

DISORDERED BODIES AND BODIES-POLITIC IN BRITISH
ENLIGHTENMENT CULTURE, 1720-1740

BY

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Introduction

Prosperity transformed Britain in the 1720s and '30s. These were decades of astounding economic growth. Exports rose from £6.9 million to £12.7 million between 1720 and 1750.¹ The national product climbed from £57.5 million in 1720 to £64.1 million in 1740: an increase of 11.5%.² Evidence of this prosperity was everywhere, and especially so in the greater London area. New buildings mushroomed and the city was flooded with foreign goods. At the Haymarket and at Covent Garden, extravagant masquerades were held with aplomb. Ships clustered chaotically on the docks and quays of the Thames, causing one contemporary writer to proclaim it to be "*the island of ships*."³ And the city itself sprawled and expanded, its tentacles extending into Middlesex and Surrey, as John Strype recorded in his 1720 map of the city.⁴

¹ Jeremy Black, *An Illustrated History of Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1793* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), 47

² Michael Jubb, "Economic Policy and Economic Development," in Jeremy Black, ed., *Britain in the Age of Walpole: Problems in Focus* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 121

³ [Anon] *Letters from a Moor at London to His Friend at Tunis. Containing an Account of His Journey Through England* (London: J. Batley and J. Wood, 1736), 29

⁴ "If in 1715 London was composed of a series of contiguous communities spread along the Thames, each of which was within easy reach of open fields, by the 1760s London had begun to escape the magnetic attraction of the river and to make ever-deeper inroads into rural Middlesex and Surrey." See Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, "London, 1715-1760", *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 17 June 2008)



Figure 1 John Styrpe, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster...* Written at First in the Year MDXCVIII By John Stowe (London: A. Churchill, 1720)

The effects of prosperity were compounded, in this period, by another ineffable yet formidable force – peace. The Peace of Utrecht in 1713 had effectually ended the War of Austrian Succession, and augured, in its wake, decades of geo-political incubation – years that are exceptional for the absence of war. Peace, in this period, also began to acquire the status of ideology. Peace was “the Health of human Nature” Eustace Budgell wrote in 1732 – those who “can delight in War, might with more Humanity rejoice in the Calamities of a Prison or a Pest-House.”⁵ Budgell’s use of peace is all the more significant for the fact

⁵ [Anon], *The Natural Probability of a Lasting Peace in Europe* (London: J. Peele, 1732), 5, 9. This treatise has been attributed to Budgell.

that he was not trying to extol the merits of peace – he was *using* peace, the merits of which were obvious, in order to score a political point.

The city, like the peace, was enthusiastically celebrated in the 1720s and 1730s. Britons (not just those who lived in London) marveled about what it had become and what it represented. “In the first decades of the eighteenth century,” as Larry Stewart has argued, “City visions of mercantilism challenged the grandeur of an uncertain Court.”⁶ London was a city of societies and corporations that advanced trade and promoted the public good, according to a 1720 tract called *The Compleat Tradesman*.⁷ It was “the mighty *Rendezvouz* of *Nobility, Gentry, Courtiers, Divines, Lawyers, Physicians, Merchants, Seamen*, and all kind of excellent *Artificers*, of the most refined Wits, and most excellent Beauties.”⁸ “The greatest Advantage of *London*,” glowed another description of the city, “is its vast Traffick to all Parts of the World, carried on by Merchants who, for Improvement of Trade, are divided into 62 Companies; being so many Bodies politick that enjoy great Priveleges granted them by former Kinds.”⁹ Even Richard Bradley, who had painted, in one tract, a dystopian picture of scarcity and destitution, flattered Hans Sloane in the preface to this treatise by declaring

⁶ Larry Stewart, “Other Centres of Calculation, Or, Where the Royal Society Didn’t Count: Commerce, Coffee-Houses and Natural Philosophy in Early Modern London,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 32:3, Did the Royal Society Matter in the Eighteenth Century? (Jun., 1999), pp. 133-153, 135

⁷ [Anon] *The Compleat Tradesman: Or, the Exact Dealers Daily Companion* (London: T. Norris, 1720), 22

⁸ *ibid*, 24

⁹ Joseph Pote, *The Foreigner’s Guide: Or a Necessary and Instructive Companion Both for the Foreigner and the Native, in their Tour Through the Cities of London and Westminster* (London: J. Joliffe, 1740), 70

him the representative and chief magistrate of “the most famous, most opulent, and most trading City this Day on Earth.”¹⁰

Peace on the world stage was no insurance against disquiet at home. The 1720s witnessed a notable increase in small-scale rioting and crowd behavior.¹¹ The “crime wave” might have been a fiction, but there *was* an escalation of crime in the greater metropolitan area. “Crime in the metropolis was more extensive and more violent and better reported than elsewhere,” John Beattie has written; “It seems apparent that much of the evidence that the law was failing to deter crime and the determination to find alternative weapons arose from the metropolis...an urban world that was finding the problems of crime and social order increasingly difficult to contain.”¹² The expansion of the press heightened the public’s awareness of crime, vagrancy, and widespread poverty.

There was, at the same time, an ideological reaction to what were perceived as the morally disordering effects of prosperity. “As Industry produceth Wealth, so Wealth should produce Vice, and Vice Ruin,” George Berkeley wrote in 1721 – capturing, as he did, one of the period’s most formative tensions.¹³ Moral degeneration was thus described as an aspect of the very prosperity that others were celebrating. Peace, like prosperity, was blamed for moral decline. The Ancient Romans, according to one 1713 commentator, had grown “distemper’d and out of Order, when they enjoy’d Peace and Repose, and

¹⁰ Richard Bradley, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Late Severe Winter, the Scarcity and Dearthness of Provisions, on the Occasion of the Distemper Raging in Several Remote Parts of England* (London: J. Roberts, 1729), preface

¹¹ Robert Shoemaker, “The London ‘Mob’ in the Early Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of British Studies* 26:3 (1987), 273-304

¹² John Beattie, “London Crime and the Making of the ‘Bloody Code’, 1689-1718,” 70

¹³ George Berkeley, *An Essay Towards Preventing the Ruine of Great Britain* (London, 1721), 27

their hostile Commotions were over.”¹⁴ Peace persistently raised fears of weakness. “For tho’ almost all the other Nations in *Europe* have been alternately at War,” opined the author of a 1728 treatise on the Thames, “we have wisely contended ourselves with a Succession of Treaties, notwithstanding the repeated Insults to which we have been exposed.” That “wisely” was meant as ironic is suggested by the next statement:

But, happily for us all, our Blood and Spirits were suffered again to circulate towards the End of last Summer, which possibly may prevent the good People of *England* from being frozen into Statues.¹⁵

In 1720s Britain as in the French *Belle Epoque*, specters of degeneration precipitated feelings of cultural crisis.¹⁶

Neither prosperity nor peace solved what might have been the most terrifying and insuperable of all problems: sickness. The extent of these fears is suggested, for instance, by the minutes of the charity schools, from which vermin-bearing children were routinely expelled.¹⁷ Commercial and urban growth accelerated the path of sickness, and the explosion of print (following the 1695 repeal of the Licensing Act) greatly increased the pace with which this fact was brought to the peoples’ attention. Death-by-gin was, for instance, recorded in the Bills of Mortality and sung about the streets: “The last War was so abstemious as not to devour above half a score Thousand of our Countrymen in

¹⁴ John Edwards, *Theologia Reformata* (London, 1713, 1726), 213

¹⁵ Icedore Frostiface, *An Account of all the Principal Frosts for Above an Hundred Years Past: With Political Remarks and Poetical Descriptions. To which are Added, ...A Frigid Essay Upon Frost-Fair* (London: C. Corbett, 1740), 9

¹⁶ Robert A. Nye, “Degeneration and the Medical Model of Cultural Crisis in the French *Belle Epoque*,” in Seymour Drescher, David Sabeian, and Allan Sharlin, eds, *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of George L. Mosse* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982), 19-41

¹⁷ MSS Guildhall Library, “Peter Joye’s Charity School: trustees minute book, 1707-44, 1705” MSS01706, q9847910, Pupil Records

a whole Campaign,” observed one 1729 author, “but what is that to the Triumphs of *Physick* and the *Bottle*, within the Bills of Mortality, which are abundantly illustrated in those elegant *Weekly Records* composed to the Honour of *Esculapius*, and sung or said by the Company of Parish Clerks in and round this Metropolis.”¹⁸ While these fears might have been expressed in hyperbolic terms, they were not ultimately irrational. The fear of sickness was real: it cannot summarily be dismissed as the misdirected anxiety of a society undergoing rapid advancement. The English were rightfully frightened by disease, sickness, and depopulation. “The waste of life recorded in the Bills was at its worst since the days of the plague between 1727 and 1750”, Dorothy George observed in 1951 and historical scholarship in intervening years has only added detail to this picture.¹⁹ These fears, of course, were not specific to the period or the early eighteenth-century metropolis. But they were, in these years, constantly being particularized. John Bellers warned his parliamentary readers of a “frightful Army of DISEASES” that were ready to “hasten the Reign, and the Dominion of the *King of Terrors*, and Attack all Parties, without respect of Persons.”²⁰ Bellers cannot be too easily dismissed as alarmist. Venereal disease, for instance, had long plagued Londoners, but it was not until the eighteenth-century that what citizens called this “foul disease” had become what we might call *endemic*.²¹ The

¹⁸ *Hell Upon Earth: Or the Town in an Uproar* (London: J. Roberts and A. Dodd, 1729), 11

¹⁹ Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1951, 1965), 25; Mark Jenner, “Death, Decomposition and Dechristianization? Public Health and Church Burial in Eighteenth-Century England,” *English Historical Review* 70:487 (2005), 618

²⁰ John Bellers, *An Essay Towards the Improvement of Physick* (London: J. Morphew, 1714), 1

²¹ Kevin Siena, *Venereal Disease, Hospitals, and the Urban Poor: London’s “Foul Wards,” 1600-1800* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004)

fear of death was ubiquitous. “A Thousand Causes, invisible to us, act upon the human Body,” it was written in 1750: “Death lurks under our Feet, hovers over our Heads, and surrounds us in all Directions.”²²

Britain, in the 1720s and 1730s, was thus a nation at once prosperous and unhealthy, politically peaceful and socially chaotic, culturally vibrant and morally anxious. It is then hardly surprising that Britons, in these years, were tugged in different directions: towards optimism and pessimism, hope and cynicism, despair and ebullience. Some believed that commercial growth boded well for social order. Several of those who foresaw inexorable commercial growth believed in its progressively civilizing effect on the people. But others sensed that commerce would only be beneficial so long as it did not result in luxury, which would be enervating. Commerce and industry led to urban growth, but proponents of commercial and industrial ideologies often explicitly opposed the epiphenomena of commerce and industry, as embodied in the city. The “mind” of this nation was thus similar in kind to the late eighteenth-century mind described by Boyd Hilton: “not an easy mind to characterize, for there was no consensus, but rather a ‘war of ideas’ which left most thinking men ambivalent.”²³ There was no consensus, in part, because attitudes towards wealth, power, and order were fluctuating and unresolved. Consensus, moreover, could only be elusive when different things struck different observers. “The nation seems peaceable and easy,” William Stout wrote it in his 1725 diary.

²² Roger Pickering, *An Address to Those Who Have Either Retired, Or Intend to Leave the Town Under the Imaginary Apprehension of the Approaching Shock of Another Earthquake: Being the Substance of a Sermon Delivered on the Last Lord’s Day* (London: W. Johnhston, 1750), 25

²³ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: the Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3

Stout had probably failed to notice, or was unimpressed by the significance of the furor unleashed by City Elections Act, instituted that year by the power-hungry Robert Walpole.²⁴

Different views could form because the nation – and, in particular, the city – really *was* a land of great differences. “While the commercialization and urbanization of early eighteenth-century society clearly facilitated the growth and prosperity of the middle class, it was attended by significant economic and social dislocation,” write Lee Davidson and Tim Hitchcock.²⁵ At once, the city was home to merchants and paupers, Europe’s most vibrant stock market and heavily stocked debtors’ prisons, defiantly irreverent crime narratives and a crime wave of unprecedented insuperability. “The city,” as David Harvey has written, “is the high point of human achievement...But it is also the site of squalid human failure, the lightning rod of the profoundest human discontents, and the arena of social and political conflict.”²⁶ The Enlightenment, I suggest in this dissertation, was an elaborate and multi-pronged effort at diffusing this “lightning rod”, these “profoundest human discontents.”

The Argument

This dissertation discovers a pathway to the Enlightenment that originates in the anxious ambivalence about the city described in the introductory pages. “There is a discontent in the Western world that does not stem from economic

²⁴ J. Harland, editor, *Autobiography of William Stout* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1851), 107

²⁵ Tim Hitchcock and Lee Davidson, eds, *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems* (Stroud: New York, 1992), xxix

²⁶ David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 229

want or from the threat of war,” Fritz Stern has remarked: “rather it springs from dissatisfaction with life in an urban and industrialized culture.”²⁷ This, as I reveal, was a discontent abundantly manifested in the early eighteenth-century. The best things about modernity – prosperity, freedom, growth, change – were directly and causally related to its most frightful manifestations: social disorder, political discontent, inequality, fear. It was, moreover, a productive discontent. Fears of the city and of processes associated with modern, urban metropolitan life – some of them political – were crucial to the formation of sensibilities that might legitimately be classified as enlightened. Herein lies one of several paths to understanding the nature of the Enlightenment.

The idea of the body and its analog, the body-politic, is used, in this dissertation, to rethink the origins of the Enlightenment in Britain. Images of disordered and disorderly bodies were ubiquitous in the cultural life of the period; they serve, for this reason, as effective windows into some formative mentalities, sensibilities, and ideologies. Metropolitan growth, commercial life, and a vibrantly democratic political culture all exacerbated these fears. In their intensified state, these fears were productive of enlightened sensibilities. Chapter One considers a valorization of interdependence – that between people, states, cities, and natural systems – and a corresponding investment in equity, balance, and restraint. Chapter Two explores the combined enthusiasm for activity, happiness, and a skeptical pursuit of certainty that converged around the fear of the organ, disease, and emotional problem known as “the spleen.” Chapter Three identifies the intuitive embracing of some of the relatively secular forms of

²⁷ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: a Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), xxiii

restraint that emerged in response to the temporal realities of the growing metropolis: an alienated navigation, an individualistic self-preservation, sexual control, concealment, sociability, and venting. Chapter Four recreates the culturally entrenchment of the commercialistic sensibility by following the political strategies of the Patriot Opposition in the 1730s, who claimed the minds of the nation by aggressive propagating distorted images of the strong and suffering type. Chapter Five explores the reaction to the process described in Chapter Four, as manifested in an escalating interest in the mind and its functions, prime amongst which was that of thinking – perhaps the most pivotal of all enlightened sensibilities.

To investigate the formation of these ideals, I traverse public debates over a wide range of topics, including medicine, bridge-building, foreign policy, grain distribution, and political skullduggery. Each chapter details a different reaction to modernity and hence each traces change over time. Combined, the chapters form into a series of layered and overlapping maps of the period's mentalities. Concerns with the state of the body and the body-politic were like common threads that ran through the disparate parts of the period's cultural fabric. Here I connect them together in ways that they have never been before.

The South Sea Bubble and War of Austrian Succession are the "natural" historical boundaries that justify the worth of considering the period between 1720 and 1740 as a single coherent whole. There is symmetry in this periodization. Robert Walpole's prodigal rise in 1720 – out of the spoils of the decaying and, quite literally, *dying* Whig establishment – throws into sharp relief the anti-ministerial hysteria that merged so insidiously with the pro-war jingoism of 1739, and coalesced into the mass adulation of Walpole's penultimate

foil Admiral James Vernon in 1740. There is also continuity. For instance, the perceptions of the interdependence of the individual and the collective good unleashed by the South Sea Bubble in 1720 went on to shape David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* in 1739. By placing the magnifying glass against two critical decades, I am able to uncover an enormous body of texts that have been untouched or barely mentioned, and bring them to bear upon some critical concerns – interesting not just to historians of eighteenth-century Britain, but all manners of scholars interested in the Enlightenment, the city, democratic practice, liberal ideals, and, of course, the body.

Terms

For my argument to be clear, I must first define my terms and parameters. What *was* the body in eighteenth-century Britain? Where did the body end and the mind or the soul begin? When I refer to the body I refer to the physical body. But it is impossible, when writing of this period, to extricate the body from the rest of the human person – the mind, the body, and the soul were certainly often conceived as separate entities, but they were also repeatedly described as connected by such shared elements as the “spirit” or the “passions.” The body was more than just a *medical* entity: it was a bundle of temperaments, impulses, and processes each of which occupied a different place on the material-spiritual spectrum. For a body to be *disordered* could thus mean a number of things. A disordered body (or body-politic) could be physically ill, emaciated, bloated, or otherwise enervated. It could also be imbalanced: excessively passionate, or insufficiently respondent to the dictates of the soul and/or the mind. Such a vision of the body is designed to be inclusive as well as expansive. “Whoever

will civilize Men, and establish them in a Body Politick,” Bernard Mandeville had declared, “must be thoroughly acquainted with all the Passions and Appetites, Strength and Weaknesses of their Frame.”²⁸ The passions, appetites, strengths, and weaknesses of the body were interesting not just to physicians or anatomists but also to theologians, philosophers, social critics, newspaper hacks, political propagandists, dramatists, novelists, writers of conduct manuals, and poets – the list goes on and on. The body was of interest to those who dabbled in all these professions (and this was an age of much dabbling). All of these professions together helped construct the visions of the body available to those who endeavored to “civilize” men and establish them into a body-politic, to use Mandeville’s words.

The body-politic, like the body, needs to be defined – not so vaguely that it encompasses everything, but also not so narrowly so its outlines are obscured and its evocative power underestimated. I consider a wide variety of cases in which the order of natural bodies was thought to hold implications, be they normative or prescriptive, for social or political order. On the one hand, the body-politic was a metaphor between the body and the state. On the other hand, it was a reference to the multitude of bodies that collectively constituted the polity. In either case, the nature of those bodies – the extent of their labor power or the temperance of their behavior – had corresponding implications for the health, strength, and wealth of the polity.

Bodies and bodies-politic served at least three different functions. *First*, the idea of the body was a *heuristic device* – it was a conceptual map or a meta-

²⁸ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices Publick Benefits. Containing, Several Discourses, to Demonstrate, that Human Frailties, ... May be Turn’d to the Advantage of the Civil Society* (London: J. Roberts, 1714), 194

theory, a tool with which to think about the widest range of problems. *Second*, bodies were *signs*. The corpulent and volatile bodies that ranged the streets of London, the skeletal corpses of the rural citizens who had starved to death after a particularly brutal winter: all were seen as symptoms of abstract and large-scale processes. *Third*, bodies thought to be symptomatic were also often turned into *scapegoats*. Fears of the city, prosperity, violence, and immorality were all, at various points, projected onto the figure of the disordered body and body-politic. The peoples' bodies, according to this mode of argument, were more than just signs of the nation's problems – they were the *source* of the problems. By scapegoating the body-politic, Britons tapped into deep-set uncertainties about nature, politics, and religion – uncertainties that had long converged around the figure of the disordered body.

The body, then, was an object of debate and an instrument of debate. Britons, in this period, argued about body-related matters and used the body to make charged ideological statements about politics, society, religion, the city, trade, and knowledge. By invoking it, rhetoricians could appeal to a wide range of readers. It is for this reason that it was so common to debates concerning a wide range of phenomena – from labor to consumption to irreligion – that concerned Britons in these ideologically transformative years. Commercial and urban growth perpetually catalyzed a synthesis between theories about the body (circulation, venting, spleen) and feelings about the body (that they were growing weak, that they were too violent, that there were far too many of them in the city). Fears of the body and ideas of the body thus combined to form into the Enlightenment ideals surveyed in the following chapters. The promulgation of these ideals led to the perpetual diffusion of the fears that had gone into their

making. Together, the chapters of my dissertation will show how fears of the disordered body rippled through the period's most critical social debates; these debates, in turn, perpetually reinforced the body's rhetorical powers – as a fear and as a flexible unit of analysis.

The Enlightenment, like the body, must be defined. In this dissertation, it is defined as *the concentrated historical actualization of the belief that intellectual production and, in particular, a critical engagement with evolving realities was required in order to effect positive change in the temporal world*. Mine is not a controversial definition of Enlightenment – I have arrived upon it by fusing together what other historians have identified as the essence of the Enlightenment. “The intellectual coherence of the Enlightenment” may be found, John Robertson has argued, “in the commitment to understanding, and hence to advancing, the causes and conditions of human betterment in this world.”²⁹ Robertson has continued:

There was a core of original thinking to the Enlightenment...Within that core the understanding of human betterment was pursued across a number of interdependent lines of enquiry.³⁰

While Robertson sees Enlightenment as a *commitment*, Daniel Gordon envisions it as an *energy* or *spirit*:

“The Age of Reason” and “the Enlightenment” are...two terms we have inherited...to describe the creative energy of the eighteenth century. In fact, we have inherited the spirit of the period as well as its self-descriptive terms; for we continue to live in a time that appreciates independence, criticism, and change. Who does not dream of achieving security and fame through one's own efforts, like Voltaire the self-made man of letters? Who does not desire to see the world become a happier place, like Voltaire the humanitarian reformer? And who does not believe

²⁹ John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 28

³⁰ *ibid*, 28-29

that reason is an instrument of progress, like Voltaire the implacable critic of prejudice and superstition?³¹ Gordon's confidence in the currency of the enlightened ethos is questionable, or at least outdated – clearly today there are many who do not dream, desire, or believe as Voltaire did. But the definition of Enlightenment contained within this passage – a time of “creative energy”, one that “appreciates independence, criticism, and change” – still holds. I do not see Gordon's and Robertson's visions as antithetical: the Enlightenment was at once characterized by an energetic spirit of intellectual exploration and commitment to positive change. Gordon's and Robertson's definition of the Enlightenment might be enhanced by that forwarded by Peter Gay, who identified in the *philosophes'* work a sort of all-encompassing *engagement* with the world in all its bewildering complexities:

While their view of the world was critical, and especially in religion, disruptive, they knew and loved the world they wished to change...When they denounced civilization, they did so urbanely...The *philosophes*, then, much as they wished to change it, were at home in their world...Their attachment was strengthened by their association with a spectrum of would-be *philosophes*, half-*philosophes*, or Christians liberal enough to tolerate, or even to enjoy, men whose doctrines they rejected.³² Most of the writers I consider were the latter: “would-be *philosophes*” and “half-*philosophes*,” to whom we might attribute the spirited burst of intellectual activity that occurred between 1720 and 1740.

