Genre and Cultural Disruption: Libertinism and the Early English Novel

Tiffany Potter
University of British Columbia

The proverbial rise of the English novel occurred as a result of the combination of any number of specific social factors, including new developments in scientific and religious philosophy, increasing literacy (particularly among women), and the progress of spiritual autobiography and other narrative pilgrims like picaresque and romance. Despite Terry Castle's reported belief that studies of the novel "have reached a kind of intellectual dead end" and that "we don't need further exposition" of the economic, generic, gendered, sexual, colonial, or capitalist aspects of the novel (quoted in Davis 479), there may be some things under the sun yet new. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*'s 2000 double issue "Reconsidering the Rise of the Novel" is only a more recent example of our continuing fascination with not only the what, but the how and the why of the English novel. Many, many theories of the novel have been offered by Ian Watt, Michael McKeon, J. Paul Hunter and others, but one facet of the genre that has not yet been considered in detail is the surprising but undeniable relationship between the prominent cultural discourse of libertinism and the increasing literary dominance of the novel in eighteenth-century England. This essay offers an overview of this relationship, and argues not that the role of libertinism in the novel's evolution in any way supersedes those of other

ESC 29.1-2 (March/June 2003): 171–196

contributing factors, but rather that as a contributor, libertinism is of much greater significance to the genre than has previously been recognized.

Tiffany Potter has published extensively in eighteenth-century studies, with emphasis on libertinism, constructions of femininity, and the novel, including articles on Jane Austen, Elizabeth Cooper, Mary Davys, Eliza Haywood, Samuel Richardson, and Mary Rowlandson, in addition to her book *Honest Sins: Georgian Libertinism and the Plays and Novels of Henry Fielding.* Her work in progress includes a major project on representations of Indigenous North American women in colonial contact narratives.

Theories of the early English novel are, of course, myriad, making a short overview necessary to contextualize the small but essential place of the culture of libertinism in the novel's history.[1] Watt's *Rise of the Novel* and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism,* both published in 1957, set much of the ground for current critical engagements of the early novel. Frye's romance archetypalism has since been developed in Margaret Anne Doody's *The True Story of the Novel,* but otherwise has emerged marginal to the dominant position of Watt as the first reference for nearly every major assessment of what has become shorthanded as the rise of the novel. Watt theorized "formal realism" as the essential marker of the eighteenth-century novel, its "primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms" (32). Subsequent critics have either built upon or rejected outright both formal realism and Watt's other thesis, that the novel's rise was the result of the changing culture of individualism, incorporating parallel rises of capitalism, secularized Protestantism, literacy, and the middle class and its ideology, but Watt is almost universally taken as the starting point of the discussion. The literary historical approach of Hunter's *Before Novels,* for example, builds on Watt in dissociating the novel from romance, but lengthens Watt's abrupt rise into a long evolutionary arc. Hunter's development of the cultural grounding of the novel well past Watt's middle class has proven most important in its consideration of the novel's roots in both high and low culture, oral and non-'literary' forms, and in a cultural consciousness that informs the individualism favoured by Watt.

Like Hunter, subsequent major studies such as John Richetti's *Popular Fiction before Richardson,* Janet Todd's *Sign of Angellica,* and Ros Ballaster's *Seductive Forms* engage a much wider sample of eighteenth-century prose than Watt as they challenge both the gendering and chronology of his account, which ignores both women writers and all prose fiction before Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740 other than that of Defoe. Such studies have left indisputable the centrality of women writers to the popularity of the early novel, and have done much to demonstrate the equal centrality of the

1 For a useful full-length overview of contesting theories of the novel, see Lennard Davis, "Reconsidering Origins."

fact that women's writing "was deeply marked by the 'femininity' insistently demanded of them by the culture to which they belonged" (Spencer viii). The feminist studies document a relationship between women and the early novel that demonstrates the novel's polyvocality: the novel reflects the culture's status quo through realistic description of details of environment and of socially-determined circumstance, in the same narrative moment that it articulates the often grievous consequences of that status quo for women. As Davis puts it, feminist critics show how "narratives participate in dominant culture and political repression. Where this is not the case, the novel is seen as providing location and opportunities of resistance and transgression … [becoming] a Bakhtinian efflorescence of dialogicity" (497). *Nobody's Story,* Catherine Gallagher's study of women writers and the market, goes further in rejecting Watt's Defoe-Richardson-Fielding trinity, arguing that female novelists gained financial advantages from emphasizing their femininity, publicly embracing remunerative authorship and successfully feminizing it in popular discourse.

Recent criticism also continues to assess the ideologies of realism and fictionality in the early novel, problematizing Clara Reeve's 1785 theory that "the novel is a picture of real life and manners.… [It] gives a familiar relation of such things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves; and the perfection of it, is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while reading) that all is real" (111). Such reconsiderations of the links among fiction, culture, and realism include McKeon's influential argument that "in the formation of novelistic narrative, the most important narrative model was not another 'literary' genre at all, but historical experience itself" (238), and Gallagher's assertion that formal realism "was not a way of trying to hide or disguise fictionality; realism was, rather, understood to be fiction's formal sign. Eighteenth-century readers identified with the characters in novels *because* of the characters' fictiveness and not in spite of it." For Gallagher, the idea of fiction emerged in the early eighteenth century from a discursive binary of "referential truth telling and lying" into an explicit fictionality marked by the formality of realism (xvi–xvii). It is such recognitions in theories of the novel—of its performance of realism in a way that concurrently embodies the privileges and challenges the boundaries of the *status quo*—that invite consideration of discourses of libertinism in the cultural moment that produced the idea of the English novel.

Theories of the complex and contradictory culture of libertinism are almost as myriad as those of the novel, and have been complicated by the

libertine's ever-evolving pursuit of absolute individualism, originality, and inimitability. Still, there is some limited agreement on the libertine's most consistent traits. The work of James Turner, Harold Weber, and Dale Underwood in particular suggests that the premise on which libertinism is based is that of the need to challenge social dogmatism and the determinist assumptions of the hegemonic group. This in itself is complicated, as most of those popularly termed libertines were male, upper-class members of that group. Still, men like Rochester, Savile, and Buckingham felt themselves restricted by the boundaries of acceptability as outlined by parliament and majority opinion, and sought freedom for privileged individuals to think and act according to their own judgement regardless of established convention or constructs of morality. These primary qualities of the libertine foster the subsidiary qualifications which function as manifestations of the need to demonstrate individual power and control and to challenge social dogma. In the Restoration these subsidiary qualities include the atheism and deism that so clearly embody the libertine distrust of traditional religious doctrine; the pursuit of absolute freedom of sexuality, establishing through often cruel means the dominance of the libertine both culturally and sexually; and the subsequently necessary increase in the autonomy and sexual independence of certain women in order to increase the challenge of conquest in battles of wit and status. These elements, in turn, are related to the libertine fascination with disguise (manifested in masks, masquerades, and appropriated identities), which, in addition to providing entertainment, allowed both men and women to pursue their passions without accountability. In any case, transgressions that did require acknowledgement could be justified by the Restoration libertine's valuing of the Hobbesian view of humanity, by the privileging of the Natural over socially-constructed regulation, and by the anti-rationalism which dictated that moralism is dependent on the presumption of reason and rationality of humanity, in which libertines widely chose not to believe.

