Novel Addiction: Consuming Popular Novels in Eighteenth-century Britain

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English in the Graduate School of Duke University

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This dissertation explores the ways in which British popular novels of the eighteenth century functioned as commodities. “Novel Addiction”, the title of this dissertation has a double meaning: Addiction was a new conceptual framework developed during the eighteenth century in order to manage the increasing anxiety brought upon the culture of consumption, and the novel, one of the most popular commodities of the same period, was addictive. Both as successful commodities and efficient cultural agents, popular novels that were categorized as the sentimental or the gothic participated in the process of creating and disseminating models of addiction that warranted perpetual discipline. However, this discipline does not aim at preventing or eliminating addiction. It rather manages addiction as “habit” in a way that guarantees proliferation of the market economy. By employing the framework of addiction, I intend to reconfigure the role of the novel in the construction of individual and collective models of consumption-oriented subjectivity.

The first chapter begins with Eliza Haywood’s *Present for Women Addicted to Drinking* where the author proposes novel-reading as the best cure for alcohol addiction, which allows me to explore a parallel between the phenomenon called the “gin craze” and the proliferation of print commodities. The second and third chapter discuss the sentimental novel and the gothic novel respectively focusing on the characteristics of each genre that make them addictive. The fourth and final chapter discusses Jane
Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*, which address and attempt to manage “novel addiction,” a problem posed by the popular novels of her contemporaries.
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Introduction

When the word was introduced to English during the seventeenth century, “Addiction” was used as a legal term indicating a formal delivery of a property to an individual. By the eighteenth century, the meaning of the word had gradually changed. In the world governed by commerce, addiction came to signify a state of subjection and attachment to commodities. Alexander Pope, in his translation of Homer’s Iliad (1715), describes Paris as “[the author] makes him [Paris] have a Taste and Addiction to curious Works of all sorts” (121). These “curious Works” seduced people in a way that might endanger the world as the golden apple destroyed Troy. Among them was the novel, one of the most successful commodities that made the printing industries flourish. “Novel Addiction”, the title of this dissertation has a double meaning: Addiction was a new
conceptual framework developed during the eighteenth century, and the novel, one of the most popular commodities of the same period, was addictive. This dissertation explores eighteenth-century British popular novels and the form of modern subjectivity associated with this newly emerging literary commodity. Both as successful commodities and efficient cultural agents, popular novels participated in the process of creating and disseminating models of addiction that warranted perpetual discipline. However, this discipline does not aim at preventing or eliminating addiction. It rather manages addiction as “habit” in a way that guarantees proliferation of the market economy. By employing the framework of addiction, I intend to reconfigure the role played by the novel in the construction of individual and collective models of consumption-oriented subjectivity. In this introduction, I work through the two separate conceptual domains of “the novel” and “addiction” to help clarify how this dissertation will discuss the “novel addiction” in the following chapters.

The Novel as Commodity, or “Popular Novels”

The answer to the question “what was the novel” and “when it arose” varies depending on the institutions within which the answer is produced. Homer Brown maintains in *Institutions of the English Novel* that a genealogy of the novel that points at one certain “rise” is always imagined retrospectively, legitimizing and being legitimized
by later institutions within which the novel has already gained a certain status. There exists an interesting discrepancy between the qualitative approach that views the novel as literature and the quantitative approach that treats the novel as commodity of the book trade when it comes to describe the rise of the novel. The novels that gained prominence as commodity remain obscure in the rise narratives produced in the discipline of literature because the value of those commercially successful novels is incommensurate with the valorization system established in the field of literary studies.

Traditionally, the “rise of the novel” represents a genealogy created in the discipline of literature that considers the novel as a form of art availing itself of distinctive uses of language, genre conventions, imaginative traditions and discursive power along with other forms of literature. For formalists like Northrop Frye, the novel emerges as a new form in reaction to other literary forms that are either dominant or residual at the time it constitutes itself as a genre. For Ian Watt, who coined the term “the rise of the novel,” the novel is a work of literature produced as a result of a series of historical changes, including changes in the mode of production, ways of living and in philosophical notions of the human subject. Watt explains the “formal” change of the novel initiated by Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson as a register of

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1 During the last two decades, the selective processes of British literature canonization, including various “rise” discourses of the novel, have been widely studied. Homer Brown’s *Institutions of the English Novel from Defoe to Scott* (1997), John Guillory’s *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (1993) and *Cultural Institutions of the Novel* edited by Deidre Lynch and William Warner (1996) addressed various issues of canon formation in context of British imperialism, American academic institutionalization, and gender politics.
social change in the early to mid-eighteenth century. In addition to his emphasis on the historical specificity of the literary form, Watt provides a new way of understanding the “rise” of a literary form in the context of its discursive power. In his view, the novel perpetuates the ideology of capitalism and Puritanism. Watt’s construction of the rise of the novel is thus significant in that the “rise” has to be understood not only by exploring what the novel is but also by investigating what the novel does.

Since Ian Watt’s pioneering work on the rise of the novel, the genre has often been understood and studied as a historically progressive, or even evolutionary narrative that began with specific origins and has developed over time to become the genre we now recognize as the novel. The following studies on the novel have questioned and revised various aspects of Watt’s historicization of the novel. One of the most significant revisionist approaches comes from Michael McKeon’s attempt to reframe the “origin” as a moment of struggle (instead of a moment of singular and homogeneous ideology as Watt argues). In *The Origin of the English Novel 1600-1740* (1987), McKeon maintains that the novel is a site within which the constant struggles between old and new epistemologies are made manifest. While accepting Watt’s fundamental premise that the novel is a form of literature that narrates socially constructed “truth” and “virtue,” McKeon denies Watt’s assumption that the generic and social categories that made the novel rise were stable, established and unchallenged. The novel has multiple “origins,” instead of a single origin, and it rose dialectically, with each new version superseding its others. In McKeon’s historicization model, the novel is a literary form whose evolution is
analogous to the rise of the British middle-class and, at the same time, it is a literary form that also internalizes the emergence of the middle-class within itself.

Lennard Davis, in *Factual Fictions* (1983), agrees with McKeon’s assertion that the novel did not rise as a stable category. The novel was born out of complex interchanges and competitions among various literary forms, socio-political structures and economic factors. Davis argues that until the early eighteenth century, fact and fiction co-existed as one undifferentiated category, and the novel came into being as a result of a newly conceived division between fact and fiction. Davis’ approach is influential in that he dissevers the function of the novel from its traditional “literary” context. He relates the novel to other prose forms that are not considered literature, and thus views the history of the novel not as the history of a literary form but the history of multiple discourses that incorporate socio-political constructions of the world. Whereas McKeon explains the relationship between the novel and the world as analogy and internalization, Nancy Armstrong is, like Davis, more interested in framing the novel as a discursive apparatus that articulates a certain mode of subjectivity—the domestic woman—that empowers the newly rising, not yet dominant, British middle class. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), she maintains that the novel exists “both as the document and as the agency of cultural history” (23). In Armstrong’s theory of the genre, the modern individual represented within the domestic novel allowed this self to become an economic and psychological reality.

These canonical accounts of the rise of the novel, despite their differences, share a
similar historical framework that relates the formal rise of the novel to the rise of a
particular kind of British capitalist subjectivity that naturalizes heterosexually gendered,
economically productive, culturally individualized dispositions of consciousness. They
also tend to embrace or at least recognize the assumption that the novel emerged and
became stable around the mid-eighteenth century with and by the works of a handful of
major authors, including Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson.

But there is yet another approach to the “rise” of the novel. James Raven and
William St. Clair argue for a slightly different version of the rise in their distinctly
quantitative approaches to the history of the novel. In Judging New Wealth (1992),
Raven sees the rise of the novel as part of the development of the book trade that
proliferated during the latter half of the eighteenth century. What is interesting in his
account of the book history is that, in order to maximize profit, booksellers deliberately
downplayed the importance of authorship and quality of writing. Instead of focusing on
expensive books that could be respectfully displayed on the living room bookshelves,
booksellers presented novels as fashionable and affordable consumer products to help
ensure swift turnover. In Raven’s view, the novel became a stable and successful genre
during the latter half of the century not as a literary form created by established authors
but as a consumer product designed to be quickly discarded and constantly replaced.

William St. Clair, in Reading Nation (2004), describes this same period as a time
when “the explosion of reading” took place. St. Clair does not agree with most book
historians who link the drop in price of printed commodities to the proliferation of the
book industry. Nor does he attribute the success of the novel exclusively to the anonymous or obscure works that flooded the market during the period. Instead he is more interested in considering how the old canon operates in the new commercialized market of literature, focusing on issues of copyrights and distribution. However, he acknowledges that literature became a field of commerce, responding to the logic of supply and demand within the market, and recognizes the proliferation of literary production as an economic phenomenon.²

Although Raven and St. Clair do not create a history exclusively of the novel, they both acknowledge the novel’s substantial role in the rapid and unprecedented growth in the publishing and book-trading industries. The novel rose quantitatively not with the works of canonized authors but with less recognized works whose copyright was bought at a considerably lower price. According to the historical framework of these quantitative methodologies, the novel became a stable, distinct genre during a time period when novels were produced hastily and on a massive scale by obscure writers.

These two distinct approaches to the history of the novel reveal a discrepancy between the rise of the novel as literature and the rise of the novel as commodity. There is consequently less critical attention given to the novels that made the genre so influential

² St. Clair emphasizes the 1774 licensing act that finally ended the monopoly of the London publishing companies by limiting the copyright of a print commodity to the period of 40 years since its initial publication. With the dismantling of other barriers, such as control of apprenticeship numbers, the English printing industry faced massive changes in the production, distribution and consumption of its commodities. Previously suppressed demand for reading rose spectacularly, and this was met by a huge rise in the supply of books. St. Clair characterizes this as “the explosion” of reading.
and dominant in terms of its market presence. John Richetti’s *Popular Fiction Before Richardson* (1969) and Terry Lovell’s *Consuming Fictions* (1987) explore the literary significance of the “popular” novels that were well-received at the time of their publication, but quickly excluded from the literary canon. In their discussion of popular novels, both Richetti and Lovell shift their attention from the moment of production, the “authoring” of a certain literary work, to the moment of consumption. Richetti describes popular sub-genres of the novel as “fantasy machines” (9) that “become ‘fictions’ during the process of consumption” (7). Popular novels were, for Richetti, prototypes of “the novel” Richardson and other canonical authors masterfully crafted, and they functioned like “machines” that endlessly produced similar and replaceable fantasies without genuine literary authorship. Lovell takes on Watt’s argument that the novel was one of the most successful cultural commodities, and focuses on the novel’s mass-produced and highly commercialized status. By using the term “expansion” instead of “rise,” Lovell establishes the novel’s history as a commodity and traces how the novel’s attendant need for popular appeal made it operate under the laws of the market instead of the literary canon. These approaches recognize the ample presence of novels that cannot easily be incorporated into the literary category of “the novel” and use the term “popular” or “commercial” to label them. However, their attempt to separate “popular” novels from the novel genre only explains what is at stake in the process of canonization that retrospectively imagines the novel as a form of literary art that reflects and serves certain ideologies. Indeed, it is virtually impossible to distinguish popular novels from “the novel”
without the language of canon that enforces certain hierarchies of cultural and aesthetic value.

In this dissertation, I intentionally label the novel as “popular” to highlight several features of the genre that have been downplayed in the narratives of the rise of the novel. The novel was born into and succeeded in the market with its tremendous commercial popularity. It became a stable genre not by distancing from mercantile agendas of the market but by embracing them in various ways. The structure and values that are embedded within these popular novels are inseparable from the structure and logic of the market that produced, circulated and consumed such commodities.

William Warner attempts to understand narrative structures of the novel in conjunction with its status as commodity in his book *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (1998). He considers the eighteenth-century novel a new commodity that was circulated in the market of popular entertainment. He argues that the literary characteristics of early prose fiction, such as repetitive and journalistic narrative structures, along with their mode of distribution—serial installments—provided a way to address and manipulate the market demand. Warner attempts to reconfigure the significance of popular fictions that created a taste for novels before the genre was stabilized. Aphra Behn, Delariviere Manley and Eliza Haywood are the precursors and rivals of the “great” novelists of the 1740s—the novels that Ian Watt anointed as the “origin” of the novel in *The Rise of the Novel*. ³ Warner

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³ William Warner extensively analyzes in chapter 5 of *Licensing Entertainment* the socio-economic and
emphasizes how these precursors of the novel established the taste and expectations for a serialized reading by providing “comporting continuity and enticing variation” (65), coupled with the bodily pleasure they secretly promised, to guarantee the success of the novel that followed these prototypes. Warner’s analysis of early novels is useful in comprehending what constituted the value and function of a novel that was produced and consumed along with other entertainment commodities.

These commodities, or popular novels, are the quintessential product of the eighteenth-century consumer culture that created a new way for a subject to relate to the world consisted of new and fashionable things for sale. Moreover, the novels themselves played a significant role in creating and nurturing a particular form of consumption throughout the eighteenth century, especially during the latter half of the century with their quantitative expansion. With its increased production from the 1770s to 1790s, the novel, which had hardly been recognized as a distinct and stable literary genre, began to adapt to the current fashion of the sentimental and gothic. The “fashionable” and popular novels that were hastily written by anonymous writers, with similar settings, overlapping characters and repetitive themes, enjoyed enormous commercial success during this period.  

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4 Compared to the 1766 Catalogue of Thomas Lowdnes’s Circulating Library, which shows only 12% of the total works of fiction was published by the circulating library publishers, who strongly favored cheap and anonymous works over respectable authorship, the 1790 Catalogue of Michael Heaviside’s Circulating
Addiction

Before we explore the peculiar and elusive characteristics of popular novels that resist the standard narrative of the “rise,” it is necessary to understand the cultural conditions and contexts that are pertinent to the production and consumption of those popular novels that succeeded in transforming the general public into avid readers. The eighteenth century marks a pivotal moment in that people were beginning to understand the world and their relationship to it in a new empirical and secular way. A world governed by the mysterious power of God was replaced now by a new world constructed upon natural and social laws; human beings came to define themselves by their secular relationship to the things they possessed and consumed. Consumption-oriented ways of life created a new tension in subject-object relations. Commodities, things produced anonymously and massively for sale, became a dominant factor in defining and performing individual and collective identity. Socio-political and economic status of an individual was recognized by the things he or she possessed and consumed. Since it was heavily—if not solely—dependent on commodities, this new secular identity was constantly threatened and destabilized by the same multitudes of things. Things

Library—a competitor of Lowdnes’s—reveals that the market share of the same category was increased up to 36% of the total works of fiction indicating the commercial success of the novels published by hack writers. See Edward Jacobs’s "Eighteenth-Century British Circulating Libraries and Cultural Book History" in Book History (2003) for more statistical information.
themselves begin to carry the power to “possess” individuals, presiding over the new
system of human transactions, motivations and valorization in the new secular and
mercantile world.

Barbara Benedict in “The Spirit of Things” explains how commodities began to
take over the mysterious power of God in eighteenth-century consumer culture. While
examining eighteenth century literary representations of things, she maintains that
commodities come to “possess supernatural power over individual meanings and
identities; they can make and unmake selves; they even take over conscience and
consciousness” (39). Indeed, things are the new gods and devils of the empirical age, as
Daniel Defoe wittingly suggests in his vastly successful novel Robinson Crusoe (1719).

Crusoe, upon his arrival on the desolate island, falls ill with fever and seeks God’s help to
survive. Finding himself “directed by Heaven,” he opens a chest where tobacco lies next
to the Bible (97). Tobacco, then one of the popular imported luxuries, gives him both
physical and mental strength to survive and to thrive, as though enacting the words of
God. Of course it was believed that God could become manifest in various physical
forms before the eighteenth century, yet what is remarkable in the juxtaposition of
tobacco and the Bible in Robinson Crusoe is that tobacco stands next to God, replacing
the sacred with its material power. It is not God’s grace that miraculously manifests as

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5Benedict investigates the eighteenth-century anxiety over the power of objects manifest in the
spiritualization of commodities in eighteenth-century literature. See “The Spirit of Things” in The Secret
Life of Things: Animals, Objects and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England (Cranbury: Bucknell
tobacco, but tobacco itself becomes sacred in Crusoe’s mercantile world.

Addiction was a newly emerging concept that replaced the old views of “devilish” possession in this context. From its ancient meaning in Roman law, addiction was associated with things transferred or attached to a person. According to The *Oxford English Dictionary*, one of the earliest usages of the word “addiction” in English language is a legal term that indicates the formal delivery of a person or property to an individual, typically in accordance with a judicial decision. From the early eighteenth century, “addiction” came to indicate a state of subjection and compulsion that was often instigated by commodities. In his observation of Homer’s *Iliad* (1715), Alexander Pope describes Paris’ refined, but potentially dangerous and compulsive character as “[the author] makes him have a Taste and Addiction to curious Works of all sorts” (121).

Nathan Bailey’s *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1749) states in no uncertain terms that to become addicted is “to give up one’s self wholly to a Thing.” Alcoholism was described as “addiction to the bottle” in a doctor’s journal (Pittis 28), while Samuel Johnson’s account of the poet John Philips includes his “addiction to tobacco” (74) in *The Lives of Poets* (1779). In this way, the notion of addiction came to demarcate the boundary of proper consumption of commodities—and constituting a secular selfhood—

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6 It is formed from Latin *addico*, a term used by the Roman judges when they allowed the delivery of the thing or a person (slave) on whom judgment had passed. Thomas Godwin’s *Romanæ Hist. Anthology* 1625), for example, explains that “The forme of Addiction was thus: ·‘the party which preuailed, laid his hand on the thing or the person against which sentence was pronounced vsing this forme of words, *Hunc ego hominem siue hanc rem ex iure Quiritium meam esse dico.*”

7 See Arthur Murphy’s complete edition of *The Works of Samuel Johnson* (1837) for Samuel Johnson’s biographical account of John Philips which was originally published in 1779.
by defining its failures and transgressions.

Although the modern concept of addiction and addict began to emerge during the eighteenth century, the issue of addiction is rarely addressed in the literary studies of the eighteenth-century except for the approaches that focus on substances such as coffee, tobacco and opium. Wolfgang Schlivelbusch’s *Taste of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants and Intoxicants* (1992) and Jordon Goodman’s *Consuming Habits, Drugs in History and Anthropology* (1995) provide useful information on how a broad spectrum of addictive substances were circulated during the period. Among these studies, many focus on the link between the spread of addictive substances and the desire for imperial expansion. Both Roy Moxham’s *Tea: Addiction, Exploitation and Empire* (2003) and James Walvin’s *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800* (1997) approaches the problem of addiction in this context.

The relationship between addiction and literature forms another branch in the addiction studies. From M. H. Abrams’ *The Milk of Paradise: The Effect of Opium Visions on the Works of De Quincey, Crabbe, Francis Thompson, and Coleridge* (1934) to Clifford Siskin’s discussion of “the discourse of addiction” in his *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (1988), many studies delve into the question that how opium and other narcotic substances are involved in the process of writing—especially of the Romantic authors—during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Although it covers twentieth-century literature, Avital Ronell’s *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania* (1992) offers a provocative way to theorize addiction and drug as part of literary
discourse. Influenced by Derrida’s notion of *pharmakon* in “Plato’s Pharmacy”, Ronell claims that literature has always been associated with pharmaco-dependency.  

However, these two distinct yet interrelated branches of addiction studies tend to simplify the notion of addiction and addict by accepting the current medical and legal definitions of addiction. There is another terrain in the addiction studies that contains various theories of addiction discourse that offer a chance to broaden such perspective. One such approach centers on the definition of “drug.” Mark Roberts in *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity* (2003) takes on the Marxist notion of commodity and claims that drugs are the ultimate commodity of modernity. Drugs are a form of commodity that transforms a subject with their hypnotic power. Unlike food whose value is inscribed as natural and essential, the value of a drug either in use or in exchange, is derived from and complicated by a series of social relations and practices that create and sustain the discourse of addiction. The mystified value of a drug and its transformative power is nothing but the very essence of what Marx calls magical commodity, or commodity fetish, which is critical to the formation of modern capitalist society.

Although commodities embody the objectified labor of workers, value is ascribed to

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8 For the discussions of *pharmakon* that relate drug to writing, see Chapter 4 “The Novel that is New” of this dissertation.

9 In fact, “commodity” was one of the early meanings of the word “drug.” According to the *OED*, drug referred to a commodity which was no longer in demand, and so had lost its commercial value or had become unsaleable. For example, in *Consuetudo, vel lex mercatoria; or, The ancient law-merchant* published in 1622, “Another commoditie Minerall, namely Copperas, hath beene so ill gouerned by worke-men vnderselling one another, and is become a meere drug out of request, by the abundance made and indiscreetly vented, bartered or exchanged”(215).
commodities as things, which “transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyphic” (Marx, 167). This transformative power of commodities makes them so autonomous and “magical” that they dominate the workers themselves (Marx, 163). Following this line of reasoning, addictive substances can be registered as the ultimate modern commodity that, in its radical and exhaustive enforcement of fetishization, exposes and destabilizes its concealed arbitrariness.\footnote{Mark Roberts’ \textit{High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity} (2003) combines both Derridean and Foucauldian perspective on addiction and drug, and offers a variety of essays on modern culture where modernity emerges directly alongside addiction.}

Another theoretical approach to addiction deals with the problem of individual identity. “Addict” is an aberration that requires disciplinary interventions in the body of an individual.\footnote{Although I do not address issues of class extensively in this chapter, assignment of the addict’s identity especially during the eighteenth century in Britain tends to emphasize the dangers of contagious addiction among the working class people. It was not only an issue for weak individuals but of less-educated, less-disciplined groups of city workers. See Mariana Velvedre’s \textit{Disease of the Will} for more discussions on class stratification that is related to the formation of an addict’s identity. She maintains that addiction has been believed to be a bigger threat to the working-classes and immigrants when there is a “stratification of the will” in Western class structure.} Just as homosexuality normalizes heterosexual subjectivity, the formation and marginalization of an addict’s identity enables and authorizes the disciplined modern individual whose docile and productive body is constantly policed. In Foucault’s words, “the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (\textit{Discipline} 26). The addict is the ultimate medium through which the modern individual is being manufactured. Eve Sedgwick points out that addiction is not a problem that can be reduced into the problem of a demonic substance or the problem of
an abnormal body. In her “Epidemics of the Will,” Sedgwick explains how “the will” and autonomy is created and disseminated against varying forms of addiction. When explaining the cause of prevalence of the will in the modern society, she maintains that addiction precedes the will. To propagate autonomy, the assignment of the newly pathologized identity of an addict undergoes a series of modifications by extending first the range of substance materials that cause addiction, then by attributing the concept to almost all manner of compulsive human behaviors.

Sedgwick furthers her argument maintaining that “the locus of addictedness cannot be the substance itself and can scarcely even be the body itself, but must be some overarching abstraction that governs the narrative relations between them” (Tendencies 130). This idea of addiction as a relation between a subject and a commodity is particularly useful when looking into the inherent contradiction embedded in the consumer culture that has not yet fully segregated the domain of addiction. The internal contradiction of ever-expanding consumption manifests itself in the narrative of addiction where subjected bodies of consumers are displayed and managed.

In this dissertation, I am not attempting to construct a genealogy of addiction that belongs to the history of medicine. Instead, I employ the framework of addiction to

12 Although my thesis in this dissertation is greatly influenced by Sedgwick’s conceptualization of addiction, the frame of genealogy of addiction she posits differs from mine. For her, addiction began as a “foreign” problem that invaded Britain with opium in its necessary, yet problematic expansion of empire. It was a peripheral and incidental problem that has garnered greater influence by being incorporated in the discourse of “free will.” However, I trace back the history of addiction to the more pervasive anxiety of consumption and look at popular commodities like gin, a cheaper, local substitute for imported liquor that bolstered the national economy.
theorize various forms of commodity-related dependency which had yet to be fully pathologized in the eighteenth century. A subject has to continuously and repeatedly consume commodities in order to establish and maintain a social, economic and cultural identity. This consumer identity is always defined and recognized in defense against its transgressions, and addiction/addict is the very transgressive Other necessary to construct a coherent consumer identity. Addiction, in this theoretical sense, demarcates a state of compulsion made by and directed toward commodities as the early use of the word in Bailey’s Dictionary indicates.

The surrender of individual subjects to commodities, i.e., “addiction,” manifests itself in two radical extremes: either in the full and absolute presence of bodies or in the complete absence of them. On the one hand, addiction is a mode of consumption that leads to uncontrollable bodily presence without a sense of self-control or will. At the same time, addiction can also create a state of hallucination that surpasses the corporeal world. Addiction designates both the extreme excess and the radical absence of things that disturb or threaten the construction of a consuming subject.

Addiction, as both a threat and a transgression, sustains the idea of the proper and autonomous consuming subject. The consuming subject, in turn, continuously marginalizes and pathologizes its other in order to contain its own identity. However, the boundary that is drawn through the process of marginalization is somewhat arbitrary and unstable. In the case of addiction, it is useful to compare addiction with “habit” to see how some forms of repetitive and compulsive consumption are delegitimized and
excluded while other similar forms of behavior are considered acceptable.

In eighteenth-century urban and mercantile British culture, daily routines and habits were constructed around varying commodities—especially the things considered to be superfluous and luxurious; e.g., drinking tea and coffee, reading papers, shopping, and so on. In addition to marginalizing certain commodity dependency by labeling it an addiction that needed to be cured, prohibited and controlled, people also processed their anxiety by attaching cultural, ethical and aesthetic values to certain habitual forms of consumption. Aesthetical refinement and cultural manners were thought to be achieved by highly ritualized habits that made people consume fashionable commodities. The social—and sociable—citizen created by the process of refinement was the foundation of the civil society. Therefore, “habit” became critical in producing a social bond that maintains the civil society.

Socially productive habits, however, were not very different from destructive and dangerous addiction in many respects. Habit, like addiction, indicates a state of unwilled and mindless repetition.\(^{13}\) Much like addiction, habits are hinged upon continuous and repetitive consumption of things that influence the consuming subjects in varying ways.

\(^{13}\) The vexing relationship between habit and individual autonomy in the modern era has been extensively studied in the fields of anthropology and sociology. The classic perspective sustained by Weber and Durkheim says that the evolution of modernity has freed subjects from primitive routines and rituals and has allowed more individual freedom. However this idea is challenged by those who see the habit-forming consumer culture as a quintessential characteristic of modernity. For example, Henry Lefebvre maintains the sheer profusion of goods in consumer culture as a key element in limiting freedom and creating the dull routine which characterizes modernity. See *Rhythmanalysis* (2004) for Lefebvre’s analysis of routines and habits that deter individual autonomy.
The popular novels, i.e., the gothic and the sentimental, are the site where the two separate domains of addiction and habit become divided, compete and merge.

**Novel Addiction**

Many approaches to the “rise of the novel” view the novel as an agent that participates in the process of constructing possessive and productive individuals. However, these approaches selectively leave out the novels that articulate and produce a different, if not opposite, mode of subjectivity that can be captured by the language of addiction. Again, the conceptual framework that I term as “addiction” here refers to a relatively abstract mode of compulsion and subjection that creates possessed individuals who cannot be articulated within the capitalist consumer culture without being marginalized as addicts. Within this framework, the popular novels of the period function in two separate, yet interrelated ways. They are objects of consumption, just like other commodities. They are printed sheets of paper, often bound as duodecimo to ensure affordability, and people purchase or borrow copies in order to derive pleasure from them. More importantly, the novels often imitate or self-referentially articulate moments of pleasurable consumption within their narrative frame. To use Armstrong’s conceptual frame discussed earlier, novels were both “agents of and documents” of the cultural history of consumption. Both as commodities and as documents of consumption, popular novels articulated and produced so-called consumed, possessed and subjected bodies. In other words, they narrated moments of addiction, and at the same time they created
addicts among readers who derived pleasure from indulging in the simulated experiences they provided.

