writes: “I think Edmund deserves a work.” To John Barry, 7 February 1752, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2 5:52.

\textsuperscript{425} The Old Maid 24, 24 April 1756; a collection of Orrery’s printed contributions to The World, Connoisseur, and Old Maid, 1753-1756, with his comments, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Osborn fc102.

\textsuperscript{426} Swift, 323-4.
repair the loss: But, in memory of so excellent a lady, suffer me to give you his thoughts of her in the following verse. “A friend” is, of course, Orrery himself. The fact that The Letters of Pliny is not the first time Lord Boyle sees this epitaph on his mother does not mean it is printed only for the benefit of the public.

The point is not that the distinction between the personal and the impersonal disappears, but that the two move along parallel tracks and inform each other. Charles, Hamilton, and even Lucy receive published works that instruct them in virtue and politeness, but these works come from the pen of their parent, friend, and companion; the public receives examples of genuine parental instruction and love in works of polite criticism, the authenticity of their intimate nature signified by such personal digressions. Ultimately, this familial relationship is the source and origin of public virtue and order. At the end of his remarks on Swift, Orrery envisions Hamilton led by fate as high as the sacred steps of the throne:

Begin by conquering your own prejudices, and then endeavour to conquer those of your master. Make him in love with parliaments... Bring him thoroughly acquainted, even with the minutest branch of the constitution. Study his honour. Prevent his passions. Correct his errors. Keep England ever uppermost in your thoughts: and consider the king of England as only born for the good of its people. Shield him, if possible, from flattery: it is a rock more fatal to princes, than Charybdis ever was to mariners. Guide his leisure to manly employments, such as may preserve him from the enervating delicacies of a court. In your public capacity forget your relations, and your private friends.

The private realm is transcended in the public realm of disinterested virtue, but, of course, this transcendence is only one aspect of a man formed and prepared for public life by an education infused with the humanity of his parents, teachers, and friends, and now ready to channel that humanity through himself as high in the public realm as it can reach, in immediate personal intercourse with his prince.

3. Marriage beyond the Flesh

Intimacy and direct interpersonal relations are the norm and essence of social intercourse, and its root and model is the family, embodying the warmth of human relations. This should not be surprising for a historian of the eighteenth century and in particular of the culture of sensibility. In the remainder of this chapter, I will pursue the investigation of interpersonal immediacy to its highest (or deepest) point, both in eighteenth-century views and in the assumption of modern scholars – to the norm of the nuclear companionate family. The body appeared as an important and inescapable player at this level. For some intra-familial relations its role seemed, and seems, highly “disturbing” (incest); but in the root structure of the nuclear family – marriage – we assume the physical to be an essential component, if not the fulfillment, of intimacy. Modern

427 The Letters of Pliny, 2:220.
428 Swift, 333.
assumptions about physical connection as the logical end of intimacy, as well as the related, more
general understanding of the culture of sensibility as an effort to integrate the body into social
life, seem to find their strongest confirmation in eighteenth-century ideas about marriage – both a
social and a sexual union. The culture of sensibility marks an important, if not complete,
ideological victory of the idea of companionate marriage, while the family remains there
perceived as the ideal model of social relations as such. Developing and continuing my
investigation of the distinction between the material and spiritual in eighteenth-century culture, I
will offer an alternative to our sensualist interpretation of the eighteenth-century marriage as the
unity of love, friendship, and sexual pleasure in the ultimate intimacy. I will argue that
“companionate” could be, and often was, defined outside and even against physical connection
rather than with it. As should already be apparent from Part One of the project, the family as
the space where the physical and the moral/social are juxtaposed and brought together is the
logically crucial point for my argument. And the remainder of this chapter will, in a sense, be a
focal point of the project where the themes I have been, and will be, developing through my case
studies will most clearly break out into the “cultural open” and move toward a reinterpretation of
eighteenth-century culture. Orrery has brought us to this point, but he will often have to be set
aside in favor of a more general discussion.

a. The Nature of Marriage

In “Cadenus and Vanessa” (1713), Swift gave a fictionalized account of his relations with Esther
Vanhomrigh. The fair maid possessed all the intellectual endowments women usually lack, but
even that did not save her from love. On the contrary, it only strengthened her passion for her
mentor, grave forty-four year old Cadenus. Cupid caught up with Vanessa when she was holding
a volume of Cadenus’ poetic works. He “Took Aim, and shot with all his Strength / A Dart of
such Prodigious Length, / It pierc’d the feeble Volume Thro’, / And deep transfix’d her Bosom
too. / Some Lines, more moving than the rest, / Stuck to the Point that pierc’d her Breast; / And,
born directly to the Heart, / With Pains unknown increas’d her Smart.”

From the poetry passion moves to the person, and already Vanessa finds imaginary charms in half-blind eyes and
decaying health. It is here that she makes use of her intelligence and endeavors to apply to the
circumstances what her mentor taught her: “That Virtue, pleas’d by being shown, / Knows
nothing which it dare not own; / Can make us without Fear disclose / Our inmost Secrets to our

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430 On the modern idealization of physical intimacy see for instance Anthony Giddens, The Transformation of
companionate marriage in the eighteenth century, inevitably, Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in
Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England (New York: Academic Press,
1978). The notion that the eighteenth century set the tone for the modern ideal of harmonious partnership founded in
intimacy and love seems to have filtered down to the popular historical consciousness successfully enough: Wendy
much of the study of and debate around early modern English marriage, which focuses on the relationship between
“patriarchal” and “companionate” forms of the institution – historical change, continuity, replacement or coexistence.
The nature of “companionate” seems to historians much less problematic. On the body in the culture of sensibility and
the monistic implications of this cultural movement see especially G. J. Barker-Benfield, The Culture of Sensibility:
Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and Sarah Knott,

Foes: / That common Forms were not design’d / Directors to a Noble Mind." Aligning her actions with Cadenus’ rules, despising “vulgar forms,” and asserting that she has “no secrets to disguise,” Vanessa makes her love known to Cadenus.

So, what Swift said was that virtue was its own guide and that true intelligence existed outside the sphere of rules and forms, constraint, shame, dissimulation, and deceit. Vanessa endangered their rational intercourse, which operated so well in the realm of manly friendship, rational delight, and mutual esteem, when she introduced erotic love into the mix – to Cadenus’ “Shame, Disappointment, Guilt, Surprise.” She only demonstrated the dissonance between heavenly wisdom and earthly love. But Orrery understood Cadenus differently, as asserting “that vice, as soon as it defied shame, was immediately changed into virtue” and “that vulgar forms were not binding upon certain choice spirits, to whom either the writings, or the persons of men of wit were acceptable.” Vanessa only followed the path of vice inherent in the teaching. Goaded initially by a vanity and ambition that spurned decency as unnecessary for choice spirits, “the lady was first smitten with the fame and character of CADENUS, and afterwards with his person. Her first thoughts pursued a phantom. Her later passion desired a substance.” And so, unrestrained by propriety, she disclosed her passion to Cadenus. The relationship that had already existed between them, founded on immoral precepts, left the door open to everything. “The close connection of soul and body seemed to require, in the eye of a female philosopher, that each should succeed the other in all pleasurable enjoyments. The former had been sufficiently regaled, why must the latter remain unsatisfied?” The female philosopher uncovered the true meaning of an unregulated intercourse of spirits, of Swift’s poetic penetration straight to the heart. The mentor's subsequent reluctance to complete the connection, Orrery surmises, “may be thought rather to proceed from defects in nature, than from the scrupulous difficulties of a tender conscience.” Orrery admits that marriage was probably Vanessa’s ultimate strategic aim, but this does not influence his moral evaluation of the relationship. He surmises that Esther Vanhomrigh was happy enough “in the thoughts of being reported SWIFT’s concubine.” The problem with the Cadenus-Vanessa relationship was that it did not originate and take place in the legitimate form of courtship and marriage. It was not from the beginning, and for that reason could not become, morally valid. The source of attraction was impure. Marriage is not simply a legal bond that can sanctify a sexual connection; it is itself a special kind of personal connection, the root of which is not in erotic passion. Neither on Vanessa’s nor on Cadenus’ side was marriage originally presupposed.

Of course, Swift’s concern was different. His character figured the relationship with Vanessa in terms of the classical conception of friendship, as an intellectual relationship of two minds.

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432 Ibid., 130.
434 Swift, 111, 110.
435 Ibid., 112, 113.
436 Ibid., 108.
437 As one author would later eloquently put it, unions concluded on the basis of passionate love between social unequals have not “any more connection with marriage, than the transactions of a brothel, or the memoirs of a kept mistress.” “Letters on Marriage. Ascribed to the Reverend John Witherspoon, Late President of Princeton College,” in A Series of Letters on Courtship and Marriage (Elizabeth-Town, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1796), 87.
removed from the concerns of flesh and practical life, or at least greatly overweighing such concerns. Romantic love has no place in this kind of friendship, in which the communication of minds and the moral and intellectual advancement of each participant through exchange is predicated on the repudiation of the flesh. Friendship is the quintessentially human relationship, unlike sexual intercourse that we share with animals and that is the foundation of marriage. The conjugal relationship, based on pleasure, utility, and physical procreation, is not compatible with true friendship. It is a union of the flesh rather than of souls, and a formal connection rather than one motivated and sustained only by the inner nobility of minds. It has the involuntary character of erotic passion, which imposes itself on the mind, rather than the voluntary nature of friendship.  

In early and Catholic Christian doctrine as well, marriage tended to be thought of in terms of St. Paul’s famous line: “If they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7.9). Marriage was defined as “one flesh,” essentially and inescapably a physical union, inferior to celibacy and virginity. One function of the institution was to allow but contain and channel towards proper goals of procreation man’s natural concupiscence. As a popular Anglican conduct manual observed in the mid-seventeenth century, the main ends of marriage “being these two, the begetting of Children, and the avoiding of fornication, nothing must be done which may hinder the first of these ends; and the second aiming onely at the subduing of lust, the keeping men from any sinful effects of it, is very contrary to that end to make marriage an occasion of heightning, and enflaming it.” Love certainly has a place in this traditional conception of marriage; it is a product of the relationship of the flesh, which is a relationship of property. Each of the spouses owns the body of the other as his or her own. Hence “ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (Eph. 5.28-29). Or, as a “person of quality” put it in 1690, “where there is distinct property, it naturally creates love, and love maintains protection…” A relationship of property, the loss of one’s power over one’s body and giving it away to another, both restricts unruly desires to which one is subject and creates a personal bond between the spouses in everyday life.

New understandings of the “ends” of marriage appeared in the classical humanism of the Renaissance and the discourse of the Protestant Reformation, which were marked by efforts to rethink the idea of marriage and integrate it into the classical idea of spiritual friendship, changing

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440 For all the unequal social standing of husbands and wives, within marriage the spouses’ right of property in one another should be equal: “for though in other things the man is superiour to the woman, the husband to his wife, because (as the Apostle teacheth) she is of him, and for him… yet in coniugall power they are equall. Man hath no power ouer his body, no more hath the woman ouer hers, each is in the others power; and that in solidum, they haue coequall command each ouer the other.” Arthur Lake, Sermons with Some Religious and Divine Meditations. By The Right Reverend Father in God, Arthvre Lake, Late Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells (London: Printed by W. Stansby for Nathaniel Butter, 1629), 3:56.

441 Marriage Promoted. In a Discourse of its Ancient and Modern Practice… by a Person of Quality (London: Richard Baldwin, 1690), 9.
the meaning of both in the process. Christian humanists and Protestants stressed the spiritual and educational role of the household and the existential potential of the strong interpersonal connection created by marriage. Marriage came to be conceived as the union of souls rather than a union of flesh, or even one soul in two bodies. Contrary to the classical views that often opposed marriage and friendship, it could be asserted that “there can be no greater societie of companie, than there is between a man and his wife”; marriage became the ultimate form and culmination of interpersonal relations. What should interest us most here is the place of sex in this rethinking of the status and nature of marriage.

Some humanists like Erasmus could oscillate between endorsing sensual delights as an integral part of the existential value of matrimony in texts like the *Encomium Matrimonii* (1518) and bringing marriage closer to the classical ideal of friendship at the expense of virtually eliminating its sexual component. But Protestantism, and in particular the Puritan movement in old and New England, seems to have been more consistent in positioning the desires of the flesh as instrumental in the soul’s progress towards God, and thus making marital sexuality and sexual pleasure an important part of the education of the soul. Puritans certainly were more than alert to the grave dangers inherent in all kinds of sensual enjoyment and the humiliating condition to which our rational and spiritual life was reduced by the Fall. But the fact of embodiment and the fallen state of our nature also implied that, first, entirely denying and suppressing desires was a highly inefficient way to deal with them and would only lead to opposite results, and, second, any spiritual experience our soul was capable of receiving in our present state was colored by the flesh and passion. In other words, the sensual part of our nature had to be integrated into our

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443 See Edmund Leites, “The Duty to Desire: Love, Friendship, and Sexuality in Some Puritan Theories of Marriage,” *Journal of Social History* 15, no. 3 (1982), 385-6; Leites quotes from the 1530 English translation: “For what thynge is sweeter, then with her to lyve, with whom ye may be most streghtly copuled, not only in the benevolence of the mynd, but also in the conjunctioun of the body,” 386.

444 “Maria: But they say chastity is the thing most pleasing to God. Pamphilus: And therefore I want to marry a chaste girl, to live chastely with her. It will be more a marriage of minds than of bodies. We’ll reproduce for the state; we’ll reproduce for Christ. By how little will this marriage fall short of virginity! And perhaps some day we’ll live as Joseph and Mary did. But meantime we’ll learn virginity; for one does not reach the summit at once.” “Courtship” (1523), in *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 95. Marriage is better than celibacy in part because it gives one who has access to sex an opportunity to exercise restraint and thus teaches true virginity – “as by gradually drinking less and less wine we learn temperance,” p. 96.

spiritual life and personality. So, in theory, the task was not to deny but to order pleasures and desires, prevent them from running wild, and direct them towards higher ends.

In the realm of sex, such ordering was the essence and purpose of marriage. Marriage was “one flesh,” but one flesh ordained by God, union in the service of God, the point where physical desire and desire for God could come together.\(^{446}\) In marriage, the act of copulation turned into a symbol and embodiment of Christ’s union with his church.\(^{447}\) The “due benevolence” of sexual intercourse strengthened the marital ties and deepened the experience of companionship that was the primary end of marriage; in other words, the Puritan marriage proceeded from the union of the flesh as reality to the spiritual union as the intended end. Within this holy institution, sex became an instrument rather than a physical act unto itself: “Let such as have wives look at them not for their own ends, but to be fitted for Gods service, and bring them nearer to God.”\(^{448}\) In Milton’s epic of married life, marriage created and reproduced through procreation not simply human bodies, but relations, emotional connections among individuals that made us human: “By thee adulterous lust was driv’n from men / Among the bestial herds to raunge, by thee / Founded in Reason, Loyal, Just, and Pure, / Relations dear, and all the Charities / Of Father, Son, and Brother first were known” (Paradise Lost 4.753-57).

But, however reasonable in design and however aiming to express pure adoration of God, the “Rites / Mysterious of connubial Love” (PL 4.742-3) made Adam’s relationship with Eve different from that with angels; through its moments of disturbing weakness, that relationship pointed to the future Fall.\(^{449}\) Whatever the human meaning and emotional benefits of marriage, it remained at the root a relationship of “one flesh.” The constant underlying presence of the body in the emotional life of the spirit, the fact that, in the words of St. Augustine, “delight orders the soul,”\(^{450}\) the inherent connection between physical and emotional “delight,” all pointed to existential dangers in familial life, to its potential openness to the world of corruption – a problem already familiar to us from Chapter Two.

\(^{446}\) Daniel Rogers writes in Matrimonial Honour (1642) that “by conjugall love” he means “not only Christian love, a grace of God’s spirit: (for marriage borders much upon nature and flesh) nor yet a carnall and sudden flash of affection, completely enflamed by consupiscence: (rather brutish than humane) but a sweet compounde of both, religion and nature,” which is “properly called Marriage love,” quoted after Leites, “Duty to Desire,” 388.

\(^{447}\) Of course, medieval Catholicism also attributed this symbolic meaning to copulation; see for instance D. L. d’Avray, Medieval Marriage: Symbolism and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168-199. But Puritans went beyond symbolism to the “realities” of the human condition.


\(^{449}\) Two opposing views on Milton’s interpretation of the place of sensuality (not of sexual acts per se) in Paradise, as total absence or joyful celebration, are strongly represented, respectively, in Luxon, Single Imperfection, and James Grantham Turner, One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton (Oxford: Clarendon Press; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). I agree with Luxon that sexual acts in Milton’s Paradise were supposed to be purely reasonable, akin to the Augustinian idea of coition without arousal, but tend to side with Turner on Milton’s feelings about the actual inescapably sensual nature and consequences of such acts and their effects on the relationship between Adam and Eve. Luxon’s rejection of their role in the Fall may have to do with a laudable but perhaps too strenuously pursued desire to find the roots of the “discontents” in Milton’s treatment of marriage in the introduction of male/female inequality into friendship as an equal relationship based on reason.

\(^{450}\) Quoted after Lane, “Two Schools of Desire,” 373.
Compare Orrery’s discussion of Terence’s opinions on love and friendship. Orrery notes in passing that “the latter, certain sensual appetites excepted, is the same passion as the former, and acts in the same manner upon the mind.” Friendship is a “flux and reflux of affection; the ebbings and flowings of social love”; its delicate texture is “apt to whither at the least blast of jealousy”; like inspiration, it “drives us forward with resistless impetuosity, and makes us act and feel for others with different and more violent agitations, than we have ever felt for ourselves.” It is not simply that here friendship is seen as a phenomenon of emotion rather than reason. More significant for my purposes is the fact that the passion of love between the sexes could be imagined as a social love/friendship with “certain sensual appetites” simply added to it, extraneous to both the emotion of love and to the reason of classical friendship. Love without such appetites is the same as friendship, and the “appetites” can be subtracted. They are not an inherent component, or part of the definition, of the powerful sentiment of social love, whether “social” or “love” is stressed. We not only see a class of passions/affections that is not inherently appetitive, but also find love between the sexes among these affections. I will posit that the nature, extent, and implications of this segregation of appetite is a crucial question for understanding the broader eighteenth-century language of love and matrimony. In his seminal work on the novel, Ian Watt observed, without exploring the question in depth, that the “narrowing of the ethical scale” in the course of the eighteenth century, the growing obsession with the power and potential dangers of sex, and the rethinking of the concept of virtue in primarily anti-sexual terms “involved a redefinition of the relations between men and women which excluded sexual passion and which stressed making a sensible marriage choice with rational friendship as its eventual aim.” The following is very much an attempt to explore the logical foundations and process of this redefinition, as well as to qualify somewhat the overtones of narrowness and dry rationality that are a modern scholar’s natural response to the idea of “excluding” sexual passion from the proper relations between the sexes. In a sense, I will offer a thick reading of one expression that dropped off of Orrery’s pen – “certain sensual appetites excepted.”

b. The Nature of Love

The extensive recent literature on the culture of sensibility testifies to the pervasive presence of emotion in the eighteenth-century worldview; it is rarely noticed, however, that our own understanding of the nature of emotion may indeed be closer to the seventeenth-century Puritans than to the culture of sensibility. I will first turn to Adam Smith and his distinction between tender social sentiment and the gross passion of erotic love. In his analysis of sympathy, Smith carefully separates the physical and the emotional. Properly speaking, we cannot sympathize with those passions which arise from the body. As a matter of fact, we cannot sustain such emotions in ourselves long beyond the particular situation that excites them. We forget pain the moment it is over, and the memory of it cannot excite much emotion. On the other hand, if a person is suffering in imagination, “we sympathize with him more strongly upon this account, because our imaginations can more readily mould themselves upon his imagination, than our bodies can

452 Thomas Dixon has already reminded scholars about the existence and prominence of this class in eighteenth-century psychology and the moral imagination in From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
mould themselves upon his body."  

Bodies are that which separates us from each other; even my own body is alien from the world of imagination and sentiment in which I really exist, and in which communication among human beings takes place. And since different passions are regarded as decent or indecent in proportion to our ability to sympathize with them, "the true cause of the peculiar disgust which we conceive for the appetites of the body when we see them in other men, is that we cannot enter into them. To the person himself who feels them, as soon as they are gratified, the object that excited them ceases to be agreeable."  

Hence erotic love, which powerfully attaches us to a particular object and excites in us a passion "entirely disproportionate to the value of the object," would appear entirely gross and ridiculous if it were not accompanied by non-physical emotions: "We readily enter into those high hopes of happiness which are proposed from its gratification, as well as into that exquisite distress which is feared from its disappointment. It interests us not as a passion, but as a situation that gives occasion to other passions which interest us." Even the scenes of bliss, of satisfied love amidst retirement, pastoral tranquility, friendship and liberty "interest us most, when they are painted rather as what is hoped, than as what is enjoyed. The grossness of that passion, which mixes with, and is, perhaps, the foundation of love, disappears when its gratification is far off and at a distance; but renders the whole offensive, when described as what is immediately possessed."  

Again, what makes the passion of love (indecent in itself) less disagreeable, are the much more proper passions that always accompany it: humanity, generosity, kindness, friendship, or esteem. It is with these truly social passions that we sympathize. It is the experience of these passions that gives true happiness.  

Smith does not assert that social passions, even mixed with erotic love, arise from the body. On the contrary, they are carefully distinguished within the mix from the physical and indecent; the compound phenomenon of "love" consists of elements of a different nature. Sensuality may be the foundation of love, in the sense of being the pretext, the initial push (even though Smith is not entirely sure of that), but it is not the direct source of love's non-physical components, which exist perfectly well on their own in other situations. It is rather a pretext that can and should be bracketed out for the purposes of social communication (see Orrery: "certain sensual appetites excepted"). If it is not silenced, if it is made visible, the sensual component will only destroy sympathy and compromise the social meaning of the mixed passion of love.  

In this system, the idea of "one flesh" would not work, since it is precisely the body that separates and alienates one person from another, an obstacle to intimacy. We find a set of social "passions" not inextricably tied to the body. It is only on this level of social passions, or affections, that true communion between two human beings can happen. Further, this communion, which is the nature and essence of marriage, can be conceived of and treated separately from sex, whether or not sex is actually present. My point certainly is not that Orrery's (or Smith's) logic leads to the exclusion of sex as such from the practice of marriage, but that marriage as a moral phenomenon can be made in its definition independent of its sexual component while silently including it. That which

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455 Ibid., 28.  
456 Ibid., 31-32.  
457 Ibid., 33, 39.
could make the idea of marriage suspicious and potentially dangerous in the eyes of someone like Byrd and even the Puritans and Milton – the necessary condition of “one flesh” – is not here part of its cultural existence. One could say that sex is present in this idea of marriage, both in it and not.

Orrery found these words most proper for describing the married life of Pliny and Calpurnia:

“There constant love with equal ardor glows, / Nor languid ebbs, nor yet tumultuous flows; / With faith unalter’d, resolutely just, / No sport of passion, and no slave of lust: / Such is the state the blest enjoy above, / The purest reason, join’d to purest love.”

Margaret Orrery seconded her husband on a more earthly plane. As we remember, five years after their wedding she wrote: “I really belive we Love [each other] as much as the fondest Lovers, but with more reason, and less passion.”

More reason and less passion do not mean colder or less intimate union. The connection of minds and souls is the essence of it; during her husband’s absence Margaret assured him that, “as all my Days, Hours, and Minuts are imploied in thinking of you, so every now and then I open my Bureau, draw a Chair, take my Pen, and discharge the fullness of my Breast upon Paper, so you may look upon my Letters as a daily diary of the state of your absent Wives mind and will judge by them, when I am in a loving, busie, merry, melancholy, cross, or good Humour.”

Two eighteenth-century commonplaces in the understanding of marriage interest me here: marriage as the highest form and culmination of friendship, and as the closest resemblance of paradise human beings can achieve in this world below. Both are reflected in Orrery’s description of Pliny and Calpurnia. Samuel Richardson, believing that “friendship… is the perfection of love,” defined marriage as “the highest state of friendship that mortals can know.” Richardson’s friend Dr. Delany wrote to his future wife in 1743 that “perfect friendship is nowhere to be found but in marriage.”

This is “the compleatest Image of Heaven we can receive in this Life” because “the greatest Pleasures we can enjoy on Earth, are the Freedoms of Conversation with a Bosom Friend” who will share our joys, cares, and distresses. In the case of marriage, the sharing is not only the most complete but also exclusive and sealed by both legal and religious bonds. It has an objectified status. The ideal, logically complete, perfect friendship implies that two people “have but one Soul, residing in two Bodies, and equally informing both; but in such an inviolated Friendship as this, a Conjunction of more than two, would in an absolute manner destroy its Unity.” Thus ideal friendship both continues and transcends the “universal benevolence” that is the soul of human society. Marital love is the perfection of this benevolence but has to be

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458 Letters of Pliny, 1:vi. Orrery began working on his Pliny project in the second half of 1739, a year after his second marriage; although the Letters were published only in 1751, at least the first volume was essentially ready for publication in 1746: the proofs with Orrery’s corrections, preserved at the British Library, are dated 7 May 1746.

Orrery to Dr. King, 27 August 1739, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 4:59; Proofs of Book I of Pliny’s Epistles, British Library (hereafter BL) 636.K.5.

459 Lady Orrery to Earl of Orrery, 29 March 1743, Houghton MS Eng. 218.26, letter 56.


separated from it: “Love, and tenderness, are sacred to the hours of privacy, and retirement; and therefore, when Calpurnia went to hear her husband’s public lectures, she put on a veil.”

A generalized feeling of benevolence is necessary for human and social happiness, “[b]ut, when the Bond of Friendship is ratified between particular Persons, the Passion then is more refined.” The passage does not speak of marriage, but the vocabulary manifests the desire to see the unity of souls as an objectified, formalized bond – something that exists both subjectively, as a free expression of the soul, and objectively. And marriage is the ultimate form of such a bond: “In wedlock when the sexes meet, / Friendship is only then complete. / ‘Bless’d state! where souls each other draw, / Where love is liberty and law!’ / The choicest blessing found below, / That man can wish, or heav’n bestow!”

Compare Orrery: “Men in years ought always to secure a Friend to take care of declining Life, and to watch narrowly as they fall the last minute particles of the hour-glass. A Batchelor will seldom find among all his kindred so true a nurse, so constant a friend, so disinterested a Companion, as one tied to him by the double Chain of Duty and Affection.” This “double chain” is the unity of moral law and feeling, the ideal state where the reign of passion does not oppose the complete government of reason. The expression “lawful passion,” often applied to conjugal love during this period, is best understood not as a result of an imposition of restraints on something entirely alien to law, but as the locating in passion of that which is “legal” in the widest sense, and separating it from that which is not. A space is created for a feeling at once moral and inherently good where social bonds shadow and reinforce the internal, marking off the limits of the human.

The double chain of “liberty and law” is, in a sense, the eighteenth-century definition of humanity. Marriage, as the form which this state takes in actual social existence, is the highest state of felicity available to man in this world below, and the image of Paradise. In the words of a commentator, it is in the latter that “we may probably be so far like the Angels, as to have the absolute Dominion of our Appetites and Passions; and be endowed with such a share of Wisdom and Virtue, that we need not be restrained by Contracts and Engagements, or be governed by positive Laws; every Man being so far a Law to himself as to transact all Things with the greatest Reason and Justice.” Significantly, this condition does not necessarily imply the absence of a material body, for “whether the Angels themselves have Bodies composed on a more refined and subtil Matter than ours at present; or whether they and we, after the Resurrection, may not be capable of receiving Pleasure by the Mediation of such Bodies, seems not to be determined. Nay, it is difficult to think that our Bodies, which are to be then more exquisitely framed, should be of

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463 Pliny’s Letters, 1:332.
464 Wilkes, Genteel and Moral Advice, 122.
465 Dr. Cotton, “Marriage; A Vision,” in A Series of Letters on Courtship and Marriage (Elizabeth-Town, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1796), 137-8 (my italics; the author is British).
466 Orrery to Deane Swift, 4 December 1742, Houghton MS Eng. 218.2, 4:338-9. On “duty” as the term most frequently paired with “affection” in eighteenth-century public discourse see Nicole Eustace, Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 115-118. Eustace stresses the hierarchical implications of love and affection that this pairing brings into relief; this is consistent with Orrery’s use of the terms here, but hierarchy is one implication, if perhaps the most significant in actual social usage, of the relationship between duty and affection in the eighteenth-century moral universe.
no Manner of use or Advantage to us,” provided our reason governs the passions still present in such a body.  

Sexual pleasure need not be absent from Paradise, insofar as the actions of the body are fully regulated by the soul. Marriage, of course within limits, replicates this situation with the help of a legal, social bond that corresponds to something within us. Conjugal union does not release the desire that is essentially inhuman inasmuch as it belongs to the body, as William Byrd would have thought; it makes the body, with its physical properties and drives, human. Marriage incorporates sex into a human state, subsumes it and deprives it of independent significance. After all, in man, unlike in a beast,

\[\text{it is not the } \text{Body} \text{ that feels and is sensible even of } \text{sensual} \text{ Pleasures, but the Soul by its } \text{Union} \text{ to the Body that feels them, tho’ the Body be the } \text{Instrument} \text{ of them; so, unless there be something engaging in the } \text{Mind} \text{ of the Person with whom Cohabitation is to be had, there can be so little Inclination to the bare } \text{Corporal Act, that we conceive any Man of the most sensualized Soul, if he would acknowledge the Truth, must confess, that after a very little carnal Converse with the most exquisitely framed Body, the future Course of his Satisfaction therein, proceeds chiefly (not to say wholly) from something he finds pleasing in the } \text{Mind and Conversation, more than merely in the Body separately considered; and that without some such Attraction of the } \text{Mind}, \text{the natural Desire would wholly decay.}\]

“Natural desire” is not represented as emotionally functional or causal. The passage implies that “carnal converse” is possible on a purely physical level among humans, but it is an aberration not proper to our nature and the nature of the relationship between the body and soul. It can be sustained only through a frequent change of partners, and, while felt in the mind, is alien to the latter. Recall Smith: we cannot enter into the appetites of another man’s body, and even our connection to our own appetites is superficial and momentary. Our humanity is defined in opposition to, or at least separately from, the body. As the Earl of Warrington asserts, an inclination towards promiscuous intercourse is a sign of a soul “totally sunk into Flesh and Sense,” which receives and experiences only the pleasures arising from the body, without generating any of its own. It is an aberration from our true nature, which is normally, because of the presence of the soul, little inclined towards a bare corporeal act. Orrery, on his part, admits that this aberration is rather frequent, but it is still an aberration, a deviation from what is natural (proper): “It is evidently certain, that the body is curiously formed with proper organs to delight, and such as are adapted to all the necessary uses of life. The spirit animates the whole; it guides the natural appetites, and confines them within just limits. But, the natural force of this spirit is often immersed in matter; and the mind becomes subservient to passions, which it ought to govern and direct.”