These primary qualities of the libertine foster the subsidiary qualifications which function as manifestations of the need to demonstrate individual power and control and to challenge social dogma.

While none of the major studies of the novel discuss libertinism specifically,[2] McKeon's positioning of class, truth, and virtue as central elements in the origins of the English novel is highly suggestive:

> The first sort of instability with which the novel is concerned has to do with generic categories; the second, with social categories.

2 William B. Warner does mention libertinism in one paragraph in his assessment of the links between amatory fiction and feminism in "Formulating Fiction": "Like their precursors on the Continent, Behn, Manley, and Haywood articulate new comic situations with a cynical 'modern' libertine ethos in a manner that intensifies the erotic tension, gender strife, and sexual explicitness of the conven-

> The instability of generic categories registers an epistemological crisis, a major cultural transition in attitudes toward how to tell the truth in narrative. For convenience, I will call the set of problems associated with this epistemological crisis "questions of truth." The instability of social categories registers a cultural crisis in attitudes toward how the external social order is related to the internal, moral state of its members. For convenience, I will call the set of problems associated with this social and ethical crisis "questions of virtue." (20)

That the early novel engaged these issues is well established by McKeon and others; as the above summary of the culture of libertinism suggests, and as the examples to follow will make clear, these same issues of truth, virtue, and class are dominant concerns of both Restoration and Georgian embodiments of libertinism. Libertinism is intriguingly consistent in the represented philosophies and realisms of many of the historical parents of the novel and in the characters they create to carry the burden of narrative interest in their works. The concurrently disruptive and creative impulses that characterize libertinism thus seem significant ingredients in the novel's emergence at this particular moment in England's literary history, since, as Doody has documented at length, the novel had had both classical and continental models for generations. As Jacques Derrida has pointed out, the "paradox of any invention is that, on the one hand, it depends on absolute novelty, a break with the law and convention, and, on the other, it requires social recognition, by the law and institutional forms of legitimation" (cited in Brown 20). Libertinism is an exact embodiment of that same paradox as the libertines take advantage of privileged social status to disrupt in the most original ways possible the very system that grants them status; this conflict is depicted over and over again in the content of early novels in a way that echoes the expected struggle over the paradox of creativity.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel as a genre grounded in specific social circumstance and ideological struggle further illuminates the links between the paradoxical nature of the libertine and the constantly renewing nature of genre: "At the time when major divisions of the poetic genres were developing under the influence of the unifying centralizing, centripetal forces of verbal-ideological life, the novel—and those artistic-prose genres

---

tional love story. The discourse of liberation propounded in their novels is also indebted to particular Restoration and eighteenth-century contexts—the realist political discourse developed out of Hobbes, Machiavelli, and Mandeville; the Tory individualism and libertinism epitomized by Restoration rakes like the first Earl of Rochester; and a baroque aesthetics of excess" (283).

that gravitate toward it—was being historically shaped by the current of decentralizing, centrifugal forces" (Bakhtin 259). The early novel in many ways seems informed as a genre by its dialogic exchange on the nature of the libertine in both content and anticipated cultural implication. Many of the early English novelists use the libertine's contradictory public agenda of subversion and private dependence on existing cultural discourse and hegemonies to interrogate the relationship between disruption and conservatism more generally. From Behn and Fielding to Davys and Richardson, early novelists use the iconic libertine as engine of plot, as im/moral emblem of Tory joy or Whig dismay at aristocratic freedoms and pleasures, and as cipher for a broad range of cultural disruptions, including the paradoxically disruptive formalization of literary genre in which the authors themselves were so consciously engaged. Eighteenth-century libertinism thus provides both a titillating subject for saleable realistic narrative and an already recognized frame in which negation and valuation of existing systems and regulations could coexist. Regardless of individual authors' approval or rejection of the sexuality, irreligion, and philosophies of libertinism, and regardless of the celebratory or denigratory nature of the libertine's representation in any one of the enormous number of early English novels, the theoretical space that libertinism represented was useful to those fostering a new genre.

The early novel in many ways seems informed as a genre by its dialogic exchange on the nature of the libertine in both content and anticipated cultural implication.

Eighteenth-century libertine philosophy does not, of course, address issues of the (already problematic) constructions of class in the same way as our post-Marxist literary scholarship, but the libertine subculture is founded above all on the belief that certain people exist above the limitations of daily exchange as entrenched by the masses and the infrastructure created to control them. The libertine self-positions above cultural strictures of morality and expression established, as Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville suggest, only to trick the gullible and uncritical into passive acceptance of their state as somehow divinely ordered.[3] Certainly part of this libertine privilege is based in social constructs we would now link to class, but part is also more intellectually defined: the libertinism of the eighteenth century was deeply invested in a skepticism that argued that there is no way truly to know—that human senses must be indulged, but cannot necessarily be trusted. This philosophical skepticism results in the understanding that truth is unknowable, and that any rational or rationalized limitations on the individual for the good of the many are merely the

3 See in particular Hobbes's *Leviathan* part one, chapters ten ("Of Power, Worth, Dignity, Honour, and Worthiness"), thirteen ("Of the Natural Condition of Mankind"), and fourteen ("Of the first and second Natural Laws, and of Contracts").

result of flawed reason based on unprovable information. Thus the libertine cannot be ruled by constructions of Virtue or Truth that are the result only of impossible attempts at reason and human rationality. This problematization of the very existence of a Truth becomes central to the rise of the novel, from Aphra Behn's interrogation of the *status quo* of gender and empire, and Delariver Manley, Mary Davys, and Eliza Haywood's querying of constructions of masculinity, femininity, and intellectual, sexual and political regulation, to Henry Fielding's narrators, who reject the limitations of the literary forms dominant in England at the same time that they value the voice of the privileged individual over generic, cultural, or moral choirs, as do Samuel Richardson's fictional libertines Lovelace, Belford, and Morden, who inescapably dominate the didactic world intended by their author.

