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JADES, CHEATS, AND COUNTERFEITS: FEMALE TRICKSTERS  
IN THE EARLY BRITISH NOVEL, 1680–1745

by

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To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the dissertation of Jeffrey G. Howard find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my wife, Amy, who has sacrificed a great deal to allow me the time I needed to complete this project. She knew the goal when she married me, namely working toward a doctoral degree in English, but neither of us understood what that endeavor would require of us both. It is due to her hard work and patience that this project has been successful.

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## ABSTRACT

This project deals with the prevalence and persistence of a narrative archetype often referred to as *the trickster*, a motif borrowed from and shared with folk literatures, which appeared in early British novels from 1680–1745. The authors of the works analyzed in this dissertation conserved and innovated on this motif throughout the period because of the cultural capital it possessed for them and their audiences. One of the primary functions—if not its most significant characteristic—of the trickster is to critique social norms, conventions, ideologies, hierarchies, and practices by calling attention to their constructedness or artificiality. For example, trickster characters are often frequently assigned a primary gender role, such as male or female, and the characters analyzed in this research project are all presented as female, hence the label *female tricksters*.

Through their often antisocial behavior, they provoke questions about what it means to be female or male. In a society in which gender roles can be perceived as rigid and inflexible, they transcend boundaries and promote fluid borders between male and female domains. These female tricksters also investigate the importance of singularity and individuality, female desire and sexual appetites, family values and education, and community as a source of strength to which women can have some recourse and through which they can thrive. While female tricksters in these novels often find success in their exploits, they also have downfalls which can sometimes signify a reaffirmation of social values or sometimes a way of masking the ongoing cultural work of the female trickster within social constraints. This project examines the female trickster's appearance in novels in light of historical trends such as materialism and criminality, as well as traditional gender roles, demonstrating how the traditional folkloric functions of the

trickster provide commentary on and complication of those trends. Finally, this dissertation provides a chapter on teaching eighteenth-century texts in a way that encourages students to examine texts through the lens of imitation, both as readers and as writers, to learn about literature through writing in the manner and generic elements of the authors they study.

## Introduction

### Understanding Tricksters

“We take cunning for a sinister, or crooked wisdom.”

~ Francis Bacon, *Essays*

Every culture has its own set of myths. Such stories are the building blocks of cultural identity and a means for accomplishing types of cultural work. Roland Barthes writes, “Myth is a type of speech” or semiotic system of meaning (“Myth Today,” 54). Different cultures populate their myth-systems with a certain inventory of signs or forms. Tricksters constitute one sign that pops up in many such myth-systems cross culturally. In the introduction to their book *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms*, William J. Hynes and William G. Doty write, “For centuries, perhaps millennia, and in the widest variety of cultural and religious belief systems, humans have told and retold tales of tricksters, figures who are usually comical, yet serve to highlight important social values. They cause laughter, to be sure, as they profane nearly every central belief, but at the same time they focus attention precisely on the nature of such beliefs” (1). This multi-faceted, highly contextualized, and frequently paradoxical nature of trickster characters has led Barbara Babcock-Abrahams to write,

No figure in literature, oral or written, baffles us quite as much as trickster. He is positively identified with creative powers, often bringing such defining features of culture as fire or basic food, and yet he constantly behaves in the most antisocial manner we can imagine. Although we laugh at him for his troubles and his foolishness and are embarrassed by his promiscuity, his creative cleverness amazes us and keeps alive the

possibility of transcending the social restrictions we regularly encounter.

(147)

Babcock-Abrahams' final line is perhaps the most far-reaching in its implications of the purpose of the trickster, namely that it is through transgression that transcendence is achieved.

Trickster studies are fraught with various opinions on the trickster's complex narrative elements. Jung argued that the trickster is a universal archetype derived from a collective unconscious, while Hynes and Doty argue that the trickster is not necessarily a universal nor is it completely "culture-bound," but more of a negotiation between those two poles. Jeanne Reesman sums up their outlook on this narrative negotiation in this manner: "What a trickster story 'means' must first address its specific, local context and only then move into the broader context offered by the various disciplines of the humanities" (xii). Together these scholars and their studies have produced vocabulary and critical strategies for identifying and classifying characters who potentially fit the characterization of *trickster*. The theoretical framework for this project consists of a negotiation between Jung's and Paul Radin's studies on the trickster's characteristics and patterns—which derive from the premise of the trickster as one narrative manifestation or motif that manifests itself universally—and Hynes and Doty's, which claims that a trickster's functions must first of all be understood in their immediate "local context" and extending outward.

The purpose of this introduction is to initiate that negotiation as it pertains to female tricksters in early English novels and novellas by laying groundwork in twentieth- and twenty-first-century studies in anthropology, folkloristics, literary studies, popular

culture, and psychoanalysis that relate to the functions of tricksters both culturally and psychologically. Up until the 1990s and on, nuanced discussion of the role of female tricksters in oral and print literature was absent from critical conversation. In order to join the discussion regarding female tricksters and their functions in society, a discussion that involves scholars such as Marilyn Jurich, Ricki Tannen, and Lori Landay, I will rely on Hynes's and Doty's argument that "there are sufficient inherent similarities among these diverse figures and their functions to enable us to speak, at least informally, of a generic 'trickster' figure" (2). In terms of this project I will discuss a generic "female trickster" figure with specific rhetorical and cultural functions within the English novels in which such a figure appears. Because, as Melissa Mowry points out, "Evidence of non-elite culture is hard to come by" because of "varying levels of literacy," and "public forms of non-elite expression—petition, broadside, ballad—were often irreducibly compromised by political interests who ventriloquized the 'commonality' to sway public opinion" ("Feminism," 34), using a more generic idea of a female trickster allows the author to integrate and build upon what we know about the folk or "non-elite" culture of the late-seventeenth and early-to-mid-eighteenth centuries as preserved in textual form with what we know about patterns and functions of trickster narratives more broadly. This critical method creates an image of the female trickster that is culturally appropriate and applicable to the novels of Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, and Eliza Heywood, as well as the broader mythic existence of the trickster cross-culturally. The theoretical apparatus for this project draws from folklore and memetics<sup>1</sup> in that it operates on the premise that

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<sup>1</sup> *Memetics*, or the study of cultural ideas and transmission, is not to be confused with *mimesis*, which deals with imitation and the representation of reality in art and literature, which will also be discussed in this dissertation.

female tricksters circulated as memes between 1680–1745, during which period the English novel (as is frequently argued) began its development. These female tricksters continued to exist in novels as they critiqued, questioned, and disrupted, as well as promoted or affirmed, social norms and values. The primary research question that drives my project is, What were the roles and functions of female tricksters in early English novelistic fiction between 1680–1745?

This introduction presents some of the primary theories connected to trickster studies; identifies some of the traditional trickster characters who appear in oral and print literature; and explores narrative behavioral patterns and traits that allow scholars to classify these characters as tricksters, as well as some of the assumptions that have historically driven those definitional apparatuses. It will also lay out some of the discussions related to gender, women, and identity as it pertains to traditional tricksters and demonstrate how trickster studies fits in with commonplace perspectives and discussions about the nature of women from the Middle Ages into the eighteenth century. This foundation will allow me to use trickster studies as a framework to help answer my research question by demonstrating 1) how some of the transgressive and cunning women of the early English novel fit into the paradigm of tricksterism and 2) how their behavioral traits, their lust, greed, and intelligence constitute often entertaining and emphatic resistance—essentially a counterculture—to prescribed societal codes regarding female behavior.

### **Folklore and Memetics as Theoretical Apparatuses**

The theoretical apparatus for this project combines two different but related fields: folklore and memetics. Folklore, as defined by Lynne McNeill, is “informal

culture,” the stories, customs, crafts, beliefs, gestures, and so on (in short, a range of traditional cultural expressions) of “regular, everyday people” (4). Folklore is frequently transmitted by word-of-mouth or through demonstration (although the digital age has expanded modes of folk transmission) in small groups and is both variable and conservative, meaning it can change in some ways and remain static the same in others. Because tricksters are frequently found in the oral narratives of folk culture, this project proceeds on the assumption that aspects of traditional trickster narratives were derived directly or indirectly from English and continental folklore and continued to operate in written texts and new contexts. In other words, tricksters might have been appropriated from oral literature into written literature, but they still retain valuable parallels and associations to the tricksters of folk narrative. Those parallels will be brought to bear on my readings of female tricksters in early British novels and novellas.

The other theoretical lens for this project, memetics, is enmeshed with folklore because the artifacts of folk culture are transmitted and evolve through memetic processes. A meme is a unit of culture (e.g. a motif, a jingle, a belief, a gesture, an accent, a proverb) that can combine with other memes to create memeplexes or amalgamations of memes. *Condescending Wonka*, *Boromir*, and *Bad News Brian* are a kind of meme (digital memes), but many other memes exist in the digital world and the physical world. Memes move from person to person and take on new characteristics and forms, shedding parts of themselves that lack utility while retaining other components. The Hot Pocket jingle is a meme, Grant Wood’s *American Gothic* is a meme, and Grandma’s recipe for fruitcake could be a meme (unless it’s awful and everyone would like to forget it), each one possessing a greater or smaller sphere of influence in which to move and evolve. In



his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins says, “Cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission in that, although basically conservative, it can give rise to a form of evolution” (203). In other words, cultural units or memes, as Dawkins calls them, stay mostly the same (conservation), but their continued movement or transmission leads to mutation and variation (innovation).

Although it is not a perfect analogy, memetic transmission (or as it is called in the realm of folkloristics “the folk process”), whether occurring by word of mouth or through demonstration or performance or technology, has frequently been compared to a game of Telephone/Whispers down the Lane/Chinese Whispers, a name which is itself a meme (McNeill 7). One person whispers a word or phrase in another person’s ear; that person must repeat what they heard in the next person’s ear, and so on. That action is repeated until every person has heard the word or phrase. The person at the end of the “telephone line” must repeat aloud what they think they heard, and their perception of the word or phrase is usually fairly different from the initial utterance—to everyone’s enjoyment. I once played this game with some friends in Italy, and while I do not recall the initial phrase, I do remember that it turned into *Luana sta incinta*, which is Foggiano dialect for “Luana’s pregnant.” Our friend Luana, who was sitting at the table playing with us, was more than a little taken aback by the revelation (which, thank goodness, was inaccurate), but we all laughed. Such changes are not negative distortions, but are simply the result of cultural evolution. The transmission of a meme is unpredictable, but as long as it remains useful to a cultural group, it will stay in circulation.

One of the key differences between this analogy and memetic processes throughout a culture lies in the fact that in the game of Telephone “tweaks” or variations

often occur unintentionally (unless you have bratty person who deliberately sabotages the phrase every round), while memetic processes and evolution can involve intentional revisions, too. For example, my wife's grandpa is constantly telling stories about experiences from his childhood and young adult years that he claims are true. One time, though, my wife heard him telling a first-person narrative that she had heard somewhere else told by someone else. When she broke it to him that, he said, "You caught me." He had heard the story from an acquaintance and liked it so much, he had purposely appropriated it and added it to his repertoire (conservation) and made it about him (innovation). What's more, it was not the first personal narrative he had appropriated. This kind of conscious rhetorical tinkering differs from another instance of memetic transmission involving an unintentional narrative revision that occurred with a personal experience narrative in my family. The story has circulated among my family members since I was very young. The story goes that my dad, a dairy farmer, fired my sister Celeste, who was supposed to be helping him milk cows, when she showed up late to the evening milking. Different family members, including me, have told it, and our versions agree about most of the details, especially the detail about who it happened to. However, once when I was conducting some interviews for a memoir project, I interviewed two of my sisters about their childhood, including Celeste and my oldest sister, Pamela. Pamela told me that when she was younger, one of her chores involved helping Dad milk the cows. One evening when she showed up late to work, he fired her and sent her back to the house. She was so distraught that she wrote him a letter, asking for her job back. At that point in the story, Celeste turned to her and said, "That happened to me. That's my story. I got fired, and I wrote the letter." Pamela's unintentional appropriation (and thus

revision) of the story constitutes a drastic shift in that story's presentation. When Celeste tells that story in which the meme or motif of the girl being fired from work by her father is central, she tells it in first-person. Up to that point, when I had told it, it was in third-person, which is still a kind of minor memetic revision. But when Pamela told it, she reverted to using the original "I" and presenting it as a personal experience, thus tweaking the meme. Because of that interview, now I have a different version of the story that I tell which not only involves Celeste as the original protagonist, but also Pamela as someone who unintentionally stole Celeste's personal narrative.

As time goes on, I expect that the story might continue to evolve and find new life outside of my family context because 1) I have told that story to a number of people who might also share it or even appropriate it into a first-person repertoire, and 2) that is what memes and stories, whether in oral or written form, tend to do. Jack Zipes summarizes this point beautifully in his description of the cultural evolution of fairy tales (although it certainly may apply to any form of narrative, folk or otherwise) as an interaction between modes of story-telling in oral, print, and digital media:

The fairy tale adapted itself and was transformed by common nonliterate people and by upper-class literate people from a simple brief tale with vital information; it grew, became enormous, and disseminated information that contributed to the cultural evolution of specific groups. In fact, it continues to grow and embraces, if not swallows, all types of genres, art forms, and cultural institutions; and it adjusts itself to new environments through the human disposition to re-create relevant

narratives and through technologies that make its diffusion easier and more effective. (222)

Because, as Zipes points out, fairy tales and their motifs tend to cast a wide net relative to the forms they assimilate, they are constantly being presented in new modes and contexts, which promote adaptation and survival. Trickster narratives too are susceptible to the variations in presentation, genre, and context brought on by adaptation to new cultural and rhetorical situations.

The trickster is a meme that appears in folk narratives, including folk tales, legends, myths, ballads, and even memorates (personal experience narratives that become part of an informal tradition in a folk context), as well as in the written literatures of popular and elite culture, the latter being the primary focus of this project. I would argue that cross-cultural comparative study demonstrates a range of variability between representations of tricksterism that speak to a common (perhaps quasi-universal) tendency toward reliance on trickster figures, as with many other examples of folk narrative, to subvert cultural norms, entertain audiences, educate, reaffirm social values, and reflect ways in which such representations are bound by a particular culture (Bascom 344). For example, while tricksters frequently share the trait of cunning or resourcefulness (the ability to play tricks is essential, otherwise the character might be labeled as something else entirely), other characteristics such as lewdness (behavioral), stupidity (psychological), and fluid gendering (biological) might vary depending on the function of the character within the cultural framework and the intent of the author or storyteller.

The female tricksters discussed in this dissertation project, including Moll Flanders, Roxana, Fantomina, and others, align in many ways with characteristics derived from the long memetic tradition of trickster characters, but they also relate to each other within the context of novels and novellas, as well as the broader English folk and print cultures that influenced these novels. These characters, although disruptive and resistant to social norms, have much in common with each other, a fact made exceedingly clear in the comparison between Behn's Miranda from *The Fair Jilt* (1688) and Haywood's Baroness de Tortillée from *The Injur'd Husband* (1722), and in the actions of the other characters analyzed in this project. These female tricksters copy and revise each other, as well as provide insights into and critiques of British culture and constructs of female identity within the period of 1680–1745. The reasons why such memes continue to be transmitted and evolve, as Dawkins would say, to some extent depends on the individual meme, the context in which it appears, and the rhetorical function it is supposed to serve, but one thing we can say for certain is that female tricksters in English novels continue to have cultural utility as sources of entertainment and statements on the needs or concerns of the community in ways that still apply to contemporary readers and situations.

### **Theorizing Tricksters**

Narrative implies the existence of deception and artifice. That is not up for debate. While it is often perceived as negative, deception is not without value, but is rather, as Mark Twain suggests in his essay “On The Decay of the Art of Lying,” an inescapable fact and sometimes a necessity often found in humans, animals, plants, and even in the elements. His point is, “Lying is universal—we all do it,” we, who live in “a world where even benign Nature habitually lies, except when she promises execrable weather” (“On

the Decay”). A Venus flytrap’s use of sweet juices to attract insects requires the alluring construction of a narrative of reward and satisfaction to potential victims. This deception leads to the sustaining of its own life, although it causes the demise of the prey. It is a biological adaptation that stems from the universal need for self-preservation. While there are many commonalities between different categories of organisms, deception is certainly one of the foremost.

Within the worlds of many myths, legends, and tales, the same scenario occurs over and over. Solitary characters, masters of narrative known as *tricksters*, use their superior awareness and intelligence to survive and thrive, deceive other characters, subvert the authority of more powerful entities, and shift social control into their own hands. In an 1885 letter entitled “The Chief God of the Algonkins, In His Character as a Cheat and a Liar,” the Americanist scholar Daniel Brinton applied the term *trickster* to a beloved mythological savior figure who was also known for being a “deceiver in words” (131). Since then, *trickster* has also been applied, perhaps most notably by Jung, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Radin, to characters who also possess qualities of subversion and trickery.

Jung argues that “since all mythical figures correspond to inner psychic experiences and originally sprang from them, it is not surprising to find certain phenomena in the field of parapsychology which remind us of the trickster” (136). Jung identifies manifestations of trickster characters in Christian and Jewish religious rites, Greek mythology, and Native American lore to demonstrate that “this phantom of the trickster haunts the mythology of all ages” and is “an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity” (140). That being said, the trickster archetype, according to Jung, is

not simply “an historical remnant,” but rather “appears just as naïvely and authentically in the unsuspecting modern man” (142). In other words, the trickster as a manifestation of our psyche is something that continues to manifest in modern civilization. Whether or not we agree with Jung’s idea of a collective unconscious and the trickster as proof of the interconnectedness of the human psyche, it is certain that trickster motifs continue to appear and play an important function in human narratives.

Lévi-Strauss also wrote about the trickster, but not as a means of deducing something about the human mental apparatus. Instead, he chose to focus on the function of the trickster in Native American folklore. Using his structuralist approach, Lévi-Strauss argued that tricksters such as Coyote and Raven operate as mediator between “polar terms” or binary oppositions, but in order to do so, the trickster “must retain something of that duality, an ambiguous and equivocal character” (441). Some scholars have questioned the premise by which he arrives at his conclusion (Carroll 303), but the notion that trickster characters “live,” as Babcock-Abrahams suggests, “interstitially”—between fixed categories—is certainly a powerful and useful concept (148). Further, as Franchot Ballinger points out, Levi-Strauss’s “structural analysis makes clear that an American Indian trickster story is not to be approached as a simple folktale of an unsophisticated people” (22), which is important considering Jung’s opinion of the trickster motif as not only archaic but even “primitive or barbarous” (141). The same can be said of these novels by Behn and Haywood, whose work has traditionally been described as formulaic and inferior to the work of later novelists such as Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and so on. What they lack in formal complexity, they are not without value and they are certainly not simple.

Radin's work *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (1956) is a commentary on a cycle of tales about the Winnebago Trickster that contextualizes the anti-social behavior of the trickster within Winnebago cultural norms. Radin's study was certainly informed by Jung's theorizing on the trickster, which one would assume since Jung's essay "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure" appeared in Radin's volume (as did Karl Kerényi's essay "The Trickster in Relation to Greek Mythology"), but Radin implies as much in his preface to the study when he asks the question, "Is this [meaning the tale cycle] a *speculum mentis* wherein is depicted man's struggle with himself and with a world into which he had been thrust without his volition and consent?" (x). Radin answers his own question in the affirmative and adds, "Our problem is thus basically a psychological one. In fact, only if we view it as primarily such, as an attempt by man to solve his problem inward and outward, does the figure of Trickster become intelligible and meaningful" (x). At the same time, Radin argues that the stories should be analyzed in their "specific cultural environments and in their historical settings" (x). Consequently, in Radin's study one sees a move that attempts to mesh a psychoanalytic perspective with a folkloric one similar to the argument made by Hynes and Doty, namely that the audience requires contextual knowledge surrounding the interaction between an individual storyteller and the dynamics of culture to negotiate a narrative's meaning.

David Williams' recent study called *The Trickster Brain* (2012) is yet another attempt to figure out why trickster figures exist. Williams relies on a cognitive approach (combining neuroscience and evolutionary theory) to postulate that human beings have an innate impulse to deal with complexity, contradiction, and conflict. Trickster figures essentially help them work through complex situations and ideas. Williams' ideas are



based on the premise “that there *is* a universal human nature, and that similar myths exist worldwide because all humans have evolved similar dispositions” (4). Williams is motioning toward a universal narrative source that is largely unconscious and transcends culture, even though the figures are translated into cultural terms, which represents a pendulum swing back toward the universalizing of the trickster to create a more cohesive system of classification. While Williams’ approach is valuable and different, it seems in many ways overly deterministic. I would argue, as Hynes and Doty do, that the most productive approach to discussing tricksters lies in “steer[ing] a course in between those who see the trickster as so universal a figure that all tricksters speak with essentially the same voice and those who counsel that the trickster belonging to individual societies are so culture-specific that no two of them articulate similar messages” (Hynes and Doty 2). What such an approach loses in specificity, it gains in diversity, while avoiding the allure of constructing a key to all mythologies.

### **Tricksters as a Category**

While the Winnebago Trickster is certainly one of the more well-known examples (among researchers in the field) of tricksters, the long list of narrative figures who could be referred to by the title *trickster* include Prometheus and Hermes from Greek mythology and Loki from the Norse; the African trickster Esu-Elegbara, whom Henry Louis Gates, Jr. discusses in his acclaimed study, *The Signifying Monkey*, and whom Gates uses as an example of the underlying subversive qualities in the interpretive processes and double-speak of African and African-American rhetorical practices. Gates places Ifa, “the god of determinate meanings,” against Esu, “the god of indeterminacy” and “the god of interpretation because he embodies the ambiguity of figurative language”

(21). Other examples include Anansi the spider from African and Caribbean folk tales; the Monkey King from India; Sheherazade and Jeha from the Middle East; Nasreddin Hoca from Turkey; Till Eulenspiegel from Germany; Giufà from Sicily; Reynard the Fox, Tom Thumb, and Robin Goodfellow from England; Coyote and Raven from North America; and many others. The prevalence and persistence of these and similar characters in cross-cultural narratives over time has led Radin to refer to the tricksters as one of the “oldest expressions of mankind” (ix).

Some of these trickster characters fit the label primarily due to the central quality of cleverness and adeptness in playing tricks while also demonstrating goodness, morality, benevolence, and a drive to aid oppressed people and subvert the tyranny of oppressors—e.g., Robin Hood (these are often given the label *culture heroes*). Others paradoxically balance cunning and intelligence superior to the characters around them with a lack of foresight, naïveté, and even stupidity. In fact, many characters oscillate between con artist extraordinaire and simpleton so much that it becomes difficult to classify them as tricksters or mere noodles. While many tricksters can fool others over and over, they themselves are frequently tricked as well (Lankford 714). For example, in Radin’s work on the Winnebago Trickster cycle, Trickster fools the entire tribe into giving him large quantities of food by taking advantage of their pre-warpath ritual feasts, when in fact he never intends to go anywhere but his tepee to have sex (5). He later manages to lose all of his food when foxes steal it (he is literally “outfoxed”), and Trickster burns his anus in the process (18). The trickster’s downfall is the result of being guided by spontaneous feelings of greed, avarice, and uncontrollable desires, which all tend to create situations that reason would have told them to avoid, sometimes even to the

extent of transgressing serious cultural taboos and profaning sacred objects, rituals, and beliefs.

Because tricksters are so complicated, classifying or defining them presents a challenge. They can demonstrate a range of contradictory behaviors and qualities, and scholars interested in trickster studies have debated for and against reducing the cross-cultural representations of characters who might qualify as tricksters into a single group for comparative study, which is why Hynes and Doty rightly claim that the “diversity and complexity of the appearances of the trickster figure cause doubt that it can be encompassed as a single phenomenon” (2). They add that, since Radin’s study, “the number of studies of individual tricksters has grown, and the range of trickster phenomena is now such that many scholars argue against a generalizing, comparativist view” (2). At the same time, while the comparativist approach to trickster studies may start to break down under the stress of attempting a universal classification of characters (for example, the behavior and context of Hans Christian Andersen’s Little Claus is a very different than that of the apocryphal Judith in many ways, even though they do both rely on trickery to accomplish their ultimate goal of overturning hierarchies of power), the term *trickster* is still useful in giving scholars a heuristic way of entering a meaningful discussion about particular characters from particular oral and literary traditions, even if those characters are diverse and sometimes contradictory. Contradiction is usually the point.

### **Trickster Behavior**

Having discussed some of the challenges of analyzing and attempting to classify and discuss tricksters, I would now like to look at some of the ways scholars have

attempted to summarize the functions of tricksters generally and answer the question, “What do tricksters do and why do they behave like that?” As I have attempted to make abundantly clear, many scholars have speculated on the function of the trickster’s existence, generally and specifically. In her study on female tricksters in the context of American popular culture, Lori Landay, drawing on the work of scholars like Radin and Babcock-Abrahams, describes tricksters as “representations of liminality, duality, subversion, and irony....[They] use impersonation, disguise, theft, and deceit to expose hypocrisy and inequality, to subvert existing social systems, and to widen their sphere of power” (2). George Lankford attempts to draw some general principles of trickster behavior that should be considered in the process of identifying trickster characters:

[Trickster] is the individual who is isolated from society and who has no concern for it. He is the one creature without goals for himself or others. He is a menace to society without being its enemy, and he brings disaster without malevolence. He is the rule breaker par excellence: He mocks religious rituals....Trickster is a breaker of taboos....There is something simultaneously horrifying and satisfying about his breaking the rules all humans in society chafe at. He does, it has been observed, what everyone would like to do, but cannot, whether because of fear, reason, or virtue. Trickster is the ultimate poor role model for living in community. (714)

Lewis Hyde has also provided some perspective on these behaviors:

Trickster is a boundary-crosser. Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and trickster is always there, at the gates of the city and the gates of life, making sure there is commerce. He also attends the internal

boundaries by which groups articulate their social life. We constantly distinguish—right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, young and old, male and female, living and dead—and in every case trickster will cross the line and confuse the distinction. (*Trickster*, 7)

Hyde adds that the trickster is not only a crosser of boundaries, but “there are also cases in which the trickster *creates* a boundary, or brings to the surface a distinction previously hidden from sight” (7). An example of creating this further “distinction” can be found in the final episode of the eighth season of the BBC television series *Dr. Who*. The Master/“Missy” (played by Michelle Gomez), the arch-nemesis of the Doctor (played by Peter Capaldi), engineers a plot, the formation of a Cyberman army created from corpses. The situation forces the Doctor to answer the question he put to his companion, Clara, in an earlier episode: “Am I good man?” (“Into the Dalek”). The answer, he realizes, is no, but based on his behavior he is not evil either, but rather inhabits a gray space between the two (“Death in Heaven”). Employing the trickster in a story rhetorically functions as a critique of social constructs and a way of raising awareness regarding knowledge previously unrecognized. While it may be connected to some tension of which the storyteller is unconscious, it also may function as a conscious representation of a storyteller’s rebellion or resistance to established rules.

Tricksters are often identified with folklore and oral traditions (and many of the tricksters I have identified appear in folk narratives), but tricksters also appear in written literature as well, ranging from William Shakespeare’s Puck in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. The literary tradition of rakes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in poetry, plays, and novels, provide

many potential examples of trickster or trickster-like behavior, including Robert Lovelace of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, whom William Beatty Warner, in a somewhat controversial reading of the novel, "champions...as a *trickster*, likened to the deconstructive effects of language itself" (Hinton 59). Tricksters appear in film and television, including Joker in *Batman*, Gabriel in *Supernatural*, Mr. Mxyzptlk in *Superman: the Animated Series*, and any number of others. All of these iterations of the trickster figure differ from each other in many ways. Yet somehow they seem to share some basic characteristics outlined above, particularly in terms of creating and crossing boundaries. They use their intelligence to deceive and gratify their wants and needs, and even sometimes rectifying social injustices. While Restoration and eighteenth-century literature provide examples of both male and female trickster figures, one could argue that their functions in English society would be different because of the social regulation governing male and female behavior. Men operated with more license in matters of diversion, sex, business, politics, and other social domains, while women were the recipients of a more stringent social code. Consequently one can also argue that the social resistance perpetrated by female tricksters constituted a movement to create more freedom for themselves, while male tricksters were often operating in an already liberated space. This project explores the trickster characteristics of female characters in novels and novellas being written in England from the late seventeenth century through the first half of the eighteenth century within the context of the social movements of that time period, as well as some of the prevalent patterns recognized in trickster narratives cross culturally (where such comparison provides the potential for deeper meaning and appreciation).

## Gendering Tricksters

Referring to the topic of gender in trickster studies, Landay writes, “Gender is a previously neglected yet important aspect of trickster figures” (27). In the discussion of many trickster figures, gender is often a key issue. In this project, it is a point of focus to which I draw attention in my use of the term *female trickster*. I use the term *female trickster* because 1) the characters I refer to as tricksters are all represented as women biologically, 2) *female trickster* is the term employed by scholars such as Landay and Ricki Tannen to describe such characters, and 3) the study of women characters as tricksters has been, until recently, ignored by scholars based on narrow definitive parameters for classifying trickster characters in oral and written literature.

The absence of female tricksters has existed in the domain of trickster studies for decades. In 1999, Hyde attempted to address the absence of women in trickster studies when he wrote,

All the standard tricksters are male. There are three related reasons why this might be. First, these tricksters might belong to patriarchal mythologies, ones in which the prime actors, even the oppositional ones, are male. Second, there may be a problem with the standard itself; there may have been female tricksters who have simply been ignored. Finally, it may be that the trickster stories articulate some difference between men and women, so even in a matriarchal setting this figure would be male (“Where Are All the Female Tricksters?” 335).

Hyde’s reasons cover a fair range of possibilities, all of which potentially explain in different situations part of the reason behind the absence of female trickster stories under

consideration. However, Hyde's first and third speculations on this critical void, assuming that female tricksters simply do not exist and that they do not exist because the rhetorical purpose of the trickster in addressing gender issues does not require a female presence, is speculative and somewhat narrow. Marilyn Jurich has demonstrated convincingly that they do exist in folk narratives, which aligns best with Hyde's second speculation, that female tricksters do exist and they have simply been ignored. Whatever the reason might be, the problem with standard gendering practices and biases of scholars who have done work with trickster stories reveals itself in George Lankford's pronoun usage in his description of the trickster: "*He* is the one creature without goals for himself or others. *He* is a menace to society without being its enemy, and he brings disaster without malevolence. *He* is the rule breaker par excellence: *He* mocks religious rituals" (714; italics added). In Lankford's repetitive use of the word *he*, Lankford is representative of many past folklore and anthropological scholars interested in trickster studies, rather than exceptional. Lankford is supposed to be talking about tricksters in general, but his prose constructs a trickster type derived primarily from a prejudicial patriarchal model based on faulty assumptions. This implicit maleness, regardless of body of narratives on which studies are conducted, is probably connected to Radin's study of the Winnebago Trickster cycle, whose enormous detachable phallus in many ways set the tone for the field of trickster studies.

Widening the gendering parameters of the traditional patriarchal system for defining tricksters allows scholars to study quite a few representations of female tricksters. Williams advocates for a more inclusive gendering model, although his descriptive vocabulary relative to female tricksterism leaves something is less than



complimentary: “Trickster literature is littered with stereotypical witches, temptresses, sexual predators, and whores: women who use evil cunning and subtle wiles to manipulate and control men” (162). Robert Darnton also includes women as part of trickster lore and uses as evidence “the ‘clever maiden’ motif of the German tales” (56), as well as a French variant of “Red Riding Hood” that—it is assumed—predates Charles Perrault’s seventeenth-century version. In this tale variant, Red uses her intelligence as a survival tactic, and not as a means of self-gratification or perpetrating “evil” acts, as Williams’ stereotypical examples, which tend toward denigration and marginalization, imply. Judeo-Christian religious tradition provides stories of Lilith, Potiphar’s wife, Jael, Delilah, and Judith, to name a few, some of whom are seen as wicked, while others are celebrated as heroic, but all of whom, it could be argued, merit a place to a greater or lesser degree in the discussion of trickster figures. Shakespeare’s works give us the initially boisterous but later slyly submissive Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew* and the cross-dressing Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, both of which have roots in folktale traditions (see Artese 105; Brunvand 345). Folklore from all over the world, as Jurich has demonstrated, supplies many more interesting examples of women functioning in the trickster role.

They do share many of the characteristics possessed by “standard” male tricksters, to borrow Hyde’s phrasing, but they also possess unique characteristics and tactics. Jurich argues, in *Scheherezade’s Sisters: Trickster Heroines and Their Stories in World Literature* (1998), “Of course, the tricks of women will be unlike the tricks of men. Women’s resources often usually depend on their sexuality and their knowledge of sexuality—both men’s and women’s....The woman’s power does not lie in property or in

military might. Her power lies in her disposition and her brain—whether she be an old woman or a child. Trickery of course enhances power” (19). Jurich refers to such female trickster characters as “trickstars” and writes, “Because women have been disempowered in so many places for so many centuries, they have had to resort to trickery to improve their lives or simply in order to survive” (19). Her tone and the language she uses to analyze the array of characters she presents as “trickstars” reflects compassion and seeks to avoid the use of negative social labels to characterize their functions and the cultural work they perform. At the same time, just as Williams goes too far in the use of negative terminology for characterizing female tricksters, Jurich perhaps gives “trickstars” too much credit in her analysis of their narrative functions and roles. I would argue that once again some negotiation is called for.

Tannen focuses her study of the female trickster on what she calls post-Jungian representations of the type and its energy. While there is some uncertainty about the actual definition of *post-Jungian*, it involves critical revisions of Jung that draw on feminist, race, ethnic, and cultural studies. Tannen acknowledges the traditional aspects of trickster archetypes, but writes that there are differences between male and female depictions of tricksters. For example, she writes, “The most significant difference can be seen in the postmodern embodiment of archetypal Trickster energy in a female body with psychological authority, physical agency, and bodily autonomy” (8). Tannen also writes that with female tricksters “humor and irony are deployed as strategic and transformative devices aimed at revolution and not just revolt” and their identities resist victimization (8). Tannen also uses the idea of a Trickster imagination or Trickster energies employed by female writers such as Anne Finch in the seventeenth century and Jane Austen and the

Brönte sisters in the nineteenth. While Tannen's arguments are helpful in identifying evidence of the literary tradition employing either female trickster types or authors who themselves exemplify trickster characteristics or "energies" (101), the self-admitted selectiveness of her argument leaves a large gap in time that excludes or at least only vaguely hints at the contributions of women writers such as Behn and Haywood who operate in that same tradition of female tricksters.

Landay, using a cultural studies approach to twentieth-century American pop culture icons such as Mae West, Lucille Ball, and others, also focuses on identifying female tricksters in twentieth-century popular culture, their characteristics, and their cultural functions. She writes, "Suffice it to say here that female tricksters articulate the paradox of femininity and autonomy, of representations of women who draw from the spectrum of human attributes and behaviors regardless of the constraints of cultural definitions of gender" (26). Consequently, taking all of these views into account, it seems safe to conclude that female tricksters do indeed exist in multiple cultural domains and media and have quite simply escaped critical attention for a number of years. One can also conclude, with Landay, that female tricksterism operates on a "continuum," ranging from more negative to amoral to more positive representations (Landay 29). There are female tricksters who are heroes, there are female tricksters who are fools, and there are female tricksters who are demons, as well as combinations of each of those roles. Their weapons are irony and humor, and they are motivated by repression, anger, desire, and a need for justice, but their stories do not preclude potential tragedy.

Using the term *female trickster* and thereby blatantly assigning a gender to a trickster character is somewhat ironic itself since one of the functions of many such

characters is to 1) question the way in which gender is performed and perceived socially and 2) embrace a more fluid and flexible understanding of cultural gendering practices, and the author of this project admits that its use is a matter of convenience in delineating and discussing a large segment of characters, while also acknowledging that problems of employing such a phrase. Instances of gender-bending are known to occur in trickster accounts. Radin's study of the Winnebago Trickster includes a story in which Trickster, who normally carries his large penis in a box, uses the organs of an elk to physically change himself into a woman. She then marries the chief's son and bears his children (22). Radin writes, "The overt reason given for doing this is that he and his companions have been overtaken by winter and are starving and that the chief and his son have plenty" (137). Trickster's transformation in this case demonstrates a reaffirmation of some of the existing social constructs within the Winnebago culture: a woman does not provide for herself but rather relies on the male to hunt and forage. Her identity becomes predicated on her ability to produce and rear children. On the other hand it is an unorthodox action out of alignment with traditionally held beliefs about sex and gender and who should copulate with whom. Trickster takes advantage of those traditional roles to preserve his/her life (and because she/he is inherently lazy) and complicates the traditional construct of gender. Other cases involving the trickster's flexible gendering may involve a shifting outward appearance, pertaining to either dress or manner or both, as in the seventeenth-century legends of the "Wicked Lady" Catherine Ferrers, who dressed in men's clothing when committing her acts of robbery (White), much like Moll Flanders, who dresses like a man when she and her accomplices are "watching

shopkeepers' counters, and slipping off any kinds of goods we could see carelessly laid anywhere" (Defoe 197).

In Landay's study, the manner of the female trickster itself can vary from the screwball antics of the housewife Lucy in *I Love Lucy* to the sexual innuendos of Mae West's radio shows. Landay's claim about these representations is that they

tell a story about the social relations of the sexes, about the ways in which women's exertions of covert and overt power in the sociosexual marketplace have been represented as both instructive models and cautionary tales. These texts articulate contradictory views of female trickery, which parallel the issues raised by the deceitful, duplicitous, subversive trickster figure, but they are also inflected by issues of gender.

(29)

Ultimately, the central concept replayed time and again in these and many other trickster narratives is that gender matters in a way that underscores cultural values, posits alternative realities to those accepted by the community, and even allows for escape from the oppressive regulations of the culture.

### **Female Tricksters in the Early British Novel: The Epitome of "Inconstancy"**

One potential avenue of inquiry that might help our understanding of the function of the trickster around the period being examined in this project pertains to the social conversations or discussions going on at the time that would give the representations of female trickster cultural utility. While there are many potential topics, conversations surrounding constructions of female gender including both men and women are certainly

a place to start, particularly those involving ideas of female inconstancy, nature, and mental acuity.

The female trickster can embody—many if not all—of the aspects of inconstancy, both negative and positive, depending on who is talking, who the audience is, and for what purpose the story is being told. The inconstant, deceptive female is a meme that has persisted across centuries in many cultural narratives. In some places, that woman, such as Judith or Scheherazade, is celebrated and her actions are depicted as heroic or at least entertaining. One might refer to that version of the meme as a culture hero. At other times, the same meme of the inconstant woman is communicated in unflattering and even maligning depictions. Those depictions in which the women are represented and received as wicked or evil are often indications of overt and covert misogyny, and they appear in literature from many different cultures. These women demonstrate similar behaviors and qualities to the culture hero trickster, but they differ rhetorically. This is the danger of being a liminal figure and a crosser of social boundaries: they run the risk of being celebrated or vilified depending not on their actions but on the reception of the narrative's audience and ideological aims of the tellers.

European history and literature, centuries before Aphra Behn made her appearance in the English literary marketplace and stage, contains numerous negative examples of inconstant women. One of the most notorious—and unfortunately influential—examples of misogynistic literature in Anglo-Norman literary history is the *Roman de la Rose*, written by Gillaume de Lorris around 1230, later added to by Jean de Meun in 1275, and during the next century translated into Middle English, in part, some say, by Geoffrey Chaucer (“Roman”). Among the many themes in the *Roman* is the

inconstancy of women, derived from or reflecting Ovid's views on the same subject (Brown-Grant xxvi). Famously, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400) character the Wife of Bath wittily absorbs and attempts to refute such depictions of inconstancy, while simultaneously embodying them. While constancy may refer to constancy or loyalty in love or any other cause to which one has committed, it also may be expanded to mean “the quality of being invariable; uniformity, unchangingness, regularity” (“constancy,” *OED*). The male ideal of female constancy essentially amounts to pigeonholing a woman into being one thing and one thing only, and what she is must correspond to the social constructs regarding female behavior.

Christine de Pizan defends her sex against charges of inconstancy—among other things—in her famous rebuttal to the *Roman de la Rose* called *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) “by citing examples of virtuous women of the past, such as Penelope, Dido and Medea, whom she presents as a credit to their sex” (Brown-Grant xxvi). Much later, Jane Austen would posit a similar position on female constancy and female nature through the character of Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* (1817), who says to Captain Wentworth, “We [women] certainly do not forget you so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves” (1038), thus demonstrating how, despite the passing of several centuries since de Pizan, strong women still felt the need to defend themselves against such pervasive misogynistic stereotypes.

The ideal implied by such derogatory images of womanhood pervaded the Early Modern period, as well as the long eighteenth century, and beyond. Samantha Karasik, writing about such images during the Renaissance, states, “Blinded by the vision of the ideal woman, men held women to unattainable standards of perfection, expecting them to

easily resist enticement” (56). Karasik describes Renaissance society as an “environment plagued by immorality” in which “it was unrealistic to expect women to be unaffected....Over time, the chaste Renaissance woman went from being the standard expectation to a rare gem among a sea of loose women” (56). In other words, the masculine standard for female behavior was more and more out of alignment with the social realities and their consequences. That did not prevent men from trying to uphold their revered standard, of course. Inconstancy, whether fickleness of mind or mutability of character, were perceived as negative characteristics in a woman, as opposed to being firm, unwavering, reliable, and true. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647–80), wrote a poem called “Constancy” in which he rails against the unfaithfulness of a woman:

I cannot change, as others do,  
 Though you unjustly scorn;  
 Since that poor swain, that sighs for you  
 For you alone was born.  
 No, Phyllis, no, your heart to move  
 A surer way I'll try:  
 And to revenge my slighted love,  
 Will still love on, will still love on, and die.<sup>2</sup> (lines 1-8)

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<sup>2</sup> In Behn's *The Rover* (1677), Behn's saucy character Hellena calls attention to this rhetoric of rakes, such as is employed by Wilmot uses in “Constancy”. After being propositioned by Captain Willmore in these terms, “Oh, I'm impatient! Thy Lodging, Sweetheart, thy Lodging, or I'm a dead Man,” Hellena counters with the question, “Why must we be either guilty of Fornication or Murder, if we converse with you Men? –And is there no difference between leave to love me, or leave to lie with me?” (Behn 22)



Wilmot's double standard for the behavior of his own sex is seen in another poem,

"Against Constancy":

Tell me no more of constancy,  
The frivolous pretense  
Of cold age, narrow jealousy,  
Disease, and want of sense.

Let duller fools, on whom kind chance  
Some easy heart has thrown,  
Despairing higher to advance,  
Be kind to one alone.

Old men and weak, whose idle flame  
Their own defects discovers,  
Since changing can but spread their shame,  
Ought to be constant lovers.

But we, whose hearts do justly swell  
With no vainglorious pride,  
Who know how we in love excel,  
Long to be often tried.

Then bring my bath, and strew my bed,

As each kind night returns;

I'll change a mistress till I'm dead—

And fate change me to worms. (lines 1-20)

Prior to Wilmot, Sir John Suckling had already spoken (1609–41) to the same double standard that Wilmot articulates in a poem of his own called “Constancy,” which can be read in two ways: either it carries an embedded irony that seems to poke fun at men who make it their business to bed many women or it is a ridiculous celebration of the license to which men can give their lust:

Out upon it. I have loved

Three whole days together;

And am like to love three more,

If it prove fair weather.

Time shall moult away his wings,

Ere he shall discover

In the whole wide world again

Such a constant lover.

But the spite on 't is, no praise

Is due at all to me;

Love with me had made no stays,

Had it any been but she.

Had it any been but she,  
 And that very face,  
 There had been at least ere this  
 A dozen in her place. (lines 1-16)

However, not all writers at the time saw this female variability or inconstancy as a negative characteristic, and some make arguments against people like Wilmot, albeit in different ways. For example, while Wilmot does say, all in all, that both sexes are inconstant, he finds fault with the inconstancy of women, while he revels in his own. In the same century but prior to Wilmot John Donne (1573–1631) described the inconstancy of the sexes as a human problem in “Woman’s Constancy”:

NOW thou hast loved me one whole day,  
 To-morrow when thou leavest, what wilt thou say ?  
 Wilt thou then antedate some new-made vow?  
 Or say that now  
 We are not just those persons which we were?  
 Or that oaths made in reverential fear  
 Of Love, and his wrath, any may forswear?  
 Or, as true deaths true marriages untie,  
 So lovers' contracts, images of those,  
 Bind but till sleep, death's image, them unloose?  
 Or, your own end to justify,  
 For having purposed change and falsehood, you  
 Can have no way but falsehood to be true?

Vain lunatic, against these 'scapes I could  
 Dispute, and conquer, if I would;  
 Which I abstain to do,  
 For by to-morrow I may think so too.

In this poem, Donne points out that inconstancy is not simply a female or male trait, but is rather a part of the ephemerality of human nature. The number of lines dedicated to pointing out the woman's inconstancy reflect the cultural trends of the time and the manner in which male inconstancy is unfairly glossed over. At another point in his life, Donne put forward another interesting perspective on inconstancy in women in which he takes misogynists or "libellers," to task for their raillery, imputing envy as a reason why they practice and vocalize such misogyny:

These envious Libellers ballad against [women], because having nothing in themselves able to deserve their love, they maliciously discommend all they cannot obtain, thinking to make men believe, because they are able to dispraise much, and rage against Inconstancy, when they were never admitted into so much favor as to be forsaken. (*The Complete Poetry and Prose*, 281)

In other words, Donne basically describes the crowd of misogynists who espouse these opinions of women as men who have never actually been with a woman and have no idea what they are talking about. In addition to finding that the vitriol of men against women is merely a projection of the male inability to garner female attention and that women have a right to change their mind as often as they wish, he also writes that inconstancy can be a positive characteristic:

That Women are Inconstant, I with any man confess, but that Inconstancy is a bad quality, I against any man will maintain: For every thing as it is better than another, so is it fuller of change....Women by their slye changeableness and pleasing doubleness, prevent even the mislike of those [what Donne calls “nice and fastidious minds”], for they can never be so well known, but that there is still more unknown. (*The Complete Poetry and Prose*, 281)

Consequently, Donne believed that the appeal of women derives from the mystery and mutability of their characters and should be upheld as a positive, rather than a negative, quality and even encouraged and cultivated: “This name of Inconstancy, which hath been so much been poisoned with slanders, ought to be changed into variety, for which the world is so delightfull, and a Woman for that the most delightfull thing in this world” (*The Complete Poetry and Prose*, 282). Donne himself of course was no saint, especially in his early years, as is indicated by his poem “The Flea,” a dialogue in which a rakish speaker attempts to use the metaphor of the flea to convince a woman to have sex with him, but his views, although they still buy in to constructs about female nature, do demonstrate a more sympathetic deviation from other male perspectives of his time. His ideas about female mystique and variety also show why at least later in the seventeenth century, actresses (including Nell Gwynn, mistress to James II), whose entire profession included the performance of multiple identities and role-playing, would have been perceived as sexually alluring. One can certainly find those same connections at work in the plays and novellas of both Behn and Haywood, both of whom were also associated with the London stage.