Physical pleasures all pass through the soul and have in them a dangerous potential to overwhelm it. But it is also possible to imagine, within the dualist framework, pleasures arising in the soul independently of the body. Such pleasures can be derived from the mind and conversation of another human being, which truly engage the soul. Love can be seen as

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468 George Booth, Earl of Warrington, *Considerations upon the Institution of Marriage*… (London: John Whiston, 1739), 20.
469 Ibid., 16.
470 Swift, 185-6.
an Affection which we have for an Object considered by us as a Good. Or in other Words, ‘tis a pouring out, or Effusion of the Mind and Will, which issues out of itself, to diffuse itself upon an Object that seems capable to make it happy. So as that the Soul of Man is not capable of the Exercise thereof towards any Object, merely as a Object, but for some Quality in that Object causing a Complacency in the Imagination of the Agent. For as the Eye cannot see but what is Visible, nor the Understanding conceive what is not Intelligible; so the Will cannot love and chuse what is not (at least in shew) Amiable.\textsuperscript{471}

And as bodily senses react only to such impressions as are proper to their purpose, so each affection of our mind and soul must have an object suited to it – a rational object. Otherwise there will be “nothing for the Affection to fix upon, but bare sensuality, common to us with the Brutes,” from which the mind, suited by its nature to rational conjugal love, can receive no long contentment.\textsuperscript{472}

Marriage, making the connection permanent and removing, in theory, the possibility of promiscuity, is called upon both to reflect and reinforce our spiritual nature. Our pleasure in marriage proceeds “chiefly (not to say wholly)” from the spirit. It is not physical pleasure that sustains or strengthens the felicity of the union of souls, but, on the contrary, it is the pleasures of the mind that sustain the “natural desire” (necessary for procreation, which is the raison d’être of sex) and keep it from decaying by rendering it acceptable to the soul. As an Anglican bishop had pointed out more than a century before, “because the body of a man is inhabited by a reasonable soule, euen these sensuall acts [of procreation] should be reasonable by participation.”\textsuperscript{473}

I am thus arguing against the presence of a necessary genetic progression from sexual desire to love in the eighteenth-century imagination. Scholarly discussions of eighteenth-century love have tended to assume such progression and utilize it to explain the relationship between sex and human emotions in the culture of sensibility. Thus John Dwyer, in exploring the significance of passion in eighteenth-century Scottish thought, argues that physical desire was seen as the root of human sociability and social love and thus essentially the glue that kept society together.\textsuperscript{474} Jean Hagstrum asserts that eighteenth-century love “remembers its origins in sexual earth,” and, in a characteristic example, wants to demonstrate how in Richardson’s thought and art “the best love arises from physical attraction, grows with sympathy of mind, and achieves permanence only when two minds fully commit themselves to virtue and benevolence.”\textsuperscript{475} Apart from passing risky judgments on what kind of love is “best” and which authors are more astute because they fit better our everyday assumptions about the nature and workings of love, such general observations, while not always incorrect, always stem more from an a priori analytical framework than from the internal logic of analyzed texts. Thinkers of a materialist bent such as John Millar certainly envisioned social intercourse, love, and marriage as products of a sublimation of sexual desire constrained by relations of power and norms of social intercourse. The mistake is to impose this interpretation on eighteenth-century culture as a narrative of progression. While

\textsuperscript{471} Warrington, Considerations upon the Institution of Marriage, 106-107.
\textsuperscript{472} Ibid., 110-11.
\textsuperscript{473} Lake, Sermons, 3:21.
\textsuperscript{474} John Dwyer, The Age of the Passions: An Interpretation of Adam Smith and Scottish Enlightenment Culture (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998).
Millar fits very well into Dwyer’s framework, someone like the popular Scottish minister and author James Fordyce simply does not.\footnote{\textsuperscript{476}}

Attention to the dualist undercurrent in eighteenth-century culture can help us see the potential gap between sexual desire and higher forms of love, the difference not only in their operations, but also their nature and origins. Sentiment and desire may coexist in the compound passion of love, but that does not mean they are essentially related. Consider Edmund Burke’s opinion on men’s appreciation of women: “The object… of this mixed passion which we call love, is the \textit{beauty} of the sex. Men are carried to the sex in general, as it is the sex, and by the common law of nature; but they are attached to particulars by personal \textit{beauty}.” And further:

We shall have a strong desire for a woman of no remarkable beauty; whilst the greatest beauty in men, or in other animals, though it causes love, yet excites nothing at all of desire. Which shews that beauty, and the passion caused by beauty, which I call love, is different from desire, though desire may sometimes operate with it; but it is to this latter that we must attribute those violent and tempestuous passions, and the consequent emotions of the body which attend what is called love in some of its ordinary acceptations, and not to the effects of beauty merely as it is such.\footnote{\textsuperscript{477}}

Francis Hutcheson also does not connect physical beauty with sexual desire, and his analysis demonstrates how the connection can be avoided. He argues that we commonly correlate physical features (of the face) with moral qualities and that our reaction to such features is essentially moral. Passions and dispositions of the mind usually find expression on the face, and we are accustomed to read such momentary, changing expressions as signs; so, “when the \textit{natural Air} of a Face approaches to that which any Passion would form it unto, we make a Conjecture from this concerning the \textit{leading Disposition} of the Person’s \textit{Mind}.”\footnote{\textsuperscript{478}} Such conjectures are not necessarily correct, and, unlike physiognomists, Hutcheson does not postulate a relationship between natural physical features and inner character, but he does say that we are prone to make such connections in everyday life. So, when we encounter strange ideas of beauty in foreign nations, “unless we knew from themselves under what Idea such Features are admir’d, whether as \textit{naturally beautiful} in Form, or Proportion to the rest of the Face; or as presum’d Indications of some \textit{moral Qualities}; we may more probably conclude that it is the \textit{latter}; since this is so much the Ground of Approbation or Aversion towards Faces among ourselves.”\footnote{\textsuperscript{479}} In this context we should read

\footnote{\textsuperscript{476} Dwyer observes that Fordyce, who “subscribed to an enlightened and historical view” of the passions, particularly sexual attraction, wanted to transform “sexual desire” into an “honourable love,” or “passion” into “sentiment,” \textit{Age of the Passions}, 122, 124. By the enlightened and historical view Dwyer means understanding sexual attraction as the physical root of social affections. In the pages of Fordyce’s \textit{Addresses to Young Men} (Boston: Robert Hodge, 1782) sited by Dwyer on this occasion, the minister reflects on those who follow moral direction early “before their sentiments have had time to be perverted by their passions, or warped by the world” (25); he speaks of those “divided, distracted, torn in pieces, between their passions and their sentiments” (31); and teaches young men “the difference between Sensual Desire and Honourable Love” (91). I see in all three cases duality and conflict rather than a transformation, even potential, of one into another. Dwyer does eventually admit that a “strange thing” happened with Fordyce, who, even supposedly having “the benefit of an enlightened understanding of the importance of the passions,” takes his “desire to manipulate these passions towards social ends” so far as to “constitute a virtually total sublimation of the sex drive within ‘virtuous love,’” (129-130). It is precisely the idea of sublimation that I want to dispute.


\footnote{\textsuperscript{478} Francis Hutcheson, \textit{An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue}, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., corrected (London: R. Ware, P. Knapton, T. and T. Longman, et al., 1753), 256.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{479} Ibid., 256-7.}
Hutcheson’s opinion on love: “This Inclination… of the Sexes, is founded on something stronger, and more efficacious and joyful, than the Solicitations of Uneasiness, or the bare Desire of sensible Pleasure. BEAUTY gives a favourable Presumption of good Moral Dispositions, and Acquaintance confirms this into a real Love of Esteem, or begets it, where there is little Beauty. This raises an Expectation of the greatest moral Pleasures along with the sensible, and a thousand tender sentiments of Humanity and Generosity; and makes us impatient for a Society which we imagine big with unspeakable moral Pleasures.” At least one scholar, having assumed that our reaction to beauty can only be physical, interprets this passage as Hutcheson’s explanation of how love moves from the physical plane to the moral through the will to find moral qualities in the desired object. In fact, Hutcheson here acknowledges the existence of basic indiscriminate physical desire but excludes it from his account of the emergence of love as the union of souls. Once the automatic modern assumption about the sexual origin of love is removed, the passage does not necessitate such a reading.

When sexual desire and the emotion of love are genetically connected, the movement is not necessarily from universal and all-pervasive desire towards a subtler emotion, as scholars are prone to suppose. To my earlier discussion of the Earl of Warrington, I will add the above-mentioned James Fordyce: “…It is the soul we seek. With mind only can mind unite. That which is presented to our eyes attracts us merely as an image of that which they cannot perceive. Our senses may be said to tie the knot; but, strictly speaking, the knot is formed in the soul.” Desire is a necessary, basic and indiscriminate physical mechanism underlying procreation; but, observes Hutcheson,

in all those who are under the restraints of the natural modesty, and of any sense of virtue, the inclination to procreate is excited, or at least generally regulated in its choice of a partner, by many delicate sentiments, and finer passions of the heart of the sweetest kind. The sense of beauty prepossesses in favour of a moral character, or acquaintance gives better assurance of it. The esteem of virtue and wisdom, the desire and love of innocence of manners, complaisance, confidence, and the tenderest good-will, are the natural incitements and concomitants of the amorous desire; and almost obscure the brutal impulse toward the sensual gratification, which might be had with persons of any character.

In Roy Porter’s view, this passage demonstrates that “Enlightenment thought saw emotional refinement as enhancing sexuality.” I see here quite a contrary process. Not only does gentle emotion subsume and obscure sensual desire in this passage; it also can hardly be seen as a “refinement” of desire, for it stems from something different, something that is not related to the bodily substance that is food for desire. “Moral passions” and the “amorous impulse” are indeed

480 Ibid., 261.


483 Hutcheson, A System of Moral Philosophy (Glasgow: R. and A. Foulis, 1755), 2:151-2. Compare the Inquiry, 262: even in persons of loose conduct who neglect the institution of marriage, “Love of sensible Pleasure is not the chief Motive of Debauchery, or false Gallantry. Were it so, the meanest Prostitutes would please as much as any. But we know sufficiently, that Men are fond of Good-nature, Faith, Pleasantry of Temper, Wit, and many other moral Qualities, even in a Mistress.”

connected in Hutcheson’s thinking; but the connection is not genetic. I see Hutcheson as implying that our moral passions and tender sentiments may arise either in direct response to the other’s subjectivity or as a reaction of our moral being to the fact of desire external to this being. Nature has freed our sensual impulse from the instinctual limitations on the season and frequency of “gratifications” common among animals, as a compensation for the duty of educating our offspring that animals do not have. However, “by a sense of shame, and the many moral passions naturally attending this instinct, as well as by our reason which can discern the distant effects, and the obligations we are under, nature has pointed out the method of gratification which is consistent with all the moral sentiments of the heart, with all the concomitant generous passions, and with the interest of society.”

When Hutcheson says that moral passions attend the instinct “naturally,” I take him to mean that it is in the nature of our moral being to react to such impulses in this particular way; the reaction is determined by our moral constitution. Moral passions properly take precedence over instinct and limit its realization, which must be made consistent with moral sentiments. (Most notably alien to the instinct but of the same nature with other moral passions is the sense of shame).

Desire is integrated into our moral being as a means of reproduction, which, with man, is itself a moral rather than physical phenomenon. But the externality of the sensual impulse to moral existence is demonstrated in the former’s potential to break free from the moral system and the process of social reproduction – not simply in sexual promiscuity but also in such unnatural phenomena as homosexuality and bestiality, born out of “brutal stupidity” and “insensibility” – in other words, the atrophy of the moral and rational being. Finally, consider Hutcheson’s argument against sexual freedom for men in marriage (supposedly permissible because it does not undermine the legitimacy of the offspring): “All the tender and generous passions attending the amorous instinct in men, declare against such liberty; and point out to them that nature has designed the conjugal state to be a constant reciprocal friendship of two; as these passions are founded on esteem and love of virtue, and where they are heartily raised toward one, cannot admit of any like passions toward others at the same time.”

Note the difference between “attending” and “founded on.” The instinct activates sentiments that create a permanent bond between two moral beings nourished by virtuous passions (“the aim of all sincere friendship is perpetuity”). Desire is locked in this bond but can break out of it. This of course would not destroy desire but would destroy the meaning of the moral passions whose existence is founded on the hegemony of conscience over the physical appetites. Since the true moral-conjugal bond does not admit of like passions beyond it, an outside sexual connection cannot be a moral

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485 Hutcheson, System, 153-4.
486 Moral being is our true nature; elsewhere Hutcheson declares that “the true structure of our nature and the true condition of our nature that God instituted cannot indeed be restored until conscience, reinstated on her throne, shows her dominion over the bodily appetites.” Our original nature “was destined by divine art and design for everything seemly, virtuous, and excellent, and... clear signs of this design and art are preserved even in the ruins of this structure,” Hutcheson, “Inaugural Lecture on the Social Nature of Man,” 132.
487 “Some abject creatures, whose lust has obliterated all modesty, and suppressed all the finer sentiments and passions naturally accompanying the amorous impulse, may chuse a dissolute course of life for its mean pleasures and gains,” Hutcheson, System, 158.
488 Ibid., 155.
489 Ibid., 159.
490 Ibid., 162.
relationship, and necessarily signifies a suppression of “all the finer sentiments and passions.” Thus, in Hutcheson’s view, it is something entirely unnatural.

Whether sexual desire is a given, natural, and unchangeable fact of human nature existing independently of love, or a functional component born within the latter, we must acknowledge that there is room in the eighteenth-century cultural universe for “virtuous love” essentially separable from desire. A confusion of terms certainly existed, and words such as love, passion, and desire were indiscriminately applied to phenomena of different nature. A morally conscious eighteenth-century commentator would be prone to point out that the term “love” itself, while often applied by contemporaries to physical desire, did not properly belong to it. As Richardson observes in the postscript to *Clarissa*, “[w]hat is too generally called love ought (perhaps as generally) to be called by another name,” such as “Cupidity or a Paphian stimulus… however grating they may be to delicate ears.” Rather than painting rosy pictures of the development of romantic love (inseparable indeed from sexual desire) into a steady and affectionate relationship within marriage, eighteenth-century commentators more usually stressed an unbridgeable gap between the two and did not expect anything good for a marriage entered upon for romantic reasons. Virtuous love was not seen as an outgrowth of romantic passion, or as what passion became when formalized and perpetuated in matrimony. It was an independent form of sentiment and the only proper reason for marriage in the first place. According to Elena Pulcini, one scholar who does recognize the deep difference between what she calls *amour-passion* and *amour conjugal* as an important feature of the eighteenth-century cultural landscape, this difference itself was a consequence of the change in the idea of marriage – of the movement away from the traditional opposition between love and marriage as the realms of subjective affectivity and social norm. Eroding this opposition and placing the interior realm of emotions in the center of the social order (which is where the institution of marriage was necessarily located) only created another opposition – between two distinct forms of “love” itself, one inherently social and moral, the other inherently asocial and destructive.

A “real world” correlative to the theoretical separation between intimacy/marriage and sex I am trying to outline may lie in the evolution of sexual knowledge and attitudes in eighteenth-century England. It has been argued that the period saw a movement from the routine deployment of a wide range of sexual practices such as mutual masturbation and long drawn-out kissing and fondling to a more and more exclusive emphasis on simple penetrative intercourse and on the procreative nature of “normal” and normative sex. Procreative activity became more strictly opposed to the “deviancy” of sterile forms of sex such as masturbation and homosexuality. The


492 Despite seeing the eighteenth century as a period celebrating sexuality, Lawrence Stone had to admit a strong opposition between romantic love and sexual desire on the one hand, and virtuous affection on the other in the writings of eighteenth-century moralists; see his discussion of the relevant texts in *Family, Sex and Marriage*, 282-287.

493 Elena Pulcini, *Amour-passion et amour conjugal: Rousseau et l’origine d’un conflit moderne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), esp. 15-19, 139-142. Another dissenting voice arguing for an essential difference between loving bonds and sexual desire in the eighteenth-century imagination comes from Richard Godbeer and his analysis of the culture of male friendship in early America. He observes that “early Americans did not assume that even physical affection necessarily expressed a desire for sexual intimacy, and had no difficulty envisioning a passionate yet non-sexual love between two men.” Godbeer devotes several pages to the application of the language of friendship to marriage and notes that, at least in early American periodicals, friendship between men and that between spouses in marriage were treated as virtually indistinguishable: *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 5, 173-8.
movement was both practical and discursive; eighteenth-century popular sex manuals were “guides to having babies, rather than to having good sex” (as we have already seen in Byrd’s case).\footnote{Tim Hitchcock, “Redefining Sex in Eighteenth-Century England,” \textit{History Workshop Journal} 41 (1996), 83, summarizing Roy Porter’s work on sex manuals. See also Hitchcock, \textit{English Sexualities, 1700-1800} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, \textit{The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).} It is conceivable that this shift from sexual dialogue and exchange of pleasure (together with the dying out of the notion that female orgasm is necessary for conception) to the “penis monologues” was commensurate with the lessening of the significance of sexual intercourse in interpersonal intimacy and exchange of affection. There would be grounds for seeing sexual intercourse only as a physical act with a definitive natural purpose, more easily segregated from the realm of spirit and intellect, and sexual pleasure as automatic and “natural” in a narrow sense, rather than as a willed and exchanged product of a \textit{human} act (as opposed to an act of a \textit{human body}).

c. \textit{The Union of Souls}

The difference between physical and moral passion and the absence of necessary continuity between them underlie the moralistic and sentimental vision of marriage as a sanctification of the connection of souls that I have tried to describe in this chapter. To the extent to which the brutal impulse is allowable and good, as pleasurable and necessary for procreation, it can exist only within this formalized connection that affirms the human purpose (the production of new selves) and human meaning of the physical connection. The sentimental concern with the coherence and integrity of the emotional self, defined against the necessary but entropic impulses of the flesh, is not couched in strictly religious terms. But the direction of the thought remains the same as in more theological interpretations of the married state: “By Regeneration euen our bodyes are made members of Christ, and so become Temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore there is great reason we should keepe these vessels of ours in honor, and in their coniunction haue a due regard of this their heauenly condition. In these evident principles we may behold how farre God hath improued our bodyes, which otherwise were made but of dust, and for sinne deserued to become dust againe; but we must cloath our flesh and blood with fore-specified advancements of it.”\footnote{Lake, \textit{Sermons}, 3:22.} Marriage is a symbol of this advancement, promising and foretelling our new condition, in which even the flesh is “clothed” in reason, rejoined to true humanity, and restored to refined perfection and the eternal life from which it had been expelled.

Eighteenth-century optimism about human nature offers its own version of clothing flesh in reason, not requiring Christian redemption. Consider one of the arguments Orrery offers against Swift’s pessimism: “Swift deduces his observations from wrong principles; for in his land of \textit{Houyhnhnms}, he considers the soul and body in their most degenerate, and uncultivated state: the former as a slave to the appetites of the latter. He seems insensible of the surprising mechanism, and beauty of every part of the human composition.” Swift should have remembered Ovid’s description of mankind: “He gave to man an uplifted face and bade him stand erect and turn his eyes to heaven” (\textit{Metamorphoses} 1.85-86).\footnote{Swift, 188.} Further along this line of thinking, it is the form (beauty) of the body that can make desire culturally acceptable as part of the emotion of love, in the way in which Swift would not allow it, able as he was to see only the corrupt flesh:


\footnotetext[495]{Lake, \textit{Sermons}, 3:22.}

\footnotetext[496]{Swift, 188.}
If we consider Swift’s behaviour, so far only as it related to women, we shall find, that he looked upon them rather as busts, than as whole figures. In his panegyrical descriptions, he has seldom descended lower than the center of their hearts: or if ever he has designed a compleat statue, it has generally been cast in a dirty, or in a disagreeable mould: as if the statuary had not conceived, or had not experienced, that justness of proportion, that delicacy of limb, and those pleasing, and graceful attitudes which have constituted the sex to be the most beautiful part of the creation. If you review his several poems to Stella, you will find them fuller of affection than desire, and more expressive of friendship, than of love.\textsuperscript{497}

This desire, this kind of love, responding to the beauty of proportion and delicacy, is intelligible, poetic, and legitimate. It is a reaction to the higher qualities of the body (recall Hutcheson on the nature of our reaction to physical beauty). Desire itself can be split, with a spiritual component detected within it. I am postulating here the same process of continuous subdivisions that Michael McKeon found in the eighteenth-century understanding of the public and private: society and state are differentiated as public and private, but the family is still further distinguished from society as private from public. Eventually, however, the private realm of the family operates properly only if it “runs on the highly regulated rhythms of a thriving public polity.” An idealized public realm is found within the private sphere, and the “private” further “down” is a negative realm of conflict and desire rather than intelligible inter-personal harmony.\textsuperscript{498} The eighteenth century may idealize the private, but this “private” is remarkably public. I am making a similar argument about love and desire. In the last account, the body is potentially dangerous and can be a prison of the soul; but mechanism and beauty, the form of the human body, define it as subordinate to the soul. The body is originally designed to express the higher nature, aspirations and destiny of man. The body combines form and matter as a design for virtue and a potential for vice – the potential that we may activate if we allow our spirit to submit to the dictates of matter. Thus “[w]e owe most Vices, as we do most Virtues, to our constitution, and yet perhaps we are more unjustly blamed for the one than commended for the other.”\textsuperscript{499} I will discuss the problem of the body’s design in more detail in Chapter Six.

In Orrery’s encomiums to marriage, stressing both personal inclination and social compatibility as the foundations of a perfect union, the language of social form and propriety fuses with heavenly imagery and thus implicitly with the dream of the self free from earthly encumbrances: “When a marriage is compleated, that takes rise from good sense, inclination, and equality of age, dignity, and fortune… the joy is diffused through every branch of the family: the parents, the relations, the friends, taste the sweet effects of the happy union, and the whole scene is a representation of heaven, as near as the state of mortality can come up to it.”\textsuperscript{500} Marriage is a social nexus that radiates heavenly perfection onto a larger social circle, but also approaches that perfection only insofar as it is concluded in accordance with social propriety. Proper marriage and proper conjugal love incorporate the rules of social politeness, which are opposed to both uncivil behavior and bestial passion: “Few and delicate have been the examples of such conjugal love. Men cannot, or will not see the perfections of their wives. From the day of marriage, the woman generally lays aside her reserve; and the man, his civility. She grows forward in her looks, and overbearing in her conversation: he becomes sour in his countenance, and snappish in his

\textsuperscript{497} Ibid., 119-120.


\textsuperscript{499} Orrery, “Thoughts and Reflections on Various Subjects,” Birch Collection, BL Add. MS 4466, 7.

\textsuperscript{500} Orrery, \textit{Letters of Pliny}, 1:59-60.
discourse. Or, if they appear fond (as from the novelty of the state it sometimes happens) the grossness of the passion is too nauseous to be named.”

We should recall that elegance and politeness “are the characteristics of humanity, and distinguish the man from the brute.” Proper marriage is a relation between two social selves, a human connection, as distinct from physical. (Of course, this does not apply when the beings who are thus connected fall too far short of the standard of humanity.) Herein lies the admirable conceptual subtlety and usefulness of the idea. Marriage is an institution that admits of highest intimacy, reaching into the most private recesses of a person’s existence, ideally removed from the realm of social power relations. It is an alternative to the demands of life in “the world” with its temptations and corruptions. It brings the idea of form and order into this intimate realm and implies the transcendence of the physical self, insofar as by definition marriage connects two souls and is the ultimate model of such a connection. In the relationship between the sexes, where our physical nature demands a union of the bodies, the fact of marriage as such does not ensure the dominance of spirit, given the corrupt condition of the generality of mankind; but the absence of the marital bond does necessarily mean inevitable submission to matter and the dominance of the physical component in the connection. Intimacy in which form is not firmly implied opens a way for the body. Hence Orrery’s strong reaction to Swift’s perceived disrespect for social form in his relationship with Vanessa.

As Orrery observes on a different subject, “[a] letter, which is only a conversation, delivered upon paper, should be perfectly easy, and perfectly correct.” It would be difficult to express better the demand for the unity of intimacy and form, of ease and correctness, which may seem contradictory to a modern observer but is the cornerstone of Orrery’s polite worldview. Marriage by its nature acts like polite criticism should act in the above instance. Both are articulations of a system of norms and forms that ideally come from inside of the individual and do the work of regulating and purifying the “idle amusements of a man’s private and domestic life,” or at least confine them within proper limits so they do not contaminate the public realm.

501 Ibid., 1:332.
502 Ibid., 1:266.
503 Witness, in Orrery’s Letters from Italy, the story of a lady who resisted the advances of Leopold, Duke of Lorrain. Tolerating the Duke’s amours because of her care for the fortune and interest of her husband, she eventually began to entertain “within herself some sensations in his favour. Her virtue was alarmed at the discovery; her fears were awakened. Conscience and honour prepared themselves to fight against love, pleasure, and ambition.” She confessed the impending failure to her husband, and implored him to flee the court: “My soul, in spite of all temptation, still prefers poverty with innocence to opulence with guilt…. Let us at once break loose from the dangers of a luxurious court. Let us seek the happiness arising from true love, and taste the joys of uninterrupted affection” (251-253, my italics). Note also two different contexts in which the word “love” is used, closely paralleling Pulcini’s distinction between love-passion and conjugal love discussed above.
504 Letters of Pliny, 2:235.
505 Orrery complains that editions of famous men’s posthumous works often improperly include such “idle amusements of a man’s private and domestic life,” which ought never to be exposed to the public view. Remarks, 80. Henry Mackenzie expresses the familial dialectic between the intimate and the ordered in describing the ideal family as a mix “of something of the stranger with the acknowledgement of our dearest friend, somewhat of the form of courtesy with the substance of affection,” The Anecdotes and Egotisms of Henry Mackenzie, 1745-1831, with a new introduction by John Dwyer (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1996), 244.
It is interaction with other moral subjects that activates one’s own moral being, as expressed by the rules of politeness. Promising freedom from the corruptions of public life and power relations, marriage also brings the benefits of interpersonal interaction into privacy and thus counteracts the dangers of retired solitude. Commenting with approval on Samuel Johnson’s discussion of retirement in the *Rambler*, Orrery observes in his commonplace book that in country retirement “every man is a separate and independant being: solitude flatters irregularity with hopes of secrecy…. The impulses of nature act unrestrained, and the disposition dares to show itself in its true form, without any disguise of hypocrisy or decorations of elegance.” One lives only to please oneself, without “considering others as entitled to any acct of his sentiments or actions.” Another entry on the same subject is even more ominous: “A Man who has lived a retired life & is forced back again into the Great World, is like Cerberus, after having dwelt in the gloomy quiet shades of Elysium He grows sick at the sight of day and terrified at noise and is apt to vomit all the bitter poison that lay latent in his heart.”

Man is a social being by his higher nature, and our virtues are social virtues; our potential for evil, the poison that lays latent within us, is found in those most private parts of our nature which it is the function of marriage to penetrate. “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2.18). Form, including internal self-regulation, acts when we position ourselves vis-à-vis others; as Adam Smith endeavored to show in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, regard for the other as an observer, a fellow social being, is the foundation of disinterestedness and of transcending the confines of our body. A relationship, the more immediate the better, with the other considered as a moral subject rather than object of desire, is the proper source of both emotions and rules. Intimacy here is not that of the bodies, but that of the minds transcending the confines of the flesh that alienate one soul from another. Propriety and form are part of intimacy because they belong to the constitution of the soul.

The concepts of social feeling and social love, from Shaftesbury onwards, work in conjunction with Lockean sensation, but imply a source different from physical sensibility. Since marriage properly belongs to the realm of social love, it should not be surprising to us, as it was to A. O. J. Cockshut, that erotic love and sex seem to have been “facets of human life entirely separate from marriage” in eighteenth-century literature, with a few exceptions like Fielding. In a true twentieth-century fashion, Cockshut is puzzled why it should be that “in the interests of morality

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507 Commonplace Book, Houghton MS Eng. 218.12, R1. Johnson observes that “[t]o be able to procure its own entertainments, and to subsist upon its own stock, is not the prerogative of every mind. There are indeed understandings so fertile and comprehensive, that they can always feed reflection with new supplies, and suffer nothing from the preclusion of adventitious amusements…. But others live from day to day, and must be constantly enabled, by foreign supplies, to keep out the encroachments of languor and stupidity.” Most that such people can expect to gain from the seclusion of retirement is “the change of ridiculousness to obscurity, and the privilege of having fewer witnesses to a life of folly.” *Rambler* 135 (2 July, 1751). Orrery thinks that the effects of retirement are in this paper “very well described,” but uses Johnson’s idea to reflect on moral rather than intellectual consequences of removal from the social scene.
and decency, sexual intercourse is usually excluded from literature when it is legitimate, moral, pure and loving,” and can be spoken of only when it is “cynical, casual, lustful and adulterous.” Of course, it was not sexual intercourse that was “moral, pure and loving” in marriage. The liberality of everyday sexual mores and the high practical tolerance for non-marital sexuality in the eighteenth century, noted by scholars like Lawrence Stone and Roy Porter, was only another reason for cultural investment in the idea of marriage as the space of interpersonal intimacy and the foundation and model of social intercourse in which the body, so conspicuous everywhere else, could be made present. The typographical peculiarity to which I resort here certainly may invoke the specter of Derrida; but my intention is not to put off other historians, emotionally scarred as we have been by the linguistic turn. I do believe that “presence” is the densest and most concise expression of the role assigned to the body, not in all, but in a large number of eighteenth-century statements on the essential nature and content of marital love and intimacy. Marriage could be positioned as a space of freedom for the soul; the body was simultaneously within and beyond the boundary of the union.

CHAPTER 5
THE SOCIAL LIFE OF EDWARD LONG

Edward Long (1734-1813) was in his time and remains today a man of dubious renown. Marcus Wood expressed a rather common scholarly opinion when he called Long’s monumental *History of Jamaica* (1774) “the most tightly argued and exhaustive defence of colonial slavery ever written.” As Wood put it, “pro-slavery generated a substantial subsequent literature in Europe and the Americas, yet basically performed a series of redealings of the cards which Long had formed into a pack.” He is also considered one of the founders, if not the founder, of biological racism. This distinguishes him from his contemporaries. Some historians have remarked that Long’s views were shared by very few in his lifetime. The much valued factual content of *The History of Jamaica* was overwhelmingly used to advance arguments directly opposed to Long’s; his precocious racist ideas, so thorough and elaborate, almost never figured among other planters’ arguments in defense of slavery. Nearly every scholarly discussion of slavery and race in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world cites Long’s views, but both his peculiarity and the problem of the genesis and thus the significant portion of the meaning of his texts are either neglected or left unexplained. In the following two chapters, I will attempt to offer a more nuanced interpretation of the relationship between Long’s writings and his culture by analyzing his oeuvre as a culturally mediated response to his personal situation and circumstances. As Anthony J. Barker has suggested, “it may well be that, in much the same way as his contemporary Thomas Jefferson, he was a humane man rationalizing his acquiescence in an inhumane system.” This note in passing fits well into the already commonplace explanation of the emergence of racism as an attempt to reconcile modern ideals of human equality with persistent forms of social and political coercion. I will, however, operate on the assumption that the very meaning of “humanity” was far from certain for Long and many of his contemporaries. I will argue that Long’s ideas are an intense and personally significant response to the challenge posed by eighteenth-century economic, social and intellectual developments to the classical notions of man as an uneasy unity of the material and the spiritual and to the visions of political order founded on virtue and the transcendental moral self.

I will analyze Long’s views as first and foremost a personal response to an existential challenge – an effort on Long’s part to understand himself as a human being and his place as an actor in a culture and social order that increasingly depended on material progress and yet were unthinkable to Long without a transcendence of materiality. As with my other two protagonists, Long’s corpus combines public and private writings and opens up impressive possibilities for this kind of study. The huge collection of Long’s papers at the British Library includes drafts and revisions of his *History of Jamaica*, as well as notes taken from a wide array of authors, which all together make possible a detailed study of the evolution of Long’s thought and his engagements with, as well as departures from, the early modern discourse on human nature. The bulk of Long’s


familial correspondence was lost in the twentieth century, but some parts of it were published by a descendant in 1925. The publication also contains at least parts of Long’s memoir on the history of his family and on his own childhood and youth, written for his children. Some additional private letters and business papers are scattered in English provincial archives. Important for me in these private texts are not the remains of the biography of Edward Long and his ancestors, but the possibility of reconstructing something of Long’s interpretation of his own history and social being and of connecting the discourse of Long’s “private” life to the social and moral imaginary of his public writings. So, I will begin with the family history of the Longs as a history of constructions and failures of gentlemanly selfhood, caught between the ideals of genteel social life and vicissitudes of securing a material foundation for such a life.

1. The Heritage

The first Long came to Jamaica with the British expedition that conquered the island in 1655. At the tender age of 17, Samuel Long (1638-1683) acted as a secretary to the council of command of the entire expedition, and was connected with Colonel Edward D’Oyley, who later became one of the leading men in the new colony and Governor of Jamaica in 1661. Samuel Long also became a prominent political figure in the colony. Elected to Jamaica’s first Assembly in 1663 from Cagway (Port Royal), he twice served as the Speaker of the Assembly, was Chief Justice in 1676-1679, and the leader of the local resistance against the metropolitan attempt to impose restrictions on the power and independence of the Assembly by giving the King and Council the right of veto over laws passed in Jamaica. He also patented significant amounts of land in several parts of the island (16 to 18 thousand acres according to Edward Long, approximately 11 thousand according to a modern biographer) and became one of the largest landowners in Jamaica. He owned a splendid house in Spanish Town, and his main country residence became the so-called Seven Plantations, afterwards renamed Longville, in the parish of Clarendon.