Unlike Robertson's, Gordon's, and Gay's Enlightenments, mine takes place in Britain and, primarily, in England, with a special emphasis upon London. The capital city, as Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, had described it to the clergy of his diocese, was like a “Fountain” from which “Good and Evil” were “deriv'd to all Parts of the Kingdom,” which was one of the reasons why it

³¹ Daniel Gordon, “Introduction” in Voltaire, *Candide* ed, (New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 1999), 4

³² Peter Gay, *The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 119

needed to be “a *Pattern* of Order and Disciplin to the whole Nation.”³³ London truly was a fountain of cultural production: it was not until later in the century that Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Dublin presses really began to compete. So I must, at the outset, acknowledge that the “British Enlightenment” of which I speak was, to a great extent, an *English* phenomenon. It was not exclusively English, which is why I use the word “British.” Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature* is, for instance, a key text, to which I return in almost all of my chapters. Many of the English thinkers whose work I cover were interested in changing all of Britain, identified as British, and presumed to speak for all of Britain. In the course of the dissertation, I will distinguish between what was British or English about any given aspect of Enlightenment: for instance, I will use “English” when speaking of the spleen, as it was the *Englishness* of the spleen that was a matter of such concern; but I will use British when writing of interdependence, as it was *Britain’s* unity that concerned writers on global interdependence.

The Scholarly Context

The idea of an English Enlightenment has witnessed somewhat of a resurgence in recent years. We now have a radical English Enlightenment of deists and freemasons, a “media-driven” Enlightenment of coffeehouses and pamphlet wars, an Enlightenment emerging from Locke, and another converging around Gibbon.³⁴ Perhaps most well known is the modern and metropolitan

³³ Edmund Gibson, *Directions Given by Edmund Lord Bishop of London to the Clergy of His Diocese* (London: S. Buckley, 1724), 4

³⁴ Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons, and Republicans* (London and Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1981), Justin Champion, *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696-1722* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), Jonathan

Enlightenment described by Roy Porter – a chaotic affair suffused with the pursuit of pleasure, sparkling with the variety of life, and trembling with the vibrancy of cultural ferment.³⁵ In bridging the history of the body with that of the Enlightenment, I build (as previously suggested) upon Porter's lifetime of work, as exemplified (but by no means restricted) to *Flesh in the Age of Reason*.³⁶ It is Porter, more than any other scholar, who has directed me to the many avenues of inquiry that comprise this dissertation. It is under Porter's inspiration that I have gone about uncovering new texts and identifying moments of cultural formation. But I also move beyond Porter in critical ways. In an otherwise laudatory review of Porter's *The Creation of the Modern World*, Margaret Jacob makes two points worth noting. First, Porter pays relatively little attention to the period between 1720 and 1760. Second, his Enlightened Britain has "little room for xenophobia, or racism, or class hatreds."³⁷ My own work focuses squarely upon this intervening period, neglected by Porter. And it explicitly links Enlightenment to these and similarly unsavory aspects of the eighteenth-century life. More so than Porter, my project is explicitly structured to delineate a

Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *The American Historical Review* (October, 2003)

<<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/108.4/sheehan.html>> (4 April 2008); John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and "Early Enlightenment" Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

³⁵ Roy Porter, "The Enlightenment in England" in Roy Porter and Miculas Teich, eds, *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: Norton, 2000)

³⁶ Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason: The Modern Foundations of Body and Soul* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004)

³⁷ Margaret Jacob, "Review: Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment (2000)" *Canadian Journal of History* IV (2002)

dialectic: the phoenix-like emergence of Enlightened sensibilities from fears, prejudices, and anxieties. In writing this dissertation I have immersed myself in negative feelings – from divisive debates over bridge building, to extended deliberations about the nature of shame in the modern metropolis, to the vicious and vitriolic pamphlet literature of 1733. This has sometimes made it difficult to imagine an Enlightenment in the making. But it is my firm conviction that we must gaze into the abyss before we can see things clearly. As rhetorical and emotional undercurrents, images of the body and the body-politic insinuate the existence of countervailing sensibilities that challenged the violence, venom, and vitriol that characterized the debates themselves. Feelings about restraint, interdependence, justice, and reason welled and surged in response to crisis, despair, and panic. Just as these debates shed light upon the usefulness of the body, the body, in turn, makes it possible to recreate the culture of the period in all of its complexity.

Enlightenment, in other words, was less like a bountiful sun beaming upon Elysian fields than a flickering light at the end of a dark and dangerous tunnel. And so we must confront the tunnel to imagine the Enlightenment. The British perpetually defined themselves in opposition to what they thought they were, had been, and could have been becoming. It is the English perception of England that helps explain how the prototypical Englishman of the mid-seventeenth-century – destructive, irascible, and antisocial – became, by the early nineteenth, industrious, reliable, and clubbable. It was, according to Paul Langford, military and economic success that accounts for this perceptual

change.³⁸ But by focusing upon two decades, I hope to show with greater clarity that the British (or English) obsession with restraint, balance, interdependence, and rationality was a response, at every level, to current and visceral specters of disorder. It was the growth of the political economy – the very factors identified by Langford as responsible for changing continental perceptions – that led to the growth of the city, the groundswell of these fears. These fears, as I show in my various chapters, were fodder for Enlightenment.

While Porter's Enlightenment has imprinted itself firmly upon the scholarly imagination, it is not without its detractors. Indeed, it has focused the effort to demolish the very notion of an English Enlightenment. "Roy Porter is wrong to talk of an English Enlightenment", was the subtitle to John Robertson's unambiguously-entitled article "Unenlightened England."³⁹ England, he contended, was just not backwards enough to be Enlightened:

Precisely because England was ahead, English thinkers lacked that incentive, and did not show the same intellectual ambition...it was because England was already a modern society that it did not participate in the Enlightenment. Precocious modernity pre-empted Enlightenment.⁴⁰ England, it is also suggested by Robertson, was missing "the emergence of a group of philosophers claiming public recognition on the grounds of the importance of their ideas for the conduct of government, economy and society."⁴¹ The idea of an English Enlightenment thus remains enormously contentious: perhaps even inflammatory: just by speaking of it, I am treading some very turbulent scholarly waters.

³⁸ Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

³⁹ John Robertson, "Unenlightened England," *Prospect* (December 21, 2000)

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ *ibid*

If this dissertation takes a different track from Robertson, it is partly for its empirical disagreement, but also because its foundational assumptions are entirely different. “English men and women of letters,” he writes, did not “lay claim to a position of intellectual leadership comparable with that assumed by their continental or even their Scottish counterparts. Instead they had to compete with writers and journalists of every level of talent and none in the great literary marketplace of London.”⁴² Here he suggests that England might have had a chance at Enlightenment if there was a clearer separation between intellectual and society. But it was, I suggest, precisely this spirit that enabled Enlightenment to happen at all. The Enlightenment described in this dissertation was not the work of one or two major thinkers – Mandeville and Hume do not replace Jonathan Israel’s Spinoza.⁴³ All of England participated. It is not, I believe, particularly relevant that those concerned for the betterment of the political order were not *leading* intellectuals (as Robertson insists they must be): there was, in this age of irony, cynicism, satire, and trenchant social critique, very little patience for the idea of a *leading* intellectual. We can hardly deprive a society of its Enlightenment for its antipathy to hierarchy. Enlightenment happened in England for precisely the reason that Robertson claims it did not: men and women of letters had to *compete*. Enlightenment happened because of English critics of England.

Enlightenment, it is secondly assumed by Robertson, was an intellectually progressive response to the absence of modernity, or to its imminence. “To adapt Roy Porter’s terms,” he writes, “there is a sense in which in England modernity

⁴² Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 42

⁴³ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001)

pre-empted Enlightenment. Most English men of letters were already confident of their liberty, and of enjoying the benefits of commerce; they evidently felt no pressing need to study them systematically".⁴⁴ A society that was "ahead" would have no need to understand *why* it was ahead – it would have no hesitations whatsoever about what it was, what it could be, or where it was going. This dissertation suggests that Enlightenment could be a response to modernity itself – to its epiphenomena, and to its excesses. A free and commercial society could generate problems that might merit the intervention of enlightened voices. Neither liberty nor commerce extirpates a society of its irrational prejudices – a free and commercial society might yet be enlightened. Enlightenment, I suggest, might proceed as a cacophony of alternative voices, which, disturbed by the excesses of modernity, or the exploitation of political freedoms, engaged in precisely what Robertson identifies as essential to Enlightenment: "the critical application of ideas of human betterment to the existing social and political order."⁴⁵

Several other scholarly contexts are worth identifying here. The period of this dissertation is sandwiched squarely between Norbert Elias' magisterial disquisition on the emergence of modern forms of civility and Michel Foucault's provocative and field-changing hypothesis on the replacement of punishment with discipline.⁴⁶ Eighteenth-century studies has, in the interim period, been rich with explorations of the body. In the last three decades, scholarly accounts of the

⁴⁴ Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 42

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*. Tran. Edward Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Modern Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977)

disparate phenomena with which the history of the body intersects – patriarchalism, aural culture, masculinity, punishment, idleness – have sharpened the picture of the eighteenth-century body and body-politic, and generated new questions.⁴⁷ “Music’s impact on the body,” it has been noted, for instance, “was explicitly organized as a moral question, which in truth operated as a convenient and somewhat abstract smoke-screen for anxieties about identities grounded on nation, class, and gender.”⁴⁸ Crowd historians, likewise, have long shown how the body’s symbolic life both effected and reflected ideological fissures.⁴⁹ A persistent interest in body-centered rhetoric travels through histories of poor relief.⁵⁰ Literary scholars have framed their readings of body-related discourses – deformity, for instance – in relation to questions of their socially transformative effects.⁵¹ Historians, likewise, have struggled against disciplinary boundaries. In the last year, Peter Reill’s and Lisa Cody’s respective

⁴⁷ See Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family, and Political Argument in England, 1680-1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Richard Leppert, “Imagery, Musical Confrontation and Cultural Difference in Early 18th-century London,” *Early Music*, 14 (1986), 516; Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen, *English Masculinities, 1660-1800* (London and New York: Longman, 1999); Randall McGowen, “The Body and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of Modern History*, 59 (1987); Sarah Jordan, *The Anxieties of Idleness: Idleness in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture* (Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press, 2003)

⁴⁸ Leppert, “Imagery, Musical Confrontation and Cultural Difference,” 516

⁴⁹ E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 50 (1971), 71-136; Peter Linebaugh, “The Tyburn Riot Against the Surgeons,” in Douglas Hay et al, eds, *Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 65–117

⁵⁰ See Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Mary E. Fissel, *Patients, Power, and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University, 1999)

⁵¹ Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum, ed. *Defects: Engendering the Modern Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000)

monographs on vitalism and men-midwives have widened avenues of inquiry by revealing ostensibly unremarkable or evanescent representations of the body as formative and profoundly indicative.⁵²

This rich corpus of existent scholarship notwithstanding, a synthetic account of the body-politic and its relationship to Enlightenment culture remains to be written. These various bodies of historians tend not to converse, which makes it difficult to see that they are often speaking of the same thing. “The separation of these two strands of scholarship,” Margot Minardi has written of the intellectual historians and historians of medicine working on the Boston Inoculation Controversy of the 1720s, “obscures what the development of professional medicine and racial ideology shared – a tendency to give explanatory weight to physical, observable characteristics of the human body.”⁵³ Likewise, a body-politic enervated by modernity was collectively constructed by politicians, divines, economists, medical writers, and literary critics. These were members of different professions, but they were all reading each others’ work. Stripped to their essentials, many of the early eighteenth-century theories posited analogous correspondences between bodily and political order. What J.B. Bamborough has said of Renaissance psychological theories is also true of the late seventeenth-century body-politic: that there was no one theory, “there were really several theories possessing a very large measure of agreement among

⁵²Peter Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Age of Enlightenment* (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2005); Lisa Cody, *Birthing the Nation: Sex, Science, and the Conception of Britons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

⁵³ Margot Minardi, “The Boston Inoculation Controversy of 1721-1722: An Incident in the History of Race,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* (January 2004) <<http://www.historycooperative.org/cgi-bin/jsttop.cgi?act=jsttop&url=http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/wm/61.1/minardi.html>> (24 Dec. 2007)

themselves.”⁵⁴ Whatever the religious or political persuasions of their readers, they tapped into the same groundswell of deeply-rooted fears: of idleness, enervation, stagnation, and unrestraint. Their tendency to correspond is a function of underlying beliefs in the natural body’s verisimilitude to political, social, and economic systems. It is for this reason that I resist the conceit that visions of the body-politic were mere applications of medical knowledge to the political sphere. We cannot explain the power of the idea if we focus in on any one discourse any more than we can reverse the profusion of discourses invested in the disordered body or body-politic. To explain the body’s and the body-politic’s impact on any given historical domain – religion, for instance, or consumerism – it is necessary to look far and wide, *across* historical domains, as I do in the dissertation.

The history of the Enlightenment is also linked, in this dissertation, to the history of feelings. Thus I expand upon questions raised by Lynn Hunt in *Inventing Human Rights* – a book that has generated much controversy by positing causal links between such eighteenth-century novels as *Clarissa* and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. “Rights,” Hunt has contended, “cannot be defined once and for all because their emotional basis continues to shift, in part in reaction to declarations of rights.”⁵⁵ Shifting emotional bases are central as well to Daniel Wickberg’s recent argument for a history of sensibilities. A sensibility, he has contended, is something that links an “epistemological

⁵⁴ J. B. Bamborough, *The Little World of Man*, (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1952), 12. “Renaissance psychological theory,” he contended, “had its roots in Ancient Greece, and in the 2,000 years since Hippocrates it had absorbed material from many and diverse sources” (11).

⁵⁵ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2007), 29

preference to a moral outlook to an ontology to a way of feeling.” It defines, moreover, “the terms in which people experience and make sense of the world, and in which they represent it to themselves and others.”⁵⁶ Feelings and sensibilities were the energy that ran between three historical agents: ideas, experiences, and socio-economic processes – all of them different entities, which changed across time for different reasons, at different paces. If the body, in this period, was symbolically valuable, it is because it triggered a variety of feelings that were politically central: the fear of weakness, for instance, or that of violence. By focusing upon descriptions of feelings, we can gauge their ability to change minds, incur actions, and alter the course of history.

This dissertation is post-revisionist in its refusal to separate political, social, intellectual, and cultural history. The revisionists, according to Steven Pincus and Peter Lake, sought “to restore autonomy to the political domain and to study it on its own terms” – one of revisionism’s “basic moves” was to forge a firm separation between political, social, economic history.⁵⁷ By embedding politics squarely within society, culture, and thought, I participate in the post-revisionist moment identified by Pincus and Lake, and embodied by the work of eighteenth-century historians like Paul Langford and Kathleen Wilson.⁵⁸ In the body of the dissertation, I engage with Langford and Wilson on an individual basis, and argue against both. But here it bears noting that they paved the way

⁵⁶ Daniel Wickberg, “What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New,” *The American Historical Review* 112.3 (2007): 5 Aug. 2007 <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/112.3/wickberg.html>>.16

⁵⁷ Steven Pincus and Peter Lake, “Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England,” *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), 288

⁵⁸ Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Paul Langford, *The Excise Crisis: Society and Politics in the Age of Walpole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975)

for a post-revisionist eighteenth-century, and it would be disingenuous to proceed without acknowledging my debt to their work.

For all these reasons, and while my interests are wide-ranging and often theoretical, I am ultimately propelled by my enduring fascination with the social and cultural life of these decades. I am continually inspired by the vast scholarship on eighteenth-century commerce and city life: Peter Clark's accounts of clubs and societies, Donna Andrew's of philanthropy and social control, and Tim Hitchcock's histories of the lives of the London poor.⁵⁹ I have likewise been compelled by numerous accounts of commerce and commercialism: Linda Colley (on commercialism as political ideology), Paul Langford (on the sensibilities of a commercial nation), David Sacks (on the rise of a commercial city), and Natasha Glaisyer (on the creation of a commercial mindset in the pre-1720 period).⁶⁰ Perhaps most inspiring was Joyce Appleby's account of the ideology of commerce.⁶¹ I have learned an enormous amount from these historians, and from many others besides.⁶² They have created the space that this dissertation inhabits.

⁵⁹ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies c 1500-1800: the Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth-Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004); Roy Porter, *London, A Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995)

⁶⁰ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992); Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1400-1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Natasha Glaisyer, *The Culture of Commerce in England, 1660-1720: Studies in History* (Woodbridge: The Royal Historical Society and the Boydell Press, 2006)

⁶¹ Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)

⁶² Much of this work is distilled in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Neil

Enlightenment, to a great extent, was about the *discovery* of commercial modernity – not just the effort to change it – and, as such, the histories of this period provide an excellent benchmark for gauging the accuracy of these discoveries.

The lighthearted ruminations on urbanity from the early 1720s discussed in my chapter on the spleen appear to belong to an entirely different world from the jingoistic sloganeering of the late 1730s. But in fact they were aspects of the same deeper process. Those who invoked or evoked the body-politic, however offhandedly, were agents, however unconscious, of a process which we might alternatively describe as “public-making” or “identity-formation.” There are deep similarities between the songbook marketers who proclaimed the spleen to be “the English malady”, the Tories who proclaimed the Walpole administration corrupt for misrepresenting the merchants during the excise scheme of 1733, the bridge-builders who evoked the livelihood of the watermen who kept the Thames – and, by extension, London – moving along, and the political economists who argued insistently that sailors were the heart-blood of the body-politic, and that all of England had to look out for their well-being. All were drivers of the engines of cultural formation. All of these culture-makers were invested in proffering visions of an imagined public to a public that they had themselves imagined. All were motivated by the presupposition that the people – fickle, changeable, movable – would *inevitably* be entertained by this plethora of theories about themselves. By extension, they indelibly shaped the nature of the social and political discourse available in Britain between 1720 and 1740.

McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982)

For the very use of concepts like “public-making” and “imagined publics”, I must establish my debts to two towering figures: Benedict Anderson and Jurgen Habermas. It is in the late eighteenth-century that Anderson locates “the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces” that led to the formation of the nation as a construct. But the “imagined communities” to which he refers – in which “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” – were hot commercial commodities in the 1720s and 1730s, precisely due to the “print-capitalism” he identifies as formative.⁶³ Historians might quibble as they are wont to do, with Habermas’ chronology or terminology, but they cannot ultimately deny that something that very much resembled a public sphere emerged in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century. The public sphere might not have been so public after all, it might have been less than inclusive of women and not exactly bourgeois, but none of this detracts from the fundamental point highlighted in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*: that there was, in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century, a profound set of changes in forms of political communication that were rooted, to a great extent, in material and socioeconomic upheaval, and that this set of changes led to a process that very closely resembles “the Enlightenment”, as defined at the outset of this introduction.

The Chapters

The dissertation proceeds as a series of anchored explorations. Each chapter traces an aspect of change; each diagrams how a particular sensibility is

⁶³ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, [1962] 1989); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1981), 4

related to the body, the city, commerce, politics, or some combination thereof. The dissertation as a whole might thus be visualized as five conceptual maps of the period, layered on top of each other, distinct and yet overlapping.

Chapter One explores debates over Britain's place in the world, London's relationship to the nation, and the Thames' relationship to London, the nation, and the world. It concentrates upon the sensibility of interdependence: that between the different parts of the body, that between bodies living in a society, that between a city and its hinterlands, and that between a nation and other nations. The power of this vision of interdependence was a product both of theories about the body and a rising perception of imbalance, inequality, and excess – this, in turn, led to the constant reification of three ideals: equity, balance, and restraint. One section of the chapter discusses the effects of the South Sea Bubble on visions of the relationship between the individual and collective good. Another spotlights some amongst the many economic treatises designed to bring these disparities to the attention of powerful urban decision-makers. Another section of this chapter focuses upon debates over bridge-building. A wide range of writers debated the placement of bridges over the Thames. The idea of interdependence was an integral weapon of their rhetorical arsenals. It was tied, at its roots, to powerfully resonant notions of the public good. I identify, in this chapter, many of the formative seeds of Enlightenment cosmopolitan thought. The visions of the body-politic covered in this chapter make it possible to connect some of the key passages of British Enlightenment thought – penned by David Hume and Adam Smith – to concerns and anxieties that were society-wide.