Behn's trickster heroine Hellena in *The Rover* forms an interesting source of comparison to Wilmot's points of view because she is not only proud of her inconstancy, as Wilmot is of his, but she puts a positive spin on the quality of inconstancy by using it to place her on equal footing with her male suitor Willmore (no seeming connection to Wilmot, but whose name does provide a glimpse into his rakish qualities), saying,

I am as inconstant as you, for I have considered, Captain, that a handsom  
Woman has a great deal to do whilst her Face is good, for then is our  
Harvest-time to gather friends; and should I, in the days of my Youth,  
catch a fit of foolish Constancy, I were undone...for I profess myself the  
gay, the kind, and the inconstant—the Devil's in't if this won't please  
you" (*Rover*, Behn 48).

Later, in Joseph Dorman's *The Female Rake* (1754), a response to Pope's "Epistle II," the narrator, a woman named Libertina revisits the idea of inconstancy by claiming that all people, not just women, are inconstant and changing, yet she seems to imply that the inconstancy of both sexes is normal and natural: "We all act diff'rent Parts from what we are, / And from our Playing, gain our Character" (5), which reaffirms the conclusion that everyone has multiple identities that they perform in slightly different contexts or situations, and who we are, as human beings, stems from the amalgamation of these performed identities.

The cultural debate on the nature of female constancy is part of a much larger discussion regarding human nature in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, in *Leviathan* (1651) Thomas Hobbes discusses the laws of nature, and particularly human nature,

A LAW OF NATURE (*lex naturalis*) is a command or general rule, discovered by reason, which forbids a man to do anything that is destructive of his life or takes away his means for preserving his life, and forbids him to omit anything by which he thinks his life can best be preserved....The condition of man is a condition of war of everyone against everyone, so that everyone is governed by his own reason and can make use of anything he likes that might help him to preserve his life against his enemies. (72)

Hobbes' explanation of the laws of nature is especially interesting to think about in terms of tricksters because such anti-social characters do look out for themselves and their own interests above anyone else's, but their attempts to do so are often self-destructive because of the rules in place that govern proper behavior within the social contract. Female tricksters in the early modern period and the eighteenth century can and often do embody negative and positive aspects of inconstancy and are projections of the "natural" desires and selfishness that Hobbes describes, providing examples of poor behavior that can reaffirm cultural values and constructs when they are unsuccessful in their antisocial endeavors, while also critiquing and creating alternatives to those values when they are successful.

Another particularly relevant cultural trend had to do with idea that women were mentally inferior to men. According to Mary Astell in 1694, the opinion that "Women are naturally incapable of acting Prudently, or that they are necessarily determined to folly" originated from the minds of "Men of more Wit than Wisdom" (16). At the same time, there is textual evidence that suggests women internalized some aspects of such

misogynist opinions, or at least pretended to in order to acquiesce to the prevailing social standards. Lucy Hutchinson (1620–81), an educated woman of the time, writes,

The Apostle reproaches the weaknesse of our sex more than the other, when, speaking of the prevalency of seducers, he says they lead about silly weomen, who are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; therefore every wise and holy woman ought to watch strictly over herselfe, that she become not one of these; but as our sex, through ignorance and weaknesse of iudgement (which in the most knowing weomen is inferior to the masculine understanding of men), are apt to entertaine fancies, and pertinacious in them, soe wee ought to watch over ourselves, in such a day as this, and to embrace nothing rashly; but as our owne imbecillity is made knowne to us, to take heed of presumption in ourselves, and to leane by faith upon the strength of the Lord, and beg his protection, that wee may not be led into error. (“On the Principles of the Christian Religion”)

Astell would ultimately argue against this kind of constructed inferiority, but before she did, Margaret Cavendish wrote in *The World's Olio* (1655) of the “natural” advantages and disadvantages that separate the lots of men and women:

There is great difference betwixt the Masculine Brain and the Feminine, the Masculine Strength and the Feminine; For could we choose out of the World two of the ablest Brain and strongest Body of each Sex, there would be great difference in the Understanding and Strength; for Nature hath made Mans Body more able to endure Labour, and Mans Brain more



clear to understand and contrive than Womans; and as great a difference there is between them, as there is between the longest and strongest Willow, compared to the strongest an largest Oak; though they are both Trees, yet the Willow is but a yielding Vegetable, not fit nor proper to build Houses and Ships, as the Oak, whose strength can grapple with the greatest Winds, and plough the Furrows in the Deep. (“The World’s Olio”)

Hutchinson and Cavendish are postulating a shared assumption about human nature, both male and female—that clearly proceeds on a premise of inferiority whereby men with their so-perceived superior rational capabilities and physical strength, may have a pretense for governing women. Cavendish also acknowledges that there are people who do not share her opinion:

True it is, our Sex make great complaints, that men from their first Creation usurped a Supremacy to themselves, although we were made equal by Nature, which Tyrannical Government they have kept ever since, so that we could never come to be free, but rather more and more enslaved, using us either like Children, Fools, or Subjects, that is, to flatter or threaten us, to allure or force us to obey, and will not let us divide the World equally with them, as to Govern and Command, to direct and Dispose as they do; which Slavery hath so dejected our spirits, as we are become so stupid, that Beasts are but a Degree below us, and Men use us but a Degree above Beasts; whereas in Nature we have as clear an understanding as Men, if we were bred in Schools to mature our Brains,

and to manure our Understandings, that we might bring forth the Fruits of Knowledge. (“The World’s Olio”)

What appears here is a debate vacillating between the idea of female nature as comprised of folly and intellectual inferiority and female nature as comprised of mental acuity and intellectual parity (or even superiority). Defoe would eventually take part in this discussion in his *Essay on Projects* (1697) when he wrote,

I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilised and a Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning to women. We reproach the sex every day with folly and impertinence, while I am confident, had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves. (“Of Academies”)

He goes on to add,

The capacities of women are supposed to be greater and their senses quicker than those of the men; and what they might be capable of being bred to is plain from some instances of female wit which this age is not without, which upbraids us with injustice, and looks as if we denied women the advantages of education for fear they should vie with the men in their improvements. (“Of Academies”)

The female trickster as a contradictory or paradoxical motif fits hand in glove into a discussion of this nature because she is capable of embodying both extreme cleverness and shortsightedness, intelligence and ignorance, careful calculation and foolish spontaneity. For example, Fantomina demonstrates a profound dexterity and ability to

change herself into different people, to keep her lover Beauplaisir on the string and in the dark about who she is, and yet she overlooks the possibility that her affair might result in her becoming pregnant, which does eventually happen. Haywood's parody of Richardson's Pamela Andrews, Miss Syrena Tricksy, is equally clever in her way of seducing men, but she almost always finds a way to lose what she gains. Such patterns of behavior are consistent in trickster characters in many bodies of literature. In this period one finds that they have not lost their usefulness in conserving the tension between intelligence and stupidity as a key factor in human identity and relationships. It also shows that people are not generally either intelligent or stupid but rather amalgamations of both at different times and to varying degrees, and thus should not be easily labeled or stereotyped.

### **Structure of the Project**

This dissertation is divided into a series of chapters that demonstrate ways in which female characters from the novellas and novels of Behn, Defoe, and Haywood function within the tradition of female tricksters who neither stem solely from the picaresque tradition nor from the psychological drives of a human collective, but as the result of memetic transmission within a culture of artists who borrow images from each other that comment on existing social situations and issues. This process of literary borrowing and innovation falls in line with the imitative literary processes of the Augustan poets, but also continues the folk processes found in the oral tradition.

In chapter one, I examine how the evolution and development of the British novel between 1680–1745 occurred, according to scholars of the novel, including Ian Watt, Michael McKeon, and April London, and how its form and the ideologies that drove its

development align with the traditional functions of tricksters in general, but especially the female tricksters that appear in English novels. I also examine instances in which female tricksters appeared in written texts during the seventeenth century and the manner in which those characters provide a context for our understanding of the relationship between the stage, the oral tradition, and the novel.

Chapter Two follows the trickster exploits of Miranda from Behn's 1688 novel *The Fair Jilt* as she uses her cunning to exploit her role as a Begine nun through the use of ceremonial vestments. Her escapades form a commentary on the nature of identity and truth, as well as a parody of religion. Behn's ambiguous ending also provides space for an interpretation that allows Miranda to avoid complete capitulation to social norms.

Chapter Three focuses on the early life of Moll Flanders, who is a manifestation of the female trickster in many ways. First of all, as Ian Watt has indicated, her "actions" have been placed in the context of the picaresque novel, although "the feeling evoked by them is of a much more complete sympathy and identification: author and reader alike cannot but take her and her problems more seriously" (94). This chapter will consider Moll's early trickster "influences," including her mother, the gypsy community she claims to have escaped from, and the two Colchester brothers who "loved" her, all of whom instruct her in trickster behaviors and characteristics which she eventually puts to use in her later life.

Chapter Four is a comparative study treating the trope of the female companion as the trickster in Defoe's novel *The Fortunate Mistress* and Haywood's *The City Jilt*. It follows the adventures of Roxana and her maid, Amy, as they creatively confront hard times brought on by an unfortunate marriage to a spendthrift, who ultimately leaves them

when he runs out of money. Roxana and Amy—mostly Amy—use their wiles to survive, and Amy especially shows an uncanny capacity for deception. While they frequently work as a team, with Amy acting out Roxana’s desires, itself a common rhetorical function of the traditional trickster narrative, Roxana also plays tricks on her maid by forcing her to sleep with Mr. ---- and having a child by him. The relationship between Roxana and Amy, as mentioned above, reveals anxieties about the amount of power servants have over their masters and mistresses, and while they are often seen as belonging to a lower, working class, Amy shows great dexterity and power in her behavior. Roxana refers to her as a devil, but her behavior is more ambiguous and complex than pure evil. As a figure of bubbling desires and intricate designs, as well as blind spots and lapses in judgement, she demonstrates, since one may see her as an extension of her mistress’s unacted passions, the inner—although not complete—corruption of the upper classes.

In chapter five I analyze Fantomina’s ability to transform herself into multiple women as she possesses the attentions of her beloved Beauplaisir, in the process internalizing the discourses of the marketplace and economic sphere in order to control the desires of her wandering lover. Catherine Craft-Fairchild claims that Fantomina’s roles “rise in rank” as she ascends from prostitute to serving-maid to widow to aristocrat, with each role acting as a kind of synecdoche for the stories of similar prostitutes, serving-maids, and widows who were seduced by rakes (“Reworking Male Models,” 830). I argue that Fantomina’s role-taking has a more circular shape, beginning with the “young lady of high birth” who visits the play-house while her mother is away, moves to “creature” or prostitute Fantomina, the servant Celia, the Widow Bloomer, returns to the

high-class with Incognita role, and finally becomes the “creature” again when she gives birth to Beauplaisir’s child. The circular pattern of her roles, along with our understanding of these roles as representative of stories, allows the reader to see Haywood’s *Fantomina* as a kind of “tale cycle,” or collection of folk stories, in which the trickster narrates and frames her own exploits, thus taking control of a perpetual narrative in which women can re-exert power over desire. Ultimately, it is not the language of buying and selling and monetary exchange that can bring power as much as learning to control information and narrative.

Chapter Six brings together two more of Haywood’s novels, *The Injur’d Husband* and *Anti-Pamela*, written almost two decades apart, each of which is often perceived as being published in a different phase of Haywood’s career. Both of these novels focus on female tricksters, but more specifically the way in which such characters comment on the practice of epistolary writing. In Behn’s *The Fair Jilt*, letters function as a way for Miranda to express her different identities, and Haywood clearly latches onto the techniques of Behn’s cunning jilt; at the same time, letters become a pitfall to the trickster’s relationships and deception because, in line with the cultural belief expressed by Samuel Johnson, that letters formed a reflection of the self, they could be used as evidence if they fell into the hands of the wrong people. This chapter investigates these tricksters as an articulation of cultural notions surrounding privacy and personal information frequently conveyed through letter writing. Haywood’s works not only show that she was in conversation with her predecessor Behn, but that she was also in conversation with herself and her works, although very different in some ways, retained a certain level of consistency over time.

Chapter Seven deals with the trickster aspects of mother figures in eighteenth-century novels, novellas, and fairy tales. During the period, the role of the mother in educating young women became a major subject of discussion, formed of a number of perspectives on the role of the mother. Conduct books, fables, and wholesome literature formed the bulk of a young woman's literary diet in hopes that these works would essentially domesticate the female and equip her for her role as a mother and manager of the domestic economy. Many mothers, instead of being the sources of such information as would prepare their daughters for that important role, came to be "monitors," wardens of domestic prisons who ascertained that their daughters were sticking to the prescribed curriculum. The prescribed standards for motherhood bleed over into novelistic depictions of certain mothers, and this chapter explores the complex mosaic of cultural perspectives of the motherly role with those found in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (Mother Midnight) and Haywood's *Anti-Pamela* (Syrena's mother), as well as other works. The other side of motherhood repurposes the conduct-book version of motherhood into a shadowy reproduction of itself.

Chapter Eight is a pedagogical rationale for using mimesis and imitation as a pedagogical framework for teaching eighteenth-century literature and rhetorical genre theory. The chapter proposes a way of expanding the utility of literature courses in general, taking advantage of the generic diversity in the eighteenth century, diversifying the kinds of texts usually taught in an upper-division literature elective, and attracting students from creative writing and professional writing emphases. The chapter includes appendices (found at the end of the dissertation) that contain a sample syllabus, calendar, course assignments, and sample papers.

## Conclusion

While trickster studies are frequently based on cultural meanings derived from the scholarly analysis of folk narratives such as myths and legends, recent scholarship on tricksters has done much to track and analyze the appearance of the trickster motifs in written literature, and even the femme fatales and Mae Wests of film, radio, and television shows. As stated, the focus of this project concentrates primarily on female tricksters in early British novels and novellas. In *Scheherazade's Sisters*, Jurich draws attention to the presence of female tricksters in the novels of Behn and Haywood (as well as Richardson and Thackeray), but her comment, which only recognizes their existence rather than taking the time to analyze their function, is understandably brief and given only in passing since her main focus is on the female trickster as a cross-cultural folktale motif (123). In this project, I will expand on that acknowledgment to argue that female tricksters, a folkloric motif, were transmitted into the novel tradition, ultimately playing an important role in the novel and in cultural conversations and trends from 1680–1745 (and beyond). Behn, Defoe, and Haywood played similar roles—although their works are quite different in many ways—in representing women who could play within and even at times covertly break free from social norms. These female tricksters belong to a particular place historically and geographically, but they share characteristics with a body of other narrative characters that transgress and reaffirm social values and illustrate the constructedness of social values and patriarchal systems and organizations through cunning, deceit, and even heroism.



## Chapter 1

### Folklore in the English Novel: Female Tricksters and Popular Texts

As demonstrated earlier, scholars have a few theories about why tricksters exist and where they come from. Part of their appeal derives from “trickster energies” as Tannen calls them (transgressive and subversive tendencies), and tricksters symbolically articulate those drives and desires. Storytellers and writers often borrow such symbols from other texts and storytellers, who themselves borrowed from some other source. Such memetic chains comprise the bulk of cultural narratives because motifs/memes have the tendency to travel and replicate.

The first part of this chapter examines potential popular literary influences containing female tricksters that might have influenced the novel tradition and posited an alternative to the ideal feminine characteristics demonstrated in conduct literature. Such sources include folk sources, such as ballads and folktales; written sources, such as criminal biographies; and performed or embodied sources, such as stage plays. These texts form a literary context that is associated closely with figures from the novels of Behn, Defoe, and Haywood and demonstrates the already established utility of the female trickster in British culture before and during the period under discussion in this project. The female tricksters in later chapters do carry many meanings consistent with the behavior of other tricksters cross culturally, but those meanings draw additional cultural relevance and utility from other contemporary literary trends. The second portion examines the conventions and characteristics of the novel, the historical context and readership of the novel, and why the novel’s conventions and context provided a suitable

literary environment for the kind of cultural work performed by the female trickster motif it espoused.

### **Female Tricksters in Seventeenth-Century Folkloric and Popular Tradition**

The broadside ballad is an important printed genre in British literature connected to the folk tradition on either side. D.L. Ashliman defines the ballad as a genre, calling it, “A narrative, often rhymed, composed in a rhythmic form suitable for singing or chanting. Many traditional folktales in prose have ballad counterparts with essentially the same plots” (180). The late eighteenth century saw a renewed interest in ballad collection with Bishop Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), followed by the collecting efforts of writers such as Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott during the next few decades. Imitations of ballads by Burns, Scott, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge—especially Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* (1798)—also became fashionable and helped usher in the Romantic period. Scott’s ballad-collecting began in 1792:

Scott's approach to authenticating, editing, and arranging material caused controversy at the time and falls short of modern standards of scholarship. He relied on an innate ‘feeling’ for the genuine article and did not hesitate to ‘improve’ ballads, changing words, inserting new stanzas, mending rhymes and rhythms, fusing various versions, and sometimes setting old legends to verses of his own. Scott argued that the ballad was, by definition, a fluid form, to which each interpreter gave his or her own stamp. He insisted that he was always faithful to the spirit of a ballad, and

valued readability over antiquarian exactitude. (“The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border”)

In 1894, Francis Gummere, who was part of the late nineteenth-century push in ballad collection and research that included the efforts of James Francis Child (1825–96), stated, “The ballad, then, must give us the sense of tradition, and a flavor of spontaneity; riches of the emotions and of direct vision, poverty of intellect and reflection” (xxix). In 1919, Hyder Rollins wrote, “Undoubtedly the ballad had begun to play an important role before 1500, and in its origin runs much farther back, far antedating the art of printing” (258). Consequently, while some critics have argued that the ballad began in the sixteenth century as a “low form,” the ballad was certainly connected to other older forms of literature (oral poetry and epic which were frequently sung) (Nebeker 991). While traditional ballads and songs are connected to and transmitted through word of mouth from person to person and group to group, *broadside* ballads are an extension in printed form—some might say appropriation—of the folk practice of ballad-making. Although many of the tunes and lyrics for broadside ballads (as well as the form of the ballad) came from the oral tradition, many others were brand-new, especially in news ballads, which incidentally, according to Lennard J. Davis, were often referred to as “novels” and were frequently “journalistic” (45, 47). In fact, the name of the well-known tune would often appear on the broadside above the lyrics so people would know how to sing the words. If the ballad said something to the extent “to the tune of, The Two English Travellers,” it was acting on the assumption that many people would already recognize that tune. Other times ballads might say, “To a pleasant new play-house tune,” and if that were the case, the customers would first rely on the oral rendition supplied by the ballad-

singer, and then they would be able to sing and share it. Broadside ballads dealt with numerous topics and situations, including “earthquakes, wars, murders, freaks of nature, and supernatural happenings,...religious homilies to those considered most likely to commit violent acts,” as well as “love, history, and other non-news events” (Davis 47). Among the many traditional folk characters they represented, ballads portrayed examples of innocent young women exploited by men, such as one finds in the ballad “A Love-sick maids song, lately beguild, By a run-away Lover that left her with Childe,” and female tricksters who use their intelligence and cunning to shift the locus of power into their own favor.<sup>3</sup>

In some cases, the point of the female trickster as used by the author, usually an anonymous one (a remnant of its connection to the folk tradition), can vary from song to song. For example, in the early modern ballad “A man cannot lose his money, but he shall be mockt too, OR, Suttle Mals love to a simple Coney, To make him an Asse to spend his money,” a woman uses her wiles to entice a young man named Tommy to buy her everything she wants, then jilts him and marries another young man instead. Tommy swears to be revenged on the jilt for her slighting him, but

These words the Damsell heard on,  
and being alwayes cunning,  
She spide him as he walkt i'th street,  
and to him she came running.

She call'd him Rogue and Rascall base,

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of tricksterism perpetrated by women are still sung about and even celebrated in folk songs such as “Red-Haired Mary” (Irish) and “The Maid on the Shore” (Newfoundland).

you slave quoth she, Ile stone yee;  
 And you Clowne, Ile cracke your crowne,  
 a pox of you and your money.

Thus with her scolding speeches,  
 his voyce she overcame,  
 He seeing of no remedy,  
 did let it rest for shame. (lines 113-24)

The author uses the last four lines of the ballad to communicate the purpose of this narrative, which is supposed to be a warning to young men: “Let every honest youngman then, / example take by Tommy, / Lest they repent, when they have spent, / upon a Wench their money” (lines 125-8). Consequently, this ballad operates much like a piece of conduct literature, a genre that increased in popularity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Warnings against such women appear also in other ballads of the time, including “The Trappand Taylor: Or, A pretty Discovery, how a Taylor was cheated, and Married to a beggar-wench, taking her to be a Country Gentlewoman” and “An ANSWER to the Advice to the Ladies of London.” For people who, like Tommy, held property and possessed wealth, the point would have been well taken: avoid women who might be interested only in climbing the social ladder. At the same time, the cunning of this “Damsell” is a focal point in the song. When one considers the fact that members of the lower classe would have been one of the audiences of this piece, as well as the fact that “the Lasse was poor, though bonny” (line 6)—in other words, one of them—she becomes fantasized proxy, a threat to the property holders and wealthier classes, and a

mode of escapism from their own impoverished conditions. This reading of the ballad illustrates Darnton's statement that "tricksterism always pits the little against the big, the poor against the rich, the underprivileged against the powerful" (56).

However, not all ballads in which female tricksters use their cunning to take advantage of those around them have the same kind of dual rhetorical purpose. The ballad "The subtil Miss of LONDON: OR, The Ranting Hector well fitted by this cunning Miss" makes no attempt to pose as a warning about the risks associated with pursuing cunning women. Instead, it almost takes pride in explaining the profound humiliation of a man whose rakish intentions received their just desserts. He gives her a guinea in hopes of enjoying her "tender embraces" later, and then she gives him so much to drink that he falls asleep. She and an older woman strip off his fine clothes and dress him as a woman, which represents a sexual reversal and an inversion of power as she deprives him of his masculinity:

Thus while he was sleeping they stript off his Cloaths  
His Hat, Wigg and Cravat, his Shirt Shoes & Hose;  
Then being as naked as e're he was born,  
In other Apparel they did him adorn.

A course Hempen Smock they did put him on there,  
One which the old Woman was used to wear;  
A red Petticoat, with a Coif on his Pate,  
Then he was array'd at a notable rate. (lines 41-8)

Eventually, they put him “into a great Chest” and “hir’d a boat-man to carry him” to Gravesend, a common route for moving cargo because the roads to Gravesend were often plagued by highwaymen (line 56). Her actions function symbolically in two different ways. First, by stripping him down, turning him into a woman, and sending him to Gravesend, a major port and market at the time, the “subtil Miss” makes commentary on the idea of women as property. As she takes his clothes and money off of his drunken body, the song proclaims that “of this brave Gallant a Booty they made” (line 38). Considered in connection with their later actions seems to indicate that not only his money and other possessions become “booty” or property of hers, but he himself becomes property or cargo, much the same way a woman in marriage might be considered the bodily property of her spouse.

Second, this ballad, using the imagery of death, also implies the cunning young woman’s dominance over the man. This aspect of the ballad connects closely with Lankford’s statement that the trickster “frequently lures others in humiliation, injury, and even death” (714). After the rake drinks enough, the ballad says, “His Reason and Senses was perfectly fled, / With their subtile Doses, as if he were dead” (lines 35-6). The sentiment in the line is interesting for multiple reasons, one of which is how closely the concept parallels how Clarissa talks about being drugged and raped by Lovelace: “But if, as he is a man very uncontrollable, and as I am nobody’s, he insist upon viewing *her dead* whom he ONCE saw in a manner dead, let his gay curiosity be satisfied” (1413). Just as Clarissa uses the image of the corpse to communicate her sense of powerlessness and degradation through sexual violation, in the ballad, the same concept rings equally true of the woman’s power shift. The stripping of the body and dressing it and placing it

in a chest figures much the way one might care for a body in preparation for interment, the chest functioning as a symbolic coffin. The boatman and the ferry to Gravesend (the word *Gravesend* itself implying a connection with death and interment) allude to the mythological boatman Charon who ferried dead souls across the River Styx. When they reach the town, the rake wakes up to find himself demoralized. In this sequence of events, the young woman proves herself to be mistress of life and death, to kill and make alive. As far as the rake is concerned, the power of this female trickster over him is essentially absolute.

The power of the female trickster (acting as a kind of culture hero) manifests itself not just in broadside ballads at the time, but also in oral and literary folktales in French, such as “Little Red Riding Hood,” and British culture, including “Molly Whuppie” “Kate Crackernuts, and “Tom Tit Tot.” Not all of the variants of these folktales contain elements of tricksterism, and in fact some of the more well-known versions, such as Charles Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood,” simply become tales of oppressed innocence and blaming the victim. On the other hand, in an oral version collected by Paul Delarue, thought by some scholars to be representative of the “original” tale variant (Jurich 78), the “trickster heroine,” as Maria Tatar calls her (199), is subsequently undressed and invited into bed by a *bzou* or werewolf who intends to eat her. Red Riding Hood feigns the need to go outside and relieve herself. To prevent her escape, the *bzou* ties a thread around the girl’s foot, but the girl “rescues” herself by tying the thread to a tree and escaping to her own home (Delarue 16). Jurich writes, “This version depicts the heroine as self-reliant and quick-thinking, able to take her life in her own hands” (78), and Darnton adds, “In true Gaulois fashion, the tale recounts the



education of a trickster. Graduating from a state of innocence to one of fake naïveté, Red Riding Hood joins the company of Tom Thumb and Puss 'n Boots" (56). While this element of tricksterism eventually disappeared from or was edited out of subsequent revisions, it seems clear that at one point at least the female trickster was a central motif in this story, empowering the heroine with enough cunning and intelligence to save herself from the menace of an oppressor.

The same can be said of the title heroine of the English tale "Molly Whuppie," found in Joseph Jacobs's nineteenth-century collection *English Fairy Tales* (1890), whose contents are derived from oral variants, some of which can be found in one form or another as early as the sixteenth century. Molly is forced to take care of her sisters and herself after their parents abandon them. Throughout the tale, she and her little family are oppressed by male figures such as an ogre and a wealthy-hungry king, but Molly uses her intelligence to avoid being eaten by the ogre and then stealing magic objects from him (a motif also found in "Jack and the Beanstalk"). Her actions allow her and her sisters to marry a trio of princes, although they cost the ogre's wife (who helped her) and three daughters their lives. Jurich writes, "Here it is only reasonable and just to assert that while tricks may succeed, that it may benefit the trickstar, these same tricks may lead to another's pain or harm" (80). The liminality of the ogre's wife in "Molly Whuppie," as signified by the contrast between her social status as a monster and her benevolence and kindness, connects her to similar figures in "Jack and the Beanstalk" and in Perrault's "Little Thumb." Further, Molly's disregard for the woman's kindness in saving herself and allowing the ogress to be beaten to death by her ogre husband may function as a commentary on and reaffirmation of certain ideas about women in society. Her initial

assistance of Molly and her sisters seems like a move toward sisterhood and community between women, but Molly's final actions demonstrate that a woman's survival cannot always depend on banding together with other women to create solidarity, as it does in "Kate Crackernuts": because of the complexities of social situations, working toward comfort and social acceptance and ultimately survival is frequently ugly and solitary work that unfortunately can divide women from each other as much as it can bring them together.

The tale of "Tom Tit Tot," a variant of "Rumpelstiltskin," provides yet another example of a female trickster from English folklore. The daughter of a poor woman, the heroine of the story forms an interesting contrast to the wit and cunning of Molly Whuppie as she functions more like the trickster-fool than the trickster-hero. When her mother overbakes pies, she tells the daughter to leave them on the windowsill until they "come again," which means that the crust will soften (Jacobs). The daughter misunderstands the phrase, thus showing her lack of domestic knowledge, and takes it literally, so she gluttonously eats them all thinking they will "come again" later, a show of appetite not uncharacteristic for a trickster character. When her mother asks if they have come again, the daughter replies with the punchline, "I've ate 'em all, and you can't have one till that's come again" (Jacobs). Her mother essentially pays her back for her gluttony when she tells the king that her daughter could spin five skeins of flax a day, and the king is so impressed that he offers to marry her, with the threat that if she is unable to spin five skeins a day for a month, he will kill her. The daughter then makes a deal with a "small little black" imp, who says that he will spin her skeins, but if she does not guess his name by the end of the month, she will become his. As a result, the girl tricks the king

into thinking she is spinning the skeins, and at last she learns by accident what the little spinner's name is—Tom Tit Tot—and saves herself. Once again, the stakes for the female trickster are high—her survival is on the line—but she manages to make it through by exploiting information and resources that come to her. Her personality balances lack of understanding with resourcefulness, and in a narrative that draws attention to domesticity and its social importance for women, she manages to survive despite not knowing how to make a decent pie or how to spin. That does not mean that these things are not important, but the norm that women have to be good at managing a household economy in order to fulfill their feminine role suddenly seems more constructed and artificial because of this story.

Criminal biographies, full of folk themes and characters, were also a common source of female trickster exploits during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. At the time, popular tastes hungered for accounts of real-life criminals and con artists, both male and female. According to Richetti,

Criminal fiction helps to perpetuate the criminal as a compelling and fascinating type-figure not simply because he and his environment satisfy a need for the recognizable rather than the ideal in literature, but also because his story and its significance evoke and exploit the deepest hopes and fear of his audience. Moreover, the 'realistic' world of underworld fiction and criminal journalism is, upon examination, an exotic place where mythological simplicities prevail. (*Popular Fiction*, Richetti 24).

Among the many accounts that appeared in popular publication and collections such as the eighteenth-century volume *A General and True History of the Lives and Actions of*

*the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murders, Street-Robbers, &c.*, was the account of the most famous Mal (or Moll) Cutpurse, the inspiration for Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's play *The Roaring Girl* (1611). Mal also appeared in other chapbooks and plays as well, even appearing mid-century in biographical works such as *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith commonly Called Mal Cutpurse* (1662) and *The Womans Champion; or, The Strange Wonder Being a True Relation of the Mad Pranks, Merry Conceits, Politick Figaries, and Most Unheard of Stratagems of Mrs. Mary Frith* (1662). *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith* has interesting political implications, as Mowry writes, because it transforms "the rebellious imp of Renaissance stage and street culture to a royalist heroine and counterrevolutionary whose life emphasized the perils of public interactions voided of principles of obligation and duty" ("Thieves, Bawds," 26). It and *The Womans Champions* also function as interesting accounts of a woman who lives to disrupt societal conventions and categories and test (by crossing them) socially constructed ideas about gendered behavior and self-representation.

*The Womans Champion* essentially sums up in just a few pages what it takes *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*—from which it borrows whole passages—pages and pages to depict, including biographical details such as date and place of birth, her family life, and other sorts of socially disruptive behavior. *The Womans Champion* explains that "a very Tomrig or Rumpscuttle [both words for *tomboy*] she was in her infancy, and delighted and sported only in Boys play and pastime, not minding or companying with the Girls" (1). Her later life, as depicted in both biographical accounts as well as Middleton and Dekker's play, demonstrates proclivities for crime, fighting, bawdry, and business (as well as the intersections between those pastimes), and in the acrostic poem at

the end of *The Womans Champion*, her life in crime receives due homage: “Famous I was for all the Thieving Art” (8). Mal in many ways resembles the Spanish *picara*, an anti-heroic figure who, according to Anna Kaler, allows “her tricks [to] serve as her creative outlet; she is too busy surviving to contemplate her sins; her repentance is always suspiciously self-serving” (something one also finds in Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* when Moll is locked in Newgate awaiting sentence) (2). Further, Kaler adds, “While the *picara* refuses to learn an honest trade, she pursues an informal education in her skills as a thief, con-artist, and prostitute....Like the *picaro*-trickster, the *picara* lives by her wit and her knowledge is focused on the natural ability to survive” (9). The picaresque tradition on the whole, according to Maurice Molho, is derived from and is deeply rooted in the “popular tales” of folk tradition (qtd. in Bandera 43), and consequently, as in the printed broadside ballads, one finds once again intersections between folklore and written literature occurring in the Early Modern period in ways that would pave the way for female trickster as a significant facet in the evolution of the British novel. Further, Mal demonstrates characteristics of the female trickster that align her actions with broader folkloric patterns in which she functions as a contradictory individual capable of critiquing the society in which she exists.

In *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, the narrator refers to Mal as “Mad Cassandra” (A3), an allusion to the Trojan priestess from Virgil’s *Aeneid* who possesses prophetic insight but was also considered to be insane. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, because Cassandra deceived Apollo, “He ordained that no one should believe her prophecies, though true” (“Cassandra”), and the word, when used allusively, connotes not only characteristics such as prophecy and truth-telling, but also the possibility of

deception. Consequently, being a Cassandra is a lot like being the boy who cried “Wolf!” with the inherent tensions that come along with being known for deception when one has some great truth to share. Mal’s connection to Cassandra is deepened by the biographer’s repeated references to some supernatural power, in association with the planets of Mars and Venus, that governs Mal’s behavior: “There is a prevalent power in our Stars that over rules all, and resists and subdues the additionall and auxiliary strength, and reserves of Education; and this I have said to be Mercury in conjunction with, or rather in the house of Venus at her Nativity” (10). Mal is more than the “great Cabal and Oracle of the mystery of diving into Pockets” (5), but there is something potentially prophetic and insightful about the actions or words of a Mal or Cassandra that can divine important things about people or society, and her supernatural qualities that contribute to her identity are only further developed by her interactions with “the Fortune Tellers of the Town (from whom she then learned some smatch and relish of that Cheat)” (22).

One might mistrust or disbelieve her words based on one’s own perception of the source. The question then is, what is Mal trying to communicate about herself, about women, about the society that does not accept her? One answer may have something to do with her role as a “boundary-crosser” and the different ways that she as a woman can become powerful by resisting societal expectations, as is articulated in the preface of the *Life and Death*: “She was the Living Description and Portraiture of Schism and Separation, her Doublet and Petticoate understanding each other, no better than Presbytery and Independency” (A4). “Schism” and “Separation” imply a few things about Mal’s personality and her relationship to society: 1) she creates disruptions within society, creating fragmentation with the systems by which she and everyone else is

supposed to be governed when she defies the laws and perceptions of her social environment by rejection social conceptions of femininity: “She could not endure that sedentary life of sewing or stitching, a Sampler was as grievous as a Winding-sheet, Bodkin and Thimble, she could not think on quietly, wishing them changed into Sword and Dagger for a bout at Cudgels” (7); 2) she creates separation and distance between herself and that society, ultimately becoming a loner, an outlier, an abnormality; and 3) she experiences internal division between the performance of the female and male portions of her personality, as signified by her “Doublet and Petticoate.” This division is both beyond the bounds of prescribed social normalcy, which is usual with tricksters, as well as a reflection of actual social practice at the time. Simon Shepherd states, “It is apparent that the existence of ‘masculine women’ was a social reality, in that female fashion tended to imitate that of males....The scandal of women wearing ‘male’ clothing was that, as we would expect, it upset the ordered scheme that depended on each sex its proper place” (199). While Mal’s manner of dress may reflect the realities of women’s fashions at the time, the narrator of the biography still claims, “Never was any woman so like her in her cloaths” in order to draw attention to her singularity, even among women (17).

Interestingly, while Mal’s apparel may reflect trends in material culture during the Early Modern period, her combination of fashion choices may comment on or at least hint at the artificiality of gender in the culture as it is tied to dress. Commentary on apparel as a reflection of identity, relative to gender or class, is certainly not unheard of in trickster tales. In fact, in a story from Sicily, when Giufà, a trickster-fool, is driven away from a house because of his poor and raggedy appearance, his mother dresses him in the

apparel of an overseer, thus raising his status so he will be accepted by those around him. The tactic works, and after he is invited in to the house, he fills his belly and his pockets with food, saying, “Eat, my clothes, for you were invited!” (“Clothes Makes the Man”). The tale reflects the notion that many people in society place value on appearance as a signifier of status and identity. Mal may be making a similar commentary in relation to gender and the irony of tying something believed to be absolute, like gender, to apparel or dress which can be donned or removed or even, in her case, blended.

Mal’s material dress signifies her liminal position between maleness and femaleness and even serves a metaphor for the double-dealing or two-faced way she lives her life: “She lived in a kind of mean, betwixt open profest dishonesty, and fair and civil deportment, being an Hermaphrodite in Manners as well as in Habit....She was indeed a perfect Ambodexter, being a perfect Mistresse of that thriving Art” (2), which aligns well with Harold Scheub’s declaration that tricksters exist in a “liminal state, the state of betwixt and between” (6). Behn’s *Miranda* (as I will discuss in chapter 2 of this project) also uses clothing as an instrument in her trickster tactics. Mal relies on her ability to inhabit the space between categories, to belong to both sides and neither, to be one thing and its opposite, and as a result is a disruption to the categories of the society she resists. Through her clothing, she becomes an example to other women that a woman does not have to be what society expects her to be; she can create her own path, her own existence, rather than accept the identity that is foisted on her. Interestingly, as noted in her epitaph at the end of *The Womans Champion*, the concept of liminality was so ensconced in her identity that it even plays into the representation of her after her death, her place of rest, and the manner of her eventual resurrection:



Here lies under this same Marble,  
 Dust, for times last Sive to Garble;  
 Dust, to perplex a Sadducee,  
 Whither it rise a He or She,  
 Or two in one, a single pair,  
 Nature's sport, and now her care;  
 For how she'l cloath it at last day  
 (Unless she Sigh it all away)  
 Or where she'l place it, none can tell,  
 Some middle place 'twixt Heaven and Hell. (7)

Consequently, one sees the inherent uncertainties brought on by adopting a middle or liminal position between extremes during her life have followed her into death. While she may go against the rules entirely in a way that tears down barriers and social constructs, she also represents freedom and liberation from the social contract that binds women to an ideal and demands that they exist in subservience to men. Within her very person both genders, male and female, exist in partnership, operating to her best interest. In fact, Mal may commit acts that break the laws of society, but at some level her body and fluid gender operates as a metaphor for a larger social body or community in which male and female can co-exist harmoniously, in addition to motioning toward the inherent complications of which human identity is constructed.

These themes of liminal identity and social disruption, as mentioned previously, exist not only in the *Biography* but also in the earlier portrayal of Mal in the play *The Roaring Girl* by Middleton and Dekker in 1607–10. In fact, the theatrical representations

of the trickster Mal (as well as some of Shakespeare's female characters, such as Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew* and later adaptations of that character by John Fletcher, John Lacy, and other playwrights) anticipate the frequently subversive behavior perpetuated by the female tricksters on the Restoration stage in the later seventeenth century. Canfield writes, "Although most women protagonists of these comedies are not really subversive of the established order but...simply insist on their choices within it, some comic playwrights of the Restoration—most notably Behn, Thomas Shadwell, and Thomas Southerne—do indeed give us truly subversive heroine tricksters who succeed by their wits in destabilizing, particularly through sexual promiscuity, that order's patriarchal, patrilineal genealogical power structure of inheritance" (3). Canfield goes on to say that such heroines function in a Bakhtinian "carnavalesque" framework, using their wits to "obtain space of their own...in which to maintain a combination of agency and (subversive) integrity" (3). The trickery of such female characters would continue of course into the eighteenth-century theater with the works of Susanna Centlivre and John Gay. Indeed, the fact that Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina; or Love in a Maze* begins in a theater is certainly significant for that fact since it connects the subversive performances and social commentaries of Haywood's protagonist in that story to those performed on the stage by so many characters before her.

Consequently, the female trickster characters who appeared in the ballads and biographies and plays of the early modern period serve as an introduction into the study of those subversive female characters who will be discussed in the bulk of this project. They also can demonstrate that there is a tradition of female tricksters occurring in the oral and written literature and on the stage of the seventeenth century that would continue

into the early budding and development of the novel. This chapter merely scratches the surface of a convergence of literary and folk traditions in which the female trickster is a viable narrative force that continued to exist in various forms in the early novel. While the medium for her appearances may have changed from oral to print forms, and circulated in various genres, she conserved many of the functions she possessed in the folklore of the people from which she derived.

### **Female Tricksters as Motifs in English Novels**

In one of Jane Austen's early pieces of juvenilia, a manifestation of what Tannen might refer to as "trickster energies" (101), called "The Beautifull Cassandra," a transgressive young woman steals a bonnet from her mother, sneaks out of the house, acts like a thieving glutton, and returns home to her mother's house, playing the role of an obedient and affectionate young woman as she embraces her mother and proclaims, "This was a day well spent" (44). Austen's early work functions as a satire of the strain of fiction often called amatory fiction, a novel sub-tradition that many have argued Behn and Haywood and others belong to. Interestingly, Austen's use of the female trickster demonstrates that 1) early in her writing career, she felt that this motif was perhaps a definitive one in one area of the novel genre, and 2) the female trickster continued to have utility for Austen even at the end of the eighteenth century as she uses it to mock an entire school of what some might call "female" writing. Austen's Cassandra (which was the name of Austen's only sister, but also serves as a connection, like Mal Cutpurse, to connotations of madness and deception) is a female trickster who essentially makes fun of female tricksters. Even though she uses it against those earlier writers, her use of the

motif still constitutes an act of borrowing and repurposing: Austen represents yet another link in the memetic tradition of female tricksterism in connection with novel writing.

To talk about the female trickster within the development of the novel, one must discuss the genre itself as it existed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This discussion will allow the reader to understand the relationship of that genre to the genres discussed in the introduction by looking at the female trickster as a shared motif. Further, it will provide some theoretical discussion of the novel itself and its function within the culture where it thrived and draw connective conclusions about the trickster's role within the genre.

While I have emphasized at length some of the difficulties of defining the female trickster, I would also add that the attempt to define the novel as a form or genre also has many difficulties because of its rich “thematic, formal, and contextual diversity” (London 6). April London also states, “As a mode in process, [the novel's] history is one of continuous, if uneven experimentation” (1). In this project, *novel* refers to a complex network of conversations and divergent manifestations. While it is often perceived as “new” and different, which viewpoint Ian Watt espouses and promotes (Richetti, *Popular Fiction*, 2), it did not emerge *ex nihilo*, as John Richetti, J. Paul Hunter, and others have more than adequately shown. Rather it evolved as a culturally absorbent genre that drew upon the forms and cultural texts of the past and reconstituted them in various ways. As Margaret Ann Doody writes, “Every novel is a crossroads of ideas, and a collection of what used to be called ‘influences.’ That is, the novel enters into dialogue with other works, or parodies or cannibalizes or subverts them. However we wish to speak of the complex relationships, every novel is intertextual, a tissue of allusions. The better we

understand the allusions, the better (other things being equal) we should be able to read the novel” (“Beyond Evelina,” 365). The purpose of this project is to help readers read the novel—or at least certain novels—“better,” to use Doody’s words. I focus not on the novel as an entire genre, but rather on a clutch of works that have been situated in the history of novel, and the perspectives offered here provide some insight into the ways these novels and novellas reflect a folkloric past that is understood and which continues to enact its many cultural functions.

### **What Is a Novel?**

Definitions of the genre are complex and the debate over what constitutes a novel has its own long history, and the “novel” meant something very different to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century audiences than it does to a more modern audience. McKeon adds, “Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers often use the terms ‘romance,’ ‘history,’ and ‘novel’ with an evident interchangeability that must bewilder and frustrate all modern expectations” (25). J. Paul Hunter adds that the reason why the novel had so many labels, including “‘romances,’ ‘adventures,’ ‘lives,’ ‘tales,’ ‘memoirs,’ ‘expeditions,’ ‘fortunes and misfortunes,’ and (ultimately) ‘novels’” is “because a variety of features and traditions competed for attention in this new hybrid form” (“The Novel and Social/Cultural History,” 9). The definitions of the novel vary depending on who is talking about them, when that individual is talking, and how that individual wants to talk about them, and thus term *novel* accords<sup>4</sup> to suit different critical discussions. For example, E.M. Forster, in *Aspects of the Novel*, writes, “M. Abel Chevalley has, in his

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<sup>4</sup> The author’s term.

brilliant little manual, provided a definition....It is, he says, ‘a fiction in prose of a certain extent’ (*une fiction en prose d’une certaine étendue*). That is quite good enough for us” (6). Forster goes on to add another condition as to word length (no less than 50,000 words), but that aspect of his definition of a novel seems more arbitrary and subject to personal taste than anything else. Other definitions of the novel include descriptions of its ability to absorb and reproduce imitations of other forms, as described by Michael Martone: “The ‘novel’ is not a form, or if it is a form, it is a voracious form. It consumes other forms to form itself” (59), which is why many novels contain aspects of fiction and nonfiction forms, including autobiography, romance, epistolary writing, diaries, and other forms (see Singer and Walker 4). According to Tzvetan Todorov and Richard Berrong, “A new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination” (161), but the novel as a genre is an especially good example of those processes.