McKeon argues powerfully for a central place in the novel's history for questions of virtue, the question of "how the external social order is related to the internal, moral state of its members" (20). The libertine answer to this, of course, is: it's not. The internal state is determined by Natural appetites and desires that are intrinsically valuable because of their unmediated state, while the external social order is merely constructed for the convenience of existing forces and for the empowerment of artificial social bodies like the Church. As McKeon notes, the process of historicizing the Bible and the ensuing possibility of religious skepticism made a significant contribution to what became the novel: "the assertion of historical truth aims to serve the end of inculcating Christian faith. In the early novels it will seek to aid the cause of teaching moral truth" (89). A "more wholesale critique of Scripture by the strict rules of empirical evidence was left to the heir of the critical historians, radical sectarians, and liberal Anglicans, the deist movement" (81). Those deists, and the libertines who made up a part of their number, did continue to examine questions of religious historicity and its implications for conventional morality. Ultimately their investigation of questions of the truth or naturalness of cultural regulation leads libertines to reject the value system implicit in considerations of "questions of virtue"—that "virtue" itself is some sort of prediscursive value, establishing the cultural currency of the individual according to passive acquiescence rather than individuated enactments of agency. In a nutshell, then, if we accept the broad outlines of McKeon's hypotheses about the centrality of class, truth, and virtue in the rise of the novel—what contemporaries (and other current discussions) might term "problems of 'naturalness' and 'morality' in narrative" (415)—we must also recognize that England's libertines had been engaging exactly these same issues since at least the mid-seventeenth century, and continued to do so in the evolving genres of fiction.

Having addressed truth and virtue, naturalness and morality in both libertinism and the emerging novel, it comes as no surprise that of the widely proposed parents of the novel, a substantial number were termed libertines by their contemporaries, and many created libertine characters that embody fictionally the very disruption such writers enacted textually in generic shifts and representations of truth, virtue, and class. Accusations and evidence of libertinism are easily spotted in the lives and works of Behn, Manley, Haywood, and Fielding, but we must consider as well fictions created by ostensibly conservative voices: Defoe's Colonel Jack, Moll Flanders, and Roxana, and Richardson's Mr B, Lovelace, Belford, and Morden. Libertine characters of both sexes in early eighteenth-century fiction create much of the impetus of the plots: whether adored or abhorred by narrators, it is very often these libertine characters and the libertine characteristics of their fictionalized culture that retain the reader's interest, pleasurably scandalized admiration, and vicarious identification while morals-of-the-stories are either passionately asserted or glanced knowingly aside, depending on the author's own assumption of autonomous privilege. As Warner notes, "the popularity of these novels [amatory fictions] seems to depend upon turning the empty ego of the central protagonist into a 'reader's seat' from which anyone can follow a blatantly self-interested quest for victory on the field of amorous conquest" (284).

A notable number of the first English novelists claim for themselves a libertine persona, and this presumption of both personal privilege and cultural and artistic autonomy above the confined generic expectations dominating traditional literary circles contributes powerfully to the impulse toward distinction of content and form that is the early novel. Further, as the most popular writers of the early eighteenth century knew, even for those writers and readers who might themselves vehemently have opposed the philosophical, sexual, and atheistic or deistic aspects of publicly performed libertinism, the private pleasure of identification with privilege could rarely be denied. As Ballaster explains in her discussion of the cultural function of amatory fiction, "Fantasy can entail the pleasure of undermining a fixed subject position for the reader or consumer through the experience of textual pleasure, as well as identification with available subject positions in the text. A reading of textual fantasy requires that the critic recognize that imaginary pleasures are invested across an entire spectrum of literary techniques and phenomena, whereby desires are constantly displaced and transformed, rather than acted out through a single literary character" (Ballaster 28–9). For both male and female readers, the libertine character could provide a subjective identification, amid the secret, still slightly

immoralized experience of reading the unsanctioned text of the as yet unformalized novel.

Aphra Behn is widely nominated as the earliest English novelist in the way that we currently configure the genre, and she also provides the first explicit representation of libertine philosophy in prose fiction. Her work consistently acknowledges the libertine subversiveness of her content, reflecting feminine desire and sexuality, the false rationalism underlying social codes, and her rejection of cultural forces that would limit individuated agency. As Behn's first biographer noted in 1696, "She was a Woman of Sense, and by Consequence a Lover of Pleasure, as indeed all, both Women and Men, are; but only some wou'd be thought to be above the Conditions of Humanity, and place their chief Pleasure in a proud, vain Hypocrisie.... She was, I'm satisfy'd, a greater Honour to our Sex than all the canting Tribe of Dissemblers, that die with the false Reputation of Saints" (Gildon 60). At the same time she is aware of the significance of the new form of her work, as her questioning of widely-accepted interpretations of virtue and truth leads to her deconstruction and reconstruction of genre. Early novels like *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684–87) and *The Fair Jilt* (1688) permit Behn to self-position within the libertine tradition that she was so often granted in more condemnatory terms: she manifests the privileged presumption of the Restoration libertine to say the unspeakable and do the unthinkable. She writes both male and female libertine characters claiming power through philosophical raillery, religious disruption, conscious cruelty, and sexual treachery.

For both male and female readers, the libertine character could provide a subjective identification, amid the secret, still slightly immoralized experience of reading the unsanctioned text of the as yet unformalized novel.

Behn's own public life of political activity, spying, unsanctioned sexual relationships, involvement in the presumed immorality of theatrical circles, and friendships with male and female libertines suggests some investment in the individuated autonomy of libertinism; both the act of writing and the content of her work also appear related to that investment. Space precludes detailed analysis of Behn's voluminous work, but a few examples should suffice to cement her links to libertine elements of novelistic history. Her knowledge of the discourse is established through the hero of her most popular play, the two-part *The Rover* (1677 and 1681): Willmore is a witty libertine at the head of a group of lesser libertines, and a character widely assumed to have been based on her culture's most recognizable libertine, the Earl of Rochester (for whose work much of Behn's poetry was mistaken because of its licentious content). In the passionately politicized *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister,* the hero Philander seduces his sister-in-law with recognizably libertine arguments for the naturalness of sexual desire, the artificial limitations imposed by self-regulatory mechanisms like

ideas of honour, and the status of "brother [in-law]" and "sister [in-law]" as mere linguistic constructs designed to control the obedient and thoughtless masses, not those who can realize their privilege. As Philander is also an atheist who, in a moment of danger, calls upon "*Venus* and her son" for safety, with "scarce a thought yet of any other deity" (241), his character alone makes clear Behn's recognition of the sexuality, philosophy, and atheism of the Restoration libertine. To complete Behn's imaging of the paradoxically creative libertine, the character of Don Alonzo punctuates his gratuitously detailed recitation of conquests past with both the passionate desire for originality and the predominant role of conquest in amorous pursuit: he explains, "I never repeat anything with pleasure" (392).

In Behn's novels, women too can embrace the previously masculinized pleasures of power. In *The Fair Jilt,* the heroine Miranda pursues the most extreme forms of libertinism as she seduces a series of men, twice attempts to have murdered the sister who inconveniently limits her financial power, and demonstrates the conflation of sexual and religious subversion typical of both French and English Restoration libertinism as she tries to rape a priest. When they are interrupted, she is able to maintain her sexual freedom by invoking the very cultural assumption that might keep a less powerful woman down: she claims that the priest has tried to rape her, and is believed because women, the presumed moral agent of humanity, are not expected to have either sexual desire or the power to enact it upon others. Like the widely-recognized libertines of the Restoration,[4] Behn's fictional ones are often too clever or too powerful to face punishment, and most are left, like Miranda, to live on without any direct representation or even confirmed reports of repentance or reformation.