In chapter one, I explore the two fundamental frames of this dissertation: 1) the concept of addiction as a way to manage the increasing anxiety brought upon the culture of consumption, and 2) the novel as a potentially addictive commodity that participates in the culture of consumption. The gin craze, a sharp surge in gin consumption during the 1720s and 1730s, triggered a series of discursive practices of marginalizing and managing certain modes of consumption that predate the birth of specialized addiction discourse. The growing concerns over the powerful effect of substance that possesses its consumer are articulated in various representations of the bodies that required criminal, medical and financial intervention. Many contemporaries regarded novels as one of the dangerous commodities that seduce consumers in a manner similar to liquor. Both were popular and accessible commodities that offered entertaining experiences of euphoria, and they were both consumed in a habitual manner. In fact many considered novels almost indistinguishable from the dangerous substances that influenced consumers’ bodies and minds, as shown in Addison’s catalogue of inflamers that lists novels next to chocolates. The final section of chapter one also explores how Eliza Haywood’s 

Present for Women Addicted to Drinking (1750) binds gin and novels together within the frame of addiction.

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14 Addison, in The Spectator of April 29, 1712, warns the “fair readers to be in a particular manner careful how they meddle with Romance, Chocolate, Novels and the like Inflamers; which I look upon as very dangerous to be made use of during this Carnival of Nature” (374).
Chapter two focuses on the sentimental novel and the ways that sympathy can transform metaphysical addiction—scenes of addiction narrated within the novels—into a physical one that manifests itself on reading bodies. Sentimental ecstasy, a form of bodily excess narrated within sentimental novels, physically manifests itself on the reading bodies via the circuit of sympathy. Contrary to its relatively obscure position in the rise studies of the novel, the sentimental novel was tremendously popular in its day, along with other sentimental commodities that nurtured affective and sympathetic forms of consumption in mid-eighteenth century England.\(^{15}\) I maintain that sympathetic consumption of the sentimental novel produces a subjected and consumed identity while revealing the inherent ambiguity in the distinction between addiction and proper habit. The peculiar and “un-novelistic” characteristics of sentimental novels, such as its extremely repetitive narrative structure that presents images of exhausted and consumed bodies (which are very much like the addicted bodies seen in discourses surrounding the gin craze) can be understood in this context. Even the supposed virtue of the sentimental novel, namely producing propriety and refinement by engaging in sympathetic ecstasy, requires a certain degree of subjection in order to create an intersubjective social bond.

Chapter three focuses on the gothic novel, another popular sub-genre of the novel

\(^{15}\) Although the role of the sentimental novel has been downplayed in many “rise-of- the novel” studies, with Lynn Festa’s *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-century Britain and France* (2006) and other growing scholarly interest in the circulation of sentimental objects in the period done by Mark Blackwell, Jonathan Lamb, Theresa Braunschneider and Julie Park, the sentimental novel and sentimentalism have recently become a focal point in studies of eighteenth century culture.
that was being circulated in the late eighteenth-century. The gothic shares a lot in
common with the sentimental novel, yet one important difference is the nature of the
object the reader is drawn to sympathize with. Whereas the sentimental novel tends to
lead its readers to engage in sociable and sometimes mutual pleasure of sympathy
towards his fellow beings, the gothic is more interested in a solipsistic and hallucinatory
mode of sympathy. The pleasure of the gothic lies in the exotic nature of the object that
overwhelms its consumers. The gothic transport, like sentimental ecstasy, is narrated
within the gothic novels and transferred into the reader’s body through the circuit of
sympathy. Whereas the sentimental addiction manifests on financially and physically
exhausted bodies, the gothic addiction manifests on obscene and unspeakable bodies that
cannot be represented in concrete and acceptable manners. The complete transgression
from physical bodies, or the absence of the bodies becomes the sign of the gothic
addiction. In this chapter, I once again turn to the addiction-habit matrix in order to
demonstrate how the subjectivity articulated and produced by the gothic exists as the
“other” to a possessively constructed individual consciousness.

The fourth and final chapter investigates the early novels of Jane Austen that
address and attempt to manage “novel addiction.” Both in Northanger Abbey and Sense
and Sensibility, Austen endeavors to reframe the popular novel into a new and proper
form of literature. Austen’s revision is performed by her fictional characters in their
attempts to cure addiction. In Northanger Abbey, Henry attempts to cure Catherine’s
addiction to the gothic. The sentimental novel is similarly revised in Sense and Sensibility
when Elinor cures Marianne of her sentimental addiction. Austen’s new novel moves away from the popular novels by managing bodily excess of the sentimental and hallucinations of the gothic.

Popular genres such as the gothic or the sentimental novel can be understood as mass-produced entertainment commodities whose value can be articulated not by the language of literature but by the language of consumption. In their excess and repetition, they reveal a fundamental contradiction embedded in the culture of consumption where productive and possessive individuals are created and nurtured. The popular novels articulate a process whereby individual subjectivity emerges as amalgamate, supplemental and dependent on its material condition. Although the popular novels cannot be incorporated into the evolutionary history of a literary form that corresponds to a similar teleology of the modern subjectivity, they do not become extinct either. Instead, they have mutated into multiple species not only as contemporary paperback novels but also such as computer games and genre movies incessantly contaminating the coherent narrative of modern “I.”
Chapter 1
Gin and the Novel

In 1750, Eliza Haywood published an interesting yet peculiar conduct book titled *Present for Women Addicted to Drinking*. In this book, Haywood deplores the contemporary “pernicious Custom of Drinking,” which prevails among women of all kinds (5). She offers a present of cure to those who have fallen into this vice. The best cure of all is for such women to occupy themselves with romances. As one of the earliest manuals on addiction treatment, Haywood’s *Present* depicts a world where female bodies are occupied by a slow poison that changes their nature into that of a “Salamander” (5). These bodies, she claims, have to be re-occupied by none other than romances in order to escape from such degeneration. What is intriguing in Haywood’s thesis is that romances are the best cure because they seduce readers in a similar manner to alcohol, and also,
they construct a habit of reading that can substitute for the pernicious custom of drinking.

Two seemingly unrelated commodities that were being widely circulated in eighteenth-century England, especially in urban areas such as London, Birmingham and Manchester, allow me to speculate on a mode of consumption important to subject formation in the beginning of Western consumer society: print commodities, including newspapers and novels produced and consumed through the mediation of the mass-market, and a distilled spirit widely known as gin. Although those two commodities have two distinct genealogies, we can discover surprising overlaps. What I would like to suggest in this chapter is a recurring pattern in the mode of consumption of these two commodities that provided pleasure to the consumers. Assuming that people deplored the devastating consequences of appalling consumption such as drinking hard-liquor while promoting polite consumption like drinking tea or reading papers and novels, we would find the overlap between the eighteenth-century gin and the novel consumption troubling. They were both described as uncontrollable, dangerous, exhaustive and enslaving; at the same time, they were perceived as constructive and beneficial to the individual and social structure they belong to. By equating print commodities with highly addictive substances like gin and brandy in the context of an emerging cultural construction of addiction, I want to reconsider the place of print commodities, especially the novel, which seduced people to become readers.

In the first section of this chapter, I explore the geographical, social and biological sites of consumption that bind the two commodities. Then in the following two sections I
draw parallels between the “Gin epidemic” of early eighteenth-century England and the successful popularization of print commodities. Discourse surrounding the sharp rise in gin consumption in England can be understood as an early version of addiction discourse that centers on the criminal, pathological, unproductive and licentious bodies, and this same form of discourse prevails during discussions of the sudden proliferation of print commodities. In the final section, I will return to Haywood’s Present that prescribes the novel as an antidote to addictive liquor. The novel functions as a disciplinary mechanism that protects its consumers from falling into addiction by offering a small dose of the same poison it is supposed to counter.

**Consuming Bodies**

The “culture” of entertainment consumption in eighteenth-century England has been crucial to understanding the economic and socio-political dynamics of European modernization, especially with regard to the impact and consequences of a consumption-oriented way of life. In *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (1982), John Brewer defines the eighteenth century as the moment of a consumer revolution that utterly changed England not only in the ways it consumed but also in most aspects of life.¹ The pervasive and unprecedented changes in the mode of consumption were created as a result of a series of

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¹ Brewer, McKendrick and Plumb in their Marxist revisionist work, *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (1982), maintain that the new means and modes of consumption precede and participate in structuralizing the modern system of production, arguing against the traditional Marxist approach that puts consumption in a place secondary to production while viewing consumption as an ultimately private, passive and isolated act of alienation and fetishization.
historical events such as improvement in technology, expansion of colonial trades, rapid urbanization, and changes in the modes of consumption. These led to massive transformation in the mode of production known as “Industrial Revolution.” Brewer insists that consumption, not production, is the key to understanding the rapid modernization of England that gave it the leading role in the nineteenth-century European industrial revolution.² It was during this period that the notion of consumption shifted away from a matter of necessity and survival to a matter of choice and taste. By consumption, the individual subject refined his or her taste and manners, which, in turn, defined the individual’s social status, previously determined by lineage. Consumption, therefore, served to establish not only the subject-object relation between a person and a commodity but also relations among subjects, which McKendrick describes as a form of emulation: “In imitation of the rich the middle ranks spent more frenziedly than ever before, and in imitation of them the rest of society joined in as best they might. . . .Spurred on by social imitation and class competition men and women surrendered eagerly to the pursuit of novelty, the hypnotic effects of fashion and the enticements of commercial propaganda” (Brewer et al., 11). Consumption was a mode of social emulation that provided a sense of connectedness and belonging thanks to the

² Brewer’s traditional view that the birth of the consumer society comes into being during the eighteenth century has been challenged by many historians. For example, Peck argues that the consumption of luxury goods was already widespread in the seventeenth century and McCracken focuses on Elizabethan culture of courtiers to maintain that a relatively localized yet very influential consumer boom took place in the sixteenth century. See Linda Peck’s Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) and Grant McCracken’s Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998).
culture of politeness expressed through their consumption habits. The desire to participate in such emulation was indeed so hypnotic and enticing that it began to dominate people’s lives.

The predominance of consumption that preceded the change to production that we call industrialization was made possible through commerce. As consumption of commodities provided a way of imagining and performing a social self that was connected to a community, commerce provided another critical frame for understanding the social structure that organized the lives of consuming individuals. The eighteenth-century British preoccupation with consumption and commerce is well documented.³ Either in Bernard Mandeville’s world where individuals viciously pursue the gratification of selfish desires or in David Hume’s world where individual desire includes sociable and ethical passions for others, commerce and consumption were the means to achieve the public good, i.e. to increase the wealth of the nation and to increase the happiness of its subjects.⁴

³ The mammoth history of eighteenth-century England by Paul Langford, A Polite and Commercial People (1989), provides a good variety of sources to understand British culture in the period dominated by a commercial and mercantilist world view that saw accumulation of wealth as the highest national and individual good. Following studies on nation-building such as Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities and more recent works like Kathleen Wilson’s Sense of the People also hinge on this idea of commerce and the consumption-driven culture of England to explain the nation’s political construction of the British Empire and its citizens.

⁴ The “superfluous hands” as Hume puts it in his essay “Of Commerce” that abound as a result of historical “improvement” of arts of agriculture can be employed in other arts: the arts of luxury and trade to “encrease the power of the sovereign as well as the happiness of the subjects” (260-261). Like many proponents of commerce and trades, Hume maintains that surplus labor to produce surplus goods, goods people want but do not need, would in fact increase the happiness of the population and the wealth of the nation.
However, the “conspicuous consumption” that dominated the cities and towns was met with some measure of criticism and disparagement. Often in a religious context, it was believed that the stable hierarchy of society inherited from the feudal past was threatened, as the virtues of moderation, temperance, and abstinence were forgotten or left behind. One of the well known cases is the public outrage surrounding the publication of the *Fable of the Bees* (1723), an event that gave the author the nickname of “Man-devil.” The presentation argued before the Middlesex Grand Jury that the *Fable* was published to “run down Religion and Virtue as prejudicial to Society, and detrimental to the State; and to recommend Luxury, Avarice, Pride and all vices, as being necessary to Public Welfare, and not tending to the Destruction of the Constitution” (Mandeville xv). Mandeville himself responded with an attack on a Christian charity school, a section added in the following editions of the same book.

The problem of conspicuous and superfluous consumption was obviously more complex than religious leaders made it out to be, with their emphasis on the blasphemous nature of self-indulgence. That the ever-increasing desire to consume served the nation contained a contradiction as does the phrase “to consume.” As John Brewer and Roy Porter point out, the phrase connotes “both an enlargement through incorporation and a withering away. . .both enrichment and impoverishment” (8). To consume is both a constructive and constitutive act of incorporation and a destructive and exhaustive act of being depleted. It is a way of building up a subject position and a way of surrendering to a compulsion. Consumption, as the term for tuberculosis, can become a fatal disease if
not managed properly. At this site of tension and contradiction, the modern concept of addiction was formulated.

Current practices of managing addiction belong either to the domain of the medical profession—the therapeutic or pharmaceutical treatment of an addict—or to the legal domain in the form of drug control and incarceration. The law prohibits and controls circulation of addictive substances while medicine treats addicts with proper drug and therapy to rehabilitate them into normative subjects that do not pose a threat to society or to themselves. In addition to social practices, addiction is studied and controlled in various academic discourses. Scientists look for distinctive brain activities and chemical compositions to identify addicts and addiction-inducing substances. Economists analyze the impact of drug trafficking on global market.

Although addiction has become a specialized concept, The World Health Organization’s (WHO’s) Expert Committee on Addiction-Producing Drugs offers a general definition under which the specialized approaches are produced:

Drug addiction is a state of periodic or chronic intoxication produced by repeated consumption of a drug (natural or synthetic). Its characteristics include: (1) an overpowering desire or need (compulsion) to continue taking the drug and to obtain it by many means; (2) a tendency to increase the dose; (3) a psychic (psychological) and generally a physical dependence on the effects of the drug; (4) detrimental effect on the individual and society. (Levine, 20)
The characteristics of addiction defined by the WHO show how much the logic of addiction resembles the logic of consumption. If we eliminate the word “drug”, a stigmatized commodity that seduces consumers to become addicts, the definitions merely indicate a state of repetition, compulsion, intensification and dependency. All are the elements of the newly conceptualized, “conspicuous consumption” of the eighteenth century that functioned as a foundational force to guarantee the expansion of commerce, which, in turn, fed the appetite for pleasure by providing more exotic and diverse commodities imported all around the world.

Therefore, addiction is an issue profoundly embedded in the earliest stages of consumer culture. Addiction and the addict have gradually become segregated outside the normative and recognized as a form of aberration and degeneration that contrasts proper and productive modes of consumption and the voluntary power of the consumer. This phenomenon of addiction can be compared to Foucault’s well known argument for the construction of sexuality. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1976) Foucault explains how homosexuality became an identity, an object of knowledge during the modern period.

This new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals. As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history,
and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and his body. . . . It was consubstantial with him, less as a sin than as a singular nature. . . . The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (42-43)

The process of marginalizing a certain set of practices legitimizes the other end of the signifying chain, producing, in this particular case, the normative heterosexual. To marginalize other sexualities, medical and forensic discourse created a new object of knowledge. The passage quoted holds just as true when we replace peripheral sexuality with addiction and the figure of the homosexual with that of the addict. Addiction is, like homosexuality, a concept created and reproduced to authorize an opposing model of the normal or reasonable consumer. Persecuted and pathologized, addiction comes to mark the periphery that encloses the modern form of consumption. 5

In order to authorize the normative consumption, addiction creates deviation. Although addiction is not criminal itself, addiction actualizes the criminal potentially inscribed in a subject, i.e. the “dangerous individual” (Foucault Abnormal 34). In his

5 In this context, Mark Roberts sees addiction as a distinctively modern invention. In his introduction of High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity (2003), he maintains that “addiction emerges directly alongside modernity, haunting the various discourses of digression, dissent, and the transcendence of the commonplace so often associated with the modern era” (3).
discussion of the abnormal, Foucault maintains that a series of medical and legal practices produced an ethical and psychological double of the legal offense called the dangerous individual. Through this power of normalization, government came to constitute itself as the authority responsible for the control of abnormal individuals. In order to expand its power, the discipline of school, home, and public institutions aimed not at eliminating but at creating deviation. Paradoxically, government can flourish only by failures of its citizens because failures warrant and justify governmental intervention.

It is during the eighteenth century that the process of conceptualizing addiction emerged in various contexts. Fueled by rapid urbanization in the early eighteenth century, commodities that offered cheap and easy pleasure became extremely popular and highly available, which in turn caused a great deal of anxiety. While such exotic luxury items imported from the colonies as coffee and tobacco were first considered a source of evil that affected only the aristocrats and other wealthy consumers who could afford them, mass-produced goods like distilled spirits attracted a much wider range of people from city workers, wet nurses, and printers to married women of higher social standing. These cheap commodities alarmed contemporary social commentators as they were considered a dangerous and morally deplorable “quick fix” that allured and corrupted people with their pleasurable charm.

This spreading “epidemic” of pleasurable consumption was a complicated issue, given that the national economy was heavily dependent on the continuing growth of such consumption. It was with this sudden and spectacular rise of the “luxuries of the Vulgar,”
as Henry Fielding calls it, that the word “addiction” came to be popularized. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word addiction as a mode of enslavement was first introduced to the English in Thomas Godwin’s *Romanæ Historiae Anthologia: An English Exposition of the Roman Antiquities* (1625). Translated from Latin *addico*, a word used by Roman judges when they ordered the delivery of a thing or a person to the person on whom the judgment was passed, addiction indicated a state of subjection instigated by things. The current meaning of immoderate and compulsive consumption of drugs and other substances was first found in William Pittis’ *Dr. Radcliffe’s Life and Letters* (1716) in the description of a drunkard as “by his too great Addiction to the Bottle” (32). Although the term was frequently used in context of alcohol consumption, it was not limited to the description of drinking liquor but encapsulated a variety of consumption activities, as we shall see later in this chapter.

Addiction was closely associated with the notion of entertainment since things that were deemed as addictive often belonged to the category of entertainment commodity. The verb “to entertain” comes from Latin “*intertenere,*” which means “to hold mutually.” The definition of entertainment begins with such concepts as sociability, community, and reciprocity that enable pleasurable exchanges among peers. To understand the importance of the consumption of entertainment during this period, first we have to examine how urbanization created an environment for sociable interactions. England went through a rapid process of urbanization during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Between 1670 and 1750, the number of people living in towns grew
from 13.5 to 21 per cent of the total population. The growth of the population in London was even more significant in that it went up from 4 to 9.5 per cent of the total population. By 1801, 27.5 percent of the entire population resided in towns. The spectacular increase in the numbers of city residents, especially of working class people who left the countryside in search of employment enabled an ample supply of unskilled laborers and a stable demand for affordable goods.

Rapid urbanization, combined with the expansion of markets overseas, fueled the consumption of new and marvelous luxury commodities as well as the production of “import-inspired semi-luxuries.” One well-known example is Wedgwood china, an English substitute for expensive tableware imported from Asia. Increased availability of import goods and emulative production of cheaper substitutions made consumption of luxury items popular especially in cities. Luxury consumption was indeed what made the infinite expansion of commerce imaginable. The dense social life of city-dwellers, along with frequent interactions among people, and then emulation of one another, contributed to the extension and diversification of luxury consumption. Materials once unaffordable

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6 See Rosemary Sweet’s *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (London: Longman, 1999) for the significance of urbanization in the period. Sweet maintains that “the growth of urban society in the eighteenth century was demonstrably one of the most important elements in the dynamics of change which saw early modern England emerge from being a second-rate European power, essentially rural, under-industrialized…to being the leading world power with many recognisably modern attributes: an industrial, market-led economy; highly developed communications; and an increasingly secularised and liberal society.” (1)

7 Printing shops were one of the earliest and largest non-agricultural, town-based industries that employed those workers. Grub Street, located in the outskirts of London near the impoverished district of Moorfields, was where many of these printing shops were located.
to all but the richest became more widely circulated, and domestic industries began to
develop to provide more luxury goods. These new consumer goods changed the
fundamental notion of consumption. Luxury consumption for pleasure was not limited to
the high and middling sorts of people. Even the working class joined in the consumption
and distribution of the commodities of pleasure. Mandeville describes the popularization
of such luxury commodities as “To such a Height, the very Poor/Liv’d better that the
Rich before” (28). Servants, wet-nurses, and other city workers found affordable luxuries
for their own levels of entertainment. Cities became the locus of unbridled consumption
for pleasure.

Where then did this consumption of luxury take place? Aside from varying kinds
of shops that offered luxury commodities, there were also coffeehouses, clubs, theaters,
and taverns that provided opportunities for such consumption. Indeed a large portion of
luxury consumption occurred in the places that offered social entertainment. The pleasure
of consumption in these social spaces often entailed but was not limited to commodities
like coffee, tobacco, wine and liquor. These substances were luxurious not only because
they were costly imports but because they were “desired” rather than needed like food.
They were desired for the physical stimulations they offered, and the social and physical
interactions they mediated by the shared experience of pleasurable consumption offered
another source of pleasure. In fact, the root meaning of entertainment suggests the
importance of sociability and mutual interactions in the experience of pleasure.
Consumption of luxury goods often took place in these sociable spaces and in this way
the city, by providing luxury commodities and spaces to socialize, became the crucial site of entertainment.

Joseph Addison’s record of his overflowing joy at the scene of the Royal-Exchange shows how much the idea of exchange and interaction itself is luxurious and “entertaining.” Luxury derived from interactions between money, goods and people is the object of entertainment that excites his body as well as his mind. In *The Spectator* May 19th, 1711 he wrote:

> This grand Scene of Business gives me an infinite Variety of solid and substantial Entertainments. As I am a great Lover of Mankind, my Heart naturally overflows with Pleasure at the sight of a prosperous and happy Multitude, insomuch that at many publick Solemnities I cannot forbear expressing my Joy with Tears that have stolen down my Cheeks. For this reason I am wonderfully delighted to see such a Body of Men thriving in their own private Fortunes, and at the same time promoting the Publick Stock; or in other Words, raising Estates for their own Families, by bringing to their Country whatever is wanting, and carrying out of it whatever is Superfluous. (*Commerce* 204)

Addison is overjoyed to watch commercial transactions provide “everything that is Convenient and Ornamental” in addition to the bare necessities provided by nature (*Commerce* 204). It is luxury that he sees and enjoys from these constant interactions. The “mutual Intercourse and Traffick among Mankind” (*Commerce* 204).that Addison
finds so entertaining provides the kind of pleasure sought in public places like
coffeehouses and taverns. Commerce and financial speculation created larger wealth,
which, in turn, led to the increased production of luxury commodities of entertainment.
Addison’s strong emotional reaction to superfluity indicates how closely the notions of
luxury, entertainments, and sociability were related.

As we can see in Addison’s experience of entertainment, one very interesting
characteristic of sociable entertainment is to doubly encode the subject position of
consumer as a corporal body as well as a mental constitution. In a culture that celebrated
fine sentiments and sensibility not only as a sign of virtue but also as physical stimulation
that pleases the subject, it is difficult to distinguish where the mind and reason ends and
the body and heart begins. Places of entertainment typically offered a combination of
commodities and services providing stimulation to both the body and the mind. For
example, many coffeehouses subscribed to newspapers for their customers so that they
could entertain themselves with coffee and tea while exchanging scandalous rumors,
political views and financial information.

As Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary put it, the coffeehouse was “a house of
entertainment where coffee is sold and the guests are supplied with newspapers.” This
definition implies that the pleasure of drinking coffee and the pleasure of reading
newspapers were intermixed in the coffeehouses. Steele, a strong proponent of the polite
culture generated in coffeehouses, insisted that “their entertainments are derived rather
from reason than imagination” (Commerce 93). His emphasis on sober and reasonable

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exchanges of opinions and news however has to be understood not as descriptive but rather as suggestive, for others displayed more satirical views toward this kind of pleasure. Edward Ward in his *London Spy* describes a typical coffeehouse as “stinking of tobacco” and providing “Nectar and Ambrosia, May Dew, Golden Elixirs, Popular Pills, Liquid Snuff, Beautifying Waters, Dentifrices, Drops, Lozenges.” He then continues, “indeed, had not my friend told me ’twas a coffee-house I should have took it for Quack’s Hall” (Ward 18). The implication is that the pleasure coffeehouse-goers expected and shared was heavily dependent on the material substance they consumed while conversing with one another. Thus the sociable pleasure of entertainment was doubly encoded as the interactions and stimulations were pleasurable not only to the mind but also to the body.

Cities, stock markets, and coffeehouses were the social—and sociable—bodies where consumption took place in the form of entertainment. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White provide a useful insight into the eighteenth-century social body and how it configured the high and the low. Borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin’s model of the classical body as represented in classical statuary during the Renaissance, and the opposite, “Other” grotesque body described in popular festivity, they explain that the classical body denotes “the inherent form of the high official culture” by negating and excluding the other body and by emphasizing its inherent homogenous solidarity (21). It is the body that preserves and conserves. The grotesque body, on the other hand is “a mobile, multiple self, a subject of pleasure in process of exchange” (22). It is the body
that surrenders, exhausts and debases. However this frame of the high and the low underwent enormous challenges and reconfigurations during the period when the constant and frequent interactions of the social, economic, geographic and human bodies came to be considered as the common good that sustains, not threatens, the constitution of the nation. In this new era of consumption, production, not conservation or exhaustion, becomes the critical concept that maintains the boundaries of the high. The classical social hierarchy is reconfigured in terms of the high and the low, where the middling, bourgeois subject now occupies the upper domain. This subject produces and perpetuates polite culture, refined taste and a disinterested perspective against the sickly, immoral, licentious bodies. The productive body is a site of transformation. The proper, respectable site of entertainment is also a site of production that transforms the pleasure of consumption into the virtue of culture. In the following section, I will explore the gin controversy of the early eighteenth century to show how these different bodies intersect with one another in contemporary attempts to understand and treat this new frenzy of consumption.

**The Gin Craze**

The gin craze, a phenomenon of the early half of the eighteenth century in England, is important in several ways. Gin was one of the most influential and popular “luxury” goods produced and circulated domestically throughout various places in the cities of England. Its enormous impact on human bodies and the national economy, often
described as a “craze” or an “epidemic,” inspired new ways to control and manage consumption of certain commodities. It was with the rise of gin, a new perception of a pathological dependency described as an “addiction,” “slavery,” or even a form of “madness,” began to surface and characterize the mode of consumption that endangered the common good achieved by “The worst of all the Multitude” (Mandeville 27). Habitual drunkenness created by the compulsive consumption of gin was viewed as a newly discovered disease that threatened the health of the individual, as well as the health of the social and national body.

Although Henry Fielding called gin the “Luxury of the Vulgar” in his critique of the evils of contemporary commerce-driven society in his *Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbery* in 1751, gin and other forms of distilled spirits were not considered “luxury” goods in the sense that they were exclusive to the wealthy. It was the first luxury item for the poorest city dwellers who sought affordable pleasures. Taverns and gin shops offered cheap, bawdy versions of entertainment for working-class city residents. Like other “fashionable” goods that utterly changed everyday life, especially in London, gin was inseparable from the new world governed by commerce. The origin of its popularity goes back to William of Orange, who passed “An Act for Encouraging the distilling of Brandy and Spirits from Corn” in 1690 to promote agriculture and to reduce the consumption of foreign imported spirits by lowering the price of domestic spirits. As the result of governmental promotion and of the following sharp drop in the price of corn, the product became considerably cheaper and more attractive to those who did not have
much to spend for pleasure. Between 1720 and 1751, the amount of distilled spirits consumed per person in England tripled. This so called “Gin Craze” was mainly an urban phenomenon among workers with limited financial resources and little leisure time. Although gin was one of the “hit” products of the early eighteenth century, its growing influence generated mixed reviews.