As was the popular habit in the early years of colonial settlement, Samuel Long died young, at 44, leaving the considerable wealth he had amassed to his son Charles, then four years of age. (Samuel also left an annuity of £50 to his father Timothy Long in London, which perhaps implies that the small-gentry family from which one of the leaders of the new colony came was of relatively humble means.) Charles Long (1679-1723), more or less a contemporary of William Byrd II, spent the first twenty-seven years of his also relatively short of life in Jamaica, as a resident owner at his estate of Seven Plantations and in Spanish Town. He married Amy Lawes in 1699 and then Jane Modyford, nee Beeston, in 1703 – both daughters of other prominent Jamaican dynasties. His eldest son Samuel, Edward Long’s father, was born in Jamaica in 1700. Legal matters, uncertainties about property and inheritance in the new colony, and disputes about the relationship between the colonial and metropolitan legal order were the things that prompted Charles to travel to England. Edward Long, in his account of the family’s history, dwells on his


516 Ibid., 41, 18.
grandfather’s legal affairs in extensive detail. Jane Modyford, Charles’ second wife, was the sole heir of her father, Sir William Beeston. But, as the Long tradition relates, Jane’s mother took advantage of her husband’s “feeble state of mind and body when he lay on his death bed.” She “caused a will to be drawn up in which she devised to her own use his whole Estate real and personal for her life,” guided her husband’s hand to sign the will, and used as witnesses her menial servants, who were not even present in the room when the will was signed. “A will so fabricated in England,” observes Long, “would have been immediately set aside in virtue of the Statutes of Frauds.” So Charles, finding his wife deprived of her father’s property during the lifetime of her mother, took widow Beeston to court and won the case in the Supreme Court of Jamaica, which annulled the will on the basis of the English law. Charles Long came into possession of Sir William Beeston’s estates. But the widow (now wife of Sir Charles Orby) did not give up, and, after an unsuccessful attempt to reverse the decision in Jamaica, appealed to the Lords of Council in England, where the proceedings of the Jamaican courts were reversed, on the ground that “the English Statutes (including the Statute of Frauds) were not in force in that Island.” The entire colonial legal order and the system of property and social peace could be said to have been threatened by the decision, and when Charles Long with his family traveled to England in 1706 on this business, his case could well be represented as a common cause of all Jamaican settlers. Edward Long “cannot forbear quoting the sentiments” of Peter Heywood, Chief Justice of Jamaica at that time (and also Charles Long’s attorney in the island) from a letter to Charles. Heywood strongly disagrees with the opinion of the English judges, who have denied to Jamaica the benefit of the English law, and resolves

> to hold the Courts as my predecessors have done before me, until the Queen signifies her pleasure to the Contrary. If I do not, I am sure the Negroes will quickly be uppermost in this island; and I hope when her Majesty shall so signify her pleasure, that she will be graciously pleased to let us know, how Treasons, Murder, Felonies, etcet shall be tried? and how the merchants trading with us shall be satisfied for their commodities, and loans? and how her Majesty’s peace shall be kept, that we may not be daily cutting one another’s throats? Which if we do, the strongest man, will have what he thinks fit, and at last we shall be so reduced, as to become slaves to our slaves.  

The specter of a naked and lawless state of nature was made even more unappealing by the presence of the masses of slaves, whom the structures and institution of Jamaican society seemed to be barely holding in check.

Charles Long was promptly supported in his cause by a petition from the town of Kingston to the Queen, claiming English laws as the birthright of Englishmen in every part of her dominions. But he proved not to be a persevering defender of colonial rights, and, instead of taking the case before the House of Lords, reached a compromise with Sir Charles Orby, sharing the profits of the Beeston estate during Lady Orby’s life. Having left Jamaica to fight for his financial interests, Charles Long soon purchased a gentlemanly country seat in Suffolk and a handsome house in Queen’s Square, and remained in England with his family for the rest of his life. Long had seen little good from the governments of Queen Anne, which managed to conclude, in Long’s case, that the colonies did not deserve the benefit of English law and order; and he seems to have aligned himself with the Whigs at the beginning of their ascendance in 1714. He became a Member of Parliament for Dunwich in 1716. A certain William Wood, who had lived in Jamaica and was connected to Robert Walpole and to colonial trade, became Long’s business associate. In

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517 Ibid., 63-65.

518 Ibid., 64-65.
1721, when Long again stood for election at Dunwich, Wood offered him Walpole’s help.\textsuperscript{519} Charles’ eldest son Samuel, Edward Long’s father, chose a military career and became Captain of a troop of Horse Guards attending on Queen Caroline. Such a position probably could not have been received without powerful protection and support, likely from the Walpole family, for which, in the words of Edward, his father had a “violent” penchant.\textsuperscript{520}

Edward Long asserts that his grandfather’s “very great” income, perhaps one of the largest among Jamaican proprietors of that time, “entitled” him to “live with splendor”; it opened a future of metropolitan gentility, ease, comfort, and leisure that could have been honorably devoted to the education of Charles’ numerous children. But Charles’ self-identification with the Whig spirit of business opportunity apparently went beyond personal attachment to the Walpoles. In July 1720, at the time when the English society was obsessed with “projects” and stock market speculation, Charles Long and several other merchants and gentlemen connected with Jamaica obtained a royal patent granting them all gold and silver mines to be discovered in Jamaica for 31 years. Rumors about the hidden mineral wealth of the island had circulated in Jamaica since the Spanish ascendancy, and in these heady times Charles Long, apparently not satisfied with his “very great” income from land and slave labor, decided to take the opportunity – without much preparation or certain knowledge of any gold and silver deposits. He was the principal patentee and the treasurer of the Royal Mines Company of Jamaica, and William Wood was his lieutenant.\textsuperscript{521} Shares were issued and quickly sold out, leaving in Charles Long’s hands a huge sum of £93,300. In hindsight, the Court of Exchequer would announce in 1745 that the company was a bubble and a premeditated “fraud upon the subscribers,” but at the time the intentions were serious. The patentees (mainly Long himself, with Wood’s help) quickly hired miners and a doctor and sent them to Jamaica with detailed instructions to Long’s agents in the islands about buying and hiring negroes, purchasing provisions and finding accommodations for the miners, and other matters related to the enterprise. The agents were to draw bills on Charles Long for the necessary business expenses. Long later publicly claimed that more than £35,000 was actually spent on the undertaking, although some more private letters cite the sum of £12,250. Only in January 1721, when the business was well underway, did Wood relate to Long the opinion that “nothing is to be Expected of Gold or Silver mines or copper worth working but this to your self, and let us do all to get rid of the Affair.”\textsuperscript{522}

By that time, however, the actual existence of gold and silver deposits in Jamaica had become largely irrelevant for the fate of the company. Even discovering ready treasures in Jamaican soil

\textsuperscript{519} William Wood to Charles Long, 3 March 1721, British Library (hereafter BL) Add. MS 22639, 129. In an earlier letter Wood mentions that he has just come from Walpole (Wood to Long, 10 January 1721, BL Add. MS 22639, 121); years later Wood seems to have been sent on a mission to France by Walpole, and boasted of having rendered there a great service to people connected with the colonies and plantation trade, Wood to Francis Melmoth, 25 October 1725, BL Add. MS 22639, 98-9.


\textsuperscript{521} Later the other patentees even argued that Long singlehandedly obtained the patent and inserted their names without their knowledge, which was probably not true; out of the money received for subscriptions Long immediately lent large sums to some of the patentees, much of which remained unreturned, for instance £8,000 out of £10,000 lent to Richard Thompson, BL Add. MS 43499, 5-6, 7-10.

\textsuperscript{522} William Wood to Charles Long, 10 January 1721, BL Add. MS 22639, 121.
did not seem to Long a quick enough way to unbelievable wealth. Immediately after receiving money from subscribers, in the summer months of 1720, he invested more than £45,000 in the South Sea stock that was at the peak of its speculative worth – likely with a view to enriching himself as much as, or rather than, augmenting the capital of the Royal Mines Company. Edward Long naturally blames Wood’s “intriguing, speculating head” for this decision, just as he explains the entire mines project by Wood’s evil influence on his grandfather.523 While this may or may not have been so, it was Wood who, on September 3rd 1720, warned Charles Long that the South Sea shares “seem to be dropping again but some think they will revive upon the General Court. I submit it to your consideration, if there should be a good opportunity of selling out upon it for the opening, whether it may not be proper to part w. th the Stock…”524 Long, who was at the time attending the genteel resort of Tunbridge Wells (also frequented by Byrd during the same years, as we remember), did nothing.

The company’s last miner in Jamaica was discharged only in July 1723 (already after Charles’ death), and the work, or its appearance, may have been continued until then. But the bursting of the South Sea Bubble sent the waves of panic that, in Edward Long’s words, “pervaded all the mining Subscribers like an Electric shock, the credit of Projects and projectors of every description became in a moment extinct; a statement of the mining accounts was demanded; the Subscribers not having consented, (for they had not been consulted) to the transfer of their deposited shares from the Bank [of England], grew clamorous and impatient.”525 The remaining years of Charles Long’s life were spent in search of money and compromises with the subscribers, but he died insolvent, “in a labyrinth of intricate accounts and lawsuits beneath which the powers of his mind entirely sank,” leaving his eldest son Samuel with the lawsuits and encumbered estate. Out of the latter, £7000 in bequests had to be paid by Samuel to Charles’ younger children from his second wife Jane Modyford, and a £600 annuity was assigned to the widow herself. The huge Jamaican estates of Sir William Beeston, of which Jane was the sole heiress and the income from which Charles Long was able to use when he was alive, also went to Jane’s children, while Samuel became the sole heir to the lawsuits. Samuel even had to relinquish to his half-siblings (namely to his half-brother Charles, after a “violent dispute”) his father’s English country seat, Hurts Hall in Suffolk, in consideration of the sums their father had had to borrow from Jane’s trustees.526

So the young Court officer found himself in rather narrow circumstances. Edward Long writes: “Thus was my Father left at the age of only 23 to engage in a scene of litigation and distress,

523 Records and Letters, 68, 69. Edward Long, and after him Charles Edward Long, identify Wood as “the celebrated” evil projector William Wood, whose 1722 patent for coining copper money for Ireland occasioned Jonathan Swift’s famous Drapier’s Letters; Records and Letters, 68; Charles Edward Long, “Royal Mines Company, 1720,” in Gentleman’s Magazine 37 (1852): 137-9. However, Swift’s Wood died in 1730, and Long’s Wood seems to have been active in 1746, when he appealed against the decree of the Court of Exchequer in the case of the Royal Mines Company; further, there is no indication that Swift’s Wood lived in Jamaica or was so closely involved with the Jamaican interest. In the National Archives, there is a will of William Wood of Hampstead, Middlesex, proved November 1730, and a will of William Wood, Saint Mary Newington, Surrey, proved September 1747, PROB 11/641, PROB 11/757; on Wood’s having lived in Jamaica see BL Add. MS 36156, 134.

524 Wood to Charles Long, 3 September 1720, BL Add. MS 22639, 112.

525 Records and Letters, 69.

526 Ibid., 70. The history of the disputes between the subscribers and patentees of the Royal Mines Company is summarized in printed appeals to the House of Lords and responses occasioned by the decree of the Court of Exchequer on 6 December 1745 that declared the Company to have been a fraud, BL Add. MS 43499, 36156.
which had proved too arduous for his father, and with additional loads of debt on his shoulders
which the last will threw upon them, and for which the profession he had chosen very ill adapted
him.\textsuperscript{527}  The love marriage with Mary Tate (in September 1723, three months after the death
of Charles Long), of a very good pedigree but small fortune, did not help. The couple made several
trips to Jamaica, in order to try to terminate the entail in which Samuel Long’s estate descended
to him and sell some parcels of land. The trips were relatively short, and by 1731 the family was
settled in England, where Samuel Long solicited and received a “post of profit” from his patron
Robert Walpole, from whom Charles and Samuel had also apparently received protection against
the Exchequer suits by the mine subscribers. Edward later recalled dinner invitations to Walpole’s
house, where “his Lordship was exceedingly affable and liberal to us.”\textsuperscript{528}  Edward Long, the last
of Samuel’s three sons, born on 23 of August, 1734 in one of the family’s temporary country
homes in Cornwall, was named after Sir Edward Walpole, his godfather. The post of Keeper of
the King’s House at Newmarket and a place in the Customs brought Samuel a yearly income of
about £400, as well as acquaintance with members of the nobility and gentlemen of distinction
who frequented Newmarket. Relying on the income from his official positions and Jamaican
estates, Samuel Long was apparently coping with the family debts well enough if he expected to
have a pleasant and dignified retirement at Tredudwell, a small Cornwall farm he bought and
rebuilt as his country seat after moving around England for many years and occupying an official
residence in Newmarket, which could hardly be called a home. Considerations of economy were
also important. The mandatory social life of a royal official at Newmarket was expensive, and
provisions in Cornwall were cheap. The Longs moved to Tredudwell in 1741.\textsuperscript{529}

Edward Long’s very short stay with the entire family (including his two brothers and three
sisters) at Tredudwell in 1745 was the happiest episode of his boyhood. He describes Tredudwell
as the ideal world of genteel life, simple rural dignity, and sentimental familial happiness rebuilt
anew, piece by piece, after Charles Long’s fiasco. Here Edward’s father “expected to end his
days… in the manner most agreeable to his inclinations; with some of his family about him and
his hours delightfully employed in rural and useful occupations.”\textsuperscript{530}  He engaged “an Architect of
eminence” to improve the property that was not “capacious or elegant enough to suit [Samuel’s]
ideas,” and himself showed a talent for building, gardening and husbandry.\textsuperscript{531}  He planted “best
fruit trees procured from Hampton Court,” kept horses, pigeons, poultry, rabbits and hogs, sheep
and cattle, and cultivated the one-hundred-acre part of the farm that he chose to keep in his own
hands. The natural elegance of rural industry happily coincided with economy. He hunted, having
stocked the surrounding countryside with hares that had not been found there before (the breed
was obtained by his father, Edward does not neglect to mention, “from his friend Lord Orford”).
He sat on the Commission of Peace for the county and studied the books necessary for becoming
an active and useful magistrate. He imported his wines and groceries from London and Portugal
and rented a beach with a summer house. There some of the local luminaries, such as the parson
of the parish, a man of sense and reading, would join the family in the “hours of festivity,”

\textsuperscript{527}  Records and Letters, 74-75.
\textsuperscript{528}  Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{529}  The house, now a bed-and-breakfast, still stands, three miles from the town of Fowey in Cornwall;
\url{http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-60563-tredudwell-manor-lanteglos}, accessed 19 October 2011;
\url{http://www.tredudwellmanor.co.uk/}, accessed 19 October 2011.
\textsuperscript{530}  Records and Letters, 83-84.
\textsuperscript{531}  Ibid., 80.
complete with song composition (litterateur Edward observes, however, that his father’s “poetic furor never soared above Hudibrastic”). In short, present here are all the elements of the image of a simple but honest and sufficiently refined country squire who has removed from the world of connections and elegance to “sweet retirement.” The image was probably both consciously cultivated by Samuel Long and constructed by the son in creating a nostalgic picture of his father the way he should have been, as the centerpiece of a gentry idyll. Edward remembers his father very fondly and especially notes the “noble disinterestedness” and good humor in his treatment of his children.532 In what feels like an effort to recapture the time lost, Edward even interrupts his narrative with a primitive drawing of the “delightful view” of the sea from the farm. This was the place Edward later nostalgically liked to call “poor Tredudwell” (for instance, when he paid a farewell visit to poor Tredudwell in 1752, leaving Cornwall forever).533

The idyll did not last long. Soon after Edward’s and his elder brother Charles’s arrival from their grammar school in late 1745, Charles was sent to Leyden to learn accounts, bookkeeping, and the Dutch and French languages, with the prospect of getting the place of a “writer” in the East India Company through the family’s mercantile connections. As Samuel’s second son, Charles would have to learn a trade to be able to support himself. Edward would never see him again. He writes: “In parting with this Brother I seemed to part with life itself, for he was certainly dear to me as my own life; I loved him not only for his amiable qualities of heart and head, for he was intrepid, liberal, sweet tempered, and possessed of a genius and understanding which gave promise of the highest future celebrity, but of a manly noble figure and uncommon strength and agility, which he had frequently exerted in protecting me from ill usage at School.” (Charles’ “lively spirit,” more inclined to the military profession, later would not brook “the sordid manners of a Dutch Comting house,” and he fled to England; it may be that getting an officer’s commission there was too expensive, and the youth was packed off to Jamaica, where he did become an officer and even Engineer General of the colony.534)

Very soon afterwards, Samuel Long had to leave for Jamaica, where the rest of the family was to join him later, except Edward, who would be sent to school: “It was with extreme sorrow I viewed the near approach of my separation from all that was dear on earth to me, and to be abandoned at once and left in this isolated state, committed to ye care of strangers, was almost too much for my utmost fortitude to support.” By 1745, “by the gross mismanagement of [Samuel Long’s] Attorney,” the profits from the Jamaican estates were nil, and the dream of Cornwall retirement was in peril. Two large properties that belonged to Samuel – Longville and part of Lucky Valley – together brought only thirty hogsheads of sugar, and his credit in the merchant house of Drake and Long, run by his successful half-brother Beeston Long, was in peril. Samuel left for the island, abandoning Tredudwell, but hoping eventually to return to the “darling creation of his own hand.”535 Mary Long with the children was supposed to follow him, but tarried in Portsmouth, encouraging the “addresses” of several officers to her elder daughters, who resented

532 Ibid., 85.
533 Ibid., 103. In a 1755 letter to Edward, his mother also refers to “poor Tredudwell,” contrasting the friendships she had in those golden days with the “neglectfull treatment” from those who style themselves her friends in London, which gives her a “thorough disgust to the world.” Mary Long to Edward Long, 23 August 1755, in Records and Letters, 115.
534 Records and Letters, 82; 96-7.
535 Ibid., 87; 84.
her behavior. In particular the eldest, Charlotte, accused her mother of “very great impudence” for acting in this important matter without the knowledge and permission of Samuel Long and without considering the feelings of her daughters. Charlotte also pointed out that “the free admission of many male visitors to the house might have a tendency to injure her and her sister’s Characters.” As his mother much later explained to Edward, she had believed the family fortune to be in such a state that “the opportunity which then seemed to offer of settling her two elder daughters for life, was too advantageous to be slighted, and that, under those circumstances the matches proposed for them, were not ineligible for two Girls, whose personal and mental accomplishments were all the portion they were likely to have.” Samuel Long, led on by the daughters, interpreted his wife’s behavior as disloyal, imprudent, and lacking in affection to her children, and “flew into an outrageous passion.” Soon after Mary’s belated arrival at Jamaica the spouses separated. Mary Long returned to England alone and was not allowed to see her youngest daughter, then in London. Only Edward maintained a connection with her, possibly at the risk of the father’s displeasure. She died alone in Cardiff, in 1765, her health forever impaired since her first journeys to Jamaica in the 1720s.

Meanwhile in Jamaica, Samuel Long embroiled himself in a violent factional struggle on the side of the governor Charles Knowles and rich Kingston merchants against most other planters. Historian George Metcalfe calls the government of Knowles (1752-1756) “one of the unhappiest in Jamaican history,” when the colony was “reduced to a state of confusion and virtual anarchy.” The governor supported the merchants of the island against the “landed interest” that dominated the Assembly; he tried to transfer the capital from Spanish Town to Kingston, the center of merchant activity. We do not know how Long fared in the years between his arrival in Jamaica and the Knowles administration. But it appears safe enough to suppose that his affairs were not in a good shape. (One clue we do have is the paltry allowance Edward received in London, about which I will speak later.) Financial interests and the need for official posts of profit may have led the struggling Samuel Long to side with the governor. Among other things, Knowles appointed him to the Council. Edward Long would later characterize the Council as an “unstable, dependent body, put in or turned out of their office at pleasure of the supreme executive power, presumed to be under the constant influence of that power, by hopes, fears, reward, or coercions,” and its members as “attached by friendship, fear, servility, a sense of their dependent state, or other motive, to a governor’s measures.” But even after the recalling of Knowles and appointment of a more “pro-Assembly” lieutenant-governor, Samuel Long remained one of the most intransigent opponents of the Jamaican legislature and “landed interest” until his death. His alleged illegal activities as a Justice of the Peace were investigated by the Assembly in 1756. During Knowles’ tenure, Samuel Long also forced his son Charles, by then already living on the island, to take a seat in the Assembly and “charged him on his duty to vote for the Governor’s measures,” which “conscience and honor of this unfortunate youth forbad.” Father renounced him

536 Ibid., 95.

537 Ibid., 95. In the only novel attributed to Long, a good-natured but misguided gentleman attempts to marry off, in fact to sell, his virtuous daughter for a promise of a large loan; The Anti-Gallican; or, The History and Adventures of Harry Cobham, Esquire (London: T. Lownds, 1757).

forever; Charles “sickened with a fever” and died in October 1756; the father’s forgiveness and desire of reconciliation came too late. Samuel Long died soon after, in January 1757. 539

The family was rapidly becoming a shambles. Edward’s father went from the “noble disinterestedness” of his Tredudwell years, when he only laughed good-naturedly at Charles and Edward’s pranks, 540 to a dependence upon a tyrannical Jamaican governor and his faction and, even worse, he tried to force his upright son into the same dependence. Under the threat of financial ruin, Edward’s mother committed indiscretions that made a “deep impression” on his youthful mind—“rather to the disadvantage of a parent whom I had hitherto honoured, and loved with an unbounded affection.” 541 The news of familial conflicts were reaching Edward in succession just as the boy was trying to adjust to a new place in the world, as a humble boarder in families and schools that did not quite conform to the Tredudwell standard of intimacy and gentility. Edward did not follow his family to Jamaica but was left in England to receive a proper education. The financial condition of the family did not allow sending him to a school of “a higher and expensive order,” so he attended a grammar school at Liskeard in Cornwall and lived in the house of a country physician, Doctor Star. Edward recalls that the Doctor could afford only two servants and no proper dining room. The family sat and ate in the kitchen, where the smoke nearly cost the young boarder his eyesight. The Doctor’s inability to provide his boarder with fuel in the winter was even more distressing. Edward was also allowed only one suit in a year, and his everyday coat “was patched and darned in a thousand places. “I confess,” he writes, “this was a circumstance which wounded my pride very much.” The boarder had a room to himself, but Doctor Star’s own two sons and manservant “pigged together in the same bed.” The doctor’s wife was kind to Edward, but scolded her own children “outrageously” and sometimes did not refrain from giving her husband “a violent Box on the ear.” So, recalls Long, “however uncomfortable my meals were rendered by the Growlings of the Doctor, the Squawling of her brats, the vociferations of the larger children and the servants, not to mention her own shrill accents, I took care never to interfere in their disputes, but confined my attentions entirely to the occupation of eating and drinking in silence.” Long was clearly out of place, and he lived as much as possible in his own world; his room was “always sacred from the intrusions of the Family.” And no sooner did Edward agree to share his bed with the Doctor’s eldest son (because the younger fell ill of the smallpox), than he contracted a “rank itch” that lasted five weeks. 542

After several years at Liskeard, in the summer of 1752, Edward traveled to London. The 18-year old boy was to attend Christ’s Hospital, a famous charity school, and to board with the school’s writing master, Mr. Smith, in what Long called in his memoirs an execrable garret room. Among the day scholars at the writing school, recalls Long, there were a son of Lord Vane and a son of Sir Edward Walpole. These “honourable associates kept us in tolerable countenance; my pride however revolted not a little at mixing in a sort of school with such a profusion of Charity Boys.” Long had no objections to the quality of his education but “very many” objections to Mr. Smith’s style of living and to his wife—a former housemaid and an “ignorant little Hussey,” conspicuously lacking in gentility. Once again Long notes in his memoirs only two servants and

539 Records and Letters, 111.
540 Ibid., 85.
541 Ibid., 95.
542 Ibid., 86, 88-93.
meals in the kitchen as marks of vulgarity, and describes his small garret without a fireplace and with an abundance of bugs.543

Two years later, Edward left Mr. Smith and was placed with Henry Wilmot, a solicitor at Grey’s Inn, following the usual practice for young students intended for the bar. Long seriously trained himself for a legal career, and later, not satisfied with slaving away like a “Hackney scribe” and writing “50 skins of Parchment p. diem” as methods of professional development, resolved upon independent study and court attendance to educate himself in the law. While so preparing to earn his own living, Edward continued to subsist on an allowance of £60 per year for all of his needs, forced, as he recalls, sometimes to live for weeks on tea, bread, and butter. For comparison, Henry Wilmot’s other apprentice from a Jamaican family, William Henry Ricketts, who would become Long’s close life-long friend, received from his father £400 per year. Long was not alone in London – he would later write warmly about his uncle Beeston, who became a sort of surrogate father to Edward and supervised his education in England. But the uncle apparently did not provide much material support, and distressing news about the family continued to come from Jamaica. By 1756 Edward’s mother was already living in England, separated from the family and not allowed to see her youngest daughter. Long describes the method that his sister’s schoolmistress adopted out of pity: “having placed a high screen in the room where visitors commonly were introduced, a slit was cut in one of the panels, thro’ which my mother whenever she came, was indulged with liberty to peep at my Sister, and to hear her sing or play on the Harpsichord.” Long himself had had to write to his father in Jamaica to ask for permission to maintain relations with his mother after the separation.544

In these unhappy years Long also began his literary life at the lower end of the London print culture. The boy apparently exhibited an inclination and aspiration to belles lettres early on. Long recalls how he “feasted upon the elegant pages of Addison with the utmost and unceasing delight,” after he received a set of the Spectator, Tatler, and a few Latin classics at the age of eleven or twelve. His father wrote to him in 1752: “You must take care to alter, as soon as possible your present style of writing, which, tho’ proper enough when you were with Mr Star, will by no means redound to your credit now. Plain English wrote in an easy manner is more agreeable to the reader than high flights and forced conceits, larded with scraps of Latin and Greek without any coherence and without any design that I can find out, but to blot and waste so much paper by way of Letter.”545 Very likely the boy had exhibited his stylistic ambitions in previous letters to the father. Around this time, after moving to London and matriculating at Christ’s Hospital, Edward entered on his own the world of print: “…[T]o employ some portion of my leisure time of which I had a great deal too much, I purchased some types from a printer of Ballads, whom I found out in one of y° dirty alleys near Snow Hill, and having contrived a small press, I amused myself with printing some of Æsops Fables, and villainous verses of my own

543 Ibid., 105-106. Curiously, almost seventy years previously, William Byrd I requested London merchants to send him an indentured apprentice boy, which might, as he was informed, “bee had from the hospitall [Christ’s Hospital] at any time, such as are very capable of our buisnesse,” William Byrd I to Perry and Lane, 8 March 1685/86, The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776, ed. Marion Tinling, foreword Louis B. Wright (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 1:58. The school was then a known source of indentured servants for the colonies.


545 Samuel Long to Edward Long, 18 March 1752, Records and Letters, 125.
composition.” This was certainly not an ordinary step. Later during his legal apprenticeship, he apparently became acquainted with what historians today call “the literary underground” and with the scribal culture, hackney writers who “slaved from morning to night at the Desk, and earned only a miserable pittance” to keep themselves and their families from starving. Long’s own occupation at the office of Henry Wilmot was probably not much different, but unpaid. It is also possible that Long seriously considered literary pursuits as at least a temporary way to earn some additional income. We have no certain evidence of Edward’s early literary activities, except for a note by a certain M.S., who cared enough to write in 1813 to The Gentleman’s Magazine in order to add several titles to the list of Long’s printed works, which was included in Long’s obituary. In the September issue of The Gentleman’s Magazine, M.S. drew on the information from an “Old Friend” of Long’s to assert that, in addition to the renowned History of Jamaica and political pamphlets, the deceased had also been the author of The Anti-Gallican, an anonymous novel published in 1757, and that he had contributed to a periodical entitled The Prater. The latter was an imitation of The Spectator published in 1756 apparently under the direction of J. Holcombe, about whom nothing is now known. Both The Anti-Gallican and The Prater were printed for Thomas Lowndes, the bookseller for whom were also printed all of the other works certainly written by Long or attributed to him by M.S. or John Nichols, the editor of The Gentleman’s Magazine, including The History of Jamaica. Given Long’s early literary inclinations, it is probable that he would attempt to publish something during his years in London, and the attribution to him of The Anti-Gallican and contributions to The Prater does not seem unlikely.


547 John Nichols’ short notice of Long’s death in The Gentleman’s Magazine (vol. 83, part 1, May 1813, p. 490), listing the works for which the public is indebted to Long, is taken almost verbatim from Nichols’ own note on Long’s publications in his Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century (London: Nichols, Son, and Bentley, 1812-1816), 3:182. According to this work, Long’s History of Jamaica was published by William Bowyer, whose apprentice Nichols was at the time. The letter by M.S., a response to Nichols’ death notice, is found in The Gentleman’s Magazine 83, part 2 (September 1813), pp. 215-16. It was reprinted by Nichols in an additional volume of the Literary Anecdotes in 1816 (8:433-35). The Literary Anecdotes remains a major source of information on eighteenth-century publishing and literary life for bibliographers; in modern library catalogs, all attributions to Long are based on these two lists by Nichols and M.S. Nichols attributes to Long, in addition to the famous History of Jamaica, the following works: The Trial of Farmer Carter’s Dog Porter, for Murder (London: T. Lowndes, 1771), Candid Reflections upon the Judgement Lately Awarded by the Court of King’s Bench, in Westminster Hall, on What is Commonly Called the Negroe-Cause, by a Planter (London: T. Lowndes, 1772), English Humanity No Paradox: or, An Attempt to Prove, That the English Are Not a Nation of Savages (London: T. Lowndes, 1778); A Free and Candid Review, of a Tract, Entitled, “Observations on the Commerce of the American States” (London: T. and W. Lowndes, 1784). Drafts for Candid Reflections and Free and Candid Review survive among Long’s papers in the British Library. Not named among Long’s works in modern catalogs is a publication to which Nichols refers as “Letters on the Colonies, 1775,” and which I would identify as Three Letters to a Member of Parliament, on the Subject of the Present Dispute with Our American Colonies (London: T. Lowndes, 1775). It indeed seems likely to be Long’s. M.S. attributes to Long the following works: The Prater. By Nicholas Babble, Esq. (London: T. Lowndes, 1756), with Long as a contributor; second edition published in 1757; The Anti-Gallican; or, The History and Adventures of Harry Cohom, Esquire (London: T. Lowndes, 1757); The Sentimental Exhibition; or, Portraits and Sketches of the Times (London: T. Lowndes, 1774). M.S. also notes that Long wrote sundry poems and fugitive essays, some of which were printed in St. James’s Chronicle and London Packet in the 1770s and 1780s. Robert Mowbray Howard, the family historian who had access to a large archive of Edward Long’s personal papers since apparently destroyed, names him as the sole author of The Prater, but does not mention the other works listed by M.S., Records and Letters, 123.

548 Thomas Lowndes himself, a “bookseller in Fleet Street” who ran an extensive circulating library, was a curious representative of the everyday literary business in eighteenth-century London. Nichols characterizes him as “a strong-minded uneducated man; rough in his manners, but of sterling integrity,” who acquired “a considerable fortune” by “persevering industry” (Literary Anecdotes, 3:646).
Both are hack productions with a comic twist, conventionally ridiculing contemporary fashions and mores.

2. Pursuits of Independence: The Economic Mind

Long’s literary and legal career suddenly ended at the beginning of 1757, when his father died in Jamaica. Edward, like his brother Charles, had been intended for a career in law or trade. His uncle Beeston Long was a very successful West-Indian merchant, and the family fully appreciated the business and career opportunities offered by the global expansion of British imperial power. Samuel Long had intended to leave all or most of his Jamaican property in entail to his eldest son Robert and his issue, and so to avoid splitting the family wealth. This decision apparently was formalized by Samuel Long as a will in 1745 or 1746, before he left England for Jamaica. Perhaps we may see it as a desire to stabilize and secure at least some material basis for the gentlemanly status and peaceful genteel world of Tredudwell that Samuel Long had been so carefully building — even though Samuel himself had tried to cut off the entail in which he had received the Jamaican estates, in order to sell some land and pay off the debts of his father. A stable continuation of landed gentility for generations to come was an essential element of gentility’s make-up as a cultural construct; the present was impossible without a specific normative future. (According to Edward Long, it was also Samuel Long who renamed Seven Plantations, his Jamaican seat and the true foundation of the family’s standing, as Longville.)

And so, Samuel Long’s younger children received only £1000 each, plus £500 more payable upon the death of their mother. Sure, it can be argued that a Jamaican estate was a far from secure material foundation for English gentility. It had not performed that role well for Samuel Long himself, who spent his life embroiled in lawsuits, political squabbles, and debt and had to seek income from offices. But he did not really have a choice. He could hardly hope to acquire a comparable and more secure estate in England, and Longville, already belonging to the family for generations, was a landed property that always carried in itself a hope of improvement, good performance, and increase in value in the uncertain, but dynamic Caribbean economy. This was the best the Long dynasty could have.