Beyond the libertine associations of both Behn's own life and the acts of the often outrageous characters she created, though, is the wider significance of her assured manipulation of existing cultural and literary forms: creating subversive content within a form that violates nearly prediscursive literary convention becomes a libertine act in itself. Behn's own self-positioning and the freedom of expression offered by her libertine characters

4 Consider, for example, two of Behn's contemporaries: the Earl of Rochester, consistently either unpunished or only minimally so by Charles II for increasingly outrageous public acts, and Hortense Mancini, Duchess Mazarin, libertine, stunningly beautiful mistress to Charles II, and leader of one of the most important salons of the day (with fellow libertine thinker St. Evremond, who termed her his intellectual and philosophical equal). She was known widely even before her migration to England as a result of a biography that reported her escape from her cruel husband (and their four children), her rejection of religious domination (and her running of dog races in the hallways of the convent to which she

grant her the necessary power and privileged status to reconstruct that which had seemed inviolable since the generic foundations laid by the ancients. And though scholars have only comparatively recently acknowledged Behn's place in the history of the novel (at least in part since her work had previously been seen as too licentious and too subversive—too libertine—to have had substantive influence), her eighteenth-century audiences obviously recognized her influence as a creative force: *Love Letters* was one of the best selling epistolary fictions of the long eighteenth century, running to more than ten editions before 1740 and the subsequent appearance of first novels by Richardson and Fielding.

Following Warner and Novak against what Warner terms the "anachronistic" division of the eighteenth-century novel along gendered lines, Fielding and Richardson will have their due in this discussion. But it is necessary first to note that Behn is only the first generation of female novelists to enact in fiction the powerful social force of libertinism. There is an important cultural continuity in the fact that some twenty years later the disruptively public professional and sexual life of Delariver Manley echoes the shock waves aroused by Behn. Still early in the development of that "new literary fiction designed to engage the social and ethical problems the established literary fictions could no longer mediate—which is to say, both represent and conceal—with conviction" (McKeon 133), Manley's *The New Atalantis* (1709) repeats and confirms the process of individuated empowerment through public narrative subversion, recreating the court of the later Restoration in a minimally constructed moral frame. The same political, philosophical, gendered, and sexual challenges appear as in Behn's work, and once again fictional libertines of both sexes contribute to the creation of the early novelistic form, with Manley's authorial position fully entrenched in the libertine subversion of hegemonic values.

This line of mothers of the novel appears in another incarnation in the 1720s and 1730s in writers like Davys and Haywood. In most of Haywood's more than sixty works of fiction, the engagement of social and philosophical issues moves beyond what we will see is Davys's conflicted representation of libertine thought, and into an explicit and highly energized interrogation of social constructions of morality, sexuality, religion, and gender both through

---

briefly retired after leaving her husband), and her travels throughout Europe with the financial support of a series of lovers. She was not punished even after the death of Charles II, as her pension was continued by James II. For the libertine significance of Mazarin's life, see Potter, "Glory in the Triumph." For biography, see her ostensibly autobiographical *The Memoires of the Dutchess Mazarine* and Rosvall's *Mazarine Legacy.*

libertine characters and the libertine qualities of her own acts of composition. Haywood consistently violates the idealizing traditions of romance as she represents, particularly in work from the first half of her career, the darker side of humanity's Hobbesian fears and desires. Mary Anne Schofield notes that Haywood's early two-volume novel, *The Masqueraders: or, Fatal Curiosity* (1724–25), "is representative of Haywood's entire literary career" (44), not least, I would add, in terms of its engagement of libertinism in content and in its original form. The novel reports the sexual and intellectual pleasures of Dorimenus, who is "young, handsome, gay, gallant, has an affluence of Fortune and Wit, [and] is a passionate Lover of Intrigue" who finds "a great many among the Fair Sex to encourage that Disposition" (I: 5). Still, consenting women provide insufficient challenge, and he eventually smiles his way into the bed of the starstruck Dalinda; Philecta later offers more resistance in her misplaced belief in an all-trumping power of reason, but his engagement of her mind, spirit, and gamesmanship leads quickly to the conquest of her body. Dorimenus eventually marries a third woman, Lysimena, but by volume two she has been supplanted at least sexually by Briscilla.[5] The story includes explicit detail of Dorimenus's conquests, and suggests no punishment of vice or reward of virtue. While Haywood's early work may lack the types of polished, single-climax artistry that later became valued in the novel, it is remarkable among contemporary narratives for its refusal even to nod in the direction of moral acquiescence.

The story includes explicit detail of Dorimenus's conquests, and suggests no punishment of vice or reward of virtue.

A similar tale of repeated conquest (though this time of the same object) is enacted by the female libertine heroine of *Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze* (1725), and here too, Haywood declines to punish her proud, witty, and autonomous heroine for her disguises as prostitute, servant, widow, and masked aristocrat in her serial seductions of her society's alpha-libertine, Beauplaisir. While she does end the novel pregnant, no one but her mother and the suitably embarrassed Beauplaisir knows, and she retires to a French convent to live with a close friend who is the Abbess there. As Catherine

5 While Doody's take on the classical roots of the novel entirely rejects what I argue is the central place of eighteenth-century culture in the novel's specifically English incarnation, her Frygian view of the figure of Eros as an archetypal trope of the genre does support my sense of the function fulfilled by the libertine in the eighteenth century and its novel. She describes Eros as "partly active being, partly rhetorical turn … a young hooligan of the neighbourhood, in short, who ought to be under better control" (361). Doody translates from *Asinus Aureus* this description: "certainly bold enough, who with his bad manners and contempt for all public discipline, armed with his flames and arrows, runs about at night through other people's houses, breaking up everybody's marriages, who commits so many shameful acts with impunity" (362).

Craft points out, this community of women does not particularly suggest punishment in the first place. Perhaps more pertinent yet, Haywood's audience might be expected to exercise its familiarity with satires and pornographic cloister tales and the convent experiences of women like Duchess Mazarin[6] to doubt any limitation of Fantomina's sexual and intellectual freedom once in France.

Even Haywood's later, ostensibly reformed novels tend to be driven internally and philosophically by the libertine presence, most notably in the hero of *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753), who drinks, evades religious observance, enjoys prostitutes, and seduces both innocents and married women. Jemmy is depicted only as a typical young gentleman of spirit, and is rewarded with marriage to Jenny, who tells him that if he will try to limit his roaming after they are married, she will be happy with his best efforts. Even in her more formally standard and publicly acceptable later works, Haywood never shies from the salacious details that will sell her novels, and over and over again she declines to be ruled by her culture's prescriptive construction of feminine virtue, passivity, and innocence of thought, or by the traditional assumption of moral didacticism as the primary object of fiction.[7] Ultimately, Haywood's fictions, like those of Behn and Manley, thus become libertine acts in themselves—the very writing of such content in a structure so energetically and conscientiously divergent from all expectation, of so surely and so shockingly violating popular constructions of art and morality, is the most concrete and widely influential representation of libertinism yet to appear on the cultural horizon.