Most conversations on the definition of the English novel’s “beginnings,” at least since the middle of the twentieth century, almost certainly include Ian Watt’s study *The Rise of the Novel*, which has been a catalyst for critical discussions on the British novel since its publication in 1959. Anytime a critic wants to discuss a new, previously unthought-of point of view on the formal qualities, historical development, or cultural and rhetorical impact of that genre, he or she returns to Watt because he constructed the most complete, well-researched, well-expressed model of the novel’s formal development during the eighteenth century. In Watt’s model, which connects the rise of literacy and the rise of the middle class with the subsequent “rise” of the novel, the defining characteristic of the new genre is what he refers to as formal realism. Watt

writes, “Both Richardson and Fielding saw themselves as founders of a new kind of writing and...they both viewed their work as a break with the old-fashioned romances” (9), a notion which Richardson expressed—in regard to his own writing—in a letter to Aaron Hill in 1741: “I thought the story, if written in an easy and natural manner, suitably to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing, that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and dismissing the improbable and marvelous, with which novels generally abound” (*Selected Letters*, 41). To Watt, while “different literary forms imitate reality” to different degrees and in different ways, the novel “allows a more immediate imitation of individual experience,” making “smaller demands on the audience” than those other forms do because it deals primarily with the literal realities of everyday life in sometimes excruciating detail (32).

While Watt is fairly clear about which authors his model is referring to—Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, Burney, and Austen—he is just as clear who does not belong in it, namely Behn and Delarivier de Manley, whose characters, Watt argues, “carried foreign, archaic, or literary connotations which excluded any suggestion of real and contemporary life” (19). Watt does include Defoe in his narrative about the novel’s so-called “rise,” while at the same time acknowledging that even he does not quite fit the model of formal realism: “Defoe created his own personal genre, which stands wholly alone in the history of literature” (131). Watt’s model is tidy and exclusionary, building out from the authorial aims of Richardson and Fielding and constructing a novelistic tradition that assumes and affirms that those writers did exactly what they intended to do. Even now, Watt’s model provides an important backdrop for our understanding of

novels, and even Jenny Davidson's recent article on the subject of "novelistic detail" in life-writing and biography, in which she writes, "When we say of a detail that it is 'novelistic,' we speak less of its depiction of character than to the texture with which it calls forth something like the physical and social worlds occupied by ourselves and by others whom we understand to have been real people" (264), smacks greatly of Watt's influence, which she acknowledges.

Watt's model of the novel's origins has been taken to task since then, though, mostly because it is exclusionary and narrow in its scope, directing its critical gaze to the literary production of a few mainly male authors. Others, such as Michael McKeon, have also quibbled with "the inadequacy of our theoretical distinction between 'novel' and 'romance'" (3), which springs from, initially, Richardson and, eventually, Watt. The question is, do we accept that Richardson developed something completely separate from those earlier romance forms that he saw as harmful? McKeon is skeptical and writes, "One central problem that Watt's unusually persuasive argument has helped to uncover is that of the persistence of romance, both within the novel and concurrently with its rise" (3). Hunter also writes regarding Richardson's claims concerning the "improbable and the marvellous [sic]," which Richardson associated with romance, saying, "Instances in novels of the supernatural or para-natural, the miraculous or the magical, the inexplicable or the uncertain, the improbable or the coincidental—varieties all of the strange and surprising—tend to be seen as flaws, or explained away, or overlooked" (*Before Novels*, 32). In other words, the need to centralize the definition of the novel as a function of its formal realism as argued by Watt has led to the exclusion of characteristics that do not fit that definition. Hunter continues, "But the novel as a species, in spite of its strong



commitment to credibility and probability, is full of incidents that do not admit of a quick and easy rational explanation” (*Before Novels*, 32). Consequently, we see enough evidence to dispute Watt’s claim regarding formal realism as the definitive characteristic of the genre. At the same time, we keep returning to his argument because it is a core piece of the puzzle, a point of departure for understanding and articulating a history of the novel. Watt’s analysis of the relationship between certain authors such as Defoe and Richardson and Fielding and their cultural milieu was thorough and illuminating of at least a major part of the novel’s history, and the field of eighteenth-century studies owes Watt owes a great debt.

Many critics have spoken against and attempted to revise the predominantly patriarchal model laid out by Watt to demonstrate that female-novel writing is part of the tradition. Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of their Own* and Nancy Armstrong in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* have written groundbreaking works that argue for an expansion of critical conversations on the role of women novelists. Both these feminist studies of the novel have had a great deal of influence on the way we perceive the role of women in the tradition of the novel and the influence the novel had on society and gender roles rather than simply being a literary reflection or product of the times in which it came to be. Unfortunately, neither of these studies goes quite far enough back in time. Showalter looks primarily at nineteenth century female novelists such as Austen, the Bröntes, and George Eliot and by her silence, according to Ros Ballaster, “dismisses eighteenth-century women writers” (20). Armstrong discusses the same female novelists as Showalter, but begins her study earlier with Richardson’s *Pamela* in 1741 and no one before that point. Other critics, especially Janet Todd, Jane Spencer, and Ros Ballaster,

have spoken on the merits and influence of the early female novelists such as Behn, Manley, Jane Barker, Penelope Aubin, Eliza Haywood, Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Fielding, and others, demonstrating that rather than being a late addition to the novel, female writers have been a part of the novel tradition for a long time. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar even go so far as to say, “Indeed, beginning with Aphra Behn and burgeoning with Fanny Burney, Anne Radcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen, the English novel seems to have been in good part a female invention” (540). Todd, on the other hand, is less exclusive than either Gilbert and Gubar or Watt, and by synthesizing these contraposing views sees the novel tradition as having male and female parentage: “Because patriarchal literary history, exemplified in Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel*, has largely written women out of its story of eighteenth-century fiction—of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett—I do not believe that feminist literary history should simply reverse the faulty procedure. The novel as a genre has both fathers and mothers” (2). In other words, Todd never intends to negate the novelistic achievements of Defoe, Richardson, and the others, but instead chooses to add perspective and broaden the scope and definitive parameters of literary history relative to who deserves to be mentioned as a participant in that history. John Skinner’s perspective on the question somewhat overlaps with Todd’s. Skinner writes, “There is a good case for regarding Samuel Richardson, rather than Defoe, as the ‘father’ of the modern English novel; and a possibly even better one for regarding Aphra Behn as its ‘mother’” (5). As Virginia Woolf said, “It was she [Behn] who earned [women] the right to speak their minds” (69). The difference lies in Todd’s implication that the novel has multiple mothers and multiple fathers rather than a single origin; it does not have dual parentage, but multiple.

Throughout its history and evolution, the novel as a genre is constantly revised and remade formally and rhetorically, both by male and female authors.

The idea that women and men contributed to the novel's emergence as a literary force has led to some significant ideas that have influenced the formation of this project. First, rather than looking specifically at either women or men as authorial entities, this project looks at both groups in the formative stages of the novel's history, putting Behn, Defoe, and Haywood in conversation with each other, largely through their use (their replication and variation) of a shared motif or meme: the female trickster. As a result, the project functions as a continuation of Paula Backscheider's attempts to bridge the divide between male and female fiction (*Revising Women*, 2). In fact, in one essay, Backscheider writes about Haywood, "We need to turn away from her body and engage her texts as we have those of Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, and Samuel Richardson—with the full arsenal of contemporary critical theory," making it clear that these writers deserve to be discussed in terms of their relationship to each other and not just in terms of "male" or "female" traditions of novel-writing (Backscheider, "The Shadow of an Author," 89). It also attempts to find one specific point of overlap between "realist" novels like *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* and what has been called "amatory fiction."

The "deliberate unreality" of such amatory fiction, according to Richetti, "served precisely as an escapist distraction from a mundane existence," as well as carried "a current of subversive intelligence which offers attentive readers a commentary on sociosexual relationships and which displays a sophisticated self-consciousness about the moral and social relevance of all this fictional extravagance" (*The English Novel*, 21). "Amatory fiction" has traditionally been used as a pejorative label that identifies works

by Behn, Manley, and Haywood as worthy only of critical sneers. Toni Bowers writes, “Rather than denigrate (or praise) amatory fiction wholesale, critics might better ask why we define ‘good’ literature as we do, how our assumptions about literary value still work to valorize some voices and exclude others, and how our capacities for pleasure might be augmented by respectful engagement with works we have been trained to resist or dismiss” (qtd. in Backscheider, “The Shadow of an Author,” 82). The point is not to look for ways to isolate or segregate texts (although to make a topic manageable some exclusion must happen unavoidably), but rather to look for ways to link them thematically, ideologically, functionally, or rhetorically. One way to do that is to ask ourselves, what kinds of things do novels discuss and how do they approach them?

McKeon’s *The Origins of the English Novel* presents the genre as an inherently dialectical one. He says, “One value of this approach to the origins of the English novel is that it fully accounts for the well-known complexity of the genre at the moment that it attains its institutional and canonic identity: its capacity, that is, to comprehend not only Richardson but also Fielding” (21). McKeon refers to this property as “the clearest sign of the new genre’s triumph as an explanatory and problem-solving mode, its powerful adaptability in mediating questions of truth and virtue from opposed points of view” (21). McKeon’s approach not only identifies topics and issues at play in the English novel, but also describes in what manner they affect how the novel functions relative to the society and culture that produced it and how the novel is a mode in which society’s problems are dealt with.

London approaches the history of the novel as an extension of McKeon’s approach, presenting the novel as a system of networks in which conversations about

social norms, family, individuality, desire, literacy, politics, education, economics, and other issues are discussed in specific groups of novels. She does not seek to isolate a particular point of origin, and in the network approach, decentralizing the history of the novel, moving away from hierarchies of writers, is essentially the underlying goal.

Hunter writes, "Literary historians variously credit Richardson, Defoe, or Behn as the 'founder' of the English novel, thus dating its beginnings from the 1740s, the 1710s, or the 1680s," but given that "there are much earlier examples of similar narratives (though with some significant differences) in Spain and France and a few classical precedents in ancient Greece" ("The Novel and Social/Cultural History," 9), London's model for the novel's existence as a decentered, nonlinear, nonhierarchical tradition simply makes sense. Neither Richardson nor Defoe nor Behn are founders of the novels, but instead are individual participants in the conversations taking place in the novel's ongoing tradition.

The conversations and issues that different groups of novels represent are essential because they form a community of works that raise, elaborate on, and complicate social issues, such as those just mentioned. Doody writes, "Of course there is always that other community to which we must attend in seeking to understand any literary work. That is the community of all the books the author read, the traditions in which the work was done. Without a recognition of that community (as real as the author's relationships with the personal community of family friends and acquaintances) we will not get too far" ("Beyond *Evelina*," 371). Isabelle Moreau also adds a perspective that is key to understanding the novel as a genre entirely in conversation with the texts and trends of its time, albeit in different ways, and those conversations were happening well before Richardson put pen to paper:

Seventeenth-century prose fiction is a story of literary transmission and cultural exchange through complex processes of delocalization, translation, and derivation across national, linguistic, and generic boundaries. It is a story of books written, published, sold, translated, imitated, parodied, plagiarized; of motifs and tropes creatively appropriated and transformed. (16)

London's approach looks at ways in which novels contributed to new cultural perspectives by pushing on each other (in a word, "dialecticizing") and conversing with texts published and consumed around the same time. Thus, the novel's tradition can be read as a process of dialectical debate in its "origins," as McKeon demonstrates, and as a catalyst for further discussion. Individual works and groups of works all function to keep important conversations going.

### **Novel Readership**

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, printing became streamlined and cheaper, and consequently more and more literature of one kind or another was being produced. This outpouring of printed material implies a boost in readership during that period of time. After all, booksellers could not afford to print so much material if no one was buying it. Watt writes, "Many eighteenth-century observers thought their age was one of remarkable and increasing popular interest in reading" (35), but "the only contemporary estimate of the size of the reading public was made very late in the century: Burke estimated it at 80,000 in the nineties" (36). Watt goes on to say that "the sale of the most popular books in the period suggests a book-buying public that is still numbered only in tens of thousands....It is likely, therefore, that when, in 1781, Johnson

spoke of a ‘nation of readers’, he had in mind a situation which had to a large extent arisen after 1750, and that, even so, his phrase must not be taken literally” (36). Hunter discusses literacy in England as being a somewhat nebulous and difficult subject, given problems with the available data concerning Early Modern and eighteenth-century readership, but he writes, “Literacy in the English-speaking world grew rapidly between 1600 and 1800 so that by the latter date a vast majority of adult males could read and write, whereas two centuries earlier only a select minority could do so” (*Before Novels*, 65). Hunter also adds that, even though “female literacy was almost certainly lower than male literacy throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in almost all regions, classes, and categories,” the rate of female literacy during the seventeenth century was on the rise just as it was for the men (*Before Novels*, 72). Consequently, whatever one might think of the reading public generally, when it comes to gender, both men and women figure into the equation, and the number was substantially increasing during the period prior to and during the formative years of the English novel.

The increase in literary production during these two centuries saw a flourishing of genres, including political pamphlets, criminal biographies, broadside ballads, religious tracts, conduct and advice literature, poetry, and of course romances, histories, and novels. While we can assume that these genres were targeting specific audiences and that such audiences actually existed given the popularity of these types of writing, whether for educational or leisurely reading, one might still ask, who was reading novels? According to Watt, economic factors would certainly have been constraining on the reading public, and probably only those who could afford to purchase the seven or eight bound volumes of *Clarissa* at three shillings per volume would be reading it: “All but the destitute had

been able to afford a penny occasionally to stand in the pit of the Globe; it was no more than the price of a quart of ale. The price of a novel, on the other hand, would feed a family for a week or two” and “was closer to the economic capacity of the middle-class additions to the reading public” (42). Readers without disposable income that allowed for such expenditures were later—for the most part after 1725—given greater access to novels by circulating libraries, but in the earlier part of the eighteenth century such programs were no doubt very rare. Sometimes, reading groups were established so that people who could not afford to purchase the novels or even could not read them would have the chance to hear them read. Luckily, many of Behn’s and Haywood’s novels were fairly short, which no doubt made them more affordable than many longer published works, although Haywood’s three-part novel *Love in Excess*, which was one of the great literary successes of 1719 in terms of its popularity, was relatively longer than Behn’s works.

In terms of the readership of novels, the common perception seems to be that most novel-readers were female, a viewpoint represented in Austen’s novel *Northanger Abbey*, published posthumously in 1818, when Catherine Morland discusses novels with friend Mr. Tilney. She says, “But you never read novels, I dare say?” Tilney responds, “Why not?” and Catherine answers, “Because they are not clever enough for you; gentlemen read better books” (861). While there are some scholars who might debate that point by saying that the audience for novels was really much more inclusive than that, and Austen’s Mr. Tilney indicates an adherence to that counter-position, saying, “The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not the pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid” (861). That being said, it is difficult to know whether such



observations as those made by Austen's characters are indicative of wider trends in readership, and if they are accurate whether these observations apply equally to early eighteenth-century novels. Hunter even writes, "Eighteenth-century observers—Charles Gildon, for example—quickly observed that actual readers of novels were an unknown breed" (*Before Novels*, 39).

Among those who could afford to purchase novels, some critics argue, novel-reading probably persisted among young, socially mobile, and especially female readers, all of which suggest, as Richetti argues, "that eighteenth-century novels render a bargaining for identity and authority which is at the heart of the profound changes in consciousness taking place in those years" (*The English Novel*, 15). However, one should also understand that these kinds of interpretations about audience are fluid, just as our understanding of novels themselves is fluid, and the kind of audience, as well as their purpose in reading particular kinds of novels, especially those being discussed in this project, might be indicative of what Robert Mayer has referred to as "a clash of tastes" (280). For example, even if the same people were reading both Richardson's "realist" *Pamela* and Haywood's "amatory" *Love in Excess*, they would be doing so because these vastly different novels appealed to different parts of their aesthetic preferences and individual needs. One promulgated virtue, the other passion and thrill. One presented a representation of everyday reality, the other offered an "escapist distraction" and a "deliberate unreality" (Richetti, *The English Novel*, 21). One promoted conformity and community, the other subversion and singularity.

## Female Tricksters and the Carnavalesque

While the novel is a diverse genre, capable of containing or representing a wide range of subject matter and cultural phenomena, one particularly interesting and relevant conversation or discussion that permeates part of the novel tradition involves the way in which femininity is represented as either submissive and conforming or disruptive, transgressive, liberated, frivolous, and covertly powerful and influential. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin calls attention to a subversive strain of novelistic literature known as the carnivalesque, which, instead of drawing from the classical canons, owes its existence to “the forgotten tradition of ‘popular humour’ ... a ‘boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations [which] opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture’” (Vice 344). Bakhtin uses as his primary example Rabelais’s famous *Gargantua and Pantagruel* published in the early-to-mid sixteenth century to show the kind of patterns and genres of folk speech and behavior that manifest themselves in Rabelais’s works. Bakhtin continued this discussion of the novel as a narrative descendant of folk humor and epic in *The Dialogic Imagination*, in which he argues that the novel essentially operates as an absorbent and memeticizing genre. It takes in, revises, and reproduces aspects of culture, including language, belief, and behavior, in ways that represents or subverts the artifacts or residual traces of that culture. In her 1986 work *Masquerade and Civilization*, Terry Castle applies Bakhtin’s theory of the folk humor and the carnivalesque to early eighteenth century “frivolity” and masquerade, the context in which the early novel began its evolution. She writes,

The masquerade broached in a peculiarly stylized way certain issues we have come to locate at the heart of eighteenth-century culture. The notion

of the self—so crucial in the artistic and philosophical idiom of the period, so endlessly problematic—must be invoked in any discussion of the masquerade. The masked assemblies of the eighteenth century were in the deepest sense a kind of collective meditation on self and other, and an exploration of their mysterious dialectic. (4)

In other words, the disruptive images of the carnivalesque and the masquerade simultaneously explore and negotiate cultural conceptions of identity, and these dialectical discussions on identity passed into the novel. Masquerade has since become the focus of many other studies, often dealing with gender generally and female identity specifically, particularly in Catherine Craft-Fairchild's valuable volume *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women* (1993). Craft-Fairchild writes that Castle "admits complexity" when dealing with the idea of the masquerade (5), but Craft-Fairchild presses harder on the idea of the masquerade and problematizes some of Castle's claims by "avoid[ing] oversimplification and...allow[ing] female masquerade to remain problematic" instead of trying to fit it neatly into a grand theory of female domination and authority (6). The main idea that needs to be extracted from the masquerade/carnival, relative to this project, is that attempts made by female tricksters do not always end in triumph, but they do always serve a function, namely to provoke inquiry and challenge, denaturalize, and deconstruct the norms of society, at least long enough to raise questions, even if that challenge leads to something besides victory for the perpetrator. In this project, I will refer primarily to the carnivalesque because the masquerade is only an aspect of a larger folk framework in which the focal

point of my research also resides, and masquerade is simply one of the instruments used by the female trickster to fulfill its traditional functions.

The carnivalesque is essentially a label for a kind of environment and a set of folk practices through which social categorization is resisted and turned upside down by a series of associated characters that can be defined as motifs or memes. Many of these memes—fools, criminals, and tricksters—existed long before the eighteenth century and its fascination with selfhood and constructions of gender. In fact, Bakhtin refers to what he calls “Rabelaisian images,” which are “opposed to all that is finished and polished, to all pomposity, to every ready-made solution in the sphere of thought and world outlook,” and writes that these images “are completely at home within the thousand-year-old development of popular culture” (3). In other words, the eighteenth century did not give rise to the carnivalesque or the masquerade or the images associated with either; rather, such images exist across time and across cultures. These environments with their sets of practices and images are replicated from person to person and text to text, finding utility in the cultural issues and anxieties that groups of people face and experience. The seventeenth and eighteenth century with their books, ballads, and stage performances combined to create a literary environment in which the female trickster meme could replicate.

## **Conclusion**

The novels of Behn, Defoe, and Haywood came into being and laid the groundwork for modern conceptions of the genre, and the subversive female trickster became a central character and force within their works. These characters, whose singularity sometimes reinforced and reaffirmed the rules or social contract that binds a

community, entertained readers at the same time they provoked them to inquiry about the communal norms they were asked to observe. Sometimes these works showed subversive individuals eating their cake and having it too, and sometimes, to use the same metaphor, those same individuals suffered from hunger. Female tricksters in the early English novel often receive their just rewards for being wicked and foolish. But before Amy dies, Moll goes to jail, or Miranda, Fantomina, and Syrena are sent away or banished (to Holland, the convent, and Wales, respectively) each of these tricksters manages to consume a fair bit of cake (and some of them, according to critics, continue to feast covertly even after receiving their so-called just desserts). The novels in discussion in this project conserved aspects of extant folk frameworks and representations to create a conversation or a network of works in which the dialectical female trickster, the narrative embodiment of vying ideological forces that brought the novel into being, became a central inquisitive force into the issues of its time, particularly regarding individualism, gender, class, economics, politics, and identity.

## Chapter 2

“Truth, which you so much admire”: Revelation and Concealment in Behn’s *The Fair Jilt*

“All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds.”

~Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*

Female trickster characters abounded on the Restoration stage, and Aphra Behn, a playwright before she was a novelist, was familiar with those theatrical tropes. Her familiarity with female tricksters as culturally provocative symbol is evidenced by representations of such female characters in her own comedies, including productions such as *The Rover; or, the Banish’d Cavaliers* (1677), which Canfield refers to as “the greatest of [the] nubile trickster plays” (41), and *The Feign’d Curtizans; or, A Nights Intrigue* (1679). Both of these productions feature female characters whose behavior aligns them with characteristics of tricksterism found in the texts discussed earlier. Behn did not remain exclusively a playwright, and her literary contributions expanded across other genres, including poetry as well as novels. As Behn moved to these other genres, the female trickster as an archetype continued to appear in her works. In the introduction to her short work *The History of Agnes de Castro* (1688), Behn dresses “Fortune,” the personified force that governs much of human experience, in the garb of a trickster, referring to it not only as “capricious” or subject to “inconstancy” and change, but she also writes that it “takes delight to trouble the Repose of the most elevated and virtuous” and “has very little respect for passionate and tender Hearts, when she designs to produce strange Adventures” (213). Her persistent use of such descriptions of quasi-sadism and chaotic disruptions in the lives of the “virtuous” across her works indicates that Behn seems to recognize in these elements of anti-conventional behavior a nugget of cultural

meaning that allows women to reach beyond prescribed cultural norms toward a greater sphere of freedom. This chapter focuses on the functions of and “reaching beyond” performed by the female trickster Miranda in Behn’s novel *The Fair Jilt* (1688), a text which acts as an early example of the female trickster in the English novel.

Behn’s story follows the escapades of a young Begine nun named Miranda, who exploits the façade of her religious vestments to satisfy her desires. She pursues a monk named Henrick, who resists her advances and winds up in prison awaiting a death sentence because of her trumped-up rape charge, and convinces a noble man named Tarquin to marry her. After spending much of their wealth in lavish living, Miranda attempts, first via a page named Van Brune, then via her husband, to assassinate her sister in order to retain her considerable dowry. When all of her plots fail, Van Brune is executed, Tarquin is nearly beheaded, and now penitent Miranda is banished with her husband to live out her days in exile. According to J.P. Vander Motten and René Vermeir, Behn’s story is based on documented events in the life of Maria Theresia Van Mechelen (as well as the other characters associated with her, including her sister Anna Louisa and Van Mechelen’s husband François Louis Tarquini), although critics debate whether Behn could have actually been an eyewitness to these events themselves or simply heard them secondhand and amalgamated them (299). In other words, Maria Theresia is a historical figure whose actions and lifestyle resemble the kinds of trickster characters Behn saw on and even created for the stage.

In *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance*, Helen Hackett refers to Behn’s tendency to view her own role as an eye-witness to the events she writes about in some of her short novels, including *Oroonoko; or, the Royal Slave* and *The Fair Jilt*,

both published in 1688, not long before Behn's death. Hackett writes, "The truth-claim becomes a formula in Behn's fictions" (187). Vander Motten and Vermeir support Hackett's statement and further claim that Behn's *The Fair Jilt* "has also been used as a testing ground for her reliability as an observer of the contemporary scene" (280). Their claim assumes that the audience should respond to Behn's "truth-claim" as though she were a journalist and a historian, who could be counted on to report the "facts" faithfully as they have been recorded elsewhere. Behn's narrative does not align perfectly with historical sources, but as Vander Motten and Vermeir have shown, Behn's fictional depiction of Van Mechelen's life "testifies to [Behn's] imaginative ability to shape the disparate pieces of information generated by the Tarquini court case into an exciting narrative with decidedly partisan overtones" (299). This chapter focuses on aspects of Behn's Miranda, a female trickster and fictional echo of Maria Theresia, to extrapolate the "truths" Behn's text expressed by subjecting historical accounts and their principle actors to creative adaptation.

The story was known widely, which Behn acknowledges in her dedication to Henry Payne. Many people could have, if they were literate and read Behn's work, recognize points in which her account varied from the ones they had heard or even read about. One might wonder why Behn would claim to be an eye-witness to a story so easily contradicted by the oral accounts of others and legal documentation. Janet Todd writes, "Behn enjoyed linguistic artifice and rhetoric and the playing of roles on and off the stage, but the enormous and frightening power of created fictions in politics made her at the same time very wary of the impositions and reprehensible manipulations of language" (72). Consequently, tension caused by Behn's simultaneous enjoyment and wariness of



the fictionalizing power of language may constitute a framework for understanding the concept of *truth* in *The Fair Jilt*. This chapter goes beyond social critiques involving politics, religion, and gender. It attempts to demonstrate the manner in which the contradictory truths about Miranda fit traditional patterns of female tricksters as a “threat to social stability with their individualistic pursuit of satisfaction and autonomy” (Landay 29). It also illustrates how truth is less about what is and more about managing narratives through revelation and concealment. Behn’s “literary trickery” (a phrase which Charlotte Morgan applied to Behn in her 1911 work *The Rise of the Novel of Manners*), much like the cunning of her protagonist Miranda, illustrates a trickster’s “adeptness” for constructing and presenting truths.

Behn’s “adept” understanding of fictionalization includes her knowledge of the way in which such fictions require ethos to enhance their veracity in the minds of the audience. Behn’s relationship with *truth* goes beyond her use of the so-called “truth-claim.” In fact, she demonstrates a desire to get at the very nature of truth in all its complexities, multiplicities, perspectives, and representations. In her dedication to Payne, Behn writes that her work is “History” as well as “Reality, and a Matter of Fact,” but also “that it is Truth; Truth, which you so much admire. But ’tis a Truth that entertains you with so many Accidents diverting and moving, that they will need both a Patron, and an Assertor in this incredulous World” (70). Behn understands that history-writing should be less “diverting,” but she, as a writer and storyteller rather than a historian, has chosen to prioritize the characteristics of entertainment and fictionalization above the traditional conventions of history-writing. Behn’s declaration implies that her narrative is not the “absolute” truth, but it is truthful or one of a whole range of truths, lacking ethos only

because her audience misinterprets how they are meant to read and understand its meanings due to their failure to evaluate it in the proper epistemological framework. Behn's explanation regarding the subjective nature of truth(s) as a function of perspective appears also in the dedicatory epistle to *Oroonoko*. She writes,

A Picture-drawer, when he intends to make a good Picture, essays the Face many Ways, and in many Lights, before he begins; that he may chuse from the several turns of it, which is most Agreeable and gives it the best Grace; and if there be a Scar, an ungrateful Mole, or any little Defect, they leave it out; and yet make the Picture extreamly like: But he who has the good Fortune to draw a Face that is exactly Charming in all its Parts and Features, what Colours or Agreements can be added to make it Finer? All that he can give is but its due....A Poet is a Painter in his way; he draws to the Life, but in another kind; we draw the Nobler part, the Soul and Mind; the Pictures of the Pen shall out-last those of the Pencil, and even Worlds themselves. (A3)

Behn's example signifies once again that truth is a range of representations, that poets like her, as painters do, do not always depict a thing as it is, but often seem rather to arrive at an approximation of external and internal realities, finding the "best light" or perspective in order to communicate something about the object being represented, even if that means changing the reality (omitting blemishes, for example). What is interesting about this idea of truth is its obvious application to the genre of the dedicatory epistle because, while Behn claims that the patron of *Oroonoko* is one of those individuals who manages to perfect her representation, unlike those flatterers, her statements lack ethos in

the same way her novels do: she is writing for money and since the poet, like the painter, is just as capable of representing an object in its “best light” or “Grace” by eliminating a mole or scar as she is of representing it in some other way, so the patron has no reason to trust that Behn’s compliments constitute the whole truth of who he really is, but rather exist as a true depiction from one possible perspective or angle. Her dedication implies, further, that since multiple representations or truths of human identity, of which she is providing the “best” one at which she can arrive, though there are other possible representations, other singular partial truths remain unwritten that are less flattering and may indeed be ugly. Her representations of multiple truths and her cross-genre decisions certainly validate Morgan’s use of the term “literary trickery.”

The multiple truths that make up Behn’s framework are important to keep in mind when reading *The Fair Jilt*, a work Jacqueline Pearson refers to as one of the “most complex of [Behn’s] narratives centring on the narrator’s ambivalent presentation of female ‘wickedness’” (50). Negotiating paradoxes is a traditional aspect of trickster narratives across many cultures, so the fact that the character Miranda, like so many other female tricksters, not only specializes in complex self-representations, deceptions, and illusions, often trying to put herself in the best light, also reveals undesirable qualities as well, should not be unexpected. Her inherent ambiguity presents a series of truths regarding her identity, for better and frequently for worse, which is seemingly paradoxical though typically found in the narrative tradition of trickster characters.

Tricksters are creatures whose very existence depends upon the effective management of narratives or truths. For example, Scheherezade, the storyteller in the frame tale of *The Arabian Nights*, saves her life not simply by telling fascinating stories,

but also by knowing how much to tell and when to tell it. As a result, she would leave her tales unfinished, so when the day broke (the time of execution), the sultan would defer the punishment until the following day so she could finish her story. As projections of human identity, tricksters showcase the fact that humans too are composed of various levels of constructed truth, and social power lies in controlling truth, the form in which it is delivered, and the manner in which information may be interpreted. In *The Fair Jilt*, Miranda's letters reveal that she can be whomever she wishes, a passionate wanton or a modest virgin, but once her crimes become common knowledge and physically attached to her body by an external power, her control of her own existence is diminished, overwhelmed by the narrative with which she has been imprinted. At the same time, despite being temporarily suppressed, Miranda's penitence may yet signal a way in which she manages covertly to retain her trickster identity, while also suggesting a realization that she has reached beyond her limits. Her self-management in many ways provides means for her to slip about undetected and often unsuspected, making her an ideal candidate for the title of trickster.

Miranda's social status at the beginning of the novel has attracted much critical attention because, while she has not yet taken vows of "perpetual chastity" (74), she is technically a kind of temporary nun whose contract will expire in about "five or ten Years" (74). Behn uses the nun and the confining convent as motifs in multiple works, including *The History of the Nun; or, the Fair Vow-Breaker*, *The Perjur'd Nun*, and of course *The Fair Jilt*. Behn was no doubt capitalizing on the popularity of other works such as *Letters from a Portuguese Nun* (1669) in order to strike while the proverbial iron was hot and sell her work to an audience craving such titillating notions, but she probably

also noticed the levels of irony and tensions that such monastic situations might suggest, particularly for the women who took orders. Behn's nuns illustrate the difficulties of navigating the space between what they want (love) and what they are "supposed" to want or what society wants for them (chastity). Such dilemmas can lead to multiple outcomes, depending on circumstances. Isabella, in *The Fair Vow-Breaker*, breaks her vows, which are considered binding and perpetual, and leaves the convent with her lover Arnaldo. Through a sequence of unforeseen obstacles, including a war, Arnaldo's supposed death, Isabella's remarriage to another man (Villenoy), and Arnaldo's surprising homecoming, Isabella ends up killing both her first and second husband and is finally executed herself, after giving one last lecture on the virtues of keeping one's vows. Miranda, on the other hand, because her vows were considered non-permanent anyway, finds a way to construct a dual existence that preserves the outward façade of the Begine (the aspect of womanhood that society expects of her) while also allowing her to seek her own interests in matters of love, fame, and wealth.

Miranda's position as a nun also fits in with traditional folkloric functions of trickster narratives because Miranda's status as a Begine carries with it all the association of chastity and virtue of the religious tradition. However, her behavior while in that role parodies the religious systems and ideologies that maintain and perpetuate it, which ties into what George Lankford writes about tricksters and their "mockery of the sacred" (717). Her position, which was considered trendy for "the best Persons in Town," though temporary, has "a regulated Government" that includes falling under the stewardship of an Abbess and a confessor (Behn, *Fair Jilt*, 75). The clothing of the Begine is also regulated:

They are oblig'd to a Method of Devotion, and are under a sort of Obedience. They wear an Habit much like our Widows of Quality in England, only without a Bando; and their Veil is of a thicker Crape than what we have here, through which one cannot see the Face; for when they go abroad, they cover themselves all over with it, but they put 'em up in the Churches, and lay 'em by in the Houses. (75)

Traditionally, clothing in religious culture functions as a kind of token or material representation of inner commitments and devotions, as well as connecting those inward feelings to the larger structure of the religious system. Examples of clothing operating on the symbolic level appear in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and many other religions. The material qualities of religious regalia bring those commitments to mind, both in those who wear the clothing and those who simply see it. For Miranda and the other nuns, their clothing, particularly the veil, represents a kind of closing off or self-isolation. The veil is a physical barrier that separates these women from society, thus giving them “the Reputation of being retir'd from the World a little more than ordinary” (75). While it may seem confining, as no doubt it was meant to be, the clothing has several advantages which make it desirable to one such as Miranda.

Rather than being moved to piety, as is the intended effect of such clothing, according to the narrator, men respond to it as a kind of titillation:

But as these Women are, as I said, of the best Quality, and live with the Reputation of being retir'd from the World a little more than ordinary, and because there is a sort of difficulty to approach 'em, they are the People the most courted, and liable to the greatest Temptations; for as difficult as

it seems to be, they receive Visits from all the Men of the best Quality,  
especially Strangers. (75)

Thus, the vestments of her position, which are intended to represent a kind of ritual purity, devotion to God, and submission to the tenets of her order, added to her already great beauty and wealth, make her extremely desirable in the marketplace of sexual politics. The very raiment that bespeaks of purity and magnificence of mind and soul also function, covertly, as symbols of hidden sexuality and fantasy. While Miranda herself does not create that effect, it being an unforeseen and uncontrollable byproduct of the veil, she does capitalize on its existence as her beauty and manner become objects of “universal” repute and adoration:

Her Youth and Beauty, her Shape and Majesty of Mein, and Air of  
Greatness, charm'd all her Beholders; and thousands of People were dying  
by her Eyes, while she was vain enough to glory in her Conquest, and  
make it her Business to wound. She lov'd nothing so much as to behold  
sighing Slaves at her Feet, of the greatest Quality; and treated 'em all with  
an Affability that gave 'em Hope. (77)

Thus, Miranda retools the restrictions placed upon her and turns the trickster’s “mask of submissiveness,” to use Lankford’s words, into a means of controlling her own sexuality rather than allowing it to be controlled by the religious hierarchies by which she vowed to be governed.

One of the means through which Miranda and other “Fille Devotes” are controlled, as the narrator states, is through the interventions and intercessions of a confessor. They fall under the stewardship of a confessor, and “without the Advice of this

Confessor, they act nothing, nor admit of a Lover that he shall not approve of” (75). In other words, confessors are the gatekeepers of sexual desire since the rules of the order give them the power of admitting or refusing lovers. However, the narrator explains that “this Method ought to be taken, and is by almost all of 'em; though *Miranda* thought her Wit above it, as her Spirit was” (75). Miranda wants to have the façade provided by the position of the Begine without the restrictions that belonging to the order places on her.

In addition to examining and undermining the role of the confessor as the representation of regulated desire, Behn’s female trickster also deals with the confessor as an object of desire. Miranda, despite hearing the suits of many potential lovers, falls in love instead with a “young Friar” named Henrick (78). After discovering that he was a prince and a man of quality before retreating into the cloth, Miranda sends him many letters full of protestations of love and offers of presents, expecting that he will give into her persuasive language and make himself, like all of the other men she has interacted with, her “slave” (88). Henrick does not at first respond to her letters and when he finally does, Miranda, unused to rejection, burns all the more for him. Her reaction to his tacit refusals at some level mirrors her own situation in which the supposedly unassailable barriers of her vows promotes rather than suppresses desire. The difference between Henrick and Miranda is that he, having made vows of perpetual celibacy, respects the vows he has made and resolves to keep them, whereas Miranda only sees them as a way of improving her marketability and desirability as a woman. Finally, “when she had above four Months languish'd thus in vain, not missing one Day, wherein she went not to see him, without discovering her self to him; she resolv'd, as her last Effort, to shew her Person, and see what that, assisted by her Tears, and soft Words from her Mouth, cou'd



do, to prevail upon him” (90). Her resolution to reveal her identity to Henrick is a significant moment in the text for multiple reasons, one of them being that, throughout the novel, Miranda’s ability to maneuver through different roles is a key part of who Miranda is and how she operates. Even in her letters, she disguises herself in different personas:

she ceas'd not to pursue him with her Letters, varying her Style;  
sometimes all wanton, loose and raving; sometimes feigning a  
Virgin-Modesty all over, accusing her self, blaming her Conduct, and  
sighing her Destiny, as one compell'd to the shameful Discovery by the  
Austerity of his Vow and Habit, asking his Pity and Forgiveness....But  
still she writes in vain, in vain she varies her Style, by a Cunning, peculiar  
to a Maid possess'd with such a sort of Passion. (89)

By presenting herself to him in person and revealing her identity, she strips away the advantage of the veil because it allows the friar to see past the façade to Miranda’s hypocrisy. In order to have her desires fulfilled, Miranda is willing to let him see beneath her chaste exterior and view the passions raging in her mind and body.

Though her revelation of herself to Henrick is a potential risk, Miranda protects herself by using the religious rite of confession as a means to gain a private meeting with Henrick and conceal herself from the view of others: “She approach'd him; and as she did so, she trembl'd with Love: At last she cry'd, Father, my Confessor is gone for some time from the Town, and I am oblig'd to morrow to receive, and beg you will be pleas'd to take my Confession” (90). After consenting, Henrick “led her into the Sacriste, where there is a Confession-Chair, in which he seated himself; and on one side of him she kneel'd down,

over against a little Altar, where the Priests Robes lie, on which was plac'd some lighted Wax-Candles, that made the little place very light and splendid, which shone full upon Miranda” (90). As her confessor, Henrick becomes privy to information that Miranda would share with no one else, while also, according to the religious dictates associated with that position, being constrained from ever revealing them to anyone else. Miranda controls who can know what she really desires by once again using and subverting the religious system and the confidentiality it requires from confessors, protecting herself from the social scrutiny that might come from revealing herself to anyone else. As a comparative study, Eliza Haywood’s later work, *The Injur’d Husband*, the protagonist, the Baroness de Tortillée, safely carries on in her affairs until she confides in the wrong person, a man not so careful as she, who lets her private correspondence slip out of his possession and into the hands of her other lovers. In *The Fair Jilt*, Miranda proceeds cautiously and makes Henrick her confidante, not as a mere man, but as a religious official who is governed by the regulations of his position. Such a step shows the meticulousness of Miranda’s mental calculations. Even when she gives herself to love, she is not a slave to her own passions. Rather, with her love/lust she will make a slave of another individual through cautious manipulation.

When Miranda removes the veil “and discover'd to his View the most wond'rous Object of Beauty he had ever seen, dress'd in all the Glory of a young Bride” (91), one finds again the parody of religious ritual, namely the rite of marriage, being enacted. By arraying herself like a “young Bride,” Miranda communicates purity untouched by sexual intercourse and a desire to give herself to Henrick in that way. The image of the bride implies the taking of vows, echoing the previous vow she made upon entering into the

life of a Begine, as well as the hollowness of that ritual act, which is intended to signify inner feelings and worthy desires when in fact, Miranda's case, it is quite the opposite. Finally, the positioning of her "Hands, which were elevated, as if in Prayer," and "seem'd to be form'd of polish'd Alabaster" complete her parody of religious sentiment (91). She performs the part of the chaste bride, even setting aside her veil and letting him see her beauty, but mocks the entire ritual by circumventing ecclesiastical authority that would authorize the sexual congress she seeks.

Even though she still plans to make her desires known to Henrick (after all, if she accomplishes her designs, she must reveal a great deal), she will keep playing out her range of pious personas, and even when the time arrives for her to discover to him her overflowing desire, then he must always see only what she wants him to see. The dual themes of concealment and revelation continues even after Miranda has confessed to Henrick: "Nothing opposes our Happiness, or makes my Love a Vice, but you: 'Tis you deny me Life: 'Tis you that forbids my Flame: 'Tis you will have me die, and seek my Remedy in my Grave, when I complain of Tortures, Wounds and Flames. O cruel Charmer, 'tis for you I languish" (91). Significantly, Henrick is arrayed in his priestly garb and sitting in the chair of the confessor, while Miranda kneels at his feet, indicating in terms of space and ideological associations, that Henrick is the one in control. Her penitence is a performed submission. When Henrick attempts to leave after Miranda confesses, though, she "held him by his Habit" and "elevated her Voice so loud, he was afraid she might be heard, and therefore suffer'd her to force him into his Chair again" (92), thus demonstrating that she is the one in control of the situation. While Miranda's attire has become a means of her liberation and sexual appeal through physical

concealment, Henrick's vestments, the symbol of his religious influence, become a means whereby he is controlled. Her hold on his clothing recalls the Biblical story of Joseph and the wife of Potiphar<sup>5</sup>, who attempts to seduce the boy prophet, but is ultimately left with only his garment in her hand as he flees from her. The divergence in the narratives (Joseph is willing to escape, even if he does so naked, while Henrick stays with Miranda and remains fully clothed) demonstrates a reworking of the original narrative and even may be read as a purposeful *parody* of scripture.

Tricksters are figures whose almost-but-not-quite parodic representations often contain critiques of people in society. Miranda's performance of the role of Potiphar's wife may indicate something occurring within extant systems of organized religion regarding the issue of individuals who observe the material aspects of religious observance but do not really internalize the principles of belief. In other words, the hypocrite is exposing hypocrisy. By leaving, Joseph followed his conscience and preserved his chastity, but Henrick, unwilling to shed his garb, the show of priestly pomp, remains in a threatened space. Henrick, like so many others, holds tightly to the belief that clothes make the man: his identity is so securely interwoven with the garments of his position that he cannot leave them behind, and Miranda, who possesses a more complete understanding of identities and artificiality of clothing, takes advantage of that belief. Further, the chair Henrick occupies, which is intended to make him the confidante of

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<sup>5</sup> The connection between Miranda and her Old Testament antecedent was mentioned by Ernest Baker in 1905 and was recently reiterated by Cynthia Sundberg Wall (2014), although neither one at length nor in great detail. The allusion would have been recognizable to many readers who were culturally habituated to spotting the use of such *types*.

people through the confession of trespasses and sins, as well as a space in which he enacts the power to absolve those wrongdoing, an influence which, in a religious context, cannot be understated since it spells the difference between salvation and damnation, becomes a space in which he is forced to hear that which he does not wish to hear. It is not his position that keeps him there; it is Miranda's threat of revelation (her "elevated Voice") and his fear of being discovered with her in such a fashion that controls his behavior and binds him to the chair.

In her final argument to convince Henrick to take her to bed, Miranda draws his attention to the privacy of the room:

This place is private, a sacred Silence reigns here, and no one dares to pry  
into the Secrets of this holy place: We are as secure from Fears of  
Interruption, as in Desarts uninhabited, or Caves forsaken by wild Beasts.  
The Tapers too shall veil their Lights, and only that glimmering Lamp  
shall be Witness of our dear Stealths of Love. Come to my Arms, my  
trembling, longing Arms; and curse the Folly of thy Bigotry. (93)

Her use of the imagery of deserts and caves draws on and contorts the ecclesiastical traditions of hermits who seek isolation from society as a means of coming closer to God, except in her case such isolation will allow them to enjoy one another without "Interruption" (93). Hers is a promise of concealment; only they will know the truth of what they have done in this space. As far as society is concerned, both individuals will retain their reputation of purity. Then she "ran her self, and in an instant put out the Candles," which, according to a Freudian perspective, functions as a symbolic projection of her goal to extinguish Henrick's flame (i.e. sexual desire) and her own, while also

indicating that perhaps she does not trust her own assessment of their privacy (93). Her objective requires further revelation of herself to have intercourse with Henrick, but, like Roland Barthes's description of the striptease and the dance in *Mythologies* (85), Miranda counteracts that revelation with further concealment: the covering of darkness. In fact, with the lights out, she is not only covered but invisible, and the same light that made her so alluring at the beginning of the scene must now be extinguished to help her attain her goal of sexual fulfillment. In the light, she must appear pure and hide her desires under a cloak of dissimulation, while in the darkness she may hide physically while revealing herself more fully.

After Miranda puts out the light, Henrick warns her that no matter what she does, they are not secure from scrutiny: "In vain, O too indiscreet fair One; in vain you put out the Light; for Heaven still has Eyes, and will look down upon my broken Vows" (18). His rejoinder to Miranda carries with it certain assumptions, including the fact there is no real escape from scrutiny, regardless of how one attempts to disguise oneself: someone will always see and know, even when one appears to be alone. Complete invisibility, in his mind, which is bound by the system he gives credence to, is a lie. The concepts embodied in his response to Miranda parallel the lines of a poem called "The Morning Quatrains" by Charles Cotton, believed to have been written before 1687 and possibly around 1665: "But let's take heed our acts be true, / For heaven's eye sees all we do. / None can that piercing sight evade: It penetrates the darkest shade; / And sin, though it would 'scape the eye, / Would be discovered by the cry" (lines 75-80). On the other hand, to Miranda, a woman who mocks religion and its adornments, both literal and figurative, and sees them purely as a means of manipulation and control rather than a means of

attaining salvation, his warning carries no weight. In fact, his words have the opposite effect as they spell the end of her attempt on his virtue and incite her anger toward him.