Having discovered the provisions of the will, Edward’s uncle Beeston advised him to go immediately to Jamaica in order to stand up for his interests, which Edward did, before even completing his full time at Grey’s Inn. His situation was not hopeless and his personal presence on the island proved useful, because the question of dividing Samuel Long’s inheritance was not fully resolved. For unknown reasons, Samuel Long changed his mind shortly before his death, and made over one moiety of his main estate, Longville Park, to Charles by a formal deed (which

549 For instance, Beeston Long to Edward Long, 31 January 1750, Records and Letters, 124.

550 Records and Letters, 126.

551 Ibid., 76.

552 Ibid., 38.

553 See the will of Samuel Long, National Archives, PROB /11/835, 358-360.

554 Records and Letters, 111. Going to Jamaica also gave young Edward an immediate source of income: he served as secretary to his brother-in-law Sir Henry Moore, then the new governor of the island. Long’s close friend Mary Ricketts wrote from Jamaica later, in 1758: “Col. Haldane coming as Governor, will Be a Great Loss to Long, for I make no Doubt, he will Bring some Scotchman with him, to fill the Place of Secretary it Being a very profitable thing”; Mary Ricketts to her sister, 23 June 1757 (actually 1758), BL Add. MS 30001, 6.
probably also means that Samuel’s possession of the Jamaican estates was by this time not limited by entail, and his early efforts had succeeded). He also apparently intended to change his will, and to leave some property to Edward. But the intention went unrealized, perhaps leaving a trace of uncertainty about the strength of paternal affection. As Edward wrote from Jamaica to his close friend William Henry Ricketts, “I impute my Father’s leaving me almost totally unprovided for, to have been owning more to Indolence, than Disaffection for me.” Since Charles died soon after this gift from his father, the timing suggests that Samuel’s change of mind was part of the intended reconciliation with him – if Edward Long’s story of the conflict between the two is correct. Robert inherited the moiety from Charles (who died without issue) and, after the death of the father, made it over to Edward, respecting the father’s unrealized intention. Having been made over to Charles, the moiety Edward received from Robert was by now not in entail, unlike the rest of Robert’s estate.

Edward still appeared to own one moiety of Longville Park in 1791, but his main estate in Jamaica and the main source of his income became the plantation of Lucky Valley, situated not far from Longville Park, on Pindar River. He bought a moiety of Lucky Valley in 1760 from his brother Robert, who also rented the other moiety from Charles Long, Robert and Edward’s uncle. If Edward’s own subsequent description of the condition of Lucky Valley at the time of the purchase is to be trusted, he clearly bought the plantation with the intention to develop it on his own, nearly from scratch. According to Long’s recollections in 1777, Lucky Valley in 1760 barely raised 80 hogsheads of sugar a year, and Robert Long was losing money on renting his uncle’s moiety for £400 sterling. The entire plantation was valued at almost £20,000 Jamaican currency (less than £15,000 sterling). Lucky Valley was far from the nearest shipping place and connected to it by a bad road; the slave gang was small, with many old or disabled; the plantation had no woodland for timber, no water mill, no hospital for the slaves. The equipment and buildings were in a wretched state. Large investments were necessary, and Long asserts to have put almost £50,000 currency into Lucky Valley over the years, spent on more land, buildings, roads, and slaves. By 1769, when he left the island, Long had added to the approximately 1000 acres of the old mateship of Lucky Valley more than 400 acres of his own, and afterwards he continued expanding the plantation. The number on slaves on the plantation was also growing; in 1769 the plantation was staffed by 252 slaves, and in 1780 it had 300. Long estimated, probably in the late 1780s, that Lucky Valley required a yearly addition of 10 to 12 negroes and that the

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556 The uncertain details of the joint proprietorship of Longville Park were recorded by Edward Long’s son from the father’s words in 1791, see Records and Letters, 126. The date of Samuel’s will is given as 1746 or perhaps 1747 in this record and in Long’s memoirs (Records and Letters, 111), but in an earlier document the same will is dated 1745: “Release by Charles Long, Saxmundham, to Beeston Long, as representative of Charles Long of Queen Sq., and as devisee in trust and executor of Samuel Long, and to Robert Long as heir in law and devisee of Samuel Long, of all claim on the estates of Charles Long and Samuel Long. May 28 1767,” Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, HA18/BD/1/3.

557 See also a table among Long’s papers, probably compiled in 1739 and listing sugar plantation in Jamaica, with the annual quantity of sugar made at each plantation on average for several years before 1739; 60 hogsheads is the average crop of Lucky Valley, BL Add. MS 12431, 155.

558 “Edward Long’s Proposals for his Property at Lucky Valley, November 1777,” Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, HA18/GD/1.

559 Plan of Lucky Valley Estate, in the Island of Jamaica, surveyed at the request of Edward Long Esqr. by James Blair, 1769, BL Add. MS 43379A.
mortality rate among them was about 1 in 30 per annum; he said nothing about the birth rate. By 1777, the plantation that was worth £20,000 currency in 1760 was already valued at about £47,500 currency. As follows from a table that Long complied sometime in the late 1780s, Lucky Valley brought in on average 246.4 hogsheads of sugar per annum between 1764 and 1787, plus rum. Average net proceeds after all the contingent charges, Long calculated at about £3880 sterling per annum. The proceeds could go as high as £6387 sterling in 1773 and as low as £858 sterling in 1771. The sum of £400 sterling per annum that Long continued to pay in rent to his uncle for one moiety of Lucky Valley is not included in these calculations of profit.

During his twelve-year residence in the island, Edward Long became Chief Judge of Vice Admiralty Court in Jamaica, which post, presumably with some income, he preserved after leaving the island and relinquished only in the 1790s. He was elected a member of the Assembly three times, in 1761, 1765, and 1766, and became the Speaker of the Assembly in September 1768, but for less than two weeks. In 1758, he married Mary Ballard Beckford, who belonged to a junior branch of the powerful Beckford dynasty and was not very likely to inherit any considerable wealth. Four of their six children were born in Jamaica. But, of course, Long’s main goal in the island was to build an estate that could support his independence and social position in England. When his wife’s uncle Ballard Beckford died in 1764, Mary was second in line to inheriting £40,000 worth of property in Jamaica and a fine estate in New York, all this depending on the life of an infant to whom Beckford left his estates. Long was offered £7,000 Jamaican currency down to give up this chance of inheritance, which, as he wrote to Ricketts, “I have a good Inclination to accept, as it will set me clear of all Creditors, with something in hand and an Estate making between 2 & 3 [hundred] hds Sugar, & all this might bid fair to carry me to my Dear Native Country. I can no more be happy here, than Gulliver was among the Yahoos, & why should I put a future Contingency, precarious at best, in competition with the means of present happiness?” We do not know if Long accepted the offer, but he certainly did not receive the main part of the Beckford inheritance, and two and a half years later he still did not know whether he would ever be able to set foot in England, despite making 360 hogsheads of sugar in 1767 and expecting even more the next year. “Yet,” writes Long, “I live in hope, and crawl out of Debt as fast as I can, that I may if possible carry my Children over at proper time to fix them in a proper cause of Education, and repair my nerves, which begin to suffer by too long a relaxation in this Climate.”

The economic pitfalls or even moral compunctions of absenteeism did not outweigh the uncivilized rudeness and dangers of the tropical sugar complex where Long’s money came from. Like Orrery, this English-born planter wished to organize the “machine” of his estate so as to be able to leave it behind.

Long left Jamaica in 1769, apparently finding it possible now to aspire to refined independence in England, where his children were able to attend Harrow and Cambridge rather than a charity school like Long himself. Having inherited little, he probably saw himself as a man who had built a relatively successful estate from a humble foundation. As he wrote to Ricketts from Jamaica,

560 BL Add. MS 18961, 82.
561 Ibid., 80.
562 Records and Letters, 122.
563 Long to Ricketts, 12 December 1764, William Salt Library, 49/90/44, 6.
564 Idem to idem, 22 July 1767, William Salt Library, 49/90/44, 8.
presumably in the early 1760s, when his work of estate improvement was in full swing, it was best to depend on Providence and oneself; “these two, you will find never failing Friends, and these only, will be sufficient, (exclusive of accidents) to make you Independent of the world.”

Long continually tried to improve Lucky Valley from a distance, to introduce and perfect techniques of the growing and processing of the cane. But it appears from fragmentary records that his road towards comfortable and easy independence, based on merit and industry, was never quite completed. He never purchased in England a proper country seat of his own, moving from one rented country house to another. Between 1769 and 1813, he lived in at least nine such residences and maybe more. Long’s London house, No. 46 Wimpole Street, was also rented from 1781 to 1802. According to the family historian Robert Mowbray Howard, the search for a house was actively pursued for many years, but Long “never succeeded in finding an estate which he liked well enough to purchase.”

Perhaps the difference between what Long felt himself entitled to, or what would correspond to his dignity, and what he could actually afford was part of the explanation for such an interesting lack of suitable dwellings in South-West England. Long took up Park House at Arundel, his last place of residence, for himself, his daughter Elizabeth, and her husband Henry Howard in 1803; but two years later he had to give it up because his income was “much reduced,” and the owner of the house, the Duke of Norfolk, then allowed Henry Howard to live there rent-free. Long continued to live with his daughter and son-in-law at Park House, a place that was not his own, until his death in March 1813.

As Long wrote to his eldest son in 1787, “[M]y great unhappiness, my dear E., is the having so numerous a Family depending upon one, who is so little enabled to requite their expectations or to promote and establish their future comfort in life in the manner becoming their merits or corresponding to their wants.” In practice this could mean, for instance, Long’s inability to help his daughter Jane Catherine in 1791, when Henry Dawkins, the father of her fiancé Richard, refused his consent to the union on the grounds that the joint incomes of the two were insufficient and the couple would be a financial burden to him. Long was understandably wounded by the lack of amiable reception that his daughter’s “accomplished mind and manners might justly challenge from the proudest, or the noblest connection in the Kingdom.” But the “accomplishments” were in sad disharmony with the financial circumstances; as he wrote to his daughter, “I expect the recent West Ind. News will make Mr D. more irritable than ever. It is a Risque however that we all share. My property is subject to the Risque & so must your dependance on it be, & there is no help for this. You know the insignificant Returns I have received these last three years, make frugality a Duty at present, from which I cannot depart.” When Catherine assured her father “in the strongest language,” as he wrote to the intransigent Henry Dawkins, “that her whole Happiness depends upon her becoming your Son’s wife,” Long reluctantly allowed his daughter to marry Richard. But he could not offer financial help and could only recommend to the couple frugality and strict economy as the means that could ensure their

565 Idem to idem, 26 May, year unknown, before 1763, William Salt Library, 49/90/44, 1.
566 For instance BL Add. MS 18272, 34-5.
567 Records and Letters, 291.
568 Records and Letters, 122-23.
independence from such an insensitive and obstinate father as Mr. Dawkins.571 While in theory personal accomplishments and marital love were more important than wealth, it was the latter that created a space of independence in which the potential of the mind, including the proper marital relationship and personal happiness, could be most successfully realized. Several years previously, Long took care to recommend to his son (then on a European tour) Mary Thomlinson, a wealthy heiress and a friend of the family, who had just come of age: “It is my duty to point out whatever occurs to me as a method of ensuring your future independence and with it, no small degree of happiness. She has every quality of heart that is amiable, and the E. Indies would not be too far, in my opinion, to go in search of a Companion and Friend, so valuable as she is.”572

Independence as the point where material standing and human quality coincide in a social self was certainly a prime concern for Edward Long, and not surprisingly so. The story of the Long family must have amply demonstrated to him the close relationship between wealth and humanity. In the complicated age of fluctuating markets and financial bubbles, wealth ceased to be an unshakable, and consequently imperceptible, bedrock of a gentleman’s social and cultural position and became an existential problem, especially for those whose fortunes were of suspicious origin and were too much embedded in the new economy. The material foundation of the idyllic social and moral order of Tredudwell became visible just at the time when the material foundations of Britain’s unparalleled culture and unequalled political order were increasingly coming into the focus of public discussion. When the status to which he aspired and the noble disinterestedness which he carefully maintained or imagined were threatened, Samuel Long went back to the crude sources of his wealth and status, the crass commercial world of staple agriculture in the tropics “beyond the line” of civilization.573 He never came back from the West Indies, either literally or figuratively, even though his virtuous self and happiness, as well as those of his family, had been built on the mental dissociation from the plantation complex. His (according to Edward) considerable skills in husbandry went into cultivating a Cornwall farm that could not provide him with a respectable income—a toy world of improvement for the sake of improvement, where a gentleman could play God and realize his design for the universe. He separated industry from gain, preferring to keep the one away from the taint of self-interest, and being content to leave the other beyond the sea.

Meanwhile in Jamaica, lazy and corrupt overseers and managers were ruining distant planters, governors succeeded one another only to give full reign to their hidden depravity, and the corrupt air destroyed the bodies of unfortunate sojourners.574 The link between property, rank, and personality was broken. In the tropics, amidst the unrestrained pursuit of gain, men’s more sordid

571 Edward Long to Jane Catherine Long, 11 November 1791; to Henry Dawkins, same date; to Jane Catherine Long, 27 November 1791, *Records and Letters*, 277-78.


574 Long notes that one of the first things he learned about Jamaica was that his mother had contracted a crippling illness there in the mid-1720s, and that the ship on which she was sent back to England, “more dead than alive,” also carried her coffin. She got better, but remained an invalid for life (*Records and Letters*, 87). As for the governors, “it is very natural to suppose, that the lust of unlimited power, inherent to mankind, will always ravage most licentiously in those sequestered places, where the hand which should restrain its career is too distant, and the reins are too much slackened by their immoderate length,” HJ 1:3.
passions were set free, and there were always enough of those who were not content with their natural station, those who wanted to rise to the top fast and become rich without honest work. Left at the disposal of such dregs of humanity, the island was consumed in corruption, only encouraged by badly selected and uncontrolled governors. It was commonly understood that these rulers, freed from the restraints of an established political system and regulated society, did not go to the colonies “merely for the sake of taking the air” (History of Jamaica, hereafter HJ, 1:7). Bribery and usury flourished, snatching hard-earned fruits of industry from honest cultivators and allowing the vilest specimens to accumulate easy riches (HJ 1:544). The governors, consummate examples of “artifice, duplicity, haughtiness, violence, rapine, avarice, meanness, rancour, and dishonesty, ranged in succession” (HJ 1:4), stirred up factional struggle to catch their fish in muddy waters, and brought chaos to the political life of the colony. And “waste of time, obstruction to all profitable business, are the least hurtful consequences. Fortunes have been consumed here, whole families ruined, by opposition; and many honest creditors defeated of their due (perhaps ruined also), by numerous insolvencies. The father has been embittered against the son, the son against the father; the warmest friends have been converted into implacable enemies; and many have descended into their graves without reconciliation and forgiveness” (HJ 1:25). Long obviously had in mind the story of his own family when writing these words. Nature contributed to the chaos, sending hurricanes and droughts that made any property in the colonies, and the lives of the gentlemen and gentlewomen dependent on it, even more uncertain.

Long’s wealth came from the primitive colonial world inhabited by “Yahoos,” and, in order for him to maintain his cherished independence and the integrity of his social self, that world had to become his lifelong concern in England. Long really found himself in the intellectual, practical, and political labor of improvement, throughout his life consistently and habitually seeing his property and his social and economic independence in a larger imperial context. In the true Whig spirit, governance, taxation, or trade regulation were for him questions of immediate personal concern. As he remarked, with an eye to the metropolitan audience, in the opening of a large manuscript study of the constitution and government of Jamaica,

It is natural for a Man in any Degree curious to endeavour at acquiring some Knowledge of that Country’s Constitution where his Property lies. – And he who purposes removing from his present Settlement to a remoter, and where he expects to live with more Comfort, to enjoy more Liberty, or to increase his Fortune, must be very deficient in common prudence, if he previously enquire not into the Nature of the Laws and Government under whose Restraint or Protection he is going to put himself. – As well as into the Tenure by which he is to enjoy any new Possessions (he is about to purchase) and how far his Condition in respect to Freedom and Happiness may be altered for the better or worse by the Change.575

For Long, this was indeed the natural mode of thinking. His papers are full of reflections on policy, calculations of trade volumes, average prices and expenses of running plantations in Jamaica, and records of crops, insurance costs, or average profits. These meticulous reflections move easily between Lucky Valley and the entire island in the imperial context, and Lucky Valley can be represented in them as simply a particular case study in Jamaican planting – “a Water Mill Estate in Jamaica capable in good years of making from 300 to 400 hhds Sugar.”576 Apart from their practical meaning, Long’s obsessive manipulations with numbers seem to be almost a form of “therapy” – a ritual assertion of agency, a claim of control over the distant property and over the underpinnings of Long’s own social self, so painfully and uncertainly out of


576 BL Add. MS 12413, 64; also see BL Add. MS 12412, 12414.
his immediate reach. There was little he could actually do about Lucky Valley, and even that depended on others – the problem already familiar to us from the experience of the Earls of Orrery. Long was fortunate, for almost two decades after he left Jamaica, to have a reliable friend and representative in the island, a certain Mr. Wynter. When the relationship was about to end, Long complained in “great anxiety”: “I shall be entirely at a loss for a successor, and the whole plan I had formed, and which he was to have pressed in the management of my affairs, must drop.” With all his plans and calculations, he was essentially helpless and dependent on someone else. The lines quoted here come from the same letter in which Long complains to his son about his inability to provide properly for the large family. Accidentally or not, both references to significant reductions of his income that we have seen above (by Long himself in a letter to his daughter and by Howard in the account of Long’s last years at Park House) come from years after 1787. The actual numbers we do not have.

The only real forms of influence on Jamaican affairs available to Long were political and intellectual. He was a prominent member of the West India lobby in London, a correspondent and spokesman of the Jamaican political elite, author of pamphlets and newspaper articles on colonial affairs and imperial trade. He had connections in the inner circle of William Pitt the Younger – the husband of Long’s niece was Thomas Steele, Secretary to the Treasury from 1784 to 1791 and Pitt’s personal friend. Jane Catherine, Long’s daughter and the future wife of Richard Dawkins, for some time in the late 1780s lived in Steele’s house. In February 1788, Steele writes to Long: “Mr. Pitt has no view in wishing to meet you today, expect for the purpose of making acquaintance with the Author of the History of Jamaica which I found him yesterday morning occupied in reading, and as he expressed his admiration of the performance I proposed to him the meeting of to-day…. He hungers and thirsts after knowledge, and you are more likely that any other person I know to satisfy his voracious appetite.”

Of course, The History of Jamaica, published in 1774, was the basis of Long’s reputation and any political role he could play in England and the West Indies. It was also the center of his life-long project of improvement. He began collecting materials for this work when still in Jamaica, during the time when he worked “on the ground” to establish a profitable estate and ensure his gentlemanly independence. He continued the work on the projected second edition late into his life. Knowledge was central to the project of improvement, and the misleadingly entitled History of Jamaica was a vast compendium of all kinds of possibly useful information about the colony as a country and as a polity – natural, demographic, legal, political, historical, and so on, mixed with proposals and suggestions for more effective government. Along with the work of building his own estate and creating a sure basis for his own gentlemanly self, Long concerned himself with creating or improving the social and political body where his property lay, and without whose harmonious development the security of Long’s property and status, as well as the prosperity and progress of Britain as a whole, would be hardly thinkable. Accepting the obvious fact that Jamaica was a commercial society, and taking pride in that, Long strove to make it a better commercial society, settled and orderly – a harmonious world where the best, industrious and virtuous, would naturally receive their due; where “faeces would remain peaceably at the

578 Thomas Steele to Edward Long, 27 February 1788, Records and Letters, 254. On Thomas Steele and his intimate friendship with Pitt, see Steele’s obituary in The Gentleman’s Magazine 94, part 1 (January 1824), 82-83. For Jane Catherine’s letters to Long from Steele’s house, dated by December 1788 and relating the latest political affairs, see Records and Letters, 259-61.
bottom; and all the other particles range themselves in different strata, according to their quality, the most refined floating always at top” (HJ 1:25). This society would become the best and strongest kind of empire, where commerce, industry, and civilization would fuse to ensure human happiness, and where the private wealth and status of gentlemen like Long would be a necessary, beneficial, and secure social and moral function. Long’s vision is exalted indeed, though not original:

To establish wholesome laws; to help and promote industry, commerce, and trade; to administer impartial justice; to reclaim uncultivated lands, and make them profitable; is to strengthen a state, more than can be by conquests; it is, in short, to acquire new countries, and a new community of useful subjects, without making any one person miserable, or shedding one drop of human blood. The present situation and circumstances of Jamaica afford opportunities of strengthening and improving it, by various means (some whereof I have presumed to suggest)... without making any one miserable, but by bestowing real happiness; by adopting the sentiments of a mild and free government; by relieving from indigence and oppression, and inviting strangers to a comfortable means of subsistence for themselves and their posterity (HJ 1:508-509).

The anthropological and moral dimension of this vision, the relationship between “man” (or a man such as Edward Long) and this kind of social project, and the possible existential implications of the latter will be my subjects for the rest of the chapter. Together with Long, I will treat in a more abstract and philosophical manner the problems of social selfhood Long encountered in the process of making sense of his experiences and the history of his family.

3. The Propertied Animal

I will begin by observing that Long’s “man” is a social being, insofar as he fulfills a social function, and that this applies potentially even to the “dregs of society” who generally threaten communal peace. A social system, a government, and a set of laws reflecting the law of nature and essential moral norms can provide the necessary curb on the passions. No less importantly, such a system can direct human energy towards the general good: “Men of restless tempers, and many of indifferent morals, which might render them noxious in the mother-state, may often become very useful citizens, when transplanted into the remoter parts of the empire; yet it seems reasonable to think, that, in order to become useful, they must undergo their probation in colonies already well-settled, and subjected to a regular form of government, where wholesome laws connect and strengthen all the obligations of society, and where a competent power resides to put those laws in full execution” (HJ 1:287).

Note that the “restlessness” and personal energy of tempers and passions that may often disregard the demands of public order and morality may be superfluous and only dangerous in well-developed and civilized communities, but they are also associated with the drive of development and underlie growth so vital for young societies. On the other hand, weak communities that are in the state of infancy can be easily overcome by the chaos of human passions. Consider the French colony of Mauritius, inundated by all manner of social outcasts, “bankrupts, ruined libertines, and cheats” after the Seven Years’ War. In such cases, where a strong system of laws and public authority that may turn potentially dangerous and a-moral energy into the fuel for orderly social development is absent, men corrupt society, instead of the social body civilizing men. According to Long’s sources, people in Mauritius “are totally insensible to every thing that constitutes the happiness of an honest man. No taste for letters, or the fine arts. The sentiments of nature are utterly depraved. Even the relative affections are extinguished. This indifference extends to every thing around them. Their houses are huts of wood that one might carry away upon a wheelbarrow. Their windows have neither glass nor curtains. There is no possibility of using carriages, for want
of roads, &c.” Such a settlement is simply a collection of individuals, not a social body as a system of interpersonal relations founded on social sentiment and embodied in culture and material achievements. Incidentally, it is in such places that the institution of slavery turns into licentious tyranny that serves the worst human passions, not the advancement of civilization through the cultivation of land. And so, observes Long, slaves in Mauritius (unlike, for instance, in the well-settled society of Jamaica) “can have no prospect of being treated with humanity, until their masters are first humanized; which will only happen by bringing them under the compulsion of wise laws, impartially and rigidly enforced” (HJ 3:938).

Humanity, including good natural sentiments and affections of the human heart and taste for arts and letters, is associated in this passage with laws – the spirit of social life and instruments that “[affix] certain bounds to mens passions and inclinations” in countries “where rational freedom is most enjoyed, as in England” (HJ 2:324). Wise laws encourage and leave unencumbered the spirit of industry also inherent in men, while at the same time curbing the invention of some men that is “ever on the stretch, to find out some new modifications of criminal pursuits” (HJ 1:22, 7). “Man alone” cannot by his nature resist his bias towards evil or the passions that pervade his soul. Passions direct one’s actions not so much against the dictates of reason, but simply irrespective of the notions of good and evil, discoverable by reason and felt by the soul. Laws, and society more generally, act as a filter differentiating among human drives. It does not matter in the greater scheme of things that some people are bad, since the social body generally, by its nature, serves the cause of good and makes men better. It is crucial that society here fulfills this nearly “soteriological” function, serving as the sphere in which human goodness exists and manifests itself. This is a case of the whole being more than the sum of its parts.

Of course, this applies to society in theory and characterizes the essence of society as a perfect type, not weak or perverse cases like Mauritius or African polities (about Africans later). Society ideally is order: “A well regulated Kingdom resembles the Glorious planetary System, where every Orb great or small has it’s appointed Circle for moving in, and each is so happily impelled, charted, and controiled by the Divine Agency, as to move in a variety of Directions, to act upon & to be reacted on by one another, without Conflict, or Confusion, or Excentricity still preserving the most beautiful harmony, & order.”579 The same applies to the pursuit of wealth, a sphere where the danger of submitting to the more sordid passions of human nature may be higher than usual: “The most perfect system of Commerce is that, which in the Order of it’s circuit, best resembles the harmony of the celestial Bodies, which move in their respective orbits without collision or confusion, and compleat their destined course in regular periods.”580 Long’s images of social life seem to be a variation of the idea of a self-regulating system today associated with the name of Adam Smith – a unity in which people’s particular talents and their pursuit of personal advantage contribute to the harmony of the whole. Long taught his son Edward Beeston Long that “[t]he talents of men are infinitely diversified; no two persons can be said to possess them equally like; but each member of the largest civilised community seems as it were destined to act some respective part in this great theatric [?], & qualified, in pursuing his own particular good, to promote that of others.”581 Everyone has a place in this social machine and possesses, in

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579 “Long’s Collections for the History of Jamaica,” BL Add. MS 18271, 57.
581 Edward Long to Edward Beeston Long, 1803 (?), copy, Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle, DHW 8/32.
his own sphere, “abilities to be exerted and functions to be exercised which perpetually are cooperating to the ends of human being. It is only when mortals deviate from their proper sphere, that we see disorder arise & anarchy prevail; for these are the sure ill consequences of talent misapplied.”

Integration of human passion and energy into the idea of order happens in the pattern of thought which interprets the consumption of material things and the increase of human material needs as part of the “ends of human being” and a sign of spiritual/intellectual advance. If man’s essential characteristic is his existence in an artificial, created environment, then the multiplication of this environment testifies to the elevation of humanity higher and higher above the level of animal nature of which we also partake. “Luxury” as the profusion of material goods and conveniences can be reinterpreted as “refinement,” the advance of civilization and humanity above the crudest material needs, and the multiplication of created forms over simple matter. Sugar, on which Long’s living depended, is a case in point. Long has little patience for “some pretended political theorists” who consider sugar a superfluity, a luxury we could do without. Savages in the state of nature certainly subsist without it and without many other “articles which are deemed very necessary among a civilized people,” such as salt, wine, shirts, or stockings. But what may be a luxury from the point of view of the state of nature can also be a cultural need. This must be so because our needs spur industry; turning luxuries into necessities is an excellent way to force people to labor and create, to integrate them into a social order of exchange and mutual dependence. Thus Central American Indians “are rather of an indolent temper; and will not labor, unless when indigent and compelled to it by want”; but it should be possible to turn their natural energy, which they expend in such too-natural occupations as hunting and fishing, or in war, into “walks of industry” (which Long clearly associates only with production and not with such extractive activities as hunting and gathering). For that, it is necessary to provide a market for their potential produce and supply goods for exchange, such as clothing: “Their wants will undoubtedly increase in proportion as they grow more civilized; and, in order to gain the costlier articles of dress and convenience, they may soon be taught, that nothing more is requisite on their part, than an advancement of skill, and redoubled diligence in selecting and procuring commodities of superior value, or larger collections of the same kind, for carrying on their barter, and due payment of their annual balance” (1:319). This logic, implicitly familiar to the modern reader, leads Long up to an exalted vision of a benevolent and moral empire of industry and exchange, founded, once again, on a system of “wholesome laws” and regulated freedom that encourage the best tendencies in human nature.

Long’s socio-economic vision was still far from commonplace when he wrote, but it was not unique or new. David Hume, in his essay “Of Refinement in the Arts” (or “Of Luxury”), formulated as well as anyone the new mid-eighteenth century understanding of the connection between material and intellectual advancement, which was rapidly becoming a commonplace. If “the same age, which produces great philosophers and politicians, renowned generals and poets, usually abounds in skilful weavers, and ship-carpenters,” it is because these human pursuits are essentially of the same nature. Material and intellectual creation, the cultivation of the soul and cultivation of the body go hand in hand and spread from one sphere into all the others when the minds of men are “once roused from their lethargy.” With the advance of refinement in both

582 Ibid.
583 BL Add.. MS 12412, 9-10.
material and intellectual life, men become more sociable because they interact more often with one another:

…Nor is it possible, that, when enriched with science, and possessed of a fund of conversation, they should be contented to remain in solitude, or live with their fellow-citizens in that distant manner, which is peculiar to ignorant and barbarous nations. They flock into cities; love to receive and communicate knowledge; to show their wit or their breeding; their taste in conversation or living, in clothes or furniture. Curiosity allures the wise; vanity the foolish; and pleasure both. Particular clubs and societies are everywhere formed: Both sexes meet in an easy and sociable manner; and the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour, refine apace. So that, beside the improvements which they receive from knowledge and the liberal arts, it is impossible but they must feel an encrease of humanity, from the very habit of conversing together, and contribute to each other’s pleasure and entertainment. Thus industry, knowledge, and humanity, are linked together by an indissoluble chain, and are found, from experience as well as reason, to be peculiar to the more polished, and, what are commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages.  

“Humanity” may just mean the love of mankind and human beings, but thus meaning is not really separable from the deeper meaning, the quality of being human. The “humanity” of a particular individual is a product of collective interaction, inseparable from belonging to a community; it “increases” in communication. A human being without society is not quite a human being, and society (the form that the transcendence of our animal nature takes) is founded in large part on the interaction through things – property that embodies our labor.

As the example of Central American Indians demonstrates, what is earned by industry is earned with the prospect of spending in mind, and luxurious spending must be understood as a social good. Long does not hesitate to establish a correspondence between wealth and extravagance. First, such correspondence is a right: a planter “undergoes infinite fatigues of body and mind, and when, after surmounting all difficulties, he sits down to the peaceable enjoyment of the fortune he has raised under such a crowd of disadvantages, he should be esteemed as one well entitled to reap, without envy, the hard-earned fruits of his industry” (HJ 1:463). However, the rhetorical emphasis on fatigues and vicissitudes only conceals the plain and a-moral naturalness of the correspondence between the substance of wealth and its exterior signs: thus simply by inheriting enormous estates in Jamaica that provided him with “a very large income,” Long’s grandfather, who lived in England, “was accordingly entitled to live with splendour.”  

The manner of spending is not so important: so what if the planter employs his fortunes “in gambling, or on elections, or hounds, or kept mistresses, or foreign tours?” After all, “nothing can more effectually rouse the ambition and activity of numbers of idle people, than to be the spectators of their [planters’] fortune.” And “is the public at large less benefited by what they expend, than by what they lay up?” Here again, through the institution of property, passion and vice can be converted into social good, much as in the writings of the reviled Bernard Mandeville. Outside of its negative moral connotations, luxury is a social function; the correspondence between the substance and the sign, the wealth and the display, is part of a larger social harmony where everyone works for the common good, willingly or not. As early as The Prater, Long (if it was Long) responded to the controversial plate tax of 1756 with an essay ridiculing a merchant who wants to sell his plate – an external sign of wealth – in order to avoid paying a tax to the state for

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585 Records and Letters, 67.

it. The plate tax was part of a series of taxes on luxury items thought at the time to be extremely clever: *hiding* such items of conspicuous display defeats the whole purpose of having them. Long hastens to close another loophole: *selling* them to make yourself seem poorer than you are appears no less ridiculous. Long’s primary function is not enjoyment but display – it is a form of signification and an expression of hierarchy that imposes upon human corruption and translates it into social good.