Daniel Defoe’s attempt to promote domestic gin production is a well known example of how gin was viewed as a source of profit that would strengthen England’s economy in competition with France and the Netherlands. Defoe, as a strong proponent of trade, argues that “they [the distillers] work for the publick in the extraordinary sums of money which they pay to the Crown” (A Brief State 3). Unlike other spirits such as brandy or port, gin was considered a domestic product (despite the fact that it was introduced by Dutch importers). Gin was made of corn and grain—major agricultural products of England in the eighteenth century, so that even gin made in the Netherlands was dependent on English corn. Gin was so popular that five major acts were passed from 1729 to 1751 to regulate its proper taxation on distribution. The popularity of gin was indeed a national phenomenon and its distilling and retailing was one of the most profitable (and thus taxable) industries in the pre-industrial revolution era. By the 1730s, one quarter of all government taxation came from sales of alcoholic substances, more than any other commodity.

Gin’s influence on the national economy was not limited to its considerable share in the nation’s tax revenue. Defoe relates gin to the true British identity by summing up
the history of “habitual drunkenness” of British people who had gone through “a long series of blood and confusion and a civil war” (A Brief State 18). Good liquor came to be known as the solace of the common people, a patriotic substitute for the “evil” French brandy or Portuguese wine that would make England’s enemies richer and stronger. Or, at least, this was one of the most popular arguments made by the proponents of gin trade and consumption. Liquor had become an indispensable part of the nation’s wealth and culture by the mid-eighteenth century. Of the many newly introduced commodities that fascinated and attracted consumers, gin was one of the most successful in terms of its commercial and cultural impact.

Although supporters of free trade like Defoe believed that gin consumption was a part of the expanding market and would eventually be beneficial to the wealth of the nation, many were concerned with the increasing number of people who fell into vice as a result of habitual drunkenness. For many, drinking a dram in a gin shop became a daily routine. Consumers of cheap, strong spirits included shopkeepers, servants, housemaids, apprentices, wet nurses and prostitutes. Unlicensed sellers were on every street corner offering a cheap and quick fix to whomever needed it. Chandler’s shops kept gin side by side with necessities of daily life. Because of its almost unlimited accessibility, the Gin Acts dealt with the matter of licensing as well as proper taxation. Despite the fact that the government needed money to finance wars abroad, it became impossible to promote gin, once it was known to be aggressively damaging the health of the population. The legislative intent was to exercise more control over the retailing and consumption of gin,
but the result was not very successful. High annual license fees drove most of the retail shops underground instead of reducing their numbers. Consequently the situation became worse and more uncontrollable. The final gin act reduced the fee to £10 a year, a fifth of the amount proposed by the second gin act of 1736.\(^8\)

When gin’s popularity reached its peak in the mid-eighteenth century, it became obvious to reformers and social conservatives that it threatened to endanger the wealth and culture of the nation. In 1734, the notorious infanticide case of Judith Defour shocked the conscience of people in London. Defour, a poor worker at a throwster’s, strangled and abandoned her own baby so she could sell its new clothes (donated by a nearby church) to buy gin.\(^9\) Her confession became national news. The story of an addict who killed her own child became a rallying point against the national vice of gin consumption. One well-known satire influenced by this shocking story was William Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* (1751), an engraving made at the request of his friend Henry Fielding, author of *Tom Jones* and newly appointed commander in chief of the London police. For Fielding, gin consumption was a criminal problem. Like many reformers who warned against the

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\(^8\)For details of the five gin acts passed during the eighteenth century, see “A Lesson in Political Arithmetic” in Jessica Warner’s *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 2002) and “The First Gin Act” in Patrick Dillon’s *Gin: The Much Lamented Death of Madame Geneva* (Boston: Justin, Charles & Co., 2002). The details regarding gin retail and legislation in this chapter rely mostly on the two major works on the topic. Dillon offers a variety of historical data from contemporary records on gin. Warner draws attention to the discursive resemblance between the eighteenth-century gin craze and current drug addiction (such as the heroin epidemic) to suggest the history of addiction goes further back than most historians argue; i.e., to the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth century.

danger that gin turned people into criminals, Fielding claimed that the proliferation of crime and debauchery in London was largely due to the uncontrolled consumption of spirits. In his *Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbery*, he describes the devastating impact of the “poison called gin” as “the intoxicating Draught itself disqualifies them from any honest means to acquire it, at the same time that it removes all sense of fear and shame and emboldens them to commit every wicked and dangerous Enterprise.” He concludes: “Should the drinking this poison be continued at its present height during the next twenty years there will by that time be very few of the common people left to drink it” (14-17).

Whereas Fielding criminalizes gin consumption, Hogarth sees gin as an economic problem. *Gin Lane* (figure 2) was originally published in two parts. The first part, *Beer Street* (figure 1), depicts rather happy and satisfied workers in a festive mood. *Beer Street*’s healthy and productive social body celebrates its economic prosperity based on commercial and social interactions, and such social body is populated by healthy individual bodies of typical English workers. Some are flirting, others drinking, and the rest of them are working with their tools. The only business that is in trouble is the pawnbroker. Mr. Pinch, the pawnbroker lives in the one poorly-maintained, crumbling building in the picture.

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10 Health is an overarching theme of *Beer Street*. In addition to celebrating the “economic” health of the town, *Beer Street*’s residents is also toasting King George II’s health upon his birthday; the flag at the top of St. Martin-in-the-fields—the church in the background—indicates that it is the king’s birthday.
In stark contrast, *Gin Lane* shows a chaotic street filled with disease, violence, madness and death. The city is in ruin, flooded with the dying and the dead. The only flourishing part of the street is the gin shop owned by “Kilman” on the right and the pawn
broker “Gripe” on the left side. The entire economy of *Gin Lane* is sickened as its occupants become addicted to gin.

Figure 2. *Gin Lane* (1751)

The social body has lost its productive force as individual bodies suffer from addiction to gin. The center of the plate presents a sick mother who seems to be too drunk to notice
her baby is slipping away from her lap. Next to her, a pamphlet-seller who carries “the Downfall of Mrs. Gin” is starving because no one is sober enough to buy tracts from him. A cook and a carpenter are selling the tools of their trade to the pawn broker to buy more gin. Gin turns individuals into unproductive people whose bodies reveal signs of sickness and decay. The drunken mother’s leg has syphilitic sores and the pamphlet-seller’s bare chest and bony legs show that he is about to die from starvation. The economy of *Gin Lane* is consumed by the uncontrollable craze for gin.

There was yet another approach to problematize gin consumption. Gin could also be viewed as a problem of medicine. Dr. Thomas Trotter published his *Essay Medical Philosophical and Chemical on Drunkenness* in 1804, which made habitual drunkenness a legitimate object of medical research and treatment for the first time. Still earlier medical discourses touched upon the problem of “habitualness,” associated with alcohol’s impact on human health.¹¹ Thomas Wilson’s *Distilled Spiritous Liquors the Bane of the Nation* (1736) viewed habitual drinking as “a disease” (viii) and the famous George Cheyne, in *An Essay in Health and Long Life* (1724), describes drinking as a “habit” that intensifies “till at last they [drinkers] find nothing hot enough for them” (64). Although medical discourses of the period recognized the consumption of gin as a disease, they found it difficult to locate the source of such illness because gin, along with other forms of distilled spirits, had been used to cure disease. According to humours
theory, the hot and dry nature of spirits would drive out the cold and wet humour.\footnote{12 The traditional prescription of gin as medicine that had been practiced since the seventeenth century was a popular channel through which upper-middle class women became dependent on gin drinking.}

Stephen Hales was among the first to study the medical effects of liquor in order to debunk the idea that the substance could be beneficial in \textit{Friendly Admonition to the Drinkers of Brandy, and other Strong Liquors} (1734).

The gin craze became increasingly problematic as it was associated with femininity. It was often identified with the feminine in part because, unlike beer and other alcoholic products that required a license, it was sold by shopkeepers and street handlers who were mostly women. The fact that it was more accessible than other liquors and beers sold in male-dominated taverns made it more attractive to women who apparently wanted quick, intense pleasure to console their exhausted nerves. Contemporary satires on gin often used a prostitute or a despotic female sovereign to portray “the mother Gin,” or “the Queen Gin” as sick, barren, potentially contagious; in reality there was a growing concern for the increasing number of women who were becoming addicted to drinking.

Even Defoe, who optimistically embraced gin’s economic contribution to the wealth of the nation, was in fact concerned about women’s increasing dependence upon gin. In \textit{Colonel Jack} (1723), he expresses his concerns about female drinking in the satirical caricature of Jack’s wife. After many adventures, Jack finds his ideal woman, “a most accomplish’d beautiful Creature indeed, perfectly well Bred, and had not one ill Quality about her” (308) and settles down. Before marrying her Jack encounters other
women who have vices that correspond to their nationalities—Italian women are licentious and French women extravagant. This modest English woman becomes addicted to drinking.

‘But I, that was to be the most unhappy Fellow alive in the Article of Matrimony, had at last a Disappointment of the worst sort, even here; I had three fine Children by her, and in her time of her lying inn with the last, she got some Cold, that she did not in a long time get off, and in short she grew very sickly: In being so continually ill, and out of Order, she very unhappily got a Habit of drinking Cordials and hot Liquors; Drink, like the Devil, when it gets hold of any one, tho' but a little, it goes on by little and little to their Destruction; so in my Wife, her Stomach being weak and faint, she first took this Cordial, then that, till in short, she could not live without them; and from a Drop to a Sup, from a Sup to a Dram, from a Dram to a Glass, and so on to Two, till at last, she took in short, to what we call drinking…As I likened Drink to the Devil, in its gradual Possession of the Habits and Person, so it is yet more like the Devil in its Encroachment on us, where it gets hold of our Senses; in short, my beautiful, good humour'd, modest, well bred Wife, grew a Beast, a Slave to Strong Liquor. (309)

This passage sees drinking as the possession of “the habits and person” by the devil, something that immediately affects the body and behavior until it becomes a kind of
necessity. Jack’s wife becomes dependent on alcohol to continue to live, even though it destroys her virtue, and chastity, then sanity, and finally life itself. The real evil of liquor is not that it harms the body like a poison such as mercury or lead, which were also used in medicine. Drinking becomes “a Habit” that enslaves the consumer and eventually drives the addict into madness. The madness of *Gin Lane* does not lie merely in the impact of alcohol on the human body but in its power to enslave those who become dependent. Aggressively manifested on the female body, the old “national vice” (Defoe, *Brief 17*) of habitual drunkenness becomes a threat to the nation fueled by the very same mechanism that made the product flourish.

The discourses on gin addiction I have discussed in this section illustrate how the consumption of gin becomes a means to articulate the abnormal: criminal, unproductive, and sick bodies in the fields of law, economy and medicine. Such abnormality is a byproduct of the culture that once celebrated and promoted the conspicuous consumption that formed the foundation of the nation’s great wealth. Gin’s enormous popularity subsided at the mid-century when the price of corn spiked after a series of serious droughts and it became less profitable to produce the substance; the epidemic of drunkenness seemed to slow down. Still, the notoriety of gin continued throughout the century for its power to take away a person’s will and change him (or, more often, her) into someone unable to produce or reproduce anything of value. The next section explores another popular form of entertainment that generated similar anxiety and concern.
**Consuming Words**

The Licensing Act of 1662 ensured the monopoly of the London-based Stationers’ Company in exchange for allowing government monitoring of printed material. When the monopoly was no longer legal after 1695, provincial printing took off, and by the mid-1740s there were 381 printers, booksellers, and engravers at work in 174 English towns. This rose to 988 and 316, respectively, by 1790 (Wilson, 20). Although William St. Clair persuasively argues in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (2004) that the “explosion” of reading happened well after the period most literary historians believe it to have happened around the mid-eighteenth century. St. Clair also draws attention to the fact that publishers and booksellers generated enormous profit by increasing their market control. He terms this period as the “high monopoly period.” Booksellers and printers maintained their claim to perpetual copyright and collaborated to maximize their profits by selling books at the highest price with virtually no intervention from the government. As a result, the price of printed materials remained relatively high despite the fact that better technology and cheaper labor was available, making printing one of the most profitable industries during a time when most major industrial sectors were still based on agriculture. The sharp increase in the number of printing shops attests to the fact that the supply of books and other printed materials, legal or pirated, indeed increased along with a growing demand to stabilize the market.

The habit of reading spread to public spaces, and became an important medium of
intellectual and sociable intercourse. Among other things, daily newspapers popularized habitual reading as a form of entertainment. Newspapers contained information on stock values, imports and exports, public affairs and diplomatic decisions, as well as personal accounts of adventures overseas and fashion trends of Europe. These papers were circulated in coffeehouses, taverns and clubs where men (and sometimes women) came to enjoy the articles and share their opinions on the issues of the day. Periodicals became a critical nexus for debates on numerous social issues. The entertainment experience mediated by print commodities was not limited to the well known case of coffeehouses with newspapers. The execution of a criminal which was still a part of public pseudo-theatrical entertainment was crowded with the people who sold genuine and fake confessions of criminals. Printed materials became critical media for those who wanted to join in and share the amusement, wonder, and pleasure that can be found in diverse company.

The place of print commodities that offered social pleasure in coffeehouses, taverns and clubs curiously overlapped with the place of gin. Like drinking, the habit of newspaper-reading was often described as a compulsion. Addison’s famous description of a news addict in the Tatler 155 (April 6, 1710), is a case in point. Titled “Addison on the Political Upholsterer Addicted to News,” this article defines newspapers as a commodity that can lead to addiction. Readers, as consumers of newspapers, become enslaved, compulsively returning to the same experience of pleasure. The so-called “political upholsterer” is a shopkeeper who lost his fortune and family because he could
not stop reading. Reading newspapers becomes a process that has to be repeated perpetually in order to keep current and valid, much like the paper itself. The vice of newspapers, according to Addison, is that a reader could become overly invested in affairs external to his life, and mad to receive more wonders of the world, just as the “[Upholsterer’s] indefatigable kind of Life was the Ruin of his Shop; for about the Time that his favourite Prince left the Crown of Poland, he broke and disappeared” (Commerce 58-59). His ruin stems from identifying so much with the prince that his life has to simulate that of prince. He becomes incapable of managing his own business because he is so engaged with the interests of others. The poor shopkeeper cannot stop asking for more news from anyone he encounters, as he wanders around the streets while his wife and children starve. This episode of the news addict ends when the upholsterer begs Addison for money to buy more newspapers.

Newspapers and other periodicals benefited from the “habit” of consumption which made reading a daily, or weekly routine entertainment. Nor were newspapers the only materials designed to encourage such consumption. Many early novels were quick to adopt the format of daily distribution by disguising themselves as a faithful rendition of the events appearing in scandalous news reports and court proceedings. Behn’s Love-letters between a Noble-man and His Sister (1684) is a fictional rendering of the scandalous trial of Ford Lord Grey of Werke, which had been a frequent topic of newspapers of her days. Its trial transcripts were very popular because of the outrageous nature of the crime. Claiming that Love-letters was a faithful records of the crime, Behn
published the first part in 1684 and its sequels in 1685 and 1687.

The structural and thematic characteristics of early novels can thus be understood in part as those of an entertainment commodity seeking success in the market. Like the newspapers, novels repeated familiar narrative structures with new details, offering the pleasure of variation in repetition. In the Love-letters, although the story ends with the elopement and union of the distressed couple Philander (Grey) and Silvia (Henrietta), Behn published a sequel in 1685 and another in 1687 that returned to the situation of courtship and betrayal. Rather than form a linear narrative progression from the first novel, the second and third installments repeat the same story of seduction and betrayal using the same characters to negate the fictional closure supplied by the first part. She invites them to engage once again in the same narrative of courtship. This kind of sequential production became a widespread trend among novel writers since it guaranteed stable demand with less risk. Other commercially successful novels underwent a similar process. Both Robinson Crusoe and Pamela had sequels that repeated many elements of the first novel, and other writers forged sequels to the successful originals as well.

That reading was considered not an event but a habit shows how much the activity of reading seems to share with the consumption of luxury substances like sugar, coffee, tobacco and gin. In addition to the juxtaposition of words and substances that frequently took place in coffee house gatherings and taverns, the “abstract” and immaterial consumption of words shared another element in common with the consumption of material substances. Both arouse corporeal pleasure. One obvious example would be the
consumption of pornography. The notorious pornography translator and printer Edmund Curll was able to make a huge sum of money by selling a translation of Jean Barrin’s *L’Ecole des Filles* (1680). The English translation, *The School of Venus*, was published in 1724 and the success of Curll’s business was significant enough to gain even the respect of those who despised him most—the printers under the post-guild network of London based printers. From Samuel Pepys’ well known account of reading *L’Ecole des Filles* (1665), we can infer that, especially for upper class gentlemen and aristocrats, pornographic texts were easy to come by from the late seventeenth-century on. Yet the success of Curll’s business and the publication of the 1749 English pornographic novel *A Woman of Pleasure* (also known as *Fanny Hill*) shows that the rise of print commodities popularized pornography so that it attracted a much wider audience.

Just as a material substance like gin provided immediate bodily pleasure and ensured habitualized consumption, print materials (especially those of a sexually explicit nature) were thought to produce a very similar physical effect. Words instead of substances excited a sense of euphoria in pornography, which was repeatedly thematized in many pornographic texts including *Venus in the Cloister* (1725), another English translation of a well known French pornography. In *Venus in the Cloister*, two female cousins, Susanne and Fanchon tell each other their erotic adventures in a graphic and explicit manner. Their conversation is mostly verbal but the words have immediate effect on the body as when Fanchon pleads to her cousin: “my cousin, I’m coming, don’t speak of it any more” (Mudge 155).
That words can arouse the reader is also a recurring theme of epistolary novels. Words were considered vehicles of passion, working in almost an identical way to gin to bring hot humor into the body of the consumer. Edmund Burke describes how words influence passions in the *Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1759):

> We take an extraordinary part in the passions of others, and we are easily affected and brought into sympathy by any tokens which are shewn of them; and there are no tokens which can express all the circumstances of most passions so fully as words. (173)

The passions of others enter into the body through the mediation of words. Among numerous print commodities, the novel, especially of amatory nature,\(^\text{13}\) shows a strong tendency to capitalize on the implicit and explicit sexual pleasure conveyed through words. Secret letters, the sweet whispers of a lover, and romance are used to trigger transport and ecstasy within the character who consumes them.\(^\text{14}\) This tradition is echoed almost to the point of parody in the famous letter-searching scene in Richardson’s *Pamela*. After several rape attempts, Mr. B. spies on Pamela to figure out a way to

\(^{13}\) The term “amatory” refers to a category of the novel of the early eighteenth century that dealt mainly with themes of seduction and sexual intrigues. The style of narration shares a lot with the “novel” of the same and later period which carried moralistic themes and at the same time stayed away from the graphic representations of corporeal pleasure. The current distinction between the novel and amatory fiction is created in part as a result of literary canonization of a certain kind of prose fictions. Although I am not acknowledging that there existed a fundamental difference in forms or content between the two categories, I use the term simply to indicate that amatory fiction makes an identifiable subset of a larger category of the novel.

\(^{14}\) See Ruth Perry’s *Women, Letters and the Novel* (1980) for a discussion of the erotic implications of letters within the novel. Perry argues that in many early novels, love letters serve as a substitute for women’s bodies, offering pleasure to the male protagonist/reader.
subdue her. After reading her letters to her family, he becomes infatuated with them and forces her to take them from the secret pocket she had “sewed in [her] under-coat, about [her] hips” (238). The proximity of Pamela’s letters to her body is significant not only because it literally eroticizes Mr. B’s search but also because it symbolically indicates the doubleness of the object of Mr. B’s desire, split as it is between the chaste body and virtuous letters. His desire is never fully gratified without the letters, so even after they marry, Pamela promises to produce more letters to please him.

From the early eighteenth century on the novel was viewed as a potentially addictive object that provided bodily pleasure like other substances of entertainment. In 1712, *The Spectator* of April 29 pointed out the affinity between the novel and other pleasurable goods for its addictive and dangerous effect on the consumer, especially the female, by advising that “Fair readers to be in a particular manner careful how they meddle with Romances, Chocolate, Novels and the like Inflamers; which I look upon as very dangerous to be made use of during this Carnival of Nature” (Vice 144). Works of fiction were singled as “the inflamers” that stimulated physical sensations. Perhaps the reason so many early novels emphasized and thematized the power of words that offered physical pleasure that aroused the reader is that they themselves were keenly aware of their own power as a commodity made of words to offer such pleasure and that they actually sought to excite the body of the reader.

The novel is a thing that inflames, and potentially addicts. Eliza Haywood, in her successful novella *Fantomina* (1725), delves into the complex structure of addiction
created by amorous narratives. *Fantomina* is the story of a woman who repeatedly seduces a libertine named “Beauplaisir.” What she offers to Beauplaisir is not so much her body but various narratives of seduction since her body is always in disguise to intensify the experience of pleasure. Each stage of seduction is a compressed version of popular amatory novels. The first seduction concerns a prostitute and a libertine. The second seduction is between a country maid and a visitor from the city. The third is a story of a widow who in her distress finds solace in arms of a stranger. The final one is a moment of anonymous, pornographic intercourse.

After she succeeds in seducing him for the second time, Fantomina disappears to change her disguise and reappears to offer a new story. The scene is described as follows:

> Here the feigned Widow ended her sorrowful Tale, which had been several Times interrupted by a Parenthesis of Sighs and Groans; and Beauplaisir, with a complaisant and tender Air, assur'd her of his Readiness to serve her in Things of much greater Consequence than what she desir'd of him; and told her, it would be an Impossibility of denying a Place in his Chariot to a Lady, who he could not behold without yielding one in his Heart. (15)

Fantomina deliberately creates a setting where a distressed widow desperately seeks to share a chariot with a stranger, and faithfully performs the role of a woman who is about to be seduced. It is her “sorrowful tale” accompanied by “sighs and groans” that makes it impossible for Beauplaisir to resist her. The narrative allegorizes a serialized and repetitive pleasure of the novel that the reader compulsively and constantly consumes. It
is an allegory of addiction by the novel.

**Addiction and its Antidote**

Paradoxically, the discourse of managing addiction understands the novel as an antidote to the addictive consumption, which reveals not only differences but also similarities between the novel and the substances that were being marginalized as addictive. Addiction requires antidote. Addison finishes his story of the news addict by presenting a cure for such addiction. As an alternative to this destructive and dangerous material, he offers: “This Paper I design for the particular Benefit of those worthy Citizens who live more in a Coffee-house than in their shops, and whose Thoughts are so taken up with the Affairs of the Allies, that they forget their customers” (61). Addison and Steele’s persistent celebration and promotion of the “disinterested” perspective can be understood as creating an antidote for the addiction to daily reading that was driving the popular reader to newspapers. It is “philosophy” rather than news that his paper offers, although it is read in the same spaces as clubs, assemblies, tea-tables, and coffee-houses (89). Addison moves on to “recommend these Speculations to all well regulated Families, that set apart an Hour in every Morning for Tea and Bread and Butters” and advises “them for their Good to order this Paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a Part of the Tea Equipage” (98). The dangerous and incessant preoccupation with world news can be replaced by implementing a new habit of reading, a part of polite and refined daily routine of the “Tea Equipage” that cures such an addiction. In this
promotion of his own paper as a replacement for bad, addictive newspapers, cultivation of a disinterested perspective and proper taste plays a crucial role. The antidote for an addiction to reading is another form of reading that can produce a will to resist such addiction, something that one can possess in order not to be possessed. If one cultivates good taste, the act of consumption can be turned into an accomplishment instead of an addiction.

The danger of addiction, however dire the consequences, cannot require any simple prohibition especially in a world so heavily dependent upon consumption and commerce. Pleasurable commodities like sugar, coffee and liquor were crucial in establishing and expanding the national wealth that made Britain one of the fastest growing nations in Europe during this period. People’s lives were formed and reformed around the commodities they produced, purchased and consumed. In the new urbanized setting, blood lineage no longer defined individual and collective identity, and the products one bought and consumed consequently became critical in signifying one’s status in the market-driven world. For this reason, many concerned citizens criticized the “wrong” kinds of emulation that might blur the “proper” social boundaries. Others were fearful of the unprecedented and unchecked growth of the market in entertainment and other luxuries. These were dreaded precisely because desire and appetite for high and low forms of luxury commodities were becoming monstrously ungovernable and impossible to rein in. Nathaniel Forster in his comment on the current economy in 1767 describes the rapid expansion of luxury consumption as “a fashionable luxury spread through like a
Contagion” (41).

Conduct books of the period discussed proper modes of consumption that would keep women from being overwhelmed by the lure of the goods and the pleasures they offered. *The Compleat Housewife: or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman’s Companion* (1734) by Eliza Smith is but one example of a manual of domestic economy that instructs women in spending tactics. *The Young Lady’s Companion; or, Beauty’s Looking-Glass* (1740), is another popular conduct book of the mid-eighteenth century that discusses the proper ways in which daughters of gentlemen should behave, and how to engage in a “safe” method of diversions. Educating women in the proper form of domestic consumption is also a way to ensure that consumption is an indispensable part of one’s daily routine. Almost ubiquitous in most of the household-related conduct books was the idea that women were “in charge” of household consumption and they had to be able to transform such consumption into things that had ethical, religious or aesthetic value.

Eliza Haywood’s *Present for Women Addicted to Drinking* (1750), a guidebook that deals with cases of addicted women and offers advice on how to avoid or cure the habit of drinking presents an interesting case of conduct literature that addresses the pervasiveness of gin addiction that spread to middle-class women. Like Defoe in his novel *Colonel Jack*, Haywood locates the problem of gin drinking not in the substance itself but its power to transform not only uneducated women but the “ladies” of respectable families into slaves of passion. The promise of controlling what was deemed uncontrollable and compulsive shapes a series of disciplinary procedures suggested in
Present for Women Addicted to Drinking. What can be the cure to such a destructive, yet powerful mode of consumption that has to be repeated no matter the circumstance?

Haywood describes such a cure for women of from a prominent families:

Reading, if they can be brought to it, is the best Cure of all: In order to effect this, they should be suffered to dip into Books of all sorts, by which Genius may be caught…I know a gentleman that cures his sister with Romances; for there is this peculiar in Books, that the grave and the gay, the serious and the comic, are all full of Disswaisives from this Vice [drinking]. . . Well a Habit of Reading is well fixed, there is nothing easier than to bad taste and to bring People from reading trivial to the perusal of valuable Authors. (Present 62-63)

The basic principle here is to replace a bad habit with a better habit that attracts and pleases but does not harm the body or mind. Just as Richardson’s Pamela cures Mr. B’s “sex addiction” with letters that transform him into a respectable gentleman, good books can “dissuade” one from an obsessive pursuit of pleasure. Managing dangerous and potentially destructive addiction by replacing it with another habitual form of consumption that is similar enough to satisfy the pathological need was a commonly accepted cure – a cure by “antidote.”