Ballaster's assessment of amatory fiction has also recognized these links between disruptive ideologies within narrative and the novelistic genre: "generic considerations are at least as important as ideological concepts in the making of women's fiction and the shaping of representations of femininity in this transitional period. They can neither be reduced to nor substituted for contemporary gender ideologies. A categorization of fiction by and for women simply on the basis of content and theme ignores the dialectical relations *between* content and form that go to make up novelistic discourse" (22–23). While amatory fiction may be read by others as generic in the pejorative sense—with stock rakes and repetitive intrigues—I am persuaded by Ballaster's sense of the powerful originality of the form. It is a vocalization of the experience of sexualized and autonomous eighteenth-century identities performed explicitly for public consumption. In

6 See note 4 on pp. 180–81.

7 For a detailed discussion of Haywood's engagement with libertinism, see Potter, "A God-like Sublimity of Passion."

this way, even texts with parallel elements can aim for the originality and disruptiveness of the libertine. Just as we do not exclude a given seduction from categorization as a libertine act because seductions have occurred before, the subversive qualities of an individual woman such as Manley or Haywood rendering her gender's desire in the public sphere cannot be negated as an original act simply because Behn published a version of that desire first. Derrida's paradox of invention illuminates the libertine acts of composition by such eighteenth-century novelists: for the invention to speak its originality, it must by definition exist in dialogue with what has come before. That libertinism is such a powerful presence in the culturally conversant work of these three of the writers most consistently associated with the development of the novel is highly suggestive of the function of cultural discourses of libertinism in creating the frame for coexistent negation and valuation of institutional forms and the decentralizing historical experience necessary for generic shift.

It is not just self-proclaimed libertines, however, who demonstrate the generic influence of the culture of libertinism. Even tenaciously moralist voices like Defoe, Davys, and Richardson often depend on libertinism for much of what separates their work from other didactic genres, and that dependence—with or without the apparent intentionality of Haywood or Behn—tends to result in a surprisingly flattering representation of the subversive libertine discourse. The contribution to the rise of the novel of Haywood's contemporary Defoe has been documented in great detail,[8] though his contribution is regularly assessed primarily in terms of his first novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and often in terms of Crusoe's significance as "economic man" or some variation on the theme. Even in this context, though, and even in a character whose capacity for "Puritan individualism" has been so well argued (Watt 63–92), we find reflections of the same cultural shifts recorded in the explicitly libertine texts: extreme individualism, a need to demonstrate economic and social privilege, the desire for control over others, and a weakened and contradictory sense of the place of religion in the life of the individual (happily termed the "relative impotence of religion" by Watt in his sense that it suggests "the profound secularization of his outlook, a secularization which was a marked figure of his age" [82]). Watt goes on to note Crusoe's "inordinate egocentricity" and, without ever invoking the self-serving deconstructions of religion, disruptions of cultural values, self-determined privilege, and expressions of social and economic

8 Many of these analyses are discussed by both their authors and others in the special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12 (2000).

power typifying libertine discourse, summarizes thus the characterization and significance of Crusoe:

> On his island Crusoe also enjoys the absolute freedom from social restrictions for which Rousseau yearned—there are no family ties or civil authorities to interfere with his individual autonomy. Even when he is no longer alone his personal autarchy remains—indeed it is increased: the parrot cries out his master's name; unprompted, Friday swears to be his slave for ever; Crusoe toys with the fancy that he is an absolute monarch; and one of his visitors even wonders if he is a god. (86)

Obviously to point out such parallels is not to imply that either Crusoe or Defoe is a libertine,[9] but rather to acknowledge finally that, as occurs so consistently in the early novel, the magnetic qualities of philosophical libertinism seep into and are necessarily reflected in the realism that was the formal sign of this new literary form. Intent as didactic novels like those of Davys and Richardson are on rooting out the evils of libertinism, they are inescapably in dialogue with the novels that advocate libertinism, particularly in their engagements of cultural constructs of heroism and masculinity.

As *Robinson Crusoe* enacts philosophical links to libertine thought in its independent masculine heroic, so novels like *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724) embody the more visceral qualities of the culture of eighteenth-century libertinism. Once again, neither Moll nor Roxana is a libertine proper, as both lack the social status and cultural privilege required for the title, but both texts engage many of the same libertine values that we have seen in the works of Behn and Haywood. The aim of verisimilitude—necessary for the novels to pass as the true histories to which Defoe staked claim—allows Defoe to establish play in the value system he purports to represent. By claiming the role of reporter of Truth, he can narrate in gratuitous detail titillating scenes of fraud, seduction, prostitution, and even incest without sacrificing the didactic pose of his moral frames. For many readers, however, the passionately realistic pictures of his culture overwhelm those narrow frames. In *Moll Flanders,* for example, like in Haywood's novels, there is nothing more than the *threat* of punishment for the heroine's transgressions and criminality: Moll's happy ending at a well-stocked American plantation is facilitated not by her repentance, but

9 Though some of the language used to describe the immorality and marginal state of libertinism was applied to Defoe by some of his contemporaries, it seems clear that such descriptors have more to do with partisanship and pamphlet battles than any documentable libertinism in the life of the novelist.

by the profits of her sins and by her explicit rejection of the prescriptive values of her culture and the limitations they might place on her individual pursuit of pleasure and power.[10] That much of the novel's action is set during the period of libertinism's most powerful cultural influence in England (being composed in the fictional autobiography in 1683) provides latitude for Defoe's bisected moral effect. It also establishes a context for the text's participation in libertine discourse, again demonstrating the space for social and artistic disruption and originality that libertinism contributes to the novel.

And while Defoe's inclusion in an overview of the implications of libertine culture for the early English novel might surprise those who read Defoe as conservative moralist, the conflict is not as great as it might seem. As Novak explains, Defoe is acutely aware of the morals and organization of his culture: "Defoe lived in a world in which mistresses of kings or noblemen (or at least their children) were often rewarded with titles, wealth, and power. He could be ironic on the subject, but he also accepted it as a reality. And do we really believe Roxana when she says it would have been better to starve to death? Defoe did not believe that." When Roxana makes her libertine arguments about the freedom of women, Novak compares her to Duchess Mazarin, and summarizes her philosophy as "'I want to be free to use my sexuality as I please, and I don't want anyone having control of my money.' These are her feelings at the moment, and she follows them to become rich and powerful" even as Defoe articulates the moral drawbacks of her libertine path (252). Novak's concern that Defoe is being deleted from an increasingly binary gendered history of the novel is well founded; it is perhaps ironic, but intriguing, that one clear tie between the gendered histories is their link to the traditionally hyper-masculinized culture of libertinism.

Novak's concern that Defoe is being deleted from an increasingly binary gendered history of the novel is well founded; … one clear tie between the gendered histories is their link to the traditionally hyper-masculinized culture of libertinism.