Chapter Two focuses in on one vision of the body-politic: the spleen – at once, an organ, and emotion, and a disease. The fear of the spleen is revealed, in this chapter, as having been productive of three enlightened sensibilities: activity, happiness, and a skeptical approach to certainty. The life of the city, I argue, perpetually fueled the intensification of these culturally productive fears. When placed alongside the histories covered in this dissertation – for instance, visions of the interdependent body-politic – the history of the spleen begins to serve another function. It becomes a branch of a larger tree, or a piece within a larger jigsaw puzzle of Enlightenment.

Restraint, it might be argued, was the fundamental building block of British Enlightenment culture, and Chapter Three explores how some relatively secular notions of restraint evolved in response to the socio-economic and cultural diversification of the metropolis. The restraints I discuss – navigation, self-preservation, sexual control, concealment, a shame-fearing sociability, and venting – were, in different ways, guarantors of social order and forms of self-preservation. Religion was not irrelevant, but nor was it critical in the formation of these restraints. They were more profitably related to the social disorder and cultural vibrancy of the metropolis. By describing their evolution, I also recreate a critical moment in the formation of the mental architecture of the English middling classes.

The last two chapters of the dissertation deal more squarely with politics *qua* politics. I am particularly interested in the relationship between political symbolism and political culture. Chapter Four revolves around the idea of a British nation that would be stronger and healthier if it became and remained a nation of strong and healthy bodies. These images of strength were appealing

because of fears of weakness, which, in turn, were rooted in urban and commercial growth. The chapter itself focuses on one recurrent trope: the strong and suffering type -- a key component of the period's rhetorical power struggles, and shibboleth of Opposition writers striving to promote the commercial interest in the course of the excise crisis of 1733 and during the build-up to the Spanish war of 1739-40. Anxieties about prosperity and those about scarcity converged around fears of the weak body. Thus converged, they heightened the evocative power of the strong and healthy body. The image of the body that was strong as well as suffering was enduringly productive of indignation. This, in turn, was crucial to the cultural entrenchment of commercialistic sensibilities. As the merchant's well-being became a *cause celebre* in the 1730s, so did a populist commercialism and commercialistic urbanism long been considered characteristic of an Enlightenment culture.

Chapter Five focuses upon the idea of the mind, and, in particular, upon the fear of the *weak* mind, and upon the desire for mental activity. I describe how pamphleteers, politicians, and propagandists in the 1730s politicized the idea of a weak-minded generality in attempts to denigrate the Opposition, oppose the ministry, expose the clergy, inveigh against pantomimes and fiddlers, and bemoan the absence of a rational political sphere. The repeated use of the weak mind to stigmatize disparate "problems" meant the mind, like the body, began to serve as a psychic connector. The more it was used, the more loaded it became, and hence all the more effective as a rhetorical instrument -- critical in the formation of the British Enlightenment's most powerful sensibility of all: thinking.

A Final Note on Methodology

It is cultural history that drew me to the study of history, and I endeavor to write a cultural history in the broadest of all senses. The “culture” that interests me was an expansive, protean entity that shaped, and was shaped by, a myriad of developments: politics, urban life, scientific thought, theological beliefs. The body and the body-politic have, in this sense, proved enormously useful as heuristic anchors. They have allowed me to confront the deep interconnectedness of different dimensions of historical experience – political, theological, philosophical, social, ideological – that are all both aspects and determinants of culture.

Within cultural history, my primary methodological strategy is an expanded and less elite version of Francois Furet’s discourse analysis, such as that envisioned by Robert Darnton in *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*:

Discourse analysis...should take account of...factors...removed from formal thought: emotion, imagination, prejudice, implicit assumptions, collective representations, cognitive categories, the whole spectrum of thinking and feeling that once belonged to the research agenda of the history of *mentalités*.⁶⁴

Among other things, this passage attests to how the history of *mentalités* is no one thing: the culture on which it focuses is comprised of a myriad of objects. This passage thus helps illustrate what is, in this dissertation, a multi-tiered analytical strategy. While formal thought (for instance, Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*) is significant to its argument, the dissertation as a whole is overwhelming concerned with these other factors. Emotions, for instance, are not incidental but critical to the argument: the chapter on the spleen considers a mounting

⁶⁴ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 178

investment in happiness, the chapter on restraint engages explicitly with metropolitan alienation, contrived indignation is central to my description of the excise crisis, and fear plays a central role throughout – the fear of the body, the fear of the city, the fear of the people. Emotions, and descriptions of emotions, are causally related to enlightened sensibilities and ideals. The chapters of the dissertation also progressively cover all of the other factors identified by Darnton, which once were examined by historians of *mentalités*: the *imagination* of the city in the chapters on restraint and the spleen; the *prejudice* contained within the image of the peoples “weak minds” in the chapter on thinking; *implicit assumptions* about interdependence, self-preservation, and rhetorical distortion in the first, third, and last chapters; and *collective representations* such as the image of the body-politic (chapter one), the city eviscerated by the spleen (chapter two), the weakened minds of the theatrical public (chapter five). *Cognitive categories* – body, mind, thoughts, passions – are a central focus of analysis throughout. Since it was the *history of mentalités* that drew me to the study of history, it is appropriate that the dissertation should fit so neatly within this historiographical category. But I should reiterate, nonetheless, that I do not embrace the style of discourse analysis associated with the work of Francois Furet and Keith Baker. Not only was this work focused upon elite discourse, it presumed to impose what Darnton has described as “a discursive model on the flow of events,” which “left no room for contingency, accident, and the revolutionary process itself.”⁶⁵ For the argument of this dissertation, which is fundamentally concerned with diversity, such a model would be pernicious.

⁶⁵ Darnton, 177. See Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

"Thinking means asking questions," R.G. Collingwood has written, "and nothing is evidence except in relation to some definite question."⁶⁶ The evidence presented in this dissertation, however diverse and multifarious, is geared to respond to one overarching question: What was the nature of the British and, in particular, the English Enlightenment? The process of arriving at an answer to this question has manifested itself in my dissertation. My definition of Enlightenment bears repeating here: *the concentrated historical actualization of the belief that intellectual production and, in particular, a critical engagement with evolving realities was required in order to effect positive change in the temporal world.* "Scientific historians study problems," writes Collingwood, "they ask questions, and if they are good historians they ask questions which they see their way to answering."⁶⁷ I cannot myself claim to have seen my way to answering this question, but I can, at the least, claim to have tried, and hence distance myself from what Collingwood describes as "scissors and paste history", which is "composed of ready-made statements, with trimming and padding of various kinds."⁶⁸ This is not because "ready-made statements" play no part in my analysis – quotes and statements do, as it happens, constitute the overwhelming majority of the "evidence" I examine. Still, a scientific historian can rely upon statements and make statements without doing "scissors and paste history", as Collingwood also writes:

The evidence from which he argues does certainly consist of statements, but these are his own autonomous statements (i.e. made on his own authority), to the effect that certain facts have come under his notice.

⁶⁶ R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of History and Other Writings in Philosophy of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37

⁶⁷ *ibid*, 38

⁶⁸ *ibid*

Among these facts may or may not be the fact that a certain statement has been made by a certain person.⁶⁹ Statements, in my dissertation, serve a number of different functions. Any given piece of evidence furnished in the form of a statement might, at any particular point in my analysis, serve as evidence of a particular sensibility, attitude, belief, or political view. But I also use the evidence of statements to describe the production of sensibilities, attitudes, beliefs, and political views. Statements, in other words, help recreate the context in which change occurred, but they are also useful in the description of the change: the process, that is, of Enlightenment. At times, enlightened sensibilities provide the context for the emergence of other enlightened sensibilities. But often they do not. The metaphor of the body-politic, the idea of the spleen, restraint, the strong and suffering type, the weak mind: none of these images and metaphors were necessarily enlightened. But we might use them, as I have, to recreate the shifting context in which an Enlightenment did occur. Representations of the body thus create the backdrop to the Enlightenment I describe.

What I am getting at here is the question of *agency*. We cannot understand discursive or ideological actions if we entirely ignore the suppositions and beliefs that were passively held, even as they changed subtly and slightly. It is for this reason that a phrase like “crime was perceived as” is sometimes more accurate than “crime was represented to the people as” – it alerts us to a reality that was, on some meaningful sense, passively experienced. In *The Making of the Modern Self*, Dror Wahrman has championed the merits of surveying the widest possible range of cultural materials “with the hope of picking up the unselfconscious traces, the unintended marks, the signs of those ‘unstructured intuitions’ that

⁶⁹ *ibid*

underlay people's fundamental assumptions about who they were and who they could be."⁷⁰ These "unstructured intuitions" play an enormously important role in my analysis, although they function alongside what Wahrman has endeavored to disregard: the "articulate reflections of contemporaries." Both must be considered together, as there is no clear point at which an "unstructured intuition" acquires the status of an "articulate reflection." Still, it is my interest in these "unstructured intuitions" that has driven me to follow images and metaphors of the body and body-politic. By focusing upon these, I touch upon what a myriad of debates had in common and, by extension, arrive at a closer estimate of the contradictions of commercial modernity and, by extension, the spirit of the Enlightenment. "Nature," writes Collingwood, "may be called a background or scenery of history, but it does not figure in history as a constant. It affects the course of history in different ways according as man copes with it differently."⁷¹ What is true of nature is also true of the body. As a continuous object of concern, the body makes it possible to extrapolate constitutive changes from evanescent processes.

Britain between 1720 and 1740 was neither the first nor the last society to "modernize" – there is nothing exceptional about how this society changed in so many different ways at the same time. But the originality of my argument is, in part, a product, in part, of my treatment of temporality. Historians, William Sewall has argued, may be "virtuosos of social temporality, but their theoretical consciousness is often so underdeveloped that they are not conceptually aware of

⁷⁰ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xv

⁷¹ *ibid*, 248

what they know.”⁷² By focusing upon two decades, I am also able to capture different forms of change that collectively combine into a description of the enormously abstract and potentially unwieldy historical category of “the Enlightenment.” “History,” writes Collingwood, “is not a series of superficial changes which, flowing over the surface of something, leave its inner essence unchanged: the changes of which the historical process consists are changes that reach right down into the heart of things.”⁷³ The five chapters that comprise this dissertation strive to arrive at “the heart of things” by describing a series of changes that occurred at different rates, by paying attention to a diversity of temporalities.

Any given change, however minute, was a historical change – one that reflects a changing England. “In the history of England,” Collingwood continues, “there is not one part of England that changes and another part that does not change: the whole thing which is England changes, and yet in this change it remains itself, because the change is continuous and involves no breaks.”⁷⁴ In using phrases like “England transformed” or “Londoners believed” I am not, in this sense, being inaccurate or hyperbolic. All of England need not have transformed for it be acceptable to proclaim England to have transformed; every Londoner did not have to believe any given thing for “Londoners believed” to be an accurate representation of what happened. “Britons” or “Englishness” are problematic categories, but they are not, like “Enlightenment” or “truth” entirely dispensable.

⁷² William Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 12

⁷³ *ibid*, 252

⁷⁴ *ibid*

Still, while I agree with Collingwood in principle, I believe more can be said about the unevenness of the continuity. This dissertation rests on the notion that continuous discursive undercurrents – the many variations of the body and body-politic – make it possible to consider the range of temporalities identified by Sewell: “relatively gradual or long-run social trends, more volatile swings of public opinion, punctual accidental happenings, medium-run political strategies, sudden individual decisions, oscillating economic or climactic rhythms.”⁷⁵ The figure of the body helps reconstruct the mindset of an era experiencing change at different rates: gradual (urbanization, commercial growth), phenomenal (the gin craze and the turnpike riots), and sudden (the cataclysmic collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720). Paul Langford and John Brewer have been commended for recognizing “the importance of the early eighteenth century as a period of profound change in both an evolutionary and revolutionary sense.”⁷⁶ By focusing upon the body, I identify causal and analogous relationships between evolutionary and revolutionary transformations. The excise crisis of 1733 and the collapse of the South Sea Bubble were both, in their way, revolutionary changes, but many of the images that they unleashed – the monster of excise, a body-politic drained of blood – were deeply entrenched in long-standing feelings about society and politics. Those who evoked these images were also exhuming these feelings and spiring them back into contemporary discourse. Britons in the 1720s coped with a rapidly changing world by repeatedly appealing to the same set of constructs that had grounded them in the past. The debates of the 1690s, for instance, were constantly replayed, in the context of the new world of

⁷⁵ *ibid*, 14

⁷⁶ Hitchcock and Davidson, “Introduction,” xii

finance post 1720. The playing field had changed inalterably, but virtue was still engulfed by corruption, the body-politic still threatened by enervation, money was still vital. The conceptual underpinnings of the discipline of political economy did not grow at the same rate or in the same way as the ineffable, powerful, and unpredictable economic forces they were used to decipher.

Change did occur: gradually, haphazardly, through subtle shifts. “I have said,” wrote James Steuart in 1767, ‘that the most difficult thing to learn concerning a people, is the spirit of their manners.’⁷⁷ “The spirit of the people changes no doubt of itself, but by slow degrees”, he wrote, and distinguished between the “spirits” of the various generations that existed in any given nation at any given time.⁷⁸ Here I identify changes across smaller time frames – not generations so much as moments – that together insinuate the larger-scale processes known to many as “the Enlightenment.” The idea of the Enlightenment functions as the conceptual equivalent of a tracking devise. I strive to be true to the disparate intentions of the multifarious individuals that behaved and argued as they did – who were not, in the back of their minds, acting in concert, even if they were ultimately motivated by the same groundswell of fears and anxieties, converging around the figures of the disordered body and body-politic.

⁷⁷ James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy: Being an Essay on the Science of Domestic Policy in Free Nations* (London: A. Millar and T. Cadell, 1767), 9

⁷⁸ *ibid*, 11

Chapter One:
Commercial Modernity, the Body-Politic, and the Feeling of Interdependence
in Britain, 1720-1740

The *Daily Post* in 1740 published an article that argued vociferously against restrictions on Irish wool production, and then concluded as follows: “Let us credit this Truth, That Nations are only powerful in Proportion as they are united: And let us understand, that no People can be united where equal Liberty and equal Advantages are not permitted.”¹ In this chapter, I describe the making of this “truth” – wherein unity, equality and balance were all presumed to be mutually interdependent and, moreover, collective determinants of a nation’s power. I focus upon Britain between 1720 and 1740, from the collapse of the South Sea Bubble to the War of Jenkin’s Ear. The idea of interdependence, evoked here by the *Daily Post*, was the scaffolding beneath a variety of ideals: restraint, equity, and balance. Commercial and urban growth produced specters of imbalance, disintegration, and over-extension. These dystopian visions produced anxiety, which, in turn, perpetually strengthened this scaffolding.

It is in the late eighteenth-century that Thomas Haskell has located the “first historical appearance of that heightened feeling of causal involvement that is a prerequisite for humanitarianism.”² But this feeling – what Haskell calls “causal involvement” and what I call interdependence – was, as I will argue, perpetually revived in the 1720s and 1730s. Anti-imperialism, Anthony Pagden has argued, was rooted in an “enduring preoccupation with the deleterious

¹ *Daily Post*, Issue 6377 (February 15, 1740)

² Thomas Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility: Part I”, in Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 134

consequences of over-extension.”³ The fear of over-extension evolved, I will show, in the 1720s and 1730s, and in response to the epiphenomena of commercial modernity. England, John Robertson has argued, did not and *could not* have had an Enlightenment, because it was already too modern, free, and commercial: “there is a sense in which in England modernity pre-empted Enlightenment. Most English men of letters were already confident of their liberty, and of enjoying the benefits of commerce.”⁴ But if Enlightenment, as Robertson writes, was indeed about betterment and change in the secular, temporal world, then neither commerce nor liberty put an end to that mission. Structural change, as I write in this chapter, created crises, imbalances and inequities, which, in turn, revealed a myriad of organic interconnections; these, in turn, continually deepened the investment in restraint, equity, and balance. Each of these ideals were then ideologically enshrined, and, as they were, helped constitute the post-commercial Enlightenment of post-1720 Britain.

There are many possible ways of exploring this process, and in this chapter I do so by examining images of bodies-politic. The idea of the body-politic, as Randall McGowen has argued, can be enormously useful to historians: “Such forms of expression were not casually invoked; they referred to deeply held convictions about the individual and society.”⁵ “Symbolic activity,” Michael Walzer has written, “unifies the universe, provides politics with a series of

³ Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 161

⁴ Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 42

⁵ Randall McGowen, “The Body and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of Modern History*, 59:4 (December, 1987), 654

references, links it closely with other realms of human experience.”⁶ More recently, Wolfram Schmidgen has argued that the spectacle of Monmouth’s illegitimate body undermined the notion of indivisible sovereignty, inspired visions of a “dehierarchized body politic”, and thus went on to shape early eighteenth-century theories of mixed government.⁷ Monmouth’s body might not have *determined* these developments, but there was something exceptionally apposite about its illegitimacy. “Political mixture,” Schmidgen writes, “produced a complex interdependence of parts that cannot be captured by the figure of a singular, hierarchical body.”⁸

The body, in this chapter, is revealed as useful for two important purposes: description and prescription. Just as a disordered body could effectively describe structural imbalances, so could a well-ordered body serve as a benchmark for a well-ordered nation. The body was visceral, so all could relate to it equally. It was also abstract, and could thus be used, and especially when adapted into a body politic, to describe complex structural processes – trade, finance, the allocation or misallocation of resources. These were processes that became, over the course of this period, increasingly ineffable. Britain in these decades was experiencing change at rapid speeds. Its citizens were confronted with what John Pocock has described as “the spectacle of a society advancing at high speed into a world it can only imagine as existing in the forms it may

⁶ Michael Walzer, “On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought,” *Political Science Quarterly* 82:2 (June 1967), 191-204; 193, 195

⁷ Wolfram Schmidgen, “The Last Royal Bastard and the Multitude,” *Journal of British Studies* 47 (January 2008): 53–76, 67, 76

⁸ *ibid*, 73

desire.”⁹ The body politic was prime amongst these forms. It was enormously compelling for being simultaneously abstract and familiar: it could adapt itself to novel phenomena and attenuate anxieties arising from that novelty.

Precisely because they were so useful, and especially so in a period of rapid change, visions of the body-politic were also consequential. They became icons of social desires, or tools for ideological propagation – rhetorical containers for the ideals of restraint, equity, and balance that had evolved in response to commercial and urban growth in an interdependent world. To evoke the body-politic, however inadvertently, was also to proclaim a truth that had the veneer of being natural. It could be parsed as a sign of what nature and, by extension, God had intended. The tree, as it has recently been argued, was an “ideologically useful symbol” for conservatives and revolutionaries in late eighteenth-century France: as a natural organism, it cast a “light of innocence, legitimacy, necessity, and good health on whatever political program it was supposed to represent.”¹⁰ Imperial Russian theoreticians likewise portrayed their society as an organic body that needed to be restrained with biological laws. This gave “scientific authority to social fears and moral panics and lent respectability to theories of social transformation.” It allowed elites to represent what were “prescriptive claims about social order” as being “objective statements irrevocably grounded in the laws of nature.”¹¹ Likewise, in 1720s and 1730s Britain, visions of bodies-politic functioned to turn feelings into semi-natural laws. “Turn where you will,”

⁹ J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 98-99

¹⁰ Giulia Pacini, “A Culture of Trees: The Politics of Pruning and Felling in Late Eighteenth-Century France,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41:1 (2007), 1-15, 1

¹¹ Daniel Beer, “Microbes of the Mind: Moral Contagion in Late Imperial Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History* 79 (September 2007), 534-5

E.P. Thompson has written, “the rhetoric of eighteenth-century England is saturated with the notion of law.”¹² Like Thompson, I envision the law as extending well beyond formal legal institutions – a vast and amorphous entity, encompassing everything from instituted legal practices to tacit and implicit notions of order, all of which were in flux. Like Thompson, I am uncomfortable with “separating off the law as a whole and placing it in some typological superstructure...The law may also be seen as ideology, or as particular rules and sanctions which stand in a definite and active relationship (often a field of conflict) to social norms.”¹³ Visions of the body politic exist in an ambiguous grey zone between laws and social norms. They contained ideals of interdependence, restraint, equity, and balance that were powerfully felt even if they were not codified. To evoke the body-politic was, nonetheless, to allude, however inadvertently, to a *natural* law of sorts. For all these reasons, it is imperative that we closely examine these uses of the body politic.

The metaphor of the body politic was also a rhetorical portal through which ideas and feelings of the body entered into political thought. These feelings were thus both *politicized* and *naturalized*. Analogies, wrote David Hartley, were not idle ruminations but essential vehicles of understanding: “the Passions are moved to Good or to Evil, Speculation is turned into Practice, and either some important Truth is felt and realized, or some Error and Vice gilded over and recommended.”¹⁴ Analogies, in other words, were as ideologically constitutive as they were emotionally powerful. A targeted study of body-politic can thus help

¹² E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 266, 263

¹³ *ibid*, 260

¹⁴ David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, His Expectations. Volume I* (London: S. Richardson, 1749), 297

identify the truths that were, to borrow Hartley's terms, felt and realized. Visions of the interdependent body-politic should not thus be reduced to mere applications of biological principles to political economy – they also emerged more directly out of political and social anxieties. The figure of the body-politic requires us to connect the realm of political thought with that of feeling. Following the body-politic thus keys us into the *emotional bases* of the vision of interdependence that proliferated in Britain between 1720 and 1740.