Haywood recommends reading “Romances”15 and gradually moving into the

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15 Although Haywood herself uses the word “novel” to describe her most successful novel Love in Excess in the title page, the term “novel” was not frequently used until the late eighteenth century and the terms like romance, or familiar history referred to the prose fiction genre in general. The context of the quote suggests that “romance” is a beginning step, a lower, easier form of literature compared to the works of
works of more respectable and admired authors. As a successful novelist herself, Haywood’s claim that the novel can be an antidote not only to bad reading material, as Addison suggested, but to gin addiction as well may come across as a rather self-promoting agenda. Still, forming a good habit of reading to cure an addiction, a bad kind of habit, shows that Haywood is conscious of the double logic in the consumption of reading. On the surface, consuming print commodities is a safe, “productive,” and respectable habit that satisfies both the desire to experience pleasure and the demand of the ever-expanding world of commerce to perpetually increase consumption. However, the fact that reading is suggested as an antidote not only to the bad form of literature reading but to an addiction to liquor puts the novel much closer to an addictive substance than it would seem. The antidote to a disease or poison contains the very substance it is designed to counter. By providing a manageable dose of the same substance, an antidote immunizes people from poison itself. Following this logic, the novel can be the antidote to gin only if it is like gin.

Reactions to the mid-eighteenth-century epidemic of gin drinking show how deeply addiction was inscribed in the foundations of both the nation’s entertainment culture and its wealth. Indeed we might say that pathologizing addiction to promote or distribute a similar yet acceptable form of dependency is the very paradox underwriting eighteenth-century consumer society. The novel, one of the most prominent and lasting respected authors, which implies not the traditional literary form of romance in medieval or renaissance period but the fashionable reading materials that appealed to young ladies.
products of the entertainment industry, has to be understood as part of this process. The next chapter will discuss the sentimental novel, a form of tremendously popular novel during the mid-eighteenth century, in order to show how “sympathy” in narrative fiction both contributed to and at the same time disturbed the discursive process of creating the binary structure of both the autonomous subject and the addict.
Chapter 2
Sympathetic Consumption and the Sentimental Novel

In the last chapter, I discussed the eighteenth-century consumption-driven entertainment culture and the ambivalent position the novel occupied both as an addictive substance and as its antidote. With the rise of gin, the discursive practice of delegitimizing and marginalizing a dangerous form of consumption began to surface as we have seen in Hogarth’s engravings, court reports on Judith Dufour, and numerous medical tracts on alcohol’s effects. The novel, in its early form, was manufactured, disseminated and consumed in ways that promoted repetitive, compulsive and oftentimes somatic modes of consumption. Reading novels was a habit and, as the modern usage of the word “habit” indicates, proper and refining habit is not far from all-consuming, destructive addiction. In this chapter, I will focus on a specific genre of literature that was vastly popular during the mid- to late-eighteenth-century in England in order to see how
the habit of novel reading came into being not as a site of containment that policed and
domesticated the reading subject but as a site of contestation among various forms of
addiction and habits.

At the same time that addiction was being identified, studied and excoriated, a
new set of practices were introduced as a means to cure the disease of addiction and
inoculate individuals against dangerous pleasures that would transform them into slaves
of addiction. Displaying deformed bodies as the evidence of addiction, many social
commentators in the eighteenth century advocated the need for surveillance and
discipline of everyday consumption. Self-regulation and discipline became important
tools for keeping the household from financial, ethical and religious corruption and
devastation. Conduct books, once focused on educating properly feminine manners to
young ladies, became more and more involved in the project of home management,
defining proper ways to manage a household without extravagant and wasteful
consumption.

*The Compleat Housewife or, Accomplished Gentlewoman’s Companion* (1728)
grew through fifteen editions between 1728 and 1753, and articulates the details of good
and proper ways to spend money. The book’s lengthy subtitle sums up what it teaches
and the list contains recipes for food and drink, table setting manners, advice on making
home-made medicines, and directions for painting rooms, and much more.† In addition

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† The full title of the book is “The compleat housewife: or accomplish'd gentlewoman's companion. Being A Collection of upwards of Six Hundred of the most approved Receipts in Cookery, Pastry, Confectionary, Preserving, Pickles, Cakes, Creams, Jellies, Made Wines, Cordials. With Copper Plates, curiously engraven,
to household management skills, these conduct books recommended proper habits like keeping records of daily expenditures, reading literature, and organizing tea gatherings and prayers to maintain the economic, religious and cultural virtue of the home. *The Ladies Magazine* recommended in August 1773 that “reading must be accounted one of the most useful, entertaining, and instructive...ways of spending leisure hours” (qtd in Ellis 47). In this way, the conduct book attempted to discipline its members against the corrupting forces of the world. Making a habit of proper forms of consumption became a critical strategy in the production of a refined, cultivated and proper subject.

Eve Sedgwick takes on this complicated rivalry between addiction and self-control in her essay “Epidemics of the Will” in *Tendencies*. Commenting on the abundance of attention to alcohol addiction, exercise addiction, sex addiction and food-related addiction, she maintains that the modern “ethical” conceptualization of free will and autonomy relies upon the invention of its opposite side of addiction in a “situation whose consolidating moment in the Reformation already revealed, at the same time, the structure of its dramatic foundational fractures and their appropriability to the complex needs of capitalism” (133). As addiction becomes a problem associated not with a given substance but with the subject whose autonomy gives in to the ruthless desire, an addict

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for the regular Disposition or Placing of the various Dishes and Courses. And also Bills of Fare for every Month in the Year. To which is added, A Collection of above Three Hundred Family Receipts of Medicines; viz. Drinks, Syrups, Salves, Ointments, and various other Things of sovereign and approved Efficacy in most Distempers, Pains, Aches, Wounds, Sores, &c. particularly Mrs. Stephens's Medicine for the Cure of the Stone and Gravel, and Dr. Mead's famous Receipt for the Cure of a Bite of a mad Dog; with several other excellent Receipts for the same, which have cured when the Persons were disordered, and the salt Water fail'd; never before made publick; fit either for private Families, or such publick-spirited Gentlewomen as would be beneficent to their poor Neighbours.” (Smith 1)
turns into an antithetical identity that the normative, self-regulatory subject has to define itself against. If addiction is a “disease of the will,” the subject must control and will him or herself to stay healthy and free of addiction. Implementation of proper habits that cultivates the body and mind of an individual is another name for such process.

Still, we use the word “habit” as a euphemism for addiction, and indeed there is a certain degree of overlap between these two modes of consumption that are designed to repeat themselves, producing a certain kind of coherent identity. Like consumption, the idea of habit entails multiple sets of contradicting, oppositional practices that further complicate the position of the novel as a commodity of entertainment that was strongly associated with cultural habituation. Habits are socialized, shared practices that create a living structure that serve to connect individuals. At the same time, habits are intensely personal. They are self-defining practices, secrets that reside hidden in the private life of each person. Whereas habits are a self-less repetition that imprisons and subjugate the subject, they also sustain the coherence of that subject.

The habit of reading, especially of the “popular” genre we call the sentimental novel, bears a lot in common with the compulsive consumption that was stigmatized as addiction. Both acts are predicated upon repetition of the same somatic experience of euphoric pleasure, especially in the context of eighteenth-century entertainment culture. In order to understand how the sentimental novel was “consumed,” the following section will discuss the eighteenth-century notions of sympathy and link them to a process I term “sympathetic consumption.” In a culture where fashionable objects of sentiment and
sensibility were circulated and adored, sympathy (the ability to respond to the feelings of others) became a chief means of consumption for those objects. Textual representations were thought to be well-suited for invoking sympathy in those readers who sought pleasure in experiencing the emotions of others. Then in the next two sections, I will explore the ways in which the sentimental novel operates as a commodity manufactured for sympathetic consumption. Sympathetic consumption of sentimental novels articulates and performs what I have discussed as two opposing logics of consumption: one marked as a negative mode of addiction and the other defined by the consumption that cultivates and refines. The appetite for sentimental indulgence was deemed as consuming and addictive. At the same time, it was thought to produce a social structure of propriety, i.e., “common-sense” by allowing the reader to inculcate sensibility and to refine manners. The sentimental novel is a genre where these seemingly opposing effects of sympathy intervene with each other.

**Sentimental Objects and Sympathetic Consumption**

Throughout the eighteenth century, especially in the last half of the century, there was public enthusiasm for celebrating the fine feelings of men. Sensibility and sentimentality was the subject of many philosophical discourses, cultural essays and daily conversations at coffeehouses, clubs and theaters. All this attention to sensibility was
manifested in fashionable new commodities that were displayed, exchanged and adored. One very well known example is Josiah Wedgewood’s medallion that depicts a black slave in chains with the phrase “Am I Not a Man and a Brother.” Thomas Clarkson, an enthusiastic abolitionist and friend of Wedgewood describes how the medallion is being circulated in cities:

Gentlemen had the image [of the slave] inlaid in gold on the lid of their snuffboxes. Of the ladies several wore them in bracelets, and others had them fitted up in an ornamental manner as pins for their hair. At length the taste for wearing them became general, and thus fashion, which usually confines itself to worthless things, was seen for once in the honourable office of promoting the cause of justice, humanity and freedom. (89)

The pain and misery of slavery embodied in the figure was designed to signal the owner’s sensibility while eliciting the same feelings from those who share the same social space.

Although many of these sentimental objects were designed to invoke sincere moral feelings, the result was a wide variety of goods for whimsical display of superficial sentiments that saturated the market. Even Clarkson himself was conscious of the danger when he mentions “fashion” which usually includes worthless things. By the late eighteenth century, there was an increasing criticism insisting that the glitter of

\[2\] Recent studies on sentimental commodities of the eighteenth century suggest that the sentimental value attached to commodities should be understood in the wider context of imperial capitalism that generates commodity fetish. See Lynn Festa’s *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2006) and Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
sentimental objects and the cult of sensibility were hypocritical and tasteless. The titles of
the novels like *Excessive Sensibility* (1787), *The Curse of Sentiment* (1787) and *The
Errors of Sensibility* (1793) show how much the public opinions had turned hostile
towards the culture of sensibility.

Among those fashionable commodities was the sentimental novel, “a six shillings
worth of sensibility” as Helen Maria Williams put it in her novel *Julia* (9). Like
Wedgewood’s medallion, the novels produced under the influence of the cult of
sensibility often focused on displaying representations of the suffering. The wretched
bodies of the victims of misfortune were described in detail in order for readers to
sympathize with the victims responding to their pains.

In a world saturated with sentimental commodities, how could people properly
enjoy themselves? Adam Smith provides his answer in his influential *Theory of Moral
Sentiments*, published in 1759. The first chapter of section I, “Of the sense of Propriety,”
is dedicated to a discussion of sympathy. Sympathy, for Smith, is a natural human
capacity that can “interest him in the fortune of others” for “the pleasure of seeing” or
“conceiv[ing] it in a very lively manner” (3). Since sympathy is a natural ability, it is not
limited to those of certain class or gender, but exquisite sensibility acquired through
education can enhance this faculty so that it can be enjoyed more fully. Developing from
its original meaning as the physical connection among organs in the human body,
sympathy came to signify an ability to connect to other bodies beyond the limits of
individual senses. For Adam Smith, however, sympathy does not connect individual
bodies like strings attached to each other as Hume and Burke insist. It is primarily a rational faculty that the “impartial spectator” intervenes in order to provide both aesthetic pleasure and ethical judgment. His notion of the impartial spectator is interesting in that sympathy, unlike other empirical feelings the body “senses,” enables a vicarious experience. When experiencing pleasure through sympathy, one momentarily occupies an “impartial” space, a departure from its partial, interested subject position.

The pleasure one feels by sympathizing with the victims of misery and misfortune is difficult to explain and even more so to justify. In order to rationalize such pleasure, Smith introduces an interactive, reciprocal relationship between the observer and the victim that is created by feelings of sympathy. In a circuit of sympathy, the one who sees a person in misfortune feels strongly motivated to help that person, and thus moves to relieve the pain and suffering, which gives him “ethical” pleasure in return. On the other side of the interaction, when the suffering person sees another person who feels his or her pain, this alone will lessen the intensity of the pain because it is now shared. The complicated circuit enabling pleasure in seeing a person suffer appears almost like a formula for the sentimental fiction. Fiction has to be created to justify what might otherwise be unjustifiable pleasure in the sight of the distressed. Without this elaborate fiction of a sympathetic bond, the circuit might become pornographically sadistic.3

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3 Patricia Mayer Spacks discusses the disturbingly extravagant aesthetics of viewing the suffering of others as spectacle in *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990). Linda Hinton maintains that Smithian scopic sympathy acts that construct enlightened human subjects are a version of the male gaze that fulfills a sadistic desire of voyeurism. See *The Perverse Gaze of Sympathy: Sadomasochistic Sentiments from Clarissa to Rescue 911*. 

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If we put aside the secondary, fictitious construction of “mutual” sympathy that serves to justify the potentially perverse pleasure of witnessing misfortune, the vicarious experience triggered by scopic or other “lively” manners of representation transforms the victim into an object of consumption. Instead of becoming the unfortunate, the spectator takes in the image of the unfortunate. By imagination, “we place ourselves in his situation” and we produce an image of him within ourselves (76). However, Smith’s subject cannot fully contain the object of sympathy within himself because the subject becomes split in the process of sympathetic consumption. To recognize what is inside ourselves, to know our feelings, Smith argues that “we must look at ourselves with the same eye with which we look at others; we must imagine ourselves not actors, but the spectators of our own conduct” (87). For smith, sympathy not only allows us to consume an image of the other but also objectifies our selves in the eyes of the impartial spectator so that we can overcome the confines of individual experiences.

Sympathy was deemed crucial in this period not only because it created a way to imagine social connectedness based on virtue and benevolence but also because it designated a particular affective mode of consumption that related individuals to representations of things. Among the various forms of representation that were used for sympathetic consumption, literature was thought to be one of the most efficient. Edmund Burke, in his *Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1759), published in the same year as Adam Smith’s *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, explains “How WORDS (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).
influence the passions”:

Now, as words affect, not by any original power, but by representation, it might be supposed, that their influence over the passions should be light; yet it is quite otherwise; for we find by experience that eloquence and poetry are as capable nay indeed much more capable of making deep and lively impressions than any other arts, and even than nature itself in very many cases. (173)

This is indeed a striking acknowledgment of the power of words to affect passions more deeply than “nature itself.” “Passion” in the eighteenth century was often used as the opposite of calm in the taxonomy of emotion. If sentiment is something acquired or refined through repeated training, passion is a more real, natural sensation that the human body is born with. Bernard Mandeville, for instance, spoke of humans as “a compound of passions” in his *Fable of the Bees* (17), emphasizing that our emotions are disorganized, fleeting and not subject to correction. The contrast between these terms is not confined to philosophy. Sarah Fielding’s novel *The Adventures of David Simple*, first published in 1744 and wildly popular in its day, frequently used “passions” to describe forceful, idiosyncratic emotions and desires, particularly those that mark the personality of a character, while reserving “sentiment” for calmer, shared affects and judgments. Burke’s passions, in this context, can be understood as unmediated, raw emotion livelier than the source itself represents.

Burke goes on to explain that nothing moves us more than verbal representation
of the passions of others:

We yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description. The truth is, all verbal description, merely as naked description, though never so exact, conveys so poor and insufficient an idea of the thing described, that it could scarcely have the smallest effect if the speaker did not call into his aid those modes of speech that mark a strong and lively feeling in himself. Then, by the contagion of our passions, we catch a fire already kindled in another, which probably might never have been struck out by the object described. (175-6)

Burke maintains that “words” are the ideal vehicle for sympathetic consumption, but the spectator’s response matters more than the object itself. Thus consumption requires a specific ability that is both natural and highly cultivated.

The literature of sentiment, especially the sentimental novel, is well tailored for sympathetic consumption. It affects the reader’s body and mind as the reader seeks pleasure in sympathizing with the characters. Because of this fit, the novel was viewed as a commodity that popularized the fashion of sensibility. The contemporary religious reformer, Reverend Vicessimus Knox comments: “There seems to be a fashion in virtue as well as in vice. . . .The quality chiefly affected of late is sensibility; and the affectation has been greatly increased, if not introduced by the taste for novels” (107). The very danger many people perceived in reading sentimental novels resided in the very corporal pleasure that came from reading a sentimental novel. The power of words in the
sentimental novel had an immediate impact on the body, and the subsequent loss of control is precisely the pleasure it promises. Knox sums up this seductive power of the sentimental novel:

The languishing and affectedly sentimental compositions formed on the pattern of Sterne, or of other less original Novelists, not only tend to give the mind a degree of weakness, which renders it unable to resist the slightest impulse of libidinous passion, but also indirectly insinuate, that the attempt is unnatural... They [novels] fix attention so deeply and afford so lively a pleasure, that the mind once accustomed to them, cannot submit to the painful task of serious study. Authentic history becomes insipid.

(103-104)

Knox agrees with Burke in that words can be powerful in inciting passions in the body that consumes them, and he goes further to point out that novels, especially sentimental novels, are capable of providing more powerful and lively pleasures than “truth”-based historical or philosophical texts.

As the words of the sentimental novel are finely attuned for sympathetic consumption, the narratives will often present themselves as a worn-out manuscript found in some obscure condition; this provides yet more evidence that sentimental novels seek to become objects of consumption in the circuit of sympathy that moves through the body of the reader. Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771), is a good example. The story begins not with characters but with the narrator who tells the story of the book itself.
The manuscript was found in the room of a tenant, an unnamed “grave, oddish kind of man,” called simply “The Ghost” by people of the parish (2). After this mysterious tenant disappears, his landlord discovers a bundle of papers and leaves it to the curate, who, for lack of the kind of sympathy required to enjoy the narrative, uses it for wadding his hunting equipment. The first several chapters of the novel are missing because it was used as wadding for his rifle. Like the protagonist and a number of the people he encounters, the body of the text itself is materially presented as an object of sympathy because it was itself subject to abandonment and abuse.

The sympathetic relationship between the reader and the ruined fragments of the manuscript is transferred into the narrative frame once characters begin to encounter numerous characters and objects of miseries and misfortune. In *The Man of Feeling*, for example, Harley meets Emily, a prostitute in a brothel, and hears her unfortunate story of seduction. When he sympathizes with her tragic history, he experiences a sentimental climax by shedding tears of grief. The interchange between distressing narratives and tears of sentimental ecstasy that occurs within the narrative is repeated outside of the narrative frame when readers are invited to feel the same sentimental ecstasy by sympathizing with the distressed characters at the same moment. During this charged emotional scene, the reader becomes Harley, the object of sympathy. The boundary between the consumer and the object is blurred in the ever-expanding chain of sympathetic consumption, and the reader is bound to get emotionally involved in the characters’ misfortunes and miseries as part of this chain.
Sympathetic consumption of sentimental novels was thought to be a very fashionable way to enhance and refine one’s sentiments; this, in turn, assured even more intense and “proper” pleasures. Polite forms of entertainment, including theater, dancing and reading, relied upon sympathy in order to generate sociable and refined feelings of pleasure; yet the nature of this sympathetic consumption was problematic. In the following two sections, I will present the two seemingly opposing sides of consumption, one of addiction and the other of proper habit. By doing so, I will reconsider the ambivalent and unstable structure of consumer-oriented entertainment culture and the role of the novel within it.

**Consumed by sentiments**

As a popular entertainment commodity, the sentimental novel cannot but participate in the field of consumption where a broad socio-cultural move to differentiate proper forms of habit from all-consuming, destructive addiction had been taking place. For the proponents of polite culture and refinement, enhancing sensibility by indulging in sympathetic consumption was a way to better his or her taste and judgment. Yet, as Reverend Knox explains in the quote above, an excessive appetite for sentimental novels was deemed as potentially harmful as well. It was good to indulge in fellow-feeling, but too much indulgence could lead to excess and destruction. Many sentimental novels were acutely aware of the precarious nature of sympathetic consumption. For instance, it is hard to see whether Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* depicts Yorick, its male protagonist, as
genuinely sympathetic and virtuous or just a feeble man who cannot stop masturbating with his own thoughts. Critics of the novel feared more than just the danger of exploiting the distressed. They were also concerned about the ways that pleasure could overpower the bodies of those who engaged in sentiment. There is a certain self-referential unease in the scenes of sentimental heroes and heroines who become literally exhausted by sentimental ecstasy and as a consequence, experience a lonely and miserable death since these scenes allow readers to experience a similar kind of ecstasy by offering them the miserable deaths of characters as the object of sympathy.

The danger of succumbing to the pleasure of sympathetic consumption was well documented in medical discourses of the period. Just as an excessive sensibility could be over-blown and destructive in the novel, the medical writings depicted an anatomy of physical and mental disorders that arise from an overly sensitive nervous system. At that time, this was considered a direct consequence of excessive emphasis on refining sensibility. Men’s melancholia and women’s hysteria were diseases of overly excitable nerves, and the symptoms of these diseases were linked to the overly tender heart and the excessive vibration of the nerves. George Cheyne’s *The English Malady* (1733) went through numerous editions and dealt with the “Nervous Distemper” so rampant in England during this period. Nervous disorders like melancholy or hypochondria, in their less extreme manifestations were viewed not only as fashionable, but desirable by the physicians because they constituted signs of refinement. Clearly, the “Hypochondriacal Constitution” was not an affliction of common men, but those whose quickness of parts
was demonstrated in their brilliance of thinking and acuteness of sensibility. However, when uncontrolled, it was a dangerous, deadly condition that required continuous medical supervision.

Mary Wollstonecraft’s warning against feminine sensibility and her strong and passionate disdain for novel reading in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1793) can be understood in this context. Although Wollstonecraft speaks to women on the matter of education in this book, she admits that the problem is not limited to the female sex only:

Their [women’s] senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility, and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling. ...Miserable, indeed, must be that being whose cultivation of mind has only tended to inflame its passions!...The passions thus pampered, whilst the judgment is left unformed, what can be expected to ensue?—Undoubtedly, a mixture of madness and folly! This observation should not be confined to the fair sex; however, at present, I only mean to apply to them. (136-137)

She goes on to argue that “Novels, music, poetry and gallantry” tend to make women “the creatures of sensation” and prevent “intellect from attaining sovereignty which it ought to attain in order to render a rational creature useful to others” (137). For her, the danger of novel reading is greater if the body that consumes the text is weaker, more
prone to be overpowered by the sensations evoked by novels. Therefore the fair sex has to be more cautious and alert when such indulgence is available precisely because the experience of exquisite feelings, losing control of her body in the pleasure of sympathy, has a much more profound and lasting impact on the weak and delicate female body.

As people who refined their sentiment by habituating themselves to the sympathetic consumption of the sentimental novel weakened and became ill with nervous disorders, the characters in the sentimental novel replicated this experience of exhaustion. In fact, death is often the ultimate fate assigned to virtuous characters in the sentimental novel who cannot stop sympathizing with the unfortunate or feeling his or her own distress. For example, Harley in Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* finishes his journey back home only to die alone without fortune or friends after exhausting his money and sympathy. The heroine of Richardson’s *Clarissa* suffers for thousands of pages only to die in the end. She stages her death as an act of final consummation, preparing as she does to die in her wedding gown. Many virtuous characters are sympathetic toward suffering and are likely to fall into the same state of emotional exhaustion that ultimately leads to death.

The physical and mental exhaustion that eats away at the body of these characters is often accompanied by financial ruin. The characters give away their possessions to those who engender feelings of pity or misery in various sentimental encounters.⁴ In a

⁴ Eighteenth-century sensibility and the sentimental novel’s complicated relationship with financial economy has been studied by many scholars. Gillian Skinner traces overlaps between economic theory and the language of feeling in the sentimental novel. Skinner challenges the disciplinary division of the two
culture where sensibility manifests itself through commodities and sentimental exchange, the transaction is frequently translated into an economic exchange of charity. Oliver Goldsmith’s *Vicar of Wakefield* presents a “former sympathy addict” who is now recovered and rehabilitated into a gentleman who can properly control his impulse to give away his fortune. Burchell (who is actually Sir William in disguise) speaks of his past in the third person to the unsuspecting Primrose: “He carried benevolence to an excess when young, for his passions were then strong, and as they all were upon the side of virtue, they led it up to a romantic extreme” (47). This compulsive benevolence is attributed to a mental disorder similar to a physical one: “Physicians tell us of a disorder in which the whole body is so exquisitely sensible, that the slightest touch gives pain: what some have thus suffered in their persons, this gentleman felt in his mind. The slightest distress, whether real or fictitious, touched him to the quick, and his soul laboured under a sickly sensibility of the miseries of others” (47). The language of sensibility, medicine and economy are all combined to articulate Sir William’s excessive compulsion. The affliction of too much sympathy and sentiment nearly destroyed Sir William’s life and fortune in this youthful indulgence.

Harley in *The Man of Feeling* is not as fortunate as Sir William. Without much


5 One very famous account is by Helen Maria William who describes the sentimental novel as “Six Shillings-worth of sensibility” in her novel *Julia* (1790)Vol I, 49.
fortune to begin with, Harley goes to London only to lose what little money he has. 

Returning home, he encounters a number of people who elicit sympathy from him. The man of feeling encounters a fair mad lady in Bedlam, a prostitute led astray by a libertine (much like Primrose’s daughter Olivia), and an old man who returns home to discover his son dead with two little children uncared for. The stories these people tell Harley function as narratives that elicit his sympathy. Like Sir William, he cannot help but feel sympathy for the misery and pain of the unfortunate. Once returned to his home in his country, he expends all his limited physical energy in helping old Edwards make a living to support his young grandchildren and dies from over-exertion.

The narrative of many sentimental novels spirals down into death and bankruptcy. The characters engage in numerous sympathetic scenes and stories that exert tears and sighs of sentimental ecstasy until either the body or financial status reaches the state of complete exhaustion. Nevertheless, the urge to repeat similar experiences seems to become a compulsion. The desire to repeat the experience of sympathetic consumption so excessively that it deprives these characters of their own personal and financial stability is embedded within the structure of the sentimental novel. It is designed to be repeated. The sentimental novel is on the whole very short on plot, and often the narrative is structured as repetitive without satisfying closure. Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey*, has no proper plot at all, ending as it does in mid-sentence; Mackenzie intentionally invented a ploy not to have to tell a complete story. Mackenzie explains that he deliberately intends simply stringing together a number of episodes remarkable
for their sentimental impact. The author wrote to his friend in July 1769, “I was somehow led to think of introducing a man of sensibility into different scenes where his feelings might be seen in their effects, and his sentiments occasionally delivered without the stiffness of regular deduction.” In another letter, written in the same month, he explains that his story is “simple to excess, for I would have it as different from the entanglement of a novel as can be” (Qtd in Todd 91).

The structure of the sentimental novel that resists a coherent and progressive trajectory invokes a reading experience similar to the repetitive structure. It is not a well wrought plot but a series of episodes that promise sentimental transport and this structure attracts readers to return to the same novel again and again. In fact, sentimental novels, unlike other popular forms of writing that were typically read once and discarded, were known for their capacity to attract readers more than once. Further, the predictable patterns that recurred in the sentimental novel made the experience very repetitive. It is not difficult to find almost precisely the same distressing situations in Mackenzie’s novels as we see in many other sentimental novels. Encounters with an abandoned maiden, a dying animal, a starving mother and her children in one novel are almost indistinguishable from those found in other novels. The lack of significant variation makes the reading experience extremely repetitive.

Thus far, I have examined aspects of sympathetic consumption that borders on the notion of addiction to create physical and financial exhaustion. Substantively and
structurally it lacks production. In other words, the somatic pleasure of sentimental ecstasy exhausts the body and a sentimental narrative repeats itself within each narrative frame and across multiple novels.