Davys's association with discourses of libertinism shares much with that of Defoe, and her novels of the 1720s similarly demonstrate the place of libertinism in novelized representations of eighteenth-century life. As McKeon notes, the novel "attains its modern, 'institutional' stability and coherence [in the eighteenth century] because of its unrivalled power both

10 Watt again recognizes this fact, but does not link it either to the work of female writers or to the cultural discourses of libertinism that Defoe's female contemporaries so freely admitted. Watt notes that Moll's "most positive qualities are the same as Crusoe's, a restless, amoral, and strenuous individualism.… [T]he sincerity of her reformation is never put to the acid test of sacrificing material for moral good. The plot, in fact, flatly contradicts Defoe's purported moral theme" (114–15).

to formulate, and to explain, a set of problems that are central to early modern experience" (20). The paradox of the libertine is one of these problems, even to writers like Defoe, Davys and Richardson who reject libertinism themselves.[11] Such writers decry the cruel power of the libertines almost invariably posited as villains, and yet as they stake claims to historicity and the verisimilitude that entails, they cannot help but represent the undeniable attractiveness of the libertine for both men and women. Davys's *The Reformed Coquette* (1724) demonstrates this contradiction both in the specifically libertine character of Lord Lofty and in the coquette Amoranda's at times libertine impulses, often similar to those in the fictions of Behn and Manley.[12] The authorial libertine paradox is made particularly clear, though, in Davys's *The Accomplish'd Rake, or Modern Fine Gentleman* (1727), whose libertine antihero Sir John Galliard rejects traditional education, denies religion, is prevented only by circumstance from swearing an oath to the devil, drinks and spends to excess, feeds his appetites with prostitutes, and drugs and rapes the daughter of his benefactor, but (perhaps in acknowledgement of the same cultural milieu that Novak cites in Defoe) is still termed basically good throughout the novel by the narrator. Galliard is one of the least attractive of the fictional libertine antiheroes of this period, and yet even the author—who survived in part by the respectability of her status as widow of a clergyman—recognizes the disturbing attraction inherent in the aristocratic libertine's capacity to fulfill any appetite without punishment. From its very title, *The Accomplish'd Rake, or Modern Fine Gentleman* specifically locates her text in dialogue with contemporary discourses of libertinism, and acknowledges their widespread valuation. Davys's Preface announces, "The adventures, as far as I could order them, are wonderful and probable; and I have with the utmost justice rewarded virtue and punished vice" (236), and in its didactic intent, Davys's work functions partly in the history of the novel to confirm the role of the Church and instructive morality in early narrative.[13] Within that same "probable" didactic frame, however, the libertine is rewarded for his actions with an estate and marriage to the good Nancy Friendly, the very woman he has raped. He is never forced to reform:

11 As Turner has demonstrated, the libertine holds an intrinsically contradictory position in eighteenth-century culture: "Libertines may be seen as secular antinomians, not simply above the law, but deeply in need of the law to guarantee their privileges and to fuel their emotional rebellion. They confirm in the very act of infraction" ("Properties" 81).

12 For full-length discussion of libertinism in *Coquette* and *Gentleman,* see Potter, "Decorous Disruption."

13 For a detailed discussion of the role of religious morality in the early novel, see McKeon 65–83.

he rushes his marriage to Nancy so that it is done before he can change his mind, and the narrator warns us in her final sentence that she has "set two spies to watch his motions and behavior" and to report "any false steps or relapses" (373). Even in this instructive narrative it becomes clear that the accomplished rake *is* the modern fine gentleman. Without eliding the vast differences of tone among amatory and didactic fictions, over and over again in the first part of the eighteenth century, it is the libertine that forms the backbone of the novel, as hero, villain, and things in between, creating the human narrative that separates the novel's engagement of truth and virtue from other genres' treatise and polemic.

The place of such female writers as Davys, Haywood, Manley, and Behn in the rise of the novel has become more soundly understood in recent scholarship, and Dale Spender's argument for the mothers of the novel is widely recognized. In order to argue for the role of libertinism in the development of the novel, though, it is necessary not only to consider its relationship to these less canonical writers, but also to integrate it more fully within the very traditional framework of the origins of the novel in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. To do so, however, we need to assess the shifting nature of the libertine discourse, mediated as it was after 1700 by the culture of sensibility and other shifts toward a more ostentatiously moral society for nearly every social stratum. As I have documented in the past,[14] libertinism continued in its cultural influence well into the eighteenth century proper. It is true that it ceased to be a dominant cultural force with the end of the court of Charles II, but such a powerful and creative discourse was not quietly subsumed by the culture of sentiment, though this is certainly a popular perception. Instead, the central elements of Restoration-style libertinism continue in the Georgian libertinism that develops in the eighteenth century proper (even as throwbacks like Francis Charteris clung to the cruelty of the old-style tradition and were widely despised for it). However, the hallmarks occur in forms that lessen the hard edge of cruel egocentrism that typified Restoration libertinism. Challenges to the cultural assumptions of the hegemonic order continue, as does the libertine's striving toward individualism, self-determination, and controlling power. Distrust of traditional religious doctrine remains, of course, but less in the extreme form of atheism than in the rejection of blind faith in favour of what could be called selective faith: subscribing to the parts of religion that favour the desires of the individual, but rejecting those that

14 The argument and evidence for this evolving libertinism are detailed in the first chapter of *Honest Sins*.

threaten punishment or impede self-satisfaction. In the Georgian version of libertinism, the pursuit of sexual privilege surrenders much of its previously extravagant masculinism, which creates a narrow site for greater independence and empowerment for women, both in the private sphere and in the public representations of feminine desire in fiction. Finally, the Georgian libertine still privileges the Natural over artificial constructs of morality, with the caveat (omitted in earlier Hobbesian versions) that no other individual be injured in the pursuit of pleasure.

These qualities of the re-visionist understanding of the libertinism of the eighteenth century are outlined in the letters of the Earl of Chesterfield, for example, and in the essays and fiction of Henry Fielding. Chesterfield writes to his son in 1750,

> I mean to allow you whatever is necessary, not only for the figure, but for the pleasures of a gentleman, and not to supply the profusion of a rake.… Having mentioned the word rake, I must say a word or two more on that subject, because young people too frequently, and often fatally, are apt to mistake that character for that of a man of pleasure, whereas, there are not in the world two characters more different. A rake is a composition of all the lowest, most ignoble, degrading, and shameful vices.… A man of pleasure, though not always so scrupulous as he should be, and as one day he will wish he had been, refines at least his pleasures by taste, accompanies them with decency, and enjoys them with dignity. Few men can be a man of pleasure, every man may be a rake. (195)

Fielding too alludes to this revised vision of libertinism. In conjunction with his investigation of the semantic instability of terms like virtue and prudence, Fielding offers perhaps the archetypal example of the evolving libertinism in his Tom Jones, his taxonomic "good-natur'd Libertine" (962) who continues to subscribe to libertine elements like the disruption enabled by social privilege, power, appetite, alcohol, and sexuality, but with the recognition that excess in their usage, once held to be subversively normative, has been left behind. Fielding's new libertine characterization is closely aligned with his sense of the true meaning of good nature. In his essay "On the Characters of Men," he explains that "Good-nature is that benevolent and amiable Temper of Mind, which disposes us to feel the Misfortunes, and enjoy the Happiness of others; and consequently pushes us on to promote the latter and prevent the former; and that without any abstract Contemplation on the Beauty of Virtue, and without the Allurements or Terrors of Religion" (*Miscellanies* 158).