Miranda makes “no Reply; but throwing her self, in that instant, into the Confessing-Chair, and violently pulling the young Friar into her Lap, she elevated her Voice to such a degree, in crying out, Help, help: A Rape: Help, help, that she was heard all over the Church, which was full of People at the Evening's Devotion” (94). Since Henrick will not take advantage of the situation she has so carefully constructed in which they may have their fill of love in secrecy, she lets everyone in the church see what she wants them to see: a young virtuous woman being assailed by the aims of a licentious man of the cloth. At this moment, Miranda completes Behn’s allusion to Potiphar’s wife: “And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice” (KJV Genesis 39:13-14). Through her accusation, which ultimately leads to the imprisonment of the innocent friar (just like Joseph), Miranda once again mocks the sacred and in a way parodies the principles contained in Cotton’s poem regarding the “discovery” of sin, thus showing that while God may see all, as Henrick claims, with his unlimited and infallible vision, she controls the perspective of his fallible followers, many of whom misread Henrick’s “silent Shame” as evidence of his guilt and label him “Profaner of his sacred Vows, and Infamy to the Holy Order” (96), a title more suitable to his accuser than to him. Her “cry” does not allow for sin to be discovered, except for the one she accuses Henrick of; rather, her cry buries the truth of her own

identity, her bubbling inner desires and loose behavior, replacing it with a show of victimized virginity.

While many of these early incidents demonstrate Miranda's control of the truth of herself through artful representation and artifice, later situations also show that even she has her limits. Following her marriage to Tarquin, Miranda displays an inadequate financial management, which stands in stark contrast to her meticulous control in other parts of her life and which showcases a kind of odd contradiction. Sometimes she is hyperaware of what needs to be done to control situations and meet her own needs, while other times she is controlled by her own desires to the point that her foresight is compromised. While this is not exactly the same thing as the "trickster tricked" motif which often appears in trickster stories, it does illustrate a similar concept, namely that tricksters are capable of both extreme cunning and extreme simplicity. Miranda's lack of fiscal foresight leads to her decision to have her sister poisoned so she can keep Alcidiana's sizable dowry. Her first attempt to have her sister murdered is not only unsuccessful, but the perpetrator, the page Van Brune, is caught and sentenced to be executed. His testimony regarding the role of Miranda in the plot exposes her to "public Shame and Infamy" and "the whole City being over-joy'd that she shou'd be punish'd, as an Author of all this Mischief, were so generally bent against her, both Priests, Magistrates and People; the whole Force of the Stream running that way, she found no more Favour than the meanest Criminal" (107). Her punishment, which involves standing "under the Gibbet, with a Rope about her Neck, the other End of which was to be fasten'd to the Gibbet where the Page was hanging; and to have an Inscription in large Characters upon her Back and Breast, of the Cause why: Where she was to stand from ten in the



Morning, to twelve” (108), seems less grave than Van Brune’s, but it does carry interesting symbolic and cultural properties. First of all, her punishment exposes her publically, in a position where she can no longer hide. Miranda’s body functions as a text, one which signifies, through her performances, both piety and virtue. The “Inscription” announces her crimes and is attached to her body as part of her punishment. It isolates a single interpretation of Miranda’s identity and her relationship to the state: she is a criminal and the state is powerful.

Second, it is fitting that the public location of her punishment is the “Market-Place,” which constitutes a significant interpretive space whose language, customs, and everyday rituals, as suggested by Bakhtin, have over time become associated with the subversive influences of the working classes. It is the will of the state to punish Miranda, but it is the gaze of the people in the public forum of the marketplace that enact the punishment. Being scrutinized and having her crimes revealed to the public view would be impossible if the people were not present to scrutinize her and read about her crimes. Miranda is only free to do as she pleases when she pulls the string, revealing and concealing the truths of her behavior and identity, but in the marketplace, there are no candles to snuff and no veils to hide behind. Although her life as a Begine was supposed to be a private one, and the marketplace is a public space, the force that operates on Miranda in both of these scenarios is the same: she is being watched. All of her actions have signified resistance to intense observation and policing to which, as a Begine, she was subject, and it is interesting that her punishment for attempted murder constitutes a return to being watched, not by abbesses and confessors as in the beginning, but by everyone in the marketplace. For once, she is really and truly trapped.

Following her public punishment in the marketplace, Behn's Miranda goes on to make another attempt, using Tarquin as her instrument, on her sister's life and almost succeeds. After being prevented and found out, she repents and receives her punishment, which in itself suggests a new-found humility and submission in her. As a result of her acceptance of her punishment (banishment to Holland), she finds a new home and community, where she is welcomed by her husband's father. Behn's narrator writes, "They say Miranda has been very penitent for her Life past, and gives Heaven the Glory for having given her these Afflictions, that have reclaim'd her, and brought her to as perfect a State of Happiness as this troublesome World can afford" (124). Submission essentially leads to integration with the community because she is fulfilling the role that is expected of her.

Interestingly, Behn does not end there, but leaves the reader with a somewhat ambiguous line: "Since I began this Relation, I heard that Prince Tarquin dy'd about three quarters of a Year ago" (124). That line connects to the dedicatory epistle where Behn's allow the audience to believe that the story is about Tarquin, which seems odd since the title *The Fair Jilt* definitely refers to Miranda and so much of the story is about what she, not Tarquin, is doing. Further, if it is the story of Tarquin's nobility and goodness rather than Miranda's need for sexual liberation and other shenanigans, it also seems odd that Behn would not allow Tarquin to simply end the story "as a private Gentleman, in all the Tranquility of a Man of a good Fortune" (124). She chooses rather to close the narrative by reporting on his death. Given what we know about Miranda's past and her passionate urges, as well as her ability to shift the focus away from herself, it is likely that she was never actually penitent and is somehow responsible for Tarquin's death. Based on what

we know about the misfortunes that frequently befall the other men in her life, Van Brune's death, Henrick's imprisonment, and even Tarquin's first sally to the gallows, and Miranda's role in effecting those misfortunes, it gives one pause to wonder if Tarquin is simply her latest victim. Given everything that has passed, one cannot help wondering whether Miranda's repentance is genuine, and one might also argue that she is what she always was: a very good actor and an individual who resists the system under the cover of acquiescence. If the existence of different kinds or aspects of truth lies at the heart of Behn's narrative, then what seems to be consistent is the unsteadiness and difficulty of managing multiple—often conflicting—narratives or truths and the inherent struggle involved in staying out of sight.

## **Conclusion**

Miranda's behavior clearly places her in the category of female tricksters, and aspects of her behavior will continue to emerge in actions of the other characters discussed in this project. Her ability to manipulate situations, mixed with her blind spots and fallibilities, create a character who poses a threat to the systems she seeks to subvert and call into question, while also—at least outwardly—reinforcing the values of the society she inhabits.

## Chapter 3

To Make a Trickster: Moll's Early Influences in *Moll Flanders*

“Why how now, saucy jade?  
 Sure the wench is tipsy!  
 How can you see me made  
 The scoff of such a gipsy?

Saucy jade!”  
 ~ John Gay

The early part of Moll Flanders' life-narrative deals in large part not only with her birth and her upbringing, but with the concept of origins and influences in general and the ways in which contributing variables combine in the production of human subjectivity. In *Moll Flanders: The Making of a Criminal Mind*, Paula Backscheider writes, “Defoe was a man with great sensitivity to injustice and insatiable curiosity about causes and origins” (3), yet interestingly Defoe seems keen at times in divulging as little as possible about where his heroes come from. In the pseudo-autobiography *Colonel Jack* (1722) he veils his titular protagonist's beginnings in mystery: “My original may be as high as any body's for aught I know, for my mother kept very good company, but that part belongs to her story, more than to mine; all I know of it, is by oral tradition” (2). Moll's story of her origins is also more than a little nebulous: “This is too near the first hours of my life,” she says, “for me to relate anything of myself but by hearsay” (12). Moll's earliest recollection gains scarcely more credence than unsubstantiated rumor, “The first account that I can recollect, or could ever learn, of myself, was that I had wandered among a crew of those people they call gipsies, or Egyptians” (12). As an adult, Moll's criminal and other cunning (though not illegal) activities frequently illustrate diverse ways in which she functions as a trickster figure. In this chapter I will point to some of the other influences in her younger years that contribute to our understanding of her trickster-like

behaviors. I lay out Moll Flanders' trickster characteristics primarily in reference to a series of early life influences, including her mother, her adoptive Gypsy community, and the two Colchester brothers.

In one of the earliest examples of Moll Flanders' diverse and creative abilities to exercise cunning and trickery, and in which she takes the side of a female acquaintance who finds herself abandoned by a potential suitor, Defoe draws attention, as he is wont to do, to the inequalities in the treatment of men and women in society, and the power of women to shift the balance of power in their own direction. Moll writes, "As the market [meaning the sexual marketplace of courtship and marriage] ran all on the men's side, I found the women had lost the privilege of saying no" (Defoe 63). Moll's friend takes some initiative not usually granted to women as a right, namely inquiring about her suitor's "character, his morals, or substance, and he took occasion at the next visit to let her know, truly, that he took it very ill, and that he should not give her the trouble of his visits anymore" (Defoe 63). Moll hears of the injustice and seeks to repay him for his lack of gentlemanly behavior by spreading rumors about him among all of the women she and her friends know, which substantiates Backscheider's claim that Defoe's "understanding of women's condition was acute" (*Moll Flanders*, 3). The rumors become so widespread that not only does he lose another woman to whom he is betrothed, but Moll makes a note that "also in one place more the woman had the courage, however strange it was, to say no" (65). Eventually and humbly he finds his way back to Moll's friend because no other woman would have him, and she only accepts when he yields to her demands for full disclosure. The sexual inequality has been subverted and Moll's

imaginative actions draw attention to the matter of inequality between men and women in society generally.

In this particular instance, Moll begins to assert her budding role in the novel not only as a full-blown trickster but also as an embodiment of its heroic characteristics. For some people, the idea of the trickster as also being heroic might seem counterintuitive because their primary characteristics are so often represented as polar opposites of each other. However, that is not always the case. Harold Scheub writes, “The trickster might be seen as the obverse of the hero, the primordial trickster moving to the sublime order of the hero, in a splendid fairy-tale domestication of the trickster movement. But the most tantalizing option is neither of these. The seemingly antithetical characters are not at all contraries” (11). Moll reaffirms a stereotype about women being gossipy in order to reject the idea that women are unable to resist or say “no” to a man. In addition to displaying the power that orality can have in the lives of women (a theme in this novel given the instance mentioned earlier regarding Moll’s dependence on “hearsay” for any account of her life after being born in Newgate), Moll’s actions also work to unify a larger community of women, of which she is a member. She is nothing short of heroic despite being an anonymous rallying point and influence for the community of women her actions favor, even if her trickster-like behavior would be frowned upon by the patriarchal values of the larger social space she must inhabit.

Arguing that Moll Flanders possesses characteristics of a trickster is not a new argument. For a long time, criticism has posited that Moll belongs in a class of literary tricksters or rogues known as *picaros* (male) and *picaras* (female), figures clearly associated with the picaresque literary tradition (derived from a tradition of oral tales) in

which a character of the lower classes embarks on adventures and survives by means of superior intelligence (*Realism*, Novak 77). Jung theorized the link between trickster narratives and the picaresque in “On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure” (1954): “In picaresque tales, in carnivals and revels, in magic rites of healing, in man’s religious fears and exaltations, this phantom of the trickster haunts the mythology of all ages, sometimes in quite unmistakable form, sometimes in strangely modulated disguise” (140). Defoe’s uses of the picaresque tradition are well-attested, and Defoe’s character Captain Singleton in the novel of the same name, published two years prior to *Moll Flanders*, is often referred to as a *picaro*. Ian Watt tries to set Moll apart from the rest of the picaresque tradition when he writes, “Some of Moll Flanders’s actions may be very similar to those of the *picaro*, but the feeling evoked by them is of a much more complete sympathy and identification: author and reader alike cannot but take her and her problems much more seriously” (94). The psychological depth that Defoe gives to his protagonist does make Moll seem more real than most of the other rogues in that same tradition, but the reality of Defoe’s representation may simply stem from teasing out inherent complexities (think for example of Don Quixote, another key character from that tradition) in the picaresque tradition and its often roguish and outlandish heroes. As with any meme, the *picara* or trickster aspect of her character is preserved, even if Defoe’s innovations (or “modulations” to repurpose Jung’s term) in form allow for a more complete or complex representation.

Much of Moll’s life is replete with socially subversive escapades. Even the tone of the novel resists its own instructive framework, infusing what claims to be an instructive text (reminiscent of Defoe’s conduct books [see Backscheider, *Moll Flanders*,

3]) with a great deal of irony. The novel commences with an author's preface by Daniel Defoe stating that *Moll Flanders* is intended to be instructive and expressly anti-criminal: "The first part of her lewd life with the young gentleman at Colchester has so many happy turns given it to expose the crime, and warn all whose circumstances are adapted to it, of the ruinous end of such things, and the foolish, thoughtless, and abhorred conduct of both the parties, that it abundantly atones for all the lively description she gives of her folly and wickedness" (Defoe 4). Defoe later adds, "Throughout the infinite variety of this book, this fundamental is most strictly adhered to; there is not one wicked action in any part of it, but is first or last rendered unhappy and unfortunate; there is not one superlative villain brought upon the stage, but either he is brought to an unhappy end, or brought to be a penitent" (5). In other words, the driving force of didacticism at work in *Moll Flanders* is supposed to move its readers to avoid bad influences and behaviors because they carry negative and potentially fatal consequences, which Moll eventually understands after being caught and sent to Newgate. By observing Moll in chains, the reader should be persuaded to avoid Moll's choices and live a better, more Christian existence within the parameters of religious and social laws rather than wearing oneself out defying them and eluding those figures who enforce the laws.

Yet, the novel deals at such length with the origins and function of Moll's criminality that the audience may not believe in the prefatory premise at all and taste only its irony. Moll relates a number of episodes from her seedy life, beginning with how, as a fetus, she essentially saved her mother, who was imprisoned in Newgate, from capital punishment and culminating with her own "reformation" in prison. Nicola Lacey, as well as many other scholars, has commented on her penitentiary penitence as being hard to



swallow: “It is nonetheless hard for the modern reader entirely to believe in her reformation. For the new, respectable, wealthy Moll is the very same Moll as the thieving and deceiving Moll, and for a morality tale, the painful moments of her regret and punishment are extraordinarily brief” (2). While it may be that those who suspect Moll of being less than sincere simply do not “know how to read [the novel], and how to make good uses of it,” as the preface claims, it is more than likely that the novel has simply allowed the audience to know Moll well enough as a character with all of her cunning and brilliance, that such an interpretation stands in direct contrast to our own observations of the patterns by which she operates. Consequently, when Moll demonstrates penitence in Newgate, something Moll admits may be perceived as being “inconsistent in itself, and wide from the business of this book” (265), the reader may be thrown off by the irony stemming from a comparison between that scene and, for example, Moll’s opening line in the book when she proclaims, perhaps not without some pride, how well-known her real name is in Newgate and the Old Bailey sessions-house (Defoe 11).

The juxtaposition of the instructive framework in the preface and the sordid details in the narrative itself produce an inescapable irony, which trickster narratives are known for. In relation to the Winnebago trickster cycle, Radin writes, “Laughter, humour and irony permeate everything Trickster does” (x). Defoe’s heroine ensconces herself in a world brimming with resistance and acquiescence to (as well as promotion of and instruction in) social norms. All of these, including escaping from oppression, educating, “validating culture,” “justifying rituals and institutions” (344), William Bascom writes, are functions of folklore, which connects once again 1) to the folkloric origins of the picaresque as a form that Defoe is playing with, and 2) to Moll’s understanding of the

power and protection of hearsay or the oral tradition, which she uses in overcoming what she perceives as an unfair situation in need of rectification.

### **The Question of Origins**

The question of Moll's trickster origins in the story admits of multiple answers, none of which is completely definitive. Before Moll begins to fully and actively embrace her resistance to the status quo, she is exposed to a range of influences that contribute in different ways to her episodes of tricksterism, the first of these, in Defoe's mind, being her own female nature. In his essay *On Projects*, Defoe argues that England requires academies where women can attend and receive the same educational opportunities as men: "The capacities of women are supposed to be greater and their senses quicker than those of the men; and what they might be capable of being bred to is plain from some instances of female wit which this age is not without....The whole sex are generally quick and sharp" ("Academies for Women"). Applying Defoe's perspective on women to Moll's situation, one might argue that because Moll is a woman her nature is highly absorbent and she is capable of learning and learning quickly. Her natural quickness thus becomes a schema which various other influences in her early life can activate, and certain aspects of those influences are internalized and replicated through her later actions.

### **Moll's Mother**

The earliest influence on Moll's trickster identity comes in the form of her mother, who, as mentioned previously, was a convicted criminal. Hal Gladfelder writes that the way Defoe constructs the relationship between Moll and her mother is one of

heredity rather than nurture, an biological inheritance which Moll is subject to despite never knowing her mother: “Moll carries Newgate with her as an inheritance and a contagion. Yet, if that contagion exceeds a purely sociological explanation—there is a kind of blood fatality in Moll’s repetition of her mother’s history—Defoe avoids mystifying her fall into transgression” (115). Moll writes, “My mother was convicted for a petty theft, scarce worth naming, viz., borrowing three pieces of fine Holland of a certain draper in Cheapside. The circumstances are too long to repeat, and I have heard them related in so many ways, that I can scarce tell which is the right account” (Defoe 12), once again undermining the audience’s faith in the narrative she provides by mentioning the unreliability of the oral tradition. She also adds that her mother escaped punishment by “pleading her belly,” and when the officials found her “quick with child, she was respited for about seven months; after which she was called down, as they term it, to her former judgment, but obtained the favour afterward of being transported to the plantations, and left me about half a year old, and in bad hands you may be sure” (12). This situation carries the germ of several themes that Moll embodies repeatedly throughout her adult life, including theft and egocentrism (that is, she seems devoid of maternal affection and cares more for her own survival than her responsibilities to care for children), both of which are anti-social characteristics that figure as common elements of trickster figures. Given the loophole on which Moll’s mother capitalizes to first postpone and then ameliorate her punishment, it may be instructive to our purposes to read that action in conjunction with John Gay’s character Filch, in *The Beggar’s Opera*, who says, “One need have the constitution of a horse to go through the business. Since the favourite child-getter was disabled by a mishap, I have picked up a little money by

the ladies to a pregnancy against their being called down to sentence” (2821). Filch’s occupation in Newgate reflects some of the unsavory activities of real Newgate convicts, and therefore could apply to Moll’s mother and explain her lack of commitment to her daughter.

If Moll’s mother was not pregnant when she went to prison, but merely took advantage of the system and had a baby to save her own life in prison, it serves our purpose to argue that Moll was conceived in trickery and that her clever desperation stems from the circumstances in which her lineage placed her. Moll displays her cleverness and resourcefulness many times over, which preserves her again and again throughout the novel, perhaps exemplified nowhere as well as in her attempt to pickpocket a woman’s gold watch, not long before being caught and sent to prison:

It happened in a crowd, at a meeting-house, where I was in very great danger of being taken. I had full hold of her watch, but giving it a great jostle as if somebody had thrust me against her, and in the juncture giving the watch a fair pull, I found it would not come, so I let it go that moment, and cried as if I had been killed, that somebody had trod upon my foot, and that there were certainly pickpockets there, for somebody or other had given a pull at my watch. (193)

Because of her quick reaction, not only does Moll escape scrutiny, but the crowd finds a scapegoat for her crime, a young man who is also discovered pickpocketing: “The poor boy was delivered up to the rage of the street, which is a cruelty I need not describe, and which, however, they are always glad of, rather than be sent to Newgate” (194). These kinds of acts cement the bond between Moll and her mother in that they not only defer

their coming punishment, but they also make other people foist certain consequences on others: Moll's mother escapes hanging (although she is still transported), but Moll remains with "no parish to have recourse to for [her] nourishment in [her] infancy" (12). Moll escapes, but the other pickpocket, her fellow criminal, is subjected to the "rage of the street." Even Moll's confessions in Newgate, mentioned earlier, might be interpreted as similar acts of clever desperation (Defoe 264). Her connection to this aspect of her mother's personality becomes a key trait in Moll's trickster identity. In fact, one might call it to a degree Moll's "first cause," the influence that first sets her on her long and unusual adventure.

### **Gypsies**

One of the earliest influences in Moll's life emerges in the form of the group known as "gipsies, or Egyptians" (Defoe 12). David Malvinni writes, "Left unanswered is the question of how this early childhood experience informs Moll's life" (25), but there are clues and vestiges of connections between that experience and other patterns that appear in her adolescent and adult life which may in part inform our understanding of her eventual embodiment of the trickster type (Defoe 12). Somehow, after being taken from her mother by a relative, Moll finds herself among the Romani or Gypsies, a group of migratory people often mistaken as Egyptian because of their dark features. Her story of the time she spent among them is a brief one: "The first account that I can recollect, or could ever learn, of myself, was that I had wandered among a crew of those people they call gipsies, or Egyptians; but I believe it was but a little while that I had been among them, for I had not had my skin discoloured, as they do to all children they carry about with them; nor can I tell how I came among them, or how I got from them" (12). Despite

her relationship with that community, Moll's actions demonstrate that she can also be interpreted as the white embodiment of Gypsy mystique and cleverness, and this is perhaps her greatest trick, made possible by her masked hybridity.

Moll's admitted association with Gypsies seems to suggest a bit of shame, as she casts doubt on the veracity of her reported relationship with the Roma with the phrase "or could ever learn, of myself" (12), suggesting that her knowledge of her Gypsy roots is the product of hearsay and not necessarily personal recollection, a point which takes on greater significance throughout the novel as reports of Moll's background and wealth and those of her potential suitors are distorted by rumor and gossip. Oral tradition might be a means of power assertion, but one cannot necessarily trust it either. Pollak extends that interpretation, stating, "In this instance, the narrator's anxious desire to assert a cultural identity clearly differentiated from that of the Gypsies through the figure of her unblackened face (or recognizable whiteness) takes on a certain overdetermined meaning in relation to the novel's colonial subtext" (127). Moll clearly tries to create distance between herself and the Gypsy community as a way of saying "I am this, not that. I embody something different than what they embody. I am familiar; they are other."

Her need to create this racial distance is no doubt a reaction to the negative cultural perceptions of Roma during that time period. Texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Joseph Addison's *Spectator* No. 130, which represents Gypsies as "Lawless Vagrants," fortune-tellers, and thieves, provide glimpses into the European representations of and prejudices against the Roma, including stereotypes that portray Gypsies as a "vaguely criminal, vagabond, oriental 'race' who wandered the European countryside and were wont to kidnap European children—whose faces were

then blackened to prevent their being recognized as white” (Pollak 127). The popular ballad “The Gypsy Laddie,” thought to have been published first in 1720, even recounts the wooing of a white woman by the Gypsy character Johnny Faa, who leaves her lord to “follow the gypsy laddie” (“200A: The Gypsy Laddie”). Moll’s association with a community of gypsies is not the first time that Defoe has drawn on legends of Gypsies abducting white children, having used it before in *Captain Singleton*. Their appearance in both of these novels seems to signal once again the connection between his work and the picaresque fiction from which he borrowed, but the legends were not purely the result of working in that genre. Addison recounts a story about

a Boy running along the Side of the Canal desired to be taken in; which the Master of the Boat refused, because the Lad had not quite Money enough to pay the usual Fare. An eminent Merchant being pleased with the Looks of the Boy, and secretly touched with Compassion towards him, paid the Money for him, and ordered him to be taken on board. Upon talking with him afterwards, he found that he could speak readily in three or four Languages, and learned upon farther Examination that he had been stoln away when he was a Child by a Gypsie, and had rambled ever since with a Gang of those Strollers up and down several Parts of Europe.

(*Spectator*, No. 130)

Such legend variants and their rhetoric persist today, as Susan Lepselter points out in her presentation “Madeleine and the Gypsies,”<sup>6</sup> and can serve as the basis for understanding relationships and tensions between Anglo-Europeans and Roma (Nord 11). The point of

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<sup>6</sup> A presentation given at the American Folklore Society’s annual meeting in 2014.

using such racially problematic narrative frameworks, according to Deborah Epstein Nord, is that “kidnapping stories and Gypsy narratives, as well as the larger tradition of foundling or bastard plots, also signal something of the fundamental mystery of individual origins that, even in an age of scientific sophistication, haunts human psyches” (11). In Moll’s case, the “haunting” effect of the nebulous nature of origins seems to be particularly applicable in that, by her own admission, the details surrounding her own birth and early life are tinged with uncertainty and gaps, and yet those early years seem to be crucial in the way they foreshadow aspects of her young adult and adult personality and experiences.

In some ways, various stereotypes of the Roma can form a basis for understanding Moll’s transgressive and socially defiant behavior later on in the novel. Malvinni writes, “Assumed is that [her experience] contributes to Moll’s early turn to promiscuity” with the elder Colchester brother (25). Moll’s desirability and beauty can be interpreted as an extension of the exoticization of the Gypsy woman prior to and during that time. George Borrow, a nineteenth-century scholar who wrote extensively on Gypsies, described the women as “wild and beautiful like sibyls” as well as “materialistic, false by nature, and enchantingly lovely” (Willems 124). Addison provides a description of Gypsies that confirms that perspective, writing, “You see now and then some handsome young Jades among them: The Sluts have very often white Teeth and black Eyes” (*Spectator*, No. 130). Representations of Gypsy women as sexualized creatures passed into colloquial speech, and one finds white women being called “gipsies” in ballads and even in John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* because of their suspected loose behavior.



However, the stereotype of Gypsy criminality is perhaps the more dominant influence at work in Moll's narrative. Addison writes that Sir Roger de Coverley, a fictional character, after having his palm read, encountered "a common Beggar upon the Road who was no Conjurer," and "as he went to relieve him he found his Pocket was picked: That being a Kind of Palmistry at which this Race of Vermin are very dexterous." The stereotype of the pickpocket Gypsy fits into a larger cultural perception of Gypsies as being capable of making things, whether wallets, watches, children, or even themselves, disappear, and Moll's story about inquiries after the Gypsies who apparently had taken her further confirms that perception (Malvinni 25). Wim Willems writes that according to Borrow, "The women had many tricks at their disposal" and they "dominate his extensive description of Gypsies' deceptive practices and he calls them the greatest swindlers on earth" (123). Given Moll's illustrious career as a pickpocket, as well as the frauds she puts on her suitors from time to time, the influence of the Gypsy community (as Defoe and his culture perceived them) on Moll seems to be that her early environment and society permeated her personality and prepared her for the criminal she would eventually take up and prosper in.

The question then is why does Defoe depict Moll as trying so hard to convince the audience of her disdain for that community, while at the same time telling a story full of unsubstantiated claims that can make her seem unreliable? Why does Defoe have her bring it up at all if she cannot provide more concrete evidence? Perhaps the episode shows Defoe's simply borrowing on the popularity of "The Gypsy Laddie" and other such songs and stories, but just as likely the way he depicts that account demonstrates that he wants Moll to seem truly sincere in her anxiety about her connection to the ethnic

community that she claims to be unable to remember. It causes her such anxiety that she has to address it, just so she can control the story through telling it her way and thereafter dismissing it. She even fabricates an inkling that she must have of her own volition left them, and not the other way around: “I have a notion in my head that I left them there (that is, that I hid myself and would not go any farther with them), but I am not able to be particular in that account” (13). Such memory lapses are natural, but at the same time Moll’s need to fill a gap in her own story indicates an underlying anxiety regarding her association with that community.

At the same time, her memory still seems somewhat selective, and the fact alone that she remembers telling the officers who find her that she came into town with the Gypsies, which would have occurred just prior to being found by those officers, serves to complicate her account. If she can remember telling such a story to the officers, why can she not remember what happened right before that? Further, the bigger question may be, can the audience trust her to tell the truth, even though they, like the officers, have no evidence except her word and their own cultural stereotypes, or is this all a con and the audience is being taken in? It could be that her anxiety is feigned, that her storytelling performance is outwardly an attempt to distance herself from the Roma, but at another level is actually functioning as a tribute to the tactics she learned from the culture that took her in. Her whiteness is simply a veil for her Gypsy identity. She is making herself out to be a victim of abduction, preying on her audience’s fear of the shiftless Other, the Roma, and utilizing those cultural threads of narrative, belief, and prejudice to weave an obfuscated and irrefutable origin story that puts her in the reader’s good graces.

## The Elder Brother

As a young girl, Moll lives with a well-to-do family in Colchester. The family consists of a mother and father, an undisclosed number of daughters, and a pair of sons. The elder of these sons, whom Moll refers to as the “elder brother,” fits well into the eighteenth-century tradition of charming rakes who are decidedly pleasure-seeking, suave, and controlled in the manner they go about giving rein to their passion, even when those outlets result in the ruin of the women they seduce and debauch. Moll describes the elder brother as a “gay gentleman, that knew the town as well as the country, and though he had levity enough to do an ill-natured thing, yet had too much judgment of things to pay too dear for his pleasures” (21). He is well-practiced in wooing the opposite sex, and Moll describes his method of approaching her, once her “gifts of nature” catch his eye:

He began with that unhappy snare to all women, viz. taking notice upon all occasions how pretty I was, as he called it, how agreeable, how well-carriaged, and the like; and this he contrived so subtly, as if he had known as well how to catch a woman in his net as a partridge when he went a-setting, for he would contrive to be talking this to his sisters, when, though I was not by, yet he knew I was not far off but that I should be sure to hear him. (21)

The careful and covert calculations he makes in his plans to flatter Moll into bed with him are equally as impressive as the machinations he uses to carry on with her later. He finds ways to have a number of meetings with Moll without detection. The first time the elder brother professes his love to Moll, he does so because they are alone in the house: “However, nothing else passed at that time; it was but a surprise, and I soon

recovered myself. He had stayed longer with me, but he happened to look out at the window and see his sisters coming up the garden, so he took his leave” (24). Another time, “The young ladies were gone a-visiting with their mother; his brother was out of town; and as for his father, he had been at London for a week before” (24). He finds Moll in “his younger sister’s chamber...and as there was nobody in the house but the maid below-stairs, he was, it may be, the ruder” (24). After making many more professions of love, the brother “threw me down upon the bed, and kissed me most violently; but, to give him his due, offered no manner of rudeness to me, only kissed me a great while” (25). Once again, their encounter is interrupted when the brother thinks he hears someone approaching on the stairs, so he hands Moll five guineas and leaves. However, their encounters do not go to “the last favour” (26) until the brother creates a more intricate mode of creating adequate privacy for him to enjoy her. He asks Moll to run errands for him, even providing her with a script for how she must bid and haggle for neckcloths, while also making known his intent to pay “a visit...to a family they all knew, and where was to be such-and-such gentlemen, and very formally asked his sisters to go with him, and as they as formally excused themselves, because of company that they notice was to come and visit them that afternoon; all which, by the way he had contrived on purpose,” all of which shows the brother’s calculating and narrative abilities (28). The brother and Moll meet in a private area without being suspected and “where was all the convenience in the world to be as wicked as we pleased” (29).

What we see happening here has meaning on multiple levels, culturally speaking. Jan A. Bell states, “Moll’s first romantic encounter...is described in such a way as to allocate the tale to the group of romances about rakes and innocent serving wenches”

(128), the same kind of narrative motif on which Haywood's novels *Fantomina* and *Anti-Pamela* are constructed. Although Haywood's heroines are more aware of the culture of rakes and are therefore more capable of taking advantage of the culture in different ways to obtain either social control or financial security, Moll, on the other hand, seems to have no clue as to what she has been swept up in, and when the brother hands her the money, she writes, "I was more confounded with the money than I was before with the love, and began to be so elevated that I scarce knew the ground I stood on" (25). She may be vain about herself and a bit unsure about her actual position socially, but her reaction still connotes a great deal of innocence. In other words, her knowledge of society and her ability to interpret and manipulate her relationships has not yet matured, although her experiences with men throughout the novel do much to promote the development of her abilities.

Moll's personal "fall" might not have happened if she had not already been so prideful, a confessional aside that connects back to Defoe's instructive preface. When Moll turns fourteen, her foster mother dies, and Moll must shift for herself until she is offered employ as a maid, in a well-to-do house in Colchester. Defoe's description of her life there indicates that she also is something of a companion to the young women in the house, or so it would seem, as she writes, "I had all the advantages for my education that could be imagined; the lady had masters home to teach her daughters to dance, and to speak French, and to write, and others to teach them music; and as I was always with them, I learned as fast as they; and though masters were not appointed to teach me, yet I learned by imitation and inquiry all that they learned by instruction and direction" (Defoe 20). The description of their education derives almost directly from Defoe's *On Projects*,

in which he outlines a suitable instructive regimen for young women: “In this house the persons who enter should be taught all sorts of breeding suitable to both their genius and their quality, and, in particular, music and dancing, which it would be cruelty to bar the sex of, because they are their darlings; but, besides this, they should be taught languages, as particularly French and Italian” (“Of Academies”).

While Defoe approves of educating women in this way, and conduct manuals at the time would concur with that perspective, their education is incomplete as it seems to lack instruction in speech and reading, which Defoe champions, “especially history, and so to read as to make them understand the world, and be able to know and judge of things when they hear of them” (“Of Academies”). Defoe’s omission of instruction in speech and reading may be read as a reflection of the omission of those aspects of education in English society, thus failing to “cultivate” her “understanding” sufficiently to avoid folly and leaving her to learn through experience what she might have gained through study. In the subjects that the women in the Colchester house are put to, Moll outstrips them, which, added to her “gifts of nature” (21), gives her reason to write, “In some things I had the advantages of my ladies, though they were my superiors...First, I was apparently handsomer than any of them; secondly, I was better shaped; and thirdly, I sang better, by which I mean, I had a better voice” (21). In other words, Moll begins to compare and elevate herself, because of her perceived “advantages,” all of which attract the notice of the elder brother, who brings about the ruin to which her vanity has left her vulnerable.

At the same time, none of the brother’s actions and stories are lost on Moll. She mimics his management of the affair and was herself “cunning enough not to give the least room to any in the family to imagine I had the least correspondence with him. I

scarce ever looked towards him in public, or answered if he spoke to me” (27). Such caution and attention to detail serves her well later on when she becomes a criminal. After stealing and losing a piece of damask when a friend-in-crime is taken in the act of theft, Moll says, “Here again my old caution stood me in good stead; though I often robbed with these people, yet I never let them know who I was, nor could they ever find out my lodging, though they often endeavoured to watch me to it. They all knew me by the name of Moll Flanders....My name was public among them indeed, but how to find me out they knew not” (203). As a criminal, privacy keeps her physically secure, even if her reputation is bandied about everywhere. Defoe writes, “I know it is dangerous to make public appearances of the sex; they are not either to be confined or exposed: the first will disagree with their inclinations, and the last with their reputations; and therefore it is somewhat difficult” (“Of Academies”). Defoe’s rhetoric seems to suggest that there is space for negotiating privacy, and Moll’s caution indicates that she is aware that privacy is important, but in her case it is not her reputation but rather her body that is at risk, and privacy is the means by which she will continue to survive and thrive.

### **The Younger Brother**

The younger of the Colchester brothers, Robin, is the polar opposite of the elder, and he represents another source of influence in Moll’s trickster identity. While the elder possesses foresight and intelligence that enables him to seduce Moll and do so nearly without consequences, Robin is impulsive, boisterous, rash, and verbally combative. When his sister tries to make a point about men, women, and marriage, Robin objects to her points because he, as a man, feels slighted on behalf of himself and his sex. At the same time, his contrariness and disruption seem to be embedded in his character, a

natural tendency he cannot seem to quell. The sister says, “The market is against our sex just now;...nothing but money now recommends a woman; the men play the game all into their own hands” (22). To which the younger brother responds, “Hold, sister, you run too fast: I am an exception to your rule. I assure you, if I find a woman so accomplished as you talk of, I won’t trouble myself about the money.” Their argument runs back and forth until the sister takes offense to what she perceives as the insinuation that she lacks beauty, which the younger brother affirms by saying, “Beauty will steal a husband sometimes in spite of money, and when the maid chances to be handsomer than the mistress, she oftentimes makes as good a market, and rides in a coach before her” (23).

In the process of bantering, “The sister and younger brother fell grievously out about it; and as he said some very disobliging things to her, upon my account, so I could easily see she resented them by her future conduct to me” (23). This argument is the first time Robin lets on that he has feelings for Moll, and it is not the last time they engage in such arguments. Robin’s disdain for his sisters and his need to banter with them does not create a welcoming atmosphere for Moll (in fact, just the opposite occurs). His quick and sharp wit suggests he even seems to enjoy goading and provoking his sisters. A later argument with them illustrates just how little he thinks before he opens his mouth and how his impulses drive his unruly tongue. When Moll (or Betty, as she is called by the family) falls ill because of the pressures placed on her due to her love for the eldest brother and Robin’s attentions, the eldest sister states, “If Betty is not in love, my brother is. I wonder he has not broke his mind to Betty; I warrant she won’t say No.” Robin lashes out at her by saying, “They that yield when they are asked...are one step before



them that were never asked, and two steps before them that yield before they are asked; and that's answer for you, sister" (42). Moll describes the rest of the argument thus:

This fired the sister, and she flew into a passion, and said, things were come to pass that it was time the wench, meaning me, was out of the family....Robin replied, that was for the master and mistress of the family, who were not to be taught by one that had so little judgment as his eldest sister. It ran up a great deal further; the sister scolded, Robin rallied and bantered, but poor Betty lost ground by it extremely in the family. (42)

Robin's feelings for Moll and his esteem for her leads him to provoke these verbal duels with his sister because he wishes to parade and flaunt Moll's superiority, although she is serving-maid, which leads to jealousy and familial tiffs. Because of Robin's transparency and obvious preference for Moll, even before he explicitly declares his love for her, the elder brother tells Moll that his family members "are fully persuaded he makes love to you; nay, the fool has put it into their heads too himself, for he is continually bantering them about it, and making a jest of himself" (34). Consequently, because Moll and the elder brother are still involved in their liaisons, Bell writes, "Obviously, this serves to involve her in a grim dilemma, in which her emotional security is at odds with her financial stability" (130). While Robin is being open and honest about his feelings for Moll, his attitude toward the situation reveals a lack of necessary discretion in a matter that would entangle him with someone socially beneath him.

The fact that Robin merits the appellation of *fool* his elder brother gives him is in keeping with the short-sighted and impulsive behavior that Robin demonstrates. His clownish, impulsive behavior, devoid at times of foresight, contrasts starkly with the

cunning intelligence possessed by the elder brother, yet both have a place in the tradition of trickster narratives. It may be significant to point that the very name Robin carries with it a certain allusion to a tradition of other narrative figures who operate as tricksters in English folklore, including the outlaw Robin Hood and Robin Goodfellow or Puck, such as one finds reference to in this Early Modern ballad, “A Pleasant new Ballad you here may behold, How the Devill, though subtle, was guld by a Scold”: “Tom Thumb is not my subject, / whom Fairies oft did aide, / Nor that mad spirit Robin / that plagues both wife and maid” (Anonymous). That authors employed allusions to the “trickster Robin” tradition in application to actual people occurs elsewhere. For example, in an earlier eighteenth-century publication called “The Last Words of William Parry a Lawyer,” a person known as “Robin Trickster a Turn-coat Scrivener” is accused of leading Parry into participating in seditious acts against Queen Elizabeth and is subsequently “turned off” (1). To Defoe, who would have been familiar with the narrative antics and functions of such a popular folk figure as Robin, creating such an allusion deliberately in a rash character whose only function in the novel is to create disruption for the main character and create a foil for the elder brother makes sense. Unlike Robin’s brother, who thinks many steps ahead, Robin thinks only about what he wants and not about any of the problems connected to the kind of behavior he displays. Robin does not seem to suffer too much because of his lack of foresight, but his lack of tact and social awareness create all kinds of problems for Moll. While calculated and cold intelligence such as the elder brother possesses are what help a trickster survive and deceive, Robin’s oafish trickster characteristics lead to inevitable downfalls, and it is to Moll’s disadvantage that she internalizes Robin’s influences at all.

### **Moll's Downfalls**

Moll displays her short-sightedness on several occasions, which in essence paves the way for slip-ups that one might refer to as instances of the “trickster tricked” motif, an often humorous representation of karma which certainly existed in eighteenth-century culture and would have been appreciated by the same audiences who enjoyed reading about the kinds of episodes that Defoe describes. Such examples of or references to the concept of “the trickster tricked” appear in such texts as a 1727 ballad called, not coincidentally, “The Trickster Trick’d,” in which a thief receives his comeuppance for stealing a horse and bagpipes from a “harmless poor Stroller” (line 10). When the thief tries to play the pipes and ride the horse simultaneously, the horse bucks him off and he dies. In the 1752 short story called “Honesty the Best Policy, or the History of Roger,” the narrator writes, “tho’ the tricks may get the better of a trickster, they are lost and squandered on one who has no tricks” (22), which in sentiment essentially amounts to an eighteenth-century antecedent to W.C. Fields’ “You Can’t Cheat an Honest Man.”

Such motifs are entertaining because of their inherent humor, but they also are inherently—though implicitly—didactic in terms of the value of being honest and above board in one’s dealings, which is no doubt why Defoe puts the motif to use in Moll’s story. Moll marries Robin, and the five years they are married are described in less than a paragraph. He is good to her, she has two children with him, and “at the end of the five years he died” (54). With twelve hundred pounds in money and her children taken in by her in-laws, Moll says, “I was now, as above, left loose to the world, and being still young and handsome, as everybody said of me, and I assure you I thought myself so, and with a tolerable fortune in my pocket, I put no small value upon myself” (55). In her

search for another husband, she encounters “men of mirth and wit, and was often entertained with such, as I was also with others” (56). Thinking to procure a husband out of this lot who would take care of her, eventually she meets and marries instead “this amphibious creature, this land-water thing, called a gentleman-tradesman; and as a just plague upon my folly, I was caught in the very snare which, as I might say, I laid for myself” (56). Her spendthrift husband ultimately spends all their money in just over two years of marriage. After being arrested and thrown into a “sponging-house,” he escapes and leaves Moll with all of the goods he could remove from their house before the creditors could take them.

The “trickster tricked” motif continues throughout the novel as Moll cleverly—although sometimes without enough foresight—attempts to catch herself new husbands. After being abandoned by her second husband, Moll attempts, with the help of a friend, to marry. Moll’s friend “made this unhappy proposal to me, viz., that as we had observed...how the men made no scruple to set themselves out as persons meriting a woman of fortune of their own, it was but just to deal with in their own way, and if it was possible to deceive the deceiver” (71). As it turns out Moll—through her friend’s artifice—manages to deceive her future husband into thinking she is a fortune, and even when she “honestly” tells him—knowing that the rumors of her wealth will prevent him from leaving—that she possesses none, he sticks with her. Ultimately they are both deceived because neither one has much money, and even worse he is her brother, which she finds out only after giving birth to his children in Virginia. Breaking with cultural taboos is a common characteristic in trickster stories, and while the transgression of certain taboos is meant to be humorous, transgressing the incest taboo is more often

intended to reinforce the society's horror of familial copulation and the reason why rules forbidding such practices exist. Concerning the incest taboo in the context of *Moll*

*Flanders*, Ellen Pollak writes,

On the one hand, Moll's incest emerges in the plot as an extension (almost an allegorical problem) of her quest for female power in the realms of economic and linguistic exchange. On the other hand, by virtue of its inadvertence and Moll's repudiation of it, the incest testifies to her lack of desire to extend that quest for female power beyond the limits of economic and linguistic exchange into the realm of sexual exchange, where, as Rubin and others have shown, the hierarchies of sexual difference originate. Moll's incest is, in this sense, both a manifestation of her transgression and its limit. (123)

In addition, Moll commits incest because she, like the suitor who only pays attention to the stories ground in the gossip mill, does not delve into the background of the man she is marrying. In fact, her desperation undermines her ability to foresee all of the potential consequences because her only goal is to find someone with money who can help her survive. What we may be seeing here is another show of advocacy for women in Defoe's presentation, because although Moll works to allow her friend the possibility to inquire into her suitor's background and affairs, she does not take full advantage of that right in her second or third—or even her fourth—marriages, thus leading her to make poorly informed choices. The horror of incest functions as a reminder of what can happen if mutual inquiry, the result of sexual parity, is not conducted or even—in the case of women—allowed. If women do not know exactly who they are getting into bed with

(figuratively and literally), then who is to say—much to the audience’s disgust—instances of incest could not happen? Full disclosure in terms of finances and family and connections on both sides is a prerequisite to a successful match, and these recurring motifs of the “trickster tricked” illustrate how deception or façade about important matters on either side can sink the marital venture.

### **Conclusion**

By analyzing Moll’s early influences, one can see how those contributing factors played a role in her development into the woman/trickster she becomes. In Defoe’s hands, Moll comes to embody and exemplify just how complex a *picara* and a trickster can be. As Watt writes, “We have a sense of personal identity subsisting through the duration and yet being changed by the flow of experience” (24). She is not just a type anymore, but rather a representation of a flesh-and-blood human being. Moll’s role as a trickster demonstrates that a trickster can transcend its role as a literary type through displays of psychological depth and dynamism.

## Chapter 4

Amy and Laphelia: The Female Companion as Trickster Figure in Defoe's *Roxana; or The Fortunate Mistress* and Haywood's *The City Jilt*

This chapter deals with tricksterism and the role of female companionship in English society and the novel, specifically in Defoe's *Roxana; or, the Fortunate Mistress*, published in 1724, and Haywood's *The City Jilt; or, the Alderman Turn'd Beau*, published the same year. These two books represent the experiences of women abandoned by the males in their lives. As a result, these women turn to each other for assistance to gain control over their suddenly helpless situations. In both cases, the female companion functions as a trickster character, a clever, cunning, mentally acute storyteller who straddles the boundary between unethical behaviors, such as lying and levity, and positive qualities, such as loyalty—first and foremost to their mistresses, although over the course of both of the works discussed in this chapter one understands that loyalty to the mistress is equivalent to loyalty to themselves and their needs. These tricksters and their mistresses present a fundamental conversation in the novel, the need for affiliation and community, a society which they find with other women. At the same time, they isolate themselves from society by committing acts that break with the social contract governing and policing human interactions.