**Proper and Proprietary Sympathy**

Consuming sentimental novels, as I discussed in the previous section, may entail nothing more than indulging in ecstatic pleasure compulsively and repetitively until the subject reaches a state of physical and financial depletion. Through feelings of sympathy, the body vicariously experiences the sensations of others and becomes transported by these feelings. However, the dangers of sympathetic indulgence and sentimental transport were constantly challenged by those who saw benefits in feeling sympathy. For the advocates of sympathy, like Smith and Hume, it was a form of labor and a mechanism of production. Traditional notions of the human body, which had been categorized either as licentious or conserving, embraced a new criterion of productivity as its ethical, economic and aesthetical valorization in the eighteenth century. The model of possessive liberal individualism, well charted by C. B. Macpherson’s *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, is relevant here, especially the traditional

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6 Although the concept of production in this passage is not very different from the one that has been celebrated by modern capitalist ideology, I also would like to point out a more apolitical structuralistic approach to the binary opposition between production and consumption (in a negative sense) that relates to the fundamental dichotomy of absence and presence. In Western philosophy, it has been considered that absence is secondary, inferior to presence since it is a state achieved by taking away presence. The hierarchy of these two elements can be smoothly translated into the hierarchy of any existing binary opposition including production vs. consumption, or habit vs. addiction.
Lockean concept of labor and ownership that translates production directly into possession and individual sovereignty. A subject labors with his own body, which is the first and foremost form of property he owns, and therefore he is entitled to properly own the fruits of his own labor. By accumulating possessions, he expands the freedom and sovereignty he holds over his own person. The individual is defined and liberated by his possessions when increased possessions that are created by productive labor serve to strengthen the freedom of the subject.

Foucault attributes this emphasis on productivity in liberal society to the shifting technology of power that finds new ways to control and domesticate individual bodies more discretely and pervasively when he explains how sexuality was reconstituted around the notion of reproduction in the *History of Sexuality vol. 1*. Foucault also argues that there is a certain shift in the notion of control that is transferred from prohibition into productivity. While reading Jeremy Bentham’s discussion of the Panopticon as an ideal governmental structure that would enhance productivity and profit, Foucault maintains that the modern liberal discourse of government articulates “this new art of government of mechanisms with the function of producing, breathing life into, and increasing freedom, of introducing additional freedom through additional control and intervention.

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7 See chapter 3 “Domain” in part 4 in *The History of Sexuality* for a more detailed argument on how the reproductive, sexualized body leads to “proliferating, innovating, annexing, creating and penetrating bodies in an increasingly detailed way and in controlling populations in an increasingly comprehensive way” (107).
That is to say, control is no longer just the necessary counterweight to freedom, as in the case of panopticism: it becomes its mainspring” (Biopolitics 67).

Sympathetic consumption of the sentimental novel was not an exception to this new discursive trajectory. The consuming nature of sympathy and the sentimental novel could only be negated and legitimized by the values and perspectives they produce. Adam Smith asserts several benefits of sympathy that are social as well as aesthetic. What is interesting in his argument is that the benefits of sympathy are made possible through habituation. The instant, empirical pleasure of sympathy is transformed into a moral virtue by its repetition. Sympathy becomes “more lively, more distinct, and more determinate” when it is habitual (322). Affection that can connect individuals who hold different beliefs and come from diverse backgrounds is “in reality nothing but habitual sympathy” (323). He continues: “Our concern in the happiness or misery of those who are the objects of what we call our affections; our desire to promote the one, and to prevent the other; are either the actual feeling of that habitual sympathy, or the necessary consequences of that feeling” (323). In order to maintain the affectionate cohesion of a society, then, sympathy must be constantly exercised.

Smith argues that the formation of affectionate bonds is one of the benefits we receive from habitually reading the sentimental novel. With its disjointed, repetitive structure that emphasizes feelings over narrative, the sentimental novel is designed to elicit continuous feelings of sympathy in the reader. This constant expression of sympathy not only strengthens the affectionate bonds of people in a society, but it also
further refines their sensibilities and facilitates more nuanced, intense experiences of sympathy.

The continuous refinement of feelings and manners was considered crucial in a world where the old, aristocratic notion of virtue was at odds with the newly rising class of “moneyed interest.” The traditional notion of virtue as devotion to the public good had been owned by the landed aristocrats whose political and economic autonomy was guaranteed by their land ownership. Their virtue lay in their autonomy and independence of any relation which might render them corrupt. However, as historian J. G. A. Pocock maintains, such civic notions of virtue became obsolete and archaic when it became practically impossible not to engage in relationships governed and mediated by various exchanges and when the value of mobile property triumphed over the property value of land. Pocock points out that “he [the man of civic virtue] was more than compensated for his loss of antique virtue by an indefinite and perhaps infinite enrichment of his personality, the product of the multiplying relationships, with both things and persons, in which he became progressively involved.” He continues: “Since these new relationships were social and not political in character, the capacities which they led the individual to develop were called not ‘virtues’ but ‘manners’” (49). The manners that embodied and performed an exquisite and refined sensibility became the new form of virtue produced by the sentimental novel.

Hume is persistent in arguing the importance of refined manners in regulating and coordinating individuals. While the law protects a society from opposing interests, “good
manners” and “politeness” facilitate “the intercourse of minds and an undisturbed commerce and conversation” (Essays 239). This idea of manners as a substitute for the law is articulated again by Burke:

Manners are of more importance than laws. In a great measure the laws depend upon them. The law touches us but here and there, and now and then. Manners are what vex or sooth, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in. They give their whole form and colour to our lives. (Thoughts 38-39)

It is hard not to be reminded of the dynamics of Foucauldian discipline while reading Burke’s exposition of manners. In a world governed by commerce and money, the social structure is manifested, performed and perpetuated by manners whose insensible operation is “like that of air we breathe in.” Indeed this description of manners nicely sums up what Foucault identifies as the invisible pervasiveness of power exercised by various modern disciplinary procedures.

Refinement, the value of the sentimental novel, was an important theme of the genre. Sterne’s A Sentimental Journey, for example, presents an episode of coin-rubbing to address the implications of social polish as seen in interactions and exchanges of sentiments and sentimental objects. Sterne is hesitant to embrace the new virtue over the old virtue of civic republicanism. Although rubbing coins to make them “as smooth as glass” (90) increases their aesthetic value, in excess the coins lose their character, both
literally and figuratively, and become indistinguishable from one another. The hesitation
is self-referential, for Sterne is acutely aware of the way his own narrative may be
sympathetically consumed by other sentimental “travelers” for their refinement.

Similar notion of sympathy as a way to establish an affective social bond among
increasingly diversified individuals through refinement is well expressed in Hume’s
philosophy on feelings. Hume, especially in his earlier works, was interested in how
sympathy produced ethical and political subject-relations in a world where there is no
absolute sovereign. Hume brings in the idea of sympathy in his Treatise of Human
Nature (1739-40) as that which unites us with other men by taking “us so far out of
ourselves, as to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in the characters of others as if
they had a tendency to our own advantage or loss” (576). Individuals are connected by
sympathy “as in strings equally wound up” that delivers motions from one to another
(576).

Later this notion of sympathy becomes less an empirical force as described in his
former works than an ardently desired moral ideal in the Enquiry Concerning the
Principle of Morals (1751). Toward the end of the Enquiry, Hume makes an appeal to a
moral sympathy that provides common ethical and jurisprudential structures for mankind:

The notion of morals, implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it. It also implies some sentiment, so universal and comprehensive as to
extend to all mankind, and render the actions and conduct, even of the
persons the most remote, an object of applause or censure, according as
they agree or disagree with that rule of right which is established. (74-75)

As suggested in this passage, the common sense of sympathy formulates a general
consensus and social bond. Gilles Deleuze in his Empiricism and Subjectivity reads
Hume’s emphasis on sympathy as a desire to create generality that “can make us abandon
the reference to our point of view” (Empiricism 37). Deleuze finds Hume’s empirical
approach to human subjectivity and sympathy useful because it accepts that “human
beings are much less egotistic than partial” (Empiricism 38), which he believes to be one
of the most important aspects of Hume’s philosophy. Giving up the position of a subject,
humans are able to enter into a state of generality—in Hume’s case it is justice and
customs that all humans can be subjected to in order to form a civil union of society—
that overcomes the limits of individual bodies and even transcend the geographical and
temporal immediacy into a universal law.

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8 Hume’s generality differs from what Smith proposes in his sympathy-as-spectatorship social order. Although Hume moves away from his earlier conjecture of sympathy as an immediate, empirical sense connection, still he maintains the structure of custom, habit, and morality must be felt instead of understood.

9 This reading of Hume’s subjectivity model is followed by Deleuze’s subsequent works on the schizophrenic subject of capitalism. Deleuze’s notion of the human as machine is indebted to the eighteenth-century empirical philosophy of sympathy that explains a human desire to transgress the physical and mental boundaries of the self. The subject of capitalism is potentially and substantively schizophrenic and machine-like. The force of a machine is always unpredictable, excessive and insatiable. Such “desiring machines” are not predetermined by their matter and they actually consume their matter in the production of force. The paradox of the capitalist world is “what civilized, modern society deterritorializes with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other” (“The Schizophrenic” 257). Alex Wetmore links Deleuze’s reading of empirical subjectivity to the machine-like characters in the sentimental novel in “Sympathy Machines: Men of Feeling and the Automaton” in Eighteenth-Century Studies 43.1 (2009: 37-54).
This production of a structure that coordinates partial subjects seems similar to the experience of addiction. Both experiences tend to abandon the real to the imaginary, and to hallucinate what is above and beyond the limits of individuals. Derrida’s discussion in “The Rhetoric of Drugs” centers on the similarities between drugs and fiction that inspires a state of hallucination. He explains how drug use relates to the question of truth when “he [a drug user] cuts himself off from the world, in exile from reality... that he escapes into the world of simulacrum and fiction. . . We do not object to the drug user’s pleasure per se but we cannot abide the fact that his or hers is a pleasure taken in an experience without truth” (25-26). Then he points out that the experience of fiction is justified because it supposedly “generates values” (26), implicating truth in the experience of a text-induced trance.

Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* narrates a scene of sympathy that resonates with the idea of fictional universality maintained by Hume. During his stay in Paris, Yorick is informed that the police inquired at his hotel about his passport. Without a passport, at a time when England was at war with France, he risked imprisonment in the Bastille. Yorick anticipates the possibility of confinement, and in order to feel the distress that may befall him, he picks up a bird cage to sympathize with the captive bird. He says: “I began to figure to myself the miseries of confinement. I was in a right frame for it, and so I gave full scope to my imagination” (72). The full scope of imagination then leads to a story of a captive slave. He is careful to select an object of sympathy that most effectively appeals to his sensibility. He says: “I took a single captive, and having first
shut him up in his dungeon, I then look'd through the twilight of his grated door to take his picture” (73). The image of a tortured body is followed by a history of confinement that lasted for 30 years. Yorick describes the imagined scene: “I heard his chains upon his legs, as he turned his body to lay his little stick upon the bundle.—He gave a deep sigh.—I saw the iron enter into his soul!—I burst into tears.—I could not sustain the picture of confinement which my fancy had drawn” (73). At this point Yorick stops “reading” a story of his own creation since he already reached the sympathetic climax with his tears. What is both significant and ironic in this convoluted experience of sympathy is that Yorick is able to produce the appropriate effects of distress only by sympathizing with an imagined character. A deep sigh and tears are produced not as a direct result of his immediate distress. In order to properly produce such outward signs of distress, Yorick has to create a simulated space, a universal equivalent of his particular predicament that enables him to freely and vigorously sympathize.

The fiction experienced by Yorick is closely linked to what Derrida describes as simulacrum, a link between drug and writing. Derrida explains the rhetorical difference that divides the two. The fiction of drugs does not produce any value whereas the fiction of literature allows its participants to produce material or immaterial values that can be added to their experience of pleasurable transport. Although Derrida maintains that the binary structure of presence against absence is always, especially in this case of drug rhetoric, unstable and misleading, the urge to legitimize one over the other still persists. It is precisely because they are so similar that they have to be constantly and frantically
differentiated. The sentimental preoccupation with the production of proper manners and propriety therefore has to be understood in the precarious position sympathy and commodities of sympathy inhabit.

The idea of refining manners and sensibility through sympathetic consumption of sentimental novels is what justifies reading novels as proper habit. In other words, novel reading produces a kind of immaterial asset; therefore it can be considered proper. Interestingly, the word “propriety” was interchangeable with the word “property” in the eighteenth century. Being proper implied a certain kind of ownership and ownership entitled one to a certain kind of proper status.\(^{10}\) Perhaps this linguistic overlap between the two words reveals the relationship between proper habits and its underlying logic of production that supplements each other.

In order to gain the proper status of a respectable habit, the act of reading sentimental novels must produce propriety and manners. It must also incorporate virtue and manners into the body that reads. Proper manners can be manifested only when performed by the body that possesses it. Therefore, a series of rituals that ensure propriety must be inscribed in the process of sympathetic consumption of sentimental novels. Lady Louisa Stuart’s recollection of reading *The Man of Feeling* is interesting in

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\(^{10}\) Although property and propriety are not interchangeable anymore in modern usage, in the eighteenth century, it was common to use these words without distinction. For example, in 1724, R Bradley states that “The Persons whose Propriety that Land is, will certainly find their Advantage by it” *(Husbandry & Gardening* 133). Other examples include Thomas Jefferson’s *Rights of British America* (1774) when he states that “Carolina was in the year 1663 granted by letters patent of majesty, king Charles II, in the 15th year of his reign, in propriety, unto the right honourable Edward earl of Clarendon.” J.G.A. Pocock provided an illuminating perspective on the property-propriety spectrum in Chapter 3, “Authority and Property,” in *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
In this respect. In her letter to her friend Sir Walter Scott, written in 1826, she remembers the first time Mackenzie’s novel was being read to her family. She mentions her “mother and sisters crying” and “dwelling upon it with rapture,” and then goes on to recollect the anxiety she felt that she “might not cry enough to gain the credit of proper sensibility” (Qtd in Goring 145). Although the reaction to the novel may seem excessive in the eyes of modern readers, exhibiting signs of sympathy such as crying, trembling and sighing were all considered very proper and refined rituals. Sometimes a reader had to “fake” these manners to measure up to the expectations of his or her peers. The 1987 Oxford edition of *The Man of Feeling* has an “index of tears” in the appendix that marks the page numbers that triggers tears along with a column describing the appropriate amount of tears. The narrative quantifies the amount of crying typically evoked by various scenes within the novel, using phrases such as: “Hand bathed with tears” or “Dropped one tear, no more.” Such an index indicates that at a time when sentimental novels were vastly popular, reading these novels perhaps entailed a performance of the body intended to exteriorize the immaterial production of sympathetic consumption. Virtue and refined sentiments were translated into bodily signs of tears and blushing. In this way, the trembling body of the reader legitimized the “proper” pleasure of reading sentimental novels.

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11 According to Vickers, the editor of the Oxford World Classic edition, the index was first found in Professor Henry Morley’s edition, published in 1886. Based on Walter Scott’s observation that Mackenzie’s novel became so obsolete in his time that the tearful scenes made readers laugh, Vickers sees the index as a Victorian joke on overly sentimental manners of reading.
Ambivalence of the Sentimental Novel

In the last section I examined the aspects of sympathetic consumption that made reading the sentimental novel into a fashionable and proper habit of entertainment. As a structure that ensures proper consumption that leads to production, the habit of reading the novel, the ritual of embodying propriety, come to occupy the temporal and spatial everyday life of the people.

However, when we consider the consumption of sentimental novels, the boundary between the two opposing spaces of consumption reveals its inherent instability. On the one hand, the reading of sentimental novels is productive precisely because it is consuming and destructive to some degree. It creates a sense of connectedness because it allows consumers to lose control over their bodies. On the other hand, the habit of novel reading is addictive because of its productive elements. It takes over individual agency by forcing the reader to perform propriety and turning their bodies into machines of manners. In these numerous reversals and slippages we can no longer find any meaningful and unbending demarcations that differentiate addiction from habit. The body marked with tears and blushing, the body that trembles, is the very site where the distinction collapses. The proper body that performatively embodies production of virtue and refinement is the body that languishes exhausted by sentimental ecstasies.

I reiterate the complicated negotiations of the significance of the sentimental novel here because I maintain that the habit of reading, even in its proper form, is never a
coherent process whereby the technology of power transforms individual bodies into docile subjects. In addressing the lack of critical or theoretical debates on the sentimental novel, Markman Ellis addresses this ambivalence and maintains that the sentimental novel remains “polyphonic with aspects that are resistant, even subversive” (3) of the unitary, centralized constructions of power.

Michel de Certeau’s influential work on consumer culture, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, charts out nuanced differences in varying “practices” of consumption that may or may not elude the imposed socio-political structures that many rituals of consumption are based on. For de Certeau, there are two main poles in the procedures of consumption we call “habit.” Like “langue” in Sassurean structuralist linguistics, there is a certain set of imposing structure he calls “strategy,” and there is “parole” of habit that manifests momentarily and accidentally (tactic). To explain how creatively and actively an act of consumption can take place, he replaces the concept of consumption with “usage” and then he brings in the example of reading: “He insinuates into another person’s text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it like the internal rumbling of one’s own body. Ruse, metaphor, arrangement, this production is also an ‘invention’ of the memory. . . .The readable transforms itself into the memorable”(xxi). Production is neither absolute nor complete according to de Certeau. And the act of reading, of consuming texts, among many other forms of pedestrian habits, is potentially subversive and resistant.

The absence of the sentimental novel in various studies of the rise of the novel is
hard to understand given that literary historians agree that the novel “rose” unmistakably and spectacularly during the last half of the eighteenth century when the predominant form of the genre was the sentimental novel. The sentimental novel’s obscurity as a literary institution coincides with its prominence as commodity. Its overt materiality that made the product so popular and appealing at the time cannot be incorporated into a history of the novel that operates on an entirely different system of valorization. Thus we cannot fully assess the sentimental novel unless we acknowledge its status as a commodity that is bought, sold, and consumed in a way that makes it similar to other entertainment commodities.

The foreignness of the sentimental novel, in its structure or characterization, can be understood by the frame that relates subjects to commodities. The sentimental novel was born onto the entertainment market that accommodated and circulated it as a fashionable object of sensibility. By locating the novel and the habit of novel reading in the context of the conspicuous consumption culture where there was a broad socio-cultural move that differentiated addiction from proper forms of habitual consumption, I have argued that the sentimental novels were taken up with the problem of shifting demarcations of the dichotomy within themselves. The sentimental novel distances itself from its consuming, addictive nature by consciously disciplining its consumers to embody proper manners. However, the very process of protection betrays its unstable and ambiguous status in the binary structure of addiction and habit by turning the feeling
bodies into uncontrollable machines. In this way, the individual subjectivity emerges as partial, supplemental and dependent on its material condition.
In the previous chapter, I discussed how the sympathetic consumption of the sentimental novel problematizes the distinction between proper habit and self-destructive addiction. The eighteenth-century obsession with highlighting and enforcing the “productive” aspects of sympathetic indulgence shows that the experience of reading a sentimental novel made many people anxious regarding its dangerous influence on the reader. Readers, like addicts, are bound to the seductive and highly repetitive seriality of sympathetic consumption even as they are exhausted, weakened and consumed by the experience. Like addicts who have to return to the same “fix,” readers feel urged to replenish physically and psychologically by consuming more novels. Like other addictive

Chapter 3
Circulating the Gothic

Thou, to whom the world unknown
With all its shadowy shapes is shown;
Who see’st appalled the unreal scene,
While Fancy lifts the veil between:
Ah Fear! Ah frantic Fear!
I see, I see thee near.
William Collins, “Ode to Fear” (1746)
substances such as coffee, tobacco, and liquor, sentimental novels engendered within
readers a desire for endless consumption and fulfilled the function of a successful
commodity, bolstering the proliferation of the very market economy it is born into.

In this chapter, I will look at another tremendously popular sub-genre of the novel
circulated widely during the late eighteenth century: the gothic. Since the publication of
Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, the term “gothic” has been used to
identify a genre that is slightly different from other novels of the same period. The first
edition of *The Castle of Otranto* was believed to be a translation of a medieval fiction
written in the twelfth century. This myth was shattered when Horace Walpole himself
acknowledged, in the preface to the second edition, that the novel was of his own creation.
In that second edition, Walpole branded it “a Gothic story.” While the novel in general
was a genre of the here and now, its gothic counterpart was more interested in escaping
from novelistic immediacy. Whereas the sentimental novel offered readers a momentary
identification with the poor, unfortunate and distressed, the gothic offered something far
more fantastic, less comprehensible and, at times, something monstrous. “Supernatural”
was a popular contemporary term that described a genre that operated out of the “natural”
world of logic, reason and facts.

The kind of sympathy evoked by the sentimental novel is based on the premise
that the object of sympathy is instantly recognizable as part of the world inhabited by the
sympathizing subject. The reader sympathizes with the distress of the poor because he or
she functions in the same economic system that produced the poor. A ruined maiden
evokes pity in the sympathizing subject because the subject is already familiar with the consequences of such misfortune. Therefore the feeling of sympathy in these situations is almost always based in social bonds, and feelings of sympathy reinforce a sense of physical and psychological connectedness within the existing society. The sympathizing subject vicariously experiences different subject positions that already exist in the world he or she lives in. In this regard, the experience of momentary indulgence in sentimental ecstasy never transgresses the boundaries of the familiar world even when it escapes and brings down the boundaries of private selves. Thus, sentimental addiction is, in its nature, sociable. The compulsive desire to repetitively consume the sentimental novel does provide a fictional, yet familiar, common ground that connects individual bodies. Hume defines this experience as the function of habit and custom.\textsuperscript{12}

The gothic novel differs from the sentimental novel on this very point. Like the sentimental novel, the gothic novel depends heavily on sympathy as a means to generate a pleasurable response in the reader. It also relies upon the same repetitive narrative structure in order to heighten its emotional impact on the reader. However, the pleasurable transport offered by the gothic requires identification with objects that are unrecognizable and unrepresentable. If sentimental addiction leads to a kind of social orgy that oscillates between debauchery and propriety, the pleasure of the gothic novel is

\textsuperscript{12}Hume prioritizes the power of experience constructed on habit and custom over the power of reason, particularly in practical organizations of society “Though it be allowed, that reason may form very plausible conjectures with regard to the consequences of such a particular conduct in such particular circumstances; it is still supposed imperfect, without the assistance of experience, which is alone able to give stability and certainty to the maxims, derived from study and reflection” (\textit{An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding} 44).
much more de-socialized and hallucinatory as helpless heroines of the gothic ramble
alone in the dark woods hearing mysterious tunes.

In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which the gothic novel functions as an
entertainment commodity that appeals to the consumer. In the first section, I will discuss
the place of the gothic novel as one of the most popular and successful entertainment
commodities of the eighteenth century and contextualize the influence and appeal of the
gothic as an important part of the continuing and expanding culture of consumption. In
the second section, I will examine how the gothic novel articulates addiction by
displaying monstrous and licentious bodies that are seduced by “objects of terror.” The
gothic novel -- the “libertine” gothic novels in particular -- pushes the pleasure of
sympathy to such an extreme that it becomes “hurtful” to its readers.13 Such perverse
pleasure forms the basis of gothic addiction. The next section discusses another aspect of
the gothic that safeguards its readers from the danger of gothic addiction. Despite the
morally and politically transgressive aesthetic of some gothic novels, the gothic manages
to produce a new mode of value to compensate for its shortcomings as addictive
commodity. The passions of self-preservation stimulated by the objects of terror creates
within readers a sense of security and enclosure. In the last section, I will turn again to
the ambivalence of the gothic as it deterritorializes the two contesting domains of
deplorable addiction and proper habit.

13 From “Terrorist Novel Writing” in Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797 (1798). The anonymous
criticizes the gothic as so extreme that it “carries young reader’s imagination into such a
confusion of terrors, as must be hurtful” (225).
Gothic Commodity: “A Pleasure Already Experienced”

Despite their obvious differences, the gothic novel has much in common with the sentimental novel. Its power to manipulate the reader’s body, in particular, is one of the key similarities that will be examined in this chapter. As discussed in the previous chapter, the sentimental novel was wildly popular and irresistible to readers not despite its lack of a solid plot or coherent characters. The sentimental novel was successful precisely because it provided a reassuring repetition of familiar scenes and situations instead of coherent plots. The sentimental novel’s emphasis on exciting the feeling body enabled a unique reading experience best described as sentimental ecstasy. The reader repeatedly returned to the same somatic pleasure of the sentimental narrative, just as the characters in the sentimental novel compulsively seek out the same feeling of sympathy. Similarly, many eighteenth-century gothic novels tend to present a series of situations that elicit feelings of both wonder and terror. These gothic scenes are designed to attract and excite readers both physically and psychologically. If pity represents the primary response to sentimental novels, terror is what distinguishes the gothic from other forms of eighteenth-century fiction.

Burke, in his Enquiries, explains how terror influences the body, “producing unnatural tension and certain violent emotions of the nerves” (121). He explains: “Fear or terror, which is an apprehension of pain and death, exhibits exactly the same effects” on the body of the observer (119). The physical impact of experiencing terror is, like an
uncontrollable burst of tears caused by reading sentimental novels, beyond the command of one’s own will. The reading body becomes subjected to the gothic narrative of terror. The experience of terror is not only compulsive and uncontrollable, it also manifests itself on the body.

However, it is not necessarily obvious that an individual will find it pleasurable to consume objects that evoke terror. Just as Adam Smith felt the urge to justify the feeling of pleasure that comes from sympathizing with the unfortunate and the suffering, Burke also attempted to rationalize the pleasure one feels when one confronts objects of terror. While Smith establishes an ethical relation that transfers the pain of the object to the pleasure of the subject, Burke believes that the key is the distance that safely guards the subject from any immediate danger or actual harm. He says “terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close” (42), because it does not offend the primal desire for self-preservation. Instead, the distance between the subject and the object allows the pain of the object to be transformed into the pleasure of the subject by reinforcing his sense of self-preservation. Terror, then, can be aesthetically pleasant when the safety of the subject is assured.

Anna Letitia Barbauld explains how this physical experience of terror evokes pleasure in her essay “On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror” (1773). She argues:

Here, though we know before-hand what to expect, we enter into [terror] with eagerness, in quest of a pleasure already experienced. This is the
pleasure constantly attached to the excitement of surprise from new and wonderful objects. A strange and unexpected event awakens the mind, and keeps it on the stretch; and where the agency of invisible beings is introduced, of “forms unseen, and mightier far than we,” our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its powers. Passion and fancy co-operating elevate the soul to its highest pitch; and the pain of terror is lost in amazement. (qtd. in Clery and Miles 129)

In this passage, Barbauld describes a particular kind of pleasure one feels when facing “new and wonderful” things of terror. She acknowledges that the pleasure derived from objects of terror is what the subject is already familiar with and able to anticipate. The subject repeatedly “enter[s] into them with eagerness,” and for those who know how to enjoy them, consuming objects of terror is something that has been well incorporated into the entertainment of everyday life. The implication is that such consumption is pleasing in part because it has become a habit. As the sentimental novel refines its readers so that they in turn feel more exquisite feelings of sympathy, the gothic novel, along with other objects, familiarizes its consumers with terror so that they can fully enjoy “a pleasure already experienced.” Although the objects are new and full of wonder,

In addition to the habit-oriented nature, Barbauld points out that artificial terror enables us to enter into something we do not see or know, allowing us to reach “a high” both with passions of the body and fancy of the imagination. Clearly, the ecstatic state
she discusses here is not only psychological, but physical, much like sentimental ecstasy. However, the kind of ecstasy offered by sentimental novels is primarily considered to be ethical in its nature. The pleasures of the gothic novel are mainly aesthetic, especially when linked to the idea of the sublime.