Even as he comes to function as the hero of the last third of the novel, Belford continues to self-identify with libertinism.

As we will see, Fielding seems quite happy to acknowledge the flawed and false role of the institution of the Church in controlling the individual, and his *Tom Jones* makes clear that he finds the new good-natured libertinism to be a powerfully attractive heroic quality. More surprisingly, Samuel Richardson's morally and religiously conservative opus *Clarissa* (1747–48) ultimately reaches much the same conclusion.[15] While the most extreme libertine in the novel, the villain Lovelace, must die for his assault on Clarissa Harlowe, the novel's two other dominant libertine figures, John Belford and Colonel Morden, continue in the tradition of good-natured libertinism that seems unavoidably to have permeated Richardson's attempts at verisimilitude in his representations of heroic masculinity. Even as he comes to function as the hero of the last third of the novel, Belford continues to self-identify with libertinism. Long after he has begun his friendship with the dying Clarissa, he writes to Lovelace of "you and I, and our brother rakes" and "we rakes and libertines" (6: 403). He gains as much pleasure from his position of knowledge and power over Lovelace late in the novel as he does from his voyeuristic involvement in the early machinations of Lovelace's power over Clarissa. Belford never explicitly surrenders his self-construction as the libertine, but, in direct contradiction to Richardson's avowed desire to disprove the theory that a reformed rake makes the best husband, he is rewarded with marriage to Lovelace's beautiful, witty, and passionate cousin Charlotte.

Morden flaunts his links to the privilege of libertinism much less energetically than do Lovelace's circle, but his first letter to Clarissa tacitly makes the admission in his acknowledgement that he is in no position to judge Lovelace, in his knowledge of libertine discourse, in his association with Lovelace in Rome, and in his implied parallel between himself and those libertines who pay a moral price for their travel through the Continent. After Morden's admission of his only partly honest liberties with women and his outburst against the disingenuous parson/spy Mr Brand, Lovelace writes to Belford: "his contempt of the parsons is a certain sign that he is one of *us*" (7: 282). Though we must automatically take into account Lovelace's potential bias, he has much evidence on which to base his assertion.

Even disregarding for the moment the powerful attractiveness that Lovelace communicated to readers (which distressed Richardson enough to add villainies and damning footnotes to the second and third editions of *Clarissa*), it is clear that the two heroic male presences in the novel are

15 For a full consideration of the tacit proselytizing of the libertine hero in the characters of Belford and Morden in *Clarissa,* see Potter, "A Certain Sign that He is One of Us."

interesting not only for their reformations or moral imperatives, but also for the evidence they offer of the almost necessary presence of the ambiguity of libertine privilege, disruption, and power in the eighteenth-century novel. *Clarissa,* like many didactic novels of the period, is generically distinguished from moral and religious contemplation or the epistolary conduct book at least in part by the narrative energy fostered by the presence of the libertine heroes and villain, characters that even Richardson's moral outrage could not keep from the position of power, status, and magnetic attractiveness in his fictional world that they occupied in the culture that surrounded him. A part of the libertine was self-construction, a narrative of the individual created for public consumption; it is perhaps only to be expected that those same narratives—so widely a part of cultural dialogue on truth, virtue, and identity—would cross over into the novel.

Those narratives appear directly enough in Fielding's *Tom Jones* that they need not be enumerated here, but even outside of content, Fielding's work offers evidence for an acknowledgement of the role of libertinism in the rise of the novel. Even as Martin Battestin maintains his thesis of Fielding as latitudinarian moralist throughout his biographical opus, for example, he acknowledges Fielding's libertine roots in a most energetic sexuality, membership in a group of free-thinkers and young libertines, and in his thoughtful rejections of many elements of entrenched social and moral dogma. Battestin's chapter on Fielding's years as a playwright, in fact, is titled, "Playwright and Libertine." And while we obviously cannot equate the narrative persona with the author, Fielding's narrators very specifically embody certain libertine qualities. This sort of narrative libertinism is also utilized by earlier libertine parents of the novel, but it is Fielding and his intrusive narrators who make its significance clearest. As the narrator of *Joseph Andrews* (1742), for example, affirms his creative power in asserting that he has founded a "Species of writing which I have affirmed to be hitherto unattempted in our language" (10), he asserts his originality, his superior ability, and his privileged state as he compares his work to other popular forms of narrative (18). At one point Fielding's narrator even tacitly equates himself to God, as Mr Wilson intones, "I am thankful to the great Author of all Things for the Blessings I here enjoy" (224).[16] At other times the narrator makes clear that any sense of superiority that the reader may have in his or her encounters with the fallible characters of the novel is

16 McKeon notes this tendency as well, pointing out the connection of "the perpetual association of providence with the more manifest power of the author" (407).

granted only by the more powerful and more privileged omniscient narrator, who chooses to reveal information only as he deems it to be necessary to the reader's limited understanding. This tactic of establishing a narrative discourse above that which the reader can access is made particularly clear in the belated explanation of Joseph's arduous and so far ridiculous defense of his chastity:

> It is an Observation sometimes made, that to indicate our Idea of a simple Fellow, we say, he is easily to be seen through: Nor do I believe it a more improper Denotation of a simple Book. Instead of applying this to any particular Performance, we chuse rather to remark the contrary in this History, where the Scene opens itself by small degrees, and he is a sagacious Reader who can see two Chapters before him.
>
> For this reason, we have not hitherto mentioned a Matter which now seems necessary to be explained.... Be it known then, that in the same Parish where this Seat stood there lived a young Girl.... (48)

The libertine narrator manipulates the reader's understanding of the fictionalized world in the same way that the historical libertine strives to subvert popular understandings of presumed prediscursive standards of religion, morality, society, and sexuality.[17] The libertine narrator relishes his or her control over information and representation, alternately assuming the roles of the naif and the omniscient to establish further both his control over all elements of his or her own fictionalized community and the implied ability to ignore or manipulate the presumed values of the culture that such a fictionalized community purports to represent. The power to problematize social values is inherent in representing a society to itself, and that subversive capacity is not lost on the libertine writers who create their worlds as they create their genre.