Property in general is a social function that defines one’s citizenship and can be a source of public emotion. Individuals being potentially equal in their imperfection, it is property that not only forms social gradation, but also infuses the resulting social and political system with spirit through a mobilization of selfish instincts and emotions. In his discussion of Jamaica’s public defense, Long observes sardonically that “we are certainly not entitled to hope for an anxious defence of our persons and goods, from the lowest orders of white inhabitants, through the impulse of public spirit, or of gratitude to the country: these are not often very conspicuous in more exalted stations” (HJ 1:128). An able army is going to cost money; and, “if any thing more remains to induce the lower order to undergo fatigue and danger with cheerfulness, it must be the example of their leaders, who it is to be wished were all men of real property in our island; whose fortunes being at stake, there is no doubt but this consideration would of itself be weighty enough to inspire them with an heroic ardour for their defence” (HJ 1:129). The moral role of the higher ranks – leading, inspiring, guiding, and being examples of citizenship to the lowly – can be ensured by a differentiation of property, which must first and foremost be a public category: “Men become more or less interested in public measures, comparatively, with their extent of property, or degree of affluence; and, indeed, the obligation for this duty to their country seems naturally to fall more upon them than on the lower class of people: they have more power to become the instruments of good; consequently, more is expected from them” (HJ 1:139). Long begins by acknowledging the connection between property and self-interest, but ends with a thoroughly civic-republican view of property as the foundation of public participation: property means “freedom for,” not “freedom against.” It is the freedom and ability to work for the public good, and, if necessary, this freedom can (or at least should) be enforced – more should be expected from you if you *can* do more. Being “propertied” is a social function.

Adam Ferguson observed disparagingly that man

finds in a provision of wealth, which he is probably never to employ, an object of his greatest solicitude, and the principal idol of his mind. He apprehends a relation between his person and his property, which renders what he

587 Long’s merchant is no idler: the money he is worth he “has acquired by sticking close to his shop, and taking care of the main Chance, and not leaving his business to be look’d after by journeymen, and apprentices.” Characteristically, his wife – the main defender of the family silver – does it only out of vanity. Long, *The Prater*, 31-39 (no. 5, April 10, 1756). On the discussions around taxes on luxuries see Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 10.


589 Marx and Engels’ reflections on the nature of capital come to mind: “To be a capitalist, is to have not only a purely personal, but a social, *status* in production. Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion. Capital is therefore not a personal, it is a social power”; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, with an introduction by Martin Malia (New York: Signet Classic, 1998), 67-68.
calls his own in a manner a part of himself, a constituent of his rank, his condition, and his character, in which, independent of any real enjoyment, he may be fortunate or unhappy; and, independent of any personal merit, he may be an object of consideration or neglect; and in which he may be wounded or injured, while his person is safe, and every want of his nature completely supplied.  

But what is “personal merit” if not public service? This is the field where “merit” is made a reality; merit without action is nothing. And what enables one to act effectively in the common interest if not one’s social position – rank, condition, and public character – ensured by property? Moreover, such ability should be backed up with legal obligation. Ferguson’s opposition can be easily reversed, and, far from being an extension of the person, property can be seen as the maker of persons – that which translates a “natural man” into a public self. And a necessary condition for a successful translation of personal acquisitive energy (which is so necessary for public prosperity, especially in young societies) into citizenship is a strong system of laws that regulate personal and property relations and a strong public authority to ensure that the necessary expectations of public service will become reality. Recall Long’s observations on the usefulness of “restless” individuals for young developing societies and on the need to restrain and direct their energy with the help of well established laws.

Nowhere is the utilization of raw immoral energy for the needs of social development, and the mechanics of the construction of useful citizens, more evident than in the colonial system of slavery. It is founded on the “obvious” and “immutable” natural fact that Africans are hardier and physically stronger than Europeans and are better fit for intensive agriculture in the tropics. However industrious and ambitious, Europeans can produce on tropical islands no more than enough “only to keep life and soul together.” Such subsistence economy, as eighteenth-century proponents of slavery were apt to argue, never could have supported the commerce, trade, and navigation that have become the pillars of British greatness and liberty. “Unable to do more than provide themselves with a mere support of existence from day to day,” colonial whites would “rapidly degenerate into indolent and miserable vagabonds, nuisances to the rest of mankind, unprofitable to themselves.” Such colonies would not make sense. Strangely enough, the tropical environment that makes it so difficult for whites to merely eke out a living, satisfies all the needs of blacks with a minimum of work. Owning their bodies is the only way to make those bodies serve the cause of civilization. And here again, the ultimate rationale for the ownership of persons limits the extent of property rights: “Reason requires, that the master’s power should not extend to what does not appertain to his service. Slavery should be calculated for utility, not for pleasure” (2:330). The role of slaves is akin to the role women at the dawn of society in the interpretation of Claude Lévi-Strauss: “Women are not primarily a sign of social value, but a natural stimulant; and the stimulant of the only instinct the satisfaction of which can be deferred, and consequently the only one for which, in the act of exchange, and through the awareness of reciprocity, the transformation from stimulant to sign can take place, and, defining by this fundamental process the transformation from nature to culture, assume the character of an institution.” For someone like Long, the difference between nature and culture is the difference between the animal and the human; slavery for pleasure is bestial, and slavery calculated for


591 Long, Candid Reflections, 14, 66.

utility and fixed as such in law is indeed an institution in which both master and slave are social functions that “humanize” their carriers.

To sum up, the pattern of disciplinarian thinking, in which human beings are seen as human primarily in their social capacity, and the quality of “humanity” is inseparable from external restraint and subordination to social function, is eminent in Long’s writing. It is equally applicable both to African slaves, whom life on the plantation improves not only morally but even physically, and to colonial governors, in whose case “we are not to expect, that men, invested with power at discretion, will forbear, from an innate principle of goodness, to make an ill use of it, while they can abuse it with impunity and profit” (HJ 1:4). But this is only one discursive level, and, I will argue, a more superficial one than the deep-running need to assert as an abstract and general axiom precisely that “innate principle of goodness” which may not be applicable to practical politics.

4. Human Society

In the course of his argument for the inferiority of Africans, Long writes: “It has been said, that the nature of their governments is unfavourable to genius, because they tolerate slavery; but genius is manifest in the right frame of government: they have republics among them as well as monarchies, but neither have yet been known productive of civility, or arts, or sciences.” The humanization of men by a system of laws and public authority is a phenomenon of everyday life, actual or such that can be planned and expected. Social order, government and laws may seem to impose human qualities from outside on “natural men” whose corrupt nature is prone to resist such imposition. But these external structures are themselves essentially expressions of the innate humanity, a certain higher genius that coexists in us with the principles of disorder and morally blind appetite. Thus, again about Africans: “Laws have justly been regarded as the master-piece of human genius: what then are we to think of those societies of men, who either have none, or such only as are irrational and ridiculous?” The same applies to the accumulation of material conveniences as well: “If it be true, that in other countries mankind have cultivated some arts, through the impulse of the necessities under which they laboured, what origin shall we give to those contrivances and arts, which have sprung up after those necessities were provided for? These are surely no other than result of innate vigour and energy of the mind, inquisitive, inventive, and hurrying on with a divine enthusiasm to new attainments” (HJ 2:378).

Man’s social and moral being are one and the same; Long finds the roots of moral behavior in labor and mutual dependence that define social intercourse. In an investigation of the origins of slavery that was eventually not included in The History of Jamaica, Long writes:

Revealed Religion teaches us, that Man is a depraved Creature; that it was in order to restrain his Crimes, and slacken his strong Bias to Evil, that God has established Authority, the necessity of Obedience, and the Diversity of Conditions: that it is both to inure the Wicked to work, even in spight of themselves, and to bring the Good to Perfection by ye practice of every Virtue, that God thought it proper to subject Men to the Alteration of Seasons, and the Severity [?] of ye Elements; in short to innumerable Wants that render them dependant on, and subordinate to each other. Morality emerges in relations among people, and these relations themselves are defined by labor, which takes man outside himself and connects him to other social (moral) agents. Mutual

593 BL Add. MS 18271, 66.
dependence is the form, and labor the content of social relations. Both are opposed to the "[a]bsolute Freedom, or such as the wild Animals of the Forrest Enjoy," which is "neither suitable to Man’s Nature, nor was intended for him by the Great Father of ye Human Race." Thus dependence and labor define humanity itself – or rather the moral nature of man, as opposed to the depravity of the state of absolute freedom. The multitude of our wants and the corresponding "Indispensableness of Labour" are both a punishment for our inclination to evil and a call for improvement, a means of the awakening of our moral potential. We are rendered useful to others in spite of ourselves and our evil dispositions, and personhood itself is a social category that emerges in relation to others, through the exchange of labor and mutual assistance to each other.

However, society is both external and internal to man; it is not simply an imposition of order on unwilling humans. This imposition reflects our higher nature and destiny, it is both a submission to necessity and an expression of an inner feeling: “Our Love of Society is persuant to ye Intention of God; It is so far our Natural Condition, that when our own profit ceases, we do not however go out of Society, nor are we ever free from the Ties that bind us to it, as they were made by the Divine hand.” Good and evil coexist in us, and human goodness coincides with the social aspect of man. Society reflects the good inherent in human nature and can be conceived as the essence of humanity. Here again we observe the move we saw in the case of Orrery and which, I would argue, characterizes much of eighteenth-century thinking on human nature and society, especially the discourse of sensibility and sociability. Society as a concept is identified with the ideal, with the perfection for which it is designed. The reality of corruption, injustice, and strife is bracketed out in the definition of the concept and is viewed as a deviation from the ideal “norm.”

Long identifies social development and progress with the higher qualities of the human mind, when he asserts that we have no other evidence of Africans’ possessing the “moral instinct” than “the vague conjectural positions, ‘that all men are equal, and that the disparity between one man and another, or one race of men and another, happens from accidental means, such as the artificial refinements, education, and so forth.’ Certain however it is, that these refinements must necessarily take place, where the moral sense and reasoning faculty are most abundant, and extensively cultivated; but cannot happen, where they either do not exist at all, or, are not distributed in such due portion, as to work the proper ascendancy over the more brutal species of instinct” (HJ 2: 477). Cultural forms that create differences among peoples are not accidental. And they are products of the mind’s highest manifestations, while the body is an instrument employed by the mind in their creation. Hence comes property as the material form that embodies social structure. The mind’s control of the body is the foundation of property and of material progress (the second nature), if one is to follow Locke in locating the origins of man’s property rights in “the labour of his body, and the work of his hands” by which man “removes” things from their natural state. “Property in person” implies the existence of something outside and above the physical person that can control, direct, and employ the latter. But even more
importantly, it implies a distance between the purposes for which the body is employed and the needs of the body. Satisfying such needs does not remove things from the state of nature. The body can and must be the means, but it must not be the end. Labor is a phenomenon of the mind, not of the body, and beasts, when they hunt and graze, do not labor and do not remove things from the state of nature. Where the mind is concerned, there may not be a tangible, material end, or at least it is not important, reasoned Adam Ferguson: “In devising, or in executing a plan, in being carried on the tide of emotion and sentiment, the mind seems to unfold its being, and to enjoy itself.” Sensuality and concentration on consumption are “but a distemper of the mind.... As a bond of society, as a matter of distant pursuit, the objects of sense make an important part in the system of human life. They lead us to fulfill the purpose of nature, in preserving the individual, and in perpetuating the species; but to rely on their use as a principal constituent of human felicity, were an error in speculation, and would be still more an error in practice.”

It is in their function as social bonds that material objects constitute property; it is in its function as an instrument of the mind that the human body acquires social life. When the body is the goal rather than an instrument, the spirit is dead or unborn. As Richard Steele (or possibly Joseph Addison) famously put it in his own project of cultural policing, “in the Number of the Dead, I comprehend all Persons of what Title or Dignity soever, who bestow most of their Time in Eating and Drinking, to support that imaginary Existence of theirs, which they call Life; or in dressing and adorning those Shadows and Apparitions, which are looked upon by the Vulgar as real Men and Women.” By contrast, the living are “laudably employed in the Improvement of their own Minds, or for the Advantage of others.”

The root of social relations, including the relations of dependence, lies in the familial ties, which, especially in the bond between parents and children, combine the emotional connection so important to our humanity with the relations of material dependence. The material dependence on the parents and the resulting obligations are, of course, only part of the relationship: “In antient Times, the Authority of ye Father, became heightned & made more Respectable, by his Age & Experience his Counsel, his provident Attention, and by ye natural Affection, & habitual Reverence early implanted in the Minds of his Children, & growing up as they advanced in Life; hence must have sprung a Mixture of Gratitude, Love, & Awe, the true sources of a reasonable Submission.” Obligation is not simply, or not so much, for sustenance and protection, but through them to the moral agent who provides them, because that which the agent produces by his or her labor is not separable from the person. It is a manifestation of the agent’s human qualities. The connection is only highlighted by the natural affection we feel for parents seemingly independently of our material relation to them, but in part because of the material position they occupy or the actions they perform as parents. Social hierarchy must be both that of persons (qualities) and that of materially conditioned social positions. Long begins the conjectural transition from the family to society thus: “Those of the best Disposition were the most diligent & probably the best beloved by their Parents; this drew their mutual Attachment the stronger, & enabled them to league against & overpower all the others inclined to be disobedient idle & refractory.” However, the multiplication of mankind necessarily led not only to conflicts but also to the need for foundations of personal authority other than the immediate personal significance

598 Ferguson, Civil Society, 46.


600 BL Add. MS 18270, 67. This notebook includes a later version of the same texts on slavery drafted in the notebook 18271.
of the parental status. Wisdom became this foundation, since it “necessarily commands Respect & Obedience from reasonable Beings” and enables its possessors to “weigh and settle Disputes with Equity & precision,” find the truth, and administer justice. The wise naturally came to occupy positions of authority, from priesthood to military command to royal power. Thus, sums up Long, “Filial Subordination, and the Submission which Wisdom exalted in all Ages, are two causes to be assigned for an Inequality of the Condition of Men in primitive Society.”

Legal power, the legal framework of a society, is a continuation of personal authority; it should essentially be isomorphic to the personal authority of merit. Inclination to submit both to merit and to law is also a manifestation of our nature as reasonable beings. Abbé Raynal, in his account of the history of Saint-Domingue, from which Long took extensive notes, compared the first two governors of that French colony, d’Ogeron and Pouancey, thus: with many of the good qualities of d’Ogeron, Pouancey

was by no means so great, because he trod in his footsteps led by the ardor of imitation, rather than the impulse of his own character. In the meanwhile the multitude who did not make these nice distinctions, reposed [?] the same confidence in the one that they had in the other. They had both all the Glory & happiness of giving a Form & Stability to the colony without Laws & without a military force. – Their natural good sense, and acknowledged Equity terminated to the satisfaction of every one, those differences that arose between individuals; and public order was maintained by that authority which naturally attends personal merit.

Here is a practical analogy to Long’s conjectural reconstruction of the beginnings of human society: in the case of Raynal’s take on the history of Saint-Domingue – very much out of the state of chaos and barbarism, subdued by the authority of meritorious leaders, even without external means of restraint. Certainly, “[s]o wise a constitution could not last long. It had too much virtue to be permanent.” And eventually the work of civilization was settled by unnamed “administrators” from the better established Martinique, who, in their lack of individuality, represent in this account the force of external, formal law, literally coming to Saint-Domingue from outside. These legislators continued the work of d’Ogeron and Pouancey towards the establishment of “rule & Subordination” by forming tribunals of justice in different parts of the colony. The personal and the formal supplement and continue each other in this story. Their unity, the subordination of the social machine to one moral will, even represents a positive aspect of authoritarian states that lack the prized English liberty. So, in Long’s words, the French colonial system manifests “a degree of forecast, prudence, and vigour, that are not so observable in any movement of our own torpid machine. There is a spirit in the French monarchy, which pervades every part of their empire; it has select objects perpetually in view, which are steadily and consistently pursued; in their system the state is at once the sentient and the executive principle. It is, in short, all soul; motion corresponds with will; action treads on the heels of contrivance; and sovereign power, usefully handled and directed, hurries on, in full career, to attain its end” (HJ 3:941).

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601 Ibid.
603 D’Ogeron’s tasks were, among others, “to subject the uncontrouled spirit of plunder to the sacred and severe authority of the laws; to revive sentiments of humanity in men hardened by the habit of crimes,” and so on: Raynal, Philosophical and Political History, 4:365.
604 BL Add. MS 12408, 29; Raynal, 4:369.
“What creature... is more variable and inconsistent than man, who is often hurried away by his Passions, or other Causes, to do Things, which he so frequently repents of, and as often wonders, that He should have been Fool, or Madman enough, to attempt them!” – so exclaims Long in his unpublished revisions of *The History of Jamaica*. This pessimistic realism about the human condition, coming naturally with Long’s life experience and evident in many statements in his oeuvre, coexists with the normative and no less personally significant optimism about the design, potential and inner perfection of the human being. As a matter of fact, here, as in the case of Orrery, it is probable that the often anxious and exaggerated pessimism is a function of the discrepancy between the observable reality and the exalted moral expectation associated with the word “human.” The word itself, as well as the word “man,” of course refers both to the wholeness of the messy human situation and to the ideal state, with the balance tilting, in the eighteenth-century moral imagination, towards the latter. It appears that the concept of society as the manifestation of man’s higher nature serves Long to reconcile his need for optimism about the human condition and the realistic pessimism about human nature in which reason and morality are prone to lose to passions and the “conflicting affections of the mind” (HJ 1:159). Long’s political whiggism stresses the need for social control over individuals, especially those in power. But those controls themselves are not an entirely external restraint on our corruption; they are an externalized expression of our own better nature. Particularly in *The History of Jamaica*, the many acerbic invectives against the rapacity, duplicity, artifice, lust for power and wealth, and many other repulsive qualities of colonial governors coexist with pleas for appointing for these positions “men of integrity, liberal understanding, generous and dispassionate mind,” “moderation, good sense,” and other manifestations of true reason, as an important precondition for the progress of the colonies and the health of the colonial political systems. “The essential qualification” for a governor, observes Long, “is goodness of heart; without which, the greater the abilities are, the more reason will the people have for dreading their prostitution to bad purposes” (HJ 1:43).<sup>605</sup> Existential realism and axioms about the corrupting influence of power move to the background of the rhetoric about the principles of good governance, inseparable from the goodness of heart.

There is evil in all of us, and some men may be beyond any possibility of moral reformation and recovery. But the social system as such, the structure into which we are all integrated, is essentially moral and humane when organized in a natural way. In the long run, it helps our better tendencies to win over the disorders of passion and unreason. A social body is not simply a metaphor for human moral perfection – it is that perfection, the manifestation of God’s design for man. Human moral and social qualities are of the same nature. In other words, social harmony and common good is not simply a result of a mechanical conglomeration of individuals and their private interests. Social harmony essentially is not a result of spontaneous self-organization, nor a whole larger than the sum of its parts, even though strong elements of this view, today so often associated with the name of Adam Smith, are also present in Long’s texts. *Social harmony is a sum that is equal to each of its parts – or rather to the potential perfection and purity of each of its parts*. Social order, material progress, arts, sciences, and laws are evidence of the moral and intellectual humanity of society’s members; they are glimpses of essential human perfection. But *individual* participation in this perfection is both indispensable and not guaranteed. I will discuss essential humanity in more detail in the next chapter; now I want to suggest that the existence of such social evidence – such social markers of humanity – was personally important for Long. The social history of the Longs in his interpretation shows, if anything, the instability of man’s moral

<sup>605</sup> See also HJ 1:4; BL Add. MS 18273, 118, 123.
nature, which again and again turns out to be contingent upon external circumstances and easily subverted. Property and social position are too obviously inseparable from the moral content of the self; they too obviously shape the social self but do not provide a stable foundation for its persistence. Together with the broad acknowledgement of the social content of the self, we find in Long’s private writings resistance to the equation between, or to the identity of, the human and social character. Combining acknowledgement and resistance was one of the intellectual tasks he faced.

606 The same, of course, could be said of Lockean sensationalist psychology, which, in the eyes of concerned contemporaries, deprived the self of an essential human core. The most interesting recent work on the subject is Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
CHAPTER 6

THE BODY TRANSPARENT: THE MORAL APPEAL OF RACE
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

“I don’t care if it hurts
I want to have control
I want a perfect body
I want a perfect soul.”

Radiohead, “Creep”

In the previous chapter, I have sketched Long’s social experiences and the ways in which he made sense of them, or represented his own life as a narrative. Departing from the context of Long’s efforts to construct a social history of his family and himself, I began outlining Long’s solution to the more general problem, which J. G. A. Pocock formulated for the eighteenth century thus: “The paradigm of commerce presented the movement of history as being toward the indefinite multiplication of goods, and brought the whole progress of material, cultural, and moral civilization under this head. But so long as it did not contain any equivalent to the concept of the zōon politikon, of the individual as an autonomous, morally and politically choosing being, progress must appear to move away from something essential to human personality.”

In this chapter, I will focus on the problem of race, both in Long’s texts and in wider eighteenth-century culture. I will not re-trace, after many scholars, the development of “race” in natural history, or discuss the biblical roots of the concept. I will, rather, address the problem of the potential existential significance of the idea of “race,” reading statements about racial gradation through the vocabulary of “moral anthropology” – through the fundamental problem of the nature of man’s moral being. In other words, what follows is rather a case study and conceptual analysis of the appeal of race.

Scholars that focus on the development of the scientific language and “knowledge” of race find in early racial thinking a growing tendency to explain “man,” his selfhood and moral life, in naturalistic, physiological terms. This tendency would only become more pronounced in the nineteenth century. In the language of natural history, contemporaries could attempt to regain a kind of human autonomy and existential assurance of some foundation of personal identity and moral life independent of the external and mechanical “multiplication of goods” and profusion of social forms. In the observation of Nancy Stepan, nineteenth-century scientists shared a deep conviction “that the social and cultural differences observed between peoples should be understood as realities of nature.”

Important here for Stepan, as for many other students of

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608 In this sense I see myself continuing the line of interpretation advanced by Winthrop Jordan in White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

racial thinking, is the naturalization of inequality between white Europeans and Americans and other “races.” But the idea of race also helps to remove the arbitrariness and volatility of social forms, which may seem to be emptied of human content precisely as they become the center of the intellectual and moral identity of “man.”

In the previous chapters of this study I have already dealt extensively with the possibilities present in eighteenth-century culture for imagining the social as an essentially intelligible phenomenon, a union of minds/souls/spirits that by the very fact of its existence, including such aspects as property and multiplication of goods, signifies the fact of the transcendence of material life. (It goes without saying that I do not consider this to have been the only way of conceiving the nature of the social in the eighteenth century.) In this chapter I will continue this line of analysis. I will argue that racial thinking, with all of its anatomical and physiological vocabulary, could be not so much a way of naturalizing and “physicalizing” human identity and social, intellectual, and moral life, as an instrument that offered a hope of removing the body as an active agent from these realms of human existence. In other words, I will describe one of the ways in which the “soul,” as both the root and the product of the social, became, in the words of Foucault, “the prison of the body.”

But I will begin by returning to the problem of the material form and human substance in social life, and by reflecting on the principle of hierarchy, both social and natural, through the prism of the mind-body vocabulary.

1. Hierarchy and the Freedom of Spirit

Let us consider the relationship between the form and substance of law, which comes up in Long’s lengthy discussion of the problem of choosing between gentlemen of rank and fortune on the one hand, and professional lawyers on the other as the most fitting category of men to fill judicial posts in Jamaica. Long, both a landed gentleman and a lawyer by training, is inclined towards the former: “Nothing is more true, that all men are fallible; and that grave judges are as liable to trip, as other men… Judges, who have not the solid principles of the constitution, of right and wrong, of truth and reason, for ever before their eyes, may lean more to the false refinements of sophistry, and the hair-breadth lines penciled by the courts of Westminster-hall, than to the equity and merits of the cause in issue before them; and by this means substitute form, cant, and finesse, in the room of Truth and its unerring maxims” (HJ 1:72). It turns out that the formal structures and restraints of law, by themselves and divorced from their proper source in the

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actual, concrete human mind, are not a remedy against the fallibility inherent in men. On the contrary, they may very well be part of the problem, one of the forms which human corruption and imperfection takes. The principles of right and wrong, the “unerring maxims” of truth and reason, do not immediately and directly inhabit the structures of the law. Their proper habitation is the human mind. The struggle between right and wrong takes place primarily within us, and only the mind that has firmly attached itself to the principles of truth and reason can oppose its own inevitable moves against these principles. All the same, the struggle does happen in the legal field, and it is externalized and socialized in the accumulation of laws and in judicial decisions that represent the relations of power and social evolution. Jamaica is indeed governed by law, but by law framed, for the most part, “by persons, not educated to the practice of the law, but by plain well-meaning planters, who consulted more the general interests of the country, than finely turned periods, and accurate phraseology” (HJ 1:71). At the same time a competent knowledge of the law is highly desirable in a gentleman that occupies a judicial post, and “joined to an expertness in the just forms of the process, which are found not unattainable even by meaner capacities, [it] will enable him to abolish quirk and chicanery to make the practice in his court, what it ought to be, consistent, methodical, and equitable” (HJ 1:75). The knowledge of the forms is in itself inferior, but it is also a good.

In writing about social customs and increasingly excessive false forms of politeness, Long also connects the concepts of inherent human brutality and empty social artifice: “It is unpleasant to think that we are of so savage a Mould, that without the Aid of Dissimulation and Lying, we cannot be civilized properly for social Intercourse: Is our Nature so brutal, that we are obliged to disguise it by this Artifice, before we can be qualified to converse with each other?” If so, we will have to admit that our civilization has “gained Politeness at the Expence of Truth,” and from our cradle we are taught to lie. But such a view of civilization will not be entirely correct, and false politeness is a perversion, not an essence of advanced social intercourse and civilization. It certainly has real roots; when we are taught that “Truth is not to be spoken at all Times,” this axiom is “the more dangerous, because we are already more than half prepared by our Nature to act up to it.” Long derives the genealogy of false politeness, compliment, and social folly from rapacity, fear, and consequent cunning as parts of our nature. But he immediately draws up another, “more respectable” genealogy – that of urbanity, true politeness and wisdom, rooted in fortitude and contentment that naturally lead to generosity, honor, benevolence, modesty, honesty, and a host of other moral qualities that also have a foundation in our nature.

The potential tension between the freedom of the human spirit from the dead form of law and the need for socialized, external restraint and the public codification and assertion of equity, can be reconciled through social hierarchy defined as gradations of liberty:

The word Liberty is an indefinite Term when applied to the different Orders of Men in a Society; For the Liberty which is proper for One Class is not so for every other; The Liberty of the Labourer or hired Domestic Servant in England is not the Liberty enjoyed by a Soldier, a Tradesman or a Man of large landed Estate. – The Labourer is much circumscribed, & perhaps it is highly fitting he should be so, or otherwise were every Restraint taken away which the Law has for wise Ends imposed upon him, he would cease to be an useful, he would soon become a Licentious & Dangerous Member. 613

612 This and all the following quotations in this paragraph are from Edward Long(?), The Sentimental Exhibition; or, Portraits and Sketches of the Times (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), 31-34.

613 BL Add. MS 18271, 57.
This hierarchy is one of social positions. But the principle of hierarchy itself reflects the need to create a space of freedom for the human mind taken in its perfection of design while at the same time limiting and controlling its fallibility; these two aspects of human nature are assumed to be unevenly distributed among individuals as much as, or more than, coexisting in a particular human being. Social ranks do not always reflect this distribution but do reflect it in the normal state of society. (By “normal” here I mean that which corresponds to the desired norm, not that which usually occurs.) So,

history evinces, that, in all ages, there has been one set of persons uniting its efforts to enslave mankind; and another set, to oppose such attempts, and vindicate the cause of freedom. The accidental circumstances of men may, perhaps, occasion this difference: the rich are the natural enemies of the poor; and the poor, of the rich; like the ingredients of a boiling cauldron, they seem to be in perpetual warfare, and struggle which shall be uppermost: yet, if both parties could compose themselves, the faeces would remain peaceably at the bottom; and all the other particles range themselves in different strata, according to their quality, the most refined floating always at top (HJ 1:25).

Accidental circumstances, in this case distinctions of property, are contrasted with the natural hierarchical distribution of human agents according to their inner quality. But circumstances, as an external category, have a lot to do with hierarchical distribution according to inner qualities. In another place Long observes that the structure of social power, the social compact and the energy of the law inherent in it, “is in truth an association of the opulent and the good, for better preserving their acquisitions, against the poor and the wicked. For want, complicated with misery and vice, generally seeks relief by plundering from those who are better provided” (HJ 2:393). The modifier “accidental,” applied to “circumstances,” implies the separability of the latter from the inner quality of agents, the existence of “circumstances” as a thing in itself, as form becoming its own content. So hierarchy is an external mechanism; it can function and be useful as an artificial form of authority. And at the same time it is also an expression of the fact that social organization is rooted in the designed perfection of the human mind. Revising The History of Jamaica for a projected second edition, Long replaced the word “opulent” in the last quotation with “industrious” – a moral quality in which property ought to be rooted.614“A well-regulated spirit of industry” is the true strength of the polity, observes Long elsewhere. But “regulation” signifies not a restraint but protection from forces external to this spirit, while the spirit of industry ought to be allowed to act “to its free and full extent” (HJ 1:7). Regulation is a quality of the spirit itself; law is a quality of the mind.

Hierarchy recognizes man’s inevitable fallibility, incorporates the low, and at the same time creates a space of freedom for the mind to animate and move the whole. Hierarchy is a movement towards perfection, towards the source of its own order on its top, and at the same time, as a system and as a whole, it is order and it is perfection, participation in which gives even the negative elements a different meaning, a moral purpose. Long sees himself among those who “view Mankind as ornamental Plants in the great Shrubberies of Nature, and consider, that even such as are rank or deformed, if they add nothing to the general Beauty of the Scene, by their Contrast, may at least be meliorated by Culture, by gentle Pruning, or by Transplantation into a

614 BL Add. MS 12405, 312.
different soil,” where they can be made useful, as in the case of Africans who cultivate European plantations in the West Indies.615

Long writes, invoking Alexander Pope:

…If we allow the system of created beings to be perfect and consistent, and that this perfection arises from an exact scale of gradation, from the lowest to the highest, combining and connecting every part into a regular and beautiful harmony, reasoning them from the visible plan and operation of infinite wisdom in respect to the human race, as well as every other series in the scale, we must, I think, conclude, that, “The general order, since the whole began, / Is kept in nature, and is kept in man. / Order is heaven’s first law; and, this confest, / Some are, and must be, greater than the rest” (HJ 2:484-85).616

Further, this idea of hierarchical order implies the separability of the pure intelligible “infinite wisdom” from the finite materials that are ordered and formed into the system of created beings. The superiority of some created beings in relation to others means their relative closeness to the source of order, their more direct participation in the “infinite wisdom” that is separable from the materials of its work. This may mean, among other things, that human fallibility and perfection are not aspects of a continuum, of a complex homogeneous whole that is “man.” Rather, they are intertwined but essentially different orders of existence that meet and interact in the complex heterogeneous whole that is “man.” The peculiarity of man, from the point of view of the “Great Chain of Being” theory, is precisely in the combination of the sensual activity, which characterizes animals as well and ascends by degrees to a very near approach to reason, and the purely intelligible: “How Instinct varies in the grov’ling swine, / Compar’d, half-reas’ning elephant, with thine: / ‘Twixt that, and Reason, what a nice barrier; / For ever sep’rate, yet for ever near! / Remembrance and Reflection how ally’d; / What thin partitions Sense from Thought divide: / And Middle natures, how they long to join, / Yet never pass th’ insuperable line!”617

The very existence of order, in the hierarchical view of nature and society, presupposes a point where the mind is free and essentially separable, if not actually separated, from the fallibility and autonomous disorder of the lower nature – a point where the possibility of separation is made a principle of action, and the high and the low are considered as the essences and worlds of their own. One needs to postulate “[t]he God within the mind” that can divide and manage “[t]his light and darkness in our chaos join’d.”618 The possibility of order depends on the separability of the pure mind. This applies both to social hierarchy and to natural – and the possibility of natural becomes the foundation of social. The fact that “some so far surpass others in perfection of the intellectual faculty, or in corporeal endowments,” must be due to

615 Long, Sentimental Exhibition, 101. While man is thus integrated into the structure of nature, hierarchy as an essentially intelligible phenomenon allows one to see the natural world itself in moral terms, as one that has a higher meaning; the natural is distinguished from the intelligible, but at the same time can become a field for the exercise of moral imagination. Thus Samuel Estwick, Long’s predecessor in the basic formulation of the concept of racial gradation: “We shall find these grand divisions of nature [in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms] arranged in classes, orders, kinds, and sorts: we shall contemplate systems morally perfect,” Considerations on the Negroe Cause Commonly So Called… (London: J. Dodsley, 1773), 72-73.


617 Ibid., 43-44 (I.221-228).

618 Ibid., 79 (II.203-204).
a certain inborn discrimination. The talents of men are infinitely diversified... but each member of the largest civilised community seems as it were destined to act some respective part in this great theatre, and qualified, in pursuing his own particular good, to promote that of others. But while each individual is, or has capacity for being, useful, they differ much from one another in the degree of that capacity. It is this which chiefly has given birth to that distinction of rank, & established that subordination which we observe in societies. Weakness submits to strength, & ignorance to knowledge. Thus is order preserved in human government.