The functions of folklore as expressed by Bascom involve the need to escape the repression of social governance while at the same time reinforcing social norms. Tricksters often perform both functions. They have traditionally symbolized this balance between the anti-social and communal. Their actions, when successful, subvert, mock, critique, or transgress community rules, regulations, and norms, while their frequent

failure to achieve their design of escaping these rules in turn reinforces and reaffirms those rules. One might use the Norse myth of Balder's death as an example of this tension in that Loki participates in a community ritual of throwing objects at Balder, who is preserved by the promises made by all living things not to harm him. Superficially, the gesture conforms and embraces the norms of the community. However, Loki also undercuts the ritual by giving a dart of mistletoe, a plant which has not taken the same promise, to Balder's blind brother Hodr (Hamilton 457). Subsequently, the dart flies and Balder is killed, thus constituting a transgression of a community rule and revealing Loki's mockery of them. However, the community's norms are eventually reaffirmed when Loki is found and punished. The servants and companions portrayed in these two novels follow the same kind of pattern, outwardly paying homage to the social order and hierarchies they are part of. Their lip service allows them to move more freely and covertly flout the social order, and their actions demonstrate that when the affiliation women seek through socially constructed ideals such as marriage and love was unavailable or failed them, they can find satisfaction through the affiliation with individuals of their sex and gain strength from that sense of community and their own unity.

**Defoe's *Roxana; or, the Fortunate Mistress***

Defoe's novel is a complicated exploration of a theme also found in *Moll Flanders*, namely that women, when confronted by dire necessity and male negligence, have the ability to not only survive but to thrive using their wits. In fact, anti-social behavior and defiance of official views of female comportment are generally crucial to success and survival in an unforgiving society. At the outset of the novel, Roxana marries



a brewer who is also a spendthrift, which leads him to bankruptcy and Roxana and her children are abandoned. With the help of Amy, a clever, prattling servant and ultimately her companion, Roxana overcomes her initial unfortunate situation by leaving her children with other family members and becoming a mistress to rich men and even royalty in France and England. April London refers to Amy as a “shadow figure,” “double,” “Roxana’s agent,” and “keeper of...secrets” (28)—an interesting facet of Amy’s personality since she is, most of the time, able to manage Roxana’s affairs with great dexterity and discretion, while also being, as Roxana refers to her, a “tattling Woman, and a true Gossip” (166). As Roxana proceeds from situation to situation, Amy tags along and even steals the show at times as a key player in the management of her mistress’s figurative and literal affairs. Amy’s behavior is a concrete example of Lori Landay’s statement that “the trickster is part of the community who may venture outside, but who always starts and ends within” (16). Amy’s role in Roxana’s life is an interesting take on that concept, because while their escapades do follow that mythic arc, they still seek and find community with each other even as they break from the larger community and the norms they defy. Further, Amy’s cleverness and trickery constitute not only a series of attempts to provide for herself by providing for her mistress and attaining social control, but also her trickery itself becomes a signifier of her regard for Roxana and a means to prove her affection for her mistress and desire to solidify their little community.

Amy begins as a servant, but as she proves her loyalty and worth to Roxana she transcends her position as a servant, or rather balances her servitude with her role as female companion and confidante. Representations of servants in eighteenth-century novels are as pervasive as they are varied. In some cases, especially as far as men were

concerned, serving-maids, such as Moll Flanders, Pamela Andrews, and even Syrena Tricky, function as reminders that although they belonged to a lower class, they were often viewed as a site of sexual gratification and desire, a concept that Haywood plays with in *Fantomina* when her heroine embodies the role of the serving-maid Celia to “continue” her affair with the inconstant Beauplaisir. Pamela uses her desirability to become upwardly mobile, resisting the advances of and then marrying her abductor, while Moll and Syrena, both of whom dream of scaling the social ladder, fall prey to their own pride and lack of foresight by giving into sexual urges.

The status of the female servant in English culture was not always founded on sexual desirability, however, as the case of Mrs. Jewkes in Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) makes clear; her status in Mr. B’s household is at least in part built on a foundation of unswerving loyalty to her master. By uniting her will to his completely, even assisting in the attempted rape of Pamela (Richardson 203), she not only merits his approval but actually participates in the reaffirmation of masculine power (although that masculine force is essentially undermined by Mr. B’s inability to complete the deed and have his way with Pamela’s body, even when she is restrained). Mrs. Jewkes becomes powerful because she is a valuable part of a larger masculine system of values. Whether the power of the female servant comes from the position of sex object or faithful subservient, the point remains that quite a few examples of eighteenth-century novels discuss the potential power of the female servant in society. For example, in Mary Davys’s *The Reform’d Coquet* (1724), the protagonist Amoranda is constantly under the threat of being betrayed by her servants, or she hears of cases in which servants have given in to bribery and allowed their mistresses to be ruined. Amy, as a servant, is to

some extent thematically in conversation with all of these depictions of female servitude, being sexually active and lusty herself as Moll and Syrena are, as well as unscrupulously and unfailingly loyal to her mistress like Mrs. Jewkes is to Mr. B. I would even argue that though Amy does not sell out Roxana as the servants in Davys's book do, she facilitates and encourages Roxana's amours and, when the choice to become a mistress or starve presents itself, shares a fair bit of rhetoric with her mistress concerning the relationship between female sexuality and economic exchange. When the landlord begins to court Roxana and indicates his interest in her as a mistress, Roxana is on the fence about what to do about his attentions, but Amy has already prioritized survival over principle:

Why, Madam, says Amy, I hope you won't deny him, if he should offer it.

What do you mean by that, Hussy, said I? No, I'd starve first.

I hope not, Madam, I hope you would be wiser; I'm sure, if he will set you up, as he talks of, you ought to deny him nothing; and you will starve if you do not consent, that's certain.

What, consent to lye with him for Bread? Amy, said I, how can you talk so?

Nay, Madam, says Amy, I don't think you wou'd for any thing else; it would not be Lawful for any thing else, but for Bread, Madam. (28)

Amy essentially defines sex as a commodity and carries a moral code that prioritizes survival above niceness, which aligns her point of view with the ideologies embedded in economic individualism at the time. Watt writes, "All Defoe's heroes pursue money, which he characteristically called the 'general denominating article in the world'; and they pursue it very methodically according to the profit and loss book-keeping which

Max Weber considered to be the distinctive technical feature of modern capitalism” (63). Tricksterism and economic individualism to some degree complement each other because each prioritizes the desires of the individual subject, although tricksterism in many instances carries that need for gratification much farther. Amy’s role in Roxana’s life as she shuffles the children off to relatives marks the beginning of her own personal rise from servant to companion.

The role of servant and female companion are not necessarily mutually exclusive in eighteenth-century culture. Betty Rizzo, for instance, writes about Charlotte Smith’s portrayal of Mrs. Rayland’s female companion Mrs. Lennard in *The Old Manor House* (1793) as being responsible for domestic tasks that were not “physically laborious” but were essentially “servile” (5). Throughout *Roxana*, Amy continues to be at Roxana’s beck and call, doing whatever she is asked to do, as a servant. Yet, she continually finds ways to go beyond the role of servant to endear herself to and take care of her mistress. It is her duty to do as she is commanded, but Amy also seems to possess a more intimate connection that supersedes her urge (so she says) to survive at all costs, or at least that is what she wants Roxana to believe about her: “Dear Madam,” she says, “if I will starve for your sake, I will be a Whore, or anything for your sake; why, I would die for you, if I were put to it” (Defoe 28), which is an interesting remark considering her later show of aversion for dying when they are in a storm at sea. Nevertheless, Amy is more than a servant to Roxana. She is, as Terry Castle puts it, “The *amie*—the perfect friend, the familiar” (*The Female Thermometer*, 46). Upon Roxana’s and Amy’s return to England, Defoe attempts to define the relationship between them explicitly, whereas before that point Amy’s role as something more than just a servant existed as an unstated

assumption: “I had...my Woman, Amy, whom I now dress’d like a Gentlewoman, and made her my Companion” (Defoe 165). Amy shows that a little cleverness can render the boundaries between roles and even classes both flimsy and permeable.

Just prior to becoming mistress to the landlord, Roxana has him to dinner: “Amy waited at the Table, and she smil’d, and laugh’d, and was so merry she could hardly contain it, for the Girl lov’d me to an Excess, hardly to be describ’d....As soon as Dinner was over, Amy went up-Stairs, and put on her Best Clothes too, and came down dress’d like a Gentlewoman” (Defoe 31). This fluidity of social identity is just one of the ways that Amy signals her role as a trickster character. When Roxana makes Amy her companion, Amy’s dress becomes an outward signifier for her new status, although nothing really changes in their relationship since she has always been Roxana’s confidante and companion, “the secret sharer in Roxana’s life” (Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, 46). Roxana even writes at one point, “I had no-body but Amy, in the World, and to travel without Amy, was very uncomfortable” (Defoe 100). The effect of Amy’s absence on her seems to suggest the degree to which their intimacy and community has progressed, to the point that Roxana feels uneasy without her. The dress is a socially codified method of reaffirming what Amy means to Roxana; it is a gesture of good will and trust and affection. After all, Amy has donned the dress of the gentlewoman before, playing with social boundaries and performing the part of a gentlewoman well before Roxana makes the significant gesture of “elevating” Amy. In society as on the stage, what frequently matters most is not birth or property but instead a little material and a lot of performance, a concept later demonstrated when Roxana dresses herself up in a Turkish dress for her new Dutch husband, with Amy in costume as

her little “Turkish slave”: “He knew me to be sure...but he by no means knew Amy” (247). A little material might allow Amy to ascend the social ladder, but by becoming a Turkish slave it also allows her to descend that same social ladder through self-exoticizing and self-abasing. Interestingly, by dressing Amy in the clothing of the gentlewoman Roxana not only signifies their level of closeness, but she also draws attention to her own prominence since only a person of some distinction would have a companion, while a person of lower status might not. Thus by raising her servant, Roxana also raises herself. While they are two different people, they exhibit a kind of blending that demonstrates the degree of intimacy to which their community of two has adopted, while at the same time exhibiting the need for singularity in their fundamental divergences from each other.

Despite being a prattler and a gossip, Amy is also a storyteller and rhetorician, demonstrating verbal control that allows her to navigate and manipulate social situations, generally on her mistress’s behalf, thus demonstrating in a number of cases her loyalty to Roxana, as well as her ability to look out for her own interests. When she leaves Roxana’s children with their relatives, her ability to use her verbal dexterity tricks the maid into taking them inside while she slips away without further detection (19). Further, when she attempts to convince Roxana to sleep with the landlord, she in her own way draws on Puritan typology to make her case: “Look ye, Madam,...if you won’t consent, tell him you’ll do as Rachael did to Jacob, when she could have no Children, put her Maid to Bed to him; tell him you cannot comply with him, but there’s Amy, he may ask her the Question, she has promis’d me she won’t deny you” (Defoe 39). Roxana attempts to rebut the girl’s argument, but she admits, “Amy had but too much Rhetorick in this

Cause; she represented all those Things in their proper Colours; she argued them all with her utmost Skill” (Defoe 39).

Another example of Amy’s tricksterism manifests in her apparent lack of guilt or conscience for any of the anti-social or asocial decisions she makes. John Minton’s claim that a trickster is the “quintessential sociopath” (662) may be an exaggerated position to take in regard to Amy’s frame of mind. At the same time, considering she is an ancillary character and is therefore deprived of the same level of interiority that Roxana possesses, her behavior suggests that she prioritizes ends over means and survival over morality. Guilt is a constant presence in this novel, but not for Amy; it is Roxana as narrator who feels it, although at various points she tries to argue that in all her years of wickedness she never felt the pangs of conscience gnawing at her: “I may venture to say, that no Woman ever liv’d a Life like me, of six and twenty Years of Wickedness, without the least Signals of Remorse; without any Signs of Repentance; or without so much as a Wish to put an end to it” (Defoe 188). However, she is more honest when she writes earlier, at the time being involved with the French prince, “But, I say, I satisfy’d myself with the surprising Occasion, that, as it was all irresistible [sic], so it was all lawful;...and with these Absurdities I kept Conscience from giving me any considerable Disturbance in all this Matter” (Defoe 69). Her statement implies a process of rationalization about her actions, from which we may infer that her conscience is very much active. Gladfelder writes, “Defoe’s most driven and conflicted representation of guilt is contained in *Roxana*—or, rather, is not contained, since it is psychological *excess* of guilt which pulls the narrative framework apart and leads to the collapse of the expected plot of trespass and redemption. Roxana’s horror at the heart of her own darkness is a stray thread that,

once pulled, unravels the whole moral fabric of her account” (132). The concept of conscience is an interesting theme in the novel because Amy, on the other hand, shows a startling lack of remorse for her actions, as shown in the earlier example when she encourages Roxana to give herself to the landlord in exchange for continued financial support. Indeed, Amy remorselessly seems to revel in defying rules, and her only regrets come when her hedonism and economic success are threatened.

It might be tempting to try to sum up their relationship in a kind of Freudian Roxana-as-super-ego, Amy-as-id relationship, and indeed Castle has discussed the fascinating psychosexual nature of their relationship, but there is too much fluidity and overlap in their behavior to make such a tidy distinction. For example, Roxana does not always wear her guilt in the forefront of her narrative. Conversely, Amy shows a bit of remorse and conscience (though in extreme circumstances and not in any permanent way) on their crossing back to England when they encounter a storm and Amy perceives that she is about to die: “HEAVEN! Madam, says she, what makes you talk so? HEAVEN! I go to Heaven! No, no, If I am drown’d, I am damn’d! Don’t you know what a wicked Creature I have been?” (Defoe 124). As the storm continues, “Amy went farther; she pray’d, she resolv’d, she vow’d to lead a new Life, if God wou’d spare her but this time” (Defoe 126). That spark of deathbed penitence is short-lived, however, because it more or less equates to being sorry for being caught with one hand in the cookie jar and not out of any desire to change. Amy is not sorry for her behavior so much as being sorry that she can no longer go on living. After they land, the narrator remarks, “Amy’s repentance wore off too, as well as mine, but not so soon; however, we were both very grave for a time” (Defoe 129).



Amy's faux repentance ought to come as no surprise, and anyone who has read *Moll Flanders* no doubt sees this as a less ambiguous reprisal of Moll's penitence in Newgate. The show of penitence is yet another example of Amy's survival instincts, assuming the pose and practices of the penitent in order, by some chance, to avoid eternal judgment. Although she is genuinely worried about dying and going to hell, her moment of penitence amounts to a mockery of the religious rituals and beliefs. This fact separates her from Roxana, who writes of herself, perhaps a bit self-deceivingly or even naively, "Yet, so it was, I argued with myself, I could not be a Cheat in any thing that was esteem'd Sacred" (Defoe 69). In fact, Amy is not afraid of breaking taboos that have serious social and spiritual consequences, a pattern found frequently in trickster stories (Lankford 716). When Roxana's daughter's continued encounters with Roxana and Amy threaten to expose them, Amy's response at last is to murder the girl. Roxana writes, "In the middle of my Amazement, Amy starts up, and runs about the Room like a distracted body; I'll put an End to it, that I will; I can't bear it; I must murther her; I'll kill her B—, and swears by her Maker, in the most serious Tone in the World; and then repeated it over three or four times" (272). Amy's oath fits into the category of folk speech that Bakhtin refers to as "billingsgate" and ultimately functions as blasphemy or disrespect towards deity (Bakhtin 5). When Roxana's daughter continues to haunt them, Amy renews her vows to kill the girl until finally, as Roxana writes, "I bade her to get out of my Sight, and out of my House; and it went so far, that Amy pack'd up her Alls, and march'd off, and was gone for almost good-and-all" (Defoe 313). Amy's threat to break the taboo of murder is obviously too much for Roxana, being possessed by conscience as she is, to stomach, but one may wonder why Amy is provoked to such a degree. What

does it signify? In Amy's first threat against the girl, she says, "She shall never challenge you for her Mother in this World, whatever she may in the next" (Defoe 273). Amy likes their relationship the way it is, and not only is she unwilling to let another woman into their community, but the fact of that woman being her mistress's daughter might be enough to replace or displace Amy, which shows the degree to which Amy loves Roxana and wishes to maintain their proximity. If the girl continues to persist in her actions, it may lead Roxana to accept her, which would essentially constitute not simply an exposure, but perhaps even a return to Roxana's past life before Amy became such a vital part of it. Unfortunately, Amy, despite knowing her mistress so well, goes too far and loses the very thing she, more than anything, wished to retain: her mistress's affection. After allowing the women in *Roxana* to have their way for so long, Defoe demonstrates that any community requires consensus to exist, while serious conflict can doom it. Amy underestimates the strength of Roxana's guilt, perhaps because she herself has so rarely felt it. Consequently, their paths diverge and their little society falls apart. Roxana seeks reintegration with the larger society (which ultimately fails because she does not take responsibility and become the kind of woman she is expected to be), and Amy is left to shift alone.

This is of course not the first time that Amy has shown limitation in her foresight and in her use of language, a common paradox in tricksters, one that keeps them from being all-powerful and infallible. As mentioned previously, Amy has great control of language and rhetoric, but her missteps also paradoxically show a lack of control in that area as well. Amy's comparing of Roxana to Rachel and herself to Rachel's handmaid (yet another parodic distortion of religious material) ultimately convinces Roxana to do

the deed, but later backfires when Roxana takes Amy at her word after Amy makes a flippant comment about Roxana not being pregnant: “Why you have been Marry’d a Year and a half, I warrant you, Master would have got me with-Child twice in that time” (45). Roxana takes affront to her servant’s prideful boast and reverses the challenge by telling Amy that she must sleep with the master. At that point Amy shows that it had really been a hollow rhetorical device after all, but even so, Roxana forces Amy to have sex with the landlord, by which act Amy receives a horrible comeuppance of sorts and not only becomes pregnant but also convinces herself that “she is a Whore, a Slut, and she was undone!” (Defoe 47). Later on, when the daughter is coming closer to discovering the truth about her mother, Roxana realizes that it was “one false Step” of Amy’s that had provided the girl with the revealing information, a false step not unlike the one Amy commits when she attempts to talk with Roxana’s first husband in France and “foolishly told him his Name, which” Roxana writes, “she shou’d not have done” (Defoe 87). Amy tries to correct her mistake with the daughter by committing another, threatening the girl and underestimating the level of Roxana’s guilt, which mistake leads Roxana to send her away. In spite of everything else that happens to Roxana and Amy following their separation, the tragedy in this story is the loss of female community, the very thing Amy worked so hard to maintain through her cleverness.

**Eliza Haywood’s *The City Jilt; or, the Alderman Turn’d Beau***

Haywood’s *The City Jilt*, in terms of the relationship and development of the characters, is less complex than Defoe’s *Roxana*, even though there are many similarities, especially on the level of plot (abandoned woman seeks female companion who basically functions as an agent for the woman in order to assert social control). The story beings

with Glicera, the “Daughter of an eminent Tradesman,” who is being courted, the reader eventually discovers, for her beauty and her wealth by the libertine Melladore (Haywood 1). After the death of her father, Glicera gives into Melladore’s “Vows, Sighs, Tears, and Implorations” and “was at last subdued, and fell the Victim to his lawless Flame” (9). When she discovers that she is pregnant with his child, he evades and ignores her and finally writes a letter in which he says, “I thought you Mistress of a better Understanding than to imagine an Amour of the Nature of Our’s [sic] was, should last forever:——’Tis not in Reason, ’tis not in Nature to retain perpetual Ardours for the same Object” (16). He abandons her and marries another woman, leaving Glicera in the lurch. His refusal to marry her sends her into labor, which results in the death of the child. Glicera then spends the rest of the novel attempting to exact a kind of revenge on Melladore specifically and on men in general.

Haywood identifies at least part of her audience for this “secret history” as women who may have had experiences similar to Glicera’s (17), which suggests something about the intent of the piece: essentially 1) to demonstrate female community at work within the story as the women work together to triumph over men and take revenge for male-perpetrated injustices, 2) to find common ground and create communal connection between the author and the female audience, and 3) to use the communal model within the narrative to show that life figuratively does not end after debauch (which is what literally happens to Richardson’s *Clarissa*). By working together, women can overcome male exploitation and have success, a thematic parallel to Defoe’s *Roxana*, even though the methods of Haywood’s women diverge greatly from Roxana and Amy’s. Further, Haywood’s story does not end tragically, as Defoe’s does, which I would argue

is a significant rhetorical difference. According to Mary Anne Schofield, Haywood is using the events in this work to say, “There is no reason [women] must be acquiescent to the will of men, and in *The City Jilt* she says exactly what they can do as she describes a woman in control, socially, sexually, and economically” (52). In other words, *The City Jilt* treats the assertion of the female sex in British society and the woman’s ability to up-end patriarchal hierarchies through female cooperation.

After losing the baby, the justifiably misanthropic Glicera takes a female companion, Laphelia, who becomes the projection of Glicera’s will, the means by which she gains power and punishes those men whom society allows an extensive degree of license and licentiousness. Glicera receives many suitors and accepts their gifts and “smiled [sic] on all, tho’ never so Old or Disagreeable; nor, indeed, was it a greater Task, to feign a Tenderness for the most Ugly than the Loveliest of Mankind—for all alike were Hateful to her Thoughts” (Haywood 20). Among these suitors is an alderman named Grubguard, who holds the deed to Melladore’s mortgaged estate. Glicera sees that as an opportunity to take revenge on her debaucher by finding a way to come in possession of Melladore’s property, and Laphelia is the instrument by which she does that.

Grubguard is by no means desirable, and Haywood’s description illustrates vividly that his only redeeming quality in Glicera’s perspective is his money: He is

immensely Rich, but so Old that none who had beheld his withered Face, and shaking Limbs, would have believed that in those shriveled Veins there was a Warmth sufficient to maintain Life, much less to propagate Desire. His palsied Tongue, and toothless Gums, however, mumbled out a strange Fervency of Passion; and tho’ it was scarce possible to refrain

Laughing in his Face, yet did she listen to him with a Seriousness which made him not doubt but that he should be in time as happy as he could wish. (21)

Haywood's ridiculous depiction of Grubguard as a suitor is later mirrored in the plot itself when Laphelia, "who had a ready Wit" (21), tricks the suitor, old toothless Grubguard, into wearing a ridiculous costume in order to win Glicera's attentions: "A white Perriwig with a huge Fore-top, Cloaths trimmed with Silver, a long Sword with a brocaded Ribband hanging to it, and every Implement of the most perfect Beau, which, joined to a diminutive Stature, small Face and Limbs, made him look exactly like one of those little Imitations of Humanity which are carried about Streets to make Sport for Children" (23). When Laphelia and Glicera see Grubguard in his outfit looking like a scarecrow and cutting "a Caper...to present his Snuff-box to the Ladies," he falls down: "This Accident, in spite of all they had resolved, made them burst into an immoderate Laughter," which they had up to that point managed to restrain (24).

On the surface their laughter symbolizes the delight that comes from knowing that the trick, as an instrument of destabilizing power structures, has succeeded. As Thomas Hobbes, whose materialist philosophy continued to have traction in eighteenth-century culture, put it, "Sudden Glory, is the passion which maketh those Grimaces called Laughter; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves" (35). In addition, from a twentieth-century feminist perspective, one can argue that Laphelia's laughter possesses symbolic qualities equivalent to social disruption of masculine rule, or in other words, as Helene Cixous

puts it, “to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the ‘truth’ with laughter” (Cixous 888). By merging these seventeenth- and twentieth-century perspectives, one could describe Laphelia as possessing a subversive power that transforms the wealthy Grubguard into a living caricature of prideful, impotent, and decrepit masculinity, or, as Kirsten Saxton puts it, “a foppish society lover” who “blurs the lines between categories of maleness, collapsing the division between the powerful alderman and the preening fop to reveal them as fundamentally connected by the texture of male appetite and ego” (130). Laphelia’s laughter stems from a recognition not only of what Grubguard is, but what men are, and what she as woman is by comparison. I would argue too that it is useful to consider the humiliated Grubguard as an echo of Shakespeare’s Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, who appears before Olivia “in yellow stockings” and “cross-gartered” (III.ii.49-50), as well as in conjunction with Behn’s portrait of the “harden’d, incorrigible Fop” at the beginning of *The Fair Jilt* (discussed earlier in Chapter 2 and which Haywood may be borrowing from) with his

Affectation in his Mein and Dress, that Mathematical Movement, that Formality in every Action, that Face managed with Care, and soft’ned into Ridicule, the languishing Turn, the Toss, and the Back shake of the Periwigg...his Hat under his Arm, while the other Hand is put carelessly into his Bosom, as if laid upon his panting Heart; his Head a little bent to one side, supported with a world of Crevat-string, which he takes mighty care not to put into Disorder; as one may guess by a neverfailing, and horrid Stiffness in his Neck; and if he have an occasion to look aside, his whole Body turns at the same time, for fear the motion of the Head alone

shou'd incommode the Crevat or Periwigg: And sometimes the Glove is well manag'd, and the white Hand displayed. Thus, with a thousand other little Motions and Formalities, all in the common Place or Mode of Foppery, he takes infinite pains to shew himself to the Pit and Boxes, a most accomplish'd Ass. (4)

Not only are women capable, by cleverly harnessing their good looks and optimizing their sexual appeal, of making men look silly, but as Haywood and Behn demonstrate, women, using their pens, are also capable of making men look ridiculous. Their laughter signifies their realization of the extent of their power, a power which is further reiterated when Grubguard falls at the feet “of his Mistress” (Haywood 24). The wealthy suitor, transformed into the “stock character of a bumbling ass” (Saxton 130), has been debased.

Laughter is important to Haywood's narrative, and it situates Laphelia, who is constantly laughing or trying not to, firmly within the tradition of tricksters, who according to Ricki Tannen, represent “a playful energy which has the capacity to produce humor that can trigger transformation” (138), and Laphelia's actions correspond to the idea of play. She is manipulating Grubguard into becoming a caricature of masculinity and stool-pigeon for Glicera's revenge, and she laughs about it because his debasement signals a reversal of female subordination, which also allows Laphelia to transcend her usual position as servant and woman and triumph over the pomp and wealth of the upper-class male. Her laughter is essentially a spontaneous overflow of glee, undammed and articulated, that resists repression and audibly expresses liberation.

Laphelia's power derives from her ability to capitalize on Grubguard's inability to appreciate the strength of the bond between Laphelia and her mistress. To Grubguard



women are unknowable and unapproachable, so he seeks the help of Glicera's confidante, so that he can advance his designs on Glicera. For Grubguard, Laphelia as companion should know everything about Glicera, and she does, as Saxton points out: "Laphelia is 'let into the Secret of her Thoughts' [80], and knowledgeably helps Glicera with all her plans" (133). The alderman supposes she will "prattle" (as Amy does, for example) and function as a key-hole into Glicera's mind. She sees what he cannot, and she can help him see, he thinks. Because Grubguard knows nothing of women and feminine desire, Laphelia takes advantage of the void and plays her trick on him by constructing a narrative of feminine desire, specifically Glicera's, to fill, as narratives are wont to do, the gap of Grubguard's understanding. Because Laphelia claims that women love a fop, Grubguard latches on to that narrative and inhabits it as the foppish object of Glicera's desires.

Glicera and Laphelia conspire to continue their charade with Grubguard by convincing him to "carry them to the Play, the Opera, and Masquerades, and after attending them Home, must sit down to Gaming" (Haywood 25). The gaming table, a site of stakes and gambling and chance, becomes the place of Laphelia's and by extension Glicera's final triumph over the licentious alderman. Setting the stage for her con, Laphelia says to Grubguard, "No Man ever gained his Will on a fine Lady, said she, till he had first lost a good Sum to her at Cards;—— nothing discovers the Passion of a Lover so much as parting freely with his Money" (26). The amount she proposes he lose to Glicera is Melladore's estate. Although Grubguard initially balks at the idea of losing money to Glicera without a guarantee of succeeding with her, he eventually goes through with it at Laphelia's goading and rhetoric of economics ("Do you hesitate if [sic] you

should accept so great a Blessing as Glicera, when offered you on Terms so easy? Is such a Sum to be valued with the enjoyment of so fine a Woman?" [42]). Laphelia's narrative of femininity must be appealing to him because it allows him to showcase his liberality, as well as his wealth, since he can afford to lose a great deal of money without feeling the pinch. At the same time, Laphelia's narrative also functions as a commentary on the nature of the sexual marketplace, equating the rituals of courtship, marriage, and the social roles of women within those frameworks essentially to prostitution, gaining utility from the first example in this book when Melladore refuses to marry Glicera because she had no money.

This critique of the sexual contract, however, exists beneath or at least beyond Grubguard's gaze, although he does see his eventual losses at the gaming as a kind of down payment or deposit on Glicera's body, which he makes clear after he loses Melladore's estate to her in a game of Picquet. When Glicera wins the pot, a lawyer comes to sign over the deed, and Glicera become the legal possessor of Melladore's property. Saxton writes, "In working through Glicera's manipulations of Melladore's estate, Haywood goes into considerable detail regarding the legal status of mortgages, adding a level of textual detail rarely commented upon and calling attention to the increasing commodification of 1720s English culture" (131). After the exchange Grubguard makes an attempt on Glicera, thinking she is now bound to him, at which point she, now that her purpose is fulfilled, unleashes her full fury on the man as a representative of his sex: "You are Betrayers all;—vile Hypocrites! who feign a tenderness only to undo us!" (49), which refers to the "Vows, Sighs," and "Tears" of her former lover and betrayer, Melladore. Having taught the old rake a lesson and humbled

him once again, “She was obliged to bid him to quit the House,...Thus ended the Amour of old Grubguard” (50), undone by a community of women capable of capitalizing on the pride and economic systems that pervade and govern their world.

After doing her part in conning the alderman, Laphelia only appears once more in the text. Glicera allows Melladore to try to buy back his estate, establishing that their relationship exists only in economic, not sentimental, terms. She is his landlord and nothing else. Melladore joins his regiment and is “mortally wounded in the first Engagement” (54). Saxton comments on the “irony of the double meaning of the phrase ‘the first Engagement’” as “not subtle,” that is, “it was his first engagement to Glicera, and the wounds she suffered from it, that ultimately led to his death in battle” (133). Glicera and Laphelia move into Melladore’s former house until Laphelia marries a man “to whom she had been a long time contracted” and leaves (Haywood 54). This ending is somewhat problematic as it seems to detract from the triumph and freedom these female tricksters have earned over “that ungrateful sex” (54). Why, after all they have gone through, does Haywood not allow her female characters to remain together? Why risk preaching conformity when the entire work seems anti-conformist? Everything about the work suggests that Haywood is interested in promoting the kind of strength that women draw from each other as a way of coping with the injustices they receive. At the same time, part of their effectiveness as a cohesive community lies in their ability to remain covert in their strategies, to work within the system without drawing too much attention to themselves. Having Laphelia remain with Glicera, who certainly could have taken care of Laphelia’s needs or given her opportunities the way Roxana does for Amy, rather than honoring her previous commitment to her young man would risk the covertness of their

operation; the statement would be too bold, too brash, too visible, and they would risk exposing themselves and render their efforts ineffective anyway. One imagines that Laphelia would continue to be the same person she was with Glicera; remaining hidden within the framework of the patriarchal system and values of marriage would provide her plenty of opportunities to for continued subversion. Their physical proximity may decrease, but their mutual objectives as women will continue to link them.

### **Conclusion**

The communities of women showcased in these works by Defoe and Haywood focus on the ways women can interact for their own common good. When faced with social pressure and turmoil, women can turn to each other for assistance, and their interdependence transcends the systems and hierarchies that comprise the society that exists outside of their groups. Their tricks and deceit allow them to survive together and triumph together despite unfavorable circumstances. Although both works end with the breaking up of the relationships of women, those relationships fulfill an objective (survival and economic success for Roxana and Amy, revenge and reassertion for Glicera and Laphelia) before they disband.

## Chapter 5

“In a box one night at the playhouse”: The Makeup of a Female Trickster in Eliza

Haywood’s *Fantomina*

In Eliza Haywood’s *Fantomina; or, Love in a Maze* (1724), the title-heroine (whose real name is never revealed in the book) disguises herself as different women to enjoy repeated sexual encounters with Beauplaisir, a young gentleman who remains oblivious to her true identity. The critical responses to this novel have been many and varied. Ros Ballaster writes that in this story, Haywood “exploits to the full the concept-metaphor of the masquerade as a ‘reenactment’ of the seduction scene deployed by the woman for her own empowerment” (188). Craft-Fairchild also comments on *Fantomina*’s actions as examples of female masquerade, which, as she says, “can be a way of refocusing the male gaze upon the consciously constructed image instead of the real self” (“Reworking Male Models,” 830). *Fantomina*’s existence as both constructed and “real,” in this case, demonstrates the complexity and multiplicity of her character(s) and her ability to avoid definition or stability in her identity, which aligns with Charles H. Hinnant’s statement, “*Fantomina*’s strategems, with their associative misapprehensions and conscious misrepresentations of character, create circumstances in which she is constantly separated from her established social identity” (410). On the other hand, Emily Hodgson Anderson claims, “Performance is inescapable in *Fantomina*, as the very title signifies not a name but the alias of a ‘Young Lady of distinguished Birth, Beauty, Wit, and Spirit’” (3). In other words, none of *Fantomina*’s roles are actually “misrepresentations”; even her “established social identity,” along with the rest of her roles, is a *representation* and a performance of self. The prostitute is a role, as are the

serving-maid and the widow, but it can be difficult for the reader to find the delineation between them, to separate the constructed from the actual. The young heiress from the country in the theater box, the mother giving birth to a “fine girl” in her chamber, or the French nun she will perhaps become are all projections emanating from a single source. Performance of roles is typical of an actress, Haywood’s own vocation at one point. In this chapter I interpret Fantomina’s performed identities in the framework of the mythic patterns and qualities of the archetypal female trickster, who uses deception and multiple illusory roles to function as a disruptive force of will and desire that can question, critique, and subvert social constraints and conventions in a particular social context. While Fantomina’s disguises and intelligence allow her to function in this disruptive manner, her occasional lapses in foresight also demonstrate the “foolish” side of the traditional trickster figure in the context of trickster narratives. Though Fantomina possesses social power while, she is also simultaneously fallible and vulnerable to the deception of others. Reading the character Fantomina as a female trickster also reveals and explores overlapping connections between themes of performativity, narrative, economic systems, and enclosure.

In the vivacious, whimsical, and resourceful Fantomina, we find biographical echoes of Haywood herself, to some degree, represented, and not solely because they are both actresses. Although our knowledge of Haywood’s life is somewhat limited, certain references from Haywood’s own writing provide some idea of what she was like or how she perceived herself in her younger years. In an essay appearing in *The Female Spectator* in 1744, Haywood writes,

Dress, Equipage, and Flattery, were the Idols of my Heart....My Life, for some Years, was a continuous Round of what I then called Pleasure, and my whole Time engrossed by a Hurry of promiscuous Diversions....The Company I kept was not, indeed, always so well chosen as it ought to have been, for the sake of my own Interest or Reputation. (8)

Haywood was not vague in references to her own intelligence. Rather her tone implies an air of pride when she describes herself as possessing “a Genius tolerably extensive, and an Education more liberal than is ordinarily allowed for Persons of my Sex” (9).

Ultimately, her “liberal education,” combined with her natural quickness, gave her ambition for going into the public sphere and having some kind of social impact. While her self-presentation of pride and self-assuredness are not necessarily sufficient for us to call Haywood a trickster herself, in *Fantomina* these characteristics form the initial basis for a persona who functions as a trickster figure in that novel.

Because of *Fantomina*’s displays of cleverness, including her keen ability to change her appearance and even dialect, as well as her “astounding ignorance of the most basic realities,” which is a characteristic that George Lankford applies to tricksters generally (716), Haywood’s *Fantomina* fits well into the category of “female tricksters.” Haywood’s depiction of *Fantomina* can be interpreted within a larger narrative tradition of female tricksters who “call attention to possibilities outside gender roles and ideals,” but who can also be “simply transgressive in the gluttonous, scatological, overly individualistic manner of tricksters in general. Such transgression, however, has specific meanings in the contexts of cultural definitions of femininity” (Williams 162). In the case

of Fantomina's "transgressions" and her role-playing and tricks one finds multiple meanings embedded.

Within the first lines of the novel, Fantomina is described by the narrator as "a young girl of distinguished birth, beauty, wit, and spirit," who "happened to be in a box one night at the playhouse" (2740). Upon spotting the interactions of "several gentlemen" and one of the "great number of celebrated toasts," or prostitutes, she turns to some other women in the box and expresses "her contempt of men, who regardless either of the play or the circle, threw away their time in such a manner" (2740). If one takes this outburst to her fellow female theater-goers at face value, along with the narrator's declaration that "she was young, a stranger to the world, and consequently to the dangers of it," one sees that her shift into the role of the trickster has not yet occurred (2740). The narrator attempts to convince the reader that this girl, "who had been bred for the most part in the country," is a figure of virtue, having been preserved from the corrupting influences of urban society, unlike her companions, whose familiarity with such interactions as that of the gentlemen and the prostitute lead them to perceive and treat it as anything but unusual (2740). In *The Female Spectator*, Haywood describes "Country-bred Ladies" such as the young girl is supposed to be:

For this Reason the Country-Bred Ladies, who are never suffered to come to Town for fear their Faces should be spoiled by the Small-Pox or their Reputations ruined by the Beaux, become an easier Prey to the Artifices of Mankind, than those who have had an Education more at large: As they rarely stir beyond their Father's Pales, except to Church, the Parson, if he be a forward Man, and has Courage to throw a Love Song, or Copy of



Verses to Miss over the Wall, or slip it into her Hand in a Visit he pays the Family, has a rare Opportunity of Making his Fortune; and it is well when it happens no worse; many a Squire's Daughter has clambered over Hedge and Stile, to give a rampant Jump into the Arms of a young jolly Haymaker or Ploughman. (22)

Haywood herself was raised in the country, but her liberal education allowed her a kind of perception that other women around her did not possess. In her mind, sheltered lifestyles harmed the development of the female mind and left women vulnerable to deception. In the case of *Fantomina*, Fantomina's vocalization of "contempt" serves to demonstrate to the others in the box that Fantomina is both sincerely surprised and shocked at such behavior and that she is pure, naïve, and so unacquainted with urban society as to have even considered the possibility of such shenanigans at the theater.

However, her surprise is an illusory front. Fantomina is not one of the "Country-bred Ladies" Haywood describes in *The Female Spectator*, but rather one probably educated enough (as Haywood is) to resist where others more innocent and ignorant would surrender instantly. Fantomina knows more and is less innocent than her declarations of being scandalized and shocked suggest. For example, Fantomina is "naturally vain, and received no small pleasure in hearing herself praised" (1740). However, rather than be taken in by any compliment she received from any male who solicited her, coquettishly "she listened to 'em all, and was not a little diverted in her mind at the disappointment she should give to so many, each of which thought himself secure of gaining her" (1740). Haywood claims, "A Girl, who is continually hearing fine Things said to her, regards them as Words of course; they may be flattering to her Vanity

for the present, but will leave no Impression behind them on their Mind” (*Female Spectator*, 22). A woman or “Country-bred Lady” who has not had the same kind of experience in society as those Haywood identifies as having a more worldly “education,” “greedily swallows the first fine Thing said to her,” which will “expose her to the Designs of him who speaks, if he happens to have any in reality” (*The Female Spectator*, 22). In other words, the fact that Fantomina does not surrender her charms to the first person who states “that she was the most lovely woman in the world” implies that she is used to interacting with men and their compliments and praises (2740).

Further, despite Fantomina’s condemnation of the dalliances of the rakes and prostitutes, the idea that she would be surprised at such behavior is odd since one would have to be not only ignorant of the stage’s degenerate reputation through personal experience or hearsay but also of a number of religious tracts and essays and conduct books written during that time that a young girl like her might have read as part of her education. Haywood herself “acted on the most prestigious stages of Dublin and London” (Backscheider, “The Shadow of an Author, 86), so she would have been intimately acquainted with the reputation of the play-house. In addition, at the same time, a number of tracts and letters were circulating that were filled with condemnations of the stage, such as that found in William Law’s *The Absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage-Entertainment Fully Demonstrated* (1726), in which he states,

He that absolutely condemns the Play-House, as wicked and corrupting, proceeds upon as much Truth and Certainty, as he that absolutely commends the House of God, as holy, and tending to promote Piety....For the Matter and Manner of Stage Entertainments is as undeniable a Proof,

and as obvious to common Sense, that the House belongs to the Devil, as the Matter and Manner of Church Service proves that the Place is appropriated to God. (12)

Law's statement regarding the depravity of the stage is a perspective shared by other writers, including Samuel Richardson, who remarked, "The Minds of young Women...will be no less tainted [than the minds of young men] with the Vanities they see acted on the Stage, and they must be strangely edify'd at the frequent scenes of the pretty Gentlemen who are introduc'd with a View to debauch their morals, and triumph over their Innocence" (17). By "testifying her contempt," the young girl is providing spoken evidence—as in a court of law—that such decadence as she sees going on below her is morally wrong in her eyes, and that she, like Law and Richardson, seems to condemn it absolutely. However, if she is as pure and innocent as she pretends to be, above such behavior, one wonders why she has even come to such a corrupt environment in the first place, unless she is not as pure and innocent as she claims. It would be unlikely that anyone could find their way into an eighteenth-century theater without knowing more of it than Fantomina seems to communicate, despite the narrator's claims that the girl only "happened to be in a box that night," as if she had unknowingly wandered into the play-house, which, if we are to believe her outburst, she or any "good girl" would never have done on purpose (2740). It brings to mind Captain Renault in *Casablanca* (1942) shutting down Rick Blaine's café and shouting, 'I'm shocked! Shocked to find that gambling is going on here,' even though he has known about and even participated in the gambling for some time; he even takes his winnings with him after closing down the café. In *Fantomina*, it seems more likely that the shady reputation

of the titillating stage is perhaps one of the very reasons the young girl comes, and her very presence in the play-house becomes evidence in itself of moral ambiguity and duplicity. Consequently, Fantomina—or the girl who will become Fantomina—has already appropriated the language of the trickster to place herself in a role, the innocent maiden, that will allay suspicion and allow her to maintain the virtuous appearance that people who are familiar with the “distinguished” identity she maintains outside of the theater would expect from her.

Her utterance regarding these “men of wit” also serves another purpose: the reaction of the women helps her orient herself in relation to the gaze of her audience. The ladies “took little notice” of the scene of interaction between the toasts and the rakes, even when Fantomina points it out to them, either because they were “more accustomed to such sights...or not of a disposition to consider anything very deeply” (2740). In other words, they are either too familiar with such scenes, as discussed earlier, or they lack the ability to think critically, which Haywood also despises, or more than likely both. Either way, Fantomina’s discovery of the orientation of the female gaze creates a paradoxical situation: by putting herself in plain sight, she can actually disappear. Capitalizing on complacency is one of the key characteristics of a trickster figure because it allows the trickster to take advantages when no one is suspecting anything to happen. When an individual or a community begins to perceive a certain practice or system of practices as normal, the trickster can use that perception of normality to advantage. For example, in the Winnebago trickster cycle, the trickster is able to take food from the tribe by declaring that he is going to war. Since it is a traditional practice to have a feast prior to setting off for battle, the people comply with his demands over and over, and for days he

takes advantage of their perception of normality (Radin 4). In the case of *Fantomina*, the ladies have grown accustomed to such degenerate behavior, so Fantomina takes advantage and inserts herself into that group dynamic of rakes and whores, thus eluding any gaze that might otherwise keep her in check. Indeed, the fact of her coming to the play-house in the first place results from the absence of her mother's observance. Her mother is a "severely virtuous" woman and at that moment is abroad in a "foreign country," displaced temporarily from the domestic sphere where she is supposed to act, according to the instructions of any good conduct book, as a kind of monitor, keeping the daughter's passions and curiosity in check (2756). That removal of maternal authority, she "having nobody in town, at that time, to whom she was obliged to be accountable for her actions," gives Fantomina the opportunity to explore and "gratify" her "innocent curiosity" first by attending the playhouse, and then by transforming herself into a prostitute (2740). However, when she finds herself in the box with other women, essentially surrogate mothers with their own collective gaze, she uses her wiles to understand exactly if and where they are looking. Their response, which lacks the proper horror or condemnation that she would expect from a good monitor, helps the young girl realize that indeed her "mother" is no longer looking, and she is free to follow her whims and impulses.

Fantomina's urge to escape the maternal gaze resonates with the situation of the female trickster found in Austen's *The Beautifull Cassandra*, which Austen wrote when she was a teenager and which was discussed in Chapter One. In this narrative, a young milliner's daughter falls in love with a new bonnet and decides to steal it: "She placed it on her gentle Head and walked from her Mother's shop to make her Fortune" (42). The

daughter's theft of the bonnet only leads to other somewhat criminal and self-interested behaviors as she, like a true trickster, gives way to her desires; she eats cakes for which she does not pay, knocking down the baker and escaping instead. She then snubs the coach driver and runs away when he demands she pay the fare. These and other scenes illustrate a key concept regarding the supervisory role of the mother at the time, namely that the maternal surveillance or gaze, as long as it was in place, could prevent the young woman from discovering first hand "the dangers of the world," but more importantly the dangers that lay latent within herself. In *Fantomina* surveillance operates, even in the absence of the mother, which is why she cannot help "testifying her contempt" to the companions because they function as maternal surrogates and therefore must have some proof of her disdain for such behavior. The maternal gaze that has kept her deprived of worldly exposure, being gone, both in the form of her mother and these women, has left her at liberty to discover more about the world she has been kept from, much in the same way Austen's character in *The Beautifull Cassandra* does. In fact, the ability to manipulate and "refocus" the sexual gaze of men and respond and resist with a gaze of her own is a main point of interest in the criticism regarding *Fantomina* (Craft-Fairchild, "Reworking Male Models," 830).

Fantomina's "innocent curiosity" leads to what Mikhail Bakhtin would refer to as "degradation" or the "lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract" (19).

Fantomina descends from her box to experience personally "in what manner these creatures [the toasts or prostitutes] were addressed" (2740). *Creature* here may simply refer to another individual or "created thing," but it also carries connotations of "a reprehensible or despicable person"; "an animal, often as distinct from a person"; or "a

person who owes his or her fortune and position, and remains subservient to, a patron; a person who is ready to do another's bidding" (*OED*, "creature"). By "degrading" herself or at least pretending to lower herself to the rank of "creature," Fantomina intends to explore a new, lower level of experience that in many ways turns the idea of rank and position "topsy-turvy," transforming her life into a place of havoc and laughter, where "creatures," even feigned prostitutes such as herself, market themselves as sexual commodities. The marketplace in *Fantomina* functions at two levels: first of all, it is a discursive space where language reflects the exchange of commodities and the nature of female identity; second, it is a liminal zone of stories and laughter in which the female trickster can operate on multiple levels of self-representation.