This chapter proceeds accordingly. Section I focuses on the ideals of the collective good that emerged in the wake of the collapse of the South Sea Bubble, Section II on an over-grown London and fears of its lop-sided relationship to provinces, and Section III on debates revolving around the river Thames. Some intellectual historians might consider these debates to be too prosaic or mundane to be worthy of investigation. But they are, I contend, profoundly indicative. Organic visions of interdependence, these debates reveal, were not imposed from above. They were spontaneous reactions to the specter of disintegration, imbalance, and inequity, in the city, the nation, and the empire. There was a genuine convergence between feelings about the body and perceptions of social change. There was an ideologically productive friction between “ought” and “is”. To delineate this process, we must acknowledge that the image of an organic society was not, at its core, the same thing as the *idea* of an *interdependent* society. Image and ideology evolved for their own reasons, even if they converged. It is for this reason that it is necessary to explain how the fact of interdependence could have rendered itself apparent to Britons in the early eighteenth-century. To do so, it is important to leave the realm of organic thought and temporarily enter territories of feelings (the sense of disintegration

that emerged in the wake of the South Sea Bubble), conditions (rural-urban disparity), and processes (bridge-building, the expansion of the turnpike system) – all before reentering the realm of rhetoric and language. Only then can we explain why the anxieties of commercial growth resolved themselves in Enlightenment visions of interdependence, which, in turn, were productive of the ideals of restraint, equity, and balance.

Hume's Body-Politic and the Collapse of the South Sea Bubble

The body-politic is, first and foremost, a *political* metaphor. In the seventeenth century, it emerged as a reaction to religious and political schism.¹⁵ It grew in salience upon the arrival, in the late seventeenth century, of political economy as “a central autonomous element in public controversy.”¹⁶ So common was this mode of argument that it drove Henry Fielding “to curse the Memory of the old Wretch, who invented the Fable of *the Belly and Members*” – a prime variant of the body politic metaphor. “From this *Tale*,” Fielding complained, “sprung every faint Endeavour to make these *three Kingdoms* subservient to the interest of *each other*, and Be in Reality *one great and mighty Empire*.”¹⁷ A polymorphous empire constantly portended the threat of disintegration, and hence continually perpetuated this mode of argument. A weak Jamaica, it was argued in 1739, eventually weakened the whole nation because “as in the Natural Body, not one of the Members can suffer, without the Head being in

¹⁵ Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

¹⁶ See Steven Pincus and Peter Lake, “Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England,” *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), 289-292, 289

¹⁷ Henry Fielding, *Stultus versus sapientum: in three letters to the fool, on subjects the most interesting* (Dublin: E. Bate, 1749), 16

some measure effected by it more or less; the same it is in the Body Politick, saving that the Effect may not be so soon felt.”¹⁸

The body-politic made a critical appearance in David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*, also published in 1739, in a passage which contained the first articulation of “the precise nature of the epistemology of empire,” as David Armitage has contended.¹⁹ Hume, in this passage, referred to “political writers” that “tell us, that in every kind of intercourse, a body politic is to be consider’d as one person.” He provisionally agreed with these writers: “indeed this assertion is so far just, that different nations, as well as private persons, require mutual assistance; at the same time that their selfishness and ambition are perpetual sources of war and discord.” Mutual reciprocity was essential because nations, like bodies, were fragile and delicate systems that depended upon each other for their survival. He went on to recognize that nations and individuals differed in other respects, giving rise to the rules called the “laws of nations”; such rules, however, did not abolish the “laws of nature.” Repeatedly, Hume reinforced the point that “the advantages...of peace, commerce, and mutual succour, make us extend to different kingdoms the same notions of justice, which take place among individuals.”²⁰ Herein lies the core essence of the vision of interdependence that I seek to explore fully in the pages that follow.

Essential to this vision of interdependence was what Lawrence Klein has

¹⁸ [Anon], *Considerations on the American Trade, Before and Since the Establishment of the South-Sea Company* (London: J. Roberts, 1739)

¹⁹ David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*. Vol. 3 (London: John Noon, 1739-40), 189; David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 180- 181

²⁰ Hume, 190

described as an “ambience of reciprocity and equality.”²¹ This, Klein has suggested, was an increasingly pervasive ambience. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, this aura of reciprocity was both manufactured and politicized. Hume himself actively developed the notions to which he referred – of interpersonal justice in the social sphere – throughout the treatise. “By the conjunction of forces,” he had written earlier on, “our power is augmented...by mutual succour we are less expos’d to fortune and accidents.”²² “Mutual”, indeed, was a word that Hume used frequently (thirty times in total, throughout the treatise). Ideas lent “mutual assistance” to each other; it was impossible to “penetrate so far into the essence and construction of bodies, as to perceive the principle, on which their mutual influence” depended.²³

The aura of mutual reciprocity was unspecific to Hume, and nor was it dependent upon the idea of the body-politic. “Nature,” *The Spectator* had exclaimed, decades earlier, “seems to have taken a particular Care to disseminate her Blessings among the different Regions of the World, with an Eye to this mutual Intercourse and Traffick among Mankind, that the Natives of several Parts of the Globe might have a kind of Dependance upon one another, and be united together by their common Interest.”²⁴ A focus upon the “mutual” was similarly integral to another Enlightenment text – one that did *not* participate in the discourse of political economy: radical deist Matthew Tindal’s 1730 *Christianity as Old as the Creation*:

²¹ Lawrence Klein, “Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal* 45:4 (2002), 879

²² Hume, 52

²³ Hume, Vol. 2, 18, 221

²⁴ *The Spectator*, 19 May 1711

And that he may expect, if he breaks those rules which are necessary for mens mutual happiness, to be treated like a common enemy, not only by the person injured, but by all others; who, by the common ties of nature, are obliged to defend, and assist each other.²⁵

Hume, considered alongside Tindal and *The Spectator*, suggests the convergence of ideal and idea – how a feeling of mutual reciprocity that was increasingly felt to be natural was enshrined and hence codified within a vision of the body-politic.

A Treatise of Human Nature was a seminal Enlightenment text, but it was beholden, nonetheless, to discursive currents that were culture wide. In this chapter, I seek to show how anxieties about imbalance and disintegration transmuted repeatedly into visions of well-ordered bodies-politic. It is instructive to start with another 1739 text, written by an anonymous merchant, who repeatedly evoked the body-politic while imploring his compatriots to restrain themselves against a war with Spain. The nation was compared to a genteel woman – only her enemies would be “eager upon every Occasion, to prostitute the Dignity of [the] Nation, pawn her Purse and sacrifice her Trade, by embroiling her in every Distraction of *Europe*.”²⁶ Standards of bodily comportment developed in relation to humans were thus transferred onto the nation state. Also running through the text was a second body-centered discourse, which took the *internal* order of the body as a conceptual tool with which to conceive political economies of balance and circulation. The best expense was that which sent no money abroad but prevented its “Stagnation at

²⁵ Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation: Or, The Gospel, A Republication of the Religion of Nature* (London: 1730), 15

²⁶ Merchant Retir’d, *An Address to the Merchants of Great-Britain* (London: J. Roberts, 1739), 16

home by circulating it from one hand to another.”²⁷ In this sentence, the metaphor of the body was only implicitly present. Later, however, it came to the forefront in an ebullient encomium on the successful restoration of public credit: “That steady Conduct which has supported our Credit, has rendered our very Debts a Kind of *quick, live Stock*, circulating by the great Power of Paper Credit through all the Channels of our extended Traffick.”²⁸ War, in such a context, would be a blood-letting of sorts: one that would have “wasted and emaciated the Body-Politick.” Peace, by contrast, would ensure the “Health and Vigour” of the Constitution.²⁹ Each time this author evoked the body-politic, he was seeking to resolve an anxiety that rose from political or commercial over-extension; each of these bodies-politic functioned, moreover, as codified visions of balance and prescriptions for order.

In all these ways, *The Spectator*, Tindal, and the anonymous merchant contextualize Hume’s use of the body-politic, which, superimposed against these uses, emerges as less exceptional and more culturally salient. Political rhetoric in the late 1720s was rich with feelings about interdependence, which were frequently enshrined within images of bodies- and bodies-politic.

The body, as Catherine Holland has written, “erupts on the scene of politics in moments of public crisis” – it is “held in reserve as a political force that becomes visible (or is made visible) in the very moments when order itself is at its most vulnerable.”³⁰ We might trace the emotional trails that lead to Hume’s and Tindal’s investment in reciprocity, and also the anonymous merchant’s

²⁷ *ibid*, 29

²⁸ *ibid*, 47

²⁹ *ibid*, 47-8

³⁰ Catherine Holland, *The Body Politic: Foundings, Citizenship and Difference in the American Political Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2001), xiv

obsession with credit, by following the collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720. The South Sea Bubble was certainly a moment during which order was felt to be particularly vulnerable. Much can be inferred from the figures of the disordered body that multiplied in its wake. The body, to begin with, enabled public authorities to describe the Bubble as a crisis. The lords in the House of Commons were advised in Lord Molesworth's speech to proceed as so many skilful physicians, and "enquire into the Cause and Nature of the Distemper."³¹ Others, including Walpole, suggested that they proceed as if London had caught on fire: "Publick credit having receiv'd a most dangerous Wound, and being still in a bleeding Condition," Walpole declared in a 1720 speech to the House of Commons, "they ought to apply a speedy Remedy to it; and that afterwards they might inquire into the Cause of the present Calamity."³² The figure of the body enabled these power-brokers to produce and communicate a sense of crisis and urgency.

While the Bubble, in reality, might not have bankrupted the whole nation – it mostly affected city-dwellers and the public finance establishment – it was traumatic for what it revealed about the complex uncertainty of the new world of finance.³³ "*Like the Soul in the Body, it acts all Substance,*" Defoe had written of credit a decade earlier, "yet is it self Immaterial; it gives Motion, yet it self cannot be said to Exist; it creates *Forms*, yet it has it self *no Form*."³⁴ The Bubble's collapse greatly exacerbated this set of anxieties, which were directed at a system that was

³¹ [Anon] *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons from the Restoration to the Present Time* (London: R. Chandler, 1742-44), 220

³² *ibid*, 221

³³ Julian Hoppitt, "Financial Crises in Eighteenth-Century England," *The Economic History Review* 39:1 (Feb., 1986), 48

³⁴ Daniel Defoe, *An Essay Upon Publick Credit* (London: printed, and sold by the book-sellers, 1710),

as powerful as it was ineffable, its invisible tentacles spreading far and wide, binding the members of the nation to each other.³⁵ The commonest of all analogies that emerged in its wake was that between blood and money. One 1720 writer argued as follows when endeavoring to inquire into the causes of the decay of the public credit: “While our *Money*, which is the *Blood* of the *Body Politick*, is suffered to run out, and there is no *Supply*, all *Projects* for restoring *Credit* and keeping up the *Spirits* of the *People*, will prove *abortive*.”³⁶ Ten years later, these fears were still sharp. The specter of war in a financially insecure nation caused one author to expatiate on the merits of “*hard money* (which is as necessary to preserve *Life* and *Vigour* in the *Body Politick*, As *Bloud* and *Animal Spirits* to preserve *Life*, *Sense* and *Motion* in the *Natural Body*).”³⁷ In all these ways, the South Sea Bubble precipitated the inclusion of money into visions of balanced and regularized bodies-politic.

It is instructive, before discussing other visions of the body-politic, to recreate some contemporary perceptions of the nature of the crisis represented by the Bubble. Britons, in the wake of the event, drew two sets of lines between human iniquity and national crisis. One narrative was of a scam perpetrated by a few against a nation of mostly industrious people; another was of a nation that was almost wholly corrupt, whose every citizen was somehow complicit in the collapse. The first narrative carried forth images of the “ignorant and unwary,

³⁵ This is a recurrent concern, but perhaps most cogently expressed in Erasmus Philips’ *An Appeal to Common Sense: Or, Some Considerations Offer’d To Restore Publick Credit* (London: T. Warner, 1720), 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 20

³⁶ [Anon] *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Decay of Publick and Private Credit, In Great Britain and Ireland* (London: n.p. 1720), 2

³⁷ [Anon] *Reasons Humbly Offered to the Consideration of the Parliament of Great Britain. For Lessening the Present Heavy National-Debts and Taxes, Inlarging the Sinking Fund, Remedying the Ill State of the Coin, and Thereby Reviving Trade and Credit* (London: n.p. 1730), 2

but *industrious Subject*” being “devour’d by *Pick-Pockets* and *Stock-Jobbers*.”³⁸

“Who can enough lament the Misery of a Nation surrounded with such People who wait for nothing but to prey on the Body of the Publick?,” asked another writer.³⁹ The most extreme version of this view called for the public punishment of the perpetrators.⁴⁰ The directors of the South Sea Company were “justly look’d upon as the immediate Authors of the present Misfortunes,” the Lord Molesworth was reported as declaring in the House of Commons, before suggesting that they be treated as parricides had been in Ancient Rome: sown up in a sack and thrown into the river.⁴¹

The crisis, according to the second view revealed as depraved a whole range of people. Politicians, priests, lawyers, and merchants: all were implicated, and described as having preyed upon the ignorance of thousands of uninformed investors.⁴² A print called *The Bubbler’s Folly* spread the blame evenly at coal traders, salt petre manufacturers, water engineers, and insurance brokers: “They’re right that gull us with the dread of Fire /” it wrote of the latter, “For Fear makes greater Fools, than fond Desire.” The contempt for foolishness that defined this passage was related to another emergent idea: that individuals living in complex societies needed to be particularly wary of others: “he that

³⁸ Thomas Gordon, *A Collection of Letters to the Author of the London Journal* (London: J. Roberts, 1721), 39; reprinted in *The Political State of Great Britain* (London: Abel Boyer, 1721), 8

³⁹ James Milner, *In a Letter to a Friend, Concerning the Late Proposals for the Payment of National Debts* (London, 1720), 12

⁴⁰ Ellis, *The Sense of the People Concerning the Present State of Affairs* (London: J. Peele, 1721?)

⁴¹ [Anon] *The History and the Proceedings of the House of Commons* (London: Richard Chandler, 1742), 220-221

⁴² [Anon] *Essay in Praise of Knavery: Whether it be in C---ers, Politicians, or Lawyers; Priests, P---lates, or Church Dignitaries; L---ds, Merchants, or Stock-jobbers; National Plunderers, or Pick-pockets; Thieves, Highway-men, or Thief-takers* (London: Sam. Briscoe, 1723)

Games and is by Dice undone, Damns his ill fortune, when the fault's his own" was the last line of the poem at the center of this print.⁴³ The complexity of complicity in the Bubble crisis is perhaps most fully revealed in a collection of playing cards published in the 1720s.⁴⁴ Each card from the deck portrayed one aspect of the madness: the ace of diamonds was a Welsh justice traveling to London to sell his copper for stocks, the ace of hearts a tradesman's wife pressuring her husband to buy stocks after she had "grown angry by her pride" upon seeing her friends traveling by "South-Sea Coach." Individually, the fifty-two cards that comprised this set signaled how the absence of restraint in any given case – greed, folly, avarice, jealousy – led to the making of the crisis. Collectively, they revealed a people caught up in the winds of change.

There was something very modern about the nature of the trauma generated by the collapse of the Bubble: it revealed the nation as simultaneously interconnected and morally eviscerated. The one point at which these explanations converged was the overwhelming realization that, whoever was responsible for the Bubble, it had implicated everyone in its wake: the Bubble, described by Allan Ramsay in his 1720 poem, was a munificent sun that shone evenly upon the "Poor and Rich, the Fools as well as Wise."⁴⁵ The playing cards revealed this too as they vividly recreated the range of the Bubble's effects: the ace of spades was a bankrupt goldsmith setting out to sea; the ace of clubs a group of women meeting at a tavern to bemoan their husbands' lost fortunes, and devising a petition importuning the state for redress. This sense of a shared

⁴³ [Anon] *Bubblers Mirrour: Or Englands Folley [sic]* (London: Tho: Bowles, 1720)

⁴⁴ [Anon] *South Sea Bubble Playing Cards* (London: Carington Bowles, 1721). See also the Harvard Business School Baker Library Historical Collections <http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/ssb/recreationandarts/cards.html>

⁴⁵ Allan Ramsay, *Wealth, or, the Woody* (Edinburgh, 1720), 3

crisis then created the need for a voice that would combine the nation into a psychic and emotional whole.

The usefulness of organic metaphor in conveying the fact of interdependence in post-South Sea Britain is revealed in Humphrey Mackworth's controversial and influential proposal for paying off Britain's public debts. "The Body Politick of Great Britain," Mackworth wrote at the end of his dedication, could be compared to "*a great Machine or Engine, where all the Wheels must go together or all stand still.*"⁴⁶ "We are now like Sailors in a Ship at Sea," he wrote elsewhere, "who, when all their Provisions are spent, begin to feast upon one another." The strongest man would outlast all the others. But he too would die eventually. The stock-jobbing trade was similarly cannibalistic: "*we are only* preying upon one another," he insisted, "*but since* the Body Politick of the Kingdom visibly decays every Year, without timely Relief it must also perish."⁴⁷ Fears unleashed by the Bubble's collapse reinvigorated discourses of restraint and interdependence. Thus George Berkeley, in 1721, began his treatise on the state of the nation by thanking God for making the British "feel the fatal Effects" of their folly and corruption: any continuation of the prosperity that had "already so bewitched and debauched the Nation" would have led to its undoing, he wagered.⁴⁸ The South Sea crisis had woken Britain up, but it was a symptom of deeper problems – it had thrown into sharp relief the many vitiating principles that had been "industriously propagated" for many years. Superficial remedies would fail to solve it, as it was the vitals of the nation that were

⁴⁶ Humphrey Mackworth, *A Proposal for Payment Of the Publick Debts, for Relief of the South Sea Company* (London: W. Boreham, 1720), dedication

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, vi

⁴⁸ George Berkeley, *An Essay Towards Preventing the Ruine of Great Britain* (London: J. Roberts, 1721), 1

touched, “the whole mass of Humours vitiated.” He hoped that the Bubble could prove to have been a catalyst for moral union:

And as a sharp Distemper by reclaiming a Man from Intemperance may prolong his Life, so it is not impossible but this public Calamity that lieth so heavy on the Nation may prevent its Ruine: It would certainly prove the greatest of Blessings if it should make all honest Men of one Party; If it should put Religion and Virtue in countenance, restore a sense of Public Spirit, and convince Men it is dangerous folly to pursue private Aims in opposition to the Good of their Country.⁴⁹

For Berkeley, as for Mackworth, the language of the body was useful in conceiving the mood of a nation racked with fears of disintegration and decline. Such a mood might indeed have been a fiction but it was, nonetheless, a powerful perception. In this case, the idea of such a mood contained a *productive* anxiety – one that produced a discourse of moral regeneration designed around the principle of restraint.

The fears of moral disorder generated by the Bubble thus also reinforced the “ambience of reciprocity” that would, as I have written, shape the thoughts of David Hume and Matthew Tindal. Such an ambience, however, extended far beyond these Enlightenment thinkers. The traumatic effects of the Bubble’s collapse cannot be extricated from the generalized obsession with honesty and community that suffuses the commercial tracts of the 1720s. Honesty, according to John Hartcliffe, writing in 1722, was an essential requirement for conduct in the new world of commerce: “For altho’ the Studies of Men are various, according to the difference of those Callings, to which they apply themselves, or the Tempers of the Places, wherein they live; yet the whole Trade and Business among them, doth depend as much upon common Honesty, as War doth upon Discipline; and without which all would break up, Merchants would turn

⁴⁹ *ibid*, 25

Pedlars, and Soldiers Thieves."⁵⁰ Restraint was revealed as particularly important because the restrained were more likely to be concerned about the public and collective good. William Talbot, in a 1725 sermon, described a naturally prosperous nation as one whose members knew that they needed to be "join'd in Heart and Affection", where they either agreed or displayed "mutual Forbearance where they differ," where they had "one Common Interest, preferable to all private aspects" and where all, "in their several Capacities and Callings", they contributed their "joint Endeavours" to "promote the Advantage of the Community."⁵¹ "And there is not a more universal Proposition," wrote one 1730 writer railing against Irish absentees, "than *That no one ought to do any thing which if universally practiced, would become a universal Evil.*"⁵² Hartcliffe, Talbot, and the Irish writer did not explicitly refer to the Bubble's collapse. But the fear of the Bubble had indelibly shaped the consciousness of some of their readers. "Though there was not to be another disaster of the magnitude of the South Sea Bubble of 1720," John Brewer has written, "the fear of an unsavoury *reprise* was never far from the tradesman's mind."⁵³ The readers of these texts were viscerally rather than theoretically aware of how selfishness could impede the collective good. Their recourse to the body-politic is most accurately attributed to this visceral awareness. Such an awareness helps explain why Mackworth and

⁵⁰ John Hartcliffe, *A Compleat Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues: Wherein their Nature is Fully Explained, and their Usefulness Proved*, second edition (London: J. Hooke, 1722), 206

⁵¹ This, he suggested, "must have a Natural Tendency to procure the Prosperity of such People." William Talbot, *Twelve Sermons Preached on Several Subjects and Occasions* (London: Jonah Bowyer, 1725), 285

⁵² [Anon] *A View of the Present State of Affairs in the Kingdom of Ireland* (Dublin and London: Weaver Bickerton, 1730), 26

⁵³ John Brewer, "Commercialization and Politics" in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 199

Berkeley chose to form an ideal body politic out of a renewed concern for social cohesion. In evoking these bodies-politic, they were contributing, however slightly, to the codification of interdependence as a tacit natural law.