And Long cannot refrain from evoking a possible comparison between those on the intellectual top of this social pyramid and the divine wisdom, speaking of “[t]hose elevated geniuses which seem to have been cast in a superior mould on purpose to inform & instruct the rest of their species; those sagacious legislators & philosophers... who in some nations have been venerated even as Divinities.” It is they who are the soul and forming power of the social order, who fill it with human content.

2. Anti-Society: The Absence of Mind

From this angle I will approach Long’s racism, and stress its abstract, philosophical overtones. The “Negroes” he constructs in his text “seem to be distinguished from the rest of mankind, not in person only, but in possessing, in abstract, every species of inherent turpitude that is to be found dispersed at large among the rest of the human creation, with scarce a single virtue to extenuate this shade of character, differing in this particular from all other men” (HJ 2:354). This is my cue, one of the points where the depth of abstraction comes up to the surface of specific characteristics of things, people and social appearances. I will describe Long’s racism not simply as a series of outrageous statements, but as a coherent picture of human and social evil – a picture that is moved by the demands of its own coherence, develops according to its own logic, and whose connection with observable reality is secondary.

Long’s characterization of Africans is worthy of an extended quotation:

In general, they are void of genius, and seem almost incapable of making any progress in civility or science. They have no plan or system of morality among them. Their barbarity to their children debases their nature even below that of brutes. They have no moral sensations; no taste but for women, gormandizing, and drinking to excess, no wish but to be idle. Their children, from their tenderest years, are suffered to deliver themselves up to all that nature suggests to them. Their houses are miserable cabins. They conceive no pleasure from the most beautiful parts of their country, preferring the most sterile. Their roads, as they call them, are mere ship-paths, twice as long as they need be, and almost impassable. Their country in most parts is one continued wilderness, beset with briars and thorns. They use neither carriages, nor beasts of burden. They are represented by all authors as the vilest of the human kind, to which they have little more pretension of resemblance than what arises from their exterior form” (HJ 2:353).

The physical form of “man” is devoid in the case of these hypothetical Africans of a human content, which ought to be expressed in civil intercourse and material improvement. Morality does not establish and regulate social relations in this case, and the natural physical relations, like that between parents and children, do not become truly familial. A search for the satisfaction of the body’s desires does not lead to productive labor. Long associates natural beauty with

619 Edward Long to Edward Beeston Long, no date, copy by Charles Edward Long, Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle, DHW8/32.
620 Ibid.
621 For instance, Smedley, Race in North America, 188-9.
productivity and deprives Africans of both the aesthetic sense and desire for productive improvement, which are in fact one. He stresses the lack of communications and of social connections that embody both moral and material improvement. The lack of a system of morality coincides with the lack of moral sensations, with the limitation of desires and tastes to the physical level, and an absence of early education or any restraint of the natural urges. The degradation of taste does not demand or even recognize a cultural transformation or processing of what is naturally received. More than that, degradation goes deeper and rejects even the naturally received structures. It sinks to the level of formless, rotting, and disintegrating matter: “They are most brutal in their manners and uncleanly in their diet, eating flesh almost raw by choice, though intolerably putrid and full of maggots. Even those that inhabit the sea coast, though well provided with other victuals, are so ravenous that they will devour the raw guts of animals” (HJ 2:382).

“Social” relations in this African world are also built on formlessness. Thus on entertainment and socializing: “At their meals they tear the meat with their talons, and chuck it by handfuls down their throats with all the voracity of wild beasts; at their politest entertainments they thrust their hands all together into the dish, sometimes returning into it what they have been chewing” (HJ 2:383). And finally Long’s vision reaches the pinnacle of the bizarre when he discusses the overpopulation of the African continent caused by mindless unrestrained submission to lust in the absence of moral regulations and in the heat of tropical climate: “The want of more extensive vent for their superfluous people, occasioned those horrid methods of diminishing them, of which we read in history, by sacrificing them to their fettishes and great men; butchering their captives in war, and, in most of the provinces, devouring human flesh; which perhaps supplied them with a permanent kind of food, and made it less necessary for them to break through their natural abhorrence of labour, and take the pains either of cultivating the earth, or laying up provisions against unseasonable years” (HJ 2:387). Perpetual orgy replaces labor, and the body never breaks out of the vicious circle of endless self-multiplication and self-destruction, feeding on its own flesh. This truly is an anti-society, a system of relations based on desire and destruction, rather than on labor, property and mutual recognition of moral agents that are equally inviolable.

Anti-society does not transcend the limits of the physical and of the self-centered desiring being for which anything outside of it is an object and nothing and no one is an other subject.

Anti-society involves relations, but such relations are not social, because they do not take place among moral subjects, and to the extent to which they exist they reflect a lack of moral being: Africans “have no regulations dictated by foresight: they are the simple result of a revengeful selfish spirit, put in motion by the crimes that prevail among them; consequently their edicts are mostly vindictive, and death or slavery the almost only modes of punishment; they seem to have no polity, nor any comprehension of the use of civil institutions. Their punishments are actuated either by a motive of revenge or of avarice; they have none to balance the allurements of pleasure, nor the strength of the passions, nor to operate as incitements to industry and worthy actions…” (HJ 2:378). Lest the reader miss the conclusion, Long asks: “Laws have justly been regarded as the master-piece of human genius: what then are we to think of those societies of men, who either have none, or such only as are irrational and ridiculous?” (HJ 2:378). The “laws” are reduced to

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622 Moral relations, on the other hand, can only be intersubjective; rights, which belong to moral subjects, should be distinguished from natural powers and exist only in interpersonal relations. Thus Samuel Pufendorf: ‘Not every natural Licence, or Power of doing a Thing, is properly a Right; but such only as includes some moral Effect, with regard to others, who are Partners with me in the same Nature’, quoted after Richard Tuck, Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 159.
the status of the tools of destruction and have no positive rational and moral content. In this anti-
society, relations of blood are not family, and relations of power are not polity; each “man” is in
fact alone. James Thompson described the plight of the savage thus: “For Home he had not;
Home is the Resort / Of Love, of Joy, of Peace and Plenty, where, / Supporting and supported,
polish’d Friends, / And dear Relations mingle into Bliss. / But this the rugged Savage never felt, / Even desolate in Crowds…”623 A mechanical conglomeration of individuals is not a society.
Loneliness is an internal, not external, characteristic – a lack of recognition for the other as
existentially equal, a companion rather than an object of action. In this context I read the
anonymous characterization of “the Negro” in the Encyclopaedia Britannica: “Vices the most
notorious seem to be the portion of this unhappy race: idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty,
impudence, stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness, and intemperance, are said to have
extinguished the principles of natural law, and to have silenced the reproofs of conscience. They
are strangers to every sentiment of compassion, and are an awful example of the corruption of
man when left to himself.”624 Compassion is the opposite of objectification, or of seeing other
“human” beings as objects necessary or useful for satisfying my passion or desire (“revenge” or
“avarice”), indistinguishable in this sense from the rest of the surrounding world, and essentially
different from myself as the subject of passion or desire.

Both Thompson and Long associate social life with material improvement, or the “plenty” and
comfort of civilized life that is inseparable from love, joy, peace, and polish. Material
improvement, the process of labor as distinct from consumption, is the primary manifestation of
the inner independence of the mind, of its ability to transcend the limitations of the physical.
Labor and the transformation of nature is rooted in but not restricted to the natural necessities of
man. Continuing his characterization of African anti-society, Long asks: “If it be true, that in
other countries mankind have cultivated some arts, through the impulse of the necessities under
which they laboured, what origin shall we give to those contrivances and arts, which have sprung
up after those necessities were provided for? These are surely no other than result of innate vigour
and energy of the mind, inquisitive, inventive, and hurrying on with a divine enthusiasm to new
attainments” (HJ 2:378).625 Thompson in The Seasons epically describes the process in which the
“seeds of art” originally implanted deep in the human mind and latent even in our savage state
were awakened by innate human industry and allowed man to create a new man-made
environment. Industry did not stop “at barren bare Necessity; / But still advancing bolder, led him
on, / To Pomp, to Pleasure, Elegance, and Grace; / And, breathing high Ambition thro’ his Soul, /
Set Science, Wisdom, Glory, in his View, / And bad him be the Lord of All below.”626 Social
organization became the natural expression of this human advancement.

“Divine enthusiasm” that leaves the bare level of the body behind, the ability to act on its own
and for itself, can be seen as a dynamic characteristic of the human mind. A characteristic more
depth essential is the ability to distinguish between true and false and/or good and evil, once
again independent of the direct and immediate needs of the human agent considered only as a

623 James Thompson, The Seasons, ed. with introduction and commentary by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon


625 In the manuscript revisions, Long replaces the “result” of the mind’s innate vigor with “emanations,” BL Add. MS
12405, 302.

626 Thompson, Seasons, 147 (3.90-95).
material being. This ability is manifested on two levels, that of moral sense and that of reason, the feeling of what is right and wrong irrespective of the position of the subject, and the understanding of the nature of right and wrong, the ability to see why we experience these and not other moral sensations. Long gives the following extensive quotation on the subject from The Divine Legation of Bishop Warburton:

‘1st, The Moral Sense: (is that) whereby we conceive and feel a pleasure in right, and a distaste and aversion to wrong, prior to all reflexion on their natures, or their consequences. This is the first inlet to the adequate idea of morality; and plainly the most extensive of all. When instinct has gone thus far, 2nd, The Reasoning Faculty improved upon its dictates; for reflecting men, naturally led to examine the foundation of this moral sense, soon discovered that there were real, essential differences in the qualities of human actions, established by nature; and, consequently, that the love and hatred, excited by the moral sense, were not capricious in their operations; for that the essential properties of their objects had a specific difference’ (HJ 2:477).627

It was a commonplace in eighteenth-century thinking on human nature, that the possibility of forming a “moral character” based on the understanding of right and wrong and the consequent “imputability of conduct,” or responsibility to act good, was a crucial, if not the central, characteristic of man.628 In this, the assumptions of a slaveholder or racist like Long were hardly different from the views of such a fervent antislavery polemicist and proponent of human equality as Granville Sharp, for whom every man, “be he ever so poor and mean with respect to his rank in this life, inherits the knowledge of good and evil, or Reason, from the common parents of mankind, and is thereby rendered answerable to God for all of his actions, and answerable to Man for many of them!”629 Working on the second edition of the History, Long took extensive notes from several authors on the difference between man and animals. He records the opinion of Hobbes on the difference between sensible and intellectual knowledge or apprehension and reflection as the mark of human distinction; a similar opinion by Buffon, known for his dualism; and the thoughts of a Catholic scholar Antoine Augustin Calmet (1672-1757), according to whom beasts’ “knowledge, reasoning, desires & designs are limited to the knowledge & discernment of what may contribute to their temporal happiness, the preservation of their bodies, & the propagation of their species; their souls may indeed judge between hot and cold, what is advantageous & dangerous to their health, but will never enable them to discern between moral Good and Evil, between what is just and unjust, lawful and unlawful.”630 Long concludes that the activities of animals that may seem reasonable to us must stem from principles fundamentally different, “and those who in other respects admit of insensible Gradations from one order of beings to another must own there is a vast chasm between Man, & and the most perfect of Brutes.”631

628 On “moral character” and ‘imputability of conduct” as distinguishing all men, although in a different degree, from animals, see Richard Watson, Chemical Essays (London: T. Evans, 1787), 5:173-5, a lengthy passage transcribed by Long in his notes on the different races of mankind, BL Add. MS 12438, 6.
630 BL Add. MS 12405, 288.
631 Ibid. Compare Pope’s already quoted lines on the insuperable line between the “half-reas’ning elephant” and true reason.

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In particular I will stress here the distinction, especially evident in Long’s transcription of Calmet, between true reason drawn to the nature of things and what we may call “tactical rationality.” The latter is operative reasoning, concerned with the surrounding world insofar as it is related to the “hard” material needs and desires of the agent, to “temporal happiness,” or to physical satisfaction. Consider also Johann Friedrich Blumenbach: men, unlike animals who rely partly on instinct, “are preserved by the use of reason, of which other animals are plainly destitute. I am sure they [animals] are only endowed with innate or common and truly material sense (which is not wanting either to man)...” tactical rationality and lower forms of reasoning do not have to be associated solely with humanity and can be viewed as purely material. Man possesses both forms, but they can be seen as essentially distinct from each other. Tactical rationality serves the physical being. Reason proper is directed outside, comprehends the structure and design of the world, and, ideally, uses our physical being as its vehicle and a source of emotion. And it was easy enough to suppose an essential difference between these two phenomena as between the material and the immaterial – easy even for a skeptical thinker such as, for instance, Lord Kames, who doubted our ability to know anything about the nature of the interaction between the body and soul, but was not averse to a conjecture “that the inferior animals are but organized matter, having powers for procreation and preservation, not even excepting the power of thinking as far as necessary to their well-being; but that man, the noblest exertion of Omnipotence upon this earth, is composed of two separate substances, one matter, the other soul and spirit; and that all his noblest faculties inhere in the latter.”

3. Design and the Perfection of Man

Here I will return to the problem of human perfection, the ideal state towards which eighteenth-century moral optimism was directed. Arthur Lovejoy justly observes that the most characteristic and significant practical moral corollary of the conception of the Great Chain of Being, so widespread in the century, was “a counsel of imperfection – an ethics of prudent mediocrity.” Man occupies a certain place in the gradation of beings, a place that is very far from true, divine perfection, and our duty is understand this place and keep to it, not to seek to overcome our natural limitations: “The good for a being of a given grade, it seemed evident, must consist in conformity to its type, in the expression of just that Idea which defines its position, or that of its species, in the series.” The exaltation of the mind, the Stoic and Platonic dream of its complete victory over the body, may appear unduly presumptuous and improper for man considering his actual constitution. But what then is the “specifically human excellence” that could be fulfilled in practice?

What is at stake is the ability of the mind to manage and direct the affections, as well as the ability to transcend the level of the senses while remaining confined to sensual perception. In and of itself the mind may even be defined as a transcendence of the physical level, a higher nature, a different level of being that both overcomes and incorporates the physical structure as a

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subordinate instrument of the mind’s operations. Writing on the problem of human perfection, Hutcheson observes:

It is of course true that our nature is fallen, weak, and corrupted in many respects. But who does not easily perceive the order natural to the human mind? Who is ignorant of which parts are by nature fit to rule, no matter how much they may be deflected from fulfilling that role? Does anyone think that natural conscience, that sense of what is beautiful and becoming, every honourable affection and even that power of the mind that we call reason, are only handmaids to those desires that are commonly said to be merely sensual, and only pander to pleasure? On the contrary, we discern without any doubt that this conscience and sense of virtue, which has human reason as its permanent counsellor, is destined by nature to govern, and that the bodily appetites are born to serve.635

In the words of another moral thinker, “the licentious, excessive, hurtful passions are of mens [sic] own raising; and not what GOD originally planted in human nature; and the permitting them, to take such scope and influence, is directly repugnant to the law of our nature; which is this, the understanding at the helm, to steer and guide the inferior and baser principles.”636 It is this dominion of the mind over the pliant body that would then define the designed human perfection, our true nature. It is the mind’s freedom to abstract, to distinguish itself, and to discern the level of the universal and general while remaining in the physical existence. It is the ability to subordinate the needful and desiring being to the demands of higher truth and good that the mind, when acting with a degree of freedom appropriate to it, detects. It is the disposition of the moral/rational being to be conscious of itself, to value the universal in that existence, and to connect on this level with other moral and rational beings – in short, to feel benevolence and sympathy. (Recall the discussion of Adam Smith’s analysis of sympathy in Chapter Four – we sympathize with others as moral beings, and simply cannot consistently sympathize with other people’s bodies.) Such other beings are perceived as essentially equal. They are equally valuable, they are inviolable both spiritually and physically. Physical being, in its instrumental capacity, remains essential and important, as both an instrument (object of our action and control) and an aspect of our existence taken as a whole. In a different context, Herder hypothesized that the human soul, however immortal, “must necessarily have first learned in this state [organic existence], to think with a human brain, and to feel with human nerves, and have fashioned itself to some degree of reason and humanity.”637 Feelings and passions are part of the “education of the soul.”

Along with reason, the moral sense is a manifestation of our higher nature, the inner and automatic ability to perceive naturally and instinctively, in ourselves, the good and evil that are beyond the scope of our physical being. It is a sign of our natural connection to the universal and of the inner autonomy of the soul, the separability of the higher from the lower.638 I will return

636 James Foster, Discourses on All the Principal Branches of Natural Religion and Social Virtue (London: Printed for the author, 1749), 1:324-5.
638 See Hutcheson’s definition: moral sense is “a determination of our Minds to receive the simple ideas of Approbation or Condemnation, from Actions observ’d, antecedent to any Opinions of Advantage or Loss to redound to ourselves from them,” An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, 5th ed., corrected (London: R. Ware, J. and P. Knapton et al., 1753), 129.
here to the passage from Hutcheson’s reflections on the pleasures of the moral sense that I have quoted in the introduction to this project: “It may perhaps seem too metaphysical to allude on this Subject, that other Sensations are all dependent upon, or related by the Constitution of our Nature, to something different from ourselves; to a Body which we do not call Self, but something belonging to this Self. That other Perceptions of Joy or Pleasure carry with them Relations to Objects, and Spaces distinct from this Self; whereas ‘the Pleasures of Virtue are the very Perfection of this Self, and are immediately perceived as such, independent of external Objects.’”

It is on the moral sense that Long writes in The History of Jamaica, repeating the already familiar thesis on the relationship between man’s inner constitution and social organization:

But we have no other evidence of [Africans’] possessing it, than what arises from the vague conjectural positions, ‘that all men are equal, and that the disparity between one man and another, or one race of men and another, happens from accidental means, such as artificial refinements, education, and so forth.’ Certain however it is, that these refinements must necessarily take place, where the moral sense and reasoning faculty are most abundant, and extensively cultivated; but cannot happen, where they either do not exist at all, or, are not distributed in such due portion, as to work the proper ascendancy over the more brutal species of instinct (HJ 2:477).

This lack of independent and sufficient self is closely related to the domination in “the Negroe’s” constitution of the passions and sensations of the animal nature, or, which was often the same in the eyes of eighteenth-century observers, of “strong” passions, embedded in or intensified by the physical constitution. If the “perfect” state of man involves a balance of subdued (not eliminated) passions that participate in the moral life under the direction of the mind, then corruption is the breaking of that balance, when “the Passions all / Have burst their Bounds; and Reason half extinct, / Or impotent, or else approving, sees / The foul Disorder, Senseless, and deform’d…”

The physical “irritability” with which we are born is in itself morally neutral, reflects the renowned proponent of physiognomy John Caspar Lavater. But if the resulting passions and actions “lead to sentiments and actions injurious to the repose and the happiness of mankind,” they are morally bad. And it is “incontestably certain from general experience, that wherever there are great energy and irritability, there also are produced the more powerful passions, most of which inspire reprehensible sentiments, and lead to actions morally bad.” Such actions will be morally bad because physical energy, which is indeed intimately involved in our moral life but is essentially non-moral, is apt to disregard and break the relations that bind together individuals as moral agents. It moves along trajectories of its own, the coincidence of which with the structures that organize the community of equal moral agents is not guaranteed in principle.

Mental life can be seen as a space in which the body is directly present through its irritations, needs, demands, and sensory experiences, but which is not limited to the stimuli received from the body. The sensual aspect of mental life Buffon described as the kind of imagination dependent “solely on corporeal organs,” emotions excited by objects of our desire, a

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640 Thompson, Seasons, 16 (1.278-81).

“representation of objects, which is more active than their presence.” Such representations, images and desires are apt to encroach on the appetite for knowledge as such, which is the real “appetite of the mind” and the source of its independent pleasure, and on the other kind of imagination, the purely intelligible power “of perceiving with rapidity all the qualities and relations of objects,” or the ability to “see” the structure and organization of the world, which Buffon calls the most brilliant faculty of the mind.

In this unstable situation of coexistence, it is important that the passions and direct representations of the corporeal world can gain ascendance in the mind, relegating the latter to the role of tactical reasoning, the servant of desire. It was to a large extent a commonplace in the eighteenth century that, in the human constitution, what the body gains the mind loses, and vice versa. It was also a widespread perception or assumption that the mental constitution of blacks, as Thomas Jefferson put it, “appears to participate more of sensation than reflection,” and that this imbalance was closely related to the peculiarities of the black constitution, in its own turn suited to the environment that this group inhabited. What interests me here is the ways in which the mind-body dualism could offer a framework in which such a phenomenon would appear natural. A physical organization possessing strong “irritability” and accommodating the energetic intensity supposedly unsurprising in hot climates did not leave much room for higher, intelligent faculties, which, once again, imply the possibility of emancipation from physical needs and desires. In the words of Herder, “[t]hat finer intellect, which the creature, whose breast swells with boiling passions beneath this burning sun, must necessarily be refused, was countervailed by a structure altogether incompatible with it.” The whole “elastic structure” of the African body, “even to the nose and skin,” was formed “for sensual animal enjoyment.”

In truly sensual enjoyment, intensity means more than correctness or subtlety, and the ability to receive pleasure – more than the understanding of the objects used for pleasure. So, in Long’s words, Africans’ “corporeal sensations are in general of the grossest frame; their sight is acute, but not correct; they will rarely miss a standing object, but they have no notion of shooting birds on the wing, nor can they project a straight line nor lay any substance square with another. Their hearing is remarkably quick; their faculties of smell and taste are truly bestial, no less so their commerce with the other sex; in these acts they are libidinous and shameless as monkies, or baboons” (HU 2:383). Often taken for granted by eighteenth-century commentators, the sexual proclivities of blacks served to underscore the difference between sexual desire as such and the compound passion not limited to the material sense, or a moral relation to another subject, which I have outlined in Chapter Four: “They [blacks] are more ardent after their female: but love seems


643 Ibid., 3:242, 3:263. Compare Hutcheson, who thinks along the same lines but stresses the independence of the moral emotions of the soul: “All Perception is by the Soul, not by the Body, tho’ some Impressions on the bodily Organs are the Occasions of some of them; and in others the Soul is determined to other sorts of Feelings or Sensations, where no bodily Impression is the immediate Occasion. A certain incorporeal Form, is one may use that Name, a Temper observed, a Character, an Affection, a State of a sensitive Being, known or understood, may raise Liking, Approbation, Sympathy, as naturally from the very Constitution of the Soul, as any bodily Impression raises external Sensations.” *Passions and Affections*, 241.


with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation." James Thompson juxtaposes this predominance of desire and “voluptuous sense” with the “grossness” of the black African body, both related to the climate: the African sun “with oppressive Ray, the roseat Bloom / Of Beauty Blasting, gives the gloomy Hue, / And Features Gross: or worse, to ruthless Deeds, / Mad Jealousy, blind Rage, and fell revenge, / Their fervid Spirit fires. Love dwells not there, / The soft Regards, the Tenderness of Life, / The Heart shed Tear, th’ ineffable Delight / Of sweet Humanity: These court the Beam / Of milder Climes; in selfish fierce Desire / And the wild Fury of voluptuous Sense, / There lost.”  

“Selfish” desire is opposed in these lines to milder sentiments, also dependent on material circumstances like the climate, but in their essence reflecting a certain standard of “humanity.” This standard, once again, may be opposed to “selfish” because it necessarily includes natural to “man” “universal benevolence, and sympathy, that enlarges and raises the heart, above the influence of every base earth-born passion.” The gross African body in the African climate becomes an obstacle in the way of the realization of this standard, locking the commotions of the mind on itself, on its own needs and desires, possibly irritated and destabilized by an inhospitable natural environment. Strong and ungovernable passions drown or subvert the proper “fine feelings of the soul,” which are more authentic from the point of view of the true design of human nature. So, a black African “has certain portions of kindness for his friends; generosity and friendship for his favourites, and affections for his connections; but they are as sparks which emit a glimmering light through the thick gloom that surrounds them, and which on every ebullition of anger or revenge, instantly disappear. Furious in his love as in his hate; the negro is at best but a terrible husband, a harsh father, and a precarious friend.” This situation is abnormal for man. 

Not immediately obviously, the body plays a significant role in the concept of human perfection when the latter is understood as the dominance of the mind. If our entire being gravitates towards perfection, and since it is in the effective separability and independence of the mind or soul that we must look for the true perfection and glory of human nature, then the natural condition of our body is to be, not the prison but a servant of the mind, its instrument or even form of expression. This is how it must have been designed. As is stated in a somewhat clumsy late eighteenth-century English translation of Herder, “every power operates in harmony with it’s organ: for it [the power] has fashioned it [the organ] solely for the display of it’s essence, it has assimilated the parts, into which the almighty has introduced it, and in which it has increased it.” The sensual appetites and desires inherent in the physical frame, asserts Herder, serve the “earthly economy” of our existence as they do in animals. But in man, they in fact “were to be the occasions of nobler sentiments and qualities, and when they have done this, they have fulfilled the purpose, for which they were designed.” So (as Long thought as well), the need and appetite for food was to “excite” man to labor, society, and obedience to laws – to bind men to one another by a “salutary chain,” or create a formal structure of relations. On the other hand, the sexual appetite, the object of which is other human beings, is closer to the interpersonal content of such relations – it “was to

646 Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, 202.  
647 Thompson, Seasons, 101-102 (2.886-96).  
648 Foster, Discourses, 2:4.  
650 Herder, Outlines, 112.
plant sociableness, and parental, connubial, and filial love… and render tedious exertions for his species pleasant to man, by his undertaking them for his own flesh and blood." The body is only a starting point in the emotional life, not its true content.

Then the body, the substance of which we unquestionably share with the animal creation, must possess its own kind of natural, designed perfection – part of the designed perfection of human nature, distinct from animals. The perfection of the body ought to be defined by its purely instrumental quality, by its ability to become “unnoticeable” in the operations of the soul, to act in full dependence, as a material frame “fashioned… solely for the display” of man’s essence and true nature. It could be argued that, while the inward organs and basic functions of the human body are overall the same as in animals, the very “organization” of our body bespeaks the higher destination of man. Long argued precisely this in The History of Jamaica, drawing on the extended reflections in the Spectacle de la Nature (1732), a highly popular compendium by Noël Antoine Pluche. Pluche, whose thoughts on the subject Long recapitulated in four pages, sought to describe the “Degree of Excellence” that raises the organs of man above those of animals. The human organs themselves remain closely related to animal in material functions and basic features; man’s resemblance to God is not located there. But, observes Pluche, “the Impression of the Image of the Almighty is found again in the Excellence of the Effects of these Organs. They are such as render Man, in Reality, the Lord of Nature, bestow on him the Activity of the Creator, and Rule over every thing on Earth.”

The “excellence of the effects,” as Pluche understands it, means the versatility and flexibility of human organs and body parts, suited for a great variety of actions and functions, enabling man potentially to accomplish everything the human mind designs, and to dominate nature. Although the organs are material, they are so constituted as to give man an essential resemblance to God – as a creative agent, a free mind that designs and accomplishes. In Long’s summary, the erect posture allows man to maintain himself “in full liberty of action, and command,” impossible for brute species that “recline towards the earth.” The human arm “is both the model and the soul, as it were, of all the instruments whatsoever,” because the latter are essentially imitations of the arm’s different properties, and “the excellence of their [instruments’] effects does always proceed from the hand and arm that direct them.” Even the stomach, seemingly having in its functions a nearer affinity to the corresponding organs of animals, is exceptionally versatile and leaves man nearly unrestrained in the choice of nourishment. And so on. Especially I will note the two authors’ thoughts on the expressive function and ability of the body, which, with its complex system of muscles of the face and other organs seems perfectly suited to articulate the limitless wealth of human mental states. Man’s “eyes, his features, his gestures, his whole countenance, correspond with his mind, and make it very well understood. He speaks from head to foot: all his motions are significant, and his expressions are as infinite as his thought.” And that is even before we consider the versatility of the human voice and our faculty of speech (HJ 2:365-8, Long’s italic).

Described in these statements is the body, as a product of one definite design for human nature. But the same criteria of instrumental perfection could be brought up for distinguishing among

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651 Ibid., 125.


653 Also Pluche, 5:22; 5:28-35; 5:35-44; 5:22. Man’s face is the mirror of his soul, observes Pluche.
human bodies. If the problem of varieties of the human physical constitution is introduced, this approach easily lends itself to the idea of a single standard of perfection among many existing forms – of a human form that best serves the needs of man’s higher nature. So, writing about the superior beauty of Europeans, Oliver Goldsmith observes, in a passage later transcribed by Long in his notes on the different races of mankind: “Of all the colours by which mankind is diversified, it is easy to perceive that ours is not only the most beautiful to the eye, but the most advantageous. The fair complexion seems, if I may so express it, a transparent covering to the soul; all the variations of passions, every expression of joy and sorrow, flows to the cheek, and without language, marks the mind.”

Here is articulated with stark clarity, in the language of the culture of sensibility, the fantasy of a transparent body within which the soul can remain free and undistorted; the fantasy of the soul’s immediate expression. This fantasy, I argue, was the defining feature of intellectual racism in the eighteenth-century. The body that it envisions does not simply allow the movements of the soul to be seen. In this transparent organ of the soul, the movements themselves are more authentically spiritual, and even in the relations between the sexes it makes possible, in the already-quoted words of Jefferson, “a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation,” rather than simply “eager desire.”

This is a body whose material quality is not subversive but rather useful; a body that of its own accord walks in the path of reason, and adds the warmth and energy of emotion to reason’s universalist and benevolent dictates.

On the other hand, the body that does not correspond to the idea of transparency and of instrumental perfection is one in which the material quality becomes more evident and intrudes upon the realization of the intellectual. Recall how James Thompson, also one of Long’s favorite authors, connects the dominance of rampant passions, overwhelming the norms of humanity, with “features gross,” produced by the circumstances of living. Degeneration, the increasing deviation from the original form divinely intended for the human being, was arguably the central idea, or explanatory framework, in the eighteenth-century discussions of racial difference – in the works of Samuel Stanhope Smith, John Hunter, Oliver Goldsmith, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Buffon, Herder, and others. “Nature, in her most perfect exertions, made men white,” unequivocally writes Buffon. “In proportion as the Tartar or American approaches nearer to European beauty, we consider the race as less degenerated,” states Goldsmith. Material conditions – climate, food, social circumstances – have corrupted the original perfection, but in some groups of men much less so than in others. In particular, some would have expressly argued, in regions with temperate, balanced climate without the extremes of heat and cold there takes place the least external interference with the normal human form: “All the principles of the human constitution unfolding themselves freely in such a region, and nature acting without


The concept of degeneration could also be combined with the postulate about the social nature of man, in the assertion that the “unfolding” of the true human form is really possible only in “civilized” life, in an artificial, transformed environment. Wild animals “are always the most beautiful when they enjoy their native liberty and range... But man, being designed for society and civilization, attains, in that state, the greatest perfection of his form, as well as of his whole nature.” The protection given by proper clothes, lodging, and plentiful food, as well as cultural concern with beauty in personal figure and appearance do much to “beautify the human form.”

I will not discuss in detail the well-known role of the concept of degeneration in eighteenth-century anthropology. I am concerned not with eighteenth-century understandings of the causes and natural history of human physical variety, but with its existential meaning, the reasons why variety could be turned into hierarchy. Those reasons depended on the place accorded to the body in the composite and uncertain phenomenon that was the eighteenth-century “man.” One detail is essential from this point of view. Degeneration made the human body, designed as an instrument of the mind, more “material,” gross, chaotic and animal, while human perfection, or beauty, depended on “being most removed from the brute creation.”

Especially in the case of Africans, observers constructed a body that was the very picture of intractable matter breaking through the confines of form, exploding from inside: coarse, wooly hair, “rank smell,” distended, hanging breasts in women, large genitals, protruding jaws, thick, sensual lips. Long too writes about Africans’ “bestial or fetid smell,” and “a covering of wool, like the bestial fleece, instead of hair” (HJ 2:352).

Note that the writers on race whom I named above overwhelmingly adhered to the idea, or assumed the fact, of monogenesis, while Long himself came to advocate the relatively marginal, for that moment, theory of polygenesis – of different origins for different races (or even species) of mankind. Polygenesis does not necessarily exclude the idea of degeneration (or improvement) of the human constitution, but does not build on it the explanation of the human diversity. Such serious differences, however, are less important for my study than common assumptions, reflections, and uncertainties about the relationship between the body and humanity.