The first reference to the exchange of commodities in *Fantomina* comes in the description of the prostitutes as "those women who make a sale of their favors" (2740). When Fantomina steps into the marketplace, she is surrounded by a "crowd of purchasers..., each endeavoring to outbid the other, in offering her a price for her embraces" (2740). The transformation into the persona of the prostitute signifies a shift into an economic sphere where sexuality, identity, and human relationships are defined in almost purely economic terms at almost every stage. The intertwining of economic exchange and sexual desire is a common theme in the exploits of female tricksters in the literature of this period, presenting itself in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana; or, the Fortunate Mistress*, the seventeenth-century account of Moll Cutpurse found in *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, and in ballads such as "The Subtil Miss of London" and "The Lady of Pleasure"; in fact, the refrain from the latter sums up this concept rather well: "But she got money by't, she got money by't, / she got money by'th bargain" (1).

Another of Haywood's characters, the Baroness de Tortillée in *The Injur'd Husband* (1722), like Fantomina, also insinuates herself into this free flow of money and sexual favors, and Haywood uses similar economic terminology to describe her interactions with her suitors. Prior to her marriage to the Baron, the Baroness spends all of her fortune, and "those on whom before she had granted her Favours *gratis*, were now oblig'd to *purchase*; and as soon as one grew weary of the Bargain, she still had the Address to gain another *Bidder*; sometimes three or four had an equal share in the Property, but she had Artifice enough to make each believe the sole Possessor" (6). This interest in economics that appears so often and obviously in these works reflects once again the economic individualism of the time, as well as the inherent characteristics of self-interest and the obsessive need for acquisition so frequently seen in trickster characters, regardless of the time period or cultural group or medium in which their narratives appear and are transmitted.

Interestingly, Fantomina, despite taking on a social role and profession in which money and sexuality function as forms of currency, does not always promote the exchange from consumer to supplier, but at times disrupts it, disruption being another key characteristic of the trickster character. When Beauplaisir first comes to Fantomina's lodgings, he offers to have a "collation to be brought after them. But she would not permit it" (2742). They return to her lodgings for a "very handsome supper and wine, and everything was served to table in a manner which showed the director neither wanted money, nor was ignorant how it should be laid out" (2742). Tiffany Potter refers to Fantomina as "Haywood's most sexually disruptive female character," one who demonstrates a "capacity to manipulate and control the signs by which her social,



economic and sexual position as woman is perceived and constructed by the public majority” (Potter 176). Fantomina is not poor and has no need of Beauplaisir’s money, and despite feigning to be a “toast,” whose primary objective is the acquisition of capital in exchange for certain “favours,” prevents him from spending his own money on her, which constitutes a “disruption” of a situation that Beauplaisir would perceive as the normal course of a relationship between a rake and his purchase.

Her show of affluence gives Beauplaisir ideas about the potential cost of keeping a mistress like her, but he ultimately “gave himself no farther trouble than what were occasioned by fears of not having money enough to reach her price about him” (2742). Later, after Beauplaisir forces her to yield to him, showing her truly in what manner he is used to addressing the kind of woman she pretends to be, he “pulled out a purse of gold, entreating her to accept of that as an earnest of what he intended to do for her” (2743). Earnest refers to a sum of money intended to seal a bargain and to pledge a continuance of the contract and exchange. If her name had been Moll Flanders, she would have taken the money, but Fantomina denies the purse, once again stopping the exchange; she seeks an earnest of a different kind: “No, my dear Beauplaisir, (added she) your love alone can compensate for the shame you have involved me in” (2743). Her denial of his earnest-money constitutes an interesting point in the text: when she initially assumed the role of the prostitute, she only wanted to know “in what manner these creatures were addressed,” not yet understanding that the manner in which such women are addressed consists exclusively of a self-interested economic discourse in which sex is sold to those willing to pay the most for it.

One might consider this disruption as evidence that Fantomina is not a trickster because 1) she is not greedy, and 2) her disguise and deceptions do not allow her to triumph at this moment; her plans begin to fall apart because of a lack of foresight, and she becomes conscious of the true meaning of their encounter and its ramifications for her future: “Is this a reward (*said she*) for condescensions, such as I have yielded to?—Can all the wealth you are possessed of make a reparation for my loss of honor?—Oh! no, I am undone beyond the power of heaven itself to help me!” (2743). Her endeavors to satisfy her curiosity have led her to regret and remorse for her actions. As mentioned previously, however, tricksters are not always able to be victorious in their deception, but are rather themselves frequently the victims of deceit (Lankford 245). Not all tricksters can succeed as the “subtil Miss of London” does, by taking the guineas offered by her “Gallant,” slipping “certain ingredients” in his wine to make him sleep, dressing him in “a red Petticoat and a coif on his Pate,” and shipping him in “a great Chest by Water to Gravesend” (1). Fantomina demonstrates the other side of the trickster persona, showing herself foolish in her interactions with Beauplaisir. Here, the narrator provides an example of the complex interplay of Fantomina’s keen foresight and blatant blind spots in judgment, explaining that “she had discernment to foresee and avoid all those ills which might attend the loss of her reputation, but was wholly blind to those which might attend the loss of her reputation” (2744).

Even in such lapses of foresight, trickster narratives like Fantomina’s manage to reveal underlying social issues, particularly in relation to the way human relationships are governed by money. The role of money as a factor in human relationships was neither an isolated nor a new problem. In *Moll Flanders*, for example, Defoe writes about the

problems when the economic sphere encroaches on the domestic sphere. Women were nothing to fortune-hunting men if they had no financial backing to recommend them.

Moll, a servant whose only assets were her looks, her virtue, and her work ethic, overhears a conversation between a brother and sister, and the sister declares,

Betty [Moll] wants but one Thing, but she had as good want every Thing, for the Market is against our Sex just now; and if a young Woman have Beauty, Birth, Breeding, Wit, Sense, Manners, Modesty, and all these to an Extream; yet if she have not Money, she's no Body, she had has [sic] good want them all, for nothing but Money now recommends a Woman; the Men play the Game all into their own Hands. (18)

Like Moll, Haywood's heroine in *Fantomina* attempts to play the game, and her disruption of the sexual/monetary exchange shows how deeply engrained the relationship between sexuality, identity, and money had become in an English society where economics perhaps more than anything else brought political power to those who possessed enough wealth. In fact, the language and system of the exchange, "the business of love," pervade every level of *Fantomina*'s masquerade (2745). In three instances in the novel, *Fantomina*'s performances, for example, are referred to as "counterfeit," a term for money that resembles legal tender so closely some people will accept it despite its lack of financial backing. When *Fantomina* changes into Celia the serving-maid, Beauplaisir rewards her kisses with "a handsome sum of gold, which she durst not now refuse" (2747), an action that evokes images of young Moll Flanders' tryst with the elder Colchester brother in Defoe's novel, although in Moll's case, money becomes an object

for her instead of a means, as it is for Haywood's heroine, to continue playing the role of Beauplaisir's object of desire.

Fantomina/Celia has learned about the close-knit relationship between money and desire, as well as the need to be true to the role she plays. In other words, she must become "in reality, the thing she so artfully had counterfeited" (2744). When Fantomina becomes the Widow Bloomer, she relates a back story of financial necessity to Beauplaisir, and in the course of their travels together, he professes that "he would gladly exchange passions with her," recalling once again that even when money is absent, desire still retains a market value for self-interested rakes (2749). With the mysterious Incognita, Beauplaisir seeks an exchange of information, wanting to know "if she were a wife, or widow...not imagining this Incognita varied so much from the generality of her sex as to be able to refuse the knowledge of anything to the man she loved with that transcendancy of passion she professed" (2753). Craft-Fairchild states that the sequence of Fantomina's roles gradually "rise in rank" from prostitute to serving-maid to widow to aristocrat, illustrating an upward mobility that is tinged and even saturated by economic discourse at every level ("Reworking Male Models," 829). Interestingly, Haywood's writing would retain this tendency to situate and represent different kinds of women in the same body. In her *Female Spectator*, she introduces the women who will be contributing to the periodical as a wife, a widow, and a daughter: "Whatever Productions I shall be favoured with from these Ladies, or any others I may hereafter correspond with, will be exhibited under the general Title of *The Female Spectator*; and how many Contributors soever there may happen to be to the Work, they are to be considered only as Members of one Body, of which I am the Mouth" (10).

Incognita, however, refuses to provide Beauplaisir with information he seeks, which constitutes another block to the system of exchange, like that performed by the prostitute Fantomina, preferring to “part with him for ever than consent to gratify an inquisitiveness which, in her opinion, had no business with his love” (2755). Thinking to wait until morning to find out her identity, Beauplaisir awakes to find that morning has come, and Incognita has vanished: “How great was his disappointment, when by the noises he heard in the street, the hurry of the coaches, and *the cries of the penny-merchants*, he was convinced it was night nowhere but with him?” (2755). In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin examines the role of such cries, calling them the “simplest genre” (181) of marketplace speech, but still filled with “philosophic meaning” (185): “They too are filled with both laughter and irony” (187). The irony of those cries and the song of the marketplace come from the fact that the exchange of commodities is still happening, but Beauplaisir, the chief buyer and seller of female wares throughout the novel, has been left out of the exchange. Incognita has taken what she wants without “pay[ing] the price of his company” and has turned the game on its head (2756). In fact, she has managed to mimic their initial sexual encounter, but with a twist: he offered her money and tried to pay for access to her body, but she rejected the payment and gave it to him gratis because she sought his love. Now, instead of satisfying him again (that is, his curiosity), she takes what she wants from him and gives nothing back. Patricia Comitini writes, “While bodily pleasure has been satisfied, his desire for her story and the pleasure it would give—the fictional context—is not. Here, the protagonist’s persona is defined by her body alone, and Beauplaisir is left wanting her story” (74). Interestingly, curiosity as a concept is a primary motive in Haywood’s writing. In *The Female Spectator*, she

writes, “From my Observations of human Nature, I found that Curiosity had, more or less, a Share in every Breast; and my Business, therefore was to hit this reigning Humour in such a manner, as that the Gratification it should receive from being made acquainted with other People’s affairs, should at the same Time teach every one to regulate their own” (9). Here, she not only shows how dangerous curiosity can be in that it exposes the individual who possesses it to certain risks, but also how valuable of an instrument curiosity can be in coming to understand society and asserting social control because it encourages exploration through inquiry into situations and underlying mindsets that govern those situations. Because of her curiosity, Fantomina knows now in what manner toasts are addressed, verbally and physically; her curiosity is satisfied on that front. At the same time, she denies Beauplaisir the same satisfaction of curiosity and thereby places him in a position of impotence or powerlessness; she no doubt understands that his curiosity is at the root a type of voyeurism, the same kind of titillation inspired by role-playing actresses on the stage, and as long as she keeps his curiosity/voyeuristic tendencies dissatisfied, she retains power over him. The accepted system of exchange is problematized and re-purposed so that control now lies with Fantomina/Incognita. In a way, the story of Fantomina is a retelling or even a counter-narrative to the problem, (women who have nothing are “Nothing”) identified by the conversations between Defoe’s characters. While Moll has nothing and must use the system and her own natural cleverness to acquire possessions, Fantomina already has wealth and status; she simply chooses not to use them to recommend her to Beauplaisir. In fact, she deliberately chooses to make this relationship about anything but money, if she can, whereas for Moll,

love and money, which Michael Seidel refers to as a “secondary love affair,” become a dual objective (xxxix).

In addition to the many problems associated with sexuality and love in these novels, Fantomina’s charades also serve as an examination of the problem with human—specifically male—nature, its impulses, spontaneity, and inconstancy. While Comitini suggests that “virtue, constancy, and love remains abstractions throughout the text because they are clearly not the motivations for the Lady’s conscious actions” (79), her reaction to his letters in which he tries to remain in the good graces of two of her alter egos, Fantomina and the Widow Bloomer, would suggest that constancy matters to her, and not simply as an abstract quality. Upon receipt of the letters, she exclaims

Traitor!...as soon as she had read them, 'tis thus our silly, fond, believing sex are served when they put faith in man. So had I been deceived and cheated, had I like the rest believed, and sat down in mourning in absence, and vainly waiting recovered tendernesses....But I have outwitted even the most subtle of the deceiving kind and while he thinks to fool me, is himself the beguiled person. (2751)

While her response is ironic, it demonstrates that she seems to value constancy, even though her feelings for him have already altered, as demonstrated in the phrase “had I like the rest believed,” which may be read both as a reference to other women in general and to the other roles she played in this narrative. If the latter, she has changed in her attitude toward Beauplaisir; she is hardened, more skeptical, having ceased trusting in his love and moved on to a different motive for continuing the relationship. In the text, feelings are an ephemeral commodity, both in Beauplaisir, who moves from one woman

to another, and Fantomina, who after discovering his inconstancy continues to pursue Beauplaisir not necessarily out of love but certainly for the pleasure of playing tricks on him.

Fantomina's solution to retaining her lover's affection comes in the form of a storytelling sequence in the form of three separate identities because "she was so admirably skilled in the art of feigning that she had the power of putting almost what face she pleased, and knew so exactly how to form her behavior to the character she represented that all the comedians at both playhouses are infinitely short of her performances" (2749). Using these identities, Fantomina manages to coax and inflame Beauplaisir's passions once again. Craft-Fairchild remarks,

While Fantomina's tale is a fantasy of female freedom, more realistic stories are embodied through the characters of her disguises: tales of daughters of merchants, women betrayed into prostitution by men like Beauplaisir...; tales of serving girls seduced and ruined by the men they work for; stories of widows deprived of means through a system which passes property from man to man. ("Reworking Male Models," 830)

This structure of story-telling takes on an interesting layer of signification in the context Fantomina's phrase, "had I like the rest believed," because it is possible that she is referring to the very stories and their debauched protagonists as mentioned by Craft-Fairchild. At any rate, Fantomina's ability to retell stories through narrative re-enactment is a conspicuous and significant part of her identity as a female trickster; her body becomes the site of narrative confluence. The traditional element of the trickster being a skilled storyteller is a common one that appears in the *Arabian Nights* (which was being



translated and published in England during the early eighteenth century). The female trickster Scheherezade tells her tales to subvert the murderous and vengeful aims of the sultan, who marries women only to kill them, all in response to his having been cuckolded by a previous wife. Scheherezade weaves and embeds layers upon layers of narrative threads, all of which tie back to her own frame story of deception and triumph over the vindictive Sultan. In a similar manner, Fantomina's performances work as a collection or repertoire of tales in which Fantomina and her various identities operate as a series of tales about women and desire. It resembles Jane Barker's *A Patchwork Screen for Ladies*, in which the screen consists of numerous stories of women fitted together into a larger narrative framework regarding women and desire (1723). By amalgamating these other narratives, Fantomina creates and recreates a string of disguises and stories designed to keep Beauplaisir engaged and desirous.

At a basic level, the moment of receiving those letters also demonstrates, to use Lankford's phrase, Fantomina's "astounding ignorance of basic realities," as well as Haywood's ironic humor, as she ignores her own experience with Beauplaisir's fickleness and only acknowledges his inconstancy when she sees a letter proving it, thus displaying her distrust of personal or eyewitness experience. This trickster is certainly adept at deceiving the eye, which is why Beauplaisir never connects Fantomina to Celia or Celia to the Widow, and so on. As a result, she may have never understood her own interactions with Beauplaisir to be proof of his infidelity because she knows not to trust human behavior to be anything but illusory, her own disguises being evidence of that. At the same time, one also wonders if she means to include her performances of Fantomina, Celia, and Widow Bloomer with "the rest" who actually "believed" Beauplaisir to be

faithful. Does she consider herself, the recipient of these letters, to be a completely different role than they? Has she really created that much distance not only from the role of the young girl, her “established social identity,” as Hinnant calls it, and these identities? Are they mere stories of credulous women, while the “I” used here refers to a woman, the perceptive actress, who never let herself be fooled?

Interestingly, this moment aligns with cultural trends regarding the letters as receptacles of selfhood. Haywood reworks the concept of self-revelation through epistolary correspondence that Richardson and Johnson would later promote, as Fantomina sees a reflection of Beauplaisir’s true self not because of his words, but in spite of them. Ultimately, letters expose the self, regardless of how artfully the author intends to hide him or herself in it. Haywood explores the same relationship between selfhood and epistolary discourse in *The Injur’d Husband* when the Baroness’s letters to one man are revealed to a gathering of her other admirers and lovers. Ashley Tauchert claims, and rightly so, that this moment in the novel, when Fantomina receives written proof of Beauplaisir’s inconstancy, essentially constitutes “the triumph of the traditional female victim of seduction over the deceiving male” (482). Pondering her successful deception of the rake leads to a kind of female *jouissance*: “She made herself, most certainly, extremely happy in the reflection on the process of her strategems” (2751). Later when she, as the aristocratic Incognita, convinces him in a letter to meet with her, “She could not forbear laughing heartily to think of the tricks she played him, and applauding her own strength of genius and force of resolution” (2754). As in *The City Jilt*, laughter is the result of a figurative slip-up for the unwary Beauplaisir and the knowledge that gives Fantomina of her own position of authority and her ability to

continue playing her tricks on him. In fact, the trick itself, the cause of laughter, becomes her objective in the relationship, whereas originally she had esteemed the value of his love as being above money, hence the reason she refused him at first.

After all, knowing exactly what Beauplaisir is has already forced Fantomina to rethink the relationship; their encounters no longer constitute a search for requital and love since “the knowledge of his inconstancy and levity of nature kept her from having the real tenderness for him she else would have had” (2751); by deceiving him as long as she can, she will make herself “more blessed,” arouse and manipulate his desires indefinitely through formulating new identities and “have him always raving, wild, impatient, longing, dying,” and give herself joy through deceit because she cannot have the joy derived from actual love (2754). One sees a similar kind of guiltless, remorseless pleasure stemming from anti-social behaviors in Austen’s *The Beautifull Cassandra*, when the milliner’s daughter returns to her mother after everything criminal she has done that day, “was pressed to her Mother’s bosom by that worthy Woman,” and “smiled and whispered to herself, ‘This is a day well spent’” (44). It is this kind of remorseless enjoyment, devoid of any thought to repercussions to others, that leads Minton to refer to the trickster character as the “quintessential sociopath” (612). It is not about love so much as coming out on top. Tricksters love to win, regardless of the cost to those around them.

In contrast, Fantomina’s enjoyment, as expressed through her laughter, symbolizes more than *schadenfreude* or a lack of conscience, but also a new perspective on her triumph. Bakhtin discusses the functions of laughter as both a universal element, capable of expressing universal truths, and in the case of “medieval man,” signaling a kind of victory: “It was not only a victory over mystic terror of God, but also a victory

over the awe inspired by the forces of nature....Through this victory laughter clarified man's consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life" (90). This seems to be the case with Fantomina, and her laughter signifies a clarity of vision that peers into infinity: she sees herself as an endless string of signifiers whose signified (herself) is always knowing and unknowable, and the only way to remain undeceived is to continue the deception. She may not have the satisfaction that comes through being loved, but she will have sexual and psychological satisfaction through her charades, which substitute for what Beauplaisir (and perhaps men in general) are not prepared to give or even capable of giving. Here, the female trickster understands the significance of her existence: she deceives to avoid being deceived by perpetuating and participating in an *endless process* of self-reproduction.

Craft-Fairchild comments on how Fantomina's roles rise in status over the course of the novel, each one acquiring in social terms more cultural capital and social control, but that is only part of the process. At the same time, Fantomina has a noticeable leveling influence on her roles: "There could be no difference in merit because they were the same person" (Haywood 2751). This influence itself is a disruptive force because it places the experiences of women, regardless of class or position, on equal footing. All women—or at least most of them—undergo and endure male exploitation.

Further, Fantomina shows that her role-playing is capable of infinite variation, almost like she is recycling and repurposing a finite number of roles. One might even say that her roles are memetic, and as she moves through them over and over, she tweaks them slightly to create something that preserves aspects of the way she played the role formerly with distinct differences. Fantomina begins her role-playing in the novel, not as

the prostitute (that is her second role), but as that “young lady of distinguished birth, beauty, wit, and spirit” who “happened to be in a box one night” and who testifies her contempt outwardly of the people she inwardly wishes to understand and even represent (2740). The aristocratic courtesan Incognita, for example, functions as a shadowy double of the distinguished “young girl,” at least in terms of class. Then, in the final scene of the novel, Fantomina’s mother, bringing the confused Beauplaisir into the room where the girl has given birth, asks, “Is this the gentleman...to whom you owe your ruin?” Fantomina replies, “Oh! No (resumed the trembling creature), he is indeed the innocent cause of my undoing” (2758). This line not only assigns Beauplaisir a passive role—or a lack of culpability—in her pregnancy, but it also creates another parallel between Fantomina’s identities. The word *creature*, used twice in the final paragraph, may refer to the low level to which Fantomina has sunk in terms of her shame. Her pregnancy and parturition, which figure as a source of Bakhtinian “degradation” and a manifestation of the “grotesque,” to borrow Bakhtin’s terminology (Vice 347), connects the new mother one of her former roles: the prostitutes or “creatures” at the play-house she once wondered about and eventually became. Consequently, it seems that her role as unwed mother is a variation on the role of “creature,” although at the same time, her delivery also plays with that term by making her a “creator” as well as a “creature.” Beauplaisir, upon encountering Fantomina and learning of his own role in her conception, “took his leave, full of cogitations, more confused than ever he had been before” (2758). Entry into this carnivalesque zone has its subversive effect on him by showing him the truth about himself and destabilizing his own self-knowledge. It is brought about not by Fantomina exactly, at least not intentionally, but by the carnivalesque nature of her previous actions

that continues to permeate and affect her situation and relationships. In other words, while the trickster has been brought down by the unforeseen consequences of her plans, the other unintended, unforeseen effects of her tricksterism remain in play regardless, discombobulating the patriarchal position of authority by inserting doubt and confusion into the situation.

Fantomina's mother sends her daughter to a convent in France after Fantomina gives birth. Despite the narrator's declaration, "Thus, here ended an intrigue" (2758), critics, such as Margery Case Croskery, have claimed that the new environment will only give Fantomina more opportunities for role-playing (suggested by the stories about the exploits of nuns overwrought with desire, including the seventeenth-century *The Letters from a Portuguese Nun* [1669]; *Venus in the Cloister, or The Nun in Her Smock* [1683]; and Aphra Behn's novellas *The History of the Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker* [1688]; *The Fair Jilt* [1688]; and *The Nun, or the Perjur'd Beauty* [1697]). In other words, the convent is merely one more stage for Fantomina's "further adventures" (Croskery 91). The idea of Fantomina's pattern of performances reaffirms that position and suggests that she will continue to create havoc, not simply because her story in the convent, which is hinted at by allusion to other prior or contemporary texts, but because it is the pattern of her cyclical repertoire; she will keep remaking herself and her performed identities over and over in similar, but not identical, ways, the way a true storyteller retells and remakes the narratives, based on contextual cues and factors. Considering she has begun to work through her repertoire once again, the next step might be something akin to the role of Celia the maid-servant. In a convent she would make vows, so it is far amiss to suggest that as a nun she will perform that role as the servant of Christ. Further, given the fact

that she escaped from the domestic enclosure prior to the beginning of the novel to attend the play, it would seem likely that this female trickster can and will, like the protagonists in Behn's *The Fair Jilt* and *The History of the Nun*, function within her confines in some fashion and find other ways to employ and enjoy her antics.

At the same time, it is interesting to consider how the idea of enclosure contributes to the shape of the novel. On one end, the domestic sphere or home bookends the beginning and the convent bookends other). Haywood has essentially enclosed the novel and all of Fantomina's adventures with kinds of enclosure. In a way, just as performance is "inescapable," as Anderson claims, so too is enclosure; the trickster Fantomina can never completely escape the systems by which she is surrounded, but that is not the point. The point is that she manages to do so much and play so many tricks and schemes despite being surrounded in a context that attempts to prevent her from such action. Her attempts to shed her social constraints still lead to enough disruption and havoc that she can attain freedom and control, albeit temporarily, even within her confinements.

## **Conclusion**

Haywood's *Fantomina* touches on many aspects of tricksterism, including disguise, deceit, irony, and performances that allow the protagonist to escape from the repression of her society and experience freedom. Her eventual placement in the convent outwardly motions toward a renewal of social equilibrium at least in that her antics are contained and out of sight rather than liberated and visible; at the same time, her presence there still hints at a creative continuation of performance, even within the narrow confines

of convent. Like Behn's Miranda, even the cloister can be a big enough nutshell for infinite roles and performances and enjoyment.



## Chapter 6

Haywood's *The Injur'd Husband* and *Anti-Pamela*: Privacy, Epistolarity, and Tricksterism

Having discussed Fantomina's exploits in the context of trickster narratives, I now shift my gaze to two more short novels by Haywood from different periods in her career, both featuring representations of the female trickster. This chapter investigates the relationship between Haywood's female tricksters and the cultural trend of epistolary writing during the eighteenth century. According to some, such as Samuel Johnson, private letters functioned as written reflections of an author's inner life and operated as spaces in which one could unfold the inner private self to an intimate audience (Watt 191). Letter-writing for Haywood's female tricksters proves to be problematic not because the practice involves exposing oneself to someone else, but because once private information is set down in ink and sent off, it is sometimes misplaced and viewed by unintended audiences who exploit the knowledge they glean by reading private correspondence. Tricksters can thrive best when they are able to manage their own narratives. When too much about them (their designs or tricks, for example) is revealed, their ability to function in society—or counter to it—diminishes. Haywood's tricksters are no exception to this notion.

Although these novellas were written in supposedly different phases of Haywood's professional career, their reliance on the female trickster as a central motif ties them together and shows Haywood's consistency over time. Paula Backscheider writes that a "common 'plot' for Haywood's life, one that has existed since at least David Erskine Baker's *Companion to the Theatre* (1764) and Clara Reeve's *The Progress of*

*Romance* (1785), is that Haywood's fictions become more moral and less shocking” (“The Shadow of an Author,” 88), thus perpetuating a narrative of authorial division that still persists. For a long time, Haywood was perceived as a lusty jilt and actress who later reformed into a writer of moral essays and conduct literature, but that popular, albeit inaccurate, portrait of her early life, and consequently the arc of her professional, has since been debunked or at least questioned and complicated: “In the past decade, we have learned that Haywood was not a runaway preacher's wife, had her own bookseller's shop for a while, and had a sustained ‘domestic’ relationship with William Hatchett. She succeeded as a journalist and translator, wrote plays, and acted on the most prestigious stages of Dublin and London” (Backscheider, “The Shadow of an Author,” 86). However, while our understanding of what she was not has been clarified somewhat, what she was is still up for debate. Backscheider analyzes Haywood’s authorial identity when she writes,

As is clear from recent descriptions, debate continues about...whether Haywood is an erotic writer producing (knowingly or not) arousal literature and pleasure machines or a skillful social allegorist or an important literary innovator. Whatever our opinions, however, it seems indisputable to me that she has come to stand for the nexus and the point of tension between a number of things—the transgressive, outspoken woman and the moral, admonishing woman writer, between amatory fiction and the new novel. (“The Shadow of an Author,” 80)

In other words, trying to pigeonhole Haywood as one thing or another is overly reductive since her career demonstrates that she was one thing *and* another, a veritable polyglot fluent in the discourses of multiple cultural domains.

*The Injur'd Husband* (1722), appeared in Haywood's early period of "scandalous and erotic novel-writing" (Todd 147). The other novel under consideration in this chapter, *Anti-Pamela; or, Feign'd Innocence Detected* (1741), was published in response to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* as part of what Stephen A. Raynie refers to as a "flood of *Anti-Pamela* literature" (77) written by individuals, including Haywood, Henry Fielding, Claude Villaret, Éléazar Mauvillon, and James Parry, who took issue with Richardson's narrative of a young serving-maid who is abducted by her master and by preserving her chastity finally marries him. When Haywood wrote her parody of Richardson's novel, she had reached a point in her career in which the content of her writing had begun to move away from the free licentiousness of her earlier works to works such as *The Female Spectator* (1744–46), which Haywood used to talk about cultural issues associated with being a woman, and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), which Janet Todd calls "moral" work which "focuses not only on woman but on the reputation or sign of woman acting in society" (148). Regardless of the critical debates concerning perceptions of Haywood's authorial identities as scandal-monger and moralist, what we find here is that between 1722 and 1741 she seems to perceive the motif of the female trickster as culturally useful and influential.

### **The "Cult" of Familiar Letter-Writing**

In *The Rise of the Novel*, Watt claims that Samuel Richardson's epistolary technique in *Pamela* and *Clarissa* reflects "one of the most distinctive features of

eighteenth-century literary history” (189). Around 1680 letter-writing became popular due to more efficient and affordable “postal facilities” and the increased literary efforts of middle-class female writers (189). Men too were caught up in the “cult” of letter-writing, and Samuel Richardson himself was a great writer of letters, in addition to working in that form in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. He also approved of letter-writing as a suitable practice as part of the education of young women, as he writes to Sophia Westcomb in 1746, “Retired, the modest Lady, happy in herself, happy in her Choice she makes of the dear Correspondent of her own Sex...; uninterrupted; her Closet her Paradise, her Company, herself, and ideally the beloved Absent; there she can distinguish Her Self” (*Selected Letters*, 68). Richardson not only approved of letter-writing as an improver of female minds, but specifically letter-writing between women, in the way *Clarissa*, for example, corresponds with her friend Anna Howe.

Letter-writing eventually grew more and more idealized culturally, which is illustrated in Dr. Johnson was of two minds on the subject. On the one hand, he understood that letters could be a space for artificiality and performance, as he suggests in *The Life of Pope* in regards to Edmund Curll’s publication of Pope’s private correspondence. Johnson writes,

Pope is seen in this collection as connected with the other contemporary wits, and certainly suffers no disgrace in the comparison; but it must be remembered that he had the power of favouring himself: he might have originally had publication in his mind, and have written with care, or have afterwards selected those which he had most happily conceived, or most diligently laboured; and I know not whether there does not appear

something more studied and artificial in his productions than the rest, except one long letter by Bolingbroke, composed with all the skill and industry of a professed author. (“The Life of Pope”)

At the same time, he also saw a more idealized aspect to private correspondence. He once expressed to Mrs. Thrale: “A man’s letters...are only the mirror of his breast, whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process. Nothing is inverted, nothing distorted, you see systems in their elements, you discover actions in their motives” (qtd. in Watt 191). While one may question the veracity of that position, given all of the criticism on epistolary writing as a popular eighteenth-century mode, one might be less tempted to question the view’s popularity and ways in which the relationship between self-representation and letter-writing affected literary works. In other words, true or not, some people in the eighteenth century really did think about letter-writing in this manner. Hand in hand with John Locke’s concept of “tabula rasa,” Christopher Flint says, “In eighteenth-century Britain paper and ink...served as primary symbols of a new form of subjectivity....A page, whether empty or filled, became a powerful emblem of human potential, a surface to be imprinted by the defining characteristics that personal experience inscribed” (80). The letter as a material manifestation of selfhood informs our understanding of the rhetorical situation of letter-writing, as well as how authors and readers might have perceived them, during the eighteenth century.

Charles Gildon, in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, published *The Postboy Robb’d of His Mail: Or, the Pacquet Broke Open* (1706), which he presented as providing access to people’s personal lives as conveyed in their correspondence and which exploited the literary voyeurism that existed in the culture. Haywood capitalizes on

this cultural tendency as well. Her use of epistolary technique and references to letter-writing shows how she, like Richardson, was in tune with the public taste when it came to letter-writing and was able to work within that form effectively. In the literary tradition already established by La Vergne with *Letters from a Portuguese Nun* (1669) and Behn with *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), Haywood produced entire works of fictional letters, including the translation of *Letters from a Lady of Quality* (1721), *Bath-Intrigues* (1725), *Love-Letters on All Occasions* (1730), *Epistles for the Ladies* (1749), and *A Letter from H----- G-----, Esq.* (1750). Haywood also had a tendency to hybridize generically many of her novels by weaving in epistolary correspondence between her characters, as demonstrated in the previous chapter on *Fantomina*. Margaret Case Croskery writes, “In almost all of Haywood’s narratives, seductions are begun, continued, and discovered in an exchange of letters between the participants or interested spectators” (86). In this chapter, I look specifically at the function of those letters in two of Haywood’s novels and what their relationship to the female trickster reveals about the beliefs and anxieties of the cultures they inhabit.

***Anti-Pamela; or, Feign’d Innocence Detected and The Injur’d Husband***

In her famous parody of Richardson’s *Pamela*, Haywood employs a female trickster who is unable to keep track of her written correspondence. John Richetti refers to *Anti-Pamela* as “an amusingly vicious attack on Richardson’s book” (“Histories,” 243). Unlike Richardson’s story of a servant girl, Pamela Andrews, who resists the sexual advances of her master, Mr. B, Haywood provides the escapades of Syrena Tricksy, “a clever and amoral reversal of [Richardson’s] priggish paragon” (Richetti, “Histories,” 243), as her mother attempts to teach her how to marry a man of means by using her

beauty and wiles. While the novel is not entirely composed of letters, the communications between the mother and daughter generally occur in the form of letters. Margaret Doody writes that this type of mother-daughter correspondence in literature was not a new idea:

“The mother's text that confers identity upon the heroine is a very old motif indeed. It is found, writ large (as it were) in one of the oldest novels of the Western tradition: Heliodorus's *Aithiopika* (c. 250-380 AD). This is a novel often translated and reprinted throughout the Renaissance, and it maintained currency in the eighteenth century.” (“Beyond Evelina,” 367)

Like the text of Heliodorus *Anti-Pamela* is also “of the tale of the mother who tries to transmit an identity through writing to the separated (and in some sense orphaned) daughter” (“Beyond Evelina,” Doody 369). Syrena proves herself an adept student and manages to snare multiple men over the progress of the novel. However, she also is adept at letting herself be found out and losing them. One of the main ways she does so comes through the discovery by others of her mother's letters.

In these letters, what we see unfold is a long-distance correspondence course in tricksterism. Syrena is the headstrong, impetuous apprentice, her mother the maestro, which mirrors the structure of Henry Fielding's parody *The Life and Apologies of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* published just a short time before Haywood's *Anti-Pamela*. Catherine Ingrassia writes that Syrena “has been raised, from a young age, to believe that she can make her living through financial gains she can obtain from men” (37) and her mother's letters give her “on-the-job” tutoring as she seeks a wealthy benefactor to marry and bankrupt. Syrena starts to pursue a relationship with a soldier named Vardine, and her

mother, Ann Tricky, sends her a letter, reminding her that the soldier is not a good catch: “No, Child!” she writes, “It is your Business to make Hay while the Sun shines—for when Youth and Beauty are no more—Farewell Hope” (66). Ann goes on to say of Syrena’s affection for the soldier, whom Ann suspects of having no economic means and limited prospects, “I hope you do not stand in need of any Caution against indulging a secret Inclination for him; for if it once comes to that you are ruin’d!—No Woman ever made her Fortune by the Man she had a sincere Value for” (66).

Ann’s remarks are a commentary on the sexual marketplace in English society, where good looks are a woman’s chief asset. Haywood continues the negotiation that Defoe plays with in terms of what makes a woman desirable and valuable in a marriage economy.<sup>7</sup> Ann’s use of the word “ruin’d” also cynically suggests that love is inherently problematic because it leaves the person who possesses it vulnerable to potential exploitation by the object of that affection, both financially and sexually. Detachment is the only way to have success in the marketplace, sexual or otherwise. To Ann, love essentially facilitates masculine control of women. Syrena proves her right when she allows Vardine to seduce and impregnate her, after which the soldier leaves her.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In *Moll Flanders* Defoe makes the further point that regardless of how many good qualities a woman possesses, if she has no money she has nothing, and as Robin says, when the “maid chances to be handsomer than the mistress, she often makes as good a market, and rides in a coach before her” (23).

<sup>8</sup> This episode reiterates once again the accuracy of Melladore’s statement in Haywood’s *The City Jilt*, in which he writes to Gliceria after leaving her penniless and pregnant: “I thought you Mistress of a better Understanding than to imagine an Amour of the nature Our’s was, should last forever:— ‘Tis not in Reason, ‘tis not in Nature to retain perpetual Ardours for the same Object.—The very word Desire implies an Impossibility of continuing after the Enjoyment of that which first caused its being” (16).



Following Vardine's departure, Syrena's mother helps the debauched girl to have an abortion, and pregnancy, regardless of how many times she has sex later, is never mentioned again in the novel, the implication being that she has been sterilized by the abortion process and has subsequently been made into a more efficient seductress because she acts without fear of conceiving.

Syrena proves a quick study, absorbing much of her mother's advice and putting it into application, for she was "train'd up to deceive and betray all those whom her Beauty should allure" (54). She also has ideas of her own regarding the best methods of male entrapment, which sometimes run counter to her mother's instruction, and she is often successful, at least for a time. In other words, she not only takes in what she learns, but her mother soon discovers that Syrena is capable of perfecting that knowledge (53). She even begins to use the many "Lessons of Deceit" that "[her mother] has so well instructed her in" on her mother (69), demonstrating that even though she requires her mother's help to succeed in securing a match, her mother's endeavors to educate her still constitute a form of structure or subordinating system which Syrena attempts to subvert. She refuses to be dependent on her mother, but because of her "Vanity, Conceit, and Avarice" she puts aside her mother's ideas and decides "to act henceforward of herself" (71). Throughout the story, she snares quite a few different men through her beauty, innocent look, and superb acting abilities, all of which she gained before "she had...reach'd her thirteenth Year," and "she excell'd the most experienced Actresses on the Stage, in a lively assuming of all the different Passions that find Entrance in a Female Mind" (54). Once again, one finds Haywood referencing her own profession (or one of them) as an underlying metaphor in the actions of her characters.

Syrena is obsessive in articulating the details of ensnaring Vardine's affections:

When I began to consider on what had pass'd; I thought I had been a little too rough in the latter part of my Behaviour; for tho' I did not repent my having refused the Stockings (tho' indeed they were very pretty) yet I did, that I had not done it with more Complaisance.—I verily believed he loved me;; but then, as it was a Passion of so late a Date, it might want a little Hope to give it Strength; and tho' it was necessary I should seem coy, yet it should have been such a Coyness, as might give him room to fancy I might at last be won; and so drawn him in by Degrees, till it was not in his Power to go Back. These Reflections kept me awake all Night.

(62)

Because of her perfectionist obsession Syrena becomes an expert in the arts of appearance, which is no doubt connected to the plight of women in her society, who, to procure matches and security for themselves, are driven to seem as though in alignment with cultural norms that would make a woman desirable, even when beneath the surface they are other than what they portray or perform. The pressure exerted by cultural forces would no doubt drive many women to obsession in matters of marriage and connection.

Like many of the tricksters who have preceded her, Syrena is not immune to occasional ineptitude. In addition to resourcefulness and cleverness, Syrena has a number of blind spots, including her own arrogance and overflowing sexual urges. When she strays from her mother's instructions, she can still be successful, but inevitably something trips her up. For example, when her mother warns her to stay away from Vardine, Syrena says, "Why must I run away whenever I see him, as if I were afraid he would devour me?"

Indeed, I shan't make myself such a Fool——if Fortune or his own Endeavors throw him in my way, I shall hear of what he has to say, and it may be manage [sic], so as to get something of him——poor as she thinks him” (71). In her haste to avoid looking like a fool, Syrena ends up playing very much the part of the fool after being debauched by her soldier. Her role as the trickster-fool remains in place throughout the novel as time after time she gains her ends only to slip up. In one instance, Syrena finds a wealthy man, but then because she has sex with other men (on the sly) she contracts a venereal disease and then passes it on to him. In another case, Syrena makes an enemy of another shrewd woman, Mrs. E——, by becoming her husband's mistress. Mrs. E—— essentially sets up sting operation in which Syrena is caught red-handed with another woman's husband, sent to jail, and finally exiled to Wales. These encounters emphasize Syrena's shortcomings and shortsightedness; they also contrast the other ways in which women can gain social power. As an example of the latter, Syrena uses beauty and cunning to gain possession of men. Other women, particularly Mrs. E—— and the mercer's wife, whose husband Syrena bankrupted and left in debt and despair, use resourcefulness and goodness to retake possession. In those instances, the reader is left to ask whether men really are in charge after all, or if masculine dominance, because it is so susceptible to the contrivances of the female trickster, is mostly a façade. Men seem to be more like objects and commodities here, and the women are like rival companies, playing for possession. While Syrena may be the opposite of society's ideals, her adventures can lead to such inquiry.

The letters between Syrena and her mother come into play as instruments in Syrena's downfall, which is made explicit in Syrena's attempt to entrap a Mr. L——by

allowing him to seduce her and then accusing him of rape, a crime punishable by death or marriage, a point of law which Samuel Richardson would also bring up in *Clarissa* six years after *Anti-Pamela* was published. A letter from Syrena's mother regarding their plot is transported in a batch of mail that ends up being stolen (no doubt an allusion to Gildon's *The Postboy Robb'd*) and then discarded in a dry ditch. As a result, the evidence of the Tricksys' machinations and plots is found by a "Country Fellow," who makes sure it arrives at the proper destination, where the family of Mr. L—— reads it and learns the truth (118). After their plans are disrupted, Syrena and her mother "cursed Fortune, and accused themselves for having trusted the Secret of their Design to Pen and Paper: Dreadful Proof that their Hearts were totally void of all Distinction between Vice and Virtue" (122). They are not angry simply because their plans have collapsed. The letters are not simply daily planners cataloguing their actions; they are perceived as artifacts of the essential self. Syrena and her mother are angry because they have put their inner life on full display, allowing others to see things about them that they never intended to reveal to anyone but each other, and once they are discovered, their ability to operate in secret (the crucial factor in their success) diminishes.

Syrena Tricksy's actions connect her closely to the Baroness de Tortillée, from Haywood's much earlier work, *The Injur'd Husband*. Though *Anti-Pamela* is clearly the more mature and sophisticated of the two works in its character development and humor, the two characters, Syrena and the Baroness, share a number of traits, including deceptive behavior/acting ability, social mobility, and uncontrollable licentiousness that lead me to think that Syrena is not only a parody of Pamela Andrews, but also a refashioning of the trickster-like characteristics found in the earlier work featuring the Baroness. One key

difference in their *modus operandi* is that Syrena works with an accomplice, while the Baroness must “act” alone, but both Syrena and the Baroness have a similar problem controlling their private correspondence and concealing themselves from unintended audiences whose scrutiny decreases their capability to operate covertly.

In her dedicatory epistle to Lady How, situated at the beginning of the *Injur'd Husband* Haywood writes, “The Subject of the Trifle I presume to offer, is, *the worst of women*” (3). According to Mary Anne Schofield, this novel depicts the manner in which “independence, self-sufficiency, and control become arrogance, greed, and fanaticism as portrayed by the cruel and lascivious antics of the Baroness” (24). The Baroness epitomizes Schofield’s notion of the “divided heroine” who is “outwardly forced to submit to male dominance and control,” while “inwardly she aggressively rebels and creates elaborate stratagems that attempt to avoid such exploitation” (5). The Baroness joins the nobility when she marries the Baron, who interestingly fails to exemplify the kind of masculine dominance that female characters like the Baroness are intended to combat. In fact, the relatively sexless nature of their marriage reflects the cultural perception that rakish women like the cuckolding Baroness tended to emasculate and even feminize their husbands.<sup>9</sup> While the Baroness does not display the kind of shrewishness or scolding behavior exhibited by the wife in that ballad, her overflowing libidinal tendencies and cuckoldry are certainly a parallel, and her husband certainly

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<sup>9</sup> This is demonstrated, for example, in the ballad “The Jolly Widdower” published sometime in the mid-to-late seventeenth century, in which a man marries a scolding and cuckolding wife who forces him, under threat of physical harm, to “drudge and toil in a thred-bare coat” by cleaning boots, starting the fire, washing dishes, and caring for the bastard babies she got by other men (line 45).

displays qualities that would not fit with traditional perspectives on masculine behavior. For example, when the Baroness claims that she was assaulted and nearly raped by Beauclair, the narrator describes the “tender-hearted” Baron as being “quite beside himself; his Soul, before overcome with soft Emotions, now quite dissolv’d and melted in a Sea of Tenderness: He clasped the Syren in his faithful Arms! kissed her dissembling Lips! And while he spoke the fondest, most endearing Words that Tongue e’er uttered, or Heart e’er conceived, a Flood of honest Tears stream’d from his Eyes” (53)

Before her marriage to the Baron, the Baroness is known as Mademoiselle la Motte, a member of an upper-class family who manages to spend her entire considerable inheritance on actualizing her desires: “the Extravagance of her Expences reduced in a short time to have nothing of the Woman of Fashion remaining but a few rich Cloaths; with these, however, and a tolerable Face and Air, she found Means for a good while to escape that...dreaded Evil; the Show of Poverty” (6). Haywood’s description of the novel’s protagonist suggests something fundamental to understanding the condition of women at the time, namely that in order to have what they want, namely sexual satisfaction and social status, they have to have wealth. If they do not have wealth, they have to at least maintain the appearance of it. While Mademoiselle le Motte no longer commands a fortune, having spent the majority of it, she still has enough sense to use what little she has to pretend she is wealthy. In this way, she becomes a courtesan and “those on whom before she had bestow’d her Favours *gratis*, were now oblig’d to purchase” (6). Her money has gone toward maintaining her desirability, and now she relies on the money of investors to continue. During this façade, she snares the Baron and

marries him before anyone can object, thus helping her climb into the nobility with an even greater fortune at her disposal.

The rest of the story follows Mademoiselle le Motte as she, instead of learning from her prior misconduct, becomes the Baroness and continues as before, spending money, seducing men, and drugging her husband. Haywood points out that the Baroness is capable of carrying on a number of affairs, satisfying herself sexually without losing control or becoming enslaved by her emotions:

But how fond soever the Baroness was of a new Intrigue, Heav'n never form'd a man whose Charms cou'd oblige her to discontinue any of her former ones, nor was she ever so much over-whelm'd in Passion as not to know how to conceal it, whenever she found occasion. (56)

In other words, the Baroness possesses the knack that Syrena Tricky has for kindling and maintaining relationships that provide her with the lifestyle she wants, but her drives and desires still push her to seek additional sexual satisfaction elsewhere. Syrena successively ruins relationships through her dalliances and spending habits, but the Baroness, who is more adept than Syrena, carries on for a quite a while, managing and maintaining her affairs and accumulating lovers like a stockpiling miser.