London and the Hinterlands

The collapse of the South Sea Bubble was but one component of the enormous specter of disintegration facing Britain in the 1720s. The Atterbury Plot of 1722 rendered evident the lingering threat of Jacobitism. The plotters, it has recently been shown, were not quixotic or delusional in believing that it could have worked: a successful plot would have fed upon a widespread disaffection generated, in part, by the Bubble's collapse.⁵⁴ These fears are apparent in the response elicited by Black Act of 1723, which made it a felony to appear armed in a park or warren with a blackened face.⁵⁵ Further rifts were rendered bare in the wake of Walpole's City Elections Act of 1725. All of these apprehensions collectively formed into a miasma of anxiety: the failed Jacobite plot itself was itself an aspect of the cultural crisis engendered by the Bubble's collapse, as it was to this sense that the plotters sought to appeal; the fear of Jacobitism similarly morphed with that of deer hunters.⁵⁶ The body-politic, in such a context, allowed the period's writers to capture a feeling of discontent that was no less acute for being abstract and amoebic. One 1728 commentator described

⁵⁴ See Howard Erskine-Hill and Eveline Cruickshanks, *The Atterbury Plot* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

⁵⁵ "England, in the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble, was a profoundly disaffected country," as E.P. Thompson has written, "and there were many elements of discontent which could have given substance to a serious Jacobite conspiracy." See *Whigs and Hunters*, p. 68.

⁵⁶ John Broad, "Whigs and Deer-Stealers in Other Guises: A Return to the Origins of the Black Act," *Past and Present* 111 (May., 1998), 69-71

the commercial origins of “the strange spirit that continues in the city of London.” “We find too it is a contagious spirit,” he continued, “and has infected the city greatest in extent and trade next to London, that of Norwich.”⁵⁷ Abstract fears that converged around the figure of the disordered body functioned, through the figure of the body-politic, to connect anxieties about political, moral, and economic decline.

One such fear was that of excessive size which, in turn, was linked to the over-concentration of power. “Greatness, so fondly coveted, has already cost the World very dear,” wrote Ephraim Chambers when dedicating his *Cyclopaedia* to King George: “Greatness has no Charm except when founded in Goodness.”⁵⁸ Britons had long feared large and overgrown bodies – Leviathans, behemoths, monsters. The protection of the weak from all tyrannical encroachments was a positive ideal that was, as the decades progressed, repeatedly reinforced. The “rule of law”, writes Thompson, involved “the imposing of effective inhibitions upon power and the defence of the citizen from power’s all-intrusive claims.”⁵⁹ That the idea of the body was not incidental but *integral* to this vision of the law is suggested by the words of one 1730 essayist: “I think it is evident that the general Drift and Bent of all human Laws is to secure the Weak, either in Mind or Body, from the open Force, or secret Strategems, of the strong and Subtle.”⁶⁰

In the 1720s, this set of fears visibly began to attach themselves to the agents of commercial expansion. Britons in this period routinely condemned

⁵⁷ Stratford to Oxford, 6 July 1728, cited in Paul Langford, *The Excise Crisis: Society and Politics in the Age of Walpole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 25

⁵⁸ Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (London: James and John Knapton, 1728), dedication

⁵⁹ Thompson, 182

⁶⁰ Matthew Concanen, *The Speculatist. A Collection of Letters and Essays* (London: J. Watts, 1730), 43

their excessive displays of strength and immodest acts of over-extension. Behind the collapse of the South Sea Bubble was the South Sea Company. The fear of its over-extension was a recurrent trope of economic texts, repeatedly expressed through images of the large devouring the small, or the few feasting upon the blood of many. “In the Southern Sea,” went one post-Bubble print, “Whale Directors Eat up all.”⁶¹ The fear of size was naturally connected to anti-monopolistic ideologies. “If this Surprizing Body of Power is not restrained in Trade,” the merchants argued in a petition against the South Sea Company, the families of gentlemen would “sooner or later feel the bad effect thereof”: once they had entered the smaller branches, the company would be able to “enter into all Branches of Trade they please, and then to oppress, crush, and swallow up all others.”⁶² Also marshaled were longstanding antipathies to tyranny: “Trade ought to be equally free to a free-born People,” one 1724 writer would contend, “and the Great should be protected, without swallowing up the Small.” He proceeded to then embellish this picture by proclaiming “Companies of Trade...generally speaking” to constitute “so many Tyrants and Lords over others, who exercise their Authority with an arbitrary Sway... They are the Leviathans that devour all others.”⁶³ The republican polemicist John Trenchard evoked the need to “hinder the Publick from being Bubbled out of Seven or Eight Millions, to glut and gormondize a few Blood-Suckers.”⁶⁴ Bubbles, in one tract, were depicted as “numerous and monstrous Beasts” born of avarice – enormous,

⁶¹ [Anon] *Bubblers Medley, Or a Sketch of the Times* (London: Carington Bowles, 1720)

⁶² [Anon] *Reasons Humbly Offered for Restraining the South-Sea-Company in their Trade* (London, 1720)

⁶³ [Anon] *An Essay on Publick Industry: Or a Scheme Humbly Offered for the Increase of Our Manufactures, the Suppression of Monopolies* (London: T. Corbett, 1724), 18

⁶⁴ John Trenchard, *A Letter of Thanks* (London: J. Roberts, 1720), 6

unmerciful and insatiable creatures that had badly devastated the nation.⁶⁵

The fear of overgrown things was not restricted to corporate entities or fiscal practices: it also shaped visions of London, whose Promethean growth-rate had long been portrayed as the country's Achilles Heel. "London, the Metropolis of England," John Graunt had written in his 1662 study of the Bills of Mortality, "is perhaps a Head too big for the Body, and possibly too strong...this Head grows three times as fast as the Body unto which it belongs."⁶⁶ London's growth was an aspect, in part, of its burgeoning population, which grew from around 500,000 in 1674 to around 740,000 in 1760.⁶⁷ "It must not be forgot here," Defoe wrote of 1665 in his 1722 *Journal of the Plague Year*, "that the City and Suburbs were prodigiously full of People, at the time of this Visitation...for tho' I have lived to see a farther Encrease, and mighty Throngs of people settling in London, more than ever, yet we had always a Notion, that the Numbers of People...was such, that the Town was computed to have in it above a hundred thousand people more than ever it held before."⁶⁸ The perception of population growth is just as important as the reality – especially as an extra 100,000 people was hardly inconsiderable in a city of less than 500,000. Perhaps more impressive than the population figures are other markers of centrality such as sprawl, as evidenced by the formation of clear "East" and "West" Ends in the decades following 1660, the increased use of "flying wagons" that connected the city to

⁶⁵ [Anon] *The Battle of the Bubbles* (London: A. Moore, 1720), 4

⁶⁶ John Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations, Mentioned in a Following Index, and Made Upon the Bills of Mortality* (London: Tho. Roycroft, 1662), 321

⁶⁷ Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, "A Population History of London: The Demography of Urban Growth," *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 19 Sep 2007)

⁶⁸ Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year: Being Observations or Memorials, Of the Most Remarkable Occurrences, As Well Publick as Private, Which Happened in London During the Last Great Visitation in 1665* (London: E. Nutt, 1722), 22

its hinterlands, or markets, of which London boasted more than thirty by the late eighteenth century (far more than Paris or nineteenth-century Manchester).⁶⁹ The idea of the city's importance grew along with these upheavals. There was, according to Francis Brewster, writing in the 1690s, "nothing so destructive to the Trade and Employments of the Nation as engrossing the Money and Business of the Kingdom in great and few hands; that would bring the Kingdom into the Rickets, draw all the Nourishment to the Head, *London* would swell beyond its natural growth, and the other parts of the Kingdom waste and dwindle to nothing."⁷⁰ This, he wrote, was an "absurdity" which appeared in its "full force" in the Bills of Mortality, which had revealed one-sixth of the nation to be living in London. "London swallows up the trade of most places in England," wrote an author purporting to be a "Moor" writing home to Tunis, condensing into one phrase a sentiment that only sharpened with the years.⁷¹ A 1720 divine reversed the body-city analogy and described "the retiring of the Spirits into the capital City of the Heart," whereby the outer parts were left "weakened and unguarded", resulting in a strengthened "better part" but weakened "major Part" of man.⁷² The idea of the unequal metropolis was, this suggests, entrenched enough to serve as the *basis* of an analogy.

This period was defined by the convergence of two axes of change – a rising awareness of imbalance and an increased investment in balance. The idea

⁶⁹ Colin Smith, "The Wholesale and Retail Markets of London, 1660-1840," *The Economic History Review* LV:1 (2002), 31, 33, 32

⁷⁰ Francis Brewster, *Essays on Trade and Navigation in Five Parts* (London: Tho. Cockerill, 1695), 109-110

⁷¹ [Anon] *Letters from a Moor at London to his Friend at Tunis. Containing an Account of his Journey through England* (London: J. Batley, 1736), 156; See also Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (Dublin: A. Leathley, 1771), 127

⁷² John Hales, *A Discourse of the Several Dignities, and Corruptions, of Man's Nature, Since the Fall* (London: E. Curll, 1720), 108-9

of the over-grown city offended deep-set notions of balance, which, as the decades progressed, were repeatedly articulated and explicated. "Nature," according to an author seeking to promote industry, "aims at an exact Symmetry and Proportion in all things."⁷³ Likewise, for Charles Davenant, an extended application of the body-politic analogy slowly revealed its purpose as a didactic devise for explicating nature's laws and deciphering nature's intentions. He asked his readers to contemplate the "pitch of greatness" the nation could attain "if one limb were not suffered to draw away the nourishment of the other; and if all the members of the body politic were rendered useful to it."⁷⁴ The body-politic worked prescriptively as well as descriptively: that which was superfluous, excessive, or disproportioned was unnatural and, by extension, immoral. And while this was not, as my citation of two late seventeenth-century tracts suggests, an idea specific to the early eighteenth-century, it was, in some meaningful way, *essential* to the early eighteenth-century. It was tied at its core to what E.J. Hundert has called the "conventional Augustan truism that nature works in almost perfect harmony with morality."⁷⁵ Thus it was that the Lords in 1704 appeared to have agreed that "every Part of the Body Politic, as well as the Body natural, ought to be kept within due Bounds; an Excess in any Member will weaken the whole."⁷⁶ Newfound medical theories such as that which concentrated around the idea of the "animal spirits" were themselves made to

⁷³ *A Discourse of the Necessity of Promoting Mechanick Industry* (London: R. Chiswell, 1689), 19

⁷⁴ Charles Davenant, *Essay Upon the Probable Methods of Making a People Gainers in the Ballance of Trade* (London: James Knapton, 1699), 53, 54

⁷⁵ E.J. Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 132

⁷⁶ *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons* (London: Richard Chandler, 1742), 416

accommodate deeper organic laws. Hence a 1716 conduct manual reprinted in 1736 made the following claim: “Our *Riches* are to the *State* what our *animal Spirits* are to our *Bodies*; there ought to be such a diffusive Over-spreading the whole, as not to leave any Part uninvigorated.”⁷⁷ Perhaps most ironic is the fact that this vision of balanced interdependence was articulated in relation to London itself. In 1702, William Seton made use of the body-politic when endeavoring to demonstrate why England and Scotland would benefit from a union.⁷⁸ The former, he prognosticated, would become “the Metropolis of the whole Island, the Meeting place of Parliament, and of all the chief Judicatures, thro’ which the Treasure of the whole Body Politick must Ciruclat, as Blood thro’ the Heart of a Natural Body.”⁷⁹ This, in turn, would make Scotland richer and more taxable, “contributing force both at Sea and Land; for the Sustenance of the whole Body Politick.”⁸⁰

Decades later, Rousseau would enshrine this fear of inequity and imbalance in a statement of natural laws designed around the idea of the body-politic: “In the same manner as nature hath limited the dimensions of a well-formed human body,” he would remark, “beyond which she produces only giants or dwarfs, so in the body politic there are limits, within or beyond which a state ought not to be confined or extended; to the end that it may not be too big to be well governed, nor too little to maintain its own independency.” For Rousseau, this political fact reflected a basic fact about the nature of strength:

⁷⁷ John Sowter, *The Way to be Wise and Wealthy: Or, The Excellence of Industry and Frugality* (London: J. Wilford, 1735), 45, 48, 48-9, 49

⁷⁸ William Seton, *The Interest of Scotland in Three Essays* (London: A. Baldwin, 1702), 53-4

⁷⁹ *ibid*, 55

⁸⁰ *ibid*

“There is in every body politic a *maximum* of force which it cannot exceed, and from which it often recedes by extending its dominion. The more the social knot is extended, the more lax it grows; and, in generall, a little state is always proportionably stronger than a great one.”⁸¹ Rousseau was not alone: Diderot, Herder, and Kant, as Sankar Muthu has shown, were similarly fearful of political over-growth.⁸² The latter, as Muthu, has also written, were profoundly influenced by Rousseauvian ideas of society. Adam Smith, like David Hume, evoked the analogy of the body-politic at a critical moment of *The Wealth of Nations*: just as Hume had compared the state to a potentially disorderly body, Smith employed the metaphor of the internally disordered body. The industry of Great Britain had been unnecessarily contained, and “principally suited to one great market”, he wrote, calling this phenomenon “the monopoly of the colony trade.” All this was profoundly unhealthy, as Britain had come to resemble “one of those unwholesome bodies in which some of the vital parts are overgrown,” rendering it susceptible to a plethora of problems that a “more properly proportioned” body need not have been worried about. The only viable solution was the “moderate and gradual relaxation of the laws which give to Great Britain the exclusive trade to the colonies.”⁸³ Smith’s dystopianism was predicated upon a utopian vision of order contained within phrases he himself used, such as “natural balance” or “that natural, healthful and proper proportion which perfect liberty necessarily establishes, and which perfect liberty can alone

⁸¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Treatise on the Social Compact; Or the Principles of Politic Law* (London, 1764), 73

⁸² Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)

⁸³ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Volume II. (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776), 209, 210

preserve.”⁸⁴ We might attribute this investment to physiological ideas, but also to the fact that the merits of proportion had been assiduously propagandized, as I have shown, in the earlier part of the eighteenth-century and thus, at it were, flooded the gene-pool of British political rhetoric.

I am interested, here, in relating these abstract metaphors and images to actual feelings about social realities. As London grew, so did the idea of a nation destroyed by imbalance. This, in turn, led to the reiteration of the laws of balance. The generation of the ideas that proved so useful to Smith and Rousseau is also a function of the appearance, in the six decades following 1689, of a “reactive” British state: as described by Lee Davidson and Tim Hitchcock, one that was “more often than not ‘reactive’ to the litany of domestic social and economic issues facing the nation, relying on those outside of central government and the legislature for information and initiative.”⁸⁵ The economic literature of the 1720s and ‘30s was suffused with the fear of imbalance and inequity. Organic images, in this context, were useful for both descriptive and prescriptive purposes, as a variety of writers endeavored to bring metropolitan decision-makers up to speed with the rural-urban disparity. A shibboleth of these texts was the over-concentration of resources in dangerously overgrown cities. Statements of the interdependence between city and the nation’s farther regions were responses to this excess and imbalance. These texts are worth considering in detail because they were ideologically formative, despite the fact that they have slipped through the cracks of eighteenth-century intellectual history (or the historiography of the Enlightenment).

⁸⁴ *ibid*

⁸⁵ Hitchcock and Davidson, xv

Like Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and, later on, Immanuel Kant, these writers evoked the body as a corrective against over-extension and as a declaration of mutual involvement. We might begin with Richard Bradley's account of the devastation wreaked by a recent winter. This is a text in a genre of its own – an epistolary treatise of political economy – which reprints rural denizens' desperate descriptions of sickness, weakness, deprivation, and disease.⁸⁶ It provides some sense of the intensity of the anger and resentment against the monopolistic metropolis. In towns such as Chester and Preston, the middling sort had to abandon ale for water, which explained their "lowness of Spirits" and susceptibility to infection.⁸⁷ London, by contrast, was as greedy as it was wealthy: "if we consider the Diet and way of living of the People so near *London*, where Provisions are more plentiful than in the remoter Parts of *England*, no wonder that they were not attack'd with Distempers so severe," one letter-writer reasoned.⁸⁸ Food shortage, illness, and death were caused by the fact that "ready-money'd Men supposing there would be a Scarcity, ingross'd all the Corn they could take up."⁸⁹ Outrage and indignation seethes beneath the surface of the text, and occasionally bubbles upward – for instance in the matter-of-fact yet graphic descriptions of hording monopolists and honest farm-workers reduced to skeletons. The body-politic emerged as a modicum of balance and fairness – a standard that was all the more important for the fact that it was so manifestly unmet. Governments required subordination, but it was also the duty of every

⁸⁶ Richard Bradley, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Late Severe Winter, the Scarcity and Dearthness of Provisions, an the Occasion of the Distemper Raging in Several Remote Parts of England* (London: J. Roberts, 1729)

⁸⁷ *ibid*, 16

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 27

⁸⁹ *ibid*, 14

state's governor to "regulate the different Orders and Degrees of its People" so that "every Member of the Body Politick" could be "happy and useful in his respective Station", with a "perfect Harmony and Concert kept up and preserved throughout the Whole."⁹⁰ Extracted from the rest of the treatise, this declaration would be trite and unoriginal. But embedded within the treatise, it is not. The body-politic is revealed as a calming corrective to inequalities whose destructive effects have been vividly described. A devastating winter is shown to have replenished the idea of the interdependent body-politic. The specter of imbalance and its empirical appearance – as evident in the thousands of dying and diseased bodies – urged Bradley to channel the vision of balance that lay latent within the perfect human body. In doing so, he helped infuse social thought with visions of disordered bodies and the idea of the well-ordered body-politic, both of which had previously emerged as aspects of the response to the South Sea Bubble. Both would also be crucial, several years later, to texts such as *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith might not have read Bradley. But he came of age in a society used to reasoning in this way. He was recapitulating an age-old belief strengthened by recent social dislocations; that inasmuch as the body was the representation of rightness and balance, the world, as it existed, was increasingly as wrong as it was imbalanced.

Bradley's account was one of many that argued in this way. "The Body-Politick," went one commercial treatise, was "like the Body Natural, apt to decay at the extreme Parts first."⁹¹ This statement was designed as a correction to the

⁹⁰ *ibid*

⁹¹ Simon Smith, *The Golden Fleece: Or The Trade, Interest, and Well-Being of Great Britain Considered* (London: R. Viney, 1736), 12

social realities that the tract had assiduously described. Exorbitant poor rates, unleased lands and insolvent tenants in Worcester and Colchester foreboded the imminent expansion of the “universal Face of Poverty”, all the more vitiating for “*a Country whose Riches and Power intirely depend on Trade.*”⁹² Blithely complacent urbanites were, again and again, warned of their own impending demise. Their fates were explicitly linked to those of their nameless rural compatriots. “For if the *Fairs and Markets* sink and come to nothing,” proclaimed a writer railing against engrossers and interlopers, “the *Towns and Boroughs*, where those are kept, cannot long survive a Disaster, that so nearly concerns their very Being, as well as their Prosperity.”⁹³ The engrossers and interlopers were themselves the vehicles of the decline, and this author rammed this in with a loaded image of social pathology:

Every *Buyer and Consumer* (under which Names are included every *Subject and Inhabitant of Great-Britain*) is miserably Impos’d upon, Cheated and Opress’d, by this Villainous Cabal and Confederacy of Bloodsuckers, the very Pest of Societies, and Vermin of the Body-Politic.⁹⁴

The fear of vermin was intrinsically connected to the idea of a corruption that traveled with ease, coasting along the network of commercial connections, thus affecting every citizen of the nation. Commercial interdependence was not incidental but essential to the dark and disturbing picture painted by a self-professed “Lincolnshire Grassier.” The “daily circle of pomp and magnificence” that characterized life in the city had blinded the court, he wrote, as cities and trading towns “in appearance, at least,” abounded with “wealth and plenty.”