The concept of the sublime is central to eighteenth-century aesthetics, especially the Longinian sublime. Longinus’s *Peri Hypsous* was popular during the eighteenth century and many translations appeared throughout England. The 1751 English edition of *On the Sublime*, translated by William Smith, defines sublimity as that which “not only persuades, but even throws an audience into transport” (12). There are two primary sources of the sublime, cited by Longinus: (1) “boldness and grandeur in the thoughts,” and (2) “the pathetic, or the power of raising the passions to a violent and even enthusiastic degree” (23). The eighteenth-century meaning of the word “passion” emphasizes the somatic aspect of feeling in contrast to the more calm and reflective mechanism of “sentiment.” Trembling and convulsing nerves mark the climactic moment of sublime experience, and the elevation of the soul. The aesthetic achievement of such a sublime experience is accompanied by a euphoric amazement that overpowers the body so strongly that it “loses” all pain represented in the object of terror.

Barbauld’s description of the experience of terror is closely aligned with Burke’s; they both assert that the pain of terror is lost in amazement. While Burke emphasizes the distance between the object of terror and the feeling subject to transform the pain of terror into pleasure, Barbauld emphasizes the distance in the soul, once elevated “to its
highest pitch,” that escapes pain. Unlike sentimental ecstasy the pleasure of which is based on proximity between the object and the feeling subject, the gothic creates pleasure through distance. Burke’s distance is what reinforces a secured sense of self, which differs from what Barbauld describes. Barbauld is more interested in the pleasure derived from momentary escape, an expansion of self into infinity. Whereas sentimental ecstasy is often described as a more ethical mode of consumption in that it connects the feeling subjects to other individuals in a moment of selfless indulgence, the rapturous experience of the gothic belongs to an “invisible” new world that is accessible only through the imagination.

Barbauld’s description of the objects of terror indicates that the “strange and unexpected event” told in the gothic narratives can excite the readers as “objects of terror.” If the gothic novel, like the sentimental novel, functioned as an entertainment commodity to provide pleasure, it begs the question: how popular and influential was the gothic novel? By the 1790s, the gothic was undoubtedly the most predominant form of the novel. An anonymous letter sent to Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797 expresses the author’s contempt for the “fashion” of the gothic novel as follows:

I never complain of fashion, when it is confined to externals. . .but when I perceive that there is such a thing as fashion in composing books, it is, perhaps, full time that some attempts should be made to recall writers. . . .I allude, Sir, principally to the great quantity of novels with which our circulating libraries are filled, and our parlour tables covered, in which it
has been the fashion to make terror the order of the day. . . . This is now so common that a Novelist blushes to bring about a marriage by ordinary means, but conducts the happy pair through long and dangerous galleries.

(223)

The writer feels overwhelmed by the ubiquitous presence of gothic novels in the culture. The gothic fills libraries and coffee tables, and enjoying terror becomes a routine entertainment activity. The gothic novel, like its sentimental counterpart, was often viewed as a fashionable commodity that was produced and consumed for daily entertainment.

To understand the sudden and enormous popularity of this particular genre, it is important to note a change in the publishing industry that helped promote mass production and the wide circulation of this commodity. Clara Reeve, in her depiction of the literary world of the late eighteenth century, states that “the manufacturers of Novels” worked constantly to provide “an Annual Supply for the Circulating Library” (36). Edward Jacobs’ study of British circulating libraries of the eighteenth century provides a useful insight. The success of circulating libraries coincided with a rapid increase in the production and consumption of both sentimental and gothic novels. It has long been believed that circulating libraries were so successful during this time because they introduced a new mode of distribution for print commodities; i.e. they provided a way for readers to bypass the prohibitively high cost of purchasing books. But Jacobs emphasizes their active role in directing the production of content materials, i.e. soliciting writers to
produce certain materials, for their distribution as well. They competed with existing
publishers by recruiting potentially successful, though little-known, writers to produce
popular reading materials for a lower price.  

To compete with the established publishers who still maintained a monopoly
even after the Licensing Act lapsed in 1695, circulating libraries preferred cheaper,
more sensational materials that would attract a wider audience. As a result, they
published and distributed a vast number of novels by anonymous authors. There were
respectable circulating libraries like Thomas Lowndes’ that dealt with well-known
authors and reputable materials. However, smaller, provincial, and less prestigious
libraries tended to focus more on cheaper materials. By 1780s, it became clear that these
cheap, fashionable novels written by anonymous authors were becoming highly
profitable for circulating libraries. William Lane, for example, operated one of the most
successful circulating libraries of the late-eighteenth century by concentrating on cheap
and sensational gothic novels for his collection. Lane’s role in the gothic novel was not
limited to distribution. He enthusiastically participated in soliciting hack writers to
produce gothic novels. He was well-known as the owner of the notorious Minerva Press,

14 For more information, see Edward Jacobs’ “Anonymous Signatures: Circulating Libraries,
Conventionality, and the Production of Gothic Romances” *ELH* 62.3 (1995): 603-629 or “Eighteenth-
second article, Jacobs builds his argument from James Raven’s mammoth data collection *The English
Novel 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles* (2000),
maintaining that circulating libraries were influential participants in the production of print commodities
and they actively led the market during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

15 For more information on this period, see “High Monopoly Period in England” in William St. Clair’s *The
which supplied the majority of his successful titles, most of them gothic novels. He was a gifted marketer of his products, and as Jacobs remarks, it was not by chance that gothic novels written by anonymous women were his chosen commodity.\textsuperscript{16} Up until the end of the eighteenth century, because of the prohibitively expensive prices of even the cheapest publications, circulating libraries grew at a rapid rate. By 1800, there were 112 libraries in London and 268 in the provinces.

Just as the sudden drop in crop prices made gin tremendously popular and ubiquitous, the rise in circulating libraries, with their vast numbers of cheap print commodities, made the gothic novel much more accessible than ever before. At the same time, because the books tended to adopt fashionable gothic themes to attract readers, the genre became notorious for its poor style and potentially corrupting pleasures.\textsuperscript{17} The “Gothic craze,” as Terry Castle describes it in the \textit{Cambridge History of English Literature 1660-1780}, marked a cultural phenomenon that is hard to comprehend if we regard the gothic novel as a work of literature whose value and appeal is determined only by aesthetic and literary standards. As Jacobs points out, circulating libraries made consumption of the novel more “casual” and habitual and these novels were not viewed as “possessions and objects of deep investment” (\textit{British} 15). Rather, the gothic novel

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{16} Although pseudonyms used for gothic novels were mostly feminine, it is not clear that these novels were in fact produced by women. Still, the gothic novel was more popular among female readers and the genre was considered as feminine

\item\textsuperscript{17} According to Jacobs, during the period from 1766 to 1799, the market share of fiction in Michael Heavisides’ catalogue increased “by 24 percent, to 36 percent of the total” books they circulated (\textit{British}, 8). In the 1799 catalogue, 68 percent of the fictions were anonymously published and 20 out of 85 anonymous fictions were attributed to female writers of unknown identity. In contrast, only two anonymous novels were suggested to have male authorship.
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succeeded as an affordable commodity that provided the intense pleasure of experiencing wonder, terror and transport.

Consumption of the gothic novel can be described as a casual habit for several reasons. In addition to its apparent affordability and the accessibility ensured by circulating libraries, the gothic novel contains thematic and structural characteristics that encourage repeated reading. Just as the sentimental novel emphasizes repetitive moments of “feeling” by denying a coherent narrative progression, in the gothic, the narrative is subservient to recurring representations of the sublime. The gothic narrative structure, with its systematic repetition, “function[s] as a force for continuation” (48) as Barbara Herrnstein Smith points out in Poetic Closure. The narrative structure of repetition resists full closure, and the reader cannot help but return to the same moment of gothic transport that refuses to gratify his desire by providing an ending.

What is most interesting about the immense success and relatively quick demise of the gothic novel is that the entire fashion of the gothic worked outside, or even against, the individualized, carefully crafted intellectual labor we now recognize as authorship. Although the “origin” of the gothic novel was claimed by a relatively respectable male author, it remained largely a genre of anonymous hack writers who often used female pseudonyms. The focus of these novels was the kind of affective stimulation intended

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18 The gothic novel’s vexed relationship with authorship is not limited to the works written by hack writers. Many gothic novels incorporated in their narrative frame multiple tales of terror and wonder inspired by foreign folklore or myth, which made it problematic to determine a finite authorship. The accusation of plagiarism always followed the genre. John Polidori engaged himself in heated debates over the authorship of The Vampyre (1819), which was advertised as authored by Lord Byron in its initial publication. He
to induce terror and amazement, or at least that was what people expected when picking up a gothic novel. The best-known contemporary commentary on such mass-produced gothic novels can be found in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1817). The so-called “Northanger horrid novels” list recommended by Isabella Thorpe to young Catherine Morland includes seven popular gothic novels. Isabella says:

“Dear creature! how much I am obliged to you; and when you have finished *Udolpho* we will read *the Italian* together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.”

“Have you, indeed! How glad I am! — What are they all?”

“I will read you their names directly; here they are, in my pocket-book. *Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries*. Those will last us some time.”

“Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?”

“Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them.”

(54)

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explains: “As the person referred to in the Letter from Geneva, prefixed to the tale of the Vampyre, in your last Number, I beg leave to state, that your correspondent has been mistaken in attributing the tale, *in its present form*, to Lord Byron. The fact is, that though *the groundwork* is certainly Lord Byron’s but its development is mine, produced at the request of a lady, who denied the possibility of anything being drawn from the materials which Lord Byron had said he intended to have employed in the formation of his Ghost story” (Macdonald 181).
Six out of the seven books on Isabella’s list were published by William Lane’s Minerva Press and were very popular items in his circulating libraries. They are imitations of the novels by Ann Radcliffe, “more of the same kind” (54). *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793) borrows the story of a persecuted heroine from Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* and presents Matilda, a beautiful orphan who has to escape from her incestuous and murderous uncle. Like *the Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitent, the Orphan on the Rhine* (1798) ends with the confession of the villain, the Marchese de Montferrat, who conspires with an evil mother figure to manipulate the innocent heroine. As Catherine asks and Isabella confirms, what matters most is their being all “horrid,” and nothing else. The experience of gothic terror is therefore made possible through consuming gothic novels as mass-produced commodities.

Most of the gothic novels that populated circulating libraries were written by obscure authors and then quickly forgotten. Ann Radcliffe published her first three novels anonymously, including her extremely popular novel, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). She published these novels with Thomas Hookam, a very successful circulating library owner and a direct competitor of William Lane’s. The immense success of *The Romance of the Forest* allowed Radcliffe to move to more established publishing houses. Less successful works remained anonymous, side by side with other gothic novels that were all lumped together as “horrid.”

The fact that the majority of the gothic novels were mass-

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19 The way many circulating libraries displayed their books is also interesting in terms of its group and genre-oriented identification. Some books were placed alphabetically according to the author’s name, but the cheap, popular novels that had no authorship were indeed put together as a group under keywords like
produced, tasteless commodities that offered nothing but momentary gratification was a concern to many, as is made clear in Henry Tilney’s contempt for the “unworthy” imitators of Mrs. Radcliffe.

The Monstrous Body

In the previous section, I examined the gothic novel’s appeal as an entertainment commodity hastily produced, casually consumed and quickly outdated. As a mass-produced, habit-forming commodity that excited its reading subjects, the gothic novel was not very different from other substances that generated addicts. However, it was not only the genre’s poor style and lack of originality that made it so notorious in the late eighteenth century. In addition to the hackneyed works of obscure writers, the gothic novels written by prominent figures were considered potentially harmful, and sometimes even more so than the anonymously produced novels. The controversy surrounding the publication of *The Monk* (1796) provides a useful example. *The Monk* is the story of a priest who violates a woman who is both Madonna and demon. It was an instant success and quickly ran through three editions. However, once the real identity of the author was revealed to be a Member of Parliament, it received a large number of negative reviews. Thomas Mathias, in *Pursuit of Literature* (1798), threatened Matthew Lewis, author of *The Monk*, by comparing excerpts from *The Monk* to similar passages in other books.

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“Mysteries” or “Memoirs and Adventures.” Jacobs maintains that such cataloging of the circulating libraries “encouraged readers to perceive and sample books as members of genre” (*Anonymous* 617).
whose authors and publishers had been successfully prosecuted for obscenity and blasphemy.20

Addiction, as we have seen in the discourses on the gin craze, becomes visible on the marginalized bodies of the sick, bankrupt, barren, licentious, and criminal. Whereas the sentimental addiction is expressed through the sickened, impoverished bodies of the characters in sentimental novels, the gothic addiction is expressed by deformed, violated, and monstrous bodies of characters who are often seduced by the power of mysterious, “gothic” things.

Since the gothic derives its pleasure from a sympathetic reaction to “the supernatural,” many gothic novels tended to recount even stranger, ever more transgressive stories to offer more intense pleasure to readers. The fascination with the utterly unspeakable and unrepresentable dominates the genre.21 Aside from its worldly implications of political transgression, the fact that the gothic novel is designed to allow

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20 Michael Gamer’s “Genre for the prosecution: Pornography and the gothic” in PMLA 114.5 (1999) provides a useful insight into the controversies surrounding Lewis’ The Monk. Gamer traces the rise of modern authorship within the context of legal liability, especially the cases concerning obscene libel, while linking pornography to the gothic novel.

21 The gothic’s fascination with the unspeakable became politically problematic along with the cult of sensibility that had dominated virtually all aspects of life from art and entertainment to medicine and philosophy when the French Revolution and its aftermath created a new tension in domestic politics. Since Sade who in 1807 saw this “genre [as] the inevitable product of the revolutionary shocks with which the whole of Europe re-sounded,” numerous studies have addressed the gothic novel’s complicated relationship with the French Revolution, from Ronald Paulson’s canonical approach in Representations of Revolution, 1789-1820 that frames the violence in the gothic as representations of the Revolution to Steven Bruhn’s Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction that discusses revolutionary politics surrounding unspeakable pain manifested on the tortured bodies of the gothic novel and drama. Paulson sums up his perspective in the following way: “the gothic did in fact serve as a metaphor with which some contemporaries in England tried to understand what was happening across the channel in the 1790s” (217).
the reader to indulge in “transport” into the unspeakable made the genre problematic. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes transport as “the state of being ‘carried out of oneself,’ i.e. out of one’s normal mental condition; mental exaltation, rapture, ecstasy.” From Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, to Lewis’ *The Monk* and many other contemporary gothic novels, transport is perhaps one of the most frequently used expressions to describe any overwhelming feelings that come from reading the gothic. The state of transport -- a state of elevation above and beyond mere self -- is primarily marked by the body that shivers compulsively from the unbearable intensity of pure sensation.

The moment of transport is also the moment of escape from the self; the reader overcomes the physical and psychological boundaries that sustain a *proper* subject. Therefore transport is potentially transgressive in two ways; the subject may become ethically transgressive himself, or he may be physically transgressed. Ambrosio, the virtuous hero of *The Monk* commits an ethical and religious transgression after he is overwhelmed by the “burst of transport” (223) triggered by Matilda’s demonic body. His uncontrollable desire to experience more transport manifests on his body, which becomes monstrous in the final scene where his ethical fall becomes a literal one. When chased by an angry mob, Ambrosio throws himself off a cliff. Alive, yet incapable of controlling his injured body, he slowly begins to perish.

Life still existed in his miserable frame: He attempted in vain to raise himself; His broken and dislocated limbs refused to perform their office,
nor was He able to quit the spot where He had first fallen. The Sun now rose above the horizon; Its scorching beams darted full upon the head of the expiring Sinner. Myriads of insects were called forth by the warmth; They drank the blood which trickled from Ambrosio's wounds; He had no power to drive them from him, and they fastened upon his sores, darted their stings into his body, covered him with their multitudes, and inflicted on him tortures the most exquisite and insupportable. (442)

In this climactic scene, the body of Ambrosio is torn apart, dismembered and finally devoured by insects. He completely loses control over his body, and this loss is described as “tortures the most exquisite and insupportable.” Ambrosio, who has pursued countless transports throughout the course of the narrative, has this final and ultimate moment of exquisite transport. The feeling body, in its excess, becomes monstrously disfigured and devoured by the non-human, non-singular desire of nature. In this final scene of transport, the body that contains a subject is literally transported into formless flesh, crushed by rocks and devoured by insects.

Marquis de Sade, who defended and admired Lewis, maintained that the eradication of physical as well as mental boundaries was a source of pleasure. In his dedication to Justine (1797), he noted that instead of telling a story in which suffering virtue is rewarded in the end, he intended to present “a wretched creature wandering from one misery to the next; the toy of villainy; the target of every debauch; exposed to the most barbarous, the most monstrous caprice,” in order to teach truly sublime moral
lessons (5). Sade’s declaration and Lewis’s fascination with the utter annihilation of the human body seem to be an extreme perversion of the sentimental that, by erasing the boundary of the individual subject, enables a new form of existence. The monk is literally consumed by the multitudes of non-human entities and this signals his submission to a boundless, selfless state of existence.

The monstrously disfigured body in *The Monk* is the body of an addict. Like the female bodies infested by syphilis in Hogarth’s *Gin Lane*, Ambrosio’s mangled flesh indicates a state of complete surrender. While gin transforms a mother into a sick prostitute in *Gin Lane*, a gothic object transforms Ambrosio into a file of flesh. Ambrosio’s degeneration into the monstrous form of ruined flesh begins when he experiences “transport” looking at Matilda/Rosario’s breasts. The scene is described as follows:

She lifted her arm and made a motion as if to stab herself. . . . She had torn open her habit, and her bosom was half exposed. The weapon’s point rested upon her left breast: And Oh! That was such a breast! The Moonbeams darting full upon it enabled the Monk to observe its dazzling whiteness. His eye dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beauteous orb. A sensation till then unknown filled his heart with a mixture of anxiety and delight: A raging fire shot through every limb; the blood boiled in his veins and a thousand wild wishes bewildered his imagination. (65)

Matilda’s naked breasts are not just female body parts. They are both male and female,
since she is also Ambrosio’s favorite disciple Rosario. Her breasts occupy a space between the secular and the sacred since they are those of a desiring woman, but at the same time they are those of the Madonna, the sacred mother. They also exist between the natural and supernatural. Matilda’s flesh seems real, yet it turns out that it is all Satan’s illusion. Ambrosio’s transport, therefore, is created by the unspeakable, unrepresentable object of the gothic.

Seized by the insatiable desire to possess Matilda’s body, Ambrosio, who was once virtuous, now commits rape, murder, and sacrilege. Ambrosio is possessed by the mysterious power of the gothic object, which makes him a slave to his own desire. Ambrosio’s degeneration can be read as an allegory for an addict whose subjectivity is formed and persecuted throughout the course of the narrative.²²

Similarly, the overwhelming power of the gothic object is what drives Victoria in Zofloya or the Moor (1806) into a murder spree. Heavily influenced by Lewis’ libertine gothic style, Charlotte Dacre published the novel under the pseudonym “Rosa Matilda,” declaring her alliance with Lewis.²³ In this female version of demonic possession, the

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²² This is another moment of juxtaposition between a homosexual subject and an addict. Eve Sedgwick and George Haggerty read Ambrosio’s fall as an allegory of homosexuality. Sedgwick maintains that Ambrosio’s desire is “unspeakable” and unrepresentable, thus ultimately obscene in the heterosexual narrative structure. Haggerty reads the final mob scene as a persecution of sodomy in a similar context. See Eve Sedgwick’s Between Men (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) and George Haggerty’s “Literature and Homosexuality in the late eighteenth century: Walpole, Beckford and Lewis” in Homosexual Themes in Literary Studies (New York: Garland, 1992).

²³ Although Zofloya or Charlotte Dacre quickly became obscure and is almost forgotten today, the contemporary impact of the novel was relatively significant. Dacre’s pseudonym Rosa Matilda became the name for a sexually provocative and wildly disturbing trend in literature. According to Thomas Medwin, Percy Shelley was enraptured by the “Rosa-Matilda school, especially a strange wild romance entitled Zofloya” (25). Shelley’s early works like St Irvyne shows Dacre’s influence.
majestic, sensuous body of a Moor, like Matilda’s breasts, arrests Victoria’s eye. The mysterious power of Zofloya, the moor, is unmistakably associated with the gothic sublime. In the scene where Victoria searches for Zofloya to plot the imprisonment of Lilla, she gazes at the sublime body of Zofloya with awe:

She proceeded a considerable way up the rock, when the loud solemn roar of the foaming cataract, dashing from a fissure on the opposite side into the precipice beneath, broke upon her ear. She fearlessly advanced, however, till she gained the summit, while louder and more stunning become the angry sound of waters. . . . Hastening onwards with rapid strides along the winding paths she had so lately traversed, she beheld the gigantic figure of the moor, gigantic even from the diminishing points of height and distance. (202-203)

Victoria indulges in the sublime experience that overwhelms her senses, and the focus of the sublime scenery is Zofloya’s gigantic body that entices Victoria. Possessed by the power of the sublime, Victoria degenerates into a murderess, whose body “falls” down the dreadful abyss like Ambrosio to become mangled, devoured by nature.

Zofloya, the mysterious slave, functions within the narrative as a gothic object whose demonic power takes possession of its master-observer. Victoria is literally addicted to the pleasure of the gothic, and her body becomes the site of transgression that must be annihilated in the final scene (much like Ambrosio’s body in The Monk).

Victoria’s body (like Ambrosio’s) is a libertine body that seeks pleasure in transgression. At the same time their bodies are addicted bodies, possessed by the gothic, compulsively
revisiting the pleasure of gothic transport.

The compulsive obsession associated with the gothic object is a theme frequently found in the gothic. Both Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) narrate a story of obsession, driven by the unspeakable object of the gothic. Although addiction is a concept that requires a commodified object for a subject to fixate on, “obsession”—fixation on ideas or things—is perhaps another way to understand the pathological condition suffered by these gothic characters. Lennard Davis provides an illuminating insight into the history of “obsession” that began in the eighteenth century. Davis’ approach to a series of discursive practices that have established our current medical understanding of obsessive-compulsive disorder strongly resonates with the history of addiction, except that addiction is much more localized concept that specifies the condition in which the pathological desire of obsession is directed toward commodified objects. Davis describes the origins of obsession as follows:24

[T]here is a moment in the Western world when obsession becomes itself something so problematic that people begin to write about it, study it, turn it into a medical problem, and then try to cure it. That defining moment, beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century in England and France, is worth looking at. Before that divide, some people were seen either as

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eccentrics, or in a more religious mode as “possessed.” After that time, the age of obsession begins as a secular, medical phenomenon. (6)

Davis’ approach shows how the modern condition of individual consciousness is born out of the split between “a conscious ‘I’ who is watching an obsessed self” and “a deranged and unconscious self dwelling in a lunatic” (61). While contributing to the formation of modern human consciousness as Davis argues, the gothic articulates the centrality of the material condition that constantly threatens and disturbs the very psychological construction of selfhood it helps to formulate with the bodies mangled, deformed and transgressed.

**Gothic Habit, Gothic Home**

Like other literary genres, the gothic novel contains conflicting trajectories within its boundaries. Many libertine gothic novels emphasize the transgressive and destructive pleasure derived from sympathizing with the unimaginable, and they present characters who implicitly or explicitly abandon autonomy and self-control in order to achieve a euphoric state of gothic transport. However, other gothic novels were more aligned with the idea of sustainable and proper pleasure. Because of this difference within the genre, categorization of the gothic has traditionally been divided between the “male” gothic, which is considered more transgressive and explicit and the “female” gothic, which is somewhat more modest in its representation of wonder and terror.

Lewis’s notorious gothic novel evoked visceral reactions from thousands of
readers throughout England and helped to stigmatize the entire gothic novel genre as obscene and lewd. One year later, Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797) appeared. Radcliffe was at the height of her fame as the author of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Although it was Walpole who coined the word “gothic” in the mid-eighteenth century, Radcliffe was the one who enabled the genre to gain widespread popularity without losing respectability. Her novels were widely read by people from differing social and cultural backgrounds. Her books enjoyed an enormous cultural prestige that is hard for modern readers to fathom. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote a very favorable review of *The Italian*, noting how the novel “powerfully seize[s] the imagination and interest[s] passions” (Rogers 56). Wordsworth, Keats and indeed all the leading poets of the time enthused over Radcliffe’s elegant skills of scenic exposition. Radcliffe’s caves, mountains, waterfalls and torrents sparked widespread enthusiasm for the Burkean sublime landscape. Although Radcliffe does not mention *The Monk* in her novel, *The Italian* certainly seems to respond to the problems Lewis posed with his obscene tales of terror.

Even before the scandalous publication of *The Monk*, Radcliffe and her contemporaries, including Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, were keenly aware of the dangers of extravagant sensibility and excessive sentimental indulgence, especially when associated with the female mind. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily, the virtuous heroine, is taught constantly by her father “to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool examination” (5). In this way, she learns a “general view of the
sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature” (6). St. Aubert’s preoccupation with this self-policing, sheltered education constitutes the idea of an ideal home that ultimately has to be regained and restored in the end.

The home celebrated and adored in Radclffean gothic novels is a site that can be obtained only by negating the gothic sublime. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily encounters numerous sublime scenes and mysterious entities, yet her journey ultimately returns home. In order to return home, the gothic has to be negated. Home could not be processed into reality without Radcliffe’s stubborn insistence upon “explaining” the supernatural that had been so consistently criticized by Walter Scott, who saw that “[the imagination] is at length imperfectly gratified by an explanation falling short of what the reader has expected” (Rogers 122). However disappointing it may be, Radcliffe’s naturalization of the supernatural and domestication of the monstrous was considered to be the virtue that distinguished her “pleasant” works from the other tasteless, licentious gothic novels written by many of her contemporaries.

In a slightly different yet overlapping context, Foucault argues in *Society Must Be Defended* that the gothic novel functions as a tactic of power that “filters” the other for the construction of Constitution. Any power dynamic involves tactics of domination that discursively create the other internally as well as externally, and the subject must

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25 Rebecca Martin in “Repetition and the Pleasure of the Gothic” links Radclifffean, dissatisfactory gothic endings to its commercial success. By denying full gratification, gothic novels thrived at the same time that they generated ever more desire for the genre. In her words, “The Gothic ending does not fulfill the reader’s desire for the unavailable and unattainable “something”; it offers, instead, a substitute, a sanitized reality, that covers/advertises the absence of a more satisfying truth. The desire directed toward this substitute, desire whetted and thwarted continuously, produces the momentum that sends the reader into the next text” (78).
constantly defend him or herself against the other. For Foucault, the eighteenth-century fascination with feudalism and gothic narratives reveals how “a historical discourse eventually became a sort of discursive weapon that could be used by all the adversaries present in the political field” (189). Civilization is a concept that is sustainable based upon its perpetual warfare against the uncivilized, and enlightenment has to be accompanied by darkness in order to defend (and define) itself. The oppositional tension between the uncivilized and civilized people helps us to understand Radcliffe’s attempt to cancel out the supernatural, to appropriate scenes of the unspeakable into reasonable narrative explanations. The sublime is indeed created in order to reinstate the supremacy of reason and the natural in the name of “home.” It is not surprising that *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in fact opens up with Thompson’s celebration of home from *The Seasons*.

Eighteenth-century studies of the sublime recognize the necessary opposition between the sublime and home. Home represents an enclosed, protected, and beautiful site that preserves the self. Burke’s theory of the sublime touches on the relation between the sublime and the idea of self-preservation. He maintains that “the passions . . . which are conversant about the preservation of the individual, turn chiefly on pain and danger” and the terrible objects that excite ideas of pain “[are] a source of the sublime.” Thus, the sublime “turns on” the passion for self-preservation by mediating the objects of terror.