In multiple ways the Baroness is an early iteration of what Syrena eventually would be, but she also extends the character of Behn's Miranda in *The Fair Jilt* published thirty-four years prior. Both of these characters begin as part of wealthy families and by their schemes manage to climb even higher on the social ladder to reach nobility. They both suffer from extravagant misbehavior, losing most of their wealth in the process (the Baroness does so twice, one way in which Haywood goes farther than Behn), which

imprudence they—paradoxically—balance with an almost unfair amount of cleverness, a common mixture of traits found in many trickster characters. They also attempt to seduce men, but turn that seduction into an accusation of rape against the would-be partner (Miranda out of anger, and the Baroness for self-preservation when her husband discovers her in bed with Beauclair).

Another way in which Haywood's character aligns and expands on Behn's Miranda occurs in the manner in which they end their exploits. As mentioned previously, Miranda's penitence allows her to join a community of nuns and become integrated once again. Unfortunately, the death of Tarquin throws an ambiguous wrench into that "neat" ending and its implication of social conformity by suggesting that Miranda is not everything she appears to be and may even be connected to Tarquin's death. At the ending of *The Injur'd Husband*, the Baroness's refusal to submit to the power of her society is slightly less ambiguous than the way Miranda's story ends. After Dulache, whom Schofield refers to as "the Baroness's pimp and right-hand man" and who is an accomplice much like Amy and Syrena's mother, although not so emotionally connected, is punished for his roles in the Baroness's crimes (25), "the wicked Baroness, impatient of her Fate, desperate, and some say struck with Remorse, and terrified in Conscience, hopeless of Mercy here or hereafter, had swallowed Poison, and ended her shameful life" (Haywood 100). One instance that appeared in the *London Journal* sounds somewhat like the Baroness's situation and may speak to a larger cultural pattern of criminality in England at the time. Michael Macdonald writes:

Even the stories of suicides following crimes or deaths so horrible that they offered tempting opportunities for comment were almost always



reported without editorial elaboration. “Last week,” ran one item in the London Journal, a fellow broke into a house in Berkshire. He “stole some goods, but was taken in the Fact; and as they were carrying him to Gaol, he cut his Throat with a Razor, and died immediately.” (37)

Her death can be read in two ways, one of which Haywood suggests: a just revenge for the Baron’s death and a way of returning to the status quo. On the other hand, to suddenly give the Baroness a conscience at this point makes no sense in light of what has gone on before, and Haywood’s use of the phrase “as some say” may indicate that the audience needs to understand the unreliability of the source (rumor) and that the real reason for the Baroness’s suicide was unknown. Both of these perspectives would align Haywood’s report with Macdonald’s suggestion that many accounts of suicide in the popular press at the time “often...simply reported the suicide like any other crime about which little was known,” and further focusing “above all on the circumstances of the death, occasionally indicating the suicide's motive or his state of mind” (44). While “ignominious,” her death is at least private (as opposed to Miranda’s public shaming in the market-place) and on her terms (Haywood 100). In death, while she could not avoid rumor, she does avoid direct punishment and, although done in desperation, even could be understood as one final act of resistance to the system. The criminal need to control the statement made by one’s body and refusal to publically symbolize and affirm the power of the governing institution by killing oneself seems to be a theme, and thus may provide enough evidence to say that the Baroness, when she runs out of ways to exist on her own terms, transgresses the final taboo, self-murder, dies on her own terms or at least at her own hand. While most tricksters are not usually guilty of trying to kill themselves, they are

often seen transgressing the cultural taboos, and one might further argue that the Baroness's actions align her with the patterns of self-destructive behaviors found in many trickster stories.

Haywood's Baroness and Behn's Miranda are also connected through the practice of letter-writing. In Behn's story, Miranda writes letters to the friar Henrick in which she declares her love for him in various ways:

Her raging Love made her say all things that discover'd the nature of its Flame, and propose to flee with him to any part of the World, if he wou'd quit the Convent; that she had a Fortune considerable enough to make him happy, and that his Youth and Quality were not given him to so unprofitable an End as to lose themselves in a Convent, where Poverty and Ease was all their Business. In fine, she leaves nothing unurg'd that might debauch and invite him; not forgetting to send him her own Character of Beauty, and left him to judge of her Wit and Spirit by her Writing, and her Love by the Extremity of Passion she profess'd. (88)

In short, Miranda's letters reveal the licentious woman's desires openly to the friar. Watt writes, "Letters are the most direct material evidence for the inner life of their writers that exist. Even more than memoir they are, to repeat Flaubert's phrase, 'le réel écrit', and their reality is one which reveals the subjective and private orientations of the writer both towards the recipient and the people discussed, as well as the writer's own inner being" (191). That being said, Miranda's use of the letter seems to speak more to Johnson's notion of the letter as a space for contrivance. Following Miranda's attempt on the friar and during his trial, "The Letters...were forc'd from him, and expos'd; however, Matters

were carry'd with so high a Hand against him, that they serv'd for no Proof at all of his Innocence, and he was at last condemn'd to be burned at the Market-place" (97). The letters are evidence, but not to the point that they are indisputable. The fact that her letters were "expos'd," but did nothing to gain Henrick a reprieve, demonstrates that the function of the letter as a depiction of the true nature of the writer may not yet have been a dominant cultural notion. In fact, Behn's description of Miranda's writing illustrates that letters, far from being a representation of the self, function as a space in which character can be altered or manipulated to achieve a particular aim:

Yet notwithstanding his Silence, which left her in doubt, and more tormented her, she ceas'd not to pursue him with her Letters, varying her Style; sometimes all wanton, loose and raving; sometimes feigning a Virgin-Modesty all over, accusing her self, blaming her Conduct, and sighing her Destiny, as one compell'd to the shameful Discovery by the Austerity of his Vow and Habit, asking his Pity and Forgiveness; urging him in Charity to use his fatherly Care to perswade and reason with her wild Desires, and by his Counsel drive the God from her Heart, whose Tyranny was worse than that of a Fiend; and he did not know what his pious Advice might do. But still she writes in vain, in vain she varies her Style, by a Cunning, peculiar to a Maid possess'd with such a sort of Passion. (Behn 15)

Miranda's feelings are real, but the manner in which they are conveyed to Henrick involve her style of representation, giving the illusion of spontaneity and suggesting that letters can communicate both an essential self and a constructed self. Gauging the

ineffectiveness of the letter as evidence, one senses that the culture in which Behn lived had not yet begun to idealize the letter as a genre, but might even have distrusted it as a form because of the artifice that Behn is depicting.

Haywood's novels on the other hand illustrate that the shift toward idealizing the letter as a material artifact in which the self is transcribed has come into vogue.

Historically, we see this in the 1724 divorce proceedings of William and Mary Yonge.

Although William was a reputed libertine, he took issue with his wife's extramarital affair with a Colonel Norton and sued for divorce. As part of the case against her, Mary's love letters were read in as evidence alongside eyewitness testimony that placed her and her lover in bed together (Montagu 1273n1). In her poem "Epistle from Mrs. Yonge to Her Husband," Lady Mary Wortley Montagu articulates her reaction to the hypocrisy and double standards that punished women for behaviors that society permitted to men. To some extent, one can see Haywood's *Injur'd Husband* anticipating the account of Yonge's experience, undoubtedly because theirs was not an isolated incident. Midway through the novel, the Baroness de Tortillée accuses Beauclair of attempting to rape her and drugs her husband with "a Potion compos'd of such pernicious Drugs" that it "had that unhappy Effect on all the sensitive Faculties as to reduce the Person who shou'd swallow it, to a Condition little preferable as that of an Ideot" (54), the potion functioning as a symbol of the Baroness's ability throughout the novel to reduce all the men in her life to a state of blind idiocy. After feeling herself free once more to conduct her affairs, she finds a new suitor in a man called La Branche, "one of the most vain, conceited Coxcombs in the Town" (55), or in other words, the rakish Baroness's exact male reflection in terms of licentious behavior, although not nearly approaching her in

discretion or the management of affairs, the fundamental idea being that culturally men had more freedom and did not have to cultivate the same level of caution as women did. Despite the Baroness's usual capacity for meticulous self-concealment in the management of her "amours," in her pursuit of La Branche, the Baroness writes letters (addressed, for example, to "*my Soul's Treasure, the most Adorable La Branche*" [59]) in which she professes her rapture for La Branche:

But say, thou dear Destroyer of my Peace! charming unbeliever! say, what must I do to convince thee that I am—that I can be only Thine—O, didst thou know thy self, thy own Unequal'd Charms were a sufficient Security for my Truth—what is there in Man desirable that my La Branche does not possess in so eminently distinguish'd a Degree, that the whole Sex besides are worthless Nothings, when compar'd with him! (59)

One hears echoes of Miranda in this flattering outpouring of emotion designed to secure the object of her desires. After elevating La Branche to such a degree, the Baroness continues to feed his ego by comparing him to her other lovers. Problematically for the Baroness, by entrusting her private protestations to 1) La Branche and to 2) paper, the Baroness creates material evidence that she is unfaithful to her husband and to all of the other men with whom she has liaisons. Unlike Miranda's letters, which are not ultimately damning (beyond a shadow of a doubt) in the eyes of those who know of their contents, the Baroness's letters are an affront to their masculine pride and they regard these documents, which only came to them because of La Branche's carelessness, as an exact and verifiable proof of the cuckolding Baroness's inner self. This is a culture in which the letter has become the ultimate material depiction of the soul, the "*réel écrit*." All the

while, they are oblivious to the irony of their indignation, and the Baroness, like Mrs. Yonge, is made out to be a monster when she is in fact merely enjoying liberties experienced by many men in her society.

Interestingly, the whole town already knew what the Baroness was; her infidelity was public knowledge to the community. But if that was the case, then why is the letter such a problem for all those involved with the Baroness? The answer is that her affairs could be only classified as rumor conveyed through oral retellings and nothing exactly concrete (that is, in writing). Since everyone's lives are subject to public scrutiny and gossip, then nothing has been transgressed. The information in the letter on the other hand is not supposed to be public; a woman and her feelings are not supposed to be public. Nancy Armstrong writes that conduct books "situate the display of the body as the cause of unseemly female behavior....It is a woman's participation in public spectacle that injures her, for as an object of display, she always loses value as a subject" (77). In *Roxana*, one of the pieces of information that leads to Roxana's discovery by her daughter has to do with Roxana's "public display" of dancing in the Turkish dress: "I was now under a new Perplexity; for this young Slut gave so compleat an Account of every-thing in the Dress that my friend the Quaker coloured at it, and looked two or three times, to see if I did not do so too; for (as she told me afterwards) she immediately perceived that it was the same Dress that she had seen me have on" (Defoe 288). Whatever Defoe's views on public display might have been, the damage that it brings to Roxana in this instance at the very least demonstrates an adoption and adaptation of that cultural norm into his novel. In the Baroness's situation, with the unfolding and reading of the letters, a

social norm, the expectation of privacy, is broken, and she is put on full display in a manner which neither she nor her lovers can ignore or refute.

Her crime does not necessarily originate from being a public spectacle for she has been very good at keeping herself and her actions hidden; on the contrary, being seen, in the eyes of society, *is* her crime, and the rest of her male friends are embarrassed and angry because they have been outperformed by a female rake, their promiscuity now permanently associating them with this hypersexual creature who “played” them. In a way, this public “court” of affronted men resembles Miranda’s marketplace, the Baroness’s letters function as a placard explaining her crimes against society’s ways.

Further, the revelation of the letters provides insight into the nature of female sexuality and its representation, a theme which carries through many of Haywood’s works. Catherine Ingrassia writes, “[Haywood’s] texts and their tremendous popularity created anxiety in some of her male contemporaries who resisted both her alternative constructions of female sexuality and the communities of readers her texts created” (32). Ingrassia points out one notorious example of male anxiety in Alexander Pope’s *The Dunciad*, written six years after *The Injur’d Husband*, in which Pope depicts Haywood as, to use Janet Todd’s words, “a kept mistress with a bevy of bastards (real or literary), a prize in a urinating contest between men” (147). Pope writes,

See in the circle next Eliza placed,  
Two babes of love close clinging to her waist;  
Fair as before her works she stands confess’d,  
In flowers and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dress’d.  
The Goddess then: ‘Who best can send on high

The salient spout, far-streaming to the sky,  
 His be yon Juno of majestic size,  
 With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes. (lines 157–64)

The anxiety created by the revelation of the Baroness's writing parallels the anxiety, as revealed through Pope's satirical poem, Haywood's prolific writing career in the male-dominated literary marketplace. One can see that even though the Baroness does seem to fit Haywood's label of "the worst of women," she, as a more demonic or evil trickster, retains a great deal of utility in Haywood's underlying articulations about the culture in which she lived and wrote and perhaps even her place in it.

## Conclusion

Haywood's two tricksters in these works suggest that she was not only actively borrowing from other authors, like Behn, but she was also mining and refitting themes and characters from her own earlier works during the later part of her writing career, establishing a continuity between her earlier and later periods in her career. Between the lost letters in *The Injur'd Husband* and those in *Anti-Pamela*, Haywood's tricksters reflect in sometimes perverse and often humorous ways the dual ideas of privacy and public knowledge that are connected to the same set of cultural trends that Gildon's *The Postboy Robb'd* was reflecting and capitalizing on, namely the relationship between privacy and voyeurism. The prospect of learning the most private thoughts and identities of the author was certainly perceived as alluring—even titillating. At the same time, even though her tricksters have their plans exposed and ruined because their correspondence is misplaced and read by unintended audiences, their letters function as material representations of the tricksters' (Ann, Syrena, the Baroness) lives and a kind of



epistolary “speculum mentis,” to borrow Radin’s phrase, that reflects the follies of these voyeuristic viewers. They ultimately make known to what extent these men/readers have acted like rakes and been made into fools. Perhaps most importantly, the ways in which Haywood’s tricksters create and perform multiple identities and engender masculine anxiety give us a glimpse into Haywood’s perceptions of her own role in the writing marketplace.

## Chapter 7

## Trickster Mothers in Eighteenth-Century British Fiction

While much of the preceding discussion has followed the exploits and significance of the activities of female tricksters in the early development of the English novel in terms of their characteristics and functions, there is one sub-category of female trickster that is especially interesting: trickster mothers. One aspect of motherly identity appears in conduct books and manuals that formed the basis of a middle-class woman's education at the time, but the novels of Behn, Defoe, Haywood, and Samuel Richardson sought to affirm and complicate that role in different ways. In this chapter, I argue that these trickster mothers in the early English novel existed not as foils to the ideal femininity proposed in conduct literature, but as shadow-like doubles who put into practice the "authorized" principles of motherhood in their own way.

In certain texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many people objectified motherhood; others, including Swift and Pope, ridiculed and degraded it. Marilyn Francus writes that certain images of motherhood codify cultural misogynistic perspectives concerning patriarchal and matriarchal power during that time period: "The representations of Errour in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Sin in *Paradise Lost*, Criticism in Swift's *Battle of the Books*, and Dulness in Pope's *Dunciad* exemplify the authority that women derive from their reproductive capacity, the patriarchal fear of that female power, and the responding strategy of demonization, which looks to justify female containment as a social and moral imperative" (Francus 830). While Francus focuses on the monstrous depiction of the mother as a projection of patristic anxiety, not all representations of mothers carried the same associations. In fact, depictions of mothers in the English novel

during the eighteenth century, as April London points out, were fairly flexible, ranging from Moll and Roxana, who possess “maternal feelings” that “are depicted as merely situational, a form of emotional interest at best enjoyed in middle age and only after their finances have been secured” to those found in “many 1790s novels, including those of Mary Hays, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Elizabeth Inchbald, [which] foreground a strong emotional bond between mother and child, representing it as both innate and mutually authenticating” (7). Given this flexibility, one can see that mothers certainly mattered in society, and the novel reflected their importance.

In *The Social Contract* (1762), Rousseau refers to the family unit as “the earliest and only natural societies” (1) and “the first model of political societies” (2). Rousseau viewed the family as a fundamental element of social life and an analogue to the operations of an organized society. Rousseau considered the father to be the “chief” of the family, and his children to be the “people,” which might leave the reader wondering where, according to Rousseau, the mother fits in 1) in the family and 2) in society generally. Rousseau is not the only one to make claims about the intertwining of family with social operations or systems in the public sphere. According to Ian Watt, eighteenth-century English society witnessed “the development of a new kind of family system which has become the standard one in most modern societies” due to the occurrence of “economic individualism” (138). In addition, Watt admits, “How thoroughly and how extensively the conjugal family system was established in early eighteenth-century England is difficult to say” (140), but “on the whole...the picture of the family in the early eighteenth century is still one of slow and confused transition” out of a seventeenth-century patriarchal model and into a conjugal model born out of the absorption of

economic individualism (141). Nancy Armstrong's arguments, acting in alignment with those of Ruth Kelso and Suzanne Hull, regarding the transformation of social categories of womanhood and the "different ideas about what made a woman marriageable" from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth would certainly seem to back up Watt's claim. Conduct literature essentially supplied "authorized" models and molds by which the production of a certain kind of mother, a figure brimming with charity, discipline, and domestic skills, could take place, a foil to the trickster mothers of the novel.

### **Views of Maternal Obligation in Conduct Literature**

Conduct literature as branch of literature in which moral and domestic knowledge was transmitted was certainly not a new concept in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At a basic level, the manuals and sermons of the time were a continuation of social endeavors put in place to produce a certain kind of woman. One could even argue that conduct literature began as a folk practice in oral tale-telling, a cultural practice performed by women in the workroom. Maria Tatar reflects, "In the frontispiece to Perrault's *Histoires* and to numerous other collections, the presence of the spindle reminds us that one of the favored sites for telling folktales was the workroom" (112). As one might suspect, domestic labor is a prominent theme in folk and fairy tales. Stories such as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves," "Cinderella," "Thousand-furs," and "The Kind and Unkind Girls" all showcase women who prove their worth and find happiness and fulfillment through their ability to manage household tasks effectively and thoroughly. Perrault, though, in addition to telling the story of a young girl doing her "duty" in visiting and caring for the sick and her mother (albeit briefly) who puts her up

to it, overtly assigned morals to his *contes*, such as the following one that he put at the end of Little Red Riding Hood as a warning to his young female readers:

Moral: Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. I say "wolf," but there are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all. ("Little Red Riding Hood")

One of the potential reasons that domestic ability is treated positively in folk and fairy tales may derive from the need to construct a feminine ideal that young women could aspire to and eventually embody. While story-telling has many functions, one of which is to *entertain* an audience, another one of its functions is to *educate* the audience about the norms and values of the society. The role of women was certainly a point of emphasis in many European tales, and continued to be emphasized in conduct literature.

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, Nancy Armstrong compares the tradition of conduct books to a "grammar," and for good reasons: these prescriptive manuals dictate the rules involved in creating the signs of ideal womanhood, and the rules do not change much—if at all—from book to book. Armstrong makes the resounding claim, "Under the sheer force of repetition, however, one does see a figure emerge from the categories that organize these manuals," what Armstrong refers to as "a figure of female subjectivity" (60). While Armstrong's primary focus deals with the prescribed demands that conduct books made on women, the motives

driving such manuals involves the creation of a female subject who not only knows how to manage a domestic sphere that includes servants and household tasks, but who is also a mother. This implies a definition based on the mother's relationship to the things it creates and nurtures: "The household simultaneously recentered the scattered community at myriad points to form the nuclear family, a social organization with a mother rather than a father as its center" (Armstrong 95). Because the volume of conduct books in the eighteenth century is so staggering, far beyond the scope of this project to amass, present, and analyze here, I will focus my efforts on just a few examples of motherhood, including the anonymous *The Whole Duty of a Woman* (third edition, 1701) and *The Accomplish'd Housewife* (1745), as well as Daniel Defoe's *The Family Instructor* (1715) and William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728). I have selected these works because of their popularity during the time period, and because they provide a glimpse of the way in which conduct literature represented the role of motherhood.

William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* argued that there are boundaries and spaces for both sexes, and the lines between them should not be crossed. Law lavishly praises the role of women in the education of children, and he also clearly delineates between the public and the private sphere, the economic and the domestic, the male domain and the female:

The right education of this sex is of the utmost importance to human life. There is nothing that is more desirable for the common good of all the world. For though women do not carry on the trade and business of the world, yet as they are mothers, and mistresses of families, that have for some time the care of the education of their children of both sorts, they are

entrusted with that which is of the greatest consequence to human life. For this reason, good or bad women are likely to do as much good or harm in the world, as good or bad men in the greatest business of life. (138)

Conduct literature existed as a way of producing women who could perform the duties of the domestic sphere, and manuals such as *The Whole Duty of a Woman* and *The Accomplish'd Housewife* typify conduct literature during the eighteenth century. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar refer to such works when they write, "From the eighteenth century on, conduct books for ladies had proliferated, enjoining young girls to submissiveness, modesty, self-lessness; reminding all women that they should be angelic" (23). These texts are intended to nurture, instruct and train the body, mind, and spirit. Law draws on this dualism when he describes the role of the mother:

For, as the health and strength, or weakness of our bodies, is very much owing to their methods of treating us when we were young; so the soundness or folly of our minds are not less owing to those first tempers and ways of thinking, which we eagerly receive from the love, tenderness, authority, and constant conversation of our mothers. (138)

For women to become efficient at mothering, they must cultivate characteristics that include, according to *The Whole Duty of a Woman*, "the Moral Vertues of Piety, Meekness, Modesty, Chastity, Humility; Compassion, Temperance, and Affability" and understand their benefits (1). Women also needed, according to the same work, to learn to avoid "the opposite Vices, as Impiety, Obstinacy, Immodesty, Uncleaness, Pride, Uncharitableness, Intemperance, and Disdain" and the negative consequences that accompany such vices (1). *The Accomplish'd Housewife* speaks of the advantages of

mental refinement through mathematics, art, music, reading, and of course writing, which, according to *The Accomplish'd Housewife*, “is the Gate or Entrance to every Branch of polite Literature” and is the means by which “Religion and Morality, Arts and Sciences, are propagated among Mankind and transmitted to Posterity” (26). These aforementioned virtues and skills would form the basis for a woman’s ability to function as an educator capable of caring for the *minds* and *souls* of her children.

The mother’s ability to care for her family *physically* forms the other primary goal of conduct literature, so the books served as reference guides for vital domestic knowledge, such as making and administering medical remedies, as well as ‘the Whole Art of Cookery, Preserving, Candying, &c” (*The Whole Duty of a Woman*, title page). *The Accomplish'd Housewife*, a patchwork volume in terms of the genres, includes tales, anecdotes, and poetry that it incorporates into its primarily sermonic delivery. The following poem, “Solomon’s Good Wife,” found in that book, emphasizes the value of domestic know-how:

...

With Flax or Wool before her spread

She draws herself on twisted Thread:

Her Hands are hardened at the Wheel,

The Distaff, and the loaded Reel.

...

Confirm’d in her industrious Way

Her Candle lengthens out the Day.

...



Before the Sun she leaves her Bed,  
 And thus prepares her Houshold-Bread:  
 Friends, Husbands, Children, Servants share  
 The Product of her early Care.  
 ...  
 Like a well-order'd State is seen  
 Her little Houshold, she the Queen:  
 In decent Pomp with Reverence drest,  
 Her Children rise, and call her blest.  
 ... (20)

What unfolds here in full display is the industrious “angel in the house” ideal that Gilbert and Gubar would later react against in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (20). The mother was responsible for the instruction of her children in piety and goodness, and in the case of her daughters, producing future mothers, capable of carrying on and overseeing the process of maternal production.

In *The Family Instructor*, Defoe intersperses dialogues between family members with his own commentary and in the process provides instructive depictions of a mother fulfilling—or not fulfilling—what he sees as her maternal obligations. The main function of these dialogues is to demonstrate the negative effects that occur when parents forget their duty of giving their children religious instruction. Defoe writes,

For Parents to pretend Love to their Children, and Natural Affection,...and  
 at the same time neglect to Instruct them, either in humane Learning, or  
 religious Knowledge, is just as if, when their Children are taken sick, they

should employ themselves in mending or making them Cloaths, or dressing up fine Banquets or Entertainments for them, and wholly omit the necessary Cordials or Applications for the recovery of their Health. (63)

In the Second and Fifth Dialogues of *The Family Instructor*, Defoe focuses on the interactions between the mother and her children, the point being to set up an ideal standard of motherhood (and parenthood more generally) by acknowledging that many mothers do have flaws and at times do not carry out their role as educator as they are expected to, which is the reason why the child in the Second Dialogue has not yet learned how to pray and the daughter in the Fifth Dialogue wants to attend the play-house with her friend on the Sabbath.

While Defoe constructs an ideal for women to reach for, his dialogues reveal interesting complexities in his depiction of motherhood. In the Second Dialogue, the child speaks to the mother about his experience at church and the confusion he feels about the preaching of doctrines regarding God and Jesus Christ. Weeping openly, he says, “[The minister] said that God was dead” (48), and at first his mother tries to tell him about the Resurrection, but then she says, “You will read it in your Bible, my Dear” (49). This gesturing toward the authority of the Bible and the written word is certainly part of her maternal role, but it becomes clear the usual authoritative sources of knowledge do not actually help the child because he/she is simply not equipped to comprehend the teachings of the Bible, the minister, and the father. Consequently, when the mother’s gesture to the authoritative Word does not help, she must do the teaching herself. Defoe implies that it is not the *written* words of the Bible that allay the child’s anxieties about religion, but the *oral transmission* of religious instruction from mother to child.

Ultimately, the mother becomes responsible for translating the messages of piety into an idiom the child can understand and process.

During the dialogue, Defoe describes the mother's manner toward the child as being "cold and indifferent," but after sensing the depth of the child's sincerity, "she felt herself TOUCH'D, and was confounded with the Child's Discourse, and taking the Child in her Arms, she kiss'd it, and wept, but could not speak to it a great while" (51). The mother begins by acting cold and hard, but then warms and softens toward the child. It is an interesting contrast to the situation in the Fifth Dialogue when the mother confronts the daughter about her Sabbath-breaking because the mother begins with softness ("I would not have you go this night, my Dear" [113]). Then, when the daughter becomes resistant and belligerent to the mother's pleas, the mother assumes a harder, more authoritative persona: "But I tell you, Mistress, since you will be put off in no other way, you shall not go" (115). Finally, when her daughter has completely disrespected her by humming "the time of a new Play-house song" and laughing at her, the mother "strikes her a Box on the ear" and "takes away all her Books, Plays, Songs, &c., leaving only her Bible, Prayer-books, and two or three good Books in their room," after which she throws the books she has taken, which she calls "the curs'd Roots from whence this blessed Fruit grows up," into the fire (116). Defoe implies that a mother should be variable, sometimes being a soft, comforting, and nurturing influence, and sometimes a passionate figure who must steel herself, even relying on physical force for the child's benefit, rather than always being one or the other. Defoe's description of the girl's reaction to her mother's austerity reads, "She first apparently laughs at her Mother, and turning away from her, sings on" (115). Both characters have their issues: the mother has neglected her duty

toward her children and their education, and her daughter's ill manners function as a critique of her negligence. At the same time, the mother feels remorse and rightly attempts to make amends for her negligence and laxity by reaching out in sincerity and penitence to her children to help them find what she was remiss to teach them. The daughter, on the other hand, feels no remorse for breaking the Sabbath and wants nothing to do with her mother's re-discovered religious ideals, as such godly behavior would interfere with her favorite pastime of attending the play with her friends. The role of the mother, according to Defoe, is 1) to instruct in piety and good behavior, and if that fails 2) to find a way to eliminate rebellious characteristics in her children.

Despite the limitations in his perspective regarding the reasons for female education (Defoe believed that women should be educated to be better companions but did not think they should be allowed to hold office, a point of debate Mary Wollstonecraft takes issue with in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*), Defoe's views on motherhood extend the arguments of Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal to the Ladies* written toward the end of the previous century. Astell's purpose in writing her well-known *Serious Proposal* is to answer the misogynist claims that "Women are naturally incapable of acting Prudently, or that they are necessarily determined to folly" (16). To such, she responds,

Neither God nor Nature have excluded them from being Ornaments to their Families and useful in their Generation....The Cause therefore of the defects we labour under is, if not wholly, yet at least in the first place, to be ascribed to the mistakes of our Education, which like an Error in the first Concoction, spreads its ill Influence through all our Lives. (17)

Astell's call for the reformation of female education were echoed by Defoe in his essay "On Projects" (1719) and again in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* at the end of the eighteenth century, approximately one hundred years after Astell published the first part of *Serious Proposal*. Astell's remarks are valuable to this project because she expressed dissent regarding popular misogynistic tendencies, trends, and mentalities and provides an interesting depiction of motherhood that allows her to critique the roles of fathers in the home and the widespread rhetoric regarding female nature. While Astell addresses the obligations of "parents" in regard to the education of their daughters, she specifically singles out mothers a number of times, which, put together, give us an idea of her ideal of motherhood.

It is important to say that Astell takes issue with social perspectives on women, but she still believes in the role of the mother as the primary source of education for her children. Shortly after Astell brings up the necessity of educating daughters properly, she remarks, "if Mothers had a due regard to their Posterity, how Great soever they are, they would not think themselves too Good to perform what Nature requires, nor through Pride and Delicacy remit the poor little one to the care of a Foster Parent," suggesting that a mother should follow her natural instincts in making sure a child has all of its needs met, and that "Nature" requires that beings capable of reproduction also have the responsibility to care completely for those they create (20). Further, mothers must do this in *propria persona*, almost without exception—and where there are exceptions extreme caution must be taken—not relegating their own obligations to someone else. Part of this insistence that mothers be the primary educators—or "managers"—of their children's educational endeavors probably stems from Locke's philosophy with its monumental

distrust of nursemaids and their tales, but also from the idea that a mother should act as a filter for the things children learn by being constantly *present*. Astell contrasts this presence of the mother with the absence of the father when she says,

Now this, at least the foundation of it, on which in a great measure the success of all depends, shou'd be laid by the Mother, for Fathers find Other Business, they will not be confin'd to such a laborious work, they have not such opportunities of observing a Child's Temper, nor are the greatest part of 'em like to do much good, since Precepts contradicted by Example seldom prove effectual. (209)

Astell suggests that the woman is already acting alone in educating her children because their husbands cannot be bothered to teach children, being either too busy away from the domestic sphere or too badly behaved to promote and reinforce proper behavior. In Astell's opinion, fathers, who are occupied with business or leisure and cannot be bothered or "confined" (another charged term) can be equated with *absence*, while Astell's construct of motherhood consists of equating the mother with *presence* because the ideal mother is the one who is always there for her children. Indeed, if the children are to be successfully raised, it will be the mother who makes them so.

### **Maternal Tricksters in the Early Novel**

While Defoe's approach to representing motherhood in *The Family Instructor* is probably more atypical as far as conduct literature goes in that mothers are more flawed and humanized than one might expect, the novel goes even farther in presenting mothers and mother figures in different lights. Of course, the primary goal of novels (entertainment) differed greatly from that of conduct literature (education), but novels

provided another set of voices in the conversation about what makes a mother *motherly*. Figures such as Lady Beldam in Behn's *The Unfortunate Happy Lady* and Mother Sinclair in Richardson's *Clarissa* are referred to in those works as "mother," but their attitudes toward virtue and kindness have been replaced by avarice and greed to the extent that they lack any modicum of "motherly" feeling or behavior. Both manage brothels, and virtue to them is something to be sacrificed (not preserved) in the name of commodity and exchange. But not all women in the novel who leave the domestic sphere also leave behind such feelings. The focus in this section centers primarily on Mother Midnight in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (Moll's surrogate mother), and Syrena Tricky's biological mother, Ann, in Haywood's *Anti-Pamela*, both of whom display elements of cunning and "tricksterism," but also retain the need to care for and educate their "children."

Mother Midnight (who is also referred to as "that old Beldam" and who according to Robert Erickson is "Moll's spiritual mother" [81]) and Ann Tricky are alike in that they are primarily governed by economic acquisition. Mother Midnight first enters Moll's life during one of Moll's pregnancies and afterward becomes an associate and "governess" in her criminal activities by buying her stolen wares and providing her with resources and skills that help her survive despite Moll's circumstances. Elizabeth Napier describes their relationship as "briskly businesslike" and argues that "there is a sinister and sterile quality in the 'mother-daughter' pair" (97). While their relationship certainly begins as a business transaction, I argue that Mother Midnight and Moll's relationship is more complex than mere business. The extent to which Mother Midnight goes to assist Moll after Moll is imprisoned suggests that while the concept of economics is still a key

cog in her thinking, she is not completely ruled by it. If she were, would she offer such generous bribes to the witnesses or continue to help Moll even though Moll is about to be transported? The amount being invested in contrast to the potential dividend makes it hard to fathom that her actions are based solely on economic gain, but rather that she has developed a real—not “sinister” or “sterile”—connection to Moll.

As Moll’s surrogate “mother,” Mother Midnight adopts the role of teacher early on, which is why Moll refers to her as a “governess.” For example, when Moll tells Mother Midnight that she has nothing “to live on, and knew not which course to take,” “She laughed, and told me I must go out again and try my fortune; it might be that I might meet with another piece of plate. ‘Oh mother!’ says I, ‘that is a trade that I have no skill in’ ....Says she, ‘I could help you to a schoolmistress that shall make you as dexterous as herself’” (184). Like the mother in *The Family Instructor* who points to the Bible when her child has a question, Mother Midnight attempts to point Moll toward resources that will help her become self-sufficient (economically, not spiritually, of course). Regarding Mother Midnight, Terry Castle has written, “In *Moll Flanders*,...we recall Moll’s ‘old Governess,’ who guides and assists the heroine during her criminal days. This woman, like Roxana’s Amy, helps the heroine in her dealings with society, and functions as a prudent advisor and accomplice. She likewise arranges Moll’s final removal to America. Standing behind Moll’s ‘old Governess,’ surely, is the conventional literary figure of the *eiron*—the tricky servant or vice” (*The Female Thermometer*, 46). Unlike the Beldams and the Sinclairs of the world who think only of economic advancement, Mother Midnight continues to assist Moll when she has need. She falls far below the conduct-book ideal in the criminal aspects of her life. In matters of feeling,



though, she is more than a “governess” to Moll, although that is what Moll prefers to call her; the fact that she, upon hearing of Moll’s incarceration “spent the night almost as ill out of Newgate, as [Moll] did in it” (251), offered significant bribes to the witnesses to move them to recant their testimonies against Moll, and did everything she could to delay the legal proceedings (the latter two in keeping with both her motherly affection for Moll and her criminal/trickster persona), all signify her undying connection to her “daughter.”

Ann Tricky teaches her Syrena a great number of useful tips that will help her survive and thrive in the marriage market, including how to use her looks and manner to gain a wealthy match. For example, when Syrena tells her mother of a developing affinity for an officer, her mother shares a bit of wisdom, waxing philosophical and even proverbial in explaining the nuances of love:

I doubt not, but he likes you, but my Girl there is a wide Difference  
between Love and Likeing; the chief aim of the one is to make the beloved  
Object happy: That of the other, only to gratify itself....I am afraid he is  
not worth taking much pains about – if he be only an Officer, as I guess by  
his Cockade, 'tis not in his Power to make you any Settlement as a  
Mistress – and as a Wife; when Children come, what is a Commission! –  
Or what a Pension to the Widow, left perhaps in an advanced Age, when  
'tis out of one's power to mend one's Fortune any way. – No, Child! 'Tis  
your Business to make Hay while the Sun shines – for when Youth and  
Beauty are no more – Farewel Hope....Be sure you write me a full  
Account of what passes between you, on Thursday Morning; and if you

come on Sunday, shall then give you Instructions suitable to the Occasion.

(66)

Once again, we find the ideal mother being mimicked and subverted in the way Ann instructs her daughter, and this method of instruction continues throughout the novel. Ann certainly stands to gain by her daughter's successes (as Mother Midnight gains by Moll's industry), so even when Syrena fails in her efforts to acquire or retain a wealthy man, Ann remains there to help her find another one. She does not abandon her; she helps her regroup and keep moving. But there is more to it than that; Ann genuinely seems to care for her daughter. Ann is rigid in her methods, like the proverbial taskmaster, to the point that Syrena chaffs against her mother's bit. Ann explains, "I am far from being an enemy to your Pleasures; but would have you be a true Friend to your Interest; and that you may be so, is the sole Aim of, Your Indulgent Mother, Ann Tricksy" (183). In other words, while Ann no doubt has ulterior motives for her daughter's success that she leaves unstated, she is insistent that her daughter become "self-sufficient" in the sense that she will value her own welfare enough to be careful about how she conducts herself.

Although Ann has twisted the rhetoric and distorted the socially acceptable process by which young girls enter into suitable financial situations, in some form, Ann (perhaps not as visibly as Moll's "Mother Midnight") remains affectionate (even "indulgent") toward her daughter and true to her role as a teacher and a guide in her daughter's life, a subversion of the conduct-book ideal of motherhood.

## **Conclusion**

While one can safely say that an ideal for mothers existed in the eighteenth-century, as demonstrated by the examples of conduct books discussed in this chapter,

novels provided a space in which less-than-ideal mothers could act out alternative examples of motherly behavior. The trickster mothers discussed here demonstrate that, despite leaving the domestic sphere to survive in an economic environment outside the home, some sense of maternal feeling and the need to educate their daughters and help them survive persist. Mother Midnight and Ann Tricksy may not be the constructed ideal or conform to all the required virtues of the construct, but if we view these women through the lens of tricksterism we see them acting according to traditional narrative patterns. Tricksters are known for positing alternatives to social norms and exploring them. Mother Midnight and Ann present a repurposed embodiment of the more-or-less official views on motherhood to show that women can be “motherly” without completely buying in to the ideal or surrendering to social conventions.

## Chapter 8

### The Art of Imitation: Memetics, Genre, and the Teaching of Eighteenth-Century British Literature

“The difference between a bad Artist & a Good One Is the Bad Artist Seems to  
Copy a Great Deal: the Good one Really Does Copy a Great Deal.”  
~ William Blake

This chapter outlines an approach to teaching eighteenth-century literature that employs imitation as a governing concept. The goal is not to produce student writers who can write eighteenth-century style prose. Rather, I want to present a more hands-on “learning-by-doing” to help students think about the kinds of genres that were being produced during that time period; the conventions that govern those genres; the kinds of events or social actions that drove those genres and made them popular; and the manner in which those genres have changed since the eighteenth century. I feel that students would be drawn to the class because the creative aspect of the course gives students opportunities to try new kinds of writing and experience texts as consumers and producers. To reproduce a work, they must first understand its components and the circumstances that make such a genre valuable. At the end of the course, students should be able to produce work across different genres (although there is some flexibility in which genre they attempt to work with), including formal poetry, biography, journals, periodicals, satires, essays, novellas, and even literary criticism. I want students to be able to combine their voices with the elements of the texts we study to create new and interesting compositions that stem from an understanding of the texts and form an avenue for personal expression.

One might say that the concept of imitation, stemming from the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, forms the basis of Western literary theory and aesthetics. Mary Klages writes that Plato conceived of art as being “representational” of material objects that were themselves representations of an ideal (13), while Aristotle viewed art as a revised version of nature: “Aristotle’s artist is not just an imitator, then, but also a creator” (16). These ideas of imitation or *mimesis* influenced discussions of aesthetics and art among eighteenth-century artists and thinkers. According to Matthew Potolsky, “Without a knowledge of mimesis, one simply cannot understand Western theories of artistic representation – or even realize they are theories rather than facts of nature” (2). The way cultural ideas are transmitted or dispersed through self-replication/imitation, while also evolving in the process, fits into the wider scope of this project and connects with the mythic narrative patterns of the trickster figure cross-culturally. One of the overarching principles of the archetypal trickster figure is its propensity for subversive imitation or the ability to behave in ways that reaffirm and reflect, but frequently undermine and distort, accepted social standards and practices. As mentioned previously, the trickster itself is a meme or a unit of cultural representation that passes from person to person and culture to culture via story-telling processes, maintaining along the way fundamental characteristics (although particular story-tellers and cultural groups decide what “fundamental characteristic” are) while at the same time altering itself in many ways, too. By analyzing the similarities and dissimilarities between representations of the trickster figure across cultures but also within a culture, folklorists and literature scholars can better understand cultural messages about social values and tenets.

This chapter combines *mimesis* as an eighteenth-century poetic practice among the Augustan poets and the theory of memes and memetics as cultural transmission, as defined by Richard Dawkins and others, into a theoretical pedagogical framework. This framework justifies using a genre-based approach for teaching eighteenth-century literature that uses imitation as its core principle. Using this approach, teachers can create writing assignments that encourage students to employ imitative modeling in their own compositions. This approach to reading and writing would work well not only for upper-division English literature majors, but also creative writing, professional writing, and technical writing majors as well as professional or technical writing. As Shirley Strum Kenny writes, “In teaching any course, a professor has to ask how it, a single piece, fits into the mosaic of a student’s education” (11), and even though learning to read, interpret, and appreciate literature is a worthy goal in itself, even for those students who are not majoring in literary studies, I am arguing that teachers can create assignments and teach courses that “fit the mosaic” more effectively. Through such assignments, students will 1) analyze the rhetorical conventions of a genre and the needs of its audiences; 2) apply their analysis, much in the same way these same students will be asked to do in professional situations; and 3) be creative in their applications to create compositions that imitate but also remake or “re-create” the original.

### **Imitation and Memetics in Eighteenth-Century Literary Production**

Imitation is a natural process by which learning and the development of critical thought occurs. Susan Blackmore writes, “Imitation comes naturally to us humans....We copy each other all the time. Like seeing, it comes so effortlessly that we hardly think about it” (3). In her mind, the ability to imitate, as Dawkins puts it in his introduction to

Blackmore's book *The Meme Machine*, could be the "key to what set our ancestors apart from all the other animals" (vii). For the Augustan poets, imitation or mimesis was a basic concept in artistic production, responding to classical texts by imitating them. Imitation of nature was also a key concept in the production of quality art. Further, in *Rambler* No. 4, Samuel Johnson writes, "It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation" (2925). Pope expresses a similar notion regarding artistic production in *The Guardian* No. 173, when he states, "I believe it is no wrong observation, that persons of genius, and those who are most capable of art, are always most fond of nature: as such are chiefly sensible that all art consists in the imitation and study of nature" (255). At the same time, both Pope and Johnson understood that making an *exact* copy of nature was not feasible, and that reproductions or imitations were still shaped by rhetorical choices about what deserved preservation and what could be omitted. Johnson writes, "Greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discolored by passion or deformed by wickedness" and "many characters ought never to be drawn" (2925). Pope writes, in his "An Essay on Criticism," "True Wit is Nature *to advantage dressed*, / What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed" (lines 297-8), implying that the essence of art might exist in nature, but it also undergoes an elevation or "decoration" to make it look its best. The imitative perspective on the representation of reality contributes to what Ian Watt described as the novel's development as a genre as being primarily defined by its penchant for "formal realism" or a "full and authentic report of human experience" (32). For example, Richardson attempts, in *Clarissa*, to imitate the "dramatic immediacy" of oral speech (Keymer xvi),

but Richardson also disrupts that illusion as simply a rhetorical device when Clarissa, who also writes in the present tense, points out, as Tom Keymer demonstrates, that people who write letters benefit ““from sitting down to write them,” a benefit that “prompt speech could not always have”” (qtd. in Keymer 51). Ultimately, this urge to depict lives and events “as they really are” is key to understanding a larger mindset and aesthetic philosophy during that time period, as long as we also realize that writers and thinkers in the eighteenth century understood the limitations and potential for creative transformations inherent in actual memetic processes.

Further, for the Augustan poets, such as Pope, John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, and John Gay, a governing tenet of their poetry was not just the imitation of reality or nature the way the novel (as well as the Puritan diary) did, but also the imitation of classical poets, forms, and motifs, especially the satirical or mock-heroic mode employed by Pope and Dryden in such works as *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), *The Dunciad* (1728), and *MacFlecknoe* (1682). Imitation, in these poems, becomes the basis for creating new expressions through the re-tooling of older forms. Augustan poets incorporated and repurposed things they valued in a way they considered to be “new and adventurous” (Doody, *The Daring Muse*, 10), while thinking of themselves “as dashing and experimental” (Doody, *The Daring Muse*, 11). Frequently, this reliance or turning to older forms to create new expression occurred not only through a collection of formal allusions or motifs, but also in direct imitation of individual works, both classical, recent, and even contemporary, such as Johnson’s “London: A Poem in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal”; Swift’s “On Dreams: An Imitation of Petronius”; Pope’s “An Imitation of Chaucer,” written in Chaucer’s own Middle English: “Women ben full of



Ragerie, / Yet swinken nat sans secresie” (lines 1-2). Margaret Ann Doody sums up this tendency to imitate as the result of “that impulse for expansion. Expansiveness is a fact of this literature, both in form and in style. The expansiveness is related to the desire to mix things, to exclude nothing, to combine what was hitherto separate” (*The Daring Muse*, 17). Creativity, then, for the Augustan poets was not necessarily an *ex nihilo* process; instead they endued existing forms with additional meaning through imitative or memetic processes, conserving in some parts and innovating in others to create lively poetry that merged new and old in interesting ways. In contemporary scholarship, this process of manipulating existing genres or forms is spoken of as a positive avenue for exploring “knowledge production” (Tardy 19). As Christine M. Tardy writes, “If the goal of using genres is to develop ownership over them, including the ability to appropriate and manipulate them for one’s own purposes (Bhatia, 2004), innovation could play a valuable role in the learning process” (19). When writers work within the conventions of a genre, but then innovate with generic convention and think critically about their choices, those choices become a source of knowledge to them about the way they view their world.