⁹² *ibid*, 12

⁹³ [Anon] *An Essay to Prove; That Regrators, Engrossers, Forestallers, Hawkers and Jobbers of Corn, Cattle, and Other Marketable Goods, Provisions and Merchandizes, Are Destructive of Trade, Oppressive to the Poor, and a Common Nuisance to the Kingdom in General* (London: J. Roberts, 1718), 21

⁹⁴ *ibid*, 27

The Lincolnshire grasiers had to keep their complaints to themselves, “the other members of the body politick, lying either at too great a distance, or being too little conversant in country affairs.”⁹⁵ But those at the center would not long remain impervious to the hardships faced by those at the periphery, and eventually they too would have to “come in for their share, and be involv’d in the same publick calamity” as their Lincolnshire countrymen. He reached for organic language when seeking to describe this imbalance and excess: money ““either stagnates, or circulates chiefly in Town”, he wrote. Images of physical weakness were essential components of his rhetorical strategy: the Grassiers’ inability to pay off their rents initiated “an unhappy chain of consequences” that involved landlords, tradesmen, merchants, clothiers, factors, weavers, dyers, wool-combers, and growers – thereby spreading “a fatal diffidence upon Trade and Credit, a general weakness and insolvency through the whole Kingdom.”⁹⁶ There was, in this case, no explicit argument for organic interdependence – the idea of an organically-interdependent society was contained within the image of infectious weakness that could so easily travel from one part of the kingdom to the other. The fact that this writer was solicitous of a regional disparity does not mean he was fundamentally motivated by justice: the text’s most central preoccupation was the need to maintain restrictions over the import of Irish yarn, “lest their thriving terminate in our beggary and ruin.”⁹⁷ Still, it is significant for the nascent discourse of interdependence contained within its impassioned plea for the even distribution of resources. “Let us too, who are

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⁹⁶ Lincolnshire Grasier, *The Grasier’s Complaint and Petition for Redress* (London: A. Bettesworth, 1726), 56, 47, 7, 56

⁹⁷ *ibid*, 34

immediately concern'd in the growth of Wool, acquire a livelihood by it," he wrote – the "us" to which he referred were the grassiers – and proceeded then to describe a wisely-governed commonwealth as one in which "no one set of Dealers, may interfere, or bear hard upon another, or thrive to their prejudice, or ruin."⁹⁸ He reached, immediately after making this claim, for the idea of the balanced body-politic: "This being as absurd in politicks, as it would be unnatural in a common Parent; to pamper one child, and starve another, or to promote the exorbitant growth of one limb, to the danger and disability of the whole body."⁹⁹

All of these texts industriously propagated body-centered rhetoric: first, they reproduced images of bodies disordered by structural malfeasance; second, they preserved those images; third, they used those images to reason and, by doing so, conditioned their readers to think and speak in a certain way; fourth, they strengthened the prescriptive power of the image of the well-ordered body. However parochial their interests, these writers were contributing to a process which ultimately led to the formation of a crucial Enlightenment sensibility – cosmopolitanism. We arrive at a cosmopolitan ethos when we imagine ourselves as members of a community that includes people who live at a distance from us. We are more likely to imagine such a community if we see our fates as these writers did: as interdependent with those of distant individuals. As Anthony Appiah has recently observed, "Voltaire himself...spoke eloquently of the obligation to understand those with whom we share the planet, linking that need

⁹⁸ *ibid*, 35

⁹⁹ *ibid*, 35-6

explicitly with our global economic interdependence.”¹⁰⁰ But the ideal of interdependence, as I have shown, also evolved in response to problems that were national in scale. “The nebulous core shared by all cosmopolitan views,” for Pauline Klingberg and Eric Brown, “is the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, do (or at least can) belong to a single community, and that this community should be cultivated.”¹⁰¹ The writers of the 1720s and 1730s might not have been cosmopolitans, but they were struggling, as the cosmopolitans also would, to conceive of a world that lay outside the bounds of what they perceived. Again and again, the trope of organic interdependence enabled these writers to warn their readers of their *eventual* yet *certain* susceptibility to the wave of economic crisis that was holding the countryside in its grip. Distance, these authors suggested, created a psychic disconnect which eluded the reality of organic interconnections. With organic images, this mental distance was collapsed. The city and the country were repeatedly revealed as bound to each other through the chains of causality. The proto-cosmopolitan intellectual strains contained within these writings would begin to converge, around the time Hume wrote the “law of nations” section of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, into a coherent ideology. But this process would continue in subsequent decades, and come to its apogee with the cosmopolitan body-politic that lay at the heart of Kant’s universal history:

Although this political body exists for the present only in the roughest of outlines, it nonetheless seems as if a feeling is beginning to stir in all its

¹⁰⁰ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), xv

¹⁰¹ Pauline Kleingeld and Eric Brown, “Cosmopolitanism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2006 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2006/entries/cosmopolitanism/>>

members, each of which has an interest in maintaining the whole¹⁰² Kant was not reading the British economic writers of the 1720s and 1730s. But Kant's example nonetheless suggests that they were looking ahead, however inadvertently, in their constant striving to imagine an equitable body-politic.

River Bodies

These visions of disparity were only partially reflective of socio-economic realities. It is certainly true that the city and its hinterlands were organically interconnected, and their fates were indeed interdependent. But not in the way imagined by contemporaries. The idea of a stagnating agricultural sector has been contested.¹⁰³ Urban growth actually reinforced agricultural advancement. Greater production in urban trades led to an increased demand for agricultural products, which, in turn, led to increased agricultural productivity. The consolidation of large rural farms pushed laborers out of small farms, as a result of which they streamed into the city in greater numbers than before. An increased urban population heightened the demand for cereal, the prices of which also happened to be declining in this period. There was, as a result, a marked increase in the domestic consumption of non-necessities. This led to even greater agricultural productivity.¹⁰⁴ Regardless, inequalities existed, and also resonated. It is perceptions, not realities, which are ideologically formative, and

¹⁰² As reprinted in Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant: Political Writings*, 2nd. Edition, transl. H. B. Nisbet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 51. It was first printed as *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltburgerlicher Absicht*, AA VIII, 15-31, First published in *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, IV (11 November 1784), 385-411.

¹⁰³ Hitchcock and Davidson, xvi

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*

Bradley's treatise was certainly formative. A decade later, *The Political State of Britain* still declared it to be "well worth reading."¹⁰⁵

The figure of the disordered body was as semiotically powerful as it was diagnostically useful, and the same is true of the landscapes in which these bodies resided. Ghostly landscapes, like bodies dying in droves, were compelling indications of malfunctioning structural processes. These markets had become "strangely thin", according to the author of the treatise on regrators, and desolation reigned in streets that were once thronged with hustle and bustle.¹⁰⁶ The absence of a "due Circulation of Profits" between the landlord, the farmer, and the consumer was rendered obvious by the sunken tolls and the grass that grew in marketplaces where cart-loads of corn had once been transported on a daily basis. It was natural, this suggests, to adduce abstract macro-economic processes of decline from the earthbound and visually apparent.¹⁰⁷

The connection between the metropolis and the agricultural hinterlands was ultimately physical. Invisible networks of credit did bind the city to the hinterlands and the hinterlands to each other.¹⁰⁸ But the extent of interdependence was an aspect, to a great extent, of such physical structures as bridges and turnpikes. 519 Turnpike Trusts were passed in the period between 1663 and 1770, covering 14,965 miles of road.¹⁰⁹ Improvements in the road system extended London's influence, but also brought goods and people from the

¹⁰⁵ *The Political State of Great Britain* (London: T. Cooper, 1740), 23

¹⁰⁶ [Anon] *An Essay to Prove*, 11

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*

¹⁰⁸ See again Brewer, "Commercialization and Politics," 210

¹⁰⁹ Jeremy Black, *An Illustrated History of Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 41

hinterlands into London.¹¹⁰ Inland waterways extended outwards into previously uncharted territories. Coastal shippers expanded their operation, vastly reducing distances in time and space.¹¹¹ The effects of these transformations were conceptual as well as material. The pamphlets on rural despair were part of a larger process wherein the citizens of London continually discovered the provinces. The psychological distance between London and the provinces, and the curiosity born out of that distance, are revealed in a 1738 travel narrative *A Voyage Up the Thames*: “not one of us having been out of the Neighborhood of London, we concluded it would be no Impediment to our Improvement Abroad, to take a slight Survey of some Part or other of the Land of our Nativity.”¹¹² Deepening interconnections facilitated trade, but also the transmission of commercial *news*; the cost of information declined along with the cost of freight. It was in this context that the letters summarized in Bradley’s treatise had traveled from the peripheries to the center, quickly turning rural plight into urban knowledge. It is because of these interconnections that ebullience and despair together defined the economic consciousness of the early eighteenth-century.

The idea of interdependence evolved, on the one hand, in response to inequalities between country and city, but also, on the other hand, in relation to the increased cultural recognition of innate connections between man-made structures and physical landscapes such as rivers. Rivers and bodies were, to

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, 45

¹¹¹ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 389-461; J.A. Chartres, *Internal Trade in England, 1500-1700* (London: Macmillan, 1977), Chapter 3; Thomas Stuart William, *River Navigation in England, 1600-1750* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936)

¹¹² Weddell, *A Voyage Up the Thames* (London: J. Roberts, 1738), 13

begin with, interlinked conceptually. “Symbolic activity,” Michael Walzer has written, “does more than provide the units of thought and feeling... the state, when seen as a body politic, is brought into close relation with the whole organic world.”¹¹³ The condition of the river, like that of the body, was read a sign, both providential and secular, of deeper forces. “Plato,” writes Simon Schama, “had believed the circle to be the perfect form, and imagined that nature and our bodies were constructed according to the same mysterious universal law of circulation that governed all forms of vitality.”¹¹⁴ In the early eighteenth century, rivers, like bodies, imposed standards of order. *The Craftsman* contrasted the river to a “natural body”:

A River, that is poison’d even at the Fountain-Head, will purge off the noxious Particles, by Degrees, and purify itself again: but when all the Streams of Government are infected, nothing but a Miracle can effect a radical Cure.¹¹⁵

The river, in its purest state, epitomized regularity. Hume used the paradox of the river – which remained stable across the ages even as it changed completely every twenty-four hours – to construct the following theory of personhood:

“what is expected makes less impression...than what is unusual and extraordinary.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, standards of order developed in relation to bodies were applied to the landscape of the river. Nicholas Hawksmoor, in his history of London bridge, panicked about the sterlings that had “changed the gentle Current of the *Thames* into many frightful Cataracts”, resulting in loss of lives,

¹¹³ Michael Walzer, “On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought,” *Political Science Quarterly* 82:2 (June 1967), 191-204; 193, 195

¹¹⁴ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 247

¹¹⁵ Reprinted in Eustace Budgell, *The Bee: Or, Universal Weekly Pamphlet. Containing Something to Hit Every Man’s Taste and Principles*. Volume 9. (London: W. Burton, 1733), 463

¹¹⁶ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. 1, 449

goods and vessels.¹¹⁷ Here Hawksmoor applied to the river fears of over-growth and over-extension that were rooted in ideas of the body and had evolved, as I have shown, in relation to behemoths like London and the South Sea Company. These fears impressed themselves upon his mind, as he revealed when wistfully reminiscing of a time when London was contained within its own walls, with the Thames on one side and a lake on the other: “it did not then seem probable that it would ever have swelled to this exorbitant Bigness.”¹¹⁸

The river, as the decade progressed, focused both utopian and dystopian visions of interdependence. In 1721, the frozen-over Thames was described by Jonathan Smedley as a still-life of national glory: “Thou! Beauteous River *Thames*, whose standing Tide,/Equals the Glories of thy flowing Pride!/The City, yea, the World’s transferr’d to Thee;/Fix’d as the Land, and richer than the Sea.”¹¹⁹ The Thames suggested a Britain that was commercially central and profoundly interdependent upon the rest of the world: “The wealthy Banker, who ne’er view’d the Sea,/ To Ports most distant, dates his Bills from Thee: While all the Silks and Sattens of the East,/ Stream, gawdy, up and down thy frozen Waste.”¹²⁰ For Smedley, this interconnectedness was marvelous, astonishing, and glorious. But the Thames froze over again in 1739, producing, in its wake, a particularly bleak landscape of despair. Severed blocks of ice careened and crashed into ferries; dead bodies floated up and down with the slowly-moving tide; ships,

¹¹⁷ Nicholas Hawksmoor, *A Short Historical Account of London-Bridge; With a Proposition for a New Stone-Bridge at Westminster* (London: J. Wilcox, 1736), 10, 11

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, 15

¹¹⁹ Jonathan Smedley, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London: S. Richardson, 1721), 37

¹²⁰ *ibid*

lighters, and boats lay battered, submerged and immovable.¹²¹ The extent of the damage, according to this writer, was an aspect of the level of activity: “whoever looks on the River *Thames*, must behold a Scene of greater Damage than has been known there in the Memory of Man; there scarce ever having been more Ships in the River at one Time, than now.”¹²² Daniel Gordon’s description of plague-besieged Marseille applies here as well: “The more the city was equated with the possibility of activity, the more spectacular and horrifying appeared the stoppage of activity.”¹²³ Another observer lamented the “dismal Effects of the Frost upon the Thames” which had rendered that “noble River almost Two whole Months innavigable, and a Stage of inspid Shews and idle Conversation; whereby Trade became stagnated, and Artificers incapable of supporting themselves by their Industry.”¹²⁴ “Icedore Frostiface” saw little but doom and uncertainty:

Half *London* running into the *Thames*, and Towns arising out of her Ruins on that Element, which can no longer contribute to her Riches and Luxury....it may justly be said, *That here we have no continuing City*; our Situation being so precarious...that a Day, nay an Hour, may dissolve our whole Community, and make the merriest of all look grave.¹²⁵

Two of the specters discussed earlier on in this chapter – the communal disintegration that followed the collapse of the South Sea Bubble and the shameful inequality stressed by the writers on the rural-urban divide – are revealed, in this passage, to have merged around the figure of the Thames. As

¹²¹ [Anon] *The Political State of Great Britain* (London: T. Cooper, 1740)

¹²² *ibid*, 20

¹²³ Daniel Gordon, “The City and the Plague in the Age of Enlightenment,” *Yale French Studies* 92 (1997), 84

¹²⁴ [Anon] *The Open Heart and Purse: Or, British Liberality Display’d* (London: C. Corbet, 1740), advertisement

¹²⁵ Icedore Frostiface, *An Account of all the Principal Frosts for Above an Hundred Years Past: With Political Remarks and Poetical Descriptions. To which are Added, ...A Frigid Essay Upon Frost-Fair* (London: C. Corbett, 1740), 16

destructive as it was, the frost was also restorative and regenerative. “A publick Spirit,” it was suggested, “will sometimes awake, perhaps at the breaking of the Frost; and some Folks be in the Humour to ask, how came the City impassable?”¹²⁶ A similar spirit of rebirth had emerged, we might recall, from the spoils of the collapse of the South Sea Bubble.

Perfect balance and even circulation were as desirable as they were unattainable ideals. The Thames, as it coursed through Southern England, confirmed this vividly. However regular the river’s movements, it could not counteract the vast inequalities in economic geography – indeed, its very regularity reinforced these differences. “It is true,” Defoe proclaimed in the fourth and radically altered edition of *The Complete English Tradesman*, “this is...against a stated wholesome rule of Commerce, That Trade ought to pass thro’ as many hands as it can; and that the circulation of Trade, like that of the blood, is the life of the Commerce. But I am not directing as to what should be, but telling what is.”¹²⁷ His subject was the grain trade, which had cut off the meal-men: that is, with the exception of “those country Meal-men who send meal to *London* by barges, from all the counties bordering on the *Thames*, or on any navigable river running into the *Thames* West.”¹²⁸ Similarly, great benefits accrued to the millers that lived in “that part of *England* which is near the *Thames*.” In former times, they were “esteemed people of a very mean employment,” but now they had become “men of vast business” – some of these

¹²⁶ [Anon] *The Political State of Great Britain* (London: T. Cooper, 1740), 126

¹²⁷ *The Complete English Tradesman: Directing Him in the Several Parts and Progressions of Trade, From His First Enttring Upon Business, To his Leaving Off* (London: C. Rivington, 1738), 262

¹²⁸ *ibid*

mills now accrued rents of three or four hundred pounds a year.¹²⁹

Not only was equal distribution impossible in a spatially-variegated world, it was the very constancy of the circulation that exacerbated these inequalities. The paradox is explicable through a chain of spatial causes and effects: commerce led to circulation, which led to activity, which led to the dense concentration of activity at nodal locations, which led to stagnation. Constant and even circulation had fueled the growth of London, but that growth had created an impossibly dense city – one that posed increasingly insuperable challenges to the evenness of the circulation. If “the building of a bridge” had in fact engrossed “a great Part of the Conversation of this City,” as one contemporary observed commented, it is because density had impeded commercial mobility in a period when the city was supremely dependent upon the transfer of goods to and from the hinterlands.¹³⁰ London was described as direly in need of “clear Passage” and “free and easy Communication to all Parts.”¹³¹ Engineering alone could alter these balances – only through artifice and ingenuity could the world more closely be made to resemble the human body.

The construction of bridges led to intense ideological warfare, which, in turn, perpetually politicized the fact of interdependence. Repeatedly, opponents of any given bridge would warn of its potentially ruinous effect on the watermen and, by extension, the nation’s military security. A broadside from 1728 claimed that a bridge at Putney would lead to “The Decrease of Watermen, so useful to

¹²⁹ *ibid*, 263

¹³⁰ [Anon] *The Political State of Great Britain* (London: T. Cooper, 1736), 249, 250-253

¹³¹ *ibid*, 120

the Sea Service, whether Private, or Publick Service.”¹³² A 1736 writer evoked the “infinite Number of Men” whose livelihood depended upon the river, which, in turn, was a “great *Nursery*” for the raising of sailors.¹³³ It is because each bridge was ideologically loaded that the prospect of its construction continually revealed the fact of interdependence.

The relationship between bridge-building and ideologies of interdependence is perhaps most vividly revealed by an anti-bridge-building pamphlet from 1722, whose author expressed great concern for “the Watermen upon the River *Thames*, and consequently to the Breeding of Seamen for the use of the Navy...For the River *Thames* is the great Seminary to furnish the Fleet with able Bodies, lusty young Fellows, who are well kept in their Youth, and inured to Labour; which gives Strength and Vigour to their Limbs.”¹³⁴ The fact of interdependence was, for this author, a critical polemical agent. London, he insisted, might well have been “a great and populous City”; still, she was “but a part; and therefore in Reason must concede, and yield up her Interest to the general Advantage of the whole Community.”¹³⁵ This was a disingenuous rhetorical act, as this author was so clearly concerned for Southwark, and not for the watermen, let alone the whole imagined community that was England. But regardless of whether this author was truly concerned, the case of the watermen *did* pose a dilemma. Interlocking networks of influence meant that any given act

¹³² [Anon] *Reasons Against Building a Bridge Over the Thames at Putney* (n.p. 1728)

¹³³ [Anon] *An Essay to Prove that the Jurisdiction and Conservancy of the River of Thames &c. Is Committed to the Lord Mayor, and City of London, Both in Point of Right and Usage* (London: R. Brown, 1746), xi vii

¹³⁴ [Anon] *Reasons against building a bridge from Lambeth to Westminster. Shewing the inconveniencies of the same to the City of London, and borough of Southwark* (London: J. Roberts, 1722), 7,18

¹³⁵ *ibid*, 22, 25

– the simple construction of bridge – could lead to a chain of consequences that extended beyond what anyone might have imagined: the possible compromise of military security, in this case. In a society undergoing complex growth, where labor-driven systems were replaced by feats of machinery, a bridge *did* pose a serious dilemma: the livelihood of the watermen who earned their living by transporting people back and forth, *were* compromised.

The circumstances of commercial modernity, as exemplified by the plight of the watermen, engendered the revivification of another long-standing vision of the body-politic: one that was predicated upon love and charity. “I cannot think,” wrote the author of the previously-discussed polemic against the bridge from Lambeth to Westminster, “how Persons who act for the publick Good, can entertain a Notion of a Project that looks with any Face or Appearance of private Injury, without redressing it to the meanest Member of the Body Politick.”¹³⁶ The waterman, of course, was such a member. The indignation at inequity contained within statement connects idiomatically to a Christian discourse of charity that had long been conceived as a vision of the interdependent body-politic. The image of a united Christian body was essential to the uniquely Anglican conception of charity that crystallized in seventeenth-century sermons.¹³⁷ Rising inequalities of the 1720s and 1730s led to its perpetual revival. One 1725 sermon proclaimed: “As the several Orders and Degrees of Men in every Nation depend upon, and are as necessary to one another, as the Parts of the Body are to the

¹³⁶ *ibid*, 20

¹³⁷ J. Sears McGee, *The Godly Man in Stuart England: Anglicans, Puritans, and the Two Tables, 1620-1670* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). See also Raymond D. Tumbleson, “‘Reason and Religion’: The Science of Anglicanism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57:1 (1996), pp. 131-156

Whole: The Community *must* be injur'd by the *Neglect* of *any* useful Members."¹³⁸

This vision of the body-politic also spilled out of sermons into proposals for other charitable institutions, wherein the fact of interdependence was employed to emphasize the need for charity. A 1738 commentator on a recent workhouse scheme opined that the internal duties of the government consisted in the establishment of law and order, but also, in a nutshell, "causing the different Members of the Community to live in *Love, Unity, and Happiness*, one with the other."¹³⁹ These quotes are usefully juxtaposed to that proffered in the anti-bridge polemic, as they suggest the invisible infrastructure upon which it rested. The polemic, in turn, is suggestive of the endurance of the ideological pressures because of which sensibilities of restraint, equity, and balance would have remained relevant, or worth reiterating.

It is because the body-politic was not specific to this period or the genre of political economy that it is such a compelling subject: it invites us to follow leads that occasionally require us to leap across the boundaries of genre – revealing, in the process, otherwise invisible genealogies. This, in turn, is illustrative of how visions of interdependence were progressively codified in a variety of different languages: how the valorization of interdependence became an appropriate response to a myriad of different problems: political, economic, religious. The body-politic, as we have seen, grew powerful in a period of structural change for its usefulness in the extraction of *eternal* truths from *mutable* phenomena. Ideas of stagnation, circulation, and even distribution also converged around turnpikes.