In addition to the link between the sublime and self-preservation, Burke notes that an experience of the sublime often entails “certain distances” and “modifications.” He writes:
When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any
delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain
modifications, they maybe, and they are delightful, as we *everyday*
*experience*. (36-37, my italics)

The distance and modifications are, of course, made by the objects of terror that mediate
pain and terror through textual or graphic representations. Burke seems to imply that the
gothic novel is one of the objects of terror that offers “everyday” casual experiences of
the sublime as the letter to the *Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797* suggests that gothic
novels created a trend in entertainment in which “it has been the fashion to make terror
the order of the day” (203). Burke’s theory of the sublime shows how concepts like
commodities and habit are embedded in the contemporary experience of the sublime.
While sentimental habits are linked to proper manners and custom, the habits formed by
consuming gothic commodities relate to ideas of enclosure and preservation.

Although many gothic novels were ambivalent toward the concept of an enclosed
self, Radcliffe is clearly more concerned with protecting and restoring it rather than with
violating or disturbing the physical and psychological boundaries of enclosure. Her last
novel, *The Italian*, is particularly obsessed with the idea of protecting and preserving the
boundaries of a self. Ellena, the heroine, successfully escapes from the evil convent of
San Stefano by borrowing a nun’s habit from Olivia, to hide her vulnerable identity. In
*The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, Eve Sedgwick comments on how gothic fiction
relies on the structural and thematic dynamics of depth and inner spaces. Sedgwick
attributes this critical obsession to the facility with which the gothic lends itself to the
Freudian model of the self that rests on the unplumbed depths of the subconscious. In
order to sustain the idea of depth, a self has to stay enclosed while constantly fighting
against an inner desire to open up. The self also remains vigilant against outside threats
that could violate its boundaries; hence, the gothic novel’s obsession with surface and
boundary.

For Radcliffe, the obsessive desire to defend the boundary of the self is not
limited to female, private bodies but to the boundaries of home. After hundreds of pages
describing the sublime wilderness of Italy that overwhelms the characters as the narrative
progresses, the plot settles down in an English-style garden. Radcliffe describes the final
wedding ceremony that takes place in a small villa surrounded by luscious trees and
flowers and “the style of the gardens, where lawns and groves, and woods varied the
undulating face, was that of England, and of the present day, rather than of Italy” (412).
This abrupt and slightly awkward Anglicization of the final scene makes more sense
when we consider the narrative frame Radcliffe establishes in the beginning. The story is
presented as a manuscript handed to some “English travellers” who meet an Italian
gentleman in an ancient convent near Naples (1). Therefore, *The Italian* is framed as a
travel narrative whose journey ends outside the text in England.26 The tour of the English

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26 In fact the association with travel narratives is not limited to *The Italian* but extends to Radcliffe’s other
novels. Many critics valued Radcliffe’s elegant use of language as a tool to convey pictures of the sublime
scenery, which made the reading experience into a tour. In a review of *The Mysteries of Udolpho,*
published in *Analytical Review* 22 (Oct 1795), the writer begins his comment as “[f]rom a tour written by
the elegant pen of Mrs. Radcliffe.” (Rogers 41). Then he goes on to praise her “extensive command of the
travelers is mirrored in the *mise-en-abyme* structure of the novel by Ellena and Vivaldi’s journey. The travelers are overwhelmed by the majestic architecture of an Italian monastery and shiver at the unspeakable violence and injustice embodied in the shadow of an assassin who sought sanctuary in the convent. Similarly, Vivaldi and Ellena engage in touring the sublime, fascinated and threatened by hallucinatory images, invisible voices, and the dreadful Inquisition. As their journey is framed by the English travelers’ journey, their home is also framed by the travelers who will return to England at the end of their journey. The English garden of Ellena’s home is enclosed and protected against the wild sublime of Italy. It is a spatial enclosure, preserved and characterized in opposition to the sublime. It is located literally on “the opposite shore” from the home of Marchesa, the ultimate villain of the novel (412). And the style of the garden is “present” and “of England” except “where a long alley peeping on the main, exhibited such gigantic loftiness of shade, and grandeur of perspective, as characterized the Italian taste” (412). Ellena’s home is preserved only as it stands in opposition to the looming danger and foreignness of Italy. The gothic sublime, therefore, sustains and preserves its political and aesthetic opposite site of home by being constantly “exhibited.”

*The Italian* imagines the tension between the sublime and home as a language of description” of the beautiful and sublime natural landscape and concludes that “[w]e have perused this tour with pleasure” (42).

representation of national and political difference and therefore inscribes “Englishness” as the ultimate aesthetic style of home. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, on the other hand, presents a slightly different frame of opposition. Making a home out of the wilderness and defending a body against looming dangers is all part of the process of appropriating the supernatural into the natural. Mysterious happenings, such as the haunting image of Emily’s dead father, music from uninhabited woods, and the famous moment when Emily faces the unspeakable behind the veil, are incidents of wonder and terror both for Emily and for readers of the novel. Emily’s attempt to identify what is obscure and unrecognizable parallels the reading experience of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The readers feel invested in the quest for answers to the incomprehensible, and the structure of the novel, by continuously introducing new mysteries, makes the act of reading into a process whereby a real, natural meaning is produced out of superstitious, hallucinatory events. By the end of the narrative, this makes the gothic into home.

Emily begins her gothic quest with a mysterious image. She discovers a portrait of a lady her father secretly cherished and the world she has believed to be real disappears. The inscrutable object turns her home into a gothic wilderness and Emily encounters many more inexplicable mysteries as the narrative unfolds. Her experience of terror and amazement allows readers of the novel to share her feelings. Until its “meaning” is produced, and the supernatural becomes naturalized, the world remains a mere hallucination—a phenomenon without truth or essence. One glaring example is when Emily finds a figure covered in the veil. Suspecting it might be a corpse she approaches
to the object. She faints as soon as she lifts the veil. The narrative provides no
explanation, leaving the reader to imagine all sorts of horrors. At the end of the novel, the
tame, even off-hand, explanation is given -- it was a wax image of a skeleton, made as an
act of penance by a previous owner of Udolpho. The threatening world of the gothic is
transformed into an ideal, well-regulated, safe haven by the narrative gesture that “makes
sense” out of insensible, unfathomable objects.

The obsession with producing and maintaining boundaries to contain the proper
self that is either private or collective (national) is seen in Radcliffe’s gothic novels.
Radcliffe’s stubborn insistence can be understood as a way to distance her writing either
from nameless, tasteless imitators of her work and from the more licentious and
controversial gothic novels. As Burke suggests, the sublime stimulates the passions of
self-preservation, and gothic novels, while articulating the security of home and heroines
within the narrative, functions as an object of terror that serves to modify the pain and
suffering so that consumers can engage in home-making of their own.

**Inhabiting the Monstrous**

Terry Castle, in *The Female Thermometer*, reads Radcliffe’s attempt to explain
the supernatural not as an act of denying or conquering the Other, but as an incorporation
of the supernatural into everyday life. For Castle, Radcliffe’s naturalizing of the
supernatural is the obverse of supernaturalizing the natural. A seemingly supernatural or
unnatural presence -- like the covered dead body Emily could not bear to look at -- is
indeed a wax figure and the moment of gothic transport turns into a calm moment of recollection. At the same time, that haunting becomes embedded into everyday life. Emily sees her dead father everywhere, and as Castle puts it, in Udolpho “to love is to become ghostly oneself” (124). Valancourt, in search of Emily in the garden, shouts out: “I have haunted this place, these gardens for many many nights with a faint, very faint hope of seeing you” (Radcliffe 152). Radcliffe does not “explain away” the supernatural but rather diverts and reroutes it into the realm of everyday life.

Similarly, in Walpole’s Otranto, the murdered Matilda comes back to life in the form of melancholy shared by the couple who unite to re-establish the rightful home once usurped by Manfred. The tale ends with the final marriage described as follows:

Theodore’s grief was too fresh to admit the thought of another love; and it was not until after frequent discourses with Isabella of his dear Matilda, that he was persuaded he could know no happiness but in the society of one, with whom he could forever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul. (106)

The restoration of paternalistic order in Walpole’s pseudo-historical document is shadowed by the presence of a traumatic past, yet the very shadow itself is the ground upon which a new home can be established. The home, the domain of everyday life, can only be enclosed through the negotiation and incorporation of the monstrous haunting. Without the murdered bride, the marriage can never be consummated or continued. As Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out, when reflecting upon the notion of home and
processes of home-making, “home does not pre-exist: it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile center, to organize a limited space. Many, very diverse, components have a part in this, landmarks and marks of all kinds” (Plateau 311).

Popular genres such as the gothic or the sentimental novel can be understood as mass-produced entertainment commodities whose value is articulated not solely by the language of literature but also by the language of consumption. In their excess and repetition, they reveal the fundamental contradiction embedded in the culture of consumption; this contradiction is sustained and perpetuated by the binary discursive mechanism of addiction and habit. The sentimental novel distances itself from its consuming, addictive nature by consciously disciplining its consumers to embody proper manners. However, the very process of protection betrays its unstable and ambiguous status in the binary structure of addiction and habit by turning the feeling bodies into machines. In this way, the individual subjectivity emerges as partial, supplemental and dependent on its material condition. Similarly, the gothic’s attempt to deny or distance itself from licentious and transgressive aspects of consumption reveals instead its intimate connection, and further helps the monstrous to permeate the domain of the home. The self is preserved, yet it is a heterogeneous composite and amalgamation rather than a transparent and homogenous space.
In the previous chapters, I have discussed two popular sub-genres of the eighteenth-century British novel, focusing particularly on the ways they bridge the world of proper manners and the world of degrading addiction. As an affordable commodity that offered physical pleasure, the novel was surprisingly similar to other addictive substances such as gin in that consumers compulsively “consumed” it and, while doing so, became subjected. The overpowering effect of the novel was frequently discussed by eighteenth-century commentators. Samuel Johnson, for example, wrote in the *Rambler* that “the familiar histories” . . . “take possessions of the memory by a kind of violence,"
and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will” (Johnson 69).\(^1\) Johnson was not alone in expressing concern about the novel’s potential to turn its readers into delusional thinkers. Addison, as early as 1712, also showed his concern when he warned the “fair readers to be in a particular manner careful how they meddle with Romance, Chocolate, Novels and the like Inflamers; which I look upon as very dangerous to be made use of during this Carnival of Nature” (374). This resemblance between the novel and “the like inflamers” caused Eliza Haywood to suggest women addicted to liquor use “romance” as a substitute for gin for it can replace the bad habit, yet without the ill effects of that vice. Thus the novel’s subsequent attempts to legitimize itself have to be understood alongside the constantly shifting demarcations of proper habit versus addiction. The discursive construction of an illegal, immoral, dangerous mode of consumption (i.e., addiction) has always been linked to a form of pleasure that does not produce or reassure the real. The obsessive anxiety to produce proper, if not property, values seen in many novelistic narratives in the eighteenth-century in fact betrays the very unstable and ephemeral nature of the value the novel claims to legitimize. Bodily symptoms of sympathetic ecstasy such as tears, sighs, and blushes should not be wasted away but rather translated into signs of virtue and sensibility. However, the novel has been accused of contaminating naïve, impressionable readers with vice, not virtue. In addition to the questionable nature of what it produces, the reading experience of the—

\(^1\) Johnson’s concern about the novel’s ability to make its readers insane appears again in *Rasselas* in Imlac’s discussion of the power of fiction in Chapter 44. He insists that indulging in the world of fiction can lead to madness.
novel itself at best sympathizing with a “simulated” reality. The sympathetic ecstasy created from transcending the real and moving into the fictional simulacrum is not very different from the euphoria induced by substances like alcohol and opium, and the very transcendental experience enjoyed by the reader belongs to the non-essential domain of fiction.

How then does the novel become properly real? This question leads us to look at the nature of the real constituted and articulated by the novel. What happens to the real, and perceptions of the real? In addressing these questions, Jane Austen’s early novels are useful. Austen’s novels occupy a transitional role in this regard. In addition to her contemporary reviewers, who placed her among novelists leading a new trend, which I will discuss in the second section, historians of literature have located her novels either as a completion of the “rise” of the novel or a new beginning of the great novel tradition of English literature.² Literary periodization of the novel almost unilaterally identifies the Austen moment as a moment of shift. Pre-Austen novels and post-Austen novels are viewed as distantly related, almost different kinds of species. It is not only the literary form and techniques of the genre that have developed to enable the shift from the pre-Austen to the post-Austen era. The novel’s relationship with reality changes, too.

*Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* are particularly illuminating in that they

² The most canonical canonization of Austen’s novels by F. R. Leavis’ *The Great Tradition* and Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel* place Jane Austen as a culmination of the previous “great” genius of Fielding and Richardson in a teleological progression of the novel. Clifford Siskin, in *The Work of Writing*, criticizes this canonical formation of Augustan-Austen as safely rational and comfortably domestic. He identifies Austen novels as signaling a new wave of novel writing that marks the Romantic era. Clara Tuite expands on this notion in *Romantic Austen* by framing Austen within the Romantic ideology of sensibility and national culture.
self-consciously participate in the transformation of the genre by addressing manners of consuming the fashionable and predominant novel form in a revisionistic tone. Austen’s remark in the advertisement of the first edition of *Northanger Abbey*, which was published in 1817 after more than a decade of dormancy, clearly shows how she was intentionally addressing the current issue of the novel reading fashion of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in her work, and how the issues may have developed and changed since her initial draft. It expresses a concern that the changes, in turn, might have made the novel “comparatively obsolete.” Austen writes: “The public are entreated to bear in mind that thirteen years have passed since it was finished, many more since it was begun, and that during that period, places, manners, book, and opinions have undergone considerable changes” (xlii). What then would be the changes that made this novel on the novel obsolete? The implication would be that the trend, the fashion Austen sets up her novel to combat, to amend, and to change has now gone along with its criticism and anxiety. In this chapter, I will look at Austen’s two early novels to see how the status of the novel becomes “elevated” from other entertainment commodities by redefining and elevating its role in opposition to addiction. The way in which the novel constitutes reality plays a key role in this process of elevation. In addition, I will address how Austen’s sympathy functions and how that function changes significantly in the new novelistic reality. In the first two sections, I will discuss the two separate, yet intertwined, forms of reality between which *Northanger Abbey* oscillates. My purpose is to read Austen’s work as a denial or dismissal of a specific kind of virtual reality in the context
of what Baudrillard calls the hyperreal. Then, I will explore a new mode of sympathy that constitutes and reflects this newly structured reality of ordinary life.

“Only of Novels”: Reality That Addicts

There have been many discussions of the connections between simulated reality and addiction. We consider various forms of virtual reality and cyberspace produced by contemporary high-tech entertainment commodities such as computer games to be highly addictive. Bio-medical research has shown that the dopamine-producing brain activities of a game player are almost identical to those of a drug user. Apart from medical approaches to the experience of “trans” created by virtual reality, literary and philosophical discourses on virtual reality often employ the frame of addiction to explain the euphoria that lures users to log on and stay in “cyberspace.” Ann Weinstone in her study on the relationship between addiction and virtual reality maintains that “VR [virtual reality] demands, as the price of transcendence, that the user become of the medium, of the other, through a relationship of compulsion, penetration, repetition, and bodily subsumption” (163). Subjectivity has always been constructed by and articulated

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3 Recent medical studies on game addiction find that those who are “addicted” to computer games exhibit similar brain activities to those of drug addicts during game playing. Adrenalin and dopamine secretion, biological markers of the addictive pleasure mechanism, shows the link between the two groups in various cases. For more information, see Aviv Malkiel Weinstein’s “Computer and Video Game Addiction—A Comparison between Game Users and Non-Game Users” in American Journal of Drug & Alcohol Abuse 36 5 (2010): 268-76.

4 Weinstone further argues that the transcendental teleology of logocentrism achieves reproduction in VR discourses in part because the attribution “life” is shifting from the realm of the biological (DNA) and
through more than one set of technologies, and what the technology of virtual reality produces is a kind of pseudo-subject position of the addict who is enslaved by hallucinations of the real. Virtual reality, a simulacrum created by a certain set of technologies, cannot exist without addicts who constantly “log on” to populate this space. In a way, virtual reality is reality without substance, a space where consumption does not result in production and the subject cannot produce identity.

Addiction has been marginalized in order to perpetuate the modern technology of discipline that controls and manages individual subjects in the name of production. In other words, addiction is the absence of production. Virtual reality, a structure of absence, can be accessed and consumed not productively but addictively in this regard. In his well-known reading of pharmakon in Plato’s Phaedrus, Derrida pairs the concept of pharmakon with writing, explaining the truth-less and therefore inferior position inhabited by writing, which contaminates and destabilizes its superior counterpart of spoken language, truth and memory. It makes pharmakon/writing a “dangerous supplement,” a potentially bad form of repetition that disturbs the original truth as the word “pharmakon” itself has a double meaning of poison and cure. The juxtaposition between drug/pharmakon and works of writing comes into play again when Derrida discusses how drugs and fictions provide similar experience of transcendence in “The

natural language to the post-vital and code. Code is coming to function as the transcendental, unifying, and ideal substance of life in cyberspace. Code is inferior and supplemental to nature and by accepting code as the mode of existence, a user becomes an addict.

Rhetoric of Drugs.” He explains “drugs make us lose any sense of true reality” and the user “escapes into a world of simulacrum and fiction” (25). Writing is one form of virtual reality that shares much in common with drug consumption; indulging in that simulacrum is a negative repetition that does not result in any meaningful production of the real. The simulacrum of fiction, a textual form of virtual reality, requires transcendence from the real world and the subject is transformed into a new identity that completely submits to repetitive, unproductive experience. They are addicts who do not possess agency or sovereignty.

Interestingly, the link between virtual reality and addiction is one of the main issues surrounding the dangerous impact of the novel in the eighteenth-century. In *Nobody’s Story*, Catherine Gallagher argues that the unidentifiable, empty nature of the characters of the mid-eighteenth-century English novel made it easier for readers to freely indulge in emotions that belonged to “nobody.” Such effectiveness of the novel, at the same time, caused a problem that Gallagher calls “a monstrous mirror image.” According to her:

The sentimental reader came to be portrayed not as an effective speculator, capable of entering and abandoning emotions, but as an emotional addict, craving fictional identification and powerless to disengage from it. “Nobody” had created a monstrous mirror image: the novel reader was a body inhabited by many sentiments, but none of them was her own. (279)

The novel was dangerous and addictive precisely because of its fictionality that is virtually real yet lacking in substance. Sympathizing with the fictional characters,
entering into a world of fiction that offers a more powerful and vivid sense of reality is at
the core of the problem. In the early eighteenth-century, when many novels were
considered amorous intrigues and exposés of political scandals, warnings against novel
reading were largely based on its contaminating and corrupting power to spread rumors
and lies. However after divorcing from the political to become “formula fiction” as
William Warner terms it, the problem was no longer about the actual references the novel
contained but about the pure, artificial nature of the fictive world the novel constructed.6
Eliza Haywood’s success as a novelist, Warner explains, owes much to her “abstraction
into generality” (122). He continues “All these changes slim down the novel of amorous
intrigue into a repeatable formula on the market, grounded in private reading practice of a
general reader” (112). The rise of the novel as a highly successful form of entertainment
was made possible by the novel becoming a form of virtual reality, a formula of the real.
However, the realistic, yet unreal world of the novel produces an abnormal subject who is
not capable of controlling its own body, possessed by anonymous feelings and sentiments.
The novel produces addicts.

Addicts are problematic because their desire disturbs the seemingly stable system
of values and production. Their desire is unreal and manipulated; so is the pleasure they
gain, which is the ultimate goal in the circuit of addictive consumption. For addicts,
hallucination is more tangible than the real world, and any pleasure they experience is
more intense than anything they get from real, meaningful production. Therefore for

6 See Chapter 3 “Formulating Fiction for the General Reader: Manley's New Atlantis and Haywood's Love
in Excess” in Warner’s Licensing Entertainment: the Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750.
them, the virtual real replaces the real. Samuel Johnson’s comment in *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* describes the problem of novel reading in a manner strikingly similar to this logic of addiction. Imlac says:

> To indulge the power of fiction and send imagination out upon the wing is often the sport of those who delight too much in silent speculation. . . . He then expatiates in boundless futurity, and culls from all imaginable conditions that which for the present moment he should most desire, amuses his desires with impossible enjoyments, and confers upon his pride unattainable dominion. . . . In time some particular train of ideas fixes the attention; all other intellectual gratifications are rejected; the mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favourite conception, and feasts on the luscious falsehood whenever she is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees the reign of fancy is confirmed; she grows first imperious and in time despotic. Then fictions begin to operate as realities, false opinions fasten upon the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture or of anguish. (Johnson 694)

The progression of “imperious” and “despotic” addiction to fiction, for Johnson, turns life into dreams. False opinions are involuntarily and violently forced onto the mind. It is the very problem of Don Quixote, Arabella7 and Catherine Morland. These novel addicts

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7 Arabella from Charlotte Lenox’s *Female Quixote* (1752). She is brought by the French novels from her dead mother’s collection in an isolated castle and learns to see her life as part of the world created in these
“live” in the world of simulacra and living this way disturbs and contaminates the reality outside the fictional domain. The habit they form from reading novels invades the space occupied by their bodies. The way they see things, interpret events, and communicate with and relate to others are at odds with the surrounding world which, according to Johnson, is turned into “dreams.”

The novels that generate false reality in readers’ minds are the object of satire in Jane Austen’s mock-gothic novel *Northanger Abbey*. The novel begins with typical Austenian irony and quickly distances itself from readerly expectations of who and what a heroine should be. The beginning of the first chapter assures the reader that Catherine Morland does not belong to the world of romance but to the world of the mediocre real by negating any possibility of her being seen as a heroine. Catherine’s father is a clergyman “without being neglected” and “had never been handsome” and more importantly “he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters” (1).8 The word “addicted” surfaces to be negated and contrasted against normalcy and banal reality. Also it represents the essence of the problem this novel attributes to the gothic genre. The gothic, in addition to itself being “addictive,” as the reader later learns, is filled with addicts—either to violence, lust or love—who have no place in the real world. Addiction,

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8 Negation of the genre expectation is another link that binds *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*. Although I do not discuss this particular commonality in this chapter, the ending of Sense and Sensibility narrates the fate of the rake, Willoughby in a very similar manner to that of the heroine in the beginning of *Northanger Abbey*. The narrator tells us that “But that he was forever inconsolable, that he fled from society, or contracted an habitual gloom of temper, or died of a broken heart, must not be depended upon—for he did nether” (268).
from the onset of the narrative, functions as a marker of everything unreal; that is, improper and corrupting “ideas” that have to be denied, rejected and demystified.

By establishing a clear distance from the gothic in the beginning, *Northanger Abbey* does two things. First, it acknowledges that there exists a world where certain things happen in certain ways; violence-addicted fathers and dying mothers are accompanied by young, beautiful heroines who are doomed to suffer from emotional and physical hardships. Then the narrative denounces such a world in order to present a proper alternative, the plain and banal everyday life of English gentry. The narrative goal of *Northanger Abbey* is to rehabilitate avid readers like Catherine, and to present the “plain” reality that generates proper and normative readership. Presenting a novel addict as a heroine, the narrative effectively separates poison from remedy. The former is the wrong kind of novel that makes the reader hallucinate and the latter is this very narrative that constructs a plain reality that cures such hallucination. While horrid tales of the gothic become a drug that addicts readers, the “English,” “Christian”—as Henry Tilney puts it when he berates Catherine—and plain reality of *Northanger Abbey* is the remedy that should cure such illness.

Catherine – young and naïve -- learns to enjoy gothic thrills and becomes so deeply immersed in these “horrid stories” that she no longer distinguishes the fantasies crafted by those novels from the world she lives in. In fact the world of the gothic often overpowers and even replaces the real in Catherine’s mind. She admits;

‘I never look at it,’ said Catherine, as they walked along the side of the
river, ‘without thinking of the south of France.’

‘You have been abroad then?’ said Henry, a little surprised.

‘Oh! No, I only meant what I have read about. It always puts me in the mind of the country that Emily and her father travelled through, in the

“Mysteries of Udolpho.” (82)

She cannot see the real landscape of Beechen Cliff. The real world is merely a trigger for her to experience the more sublime and powerful pleasure of Udolpho. As Johnson warns the reader, life turns into dreams as her “looking” quickly leads to “thinking” of the sublime scenery of the south of France. Catherine’s recovery from her addiction to the gothic depends on her divorce from such a false reality, where wives are murdered by husbands and skeletons are buried in the basement.

Catherine’s dependence on the gothic grows when she is invited to Northanger Abbey. As soon as she hears the word “abbey” she gets excited at the prospect of experiencing sublime scenery and chilling mysteries. Once she arrives, the gothic defines not only her perception of the world but her behavior as well. The desire to actualize a gothic narrative out of the situation is almost a compulsion. In her room she finds an old chest with which she begins her gothic quest.

‘This is strange indeed! I did not expect such a sight as this! . . . I will look into it—cost me what it may, I will look into it.’ . . . Her fearful curiosity was every moment growing greater; and seizing, with trembling hands, the hasp of the lock, she resolved at all hazard to satisfy herself at least as to
its contents. (129-130)

She has to open the chest in which she “knows” some dreadful secrets of the past are hidden. She has to explore the late Mrs. Tilney’s room in which there must be some evidence of terrible violence perpetrated by the dark, villainous General Tilney.

The problem with the novel that Austen attempts to overcome is clear. It is not the genre itself since the person who never reads novels, General Tilney, is even worse in many respects than those who read too much and too eagerly. In fact, the narrator interrupts the plot in the fifth chapter to defend novels that “have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure that those of any other literary corporation in the world” (21). Despite their relatively humble status compared to other polite writings like the Spectator, the narrator insists that great novels possess “the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties” and “the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world” by them (22). This opinion reemerges when Catherine confesses her dislike of history books to Miss Tilney. For her, history books are less interesting, because in addition to their being as fictitious as the novel, the inventions of history books are dull as opposed to what she reads in novels. The narrative addresses Austen’s concern about the unjust shame the novel must endure and constantly asserts the novel’s superiority to other forms of writing. In a letter written during the same period as she composed Northanger Abbey, Austen professes her love for the novel with a slightly bitter remark on the general perception of the novel as trivial. Informing her sister that she received an advertisement from a circulating library, she says, “As an
inducement to subscribe Mrs. Martin tells us that her Collection is not consisted only of Novels, but of every kind of Literature &c &c—She might have spared this pretension to our family, who are great Novel –readers & not ashamed of being so;--but it was necessary I suppose to the self-consequence of half her Subscribers” (Le Faye 26).

Clearly, Austen is not satisfied with the value ascribed to the novel as a popular yet embarrassing commodity. Therefore, despite the numerous merits of the genre that the narrator constantly defends, Austen is self-conscious about the genre’s status in the literary market. The novel was a commodity whose popularity ensured sustainable profit for circulating libraries. Still, for circulating libraries to garner both respect and a respectable readership, they needed to distance themselves from their collection of popular novels when appetite for the novel was considered embarrassing and dangerous since it could adversely affect the minds of the readers and possibly produce addicts like Catherine.

The danger of the novel lies not only in its status as an affordable and pleasurable commodity but also in its influence as “writing.” The influence of writing that overpowers its readers is largely attributed to the novels of sentiment, which earned the predominant position with the gothic’s sudden and immense popularity during the late eighteenth century, when *Northanger Abbey* was being composed. Janet Todd discusses the sentimental novel’s capacity to link the “literary experience” with the “living one” (6) and its momentary impact and lasting influence, which Clifford Siskin identifies as the “constitutive power of writing” (207). Siskin in his reading of *Northanger Abbey* claims
that Austen is responding to the threat of writing posed by the dominant form of the novel at the time; the subsequent reconfiguration or reappropriation of the genre that Northanger Abbey attempts to achieve is, for Siskin, the act of “taming” writing (207).