Like Behn, Manley, and Haywood, then, Fielding declines to represent or to be generically influenced by literary and social prescriptions. These four central figures of the novel's history all challenge humanity's belief in

17 Fielding had already investigated the capacity of the epistolary form to enable self-representation and privileged self-positioning in his deconstruction of modes of fictive "truth" in *Shamela,* and he had also taken on the question of virtue, of culturally prescriptive morality and its separation from any innate system of restraint and desire in his essays. In *The Champion,* for example, he had argued that "Virtue is not that coy, nor that cruel mistress she is represented.... Virtue forbids not the satisfying our appetites, virtue forbids us only to glut and destroy them" (24 January 1739/40).

its own rationalism, emerging with a libertine skepticism; they all examine the distinctions between individual and public moral codes, rejecting the capacity of the rabble to foster regulatory mechanisms that infect the agency of the privileged individual; they all assume this privileged status, beyond the reach of social or literary limitation, using that status to establish sexual, philosophical, and intellectual originality; and all of these things work together to enable a generic individualism that reflects in content, character, and form the libertine subculture and the libertine codes of privilege, voice, and originality, as well as the power to manipulate their cultures by making them public.

Behn, Manley, Davys, Haywood, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding—all of these parents of the novel engage discourses of libertinism in central works of their own canons. In acts both conservative and disruptive formally and culturally, they create explicitly libertine novels, novels braced by contact with libertine discourse, early feminist novels decrying libertine victimization of women, and even didactic novels determined to root out libertine sentiment. In intriguing ways, then, the libertine has long been an unrecognized figure in the many-threaded carpet of the history of the English novel. In their recognition of the constructed nature of the identities and voices proffered for public consumption, libertines had long manipulated or rejected outright what Gallagher terms the binary of truth telling and lying, paradoxically using their positions of privilege to disrupt the cultural system that granted them their status. It seems clear that the libertine's creation of a model for concurrent acknowledgement and rejection of a *status quo* contributed to eighteenth-century England's opening of the cultural space for the new imaginative genre that used realism as its formal sign. Alongside the rise of the middle class and the shifting of the market, the gendering of public voice, history, didacticism, romance, and questions of realism, truth, and virtue, the highly individualist discourse of libertinism deserves recognition amid the social and intellectual dialogues that fostered the novel.

Acknowledgements

This work has been supported by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and McMaster University Special Collections, and the Clark Library at UCLA.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, Mikhail. "Discourse in the Novel." *Modern Literary Theory*. Ed. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh. 4th ed. London: Arnold, 2001. 256–64.

Ballaster, Ros. *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1992.

Battestin, Martin. *Henry Fielding: A Life.* London: Routledge, 1989.

Behn Aphra. *The Fair Jilt.* London: R. Holt, 1688.

———. *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister.* Ed. Janet Todd. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1993.

———. *The Rover.* Ed. Anne Russell. Peterborough: Broadview, 1999.

Brown, Homer. "Prologue: Why the Story of the Origin of the (English) Novel is an American Romance (If Not the Great American Novel)." *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*. Ed. Deidre Lynch and William Beatty Warner. Durham: Duke UP, 1996. 11–43.

Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of. *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son and Others.* Ed. R.K. Root. New York: Everyman, 1929.

Craft, Catherine. "Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn's *Fair Vow Breaker,* Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*, and Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote.*" *Modern Language Review* 86.4 (1991): 821–38.

Davis, Lennard J. "Reconsidering Origins: How Novel are Theories of the Novel?" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12.2-3 (2000): 479–99.

Davys, Mary. "The Accomplish'd Rake, or Modern Fine Gentleman." *Four Before Richardson: Selected English Novels, 1720–1727.* Ed. W.H. McBurney. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1963. 233–373.

———. "The Reformed Coquet." *Popular Fiction by Women 1660–1730.* Ed. Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.

Defoe, Daniel. *Moll Flanders.* Ed. David Blewett. London: Penguin, 1989.

———. *Robinson Crusoe.* Ed. Angus Ross. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965.

———. *Roxana.* Ed. David Blewett. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982.

Doody, Margaret Anne. *The True Story of the Novel.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1996.

Fielding, Henry. *Joseph Andrews.* Ed. Martin C. Battestin. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1967.

———. *Miscellanies by Henry Fielding Volume One.* Ed. Henry Knight Miller. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972.

———. *Tom Jones.* Ed. Martin Battestin. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1975.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

Gallagher, Catherine. *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1994.

Charles Gildon. "Introduction." *All the Histories and Novels Written by the Late Ingenious Mrs Behn.* 3rd ed. London: Samuel Briscoe, 1698.

Haywood, Eliza. "Fantomina, or Love in a Maze." *Popular Fiction by Women 1660–1730*. Ed. Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 226–248.

———. *The Masqueraders: or, Fatal Curiosity*. 2 vols. London: 1724 and 1725.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan.* Ed. C.B. Macpherson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981.

Hunter, J. Paul. *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction.* New York: Norton, 1990.

Mandeville, Bernard. *The Fable of the Bees.* Ed. Phillip Harth. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.

Mazarin, Hortense Mancini, Duchess of. *The Memoires of the Dutchess Mazarine.* London: William Cademan, 1676.

McKeon, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987.

Novak, Maximillian. "Gendered Cultural Criticism and the Rise of the Novel: The Case of Defoe." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12.2-3 (2000): 239–52.

Potter, Tiffany. "'A Certain Sign that He is One of Us': *Clarissa*'s Other Libertines." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 11.4 (July 1999): 403–20.

———. "Decorous Disruption: The Cultural Voice of Mary Davys." *Eighteenth-Century Women.* Ed. Linda Troost. New York: AMS, 2001. 63–93.

———. "Glory in the Triumph: The Female Libertine." *TransAtlantic Crossings II: Sexuality & Textuality in the Eighteenth Century*. Ed. Don Nichol. St. John's: Memorial UP, 1999. 75–88.

———. "'A God-like Sublimity of Passion': Eliza Haywood's Libertine Consistency." *The Eighteenth-Century Novel* 1 (2000): 95–126.

———. *Honest Sins: Georgian Libertinism and the Plays and Novels of Henry Fielding.* Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1999.

Reeve, Clara. *The Progress of Romance.* New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930.

Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady.* Ed. Florian Stuber. New York: AMS, 1990.

Richetti, John J. *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700–1739.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1969.

Rogers, Pat. *Defoe: The Critical Heritage.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.

Rosvall, Toivo David. *The Mazarine Legacy: The Life of Hortense Mancini: Duchess Mazarin.* New York: Viking, 1969.

Schofield, Mary Anne. *Eliza Haywood.* Boston: Twayne, 1985.

Spencer, Jane. *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Todd, Janet. *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction 1660–1800.* London: Virago, 1989.

Turner, James G. "Lovelace and the Paradoxes of Libertinism." *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays.* Ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. 70–88, 273–75.

———. "Properties of Libertinism." *Eighteenth-Century Life* 9.3 (1985): 75–87.

Underwood, Dale. *Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1957.

Warner, William B. "Formulating Fiction: Romancing the General Reader in Early Modern Britain." *Cultural Institutions of the Novel.* Ed. Deidre Lynch and William Beatty Warner. Durham: Duke UP, 1996.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1964.

Weber, Harold. *The Restoration Rake Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England.* Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986.