¹³⁸ Thomas Clarke, *The True Foundation of a Nation's Greatness* (York: Thomas Gent, 1725), 20

¹³⁹ [Anon] *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Encrease and Miseries of the Poor of England* (London: A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, 1738), 31

The turnpikes increased the interdependence of metropolis and periphery, but they also created a world that was riven with imbalance and asymmetry. In this world, the idea of the body-politic remained a powerful corrective – a psychic restraint against the speed of modern life. It was integrally useful to a 1750 jeremiad against post-chaises – four-wheeled horse-drawn carriages (or “flying coaches”) that were damaging the roads with their high-speed driving and thus perniciously impeding the smooth circulation of the inland trade. “The political, *as the natural Body*, has many Members,” wrote this author, and “if one Member suffers, the rest, in some measure, suffers with it.”¹⁴⁰ Post-chaises offended rules of balance and proportion, and thus occasioned a re-codification of those very rules:

Whenever the Body becomes troubled with a *running* Disease, or whenever the Constitution goes to Decay, every Member decays in Proportion: Hence appears the great Inconsiderateness of those, who are regardless of the Body, I mean the *publick Weal*, tho’ *their own* has a close, and necessary Connection with it.

A text such as this might profitably be situated within the larger tradition of economic writings outlined in this chapter: a tradition concerned with inequality and imbalance – “unequal *Taxes*, and unequal *Privileges*”, as the title declared. Was it, this author asked his readers, possible to preserve the public roads, which were necessary for circulation, but to do so in a manner that was “*practicable, reasonable, or equitable*”?¹⁴¹ Here we see how three central Enlightenment tenets – utility, reason, and equity – were produced by anxieties about socio-economic

¹⁴⁰ John Newball, *Proposals to Preserve the Publick Roads: Without Prejudice to Trade, Excess of Tolls or Turnpikes. Also a Brief discourse, Shewing that Inland Trade is the Chief Support of Societies, Consequently the Support of the Nation; That the Present Run of Post-chaises Tends Greatly to the Ruin of Both; And that Unequal Taxes, and Unequal Privileges Are Often Attended with Pernicious Consequences*. By Phil’ Anglus (London: Mary Cooper, 1750), 3

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, 2

dislocations. At length, this author inveighed against the idle poor benefiting from the largesse of parishes, the rich “set on Pinnacles by Pension” whilst “honest industrious Persons” bore the brunt and suffered. Hawkers, bankrupts, smugglers, and robbers were everywhere – constantly gaining in strength and numbers.¹⁴² Specters are evident of the mortiferous world described by Richard Bradley. In such a context, post-chaises were just one indication of a larger, deeper, and profoundly irresolvable problem: of social and moral order in a modern, capitalist economy. Here might recall Pocock’s metaphor of a society expanding with great speed into “a world it can only imagine as existing in the forms it may desire.”¹⁴³ It is for this reason that one of the forms that it did desire – the balanced and interdependent body-politic – became, through this period, increasingly compelling for Enlightenment writers like Hume, Smith, Rousseau, Kant, and, beyond that, the British social reformers of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁴

Organic thought was a vessel for deeply held beliefs about the laws of nature. As material realities changed, so were these laws progressively adapted to the new arenas of change in the early eighteenth century. Thus as Britain grew and uncertainties increased, so did these images entrench themselves deeper. This chapter has charted this process by concentrating upon a series of moments. A passage from Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature* has been contextualized against religious, imperial, and commercial uses of the body-politic analogy. An aura of interdependence has been traced as emerging out of the emotional spoils

¹⁴² *ibid*, 7

¹⁴³ *ibid*

¹⁴⁴ For nineteenth-century bodies-politic, see Catherine Gallagher, “The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew,” *Representations* 14 (Spring, 1986), 83; Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

of financial crisis in 1720. The analogy of the body-politic is shown to have functioned as a corrective to London's greed and unconcern for scarcity in the hinterlands. Debates over bridges and turnpikes have occasioned the application of natural ideas to socio-economic problems. Throughout, I have shown how the need to describe disintegration and imbalance drove the reproduction of dystopian organic visions; the desire to improve or restore order fueled the proliferation of the well-ordered variants. The repeated employment of the body-politic had the inadvertent effect of naturalizing the ideal of interdependence, giving it the status of a mostly (although not entirely) unwritten natural law. However off-handed, each utterance had some part of a process in which new visions of interdependence were infused with the aura of truthfulness.

Chapter Two: The City and the Spleen in Early Enlightenment England

An East Indian elephant placed on display for “public spectacle” fell sick and died in 1722 – perhaps due to the large quantities of ale it was continually fed by the citizens of London.¹ We are told of this affair by William Stukeley, Augustan anatomist and eminent expert on Druids and dragons, who placed the weight of the blame on the ignorance of the creature’s keepers.² For the anatomical profession, this unfortunate turn-of-events was fortuitous, as contained within the elephant’s cadaver was an enormous specimen of a profoundly mysterious organ: the spleen. “We are forc’d,” Stukeley pronounced, “to own our ignorance of nature’s intention in forming the curious organ of the spleen.”³ “We may expect improvement in our art,” he promised his readers, “by searching into the entrails of so prodigious a creature as the elephant, the hugest of all that tread the ground, a mountain of animated matter.”⁴

The size of the elephant’s spleen approximated the magnitude of a problem that was widely recognized and deeply felt. Apart from being an organ, the spleen was an emotion and a psychosomatic disease. Included in the text’s early pages was a reprint of Anne Finch’s 1701 ode, which had connected the spleen to moral, social, and physical disorders such as idleness, unruliness, hysteria, and

¹ William Stukeley, *Of the Spleen, its Description and History, Uses and Diseases, Particularly the Vapors, with their Remedy. Being a Lecture read at the Royal College of Physicians* (London: printed for the author, 1723), preface

² On Stukeley’s fascinating life, see David Haycock, *William Stukeley: Science, Archaeology and Religion in Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002)

³ Stukely, preface

⁴ *ibid*

nervousness.⁵ Then, somewhat disingenuously, Finch had evoked the uncertainty by which the spleen was surrounded. “What art thou, Spleen,” she had asked, “which every thing dost ape? Thou Protean to abuse Mankind,/ Who never yet thy hidden Cause cou’d find;/ Or fix thee to remain in one continu’d Shape.”⁶ Two decades later, the problem of spleen persisted in eluding the English. Richard Blackmore described the spleen as “this *Proteus*, this Posture-Disease,” which could “assume the Shape and Figure, and the Part of many others of different Denominations.”⁷ A 1723 poem defined the spleen by its very changeability: “Ten thousand Forms assuming, Proteus Spleen/ Her motly Troop conducts, with hideous Yell/ Their Shape each Moment changing.”⁸

The idea of the spleen was, at this time, shrouded with uncertainties but also culturally formative. Often it was described as an essential aspect of Englishness. “There is no Nation in Europe, as has been observ’d above a thousand times,” literary critic John Dennis proclaimed in 1698, “that is so generally addicted to the Spleen, as the English.”⁹ Decades later, Blackmore would vividly attest to the spleen’s enduring hold on the nation’s consciousness when he endorsed the phrase “the English Spleen” and confirmed that such a distemper had, in fact, attained “such a universal and tyrannical dominion over

⁵ Anne Kingsmill Finch, Countess of Winchelsea, *The Spleen, A Pindarique Ode. By a Lady. Together with A Prospect of Death: A Pindarique Essay* (London: H. Hills, 1709). Later versions of this text appeared in 1709 and 1713.

⁶ *ibid*, 1

⁷ Richard Blackmore, *A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours: or, Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Affections. With three Discourses on the Nature and Cure of the Cholick, Melancholy, and Palsies* (London: J. Pemberton, 1725), 16

⁸ Henry Baker, *An Invocation of Health* (London: J. Parker, 1723), 6

⁹ John Dennis, *The Usefulness of the Stage, to the Happiness of Mankind. To Government, and to Religion. Occasioned by a Late Book, Written by Jeremy Collier* (London, 1698). Reprinted in *Miscellaneous Tracts* (London: Rich. Parker, 1727), 310

both sexes, as incomparably exceeds its power in other nations.”¹⁰ Later in the century, the idea of the spleen was described as particular to the period under consideration: “In the latter end of the last and beginning of this century, spleen, vapours, or hyp, was the fashionable disease,” James Makittrick Adair would remark, in his 1790 *Essays on Fashionable Diseases*.¹¹ So while the image of the spleen might most famously be associated with Baudelaire’s “Spleen de Paris”, its genesis lies firmly in early eighteenth century London.¹² Then, as in nineteenth-century Paris, it was more than just evocative of the ineffable discontent of the modern urban experience: it was *emblematic* of it. “Medical judgments,” as Robert Nye has written of this period, “were capable of expressing the consensual norms, prejudices, and salient anxieties of French society.”¹³ The same might be said of the figure of the spleen in early eighteenth-century England.

Anxieties surrounding the spleen were productive, I argue in this chapter, of sensibilities that clustered around three ideals: activity, happiness, and a skeptical pursuit of truth. These are respectively explored in the first, second, and third sections of this chapter. The spleen, I argue in the first section, called for business, business brought wealth, and wealth led to complaints of the spleen. The fear of the spleen was used to unmoor and undermine traditional mores of female comportment. The spleen was blamed for urban discontent, and the city was blamed for the reign of the spleen. In yet another rotation of the cycle, the city, being as it was a force-field of activity, became a cure for the

¹⁰ *ibid*, v

¹¹ James Makittrick Adair, *Essays on Fashionable Diseases* (London: T.P. Bateman, 1790)

¹² Charles Baudelaire, *Le Spleen de Paris* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1869)

¹³ Nye, “Degeneration”, 21

spleen. In the second section, I focus upon the relationship between the fear of the spleen and the valorization of happiness. The spleen, as I show, was used to engender a national emotional revival after the collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720. *Happiness* is the focus of this section, but activity is revealed as enduringly salient – especially as an avenue to happiness. The third section focuses upon what the spleen reveals about the production of an enlightened skepticism about uncertainty. Many of the texts examined in this chapter built upon fears of the spleen at the same time as they dismissed those fears as unreal. But those who described or bemoaned the effects of the spleen upon English minds and bodies – however real or unreal they described the effect as being – were reinvigorating the powers of the concept of the spleen. If the idea of the spleen was continually productive of anxiety and confusion, it is also because it was both intellectually and emotionally *useful* to those who wanted to propose different forms of activity and happiness. The discourse of the spleen – both the fear of the spleen and the reaction to the use of the spleen to elicit fear – grew in response to urban life, which brought with it idleness, demands for commercial growth, the scars of financial collapse, and diverse other experiences including noise, bad weather, irreligion, and suicide. The figurative power of the image of the spleen explains why any given writer would *use* the image to motivate, inspire, or provoke her or his readers into a particular form of activity, change in emotional outlook, or way of seeing the world. City life appeared to reinforce the reality of the spleen, but it also made it increasingly useful, on the one hand, and increasingly elusive, on the other. The life of the city persistently added to the fear the spleen and all it represented. These fears, in turn, continually propelled the idealization of activity, happiness, and an enlightened skepticism.

The spleen thus enables us to clarify the nature of an English Enlightenment that emerged as a response to the excesses of modernity – one that was not, in other words, an articulation of modernity itself. In connecting the body to the city, I am traveling a path blazed by Roy Porter, who, more than anyone else, has written of how the early eighteenth century “formulated not just progress but its verso: the idea of diseases of civilization.”¹⁴ But Porter himself has been strongly challenged – perhaps most famously by John Robertson, for whom “modernity pre-empted Enlightenment” in England.¹⁵ Commerce and freedom, inasmuch as they were manifested in the city, are revealed in this chapter as generating a plethora of problems and anxieties that occasioned enlightened intervention. The problem of spleen was intensified and exacerbated by urban modernity. Following the spleen establishes that there was ample *room* for Enlightenment in a commercial and urban society. As such, this chapter follows organically from the previous, which similarly challenged Robertson’s argument with a focus upon fears of the disordered body.

In offering an Enlightenment that was, in some sense, a response to modernity, I also hope to further Porter’s mission of expanding the ranks of the enlightened and the enlighteners. “Porter,” Robertson has derisively remarked, “was free to include in his account of the British Enlightenment any and every aspect of eighteenth-century British intellectual and cultural life which took his

¹⁴ Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 282. Also important, and repeatedly cited by Porter, is G.S. Rousseau, “Nerves, Spirits and Fibres: Towards an Anthropology of Sensibility”, in *Enlightenment Crossings: Pre- and Post-Modern Discourses* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 122-41

¹⁵ Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 4

expansive and inclusive fancy.”¹⁶ But Porter’s, perhaps, was the only way of capturing the incredible synergy between the different forms of change that characterized this period of cultural turbulence and intellectual transformation. I have, in Porter’s spirit, and in contravention to Robertson’s, examined a wide range of texts in making this argument, including commercial tracts, medical treatises, periodicals, newspapers, songbooks, and other less easily classifiable ones, such as “John Midriff’s” impassioned recreation of the emotional life of post-1720 London, thinly veiled as a medical treatise. Most of the texts I consider have been entirely or almost entirely ignored – even, for the most part, by scholars of the spleen. They are, with a few exceptions, the very opposite of canonical – but they are, as I suggest, nonetheless enlightened.

Activity

What, it might be asked, *was* the spleen? Explanations had proliferated for centuries: in the Midrash, the spleen was said to produce laughter in children; in the Talmud, it was the grinding mill of the digestive system.¹⁷ The Greeks, including Hippocrates, believed that it worked as a depository for such noxious fluids as bile: as a well-functioning spleen would protect the organism by drawing these fluids to itself and absorbing them into its “spongy” tissue, a disordered spleen was one that had reached maximum capacity, enabling the vitiating substances to travel the body and, as they did, spreading illness

¹⁶ *ibid*, 27

¹⁷ See David A. McClusky et. al, “Tribute to a Triad: History of Splenic Anatomy, Physiology, and Surgery – Part I,” *World Journal of Surgery* 23:9 (1999), 311-25, 311. See also Angus Gowland “The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy,” *Past and Present*, 91 (2006), 77

everywhere they went.¹⁸ This was a view to be contested, debated, and developed for centuries: Vesalius, for instance, disagreed vehemently with Galen's belief that the spleen had a vasculature similar to the liver's.¹⁹ The 1720s witnessed somewhat of a Renaissance in spleen studies. Stukeley's was not the only attempt at decoding the purpose of the spleen: Richard Blackmore, George Cheyne, Bernard Mandeville, and Nicholas Robison would all also weigh in at length.²⁰ Differences aside, each writer was motivated by a fundamental urge to explain the inexplicable: "Nature Makes Nothing in Vain," Aristotle had declared, and the anxieties generated by this dictum are apparent, for instance, in Blackmore ebullient assertion "Many Mysteries continue in Nature, that elude the Sagacity of curious Enquirers, to humble the Pride of learned Philosophers."²¹

It was the collective influence of social, discursive, and biological forces that shaped the period's obsession with the spleen, and my account is designed to reveal how they worked in tandem with each other. The idea of the spleen both focused and combined fears of inactivity, discontent, and misinformation. Aristotle had described melancholy as a side effect of genius, and Thomas Sydenham, in the seventeenth century, had substantiated this argument using Galenic ideas of the humors and Hippocratic notions of the weather's effect on

¹⁸ Henry Gray, *On the Structure and Use of the Spleen* (London: John W. Parker & Son, 1854), 1-53; See also McCluskey et al, p 311-14

¹⁹ McCluskey et al, 316-7. As McCluskey et al note, Vesalius, who came upon his findings through dissection, "was a better Galen than Galen himself" (317)

²⁰ See George Cheyne, *The English Malady: Or, A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds, as Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Spirits, Hypochondriacal, and Hysterical Distempers* (London: G. Strahan, 1733); Richard Blackmore, *A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours: or, Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Affections* (London: J. Pemberton, 1725); Nicholas Robinson, *A New System of the Spleen, Vapours, and Hypochondriack Melancholy: Wherein all the Decays of the Nerves, and Lownesses of the Spirits, are Mechanically Accounted For* (London: printed [by Samuel Aris] for A. Bettesworth, W. Innys, and C. Rivington, 1729)

²¹ Cited in McCluskey, 315; Blackmore, 226

human tempers.²² Sydenham's views were taken up by seventeenth-century political economists seeking to inspire their fellow countrymen to overcome an apparently crippling contemplative melancholy. The set of conditions attributed to the "spleen", they argued again and again, were not actually rooted in the spleen; they were the psychosomatic side effects of unhappiness and inactivity. The Dutch, as William Temple observed in 1673, never complained of this disease because they were "ever busie, or easily satisfied."²³ The figure of the spleen thus emblemized the dependence of happiness upon business, and was also associated with the hypochondriac delusion of its supposed sufferers. The spleen was "the Disease of people that are idle, or think themselves but ill entertain'd; and attribute every fit of dull Humour, or Imagination, to a formal Disease, which they have found this Name for; Whereas such Fits are incident to all men, at one time or other."²⁴ To complain of the spleen was a cardinal symptom of the disease – precisely because the disease was largely imagined. There *was* a physical condition, which was rooted in climactic, gastrointestinal and other physical forces such as "aberrations of some insensible degrees in Health and Vigour."²⁵ But it was one that first affected "the finer Spirits of the Brain" before it devastated the entire system. It had nothing to do with the supposed ascent of a bilious hypochondriac substance.²⁶ Only the idle English tried to attribute it to a deeper dysfunction of the soul or body; the act of doing so correspondingly delivered them into an even deeper melancholy. It behooved

²² Lawrence Babb, "The Cave of Spleen," *The Review of English Studies*, 12:46 (1936), 172, ii. 89

²³ William Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (London: A. Maxwell, 1673), 162

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ibid*

them, he implied, to learn from the case of the Dutch, who were “well, when they are not ill,” and “pleased, when they are not troubled...content, because they think little of it.”²⁷

Fears of the spleen were propelled, in the early eighteenth-century, by the effusion of theories on the merits of circulation. Roy Porter has described an “entrenched medical materialism”: with the body as with the economy, “Circulation was the key...stagnation was an evil.”²⁸ Stukeley’s study of the elephant’s spleen revealed the organ to be a “second heart” of sorts – one that aided crucial processes like digestion by functioning to circulate blood amongst the internal organs. It supplied the stomach with “a new quantity of blood, besides that deriv’d in the ordinary course of circulation”; a “debilitated spleen,” by extension, could not keep up the “tenor of the circulation.”²⁹ Physical activity enabled the actualization of nature’s intentions, which were to circulate and, by extension, maintain an adequate distribution of physical and spiritual elements. As the problem of the spleen supposedly occurred when a bilious substance accumulated in the stagnant spleen, the *idea* of the spleen became a *reason* for activity. “Labour or Exercise, “wrote *The Spectator*, ferments the Humours, casts them into their proper Channels, throws off Redundancies, and helps Nature in those secret Distributions, without which the Body cannot subsist in its Vigour,

²⁷ *ibid*, 164

²⁸ *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 235-6. See also Ulinka Rublick, “Fluxes: Towards a Historical Anthropology of the Body and of Emotions in Early Modern Europe,” *History Workshop Journal* (April, 2001) and Sophie Vasset, “Blood, Fluids and Juices: Circulation as a Pattern for Human Health and its Metaphors in Eighteenth-century Britain,” presented at *Vital Matters: Eighteenth-Century Conceptions of Life and Death*, Clark Library, Los Angeles, 4 February 2006 (delivered by Helen Deutch).