In addition, the gothic craze was no longer simply a problem for an idle and impressionable individual. The rapidly polarized political atmosphere surrounding the French Revolution, in which the notion of sympathy and sentiment was appropriated to encourage political actions either for resistance or containment, often in the form of the novel, made the power of a fictional simulacrum more politically dangerous and systematically influential.9 Henry’s rather hyperbolic invocation of the national and religious identity to exorcize the gothic out of Catherine, as we will see in the following section, can be understood as an anxious response to the threat of the gothic novel, which produces politically charged monstrosities.

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9 One most glaring example of the politicalization of sentiment and sympathy is the debate between Edmund Burke and Wollstonecraft that is centered on the suffering female body of the persecuted queen of France. Burke in his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790) presented a stage of suffering with the female body as the center of sympathetic attention in order to generate anti-Revolutionary sentiments among readers, which garnered vehement criticism from pro-revolutionary, Jacobin commentators, who themselves used the sentimental form to “move” the reader. Wollstonecraft, although she herself was sympathetic to the sentimental form of writing as seen in her novels such as Mary, a Fiction (1788) and Maria, The Wrong of Woman (1798), attacked sensibility appropriated by Burke as insipid and untrustworthy. For more political implication of sympathy and sentiment manifested in the novel, see Markman Ellis’ The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel (1996). By investigating the significance of political material in the fictional text, and by exploring the ways in which the novels themselves take part in historical disputes, Ellis shows that the sentimental novel was a political tool of considerable cultural significance especially during the late eighteenth century in England.
There are many ways to understand Austen’s attempts to “tame” writing in order to exonerate the novel from the accusations of contemporary critics. In this section I would like to focus on her attempt to revise the virtual reality the novel constitutes. While the gothic novel represents a kind of false reality that addicts the reader, there is a cure for this illness. In the well-known scene of Northanger Abbey in which Henry chastises Catherine for her wild imagination, he urges her to rely on her “own observation of what is passing around” (159) instead of ideas she had been absorbing from gothic novels. Henry’s attempt to “correct” Catherine continues: “Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians.” She has to come back to the world where “roads and newspapers lay everything open” by inoculating her imagination with her own memories and observations. Catherine’s addiction to the gothic can be cured by engaging in the reality of everyday life. Henry’s two suggestions—to remember and to observe—are directly related to the nature of the reality Austen presents as a cure for Catherine’s addiction and also for the “injured body” of the novel (21). Memory and senses, especially in the context of the eighteenth-century British empirical philosophy of Berkeley and Hume, function as the main faculties that collect directly perceived data of the real in order to build up a temporally and spatially concrete self. Empirical immediacy is transferred into the concrete notion of self. Hume maintains that the contents of the mind can be reduced to “perceptions” given us by senses and
experience. Memory and senses, or “impressions” in Hume’s theory of human understanding, are the “clear” and real perceptions that cure and correct the false and dangerous hallucination by which Catherine is seized by.

Is the kind of reality that Henry urges Catherine to remember and observe different from what she experiences by reading gothic novels, which she believes she can continue for her “whole life” (23)? Both “realities” are heavily dependent upon the constructive process that is at best vicarious and at worst merely fictional. Hume admits that the reality that we believe to be true is in fact “effects of custom, not of reasoning,” a result of a random association of events and ideas we experience repeatedly. Although direct physical faculties of memory and senses are enlisted to restore true reality here, what Henry really urges Catherine to recognize is beyond their reach. One cannot directly “remember” his or her national and religious origins or the age he or she lives in. It is a gesture of restoring an identity that is in fact imagined as Benedict Anderson maintains in Imagined Communities. However Henry’s belief that one can remember and sense what

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10 Hume in fact denies that we have any a priori idea of self. Experiencing the self is momentarily possible as he describes “when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat, or cold, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception and never can observe anything but perception.” For more on Hume’s empirical theorization of identity see Book I, Part 4, Section 6 of A Treatise of Human Nature.

11 For more discussion of custom and habit in David Hume, see Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748). Hume posits that the certainty we have for some aspects of life does not come from immediate perception but customs shared by people and the habit of experiencing the same associations repeatedly. For him individual memory and senses have to be “guided” by custom and habit which function as the foundations for all reasoning of immediate facts.

12 See the last chapter “Remembering and Forgetting.” Anderson here explores the abundance of historicizing the nation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which he attributes to the rise of
in fact cannot be sensed or remembered reveals that there is a kind of convergence taking place. The lapse of distance between what can be physically perceived and figuratively understood becomes more evident when he juxtaposes “road” and “newspaper,” the two elements that he thinks make the reality they live in accessible and transparent. The roads that connect cities and people are interchangeable with the newspapers that provide information and narratives the reader needs in order to gain a sense of a connected, transparent world. These are the lights that make Catherine observe what has been “passing around.”

This moment of convergence resonates with what Baudrillard calls the advent of the hyperreal. In an attempt to revise the traditional Marxist approach that mourns the loss of use-value, he claims that the real is no longer possible in a world where constant and excessive simulation becomes the predominant mode of production. He explains the time of the hyperreal as follows:

Models no longer constitute an imaginary domain with reference to the real; they are, themselves, an apprehension of the real, and thus leave no room for any fictional extrapolation—they are immanent, and therefore leave no room for any kind of transcendentalism. (171)

13 In theorizing the hyperreal, Baudrillard elaborates the genealogy of the orders of simulation that resonates with Foucault’s The Order of Things. However, unlike Foucault who is focused on the shifting structural relationships among signs, Baudrillard seeks to maintain a link between the modes of representation and the modes of production in his interpretation of the social.
In the hyperreal, models operate as the real, and the experience of the real so immanent and pervasive is made possible through endless repetition of simulations. In the world of the hyperreal, living itself becomes vicarious and hallucinatory, which is effectively and constantly forgotten by the assurance of the fragmented traces of the real. Despite the fact that Baudrillard’s periodization of the hyperreal is geared towards post-industrial Western society, many studies indicate that there are parallel aspects or similar patterns between pre-industrial eighteenth-century Europe and the post-industrial, post-modern West. Giovani Arrighi, among others, traces historical changes in the mode of production in Europe; his study reveals the spiral repetition of the proliferation of finance that leads to and also results from massive material production (MC to CM’) that binds eighteenth-century England to the twentieth-century United States. Although there is a significant similarity between the eighteenth-century mode of production/simulation and that of post-World War II Western society, I am not invoking Baudrillard to argue that Austen foresaw the advent of the hyperreal before its time or that the historical frame of the hyperreal has to be renegotiated. Instead, I employ the frame of the hyperreal to highlight a certain kind of saturated reality whose immediacy and pervasiveness are manifest in fragmented, repetitive and excessive details of living. Newspapers, like roads, constitute an immanent reality saturated with records and episodes of life; they are to be passed

14 For more information, see chapter 3, “The ‘Endless’ Accumulation of Capital” in Arrighi’s The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times (163-246). Arrighi uses the term “the long twentieth century” to analyze the rise, full expansion and eventual suppression of the twentieth-century US systematic cycle of accumulation that derives from European cycles of accumulation dating from the Renaissance. He emphasizes the role of war as final climax in these repetitive, three-phased cycles of money-capital-money, including the Thirty Years War, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Second World War.
around, providing the sense of the real.

In addition to the lapse between the real and simulation, Henry’s gesture to segregate the gothic as the domain of imagination that is apart from the domain of the real bears a resemblance to what Baudrillard calls a strategy of concealment employed by the hyperreal:

Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the “real” country, all of “real” America, which is Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle. (172)

The hyperreal strategically constructs the domain of the imaginary to hide the fact that the reality outside the imaginary domain is also mere hallucination. Henry’s attempt to dismiss the gothic as illusion conceals the fact that the reality Henry believes in is constituted by remembering and sensing illusions. In order to cure, poison has to be identified. These symptoms and strategies of the hyperreal astutely explain the kind of reality *Northanger Abbey* carefully constructs and disseminates. The novel merges into the real, and the hyperreal—the hallucination of the real—is the only mode of reality
accessible. In this labyrinth of simulacra that is at once fiction and real, any form of transcience becomes impossible and meaningless unless it propagates the myth of the real, which is exactly what Henry does to “wake up” Catherine into reality.

The absence of the real is concealed not only by the gesture of pointing out the imaginary but also the excessive, repetitive production of details of life. Catherine is always interrupted in her pursuit of discovering mysteries by daily routines of family dinner, excursions, preparing for bed and friends’ visits. The scene in which Catherine opens the chest in her room at the Abbey, clearly intended to parody the famous wax statue scene of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, is a good example. After a series of unsuccessful attempts to open the chest one stormy night, Catherine finally discovers what has been hidden inside. The narrator describes the moment as follows:

> Her greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page. She started at its import. Could it be possible, or did not her senses play her false? An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters, seemed all that was before her! If the evidence of sight might be trusted, she held a washing-bill in her hand. She seized another sheet, and saw the same articles with little variation; a third, a fourth, and a fifth presented nothing new. Shirts, stockings, cravats, and waistcoats faced her in each. Two others, penned by the same hand, marked an expenditure scarcely more interesting, in letters, hair-powder, shoe-string, and breeches-ball. (137)

This anti-climactic moment of discovery shows that truth lies in the trivial and banal
repetitions of life. What can be discovered and sensed is evidence of nothing new, nothing extraordinary. Real life manifests itself in this repetition of the records of mundane household items in a world that has no space for climax or transcendence. The world of *Northanger Abbey* becomes real through endless replication and the interruptions of daily life; habit now becomes the novel.

The claim that Austen’s novels mark a convergence of the novel and the real can be supported by contemporary reviewers who saw her as a pioneer of a new trend in the genre. Walter Scott most notably praised Austen’s works because of their ability to shed new light on the pleasures of ordinary life. In his review of *Emma*, Scott locates Austen’s novels within “a class of fictions which draws characters and incidents more immediately from the current of the ordinary life than was permitted by the former rules of the novel” (211). He continues: “the substitutes for these excitements [of the former novels]. . .was the art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of the splendid scene of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him” (215). In this celebration of a new form, we notice an interesting inversion of the relationship between the novel and habit. As I discussed in the second and third chapter, sentimental and gothic novels were commercially successful and culturally relevant because they became habits, which is another way of understanding the “threat of writing” posed in the eighteenth century. At this turning point, however, Scott is impressed by the novel’s ability to incorporate everyday habits of life. In other words, habit now becomes the
novel. Scott continues: “the narrative of all her novels is composed of such common occurrences as may have fallen under the observation of most folks; and her dramatis personae conduct themselves upon the motives and principles which the readers may recognize as ruling their own or that of most of their acquaintances” (216). For Scott and many of his contemporaries, it is obvious the novel and ordinary life intersect with each other so closely that it is virtually impossible to distinguish one from the other. The motives and principles of the fictional characters are not merely probable or plausible. Readers would recognize them “as their own.” We can recognize and interpret our own motives and principles, along with those of our acquaintances, just as we read them in the novel. The principles and motives produced in these novels function in the real world without any novelistic gesture of moralizing. Although such convergence has been viewed as a result of a series of changes the novel genre underwent during the eighteenth century not only by its contemporary reviewers but also by today’s literary historians who works on “the rise” of the novel, it cannot be denied that reality itself, whether it was a newly disseminated national consciousness or the rapidly expanding culture of consumption, also faced a change in its increased dependence on various kinds of simulation.

This increased proximity between the novel and the real nullifies one of the problems of the novel that had existed since its inception. The new novel contains no possibility for transcendence and the transformative power it previously had has now dissipated into the comfortable and familiar pleasures of everyday life. In Scott’s words:
It affords to those who frequent it a pleasure nearly allied with the experience of their own social habits; and what is of importance, the youthful wanderer may return from his promenade to the ordinary business of life, without any chance of having his head turned by the recollection of the scenes through which he has been wandering. (221)

For Scott, “frequenting” Austen’s novels offer a pleasure so natural and ordinary that it is indistinguishable from other social habits and therefore no heads would be turned while recollecting its pleasurable scenes. Richard Whately praises Austen in *The Quarterly Review* of January 1821 for the same reason. He compares Austen to the great writers like Shakespeare and Homer, those who depicted “true” human nature. He then praises her novels over the works of Maria Edgeworth and Hannah More, two authors who sacrifice the ordinariness of the characters and situations in favor of an “avowedly didactic purpose.” Austen has appeal as a proper and respectable novelist and some have argued that she creates safe havens. Her novels are safe havens not because they represent “ideal” domestic life but because the familiar rituals of everyday life form the core of her narrative. Novelistic simulation that was once addictively transcendental is now enmeshed with ordinary life, depicting habits of life that are safe and comfortable. The novel’s power to drive its reader toward madness is no longer threatening in a world in which the supposedly maddening illusion is simply another repetition of our domestic, familiar and safe reality.
Sympathy for the New Novel

_Northanger Abbey_ was followed by _Sense and Sensibility_, and we can see that Austen continues to revise the genre by shifting focus from the gothic toward the sentimental.\(^{15}\) Although not as explicitly as _Northanger Abbey_, _Sense and Sensibility_ reveals an anxiety towards the novel, especially the sentimental novel. This anxiety primarily centers around Marianne, one of the novel’s two heroines. As Catherine Morland’s embarrassing yet adorable madness comes from her addiction to the gothic, Marianne’s much more dangerous and ultimately tragic madness is inseparable from her sentimental indulgence. Throughout the novel, Marianne functions as a sentimental object invoking sympathy from others. She also represents a sentimental addict whose excessive desire to consume and express sentimental narratives drives her to a near-death experience. Edward and Lucy’s secret engagement, and the story of an abandoned woman and a rake told by Colonel Brandon, also function as sentimental narratives to be properly consumed by other characters within the novel. The abundance of sentimental objects and narratives in _Sense and Sensibility_ makes the experience of reading the text a disciplinary practice\(^{16}\) of exercising proper sympathy.

The scene of Marianne and her mother sharing sentiments seems almost identical

\(^{15}\) Although _Northanger Abbey_ was the last book to be published after Austen’s death, it was submitted for publication in 1803 when she just started her career as a professional novelist. Although there may have been some changes made during the intervening years, I consider it to be Austen’s first novel (followed by _Sense and Sensibility_, published in 1811). For Austen’s publication history, see William Baker’s _Jane Austen: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work_ (2008).

\(^{16}\) Tony Tanner’s traditional reading of Austen’s novels as an ultimately developmental, progressive narrative where heroines have to learn the lessons to become “mature” enough to get married into the reproductive system of marriage in _Jane Austen_ is a good example of such disciplinary reading practice.
to what has been endlessly described in the works of Mackenzie and other sentimental writers.

They encouraged each other now in the violence of their affliction. The agony of grief which overpowered them at first, was voluntarily renewed, was sought for, was created again and again. They gave themselves up wholly to their sorrow, seeking increase of wretchedness in every reflection that could afford it, and resolved against ever admitting consolation in future.

(8)

Marianne, like her mother, is trapped in the continuing cycle of sympathetic reciprocation that only becomes more and more intense. Eve Sedgwick reads Marianne’s giving-up of herself as a masturbatory and self-effacing addiction, a subaltern sexual identity that instigates punitive and pedagogical reading through which the heterosexually normative “will” can be formulated.\(^\text{17}\) The pre-normative, vulnerable status of Marianne is described as one of complete openness; she is waiting for a man who “enters into all [her] feelings” (15). Typical of a sentimental heroine, Marianne’s sentimental indulgence steadily intensifies and nearly destroys her. After being betrayed by Willoughby, who denies that any sincere attachment has taken place between them, the abandoned Marianne leaves Barton in order to forget the affair. Later, she joins her sister to revisit Barton. During this journey that circles back to her sentimental romance, in Cleveland, only 30 miles from Willoughby’s home, she is overcome with nostalgia for her former romance and indulges

in “solitary rambles,” imagining that Combe Magna, Willoughby’s residence, is before her eyes. This delirium of fancy is followed by physical delirium caused by a fever she picks up from wandering in the rain.

To regain her health, Marianne must recover from the sentimental that is both dangerous and addictive. Marianne’s redemption is facilitated and secured by Elinor, her “sensible” sister, who never spontaneously expresses her own feelings. Elinor’s duty ranges from taking care of her unpredictable sister and feeble mother to managing financial arrangements and dull, everyday household chores such as counting linens. She is the center of the domestic domain that cannot function based on the unstable and self-indulgent sensibility of Marianne and her mother. Marianne’s sentimental addiction, like other chores, is an object to be managed as part of maintaining the home. The anxious need to control Marianne’s excessive sentiments, manifested by Marianne’s restless and later sickened body, is what drives Elinor to fix her attention on Marianne from the beginning of the narrative. Sometimes she pokes gentle fun at Marianne’s overindulgence. At other times, she cautions her sister about improper displays of affection to Willoughby. In each case, Elinor tries to police her sister’s wild sympathy and impulsive sensibility. Elinor is sympathetic to her sister’s pain and pleasure but, unlike Marianne, she is driven to manage the feelings of others as well as her own. Elinor’s sympathy constitutes a kind of paranoid subjectivity whose constant surveillance and corrective perspective is directed towards the sentimental objects within the text.

Sensibility and sympathy’s uncontrollable and dangerous potential has always
been in the minds of those who celebrated the “fellow-feeling” that binds people together away from selfish interests of private individuals. Even Adam Smith, one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the power of sympathy to form connections among individuals, has to create a fictional space of regulation that moderates and controls sympathy. Smith invokes an impartial spectator, an “ideal man within the breast” to keep sympathy in check. As Brigid Lowe points out, “Smith’s conception of sympathy is something of a retreat within the sentimental tradition” (9), and a correction of the idea that Hume promoted in his *Treatise of Human Nature*. In the *Treatise*, Hume’s ideal of sympathy was one that “receive[s] by communication” the inclinations and sentiments of another, “however different from, or even contrary to our own.”18 Smith seeks to replace Hume’s sympathy as a fundamental principle of radically intersubjective communication with a model of sympathy that is cognitive rather than emotional. For Smith, sympathy is an impartial spectatorship that is mediated and controlled, resulting in a form of subjective consolidation.

For Austen, Hume’s intersubjective model of sympathy that resonates with Marianne’s radically “open” mind is replaced by an “intra-subjective” model of sympathy through the ritual of curing the disease of sensibility. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor plays the role of an “impartial spectator” who mediates sympathy to provide a cure for the sentimental. By telling Marianne what Willoughby has gone through, and by appropriating his version of sentimental narrative, Elinor becomes the medium who

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18 See Hume’s ‘Of the Love of Fame,’ in *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 

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regulates sympathy. In the scene where Marianne finally finds peace, seemingly cured of her sentimental disease, the sentimental narrative itself is curiously suppressed. Only the manner Elinor used to convey the story is described:

She managed the recital, as she hoped, with address; prepared her anxious listener with caution; related simply and honestly the chief points on which Willoughby grounded his apology; did justice to his repentance, and softened only his protestations of present regard. (246)

This absence of feeling, and the bodies that manifest such feeling in an emotionally charged scene, is not only the narrator’s choice but Elinor’s too. The ritual of curing the sentimental, as seen in the scene between Marianne and Elinor, is repeated in the following chapter when Elinor, upon Marianne’s request, tells the story to their mother. The narrator explains that if Willoughby had been the one to tell the story, her mother and Marianne would have been more compassionate, influenced by “his countenance and his manner” (247). However, Elinor’s mediation sobers them to become “perfectly satisfied” and wishing for “no change” (247). The speaking body, an object of sympathy within the sentimental novel is disembodied by Elinor’s mediation that is sympathetic yet discrete.

The mediation of disembodiment is not limited to the reciprocation between the characters like Elinor and Marianne. Sympathetic to Elinor, the narrative perspective naturalizes Elinor’s desire to tame and correct Marianne’s uncontrollable sentimental indulgence by a disembodied, “impersonal” voice that speaks Elinor’s mind in order to
make the reading experience of the text into policing and taming the sentimental narratives. By establishing a strong bond between the reader and Elinor, entering into Elinor’s interior structure of mind without any transition, disembodied and disembodying sympathy creates a connected and coherent perspective between the reader and Elinor that polices the sentimental body.

As the old model of sensibility is tamed by a new, mediated sympathy that is disembodied while Elinor treats Marianne’s disease in the text, sympathy at the narrative level functions as a technology for producing a new space of subjectivity and the new sense of the real populated by these subjects. Free and indirect speech, a form of narration in which a third-person narrator speaks in the voice of characters, is said to be the narrative equivalent of sympathy. John Bender, for example, maintains that “sympathy, operating through the medium of impersonal spectatorship, fuses the subjectivity of the beholder with other seemingly accessible consciousness. This staging of speech. . . is accomplished technically in the novel through free indirect discourse” (227). Bender’s illuminating juxtaposition of the novelistic technique of “impersonal” free indirect speech with the idea of the penitentiary that disciplines individuals with surveillance, however, cannot fully explain Austen’s complicated attitude toward the effect and implications of sympathy established in the sentimental novel. Clara Tuite argues that Austen’s free indirect discourse is used to exercise a “sympathetic patronage”
over the sensibility that needs domestication (71).

In a way, Austen’s free indirect discourse stylistically disembodies the sentimental narrative to de-problematize sensibility, something that has been dangerously embodied and highly commodified. The omniscient narrator enters into the thoughts of individual characters to speak in their voice. In that moment of collusion, the boundaries that divide individual characters disappear as do the grammatical markers that enclose the feelings and speeches of individual characters. The subject-object relation of sympathetic consumption is sublimated into a narrative structure that is immanent and transparent, not transcendental. The transcendental ecstasy of transport into the feeling body of others is replaced by the process of disembodiment through this new style of sympathy. The narrative sympathy creates within the character of Elinor a transparent space whose depth is revealed by the act of sympathetic narration. The moment of transport, the ecstatic identification with the other that the sentimental novel generates is now internalized, producing interior depth that is accessible via the new, disembodied sympathy. The “impersonal” and transparent space of consciousness therefore is formulated in the process of taming, if not negating uncontrollable bodies that are addicted to the sentimental.

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19 Although her observation explains very astutely how the “sense” of sympathy and “sensibility” in Sense and Sensibility are at odds, tactics of sympathy that domesticate sensibility are not addressed in detail. Tuite instead focuses more on Austen’s “Romantic” impulse to create a subject of reflection and discretion. Along with Tuite, there are recent studies that read Austen’s treatment of consciousness and time in a Romantic rather than an Augustan context. In Jane Austen and the Romantic Poets, William Deresiewicz attributes changing representations of time and memory to Austen’s exposure to British Romantic poetry, particularly Wordsworth. Also in Amnesiac Selves, Nicholas Dames places Austen’s novels in the context of changing cultural constructions of Romantic nostalgia.
In addition to creating a subject space of impersonal and disembodied mediation, Austen’s style of free indirect discourse constitutes a form of everyday life that is experienced both subjectively and objectively in narration. It is a textual simulation that functions as the ultimate medium of experience. Free indirect discourse in *Sense and Sensibility* is not limited to the description of the inner state of Elinor nor does it serve the single purpose of aligning readerly perspective with Elinor’s. Rather, the function of the style changes significantly when applied to other characters. When used to describe Marianne’s instant and strong infatuation with Willoughby, who she thinks is the perfect embodiment of the sentimental hero she has longed for, or to describe Mrs. Jennings’ absolute certainty that Colonel Brandon is in love with Marianne, the narrator’s voice mimics the voice of the characters without strong emotional attachment.\(^{20}\) The narrative represents Mrs. Jennings in the following manner.

She was remarkably quick in the discovery of attachments. . . . This kind of discernment enabled her soon after her arrival at Barton decisively to pronounce that Colonel Brandon was very much in love with Marianne Dashwood. She rather suspected it to be so, on the very first evening of their being together, from his listening so attentively while she sang to them; and when the visit was returned by the Middletons’ dining at the

\(^{20}\) Daniel Gunn, in his reading of *Emma*, explores a similar aspect of free indirect discourse not as a representation of autonomous figural discourse but as a kind of narratorial mimicry, analogous to the flexible imitations of others’ unspoken words. See Gunn, Daniel P., “Free Indirect Discourse and Narrative Authority in Emma,” *Narrative* 12.1 (2004): 35-54.
cottage, the fact was ascertained by his listening to her again. It must be so.

She was perfectly convinced of it. It would be an excellent match, for he
was rich and she was handsome. (29)

With a slightly exaggerated tone the narrator performs the role of Mrs. Jennings, making
fun of her single-minded certainty in her ability to read the feelings of others. The
distance between the narrator and the character in the beginning is suddenly interrupted
by the moment the narrator “becomes” the character. And then the narrator resumes its
original distance only to return to her voice again with her tone of certainty shown in
italics. In these examples of a “comic” use of sympathetic narration, a character’s
interiority becomes transparent, externalized and displayed as part of the reality narrated
in the disembodied narrator’s voice. In this playful externalization of a character’s
interiority, sympathy becomes a mode of simulation instead of transcendence, a
simulation of subjectivity presented vis a vis the objective observation and description of
characters and events.

The tactics of a sympathy that disembodies and simulates is what differentiate
Sense and Sensibility and Jane Austen’s later novels from her predecessors. As a response
to the problem of the genre of the sentimental novel that made sensibility a highly
 commodified and overtly political object of consumption, Austen reappropriates the
notion of sympathy into a narrative tool that mediates the feelings of individuals and
transforming them into a transparent, externalized simulation of living that constitute the
world of her “little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which [she] work[s] with so fine a
brush.” 21 Austen’s sympathy has no body nor does it allow the experience of ecstatic transport. It is a form of sympathy that makes the reality of ordinary living accessible, recognizable and familiar through narrative simulation.

A transparent narrative structure of individual consciousness firmly anchored in the reality of everyday life is being formulated in these two Austen novels. By formulating a new and novel form of consumption -- curing the addiction to novels -- this new novel ascends into the domain of “culture” and finally escapes from the stigma of being an embarrassing and dangerous commodity. It is not the gesture of moralizing of the sentimental novel nor is the gesture of aesthetizing of the gothic. Instead, the novel inserts itself into the habits of ordinary life by mimicking and simulating details of the real. It is in part the process Siskin calls “naturalization” of writing which is complimented by the process of literalization of living that I have explained with the frame of the hyperreal.

Still, these two novels are a site of struggle and transition rather than a site of containment. They resist the form and content of the popular novel that are overtly somatic and repetitive, but the coherent and deep model of subjectivity that “develops,” and the concrete and fully centralized structure of the penitentiary have not yet arrived. Terry Castle points out that the ending of The Mysteries of Udolpho does not suppress the supernatural by rationalizing the other but the supernatural becomes incorporated into

21 From Jane Austen’s letter to Edward Austen on December 16th in 1816.
ordinary life. In a similar way, Jane Austen’s two meta-novels leave the old form of the novel haunting these texts. Claudia Johnson observes that *Northanger Abbey* is “an alarming novel to the extent that it, in its own unassuming and matter-of-fact way, domesticates the gothic and brings its apparent excesses into the drawing rooms of ‘the midland countries of England’” (42). It domesticates the world of Catherine Morland by replacing her gothic reality with the immediate, familiar, repeated perceptions of living, yet the addiction and violence found in the gothic is never fully discarded. In the final scene General Tilney is still a despotic and greedy villain, an English version of Radcliffe’s Montoni, according to Johnson’s reading, and the happiness of the marriages is guaranteed by the narrative voice that suddenly retreats into the world of fiction.

Similarly, while Marianne’s feelings are contained in the end of *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor must lose control in order to reach out to Edward. Her “tears of joy” that she thought would “never seize” (254) make Edward see how Elinor has been feeling.

The gothic and sentimental never fully disappear. Like the other abnormalities that are suppressed but return to haunt and disturb normalcy, the novel’s past persists in the novel proper in both its form and content. Austen’s novels betrays the moment of contestation the genre of the novel has undergone and her gesture of departure and negation reveals what is forgotten as well as what is remembered in the process.

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Biography