Imitation was not just an aesthetic mindset for the Augustan literary tradition, but also for the oral traditions of England as well, in which mimesis played—as it still does—a fundamental role in the transmission of tales, ballads, and contemporary legends among its people. Eighteenth-century British culture was, despite opposition from certain adherents of “Puritanism,” temporally in close proximity to its oral tradition. J. Paul Hunter writes, “When Pope alludes, in *The Rape of the Lock*, to ‘all the Nurse and all the Priest have taught’ (I, 30), his tone is warm and a bit nostalgic about the parallel passing down of oral tradition through religion and folk channels” (*Before Novels*, 144).

Throughout various eighteenth-century literary texts, we find allusions to these folk channels and processes again and again. Regardless of its falling out of favors with the Puritan sector, the oral tradition, in which imitation plays such a key role in the conservation of culture and is part of the process by which cultural units or memes persist, left a significant impression in British literary culture. In Daniel Defoe's *Colonel Jack* (1722), the title character states that the "oral tradition," as facilitated by the stories told to him by his nurse, are the only reason he knows anything about his parentage (1). Defoe's 1722 *A Journal of a Plague Year* also provides a reference to the way in which the oral tradition operates, as he describes the transmission of word-of-mouth information in a church during plague time:

Once, on a public day, whether a Sabbath-day or not I do not remember, in Aldgate Church, in a pew full of people, on a sudden one fancied she smelt an ill smell. Immediately she fancies the plague was in the pew, whispers her notion or suspicion to the next, then rises and goes out of the pew. It immediately took with the next, and so to them all; and every one of them, and of the two or three adjoining pews, got up and went out of the church, nobody knowing what it was offended them, or from whom."

Defoe's depiction of the scene, which resembles a game of telephone, functions as a description of the way in which information is passed through cultural transmission. Each person observes and then repeats their informant's behavior (without investigating the accuracy of the information, of course): first, they pass the information to their neighbor, thereby keeping the chain of transmission replicating; second, having done their part, they are free to leave. Their neighbor repeats the words to the next person, who then

repeats the behavior, etc. The pattern continues until everyone in the pew, as well as in “the two or three adjoining pews, got up and went out of the church” (74).

In Jane Barker’s *Patchwork Screen for Ladies*, the narrator shares a coach with a group of people who, in light of a frightening experience, begin *telling* stories (third-person narratives or contemporary legends) to each other: “This Accident put them in Mind of many criminal Adventures and Robberies, which they related, one Story bringing on another, as is usual among Company” (A1). In this case, we see evidence of a memetic chain forming: an experience first reminds the passengers of experiences and narratives that have to do with a motif or meme (“criminal Adventures and Robberies”) connected to their own. These stories lead to other stories, “one Story bringing on another,” and these stories, all of which connect to each other via their shared components, are then transmitted to the author, who then passes them on to the reader: these stories, “some of which, perhaps, will not be disagreeable to the Reader; and therefore I shall insert them here” (A1). One also sees these stories “embellish’d” with proverbs in succession, each storyteller identifying the strategy of the previous teller and imitating it (A4). In *Clarissa*, the transmission of ghost stories manifests itself in connection with a haunted coppice near the Harlowe home, and Clarissa points to the existence of those tales and the powerful “impressions” created by those supernatural narratives that leads to their continued persistence. Clarissa ascribes their persistence to “country loneliness and ignorance; notions which, early propagated, are apt to leave impressions even upon minds grown strong enough, at the same time, to despise the like credulous follies in others” (352b). This reflection on the tale echoes Locke’s hostile attitude toward the stories told to him by his nurse, as opposed to Pope’s “nostalgia.”

Hunter writes that Locke, “according to a frequently retailed anecdote, . . . remained all of his life unable to ‘enter the Dark without Trembling and Horror’” because of powerful impressions passed on to him by his nursemaid’s “‘Prattle’” (*Before Novels*, 147). It is that “impression” that forms the foundation of the meme and ensures its survival through transmission and evolution. That being said, it seems evident that many eighteenth-century writers thought about aspects of cultural transmission or “memetic replication” in some form or another, whether in oral or written traditions.

Female trickster accounts (whether novels, novellas or ballads), also imply this kind of memetic process in operation in British fiction. Indeed, the re-use of the female trickster character in different ways suggests that it operates as a meme, parts of which are conserved, while also providing room for elaboration and innovation. For example, in the ballad *The Subtil Miss of London*, the female trickster’s cunning is emphasized, while in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796), Matilda’s wickedness takes center stage.

Haywood’s Baroness in *The Injur’d Husband* pays for her crimes, while the protagonist of Austen’s *The Beautifull Cassandra*, as well as Mal Cutpurse in *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, escape without consequence or remorse for their anti-social behavior.

Glicera’s companion, Laphelia, in Haywood’s *The City Jilt; or, the Alderman Turn’d Beau*, is adept in encouraging certain behaviors in the alderman by using her silver tongue, while Isabela in Behn’s *The History of the Nun; or, the Fair Vow-Breaker* (1688) is capable of and commits murder. Many of these tricksters are presented as comic figures, but only some, such as Syrena Tricksy in Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela* or the protagonist of Austen’s *The Beautifull Cassandra*, are blatantly satirical or parodic. Frequently, the female trickster is a main character, while at other times the female

trickster is ancillary. Often, she is alone, as Fantomina is, but in other cases, as with Amy and Laphelia, the female trickster works with a partner. Although Defoe emphasizes the “reality” of his characters, most accounts of trickster figures require the reader to work harder to suppress disbelief. Despite the connections between such characters, one can also see that the list of variations in their narrative makeup can be extensive.

The “female trickster” simply represents a single vein of readings in a semester-long discussion of the role of imitation and memetic processes in eighteenth-century literature. Through thoughtful comparison of these works students can see that the idea of imitation is vital to understanding some of the essential literature of the eighteenth century, while also allowing them to distance themselves from more modern perspectives and paradigms regarding artistic production and creativity.

### **Imitation in the Classroom**

In university-level English classrooms, the written product generated most frequently by students is the academic essay. This product has several functions:

- 1) It prepares literary studies majors for academic discourse in their field because many of those students who intend to be English professors in literature will also be engaging in literary conversation with their peers through the medium of refereed articles;
- 2) It allows the professor a mode of assessment so that she can gauge the level to which students are interacting and thinking critically about the text;
- 3) It is traditional/conventional.

While I will not argue that writing essays is pointless (the practice is in fact quite useful), I would argue that confining oneself to the essay or reading response/ “near-essay” as the primary product of literary courses ignores other more creative assignments with utility to other kinds of students—creative and professional/technical writing majors—who are not seeking careers in the field of literary studies. Widening one’s approach to encompass more creative writing assignments can inject a classroom with additional value and even engagement. Robert McMahon writes, “Among the many oddities in teaching English is this: We study literature but we write essays. Students read one kind of writing but write another....Now I am not suggesting that we abandon the teaching of exposition and argument, nor do I want works of literary criticism read in high schools. Rather, I want students to write more, to write in literary forms....Writing in literary forms fosters the zestful use of language; it leads students into pleasures of writing akin to the pleasures of reading” (McMahon 68). When Dan Mills teaches *Othello*, his students write *additional scenes* for the play that provide a constructed back story for characters; they are actively writing in the form of the play to develop their understanding of themes they have discovered in their reading of the play (155). Creative assignments can become that source of pleasure McMahon describes while still cultivating writing skills and providing teachers with—albeit different—means of student assessment, and imitative writing is one of many means of attaining those goals.

I want to use imitation as a framework to teach a course in eighteenth-century literature. Imitative writing, as a principle of reading and writing, can be and has been used in multiple ways in the classroom. The approach that I am taking encourages students to study the examples and conventions of genres present in the eighteenth

century, write imitations of works in those genres, and allow their natural creative processes to form variations on those works in their compositions. I expect changes, tweaks, transformations, etc., to occur as a natural consequence of attempts to imitate eighteenth-century writers because students will have a modern concept of the genres we discuss, especially the conventions and rules that apply to particular genres that they use all the time, as well as a particular manner of expression/voice and style of their own, as well as a body of personal experiences, all of which will influence their writing.

Frank M. Farmer and Philip K. Arrington define the practice of imitation as “the approximation, whether conscious or unconscious, of exemplary texts, whether textual, behavioral, or human, for the expressed goal of improved student writing” (13), “approximation” being the operative word. When we read and interpret the texts in a class, students must also come to understand the functions of these genres from an eighteenth-century standpoint. Their imitation should combine their modern understanding of a particular genre with the aspects of the genre as it was perceived in the eighteenth century (what are its patterns, conventions, purposes, the motivations driving its use?). Imitation is not a new pedagogical concept, although much of the secondary literature on imitation as a writing strategy is applied to the composition classroom. Paul Butler focuses specifically on imitation as a “stylistic resource” to help students “internalize the words of others” (81). I wish to transfer this kind of internalization to my eighteenth-century literature courses by studying the way certain writers use imitation in their own works. In a course, I might use satirical pieces such as Defoe’s *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* (1702), in which Defoe performs what Michael Seidel refers to as “impersonation,” imitating the voice of a “zealous bigot” (xiv). In Jonathan Swift’s

*Gulliver's Travels*, we find the narrator falling into different voices, using the cant of lawyers and sailors to ridicule not the professions themselves necessarily but rather the use of jargon in any profession: "Finding it likely to overblow, we took in our spritsail, and stood by to hand the foresail; but making foul weather, we looked the guns were all fast and handed the mizzen" (2532). It is an imitation of reality, as many sailors do talk this way, but this example of imitation is put to a different rhetorical purpose than "the full and authentic account" of everyday life employed in the so-called "realistic" novel.

"Good writers are also good readers" is a well-worn maxim among composition instructors, which is a common justification for requiring students in writing classes to read. Nick Everett writes about the relationship between reading and writing, specifically creative writing when he states, "Where possible learning about something should include trying it oneself. In English that means writing literature, not just about it" (233). He goes on to share O' Rourke's and Hunter's declaration that "'it is...of value for those engaged in reading as a critical practice to do so with the knowledge and empathy that comes from exploring the writing process as creators, as well as receivers, of texts" (qtd. in Everett 233). In other words, when students undertake to write the way someone else writes, they gain insights from an insider's perspective that might be otherwise unavailable to them if they interact with a text solely as a reader. Allowing students this insider's perspective can introduce them to new ideas about audiences, the malleability of a genre, and the rhetorical purposes that drive a text.

Some might argue, understandably, that such an approach hinders the creativity of a student because it forces them to write within the limitations and constraints of formal elements. Students used to writing poetry in free verse may be habituated to less



constraint, and trying to write heroic couplets or making use of some other rhyme and metrical scheme could prevent them from expressing themselves as they are used to and as they would wish. They might even perceive it as “other-expression” instead of “self-expression.” I in no way wish to hinder the self-expression of my students, and to me their pursuit and development of identity are central to educational endeavors. By imitating these texts, students are not trying to be someone they are not; they should not abandon the associated experiences that they bring into the classroom and that molded their sense of self in the first place because those experiences, those thoughts, are still valuable. As Louise Rosenblatt says, “The inescapable molding influence of the culture into which we are born is an extremely important concept” (15), and “what the student brings to literature is as important as the literary text itself” (82). As many other critics have stated, teachers need to leave behind the banking models and the empty vessel metaphors, and keep reminding themselves that the text-student relationship is bi-directionally enriching. Education is about adding to and reshaping modes of thought to become more discerning and critical.

At the same time, we should also understand that the formulation of student identity, especially the identity of student-as-writer, is an unfolding, incomplete process. As students learn, they constantly add to themselves. The writers they engage allow them to add to their existing sense of self. Robert Brooke writes, “Imitation as a learning/teaching strategy, thus, is more concerned with the *identity* of the writer than the form of the text” (23). That being said, imitation is essentially a kind of “trying-on” of other selves, often selves that merit emulation. Imitative compositions may accordingly serve as spaces of negotiation and transition where the self and the Other can merge and

the student understands a text and its author from within. Students study the words of eighteenth-century authors, and then try on the personas communicated through those words, absorbing their writerly choices and attempting to recreate their writing in a way that does not completely, to use David Chidester's phrase, "bridge any gap between original and copy" (139), but does serve to bridge the gap between the student writer and the authors they study. Butler also speaks of

forms of imitation in which students start with the words and syntax of the writer and then transform the passage by changing the subject matter or context. In doing so, it's possible to study closely the way a writer uses syntax, diction, punctuation, sentence structure, and variation in his or her prose while actively applying the model and making it one's own. (81).

Consequently, imitation results in a textual revision that reflects and even adds to the on-going revision of the self, which, according to Cristina Bruns, is a desirable outcome of literary study. She draws on the idea of the remaking qualities of literature when she refers to texts as "transitional objects" that "serve a vital role as tools of self-formation by providing access to a fuller self-awareness or self-experience that makes possible the reworking of our conception of self and other, our relation with the world. It is this role that literary texts are ideally suited to perform" (30).

## **Genre**

"Students should learn to read a range of texts," claims Robert Scholes, "from various times and places, in various genres and media, in 'high' and 'low' forms of textuality" (168). My approach as outlined in this chapter extends Scholes' statement to say, "Students should also learn to write a range of texts/genres." Using a genre-based

approach in which imitative writing is employed makes sense because it gives students a chance to work with a lot of different kinds of texts, which is especially helpful for both creative and professional writers, and also allows for comparing and contrasting the similarities and dissimilarities of the rhetorical conventions across a range of genres. For example, students can read and write letters in the style and manner of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and then compare her letters to the journal of Frances Burney or even the fictional letters found in Richardson's *Clarissa*. Montagu's letters were initially a private act between her and another individual, but does the way in which we read them (and re-write them) now in an anthology change their nature? How is it any different now than a journal entry? Further, Montagu describes events that happened to her, but does that mean that all letters should belong in a category as a kind of non-fiction? Do *Clarissa*'s letters have a different effect on the audience because they belong in the realm of fiction? These kinds of questions (based on just a few examples) ultimately should lead students to try to reconsider their own concepts of the genres they use and how they define the parameters of writing categories.

One of the chief discussions that we would have at the beginning of the course and throughout the semester would involve a definition of *genre*. Ayn Rand's objectivist position is that writers should not "look inside" or ask themselves "How do *I* do this?" but rather approach the writing task by asking, "What is the nature of the thing I want to do? What is the nature of an article?" (*The Art of Nonfiction*), which is something students could benefit from adopting as their approach to discussing particular texts and writing in those forms. There are multiple viewpoints on the subject. For example, Brock Dethier writes, "We use familiar genres like 'lab report' and 'personal essay' without

thinking about what rules and conventions govern the genre” (3). Do students consider genre to be a set of formal elements, or is the definition of a genre, as Carolyn Miller claims, more of a category of ““typified actions based in recurrent situations”” that are formulated by the people who use them every day (qtd. in Devitt 11)? Do we look more at what genre *is* (conventions or rules), or more at what it is supposed to *do* (rhetorical purposes or potential social effect)? Margot Singer and Nicole Walker take a middle road in this discussion of genre, by combining and revising the views Dethier and Miller articulate: “Genres, in sum, are not fixed categories with clear-cut boundaries, but constellations of rhetorical modes and formal structures grounded in vary degrees of fact. Genres are rooted in convention” (4). By exploring what a genre is, what it does, why it does that, who it is for, students will prepare themselves to discuss the “audience-related,” “purpose-related,” and “document-related factors” involved in the process of textual production, which are important to consider not just in honing critical thinking, but they provide a concrete way to help prepare technical and professional majors for their future careers (Markel 5).

While genre-based approaches can be applied to the study of nearly any period in which multiple genres of writing exist, I argue that eighteenth-century British literature works well for it because of the abundance of textual diversity coming in to being at the beginning of the period 1) because of the rise in readership that occurred during the previous century and 2) the advancements in printing technology during the early modern period that brought about a veritable abundance of printed materials, both literary and popular, because they could be produced more cheaply than before.

The eighteenth century contains a diverse range of genres and forms, including biography, autobiography, pseudo-autobiography, novels, novellas, object narratives, satires, periodicals, essays, journals, letters, broadside ballads, pamphlets, treatises, conduct manuals, and metrical poetry that would provide students with a rich textual experience as they discuss the nature of these genres and attempt to reproduce them on their own. Some teachers might wish to emphasize the *collaborative* aspects of writing can combine Stanley Fish's idea of "interpretive communities" (15) with Markel's point that collaboration is an essential component in the process of producing technical documents (7). In that case, these teacher can create group activities and assignments by having students produce a semester-long periodical a la Samuel Johnson's *Tatler* or Addison and Steele's *Spectator* in a print or an online forum (such as a Wordpress or a Wix website host). They might even assign pairs of students to a semester-long correspondence via letters or email and have the students turn in their correspondence at the end of the semester as an edited collection. As students work together, figuring out the topics, themes, and the generic nature of the texts they study and engaging with each other through writing tasks, their socialization can yield intangible benefits such as academic conversations, editing practice, and so on.

Students should still be reading literature for its themes, content, form, and historical and cultural significance. Students will read texts, articulate their reactions, and work through their "own honest and immediate reactions" in ways that go beyond the course themes because their input and emotional and intellectual responses will provide substance for discussion (Spacks 642). My goal for myself as a teacher is to eventually integrate those responses into discussions about formal and generic conventions so that

students understand 1) the kinds of the things people wrote about and 2) how they wrote about them, well enough to reproduce works in those genres. I firmly believe, as Tinkle et al. does, that students “should not be conceived of as relatively passive recipients of our knowledge but rather active participants in constructing their own knowledge. They should be active learners, engaged in creating new ideas, explaining ideas to each other, applying information in new contexts, and evaluating their learning” (506). I believe that the kinds of assignments I am proposing in this chapter can encourage students in those areas as they discuss in class and later write in the forms they study.

### **Challenges**

For fear of making it sound as though I have complete faith in this approach to teaching literature, I want to add that there are certain risks involved, challenges that will need to be overcome or at least kept in mind. The challenge that figures most prominently in my mind has to do with coverage and number of assignments. Because the eighteenth century is so generically diverse, teachers might feel the need to cover a lot of different textual categories. That is fine. Students need to be challenged and stretched to grow as thinkers, writers, and teachers, but not so challenged that they become lost and confused or simply fall behind because they cannot keep up with an impossible—for them—workload (see Vygotsky’s “Zone of Proximal Development”; Beach et al. 6). Students also need to have enough time to analyze the texts they want to work with, and placing more emphasis on coverage than on depth of understanding can create tremendous obstacles. As Elaine Showalter writes, “Instead of aiming for comprehensive coverage, we have to think about what students need to read to establish a basis for further learning” (13). By focusing on what students need to know, teachers can keep them from

becoming overwhelmed by the rigorous process of reading and writing that this kind of course and its assignments requires.

One way of overcoming this potential tendency is to give students choices about which assignments they want to do. Students need not have complete freedom because some would be, out of necessity or laziness, attracted to those assignments that seem simpler. A teacher might in that case provide groupings of assignments that require similar amounts of time and effort to complete, and allow students to choose between those. While all students will be required to complete the same readings, giving them choices about their assignments can increase their level of buy-in because they have some measure of control.

### **Imitation as a Pedagogical Framework: Anecdotes**

I have at different times in my college career, both as a student and a teacher, completed and assigned projects that forced me and my students to think imitatively, some examples of which I will present here. My first experience with this kind of assignment occurred in my junior year at Brigham Young University–Idaho in a British literature survey course. We had just finished reading Christopher Smart’s poem “Jubilate Agno, Fragment B, [For I Will Consider My Cat Jeoffry],” when the instructor offered extra credit to students who could write at least twenty lines in imitation of Smart’s poem. Intrigued by the challenge, I spent parts of the next four days writing “To the King of Rock and Roll, Elvis Presley,” in which I celebrated the music and sex appeal of one of my favorite musical artists in an academic environment in which such things were rarely discussed openly. I maintained many aspects of Smart’s original, but the content changed and the tone became more parodic than serious. I participated in a panel discussion with

that same instructor about seven years after, and to my surprise she still remembered the poem.

Even in my graduate studies, in a course on eighteenth-century literature, I was asked to write an imitation of some lines from any poem by Pope. The point of the assignment was to engage with Pope's poetry in a way that forced the students to create "metrically correct" poetry within a formal framework. I choose sixteen lines from "An Essay on Man" as my point of departure:

What would this man? Now upward will he soar,  
 And little less than angel, would be more;  
 Now looking downwards, just as griev'd appears  
 To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears.  
 Made for his use all creatures if he call,  
 Say what their use, had he the pow'rs of all?  
 Nature to these, without profusion, kind,  
 The proper organs, proper pow'rs assign'd;  
 Each seeming want compensated of course,  
 Here with degrees of swiftness, there of force;  
 All in exact proportion to the state;  
 Nothing to add, and nothing to abate.  
 Each beast, each insect, happy in its own:  
 Is Heav'n unkind to man, and man alone?  
 Shall he alone, whom rational we call,  
 Be pleas'd with nothing, if not bless'd with all? (2718)



For the assignment, I wrote a fairly imperfect imitation of those lines that I called “To My Cat George, Whom I Wish Would Treat Me Better,” the point being to not only write heroic couplets, but also to allude to a cultural trend of poets writing about cats, as demonstrated in Smart’s poem and Thomas Gray’s “Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes” (1748):

Why should I care if someone hears me cry,  
 Or slightly worse than that: might be I  
 Now looking downcast, just then broke my heart  
 To read that ode of Gray’s, the lines of Smart.  
 Thought of my George, that stinker, when he yowls,  
 Cries, "Where's my lunch? Have I a need for scowls?"  
 Glaring like that, without compassion, from  
 The spiteful monster, awful, seething tom.  
 His slimmest needs are satisfied, each day  
 Now, on demand, in seconds, there by tray;  
 Splotch of wet Purina on a plate;  
 Always on time; and never after eight.  
 My self, a peasant, humble, on my knee:  
 Is George a jerk to me, and only me?  
 Will he ever, whom “Master of all” I name,  
 Be changed with time, and not remain the same?

My poem was not the most inspiring or most correct work of all time, but it did help me understand a few things about heroic couplets that I had not seen before, including the difficulty of writing a good one, which gave me more respect for poets like Pope and Dryden, as well as some of the things couplets are good for, especially satire.

I also have used the same concept of imitation/memetics in my composition classes. In 2012, I began using an assignment using folktales in my English 1010 composition courses at Utah State University, a description of which appeared, in part, in an instructional note in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* in 2015. The assignment presented students with a range of written and audiovisual variants of the Red Riding Hood story, including versions from the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, Jim Garner, James Whitcomb Riley, Stephen Sondheim, Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs, Catherine Hardwicke, Disney, and independent film variants on YouTube. After discussing these variants in class, recognizing the different ways stories can be adapted or revised, groups of students constructed their own versions around a particular agenda or topic, shown visually through visual art and presented orally to the class. This assignment is a variation of one suggested by Richard Beach et al. in *Teaching Literature to Adolescents* (2004) in which he argues that rewriting texts can form a useful mode of critical interrogation (114). In later classes, particularly my English 2010 courses at USU, the assignment evolved into an individual writing assignment without visual depictions, but at the core it remained the same. In an English 1101 course at Idaho State University in 2014, I put the students into groups and gave each group a copy of a fairy tale: Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, Goldilocks and the Three Bears. I then asked them to re-write the story by changing the genre and/or the perspective of the story. For example,

how would the protagonist of Rumpelstiltskin tell her tale in a text message? An email? How would the story of Goldilocks look as a set of instructions with an attached list of required materials? How would Cinderella's step-mother write the story as a mommy blogger? By using these fairy tales, students could rely on their own knowledge of rhetorical conventions and rules that govern the categories of texts they were familiar with. One student liked reading "mommy" blogs, while another student felt most comfortable writing a set of instructions, so using these mental models they changed their texts into a different version or variants of the same narrative.

## **Conclusion**

Imitation forms the basis for the transmission of cultural knowledge. The female tricksters examined throughout this dissertation exemplify the significance of imitation, both in its behavior within narratives as well as a meme that is passed from person to person through oral and written storytelling. Imitation represents the unifying concept in the pedagogical framework of the course I have outlined in this chapter. By using imitation as a teaching tool, I hope to introduce students to new (to them) perspectives on creativity in the eighteenth century and in the folk tradition, as well as to the way memetic processes operate in their lives. By engaging with works written in a wide range of genres from the eighteenth century through imitation, students will learn by reproducing and revising rather than by reading and researching alone. Students will gain a better understanding of genre and the way genre operates as a malleable set of conventions and formal elements with specific rhetorical purposes.

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Appendix 1

Sample Syllabus

**English 3327: Special Topics in Genre**

Reading and Writing Eighteenth-century Literature

**Instructor:** Jeff Howard

**Office:** LA 160

**Office Hours:** M-W 12-1

**Required course materials:**

*The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*

College-rule notebook or binder with notepaper

A diary or journal (just for the purposes of this class, and not to be used for note-taking)

Links to additional resources can be found on Moodle (or other LMS)

**Course Objectives:**

Much like other literature classes, one of the primary objectives in this course is to introduce you to significant and influential pieces of literature. Our period of study involves some seventeenth-century texts (from the Restoration onward), but mostly we will be reading the works of eighteenth-century writers. In addition to that, you will also be asked to explore these works in terms of the rhetorical conventions and **genres**. We will ask questions, such as, What is a genre? What characteristics separate one genre from another? What is the difference between the way the genre was defined then vs. how we define it now?

The second primary objective in this course is to help you understand the conventions of certain genres well enough to write in them. For example, we will study entries from Samuel Pepys' diary at the beginning of the semester, but then I want you to keep a diary yourselves during the semester, using Pepys' work as a point of departure. However, I also expect you to take some creative license with some of these assignments. By the end of the semester, you will have written in at least seven different genres.

**Student-Teacher Interaction:**

If you need to talk to me after class, I am more than willing to stick around and chat. Don't be afraid to come talk to me if you are having problems with the course. I am here to guide you through this. If you need to come talk to me in my office, I do have office hours. If you need to meet with me outside of office hours or want to set an appointment, please contact me via email at [howajeff@isu.edu](mailto:howajeff@isu.edu).

**Reading:**

This course has quite a bit of reading in it. Most of you, if not all, are English majors, so reading is something you probably enjoy doing. You can find many of your readings in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*. All other reading assignments will be posted to Moodle. For each day of class, I want you to bring your book to consult and occasionally read from aloud if asked. On the calendar, each class period has a *Readings* section. The reading that appears there should be read prior to class each day.

**Technology:**

To participate in this class effectively, you need to have access to a computer with a strong, reliable Internet connection because you will be doing readings and turning in assignments online. You must be able to log in to Moodle in order to find the syllabus and other important documents. You will need a university email account so we can communicate with each other when we are not in class. You will need access to Microsoft Word because I want all of your assignments submitted in Word .doc or .docx files.

**Formatting:**

In our discipline, we rely on MLA format for citations and document appearance. However, not all of the assignments we do in this class will follow MLA format exactly. All documents should have 1-inch margins and use 12-pt. Times New Roman font. However, only the research paper, novella, essay, dictionary definition, and biography assignments are double-spaced, have page numbers and have a header in the top left-hand corner of the first page that looks like this:

Student Name

Professor Howard

English 3327

Date

All of your other assignments will be single-spaced and will have other formatting instructions that I will provide.

For all of your MLA format and citation needs, consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) online at the following URL:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

**Grading:**

A : 93-100% (465-500 pts.)

**A-** : 90-92% (450-464 pts.)

**B+**: 87-89% (435-449 pts.)

**B** : 83-86% (415-434 pts.)

**B-** : 80-82% (400-414 pts.)

**C+** : 77-79% (384-399 pts.)

**C** : 73-76% (365-384 pts.)

**C-** : 70-72% (350-364 pts.)

**D** : 60-69% (300-349 pts.)

**F** : 0-59% (0-299 pts.)

**X** : If you have done no work in the class and have stopped attending, you can receive an X.

**W** : If you withdraw from the course by the deadline, you can receive a W grade.

**Late Work Policy:**

I do accept late work. However, if it is late, I deduct 10% of the potential points for the assignment each day it is late. After the third day of being late, I will no longer accept your assignment.

**Revisions:**

You may revise **2** of your assignments for the chance at receiving a better grade. You may turn in a revision any time before the end of the semester. You can choose which assignment you wish to revise. I will give you feedback on your assignments to help guide you in the revision process.

**Attendance:**

I will be taking attendance daily at the beginning of each class, so please be in your seats on time so I can count you. If you come in late (after I take attendance), I will count you as tardy. Three tardies make an absence. Five absences will cause you to fail the class. If you must miss a class, please let me know beforehand. If you miss, please still do the readings, and I can fill you in later on what we talked about if you come and talk to me.

**Extra Credit:**

I will occasionally offer extra credit opportunities. I will let you know what those are.

**Academic Honesty:**

First of all, you must do your own work. All work that you submit in this class must be original to you. You may not pay or ask anyone to do your work for you. That is

cheating. Also, you may not submit anything in this class that you have submitted in some other class.

If you use the words or ideas from outside sources in your work, you must cite it using MLA citation style, both in text and in a works cited page. This policy applies to direct quotations, summarizing, and paraphrasing. Any idea that is not considered common knowledge and did not originate with you should be cited.

**Caveat:** I reserve the right to change items in the syllabus or calendar, if necessary.

## Appendix 2

## Writing Assignments

You do not have to complete every assignment, but you **must** complete one assignment from each of the boxes in the table. For example, for your final project, you may write either a research paper about one of the works we've discussed in class, or a novella in the style of Eliza Haywood and Jane Austen, but you do not have to complete both. The choice is yours, depending on your taste, your strengths, or your need to try something new and different. On the other hand, everyone in the class must write a Graveyard poem in the style of Thomas Gray. If you look directly below this table, you will find short descriptions of each assignment. This might help you decide which of the assignments you prefer to complete. The due dates for these assignments appear on the calendar below and in the assignment descriptions. All assignments are submitted to me via Moodle. Examples/models of these assignments appear in the section following the calendar. The attendance and participation grade is 10% of the total. The rest comes from writing assignments.

**Choose one:** (5%)

Iambic tetrameter—16 lines (see Samuel Butler's "Hudibras")

Iambic pentameter/heroic couplets—16 lines (see Alexander Pope's "Epistle 2: To a Lady")

Ballad—12 lines of verse and 4 lines of refrain (see "The Trickster Trick'd" and "The Lady of Pleasure")

**Required:** (10%)

Graveyard poem (free verse or formal)—32 lines (see Thomas Gray's "Elegy on a Country Churchyard")

**Required:** (10%)

Letter (typed or handwritten)—500 words (see Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "The Women's Coffee House")

**Choose one:** (10%)

Essay—500 words, topic of your choice (see Samuel Johnson's *Rambler* No. 5)

Biography—500 words, friend or family member (see James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*)

**Required:** (20%)

Diary—2 entries per week from Week 3–15, each at least a good-sized paragraph

**Required:** (10%)

Dictionary definition—1 word, at least 1 definition, 6 quotations using that word (see Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*)

**Choose one (final project): (25%)**

Research paper—5-6 pages (should involve a work we've talked about in class)

Novella—10-12 pages (see Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*/Jane Austen's *Love and Freindship*)

*Assignment #1: Diary*

During this semester, each student in the class will be required to keep a diary. You must write two entries a week. I find that it is best if you fix a pair of days (Monday and Friday, for example, or Sunday and Wednesday) on which you will write in your diary, but you can also just write whenever you feel like you have the time during the week. Each entry must be a fairly good-sized paragraph. If you look at some of Samuel Pepys' entries, you can get a sense of what I mean by "good-sized." You should record things that go on in your life, but also at times reflect on them.

I will check on your work twice in the semester, once at the end of Week 8 and once at the end of Week 15. Please bring your journals to class with you during those weeks. I will collect them, grade them, and return them to you the following week.

**Due date—TBD**

*Assignment #2: Formal Poetry*

This is also in one of the "Choose one" categories along with the ballad assignment (see Assignment #3). In contemporary poetry, prosody (the sound and rhythm of language) isn't as stressed as it once was. Free verse has kind of done away with that. That being said, it does a poet good to think about the sound and rhythm that language makes and the effect that rhythm has on the reading experience.

With this assignment, you can choose to either write an imitation of Samuel Butler's "Hudibras" by writing 16 lines of iambic tetrameter or Alexander Pope's "Essay 2: To a Lady" by writing 16 lines (8 heroic couplets) in iambic pentameter. You can choose what you write about, but you need to follow the form throughout your poem. Your poem should be single-spaced. During those weeks when we talk about these poets and their works, we will also discuss vocabulary such as poetic "feet," iambs, meter, couplets, heroic couplets, and so on.

**Due date—TBD**

*Assignment #3: Ballad*

This assignment appears in one of the “Choose one” categories with the formal poetry assignments (see Assignment #2). Ballads were a popular genre because they frequently originated with the people. They were also more accessible than other types of publications because 1) they cost less and 2) they could be sung, so you didn’t need to be able to read to enjoy them. You just had to know someone else who knew the song. The tunes generally were folk tunes that people already knew, even if the words had been changed, so they could pick it up fairly easily.

Your job in writing a ballad is to write three verses of four lines each, and a four-line refrain or chorus that can be sung following each verse. You should also dictate, just below the title, how the tune is to be sung. In other words, tell your audience what the tune is. Your ballad should be single-spaced. Ballads frequently had pictures, so include an illustration that connects to the content of your ballad just above the title.

**Due date—TBD**

*Assignment #4: Letter*

Each of you will be required to write a letter. Not an email. A real letter on real paper that requires you to send it to someone through the mail in a stamped envelope. Your letter should be single-spaced. If we look at letters written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, we notice that she is extremely detailed in her private correspondence. Feel free to either write the letter by hand or type it out. I will provide you with envelopes and stamps in class. Submit a copy of your letter on Moodle, but also bring a copy of the final draft of the letter with you to class. I will give you an envelope. You will then write the address on the envelope, put the other draft of the letter in it, and seal it. You will then turn it in, and I will put the stamp on and mail it for you.

The letter should be roughly 500 words long.

**Due date—TBD**

*Assignment #5: Graveyard Poem*

Each of you will be required to write a poem in the manner of Thomas Gray’s “Elegy,” although it only has to be 32 lines long, far shorter than his. It can be rhyming or not; it’s up to you. There is, however, one catch: you must write it in a cemetery. Go in the morning or at twilight, and just spend some time contemplating what you see, your own life, your mortality, etc. There are a lot of possibilities for creativity in this assignment, so feel free to explore them.

**Due date--TBD**



*Assignment #6: Biography*

This is another “Choose one” category. You can choose to do the biography assignment or the essay assignment to fill this requirement (for “Essay,” see Assignment #7). James Boswell’s *The Life of Samuel Johnson* is perhaps the quintessential and most genre-defining biography in the English language. While I do not expect you to write an entire biography like Boswell’s (at best you might get a snapshot), I do expect you to be able to write *at least 500 words* about your interactions with someone you admire. Remember, this is about *someone* else; it isn’t about you, although you might appear in it. Boswell’s biography of Johnson reads almost like a novel in its specific observation and keen detail, its anecdotes, and its pithy quotations. It might also help you to interview the person you choose to get some of those quotations, as well as some further information on their background. MLA format.

**Due date—TBD**

*Assignment #7: Essay*

If you choose not to do the biography, you may do this one instead. Your essay can either take the form of personal essay or an op-ed. I will provide examples for you, and you will be reading two chapters from Brock Dethier’s *21 Genres and How to Write Them* that should give you an idea of what the difference is. Eighteenth-century publications like *The Idler*, *The Tatler*, and *The Spectator*, among others, were full of these kinds of essays. You shouldn’t need to do any external research, but if you want to drop a quotation from someone else in here and there, make sure you cite it using MLA format (7<sup>th</sup> edition), both in text and in a works cited page.

**Due date—TBD**

*Assignment #8: Dictionary Definition*

Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* was an amazing feat, taking years and multiple assistants to finish. Being able to write a good definition seems fairly simple, but there are rules to follow. In this case, I want you to go online, go to [brainyquotes.com](http://brainyquotes.com), and find six quotations from fairly famous people that have a single word in common. You decide what that word will be when you search. Then, find the original source of each of those quotations—whether by looking online or by *going to the library*—and based on those six quotations, write a solid dictionary definition for that word. After your definition, I want you write in those quotes and who said them, the way Dr. Johnson does. If your word has multiple meanings, you need to write multiple definitions. For example, *bridge* (noun) is not only a physical structure that conjoins two separate points, it can also

figuratively conjoin two separate figurative points. As a verb, it can describe the action of linking places or concepts (*to bridge*). It also is a card game (noun). Finally, attach a works cited page that gives the correct MLA citation for the original source of those quotations (not the Brainy Quotes website).

**Due date—TBD**

*Assignment #9: Novella*

During the last few weeks of class, we will be reading novellas about the exploits of trickster women, written by Eliza Haywood, Jane Austen, and Aphra Behn, as well as some excerpts from Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Henry Fielding's *The Life and Apologies of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*. These should serve as models for you, although yours will potentially be much shorter than the ones we read for class. I expect your final draft to be well-written and engaging. Please use MLA format. If you choose this option, you must submit a hard copy on the last day of class.

**Due date—TBD**

*Assignment #10: Research Paper*

We will not be reading any assignments from the eighteenth-century that look like this. This assignment will be a standard literary analysis/research paper that uses outside sources and close reading/word studies/symbol studies to create and substantiate an original thesis statement regarding your interpretation of one of the texts we have read in this class. Please use MLA format. Attach a works cited page in which you correctly cite all outside source material. The research paper should be 7-8 pages. If you choose this option, you must submit a hard copy on the last day of class.

**Due date—TBD**

## Appendix 3

### Semester Calendar

**Note:** Works that appear in the daily *Readings* sections on the calendar must be read before class on the day it appears. *NAEL* = *Norton Anthology of English Literature*

**Tuesday: Syllabus, course policies, calendar**

*Readings:* None

**Thursday: Defining Genre and Memetics**

*Readings:* Brock Dethier's "Genres," pp. 3-4, Richard Dawkins "Memes: The New Replicators" (on Moodle)

**Tuesday: Diaries and Journals**

*Readings:* Samuel Pepys' "Diary," *NAEL*, pp. 2260-69

**Thursday: Diaries and Journals**

*Readings:* Francis Burney's "The Journal and Letters," *NAEL*, pp. 2992-3011

**Tuesday: Restoration Poetry**

*Readings:* John Dryden's "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham" and "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day," *NAEL*, pp. 2243-45

**Thursday: Restoration Poetry**

*Readings:* Samuel Butler's "Hudibras," *NAEL*, pp. 2289-96

**Tuesday: Heroic Couplet**

*Readings:* Alexander Pope's "Epistle 2. To a Lady," *NAEL*, pp. 2772-79

**Thursday: Ballads**

*Readings:* "The Trickster Trick'd," "The London Miss," "The Lady of Pleasure" (on Moodle)

**Tuesday: Ballads**

*Readings:* Examples from *University of California-Santa Barbara English Broadside Ballad Archive*. (link on Moodle)

**Thursday: Letters**

*Readings:* Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "Letters," *NAEL*, pp. 2758-63 (on Moodle)

**Tuesday: Graveyard Poets**

**Readings:** Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," *NAEL*, pp. 3051-54

**Thursday: Graveyard Poets**

**Readings:** Robert Blair's "The Grave" (excerpts on Moodle)

**Tuesday: Biography**

**Readings:** James Boswell's "The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.," *NAEL*, pp. 2962-69, Samuel Johnson's "*Rambler* No. 60" 2926-29

**Thursday: Biography**

**Readings:** James Boswell's "The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.," *NAEL*, pp. 2972-82, 2987-92

**Tuesday: Autobiography**

**Readings:** Olaudah Equiano's "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano," *NAEL*, pp. 3033-43

**Thursday: Novellas**

**Readings:** Eliza Haywood's "Fantomina; or, Love in a Maze," *NAEL*, pp. 2739-58

**Tuesday: Novellas**

**Readings:** Aphra Behn's "The Fair Jilt" (on Moodle)

**Thursday: Novels**

**Readings:** Excerpts from Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and from Henry Fielding's *The Life and Apologies of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (on Moodle)

**Tuesday: Austen's Juvenilia**

**Readings:** Jane Austen's "The Beautiful Cassandra" (on Moodle)

**Thursday: Austen's Juvenilia**

**Readings:** Jane Austen's "Love and Freindship" (on Moodle)

**Tuesday: Literary Research**

**Readings:** None

**Thursday: Essays**

**Readings:** Samuel Johnson's "*Rambler* No. 4," *NAEL*, pp. 2923-26, "*Rambler* No. 5," *NAEL*, pp. 2852-54

**Tuesday: Dictionary Definition**

**Readings:** Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, *NAEL*, pp. 2929-36

**Thursday: Satire**

**Readings:** “A Modest Proposal,” *NAEL*, pp. 2633-39, “The Lady’s Dressing Room,” *NAEL*, pp. 2767-70

**Tuesday: Plays**

**Readings:** John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*, *NAEL*, pp. 2787-2806

**Thursday: Plays**

**Readings:** John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*, *NAEL*, pp. 2807-33

**Tuesday: Religious Allegory**

**Readings:** John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, *NAEL*, pp. 2269-78

**Thursday: Workshop**

**Readings:** None—have first two paragraphs done and submitted on Moodle the night before. I will take the name off, and we can workshop them as a class.

**Tuesday: Workshop**

**Readings:** None—have first two paragraphs done and submitted on Moodle the night before. I will take the name off, and we can workshop them as a class

**Thursday: Last day of class**

**Readings:** None—in-class party, turn in final projects, evaluations and reflections

## Appendix 4

## Model Papers

**Example 1: Diary Entry**

Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2015

Pocatello, ID

I woke up this morning thinking that I would run 10 kilometers, but I grossly overestimated how quickly the desire to run for over an hour would decline when I started running. My legs were heavier than anticipated, the sun was blazing, and I forgot to bring water with me. I ran down the hill, up the canal bank and back, twice around the elementary school track, and back up the hill: 3.5 miles in all. Amy did the dishes, and I played with Max and put him down for a nap around 10 a.m. Amy is trying to put her syllabi together for the next semester, which begins in about two weeks, so I took care of the baby most of the day. Around 3 p.m., Amy decided to go for a run in the cemetery, so she took Max with her and dropped me off at the library so I could check out a book for her and do some work. I found a stack of books that I needed, but when I sat down to write a dissertation chapter, I found that my computer was almost out of battery, and I had left my computer cord at home. Consequently, I saved the half-paragraph I had written, shut the computer, checked out my books, went and sat under a tree by the flower beds across from the LDS Institute of Religion, and perused my library books until Amy came and picked me up an hour later. At 6:30 p.m. we went to a church social, made some new friends, and played kickball, which some people were taking far too seriously. We took Max with us, even though they said, "No kids," because he is only just under 6 months old and can't take care of himself. Also, we don't trust babysitters and he makes a really good icebreaker so people will want to talk to us. No one shunned us for breaking the rules and for the most part, we had a great time. Hopefully we can continue to make friends. Max went to bed around 9:30 p.m., and Amy and I did the same shortly after that.

## Example 2: Dictionary Definition

PAR·A·DOX. *n.*

1. A state in which two seemingly contradictory conditions can exist simultaneously; as in quantum physics and the behavior of light that acts as both a wave and a particle.

“There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive.”—Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild*

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”—Carl Rogers’ *On Becoming a Person*

“In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two.”—Erich Fromm’s *The Art of Loving*

“‘Yeah, I’ve got some of that in me,’ he says, ‘quite a bit of Dude in me. I consider myself pretty lazy but I look back and check out the stuff I’ve done and I say, “God, that’s a lot of stuff for a lazy guy.” It’s a paradox I suppose, being both things.’”—Jeff Bridges, interview (qtd. in Hoby)

“Every experience is a paradox in that it means to be absolute, and yet is relative; in that it somehow always goes beyond itself and yet never escapes itself.”—T.S. Eliot’s *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*

“The Clinton paradox: How could a president so intelligent, so compassionate, so public-spirited and so conscious of his place in history act in such a stupid, selfish and self-destructive manner?”—George Stephanopoulos’ *All Too Human: A Political Education*

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**Example 3: Letter**

12 August 2015

Dear Mom,

I am sorry that Amy and I could not come to Kuna in July. I know you wanted to see Max, and that would have been nice for you since you've been dealing with the headache of Grandma's estate. I hope very much that all of that is on its way to being resolved so you can move on with your life.

I was also very glad to hear that Dad has been submitting more job applications. I know he'll have work substituting at the schools, but it would be nice if he could find something full-time as I know it will be good for his morale and good for your bank account.

Speaking of school, I cannot believe that Maren is going into her senior year of high school. I think she will be the first one out of her siblings to have an actual high school diploma, as opposed to a GED like the rest of us have. She's a miracle. I also hope you can figure out what to do with the foot operation for her. I know it's going to be difficult for a while, but she'll definitely be better off for it.

Amy and I have been busy finishing the summer semester and preparing for fall. Amy spent the entire day yesterday on the couch putting her folklore syllabus together. Final grading was much easier than it usually is because we each only had 5 students in our English 1101 courses this summer.

I finished revising an article on Jack London's ghost stories and am now moving on to writing a chapter of my dissertation. I have spent an awful lot of time writing this summer, and it won't let up until my dissertation is finished. After my comprehensive exam, I felt a little burned out with my project, so I practiced my avoidance strategies as much as possible over the last two months. I have revised literature articles, poetry, and creative non-fiction. The rejection and "revise-and-resubmit" emails are cluttering up my inbox.

Max has skipped the whole "rolling over" phase of his development and moved on to scooting. His only problem is that he has only figured out how to go in reverse. He keeps finding himself stuck beneath a chair or some other immovable object, so he whimpers until we come and pick him up and put him back on his blanket. Then he'll put himself back on his hands and knees and scoot backwards into something else. It reminds of the time Julia tried to teach me how to drive a stick shift. I kept killing the engine when I put it in first gear, but then I discovered it was easier to put into reverse, so I drove around the barnyard backwards at 20 miles an hour and scared Julia to death. It took me some time to figure out how to go forward, but I finally did it, and I know Max will, too.

Thank you again for the cookbook. It's been really helpful to us since we've been dieting. I've lost 16 pounds since June, and Amy has lost 13. She thinks she can reach her goal weight by the end of August, which is exciting since she hasn't been that low since before she had Max. My clothes have been getting fairly loose recently, so maybe some back-to-school shopping will be in our near-to-immediate future.

Love,

Jeff