4. The Complexions of Mind

For Long, a parallel between physical and moral/intellectual perfection, or imperfection, is evident in the gradation of animal and human species, organized into the Great Chain of Being. In the original drafts of The History of Jamaica Long, for instance, traces the movement of the

659 Samuel Stanhope Smith, An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species (Edinburgh and London, 1788), 71. For a particularly bizarre example, treating blackness as not simply a consequence of degeneration but a disease, see Benjamin Rush, “Observations Intended to Favour a Supposition that the Black Color (As It Is Called) of the Negroes Is Derived from the Leprosy,” Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 4 (1799): 289-297.

660 Smith, Variety of Complexion, 79. Naturally, it is Europeans and Americans who are “the most beautiful people in the world, chiefly, because their state of society is the most improved,” ibid., 114. As another commentator points out, “those who are always clothed, and generally live in-doors, are seldom exposed to the causes which produce a change of colour, and so retain their whiteness,” John Hunter, “Inaugural Disputation on the Varieties of Man” (1775) trans. from Latin, repr. in Blumenbach, On the Natural Varieties of Mankind, 375.

661 White, Regular Gradation in Man, 134.
Chain from primitive monkeys to apes that closely resemble men, then to the most primitive of Negroes whose aspect, features, and qualities make them little distinguishable from apes, then to the more humanized Blacks, proceeding through all the woolly Race, to those which have long Hair & regular Features, and from these through the various Discolorations of both the Body and Soul, till we arrive at the most Beautiful, polished, sensible, Rational, & perfect of human Creatures.662 The word “Beautiful” was inserted over the line and then crossed out. In the final text of the History, the passage was further modified and made to look more neutral. The ideas of the variations of the soul and degrees of humanization are replaced with the variation of the intellectual “faculty” – a manifestation, rather than essence. So, running parallel with the gradations in the structure of hair and the skin color, “we observe the like gradations of the intellectual faculty, from the first rudiments perceived in the monkey kind, to the more advanced stages of it in apes, in the orang-outang, that type of man, and the Guiney Negroe; and ascending from the varieties of this class to the lighter casts, until we mark its utmost perfection in the pure White” (HJ 2:374-5).

Here we find a peculiarity in Long’s views on racial gradation. It is the idea of a gradation of souls, which in the final version of the passage quoted above is presented in a less objectionable and rather widespread form, as a gradation of “intellectual faculties.” Working on the second edition of the History, Long records Buffon’s opinion on the difference between humans and animals: animals, like humans, have sense, imagination, memory, and passion, but are devoid of understanding and reason – in other words, “they have the inferior faculties of the Soul, but not the superior.” The statement prompts a comment in the margins: “Why may not there be a Gradation of Souls, as well as Bodies? – the Chain admits of many intermediate links between imperfection and perfection.”663 On the next page, Long cites in his notes Edward Tyson, who classed the pigmy as “the intermediate link between the Ape and Man; – In the formation of body, & sensitive or Brutal Soul more resembling a Man, than any other animal, yet in other respects wholly a brute.” Long comments: “It is difficult to understand what he means by brutal soul, unless it be that it consists solely of a passive instinct, without a power of combining ideas.”664 The comment may be read in various ways. Long may be criticizing Tyson for loosely applying the word “soul” where it does not belong, to the purely animal powers of instinct. But he also may be finding in Tyson indirect support for questioning the nature of the divide between lower mental activity and reason as that between the lack of a “soul” and a presence thereof – the divide asserted, for instance, by Buffon. I prefer the second interpretation, and will in this section explore the possibilities and “advantages” of shifting the central role in the interpretations of racial gradation from variations in the body to variations in the mind.

Long may seem not to be entirely consistent on the issue. His observations, descriptions and arguments do sometimes reproduce the pattern of thought that posits the strength of the intellectual and moral qualities as reversely proportionate to, and dependent on, the degree of physical irritability and energy, or the strength of the body. In the draft version of the History, Long finds in Africans a “Barrenness of Genius, & in general a Weakness of Intellect; little

662 BL Add. MS 18270, 57-8.
663 BL Add. MS 12405, 288.
664 Ibid., 289. See Edward Tyson, Orang-Outang, sive. Homo Sylvestris, or, The Anatomy of a Pygmie Compared with That of a Monkey, an Ape, and a Man: to Which Is Added, a Philological Essay Concerning the Pygmies, the Cynocephali, the Satyrs and Sphinxes of the Ancients: Wherein It Will Appear That They Are All Either Apes or Monkeys, and not Men, as Formerly Pretended (London: Thomas Bennet and Daniel Brown, 1699).
Disposition to Industry, nor Genius for the fine Arts; absorbed in Sensuality, the Brute appearing to predominate, & efface the human Rational being. Describing subtle distinctions within the black race, he finds that Senegal Africans possess better “understanding” than other blacks, while at the same time “their bodies are not robust, nor their constitution vigorous. The delicacy of their frame, perhaps, has some effect on their minds, for they are easier disciplined than any other of the African Blacks” (HJ 2:404). Long was a diligent student, and gathered enough statements from the contemporary scientific literature that lent themselves to this interpretation of the relationship between the mind and the body. He took notes, for instance, from the abbé Raynal’s discussion of the Negroes’ hotter skin, quicker pulse, and excessive passions, which make them more fit for slavery, and of blacks’ “Intellectual Faculties” nearly exhausted by the excesses of sensual pleasures. Long also recorded observations from such a specialized source as the work of “Dr. Mosely on ye tetanus,” stating that sick negroes are void of sensibility, disregard pain, and do not suffer from mental disturbances and nervous diseases. The gross and sensual black body, in which, according to Raynal, even the substance of the brain is blackish, is not a proper instrument for expressing the subtlety and diversity of truly human mental life. Particularly illuminating are Long’s own reflections, not on Africans, but on Jamaican Indians and their custom of depressing the skulls of their children after birth:

It might be no improper subject of Physiological Enquiry, how far this derangement of the structure of the skull and Brain, and of those delicate organs by which the Soul is conceived to exercise its rational powers, might affect the Genius and manners of these people? and operate towards producing that supposed inconsistency alluded to by Ulloa, where he observes, that, ‘if considered as a part of the human species, the narrow limits of their understanding, seem to clash with the dignity of the soul; that, in certain particulars one can scarce forbear entertaining an idea, that they are really Beasts; and even unfurnished with that Instinct which we find in the Brute creation. – While, in other respects, a more comprehensive judgement, better digested schemes, and conducted with greater subtlety, are not to be met with than among them.’

Cunning, schemes, and various forms of tactical rationality are not lost in an imperfect, artificially deformed brain, but the higher faculties and rational powers of the soul are impaired. The two levels of intelligence are represented as separable. A great refinement of tactical judgment and intelligence is not inconsistent with the lack of higher faculties. The influence of the brain on the operations of the soul is assumed, but the two are not identified.
without reservation. The brain is an organ of something that can be seen as not limited to itself, and realization of the full potential of the “soul” may depend on the structure of this organ, on the degree to which it is suited to express the human potential. Long would have agreed with the words of another student of human variety, a physician, John Hunter: “If the operations of the mind do not altogether depend upon the nervous system, especially the brain, as those think who deny that the mind is anything without matter, still there is no doubt they are most intimately connected with it, and vary with its variations.”

But *The History of Jamaica* also exhibits a tendency to downplay the significance of the anatomical factor in the dualist pair, and to theorize hierarchical gradations from the less human to perfectly human in the soul itself. This goes hand in hand with Long’s desire to minimize the physical differences between blacks and higher apes – to deny a clear *anatomical* break between humans and animals in favor of insensible gradations of the Great Chain. So, after summarizing Pluche’s analysis of human anatomical superiority over the brute creation, Long observes that the “oran-outang” possesses the same “structure and organization” as man, and, judging solely by his anatomical characteristics, shares with man the dominion over the rest of the natural world. “The sole distinction between him and man,” reasons Long, “must consist in the measure of intellectual faculties; those faculties which the most skilful anatomist is incapable of tracing the source of, and which exist *independent of the structure of the brain*; these powers are rendered visible only in the result they produce, through the intervention of the bodily organs” (HJ 2:369, Long’s italics). It is important for Long to establish the physical belonging, or at least extreme proximity, of the higher apes to “man” as a genus – in large part in order to efface the strict boundary between oran-outangs and black Africans. He asserts the anatomical similarity of humans and oran-outangs to be sufficiently demonstrated by the contemporary natural history, and latches his most forceful and programmatic statement of intellectual gradation to Buffon’s strict dualism, which asserts the spiritual qualities of man to be independent of the material organization:

> But if we admit with Mr. Buffon, that with all this analogy of organization, the oran-outang’s brain is a senseless *icon* of the human; that it is mere matter, unanimated with a thinking principle, in any, or at least in a very minute and imperfect degree, we must then infer the strongest conclusion to establish our belief of a natural diversity of the human intellect, in general, *ab origine*; an oran-outang, in this case, is a human being, *quoad* his form and organs; but of an inferior species, *quoad* his intellect; he has in form a much nearer resemblance to the Negro race, than the latter bear to white men; the supposition is then well founded, that the brain, and intellectual organs, so far as they are dependent upon mere matter, though similar in texture and modification to those of other men, may in some of the Negro race be so constituted, as *not to result to the same effects*; for we cannot but allow, that the Deity might, if it was his pleasure, diversify his works in this manner, and either withhold the *superior principle* entirely, or in part only, or infuse it into the different classes and races of human creatures, in such portions, as to form the same gradual climax towards perfection in this human system, which is so evidently designed in every other (HJ 2:371, Long’s italics).

The implications of this passage seem to be as follows. On the question of anatomical structure, Long here and elsewhere constructs a position that simultaneously does several things: asserts the qualitative superiority of the human genus; erodes the boundary between the human body and animal through postulating insensible gradations and problematizing the classification of the higher apes; and, finally, restores the inherent superiority of the human, as well as the boundary that separates it from the inhuman, in the highest point of the gradation – the “pure White.” From this “pure white” the “Negroe race” is distinguished as the embodiment of the animal in the human – human but closer to the apes than to the whites. “Human” is simultaneously the entire

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The question of the intelligible aspect of man and of the structure of the human intellectual faculties follows a parallel pattern after it is strictly divorced from the question of anatomical structure. While Long embraces the idea of the “superior principle” as man’s distinction from the animal creation, he does not concede to Buffon an easy boundary between inhuman tactical rationality and human reason. It is true, writes Long, that, however anatomically human the orang-outang may be, he would remain very far from our idea of “a perfect human being” if not endowed with reason and rational perception. According to Buffon, he is not so endowed – he “has a tongue, and the human organs of speech, but *speaks not*; he has the human brain, but does not *think*; forms no comparisons, draws no conclusions, makes no reflections,” and is moved purely by instinct, like brute animals. But, as Long observes, we do not actually know that for sure, for our possibilities of observing the species have been extremely limited. What Buffon voices is no more than a preconceived notion. Perhaps the surprising external signs of intelligent behavior that trained dogs and other lower animals can exhibit are due only to external imposition, the skills of their human teachers; but, given the anatomical structure of the orang-outang, “we are forced to acknowledge, that his actions and movements would not be natural, unless they resembled those of *man*” (HJ 2:369). Long concludes that “human organs were not given [the orang-outang] for nothing,” and later, in a marginal insertion made in preparation for the second edition of the *History*, develops the statement: “[t]hat they think and reason too within such a limited degree, as is necessary to supply their wants, acquire and preserve the materials of subsistence, provide for their safety, against Enemies, and every other matter suitable to their destination in the circle of and the ends of their existence.”671 These creatures probably possess some kind of a language, and most importantly for Long, they do not seem “at all inferior in the intellectual faculties to many of the Negroe race; with whom, it is credible that they have the most intimate connexion and consanguinity.” When gradation and degrees of perfection are found in the “superior principle” itself, that which may have appeared insufficiently human or inhuman – for instance, tactical reasoning organized around the needs of physical survival – becomes a degree of the human (at least when found in a body that is “human” in its structure and organization). Denying to black Africans manifestations of reason beyond the selfish strategies of physical survival and satisfaction does not then necessarily imply, for someone like Long, denying them a participation in humanity. The boundary between the human and inhuman, between the independence of the spirit and the tactical reason is eroded; but the spiritual essence, uniqueness and independence of the human “superior principle” is reaffirmed in its most perfect incarnation – the end point of the “gradual climax towards perfection in this human system.”

Certainly, the idea of a gradation in spirit, in something supposedly immaterial, something that does not possess the quality of extension, is rather far from self-evident. The matter-spirit dualism had long been a weapon against the concept of racial gradation, as the culturally axiomatic view of the world and human nature that made more difficult an intellectually acceptable discursive articulation of the assumptions about innate African inferiority – which assumptions, however,

671 HJ 2:370; BL Add. MS 12405, 298.
the colonial planter class could follow in everyday life without caring much for metaphysical consistency. Morgan Godwyn used the dualist weapon in the first large-scale clerical critique of colonial slavery in 1686; and new evangelicals like Hannah More kept returning to it a hundred years later: “Does then th’ immortal principle within / Change with the casual colour of a skin? / Does matter govern spirit? or is mind / Degraded by the form to which ‘tis join’d?” Most notably, the prominent anti-slavery activist and minister James Ramsay used the matter-spirit dualism to the full in his attack on the racism of the West India plantocracy. Intellectual and moral powers, he argued, could not be determined by the physical form, because matter and spirit were essentially different, and matter could have nothing to do with intellect. So, “if the Deity give to matter the power of thinking, he superadds an attribute analogous to no other quality of matter within our knowledge. He can give to a bull the form and attributes of an horse. But is not the bull annihilated, and a new animal formed in his stead? In like manner, to give to matter the ability of thinking, it must be changed into spirit, because the attribute of thinking is incompatible with matter, even as the distinguishing qualities of an horse cannot co-exist with those of a bull.” Further, only matter can take various shapes and colors, while “the soul is a simple substance, not to be distinguished by squat or tall, black, brown, or fair.” The nature and qualities of the soul are not influenced by the physical shape in which it is contained, and there can be no gradation of souls from “less perfect” to “more perfect.” This simple substance is essentially the same in us and in God (or other hypothetical creatures endowed with spirit): “…We can have no idea of intellect, but as acting with infinite power and propriety in the deity, and with various degrees of limited power and propriety, in several orders of intelligent created beings.”

“Propriety” in this case means a correspondence between the nature of the intellect and its action, or between essence and expression. While intellect is essentially the same in man and God, the difference lies in its freedom to act and to express itself. And, in the case of man, Ramsay virtually excludes the body from consideration when he discusses the factors that limit the expression of the intellect. The only factors he admits are social – variable, impermanent, and extrinsic to man. For the purposes of social life, “different pursuits, and different degrees of exertion of the reasoning energetic powers in the several individuals that compose a community” are only proper. But this hierarchy is variable and does not reflect special inner differences among men.

As many polemicists do, Ramsay imputed to his adversaries a disreputable view which most of them would find wrong and dangerous: materialism, the idea of “thinking matter,” smacking of atheism. But this did not need to have been the case. According to another polemicist, probably a

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675 Ibid., 201. Recall also William Blake’s famous line from a poem about a “Little Black Boy,” meant to shame callous racists and advocates of slavery: “…And I am black, but O! my soul is white”; *Songs of Innocence* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 9-10.
677 Ibid., 201-202.
certain Rev. Lindsey of Jamaica, who shared with Ramsay a position in the established church, the practical question that one had to face in considering the issue of racial gradation could be formulated in keeping with the dualist language: as “whether from the Vast Variety and Different Appearances of Mankind, under the Vast differences of Gods climates, it is not Reasonable for a Philosopher to suppose, That if God has not Created from the Beginning, different Species of the Human Genus, he has at least permitted (in the course of his Providence – and for Reasons very Obvious to Society) the Soul frequently to Degenerate with the Body?” And if whole nations are created different or undergo mutations and changes, perhaps under the influence of climate or nutrition or other external circumstances, perhaps “their Souls also shall undergo an equal and corresponding Alteration.”

This does suggest a very close relationship between soul and body and a kind of influence of the latter on the former that goes deep into the constitution of the soul and does not remain merely external. Lindsey, indeed, addresses the increasingly conspicuous challenge of materialism, and admits that it is possible to suppose that the “thinking faculty” in man is only a more refined matter, not a substance of a special nature. We certainly find that the “genius” of a race (in this case meaning a family) commonly follows the natural dispositions of an ancestor, which suggests heredity via physical reproduction. But, assures Lindsey, whether we follow this materialist opinion or the more popular one, namely that the thinking faculty “comes Pure and Spiritually Immaterial from the Father of Spirits,” does not matter here. For he who formed this thinking part in man, “having from its Rational Composition, design’d it for a Responsibility of Actions, in a World of Spirits; might as it should best answer his Divine Will, either have Ordeaned it to Immortality, tho of the seed and race of Man, or might have Formed it Immaterial as well as Immortal.”

In other words, even if one conceded to the insistent and vocal materialist party a physical origin of the intellectual faculty (increasingly believable in the scientific age), there would be left open a possibility for arguing that transcendence and essential independence from its material origins are characteristics of this intellectual faculty. Herder, for example, follows the same strategy in trying to comprehend the nature and origin of the human soul. He finds its root in the energy that “penetrates every living thing, and unites all the powers of nature. In the human frame it has attained the highest degree of subtlety, of which it is capable in any terrestrial organization: by it’s means the soul acts almost omnipotently on her organs, and beams back upon herself with a consciousness, that moves her inmost essence. By means of it the mind is filled with vital warmth, and is capable by free volition of transporting itself as it were out of the body, nay even beyond the world, and bending them to it’s will.”

Self-reflection and the consciousness of its own identity as free agent becomes the main principle of the soul’s movement, even though the energy for this movement is taken from its material organs. The soul is always in the process of becoming a thing for itself. As a power, it is not the same as its organ; it is a potential continually actuated by the organ (the human body). Unlike the organ, it is imperishable: “[w]hen the shell drops off, the power, which already existed before it, though in an inferior yet organized state, still remains.” Organic powers of the soul “unite harmonically with their frame, in which, as long

678 BL Add. MS 12439, “A Few Conjectural Considerations upon the Creation of the Human Race. Occasioned by the Present British Quixottical Rage of setting the Slaves from Africa at Liberty. By an Inhabitant of Jamaica. St. Jago de la Vega. July 23 1788,” 37. According to Charles Edward Long, Edward Long’s grandson and a known antiquarian, the author of this work is Rev. Dr. Lindsey, rector of St. Katherine’s parish in Jamaica. The manuscript, now among the Long papers at the British Library, was prepared for publication or at least wide circulation.

679 Ibid., 36-7; see also 156.

680 Herder, Outlines, 113.
as it endures, they harmonically act: and when it is worn out, their creator calls them from their 
post, and prepares for them another sphere of action. Thus immortality can be reconciled with 
the idea of a material origin of the soul, and it is immortality that signifies the separability of the 
intelligible from the material, its independence in principle. But in the Herderian account, the 
traces of its physical stage remain in the constitution of the soul, which is given form through the 
body.

Long, in fact, does not concern himself with such problems. He accepts the separation and 
different natures of the body and soul as a given; he does not theorize on the nature of their 
connection, nor problematize nor attempt to explain their separability. He finds, consciously or 
not, another way of thinking about human gradation in dualist terms. In Long’s account of human 
variety, the hierarchy of human physical forms and that of the “intelligent faculties” in different 
species of man run parallel to each other “through the various Discolorations of both the Body 
and Soul,” corresponding but independent and not necessarily united by any causal relationship. 
If, asks Long after once again listing the beauties and advantages of the white complexion, “the 
God of Nature has assigned this characteristic Excellence of personal Beauty to the Whites, is it 
more incredible or improbable, that he should likewise have thought fit to distinguish them 
further by a characteristic excellence of Intellectual faculty”? The main cause for both lines of 
gradation is divine will, or the place in the harmony of the universe which the various animal and 
human species are designed to occupy. In the History, after the already quoted outline of the 
gradations of the human intellectual faculty from the first rudiments in the monkey kind to the 
“utmost perfection in the pure White,” Long concludes: “Let us not then doubt, but that every 
member of the creation is wisely fitted and adapted to the certain uses, and confined within the 
certain bounds, to which it was ordained by the Divine Fabricator” (HJ 2:374-5). The faculties of 
every species correspond to the ends of its existence. To an unphilosophical eye, the black race 
may seem to deform the beauty of the globe and to deserve extermination. But Long is more 
broad-minded: “[A]s Christians we should indeed commiserate their [sic] overwhelmed as they 
are in Ignorance and vice; & as Philosophers, we must regard them as forming a Contrast to the 
Rest of Mankind in the Complexion of Mind as well as Body; all the Creation, we may observe is 
contrasted with Light and Shade. Perhaps this Opposition of Quality, rightly considered, may 
appear to add very much to the Beauty of ye whole.”

Thus we return to the vision of an 
intelligently designed hierarchy as the foundation of harmony and order.

It is important to note that the central concern for Long in the description of this human hierarchy 
is indeed the intellectual gradation, the complexities of the mind. In the case of the human genus, 
these are at the center of God’s hypothetical design, they are the real content of the human 
hierarchy. The physical characteristics, or the degrees of grossness and refinement in the human 
frame, are tailored to the potential, the needs, and limitations of the intellectual faculty. The body 
is indeed a functional organ. In other words, of the two designs – that for the body and that for the 
soul – the second is the main one, and the two are correlated only intermediately, through the will 
of the designer. The possibility of the body’s influence on the soul, of its imposing limitations on 
the realization of the soul’s potential, is by no means denied. However, in Long’s logic, this 
would simply not happen in practice, since it would be natural and reasonable for the intelligent

681 Ibid., 112.
682 BL Add. MS 18961, 37.
683 BL Add. MS 18270, 44. This draft passage did not make it into the published text of the History.
designer to form for each of the human species a body suitable for the preordained moral and intellectual potential of this species. Moreover, to do otherwise would be cruel on the part of the creator. So, we are likely to see exceptional instances in which the physical constitution interferes with the designed intellectual potential of man only in cases of artificial mutilation, such as intentional deformations of the skull we find among Jamaican Indians.

Further, if we understand the human body to be designed as a material organ and instrument of man’s intelligible faculties, we can “read” the body and its structure as a sign and indirect evidence of our intellectual potential and destiny by examining the uses and functions for which the body is suitable. This is precisely what Long does, after Pluche, in interpreting man’s physical organization to demonstrate God’s intention to give man dominion over nature. Similarly, the bestial characteristics of the black body that Long tirelessly stresses, as well as its general “crude” organization suitable for hard physical work in the tropical climate, are not so much factors that limit the full realization of the black African’s intellectual and moral potential, but rather signs of the intended limitation of that potential, and of the intended function of this species in the harmony of the larger human community. This is also the meaning that can be attributed in Long’s racial universe to Oliver Goldsmith’s reflections on the advantages of the white complexion: if it is the most suitable one for expressing fully the movements of the mind, it is safe to assume that behind this complexion there is more to express than behind, say, the dreadful black one. The “transparent covering to the soul” was designed to give a material expression to the soul. And, in another example, the human organs given to the orang-outang can be treated as evidence, if only indirect, of his possessing also more intangible, immaterial human qualities.

5. Existential Implications

On the simplest level, the implications of this picture of racial gradation are trivial and immediately obvious – a natural justification for slavery as a form of social hierarchy and gradation of social ranks (certainly not, in Long’s system, as absolute power of man over man). This is the context in which the problem of race was first explicitly articulated by a West-Indian in British public discourse – by Samuel Estwick, whom Long followed and whose basic postulates he developed at length, first in his own response to the Somerset decision, and then in the History of Jamaica. Long’s writings on race unquestionably appear as the center of his proslavery argument. As a justification for slavery, the idea of racial gradation did not immediately take root, but it eventually persisted among slaveholders until the American Civil War.684

But the analysis of the language of mind and body and of the specific content of Long’s racial views leads us deeper into their possible existential significance. An important function of hierarchy is not only to establish the dependence of the lower order, but also to signify the freedom of the higher. The morally destructive potential and animal connotations of the body are acknowledged in principle. But introducing a gradation of bodies from the more bestial to the more human, along with a gradation of intellectual faculties as such, both minimizes the threat of the body on the top of this hierarchy of the human genus and makes the organization of the body

itself a readable sign and assurance of the inherent moral and intellectual qualities of the white species. The white body is reconstituted as a natural instrument and organ of the human mind, while remaining a potential threat to the moral and intellectual life and, to an extent, man’s connection to the animal world. But the threat comes not from the body as such, which is not an active agent but primarily an instrument. The threat coming from the mind’s connection to animal nature is born within the mind itself, in its engagement with the body. It is not an inescapable destiny but rather our choice, the choice of intelligent beings, to employ our physical nature for the purposes of the mind or to employ reason in the service of desire. Desire is a necessary and ever-present mechanical component, part of the natural order to which our physical frame belongs. Even the white body shares its substance with animals and is, in its materiality, essentially a-moral. But the difference lies in the “structure and organization,” which determine, among other things, the degrees of intensity and direction of the passions, appetites, and desires. This is the difference between the black and white body.

If the (white) body is reconstituted as an essentially passive entity, an object and, in its designed perfection, an organ, then the realization of our moral and intellectual potential at the top of the human gradation is a problem only of the mind itself – and of the social life, imagined as an essentially intelligible system, a manifestation of man’s higher nature. The human community is the location of man’s specifically human nature, his difference from the natural animal world. It is a product of the human mind in general, as a phenomenon, and at the same time of the environment in which particular minds exist, are formed, developed and improved through forms and structures such as property, education, or political institutions. The eventual independence of man from his animal nature is a social question. Those, even among blacks in the West Indian colonies, who can be drawn into the system of proper social relations, gradually emerge as agents and property owners within the plantation world, “for, even among these slaves, as they are called, the black grandfather, or father, directs in what manner his money, his hogs, poultry, furniture, cloaths, and other effects and acquisitions, shall descend, or be disposed of, after his decease” (HJ 2:410). Their pride and vanity, of which creole slaves possess a large share, become useful: because of them “the better sort appear sensible to shame” and thus may, “with a very moderate instruction in the Christian rules, be kept in good order, without the whip” (HJ 2:411). Many are moved by feelings of filial obedience and gratitude to their masters, the connection with whom gratifies their vanity. Such creoles are superior not only to Africans in “the beauty of shape, feature, and complexion,” but also to the lower order of white servants, those “beastly white wretches” who come to Jamaica in search of easy money, are insolent, lazy, and always drunk – for “there is nothing surely can more degrade a man, than this voluntary rejection of his rational faculties; deprived of which, he sinks below the lowest rank of brutes” (HJ 2:410). Note that agency, free will, the ability of such whites to reject or honor one’s higher nature are stressed. It is their choice to turn their natural freedom into licentiousness, and it is the function of the social forms to direct men towards the right choice. In describing creole blacks, Long follows the ethnographic mode and compares their customs and rituals to those of the Scottish highlands – outskirts of civilization, to be sure, but not the perpetual Darkness of Africa. Ethnography describes society, not primeval chaos. Some creole performances, dances, and songs even merit such expressions as “correctness of air,” “wonderful address,” “propriety of attitude,” and “very pleasing effect” (HJ 2:424). Moreover, while freed blacks are “not supposed to have acquired any sense of morality by the mere act of manumission,” Long advocates the expansion of civil rights and liberties, up to voting rights, for those who in addition to freedom have a good education and

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685 For more on blacks’ superiority over such whites see HJ 2:282; 2:289.
sufficient property. They can also serve in public office “without any probable ill consequence” – of course, only as clerks (HJ 2:321).

Roxann Wheeler, in what is perhaps the most detailed and nuanced analysis of Long’s views to date, notes that such opinions belie Long’s own argument about the permanent inferiority of blacks and are in accord with the general instability and superficiality of racial categories in the eighteenth century. However, what Long believes he observes is the ameliorating influence of civilization on a human species who have been forcibly introduced to it and would never have been able to create it independently. The hundreds of pages that he devotes to black people – in Africa and in Jamaica, the natives of the continent and creoles – are not simply a crucial part of the most elaborate defense of colonial slavery ever written. It is a minute inquiry into the pressing problem of the relationship between man and society. The History of Jamaica explores (and attempts to contribute to) the process by which the backbones of society – property, law, and education – unite human beings in the progressive moral order and help them manage their animal nature. There is, however, a crucial difference in the results of society’s influence on different men and women. Not for nothing does Long devote a special chapter to the celebrated case of Francis Williams – a son of free blacks and a boy of “unusual lively parts” who was, for the sake of “experiment” educated at Cambridge and subsequently set up a school in Spanish Town. His treasured impartiality barely prevents Long from voicing definite conclusions on the quality of the man’s poetry, but he does allow himself a short observation on the “moral part” of Williams’s character:

He was haughty, opinionated, looked down with sovereign contempt on his fellow Blacks, entertained the highest opinion of his own knowledge, treated his parents with much disdain, and behaved towards his children and his slaves with a severity bordering upon cruelty; he was fond of having great deference paid to him, and exacted it in the utmost degree from the Negroes about him; he affected a singularity of dress, and particularly grave cast of countenance, to impress an idea of his wisdom and learning; and, to second this view, he wore in common a huge wig, which made a very venerable figure (HJ 2:478).

Cambridge has not removed Williams far from being a cruel African tyrant whose power over other men has little to do with humane guidance. In this he is presumed to be no different than all other black slave-owners in the West Indies, whom pro-slavery literature habitually represented as particularly cruel and arbitrary. Wisdom, learning, and true superiority are replaced by the external signs thereof. In this portrait by Long, Williams revels in his newly acquired social status and jealously guards its trappings; his social advancement has only bolstered pride and vanity instead of encouraging the growth of a moral self. Africans, creoles, and mulattoes can be educated, some can even function as citizens; they can act as subjects, fulfill social functions not limited to slavery, and generally be useful; but they cannot be subjects. All they can achieve is imitation, exterior signs of moral selfhood. At the same time, finding in blacks “every species of inherent turpitude” does not exclude them from participation in humanity, once the boundaries of the latter are blurred. Blacks have a function in the human order, just as the body has a function in the complex whole that is the human being. Just like the human body, blacks are conceived of as both human and not.

But perhaps most importantly for the reflection on the human condition, postulating such a human hierarchy of the “complexions of the mind” changes the terms of the existential problem

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of moral-intellectual goodness that “man” faces. The factor of the body certainly does not disappear. The “transparent body” remains a metaphor, and the inherent difference between ideal and reality will be admitted by eighteenth-century observers even in cases when the ideal is averred to be the true and essential reality. Postulating the expressive and instrumental functions as central to the phenomenon of the human body does not entirely reduce to these functions the common and everyday reality of the body. White plantation owners can be just as cruel as African despots, and their penchant for rioting in the “goatish embraces” of their black mistresses is famously a source of acute dismay for Long (HJ 2:328). His description of Jamaican gentlewomen succumbing to the influence of their black servants is remarkable for its vividly sarcastic imagery of physical and intellectual looseness:

We may see… a very fine young woman awkwardly dangling her arms with the air of a Negro servant, lolling almost the whole day upon beds or settees, her head muffled up with two or three handkerchiefs, her dress loose, and without stays. At noon, we find her employed in gobbling pepper-pot, seated on the floor, with her sable hand-maidens around her. In the afternoon, she takes her siesto as usual; while two of these damsels refresh her face with the gentle breathings of the fan; and a third provokes the drowsy powers of Morpheus by delicious scratchings on the sole of either foot. When she rouzes from slumber, her speech is whining, languid, and childish (HJ 2:279).

This is everything that education, regimen, and true polite manners and clothes are supposed to prevent – down to locking the amorphous body in stays. However, in the case of white creole women, by reining in the body, education and proper socialization set free something that is already there – those “excellent talents” which “require only cultivation to make them shine out with dignity and elegance” (HJ 2:284).687 The problem of human goodness, of existential freedom from physical limitations, becomes the problem of disciplinary practices and social forms, while these social forms are seen as internal to the human being, not external restraints. Long’s portrait of the African anti-society, comprehensive and intense, but not unique in its main features, functions as a negative that highlights the intelligible nature and origin of “real” European social life. From its place in the sphere of external restraint and the palliative management of human depravity, the problem of social order is moved to the heart of existential concerns, and reimagined as the potential solution to actual human depravity. Now the solution is in human power. The body, even white, does not disappear. But the numerous, ubiquitous, all-embracing disciplinary practices, discourses, and structures the object of which it will increasingly become in the nineteenth century, and which have been so vividly depicted by Foucault and his followers, can now be imagined as foundations for optimism about the existential potential of social progress, as a road towards the true liberation of man.

687 True to the “environmentalist” fashions of contemporary anthropology, Long also believes that the Jamaican white women’s superior graces and quickness of parts do owe something to the climate of Jamaica, where everything seems to flourish better than in England. On the other hand, as Long remarks in the chapter on Williams, “the climate of Jamaica is temperate, and even cool, compared with many part of Guiney; and the Creole Blacks have undeniably more acuteness and better understandings than the natives of Guiney” (HJ 2:477). Such differences, however, are only cosmetic.
CONCLUSION

“All human society must proceed from the mind rather than the body, else it would be but a kind of animal or beastish meeting.”

John Milton, The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce

The trend that runs through my case studies is a desire for, and gradual assertion of, the independence of the soul from the body. The independence in question is not simply independence in principle and abstract essence; it is not simply the identification of the spirit with the purity of reason and moral law as phenomena utterly general and extrinsic to the bodily life. It is rather the constitutional independence of the concrete, embodied human soul – human individuality in its structure, character, movements, and actions – from the body with which this soul coexists and interacts, but to which it is not limited and on which it does not entirely depend in its movements. It is an independence that is ever potential, never complete, but defined as the true (as opposed to circumstantial) reality of specifically human nature. This independence was to define (not to be confused with “to correspond to the everyday reality of”) both the human condition and social life.

William Byrd inherited from seventeenth-century popular psychology, medicine, and philosophy a deeply physiological view of the constitution and operation of the human self. He was compelled to see the movements of spirit as inseparable, deriving from, or necessarily reacting to the movements of the body. The abstract power of reason, intellectual life and moral principles were in fact positioned as external to the passions, affections, and emotions of the embodied soul – virtually to the entire reality of that soul. This was the kind of imagination that could lead Byrd’s contemporary Cotton Mather to postulate a tripartite division of “man” into the body, the embodied, vital and passionate soul, and the pure rational spirit that does not partake of the body. In this tripartite division, a space for pure reason was carved out even as the essential dependence of the soul in its actual operations on the body was conceded. The soul could be deeply suspect because of the fact of its “fall, a descent into body, into Matter,” in the words of the Neo-Platonist Plotinus: “The dishonour of the Soul is in its ceasing to be clean and apart.”

One need not have been as literal as Mather was in creating a “space apart” in the human constitution for the “system of principles to be grasped by the detached intellect.” One need not have turned this system of principles into an entity that would ontologically be a component of “man.” But the problem of the relationship between such abstract principles and the movements of the deeply suspect embodied soul was, for Byrd among others, the central problem of moral life. Reason, to whose government the life of the embodied soul was to be subjected, struggled to find a place inside that soul, and was liable to be pushed out, conceived as a set of external restraints. Its best hope to restore its rightful prominence and regain its reality in “man” was in the cessation, or reduction and strict Stoic subjugation of the passions, affections, desires, emotions, moods, and other movements and states of the soul closely connected to the bodily life.

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690 In the words of Martha C. Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

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But the body refused to be taken out of the picture of human and even social existence. Disturbingly, it turned up at the very origin of reasonable and moral social order – the patriarchal family and lawful procreation, “the whole band of civil society.” Byrd could not avoid finding at the root of this fundamental institution, as well as at the root of his own social being as a father and master, the desire that constituted an essential element of marriage and permeated the soul itself. Marriage, the pivotal social relation, seemed, in some unavoidable way, to be a bond based on licentious fiction, a thing of the flesh, even if it was not only that. Reason, as freedom of the soul from the body, turned out to be utterly abstract and alien to the phenomenon of embodiment or even to social existence. It threatened to come into conflict with life as such. The germ of corruption was not simply present in the human and social constitution. It was a key structural aspect of both. When the premises of matter-spirit dualism were pursued doggedly and intensely enough in the patriarchal social and moral imagination, desire was prone to be found deep inside order, always undermining the latter from within. Byrd could not free himself from this fundamental pessimism and begin to imagine a state of freedom from the body until the close of his life, and then only tentatively and uneasily. His musings on ginseng did not solve for him the logical dilemma, but, in a way, they did reveal a dream world in which the dilemma would not exist – where a healthy body would be a perfect instrument, not a potential subversive agent, where desire would not be an inevitable component of health and vigor, and where transgression, while not eliminated, would be a matter of the free choice of a human agent, and thus avoidable rather than inevitable.

In Byrd’s mental world, this picture was too good to be true. But Byrd both set out the problem that matter-spirit dualism posed for the early modern moral imagination and pointed toward a way to avoid (not resolve) the problem. The remainder of this project explored, in the case studies of the fifth Earl of Orrery and Edward Long, some of the possibilities and actual efforts to build a picture of human nature that would get out of the cul-de-sac of dualist pessimism. The central movement that I see in my case studies, and a movement that, I argue, can be found in larger eighteenth-century cultural trends such as the culture of sensibility, is the assertion of the soul as an independent agent of feeling and action, extensively influenced in everyday practice by the body, but potentially free from the body. The concomitant development – the reimagining of the body as a mechanic and pliable instrument and reactive substance rather than the active, and always potentially dangerous, agent – has been commented upon.\footnote{For instance Francis Barker, \textit{The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).} But the role of the soul and spirit in what, for instance, Terry Eagleton calls “the production of an entirely new kind of a human subject” remains underexplored, if not actively denied.\footnote{Terry Eagleton, \textit{The Ideology of the Aesthetic} (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 19.}

Eagleton’s description of the “new kind of a human subject,” the emergence of which was presumably one of the central trends in early modern culture, is excellent and paradigmatic: this is a subject “which, like the work of art itself, discovers the law in the depths of its own free identity, rather than in some oppressive external power. The liberated subject is the one who has appropriated the law as the very principle of its own autonomy, broken the forbidding tablets of stone on which the law was originally inscribed in order to rewrite it on the heart of flesh. To consent to the law is to consent to one’s own inward being.”\footnote{\emph{ibid.}} Note that this idea contradicts another construction that connects the articulation of the Western individual with the Cartesian...
division between the body and soul and detects a movement, between Descartes and the
nineteenth century, towards the image of the body as primarily an object of knowledge,
management, and training, rather than an active/leading source of desires and drives or the locus
of our inner being. I would argue that the implicit and apparently automatic identification of
“one’s own inward being” with “the heart of flesh” should not be automatic and should not be
taken for granted. In order to appropriate law, truth, beauty, and morality as active forces of the
human constitution, rather than external principles to be forcibly imposed, one could choose
between at least two main logical paths: first, indeed, to find these principles in the flesh itself, as
its constitutive elements; and second, to imagine spirit as an (or the) active, moving principle of
the human constitution. Both of these paths were actively pursued in the eighteenth century, and
their premises prominently contradicted each other. Today, it is the second path that sorely lacks
scholarly attention.

My investigation was not purely metaphysical – I approached the construction and articulation of
an “active soul” first and foremost through the problem of the marriage, family, and love, which
had already been the center of my attention in the Byrd chapters. In comparison to Byrd, I found a
veritable paradigm shift in the life and thought of the Earl of Orrery, whose personal character
and views on the world and man fit well the developing culture of sentiment and sensibility. I
found him reimagining, intentionally and not, specifically human relations as overwhelmingly an
intimacy of minds/souls that leaves behind or even actively rejects the body, and applying this
basic concept of human relations to marriage and love between the sexes. I traced in the larger
eighteenth-century culture a trend towards the analytical differentiation between the spiritual and
the physical aspects, or rather kinds, of love and pleasure. I argued that it was possible to imagine
the relation between these two kinds as that of coexistence rather than causation – one did not
have to be ultimately traced and/or reduced to the other. Truly human relations, including
marriage, could be defined through the spiritual connection and pleasure arising in the interaction
of souls/minds, with physical connection either unnecessary or secondary. There was no
fundamental difference between marriage and friendship. For Byrd, on the other hand, there was.
Love between the sexes simply could not be essentially intellectual, since the body was naturally
present in it, and, once present, colored the entire relationship, penetrated the soul, and shaped its
motions. The discourse of love that I am finding in the middle and second half of the eighteenth
century did not deny the sexual aspect of the love between the sexes but segregated it in a special
sphere analytically separable from the higher, spiritual kind of emotional life. This was a possible
solution to the conflict between the social and the sexual in the institution of marriage, which
Byrd could not solve and which Plato had solved in a peculiar way, creating an alternative image
of a socially significant, intimate and erotic union of two persons that was not sexual and could
not be involved in procreation. So, postulating that sexual pleasure “mustn’t approach love, and
lover and boy who love and are loved in the right way mustn’t be partner to it,” Plato’s Socrates
suggested a law for his projected city: “that a lover may kiss, be with, and touch his boy as
though he were a son, for fair purposes, if he persuades him; but, as for the rest, his intercourse
with the one for whom he cares be such that their relationship will never be reputed to go further

693 So in Barker, The Tremulous Private Body, 86: “At the same time as bourgeois power rarefies the material in its
search for the tranquil and tranquilizing ideal – the fable of the ascertainment of its own domination – it also, as its
other side, issues onto a positivism of the object. It must master the body of the world in practice at the same moment
and in the same gesture and purposes, as it de-realizes it in thought: not so much denying the world – which, on the
contrary, it strives to dominate – as opening up that powering and powered division between body and soul, object and
subject, which is the principle of its sexuality, its epistemology and its representation, and which in the widest sense
designs the characteristic structures of the new culture.”
than this. If not, he’ll be subject to blame as unmusical and inexperienced in fair things."694 For the Anglophone eighteenth century, this was clearly not a culturally acceptable option. For Byrd and Plato, sexual desire had necessarily compromised and undone the pure spiritual pleasure in the embodied soul, where physical stimuli entered the wholeness of emotional life and became an inseparable part of it. The sentimentalist discourse created a possibility for conceiving a human bond that involved flesh and procreation but could remain essentially spiritual (properly human). 695 More abstractly, I consider this shift in thinking about marriage as an instance of the general reimagining of human nature that placed human moral and intellectual potential in the center of the definition of “man” and left the messy incidents and imperfections of embodiment on the sidelines as present, but epiphenomenal.

So, I argue, the relation of the flesh was widely seen as secondary in the basic social relation of marriage, an appendix that was necessarily there but could safely be looked past in search of the true human content of the relation. Here my interpretation of eighteenth-century discourse is very different from the prevailing wisdom on the culture of love and marriage in the period. To the scholarship that I already addressed in Chapter Four, I will add Ruth Bloch’s work on the conceptions of sexuality and romance in the eighteenth century. Bloch believes that, for sentimentalist authors, “heterosexual love cultivated in courtship and marriage constituted the primary social bond. Passionate sexual love between men and women was for them an expression not of individualism but of communal morality. The relation between husband and wife was, argued Hutcheson and Hume, ‘the first and original principle of human society,’ from which developed all other affectionate connections between parents and children, kin, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and fellow countrymen.”696 True. But after postulating the marital relation as the paradigmatic human and social relation at least two directions are possible. One can infer that physicality underlies, immediately or intermediately, human relations as such. Or


695 Another eighteenth-century authority on the inevitable rift between humanity and properly human love on the one hand and the sexual impulse on the other is Kant: “Sexual love makes of the loved person an Object of appetite; as soon as that appetite has been stilled, the person is cast aside as one casts away a lemon which has been sucked dry. Sexual love can, of course, be combined with human love and so carry with it the characteristics of the latter, but taken by itself and for itself, it is nothing more than appetite. Taken by itself it is a degradation of human nature; for as soon as a person becomes an Object of appetite for another, all motives or moral relationship cease to function, because as an Object of appetite for another a person becomes a thing and can be treated and used as such by every one. This is the only case in which a human being is designed by nature as the Object of another’s enjoyment. Sexual desire is at the root of it; and that is why we are ashamed of it, and who all strict moralists… sought to suppress and extirpate it.” Immanuel Kant, Lectures on Ethics, trans. Louis Infield, introduction by J. MacMurray (London: Methuen, 1979), 163-4. By “human love” Kant meant “good-will, affection, promoting the happiness of others and finding joy in their happiness,” 163. Kant saw marriage as the only acceptable circumstance for sexual relations, because there sex was subsumed in a truly human bond of mutually equal and mutually responsible moral subjects. The dangers of “objectification,” on the other hand, still remain among the main moral concerns related to sexuality, despite all the cultural valorization of the latter.

696 Ruth H. Bloch, “Changing Conceptions of Sexuality and Romance in Eighteenth-Century America,” William and Mary Quarterly 60, no. 1 (2003), 38. Bloch’s plot line of the “changing conceptions” is the exact opposite of mine: she finds a split between sexuality and spiritual affection in the earlier Puritan culture and their fusion into the idea of “romantic love” in the age of sensibility and sentiment. As we have seen in Chapter Four, she is not the only scholar who looks in the eighteenth-century for the precursors of the modern cultural ideal of, in Herbert Marcuse’s expression, “libidinal rationality” that could turn the sex instincts into a foundation for stable and lasting social relations and an aid to civilized freedom; see Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), esp. 180-202.
one can infer that the marital relation, and even heterosexual love itself, is not essentially a physical phenomenon, much less related to “genital sexuality,” as the modern expression puts it. One could even say that Hume and Hutcheson well represent these diverging directions. In the second case, the fact that heterosexual love came to express “communal morality” testified to the change in the perception of the nature of heterosexual love rather than communal morality.

Thus, instead of the body that lurks at the root of all social relations (a postulate that deeply troubled Byrd and Swift but could be accepted with more equanimity and scientific interest by someone like John Millar), we might find a social world of interpersonal relations that does not include the body as an active (subversive and/or creative) structural component. In such a picture, the body would remain important, but rather as a passive obstacle for, or instrument of, emotional, intellectual, and moral life, an object of social relations, and a laboring machine to be explored, constructed, and managed. Chapters Five and Six of this project presented a case study in how such a picture could be elaborated and felt, and what could happen to the body in it. I found in Edward Long’s writings a picture of social life as the essential expression and, furthermore, location of our humanity, incorporating the body, but primarily as object, material, and instrument of labor, exchange, and regulation. Law, norm, and rule are both the form of this society and – together with property, invention, arts and sciences – its content. In other words, social regulation is not external to man’s embodied existence – or rather, it is external to the body, but internal to the mind. This is indeed a society of subjects that find the law deeply inscribed in their “inward being,” but not on “the heart of flesh.” And as an anti-thesis to this implicit picture, Long’s writings offer us an image of a human (?) grouping in which the body is indeed an active, constitutive element – a grouping that is not properly a society at all, but rather an anti-society.

The body remains an irreducible element of chaos in the picture of society proper – an instrument that always has a potential to become an obstacle. But, while irreducible, it could also be portrayed as receding, if a gradation of human bodies varying in their delicacy, beauty, and instrumental quality were introduced. My “smoking gun” is Oliver Goldsmith’s metaphor characterizing the best kind of human body (of course, white European) – the body that is a “transparent covering” to the soul, a nearly unnoticeable mediator that allows the human soul to express itself and act as if it were completely free and “uncovered.” In their relentless attention to the body, many of the proponents of the culture of sensibility never forgot that feelings, of all kinds, were in the mind, and that the problem of the body was a problem of the adequacy of the mediator, the fineness of the conduit and instrument, on which it depended to a large extent how feeling would correspond to judgment and to the moral and rational standard. The purported fusing of the mind and body in the culture of sensibility (and its perception of love, as I have said above) was in fact apt implicitly to reinforce the existential dualism, reading the body in a “system of expression, whose basic assumption is a referential structure of inside/outside and psyche/body. To express is to make the first of these paired terms pass through the second, to let the one be read through the other, and thus to set up an organic and signifying unity.” In this “dualism of the sign,” the ideal state was the passivity and transparency of the signifier. I have argued that one of the possible ways to both acknowledge and eliminate the body as an agent of

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697 Today, a notable philosophical proponent of this view is Martha Nussbaum; see her Upheavals of Thought, 475-6.

its own, a-moral and potentially dangerous, lay through constructing a hierarchy, a progression of bodies, from a crude and alien agent to a pliant and transparent covering of the soul. And less agency to the body meant more agency to the mind. The subversive potential that always remained in the flesh became a matter of choice for the human agent, the question of how one chose to engage the body. Further, the human agent is, as we remember, an essentially social being. The more social, the more independent he or she is from his or her narrowly bodily existence. So, freedom from the limitations and dangers of bodily life is not an everyday reality of human existence – but it is a social problem, a matter of policy, choice, and social persuasion and education that would enable men and women to make the right choices, to liberate themselves.

This kind of the eighteenth-century social imaginary, tied to ontological dualism and built on the ideal of mental independence from the bodily life, is rarely noticed today. It can provide an alternative interpretive framework for reading the “sociological” discourse of the period, for instance, the conservatism of Edmund Burke, who famously defended against the onslaught of revolutionary radicalism and rationalism “all the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society.”

It is these illusions and ideas of “the moral imagination, which the heart owns and the understanding ratifies,” that rise as a superstructure over our animal existence and “cover the defects of our naked shivering nature.” Without them, in Burke’s view, power can be founded only on physical force; it can speak only to the tangible material interest or fear, and relies on the basic physical terror and such instruments as murder and confiscation. Burke’s condemnation of the rationalism of the French Revolution can be read as an excellent manifestation of the social and political imaginary that hinges on human feeling, on the sentiments and affections that permeate “private society.” But the causal links between human feeling and social existence are complicated. On the one hand Burke complains that, “[o]n the principles of this mechanistic philosophy” of rationalism and universal equality, “our institutions can never be embodied, if I may use the expression, in persons; so as to create in us love, veneration, admiration, or attachment.” Social attachments and “public affections” are essentially personal in nature, they take place between, or towards, particular people. On the other hand, particular people become objects of such attachment and affection as social creatures, social personas. When we are considered outside of our specifically social existence and abstractly stripped down to our elementary “natural” condition, our moral significance as subjects seems to recede, and our animal nature comes conspicuously into view. On the “scheme of things” proclaimed, according to Burke, by the apologists of the French Revolution, “a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order.” In the state of “natural” equality, the murder of a king, queen, bishop, or father is nothing but a common homicide, which in itself is pardonable if practically advantageous. Without social (and, note, familial) position, humanity itself dwindles away, becomes too weak to rise above the animal nature even in our own estimation. We are attached to other human beings, we naturally feel affection towards them, but our attachment is social, and our affection and respect towards men is an artifact of our social nature.699

Society certainly is a contract, notes Burke, but not one concerning “things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature.” Rather, it is “a partnership in

every virtue, and in all perfection,” in science, in art, and in other achievements of the human mind. It is not a temporary and practical union of convenience. It unites human beings of all generations – dead, living, and yet unborn – and, one might conclude, is an essential characteristic of the specifically human nature. It integrates the temporal and the eternal in us into a coherent order mandated by Providence, or rather integrates the temporal into the eternal, because order belongs to the realm of the eternal: “Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place.”

Francis Hutcheson also considered man’s moral nature and social structure to be inseparable. Suggesting that human nature is essentially morally good and is incapable of sincere disinterested hatred, he proposed a thought experiment. Imagine a group of pirates stuck on an island where prospects of ill-gotten riches are nil. It seems evident to Hutcheson that such people, perhaps considered evil and incorrigible in our society, “may return to a State of Love, Humanity, Kindness” when external incentives for malice are removed, and may “become Friends, Citizens, Husbands, Parents, with all the sweet Sentiments which accompany those Relations.” When men recover their “natural affections,” they “contrive Laws, Constitutions, Governments, Properties; and form an honest happy Society with Marriages, and Relations dear, and all the Charities / Of Father, Son, and Brother,” argues Hutcheson, quoting Milton.

Passion is precisely the part of our emotional life that is not essentially and inherently social. Particular attachments that find support and energy in “bodily motions” can be inconsistent with the social

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700 Ibid., 96-7.
interest and social good will, in which case they demonstrate “some Defect in that more noble Principle, which is the Perfection of Virtue.”

Here again we return from the social imaginary to the ontological dualism and the nature of “man.” The highest perfection of virtue that a human being is capable of lies in “an universal calm Good-will toward all sensitive Natures,” and this kind of affection is emphatically not physical in nature. As a matter of fact, all sensations and the entire emotional life are artifacts of the soul, not of the body; and the distinction is between mental phenomena that do and do not have a physical origin or stimulus. Hutcheson is entirely explicit on the issue: “All Perception is by the Soul, not by the Body, tho’ some Impressions on the bodily Organs are the Occasions of some of them; and in others the Soul is determined to other sorts of Feelings or Sensations, where no bodily Impression is the immediate Occasion. A certain incorporeal Form, if one may use that Name, a Temper observed, a Character, an Affection, a State of a sensitive Being, known or understood, may raise Liking, Approbation, Sympathy, as naturally from the very Constitution of the Soul, as any bodily Impression raises external Sensations.” It is this possibility of an independent, incorporeal feeling that has been neglected of late by scholars in pursuit of eighteenth-century nervous sensibility. But it was neither particularly uncommon nor new in the history of Western thought. Refuting those who thought virtuous action could be based only on reason, Hutcheson contests the assumption with which modern scholars appear in a curious way to sympathize when they approach early modern culture. He does not agree that there exist two principles of action, reason and affection (or passion), one being common in us with angels and the other with brutes. We should remember “the common Divisions of the Faculties of the Soul. That there is 1. Reason presenting the natures and relations of things, antecedently to any Act of Will or Desire; 2. The Will, or Appetitus Rationalis, or the disposition of the Soul to pursue what is presented as good, and to shun Evil. Were there no other Power in the Soul, than that of mere Contemplation, there would be no Affection, Volition, Desire, Action.” These faculties of the soul, independent in themselves, should be distinguished from the lower ones, dependent on the body: the senses and the appetitus sensitivus, in which the particular passions are founded. Hutcheson subscribes to the “moral hedonism” shared, for example, by Locke, according to which reason and understanding in themselves cannot be the immediate cause of action, and every action must stem from desire and its varieties. But he follows a longer tradition, represented by such thinkers as Augustine and Aquinas, in establishing a distinction between “rational” and “sensitive” desire, rational and sensitive appetite. He not only assumes that all passions, affections, feelings and desires are phenomena of the mind and soul, but also presupposes that some of them are phenomena of the soul only, the acts of the spirit in which the body participates only reactively, if at all.

It is true that the eighteenth century was the time of “insistence, indeed obsession, with the relation of the mind (soul) to the body.” In the increasingly sophisticated and widespread discourses of neurophysiology, associationist and sensationalist psychology, and sensibility, the body and its relation to external stimuli often became the focus of attention in the study of the

703 Hutcheson, Inquiry, 187.


705 Ibid., 219-220.

passions, affections, feelings, moral reactions, reason and knowledge. It could be assumed and boldly stated during this period that disproportions among men in the intellectual and moral faculties were “in fact only occasioned by some or other of those innumerable and hidden accidents, which from our first coming into the world, in a more or less degree, have an effect upon the organs of sense; and they being the sole canals through which the spirit shows itself, according as they happen to be extended, contracted, or obstructed, the man must infallibly appear.”

This interaction between the organs of sense and the natural and social world could be seen as a firm and sure foundation for a science and understanding of human nature, development, behavior, and character. It was possible in the eighteenth century to say that “[n]erves are the basis for brain and sensory impressions, for all human passion and reason, for emotion and feeling, for higher associated ideas and principles, for the thoughts of monarchs and the legislations of parliaments.” It was the period when, said Terry Eagleton, “the whole of our sensate life” was coming into focus.

It was possible, with enough courage and logical determination, to formulate materialist approaches to the life of the mind, to insist that matter was not dead but in itself alive, and that emotions, imagination, and the entirety of mental life arose from the independent movements of matter; that the right morals, the right feelings, and the right knowledge could be produced by the right management of the body both on the individual and social scale. Enlightenment rationalists such as Joseph Priestly or Jeremy Bentham argued precisely that. But in this dissertation I wanted to demonstrate, first, that in the eighteenth-century discourse on human nature there also existed ample potential and logical possibilities for dualist interpretations of moral and social life. Second, I wanted to present and analyze in depth real-life cases of the dualist social and moral imaginary, to explore concrete manifestations of the intellectual potential and cultural reach of eighteenth-century dualism.

Establishing and illustrating the eighteenth-century ability to imagine an essentially spiritual humanity, independent from our physical frame, means making a point that is far from trivial today. Approaches to the life of the mind, to morals, feelings, knowledge, and society through the body, senses, nerves and the brain are highly congenial to modern scholars and readers. We have been brought up in a new cycle of Western reaction against a hierarchical differentiation between reason and emotion and mind and body. Celebrations of the bodily life, of affects and emotions, rhetorically directed against the “traditional,” “Judeo-Christian,” “Cartesian,” “modern Western,” “patriarchal,” or suchlike preoccupation with the logos, come naturally and/or feel plausible to a cultured individual today. So do periodic and endlessly repeated calls to bridge the “gap” between reason and emotion, often with the explicit or implicit goal of “rehabilitating” the latter.

And it appears hardly avoidable that “a common ontology linking the social and the natural, the mind and body, the cognitive and affective” will, at the bottom of it, start with the body, even if this

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“body,” in increasingly inventive and convoluted ways reminiscent of the poststructuralist theory of the linguistic turn, will be conceptualized as a “process,” “becoming,” and continuity with its milieu, rather than a bounded, clearly separable unit. So, when we turn to the mind-body problem in the eighteenth century, we are prone to look for efforts to overcome dualism (or interpret what we read as such efforts), and our attention is increasingly focused rather on the problem of the body, as in the works of such prominent students of the period as Roy Porter and G. S. Rousseau. We tend to find and stress, or even celebrate, implicit materialism in the eighteenth-century efforts to build a natural philosophy of the internal human world and an empirical science of the “mind.” This eighteenth-century “mind,” according to the philosophers Raymond Martin and John Barresi, must be differentiated from a transcendental “soul” (supposedly unchangeable and given a priori) and defined as “a dynamic natural system subject to general laws of growth and development.” Aggressively presentist throughout their work, Martin and Barresi so define the eighteenth-century transition in the study of the self: “One mystery, the immaterial soul, had been dropped. Another, the self as material mind, had emerged to take its place.” Roy Porter also finds consciousness and “mind” displacing the “expressly Christian idea of the soul,” and sees the dominant trend in eighteenth-century thinking about the self in empirical psychology, which “insisted that mind was a faculty which emerged, through natural, law-governed activities, from the operations of the senses and education: mind was rooted in the mundane and the temporal,” and sometimes expressly defined as mechanical and material.

But Porter also points out that such intellectual changes did not cancel the dualist vision of man, that the new self-as-mind was not necessarily or prevalingly “identified with, reduced to, or seen as coterminous with the flesh. Rather it meant the moulding, disciplining and subordination of the flesh,” to be espoused by the lay intellectual and cultural elites throughout the nineteenth century. Porter understands this approach to the human self as a dualism of sublimation and transcendence, rather than the dualism of original substances – “the flesh bodying forth consciousness and consciousness turning the being from something low and self-regarding into a higher entity.” In his earlier work, Porter already described a shift in the second half of the eighteenth century from, on the one hand, a science of the mind that explained mental phenomena through the body and its influence on the embodied mind towards, on the other hand, a science more properly mental, seeking causes for mental phenomena in the convoluted depths of the mind.


714 Ibid., 473-4.

715 Ibid., 360. For a present-day dualist philosophical critique of this idea of the emergence of mental qualities out of the physical world see Antonella Corradini, “Emergent Dualism,” in Psycho-Physical Dualism Today, 185-209.
itself. In this shift he finds the beginning of the privileged position of the mind in Victorian culture, the emergence of the extensive concern with the mind at the expense of the body.  

I fail to see anything in the eighteenth-century psychological approach to the “mind” (or even in its interpretation by such modern scholars as Martin, Barresi, or Porter) that would necessitate an insistent scholarly stress on substantial monism in the face of such persisting or even strengthening anthropological dualities of the second half of the century. The development of empirical psychology as the “new science of human nature” is not enough. It has already been argued that psychology remained a resolutely dualist science up until the late nineteenth century, precisely during the period when it was asserting itself as an experimental, strictly scientific enterprise. And more generally, a connection between empirical psychology and materialism cannot be a theoretically correct one. An empirical investigation of consciousness is hardly able (and, at least in theory, should not care) to answer the ontological question – what is conscious. Empirical inquiry into the developing and dynamic mind does nothing to disprove the existence of an immaterial soul. It does not inevitably lead to materialism, and materialism, just like dualism, must remain only an a priori assumption or belief on the part of the investigator. Putting empirical psychology and materialism together in accounts of eighteenth-century intellectual history creates a false illusion of causal relationship – the illusion to which a modern scholar is prone to fall victim. Metaphysical reflection on the nature of that which is conscious or unconscious was indeed not at the center of the purportedly scientific study of the mind, which preferred to focus on manifestations rather than the essence. But this only meant both dualist and monist assumptions were possible concerning this basic, and existentially significant, question of human nature.

Consider James Beattie, a run-of-the-mill representative of Scottish common sense moralist thought: “For how thoughts of the mind, which are surely no corporeal things, should leave upon the brain, which is corporeal, particular stamps, variously sized and shaped according to the nature of the thoughts, and how the mind should take notice of those stamps, or remember by means of them, is altogether inconceivable.” But it does happen, according to Beattie, and, despite their immaterial nature and their mysterious connection to the material world, “the things perceived by consciousness” can be objects of scientific study. Such things “do as really exist, are as important, and may as well serve for the materials of science, as external things and bodily qualities. What it is to think, to remember, to imagine, to be angry or sorrowful, to believe or disbelieve, to approve or disapprove, we know by experience, as well as what it is to see and hear. And truth and falsehood, virtue and vice, are as real as sounds and colors, and much more essential to human happiness.” The moral science could be conceived as primarily a science of the things of the mind, because the certain truth that the body and mind are intimately connected and “mutually operate on each other” does not necessarily mean “that any one bodily part is necessary to consciousness in the same manner as the eye, for example, is necessary to seeing.”

In other words, the mutual influence of the body and mind could be seen as mutually external and extrinsic, sometimes an obstacle, sometimes an aid to the functioning of the other, but not an

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essential determinant of action. Things of the mind could be studied on their own, as things in themselves, with their own internal movements, causations, and natural developments. This kind of mental science, perfectly compatible with, or even requiring, substantial dualism, did not necessarily lead to a “materialization” of the mind. The “naturalization” of the mind could be, so to speak, formal rather than substantial – through a likening of the realm of mind to the realm of matter as real structures with regular, knowable and predictable motions and developments.719

This kind of naturalization could mean moving away from trying to explain the phenomena of the mental life, such as imagination or emotions, through interactions of the mind and body, and focusing on the world of the mind as a world of its own. This was the movement into the interior of the mind that Porter identifies as a central trend in the reflection on man in the second half of the eighteenth century.

It is this movement that my project addresses as well, from a different angle – as an evolution in existential concerns and patterns of human self-interpretation, where the question “who am I?” is primary, and empirical (“scientific”) explorations of the workings of the mind and body secondary. The conceptual distinction between the soul (transcendental and a priori) and mind (a phenomenon of natural development) appears superfluous, or at least not primary, from this point of view. The intellectual movement from the soul to mind emerges as a less important narrative than the movement away from the body, apt to transform but at the same time to strengthen the traditional matter-spirit dualism. The soul hovered behind the developmental and environmental study of the mind, the latter being easily interpreted as a diverse and uneven actualization of the potential of the spirit in the state of embodiment. Before attributing the great disproportions in human intellectual and moral development to the “innumerable and hidden accidents” of the embodied and social life, Eliza Haywood can assert with confidence that “there is certainly no real distinction between the soul of the man of wit and the ideot.”720 It is the movement of human self-understanding from the body into the realm of the “spirit” (understood literally or metaphorically) that requires explanation and interpretation beyond the most basic functionalist one given, for instance, by Porter, in which the material mind’s progressive differentiation from the body signified and ensured in the eyes of the lay elite its continuing power over the plebs.721

In the intellectual-history narrative of the “materialization of the mind,” the movement of ideas per se is that from the soul to mind, while the movement from the body to mind, which does not quite fit the narrative of materialization, is explained extrinsically, as a phenomenon that is primarily social. My case studies of three educated and reflective gentlemen-landlords should contribute to the functionalist understanding of the marginalization of the body, but my primary focus is on the logic of ideas and conceptual movement behind this marginalization. I find in the existential concerns of my subjects an elaboration and transformation of matter-spirit dualism from within, and a series of intensely personal efforts to find that existential freedom for an intellectual and moral agent which the dualist schemes of the world made it so difficult, as a matter of fact impossible, to gain.

719 Porter finds similar ideas and assumptions about the body, mind, and the science of the mind in the works of another Scotsman, Dugald Stewart. Stewart’s scientific intentions give him a place in Porter’s narrative, but he is quickly dropped in favor of Hartley and Priestley, who much better represent the movement towards a materialist mind. Flesh in the Age of Reason, 343-45.

720 Haywood, Life’s Progress, 6.

721 Porter, Flesh in the Age of Reason, 474.
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