²⁹ *ibid*, 33, 74

nor the Soul act with Chearfulness...It is to a Neglect in this Particular that we must ascribe the Spleen."³⁰

The idea of the spleen thus became a *focus* for realizations that were not specific to the spleen: of the many-tiered benefits of exercise and activity. The fear of the spleen was not, it must be established, synonymous with the fear of inactivity. These were two separate fears, with a significant degree of interpenetration. The subject of the spleen gave vent to what were deep-set anxieties about inactivity. But this does not in turn mean that these anxieties were *rooted* in ideas of the spleen. The author of a 1715 conduct manual asked his readers to "consider the Anatomy of an Human Body" with the intention of discovering how "absolutely necessary *Labour* is for the right Preservation of it...There must be frequent *Motions* and *Agitations*, to mix, digest, and separate the Juices contained in it...*The Nobleness of the Soul*...consisted in *Action*."³¹ This was after having proclaimed that there was "more Toil, Fatigue, and Uneasiness in *Sloth*, than can be found in any Employment a Man will put himself upon. When a thoughtful Man is once fix'd this way, *Spleen* is the necessary Consequence."³² There was a convergence, in other words, between the discourse of the spleen and the upsurge of feelings on the merits of activity. More than anatomy, it was practice and observation – the fact that doctors lived inside their own bodies and had a visceral sense of what made them and those they observed feel better – that reinforced the merits of activity. The mechanisms of the hysterical and hypochondriacal distempers – of which "the spleen" was a prime

³⁰ See *The Spectator*, 2nd ed. (London, 1713), 119-20

³¹ [Anon] *The Gentleman's Library, Containing Rules for Conduct in All Parts of Life* (London, 1715), 168-70

³² *ibid*, 167

instance – were examined closely in another medical text.³³ It did not take a doctor to realize that physical activity was curative of both moral and physical illnesses – “there is nothing like Hurrying the Body, to divert the Hurry of the Mind,” as this author remarked.³⁴ We cannot assume that this is an application of the spleen, rather than a realization that happened to interlock neatly with the set of ideas surrounding the spleen. The merits of exercise were repeatedly upheld because both seemed to reap medical as well as moral benefits. This is regardless of the fact that the mechanism by which it did so remained enduringly obscure. If riding appeared to cure women of hysteria, this author asked, then why not let them ride? “Now if women who happen to be thus tormented, believ’d that a Recourse to this Exercise would relieve ‘em; I leave it to any one to judge, whether they would dispute the putting it in Practice.”³⁵ The theory was built around the success of the treatment. The “*Hysterick or Hypochondriacal Case*,” according to this author, “falls the most under a Gymnastick Method, because the least proper to be treated with much Internal Physick.”³⁶

The idea proffered in these treatises had been evolving for centuries, but were newly salient in the commercial metropolis. The desire for activity grew in a society stilled by stagnation, which, in turn, was a product of commercial activity. The vicious cycle of the spleen – stagnation leading to melancholy, melancholy leading to even more stagnation – is perhaps nowhere more vividly described than in the “Cave of Spleen” passage from Alexander Pope’s *The Rape*

³³ *Medicina Gymnastica: Or, A Treatise Concerning the Power of Exercise, With Respect to the Animal Oeconomy; And the Great Necessity of it in the Cure of Several Distempers* (London: printed by John Matthews, for Robert Knaplock, 1705)

³⁴ *ibid*, 157, 163

³⁵ *ibid*, 203

³⁶ *ibid*, 142

of the Lock. Like Alice's Wonderland, Pope's cave was an imagined literary underground in which all temporal rules appeared to have been reversed – revealing, as they did, the true essence of society. The Cave was home to a horrific scene of grotesque stagnancy, in which bodies and mechanical parts had morphed into each other to the point that they were entirely immobilized and redundant. “A constant Vapour o’er the Palace flies,” Pope had written, “Unnumber’d Throngs on ev’ry side are seen/Of Bodies chang’d to various Forms by Spleen/Here living Teapots stand, one Arm held out,/ One bent, the Handle this, and that the Spout”³⁷ It is because the vision contained within this passage was so culturally salient that Voltaire had it reprinted in *Lettres Philosophiques* (London: C. Davis, 1733), having described its author as the “most elegant, most correct” poet of a genius-filled nation, his compositions “vastly clear and perspicuous...general, and relative to all Nations.”³⁸

“La Caverne profonde” might have been based upon London, but it could just as easily have been set in Paris. It was in the metropolis that commerce happened and here that its wealth was concentrated. Wealth, in turn, watered the breeding grounds of idleness – a sin that was denounced for centuries in

³⁷ Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock. An Heroi-Comical Poem* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1714), 32, 33

³⁸ Voltaire's commentary on the “Cave of Spleen” might be placed in the context of a broader tradition of French commentaries on English spleen. See Eric Gidal “Civic melancholy: English gloom and French Enlightenment,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37.1 (2003) 23-45. Emphasizing accounts such as Pierre Jean Grosely's *Londres* (1770), “the most complete theorization of the English civic melancholy.” he also cites examples such as that of the Marquis de Barbe-Marbois', who is known to have referred to England as “that country of liberty and spleen.” Letters of the Marchioness of Pompadour from MDCCLIII to MDCCLXII (London: W. Owen and T. Cadell, 1771), 94

sermons, conduct manuals, and commercial tracts.³⁹ Spleen and idleness were intimately associated. In his 1720 mock conduct manual *The Humourist*, Thomas Gordon asserted that he would “neither contradict the Opinion of the Physicians, nor the Experience of their Patients” by asserting “that Idleness has a mighty Hand both in the Creation and Nourishment of the Spleen and the Vapours.”⁴⁰ The spleen, moreover, embodied an idleness that was specific to the wealthy. So claimed *The Visitor*, a 1723 newspaper: “I always thought that Love, like the Spleen and Vapours, was only the Disease of the Rich and Great, and that the Vulgar had no Notion of it.”⁴¹ As the spleen was related to idleness, idleness to wealth, and wealth to the city, the spleen itself became a prime symptom of the urban condition. It was, according to George Cheyne, the “Wealth and Abundance of the Inhabitants, the Inactivity and sedentary Occupations of the better Sort (among whom this Evil mostly rages) and the Humour of living in great, populous and consequently unhealthy Towns”, which had “brought forth a Class and Set of Distempers, with atrocious and frightful Symptoms, scarce known to our Ancestors, and never rising to such fatal Heights, nor afflicting such Numbers in any other known Nation.”⁴² Commercial activity was a cure for

³⁹ Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order, Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 123-4

⁴⁰ Thomas Gordon, *The Humourist: Essays upon Several Subjects. Enthusiasm. News-writers. The Spleen* (London: W. Boreham, 1720), 49. By 1730, this text was in its fourth edition

⁴¹ *Visitor* (July 2, 1723)

⁴² *The English Malady*, *ibid.* Cheyne's equation of the class dimensions of nervous disorder have been explored by Roy Porter in "Civilization and Disease: Medical Ideology in the Enlightenment," in *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain, 1660-1800*, ed. Jeremy Black and Jeremy Gregory (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 154-83. See also Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment: The Life and Times of George Cheyne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000)

the spleen, but the prosperity it generated, concentrated in the form of urban wealth, was also fuel for the spleen. It is for this reason that the problem of the spleen would not be so easily resolved. Early eighteenth-century writers were forthcoming with solutions for the spleen – songbooks, plays, activity – but had no truly sustainable solution for a problem that was nourished by commercial growth. The problem of the spleen did not end with the early 1720s because metropolitan wealth continued to accumulate. The English did not feel it necessary to end commercial activity, even if they liked to bemoan its epiphenomena. Temple and Collier did not consider the possibility that the activity they proposed would generate further amounts of wealth, which, in turn, would nourish idleness and stagnation. Nor did Cheyne suggest that wealthy urbanites engage in less commercial activity in order to reduce cases of the spleen.

How, it might be asked, was the ideal of activity, embodied as it was by fears of the spleen, an ideal of *Enlightenment*? The cultural productivity of the discourse of the spleen, and its relationship to Enlightened sensibilities of activity, is suggested by its use in a text designed to prevail against the conditions that led to the formation of stereotypes such as that of the idle rich woman: Sally Fisher, *Britain's Golden Mines Discover'd: or, the Fishery Trade Considered* (London: J. Morphew, 1720). Much has been written on the gendered aspects of the spleen and, in particular, how women's bodies were governed by hysteria or beset with a case of the "vapours."⁴³ But there is also much that

⁴³ See Desiree Hellegers, "The Threatening Angel and the Speaking Ass: The Masculine Mismeasure of Madness in *The Spleen*," *Genre*, 26:2-3 (1993), 204: "Descriptions of nervous disorders in the works of Sydenham, Thomas Willis, and, subsequently, Bernard Mandeville, continue to reflect patriarchal myths

remains to be written of how these prejudices were subverted and undermined. *Britain's Golden Mines* is particularly interesting because its purpose was not to make a point about the spleen: it was to encourage female investment in fisheries – it was proposed that the idle ladies of estate join “the busie part of the World.”⁴⁴ The ladies of estate were prey to the spleen because they were inactive: “their having something to do,” it was hypothesized “would prevent, in a great Measure, that fashionable Disease the Spleen or Vapours.”⁴⁵ “Even that sort of Spleen which is the Effect of what we call a dull or foggy Day,” she would offer, “proceeds from the same Cause, the not knowing what to do with our selves.”⁴⁶

In a commercial world that was deeply misogynistic, *Britain's Golden Mines* used fears of splenetic inactivity to help imagine a public commercial persona for the aristocratic woman. It was a female voice – “Sally Fisher” – that was urging England’s women to escape their homes for an active public life: “I cannot but blame the Custom of our Country which makes it unfashionable for fine Ladies to know any thing about Business.”⁴⁷ Women, in the 1720s, tended not to run fisheries – mostly, if at all, they ran smaller scale business like lodging houses or money-lending.⁴⁸ But this is precisely what makes the text so remarkable: it actively imagined a different sort of England, and anticipated a newfound social world governed by a different set of sensibilities. The fear of spleen, a common prejudice, worked to prevail against ideals of femininity that had been

concerning the limited intellectual capabilities of women and the excesses and inherent corruption of woman’s sexuality.”

⁴⁴ Sally Fisher, *Britain's Golden Mines Discover'd: or, the Fishery Trade Considered* (London: J. Morphew, 1720), xiii

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ *ibid*, xiv

⁴⁷ *ibid*, iv

⁴⁸ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society, and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 173

intensified by the collapse of the South Sea Bubble: “With Jews and Gentiles, undismay’d / Young tender Virgins mix; Of Whiskers, nor of Beards Afraid / Nor all their Cousening Tricks,” went a 1720 song called *Stock-Jobbing Ladies*.⁴⁹ The fear of the spleen was amongst several rhetorical components of *Britain’s Golden Mines*, but to explain the work that it did in urging the women towards activity we must consider the accumulation of all of the fears associated with the spleen, as described thus far in this chapter. If, as Michael McKeon has written, “the emergence of modern attitudes towards the public and the private is incremental rather than a rapid historical process” because “its contributing elements (e.g., systems of social and gender categorization) evince a comparable pattern of change,” then we might also look towards the evolution of attitudes towards the body that influenced these systems and attitudes.⁵⁰

The image of the spleen could be an ingredient of a prejudice, but it could also, this suggests, be used to subvert that very prejudice. The idea of women being splenetick and vapourish was often used to propose female activity: *Britain’s Golden Mines* is just one instance of this. Another instance is that of a “Barbara Puzzle” who wrote to the *Mist’s Weekly Journal* in 1723 on ladies’ desires to solve riddles: “You will not wonder then (dear *Mist*) if we Females are desirous to imitate the Learned, and try our Wits this Way, especially when by this Means we get an Opportunity to vent a little Spleen, which otherwise might ascend in Vapours to the Brain.”⁵¹ This was loaded self-deprecation – designed to mock the presumably misogynist reader by preempting his misogyny with

⁴⁹ [Anon] *Stock-Jobbing Ladies* (S.I.: s.n., 1720). See the HBS Bancroft Collection

⁵⁰ Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2005), 268

⁵¹ *Weekly Journal, Or Saturday’s Post* (Saturday, May 2, 1723)

supposed self-effacement. In this sense, Puzzle's piece fits in with early eighteenth-century conduct manuals, in which the language of filial obedience became, it has recently been argued, "a carefully exploited tool with which women not only demonstrated their own moral authority but even, paradoxically, defied their husbands."⁵²

Apart from being useful for the cultural liberation of women, the ideal of activity was conducive to the formation of an urbane sensibility. "While their view of their world was critical," Peter Gay has written of the *philosophes*, "they knew and loved the world they wished to change."⁵³ The fear of the spleen helps in part to account for the love of the city. The city was a force-field of commercial activity, and so the spleen, it often appeared, almost *required* a city to cure it. Solitude, it was sometimes suggested, brought along the spleen; the city provided a release from this solitude, and hence it also *cured* the spleen. The *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, made the following observations in an essay on solitude:

The People who complain most of the Spleen, are those who meet with nothing to ruffle or discompose them in this Life: the little Rubs and Difficulties which Men in Business are obliged to encounter, have so good an Effect upon their bodily Healths, that I never knew such a one complain of the Vapours.⁵⁴

In championing the merits of the *vita activa* against the *vita contemplativa*, the *Weekly Journal* was weighing in upon an age-old debate – one that went back to the Renaissance and the Ancients. But the sentiment was described as visceral and current. "I Find it is a Complaint among Men of Business, that the Town is

⁵² Ingrid H. Tague, "Love, Honor, and Obedience: Fashionable Women and the Discourse of Marriage in the Early Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of British Studies* 40:1 (Jan., 2001), 81

⁵³ Gay, *The Party of Humanity*, 119

⁵⁴ *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, Issue 331, (October 10, 1724)

very thin," this passage began, "and indeed, a Man who is accustomed to walk the Streets, may perceive the Crowds of Passengers considerably lessen'd, from what they are at the more busy Times of the Year; so that a Man may now come to the Town to be retir'd."⁵⁵ The city cured the spleen because it was a field of diversions as well as troubles: in the words of this passage's author – "that Variety of Objects we meet with in the great World, which amuse the Senses, and keep the Mind from preying upon itself."⁵⁶ It was entertaining and hence therapeutic. "The Spleen is nothing but the Effect of Stagnation," John Dennis would write in a 1720 letter to Walter Moyle, "and the Motion of vigorous Exercise must and will cure it." Here he was reiterating a commonplace. But Dennis pushed it in an uncommon direction. The life of the city was itself sufficient exercise, he insisted: "Take a gentle trotting Horse, and an honest careful Servant, and come up and see your old Friends and this wicked Town but for one Fortnight, and if the Journey to this Town and back again into Cornwall, and the strange Sightings which you will see here, do not remove the Spleen for one six Months, I will be contented to have it for twelve." Dennis the conservative moralist then proceeded to glamorize "a Town entirely new" – one replete with "new Buildings, new Men, new Manners."⁵⁷ Decades later, the Scottish poet Matthew Green would echo the sentiment. The spleen was occasion for urban engagement. "Passion," he mused, "Subsiding settles into spleen;/ Hence, as the

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁷ John Dennis, *Original Letters, Familiar, Moral and Critical* (London: W. Mears, 1721), 211

plague of happy life/ I run away from party-strife.”⁵⁸ It drove him to immerse himself in his city’s cultural life, abundant as it was with diversions and spectacles. “If spleen-fogs rise at close of day,” he wrote, “I clear my evening with a play,/ Or to some concert take my way./ The company, the shine of lights/ The scenes of humour, musick’s flights/ Adjust, and set the soul to right.”⁵⁹

The city was as wonderful as the spleen was terrifying. The spleen was not a benign yet laughable side-effect of the city – it was produced by the city but also reason to embrace the city. Daniel Gordon has written that “the ability to find amusement in superficiality, to discover pleasure in the very limits of secular striving, is one way of defining the spirit of the Enlightenment as a whole...La Rouchefoucauld...simply converted his anxiety regarding the impossibility of attaining absolute integrity into an appreciation of the relative pleasures of the commerce of the world.”⁶⁰ My problem is with the idea of “relative pleasures”, not with the idea that secular striving was reconceived as pleasurable. The spleen, these uses suggest, was not a *relative* ill. George Cheyne, writing decades after Finch, did not think it any less grave – a myriad of anxieties related to the city were projected, in *The English Malady*, onto the image of the spleen. But it is because so many fears had accumulated around the figure of the spleen that it became so useful for the propagation of activity and, as we have seen, urbanity.

⁵⁸ Matthew Green, *The Spleen. An Epistle Inscribed to his Particular Friend Mr. C. J. By the late Mr. Matthew Green, of the Custom-House, London* (Edinburgh: A. Dodd, 1737), 10

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 4

⁶⁰ Gordon, “The City and the Plague in the Age of Enlightenment,” 72

Happiness

There was, in early eighteenth century England, an increased premium placed upon happiness. The English complained of unhappiness because they were conscious of not being happy, but also because they felt that they had a *right* to be happy. Happiness, in the early eighteenth-century, began to acquire the status of ideology. "The happiness of a community," George Blewith would write in 1725, "is nothing but the private happiness of the private individuals that compose it."⁶¹ Happiness, at the same time, was re-described as a noble aspiration. "Depend upon it," Lady Mary Montagu wrote to Frances Pierrepont in 1726, decades later, "'tis only the spleen that gives you those ideas...there is nothing more silly than to be too wise to be happy."⁶² The spleen was repeatedly evoked in such unfavorable descriptions of unhappiness. "We are not only grown weary of each others' repeated dullness, but of ourselves, and our own musty notions" one aristocratic lady wrote to Henrietta Berkeley (wife of George Berkeley) in 1722, "and this cursed ill weather is an addition to our spleen; and inclines us to believe there is a thorough change in nature."⁶³ What is striking about this statement, apart from Berkeley's resignation about the inevitability of her own self-deception, is how unhappy she is about her own unhappiness.

⁶¹ George Blewith, *An Enquiry Whether a General Practice of Virtue Rends to the Wealth or Poverty, Benefit or Disadvantage of a People?* (London: R. Wilkin, 1725), 171

⁶² Lady Mary Pierrepont Wortley Montagu, "Letter from Lady Mary Pierrepont Wortley Montagu to Frances Pierrepont, 1726," in Lord Wharncliffe, ed., *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Pierrepont Wortley Montagu*, Vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), 185

⁶³ "Letter from Elizabeth Lawrence Griffith Mohun Mordaunt, Lady Mohun to Henrietta Hobart Howard Berkeley, Countess of Suffolk, July 1722", in John Wilson Croker, ed., *Letters to and from Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk and her Second Husband, the Hon. George Berkeley, From 1712 to 1767*, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1824), 96

It was in this context – in which the spleen had become a kind of iconic anti-ideal, the very specter of which was productive of the desire for happiness – that the South Sea Bubble collapsed. The event, which took place in 1720, generated untold trauma. In effect, it is true, it might have only shaken “the bedrock of the City, rather than the surface of the country.”⁶⁴ We cannot underestimate its effects upon the inexperienced investors who had been tantalized by the promise of plenty, and, having no source of sensible financial advice, arrived at the stock market expecting to partake of the expanding national wealth, only to have their dreams shattered and pocketbooks emptied. England, of course, had been traumatized by many things – the Sacheverell riots, the Jacobite conspiracies. But there was something very modern about the nature of the trauma generated by the collapse of the Bubble: it revealed the nation as simultaneously interconnected and morally eviscerated. What this created – and here affect becomes important – was the need for a voice that would combine the nation into a psychic and emotional whole. Thus George Berkeley, in 1721, (and as cited in Chapter One) began his treatise on the state of the nation by thanking God for making the British “feel the fatal Effects” of their folly and corruption, and providing an opportunity for national moral regeneration:

It would certainly prove the greatest of Blessings if it should make all honest Men of one Party; If it should put Religion and Virtue in countenance, restore a sense of Public Spirit, and convince Men it is dangerous folly to pursue private Aims in opposition to the Good of their Country.⁶⁵

The new community required a new affective heart. And the spleen, as it happens, proved enormously useful in creating such a heart.

⁶⁴ Julian Hoppitt, “Financial Crises in Eighteenth-Century England,” *The Economic History Review* 39:1 (Feb., 1986), 48

⁶⁵ George Berkeley, *An Essay Towards Preventing the Ruine of Great Britain* (London: J. Roberts, 1721), 1, 25

The idea of the spleen was at once abstract and recognizable, and hence made it possible to convert a national tragedy into an opportunity for national regeneration. The idea could do much to connect the disparate individuals of a society into one emotional whole. This was what happened in John Midriff's *Observations on the Spleen and Vapours: Containing Remarkable Cases of Persons of Both Sexes, and All Ranks, ... Who Have Been Miserably Afflicted with those Melancholy Disorders Since the Fall of South-Sea, and Other Publick Stocks* (London: printed for J. Roberts, 1721). With unflagging determination, the narrator of this text ranged the city seeking to cure cases of the spleen. The figure of Midriff was as virtuous and heroic as the problem of the spleen was apparently hopeless. The maladies were "more than ordinarily obstinate" because, according to the preface, "the Disasters which happen'd to Mens Pockets fell out, unluckily, about that Season of the Year, when above Two Thirds of the Nation" were "naturally Splenetick, and when the Discontented of all Denominations" tended to see "their Plots and Machinations on foot."⁶⁶ Longstanding feelings rooted in physiological phenomena (the weather's effect on the human body) were mixed together with the newfound anxieties of a bankrupted nation. But these longstanding feelings also provided an opportunity for regeneration. The idea of a city afflicted with the spleen enabled Midriff to laterally connect the afflicted: a figurative urban public was thus produced out of the disparate cases of individuals bankrupted by the disaster of 1720. The text was intrinsically preoccupied with the range of people affected by the Bubble: the title itself referred to "Persons of all Sexes, and all Ranks, from the aspiring DIRECTOR to the humble BUBBLER." All these individuals were united by the fact that they dated "Splenetick and Vapourish

⁶⁶ *ibid*

Disorders from the melancholy Circumstances of the Times.”⁶⁷ Like the Provençal plague writers of the early 1720s, as interpreted by Daniel Gordon, Midriff managed to “glorify the city...as a community of suffering.”⁶⁸ Misfortune had made a community out of the heretofore-unrelated, and the idea of the spleen was the binding force of this community. His investment in curing the problem of the spleen is an aspect of his belief that the unhappiness of all these disparate individuals was also a national problem. He described himself as expressing to an incensed clergyman his hope that “the Nation was not now sunk beneath what it had been in all former Ages.”⁶⁹

An imagined community defined by affect had therapeutic benefits, especially if it meant that an old idea could be used to define new-found anxieties, which in turn, could be resolved through tried-and-tested solutions – such as, for instance, activity. By defining the communal trauma of the early 1720s in recognizable terms, the image of the spleen also helped exhumate it, as the novel set of anxieties associated with the early 1720s were reconnected to familiar stereotypes about English depressiveness, and attacked with a time-honored tool: activity. A miserable poverty-stricken French artist claiming to have surrendered to what he called “your D__md Anglise Maladie” was advised to “apply to his Business” until he was well; the previously “healthful Constitution” of a Sir Anthony was attributed to “his way of Living; for he had been in constant Business of one kind or another from his Youth.”⁷⁰ The traumas arising from the Bubble’s collapse were converted, through the idea of the

⁶⁷ *ibid*, preface

⁶⁸ Gordon, “The City and the Plague in the Age of Enlightenment,” 76

⁶⁹ Midriff, *Observations on the Spleen*, 60

⁷⁰ *ibid*, 21, 35

spleen, into fuel for the propagation of activity. Midriff concluded the treatise by reassuring a “Mr. Pitfall” that many others beside him were invested in the public good: “I put him in Remembrance of the Advice I had already given him, to keep himself always employ’d; some useful Business or another...the Intervals of Business and Company would keep off all Melancholy Reflections.”⁷¹

Happiness and activity remained intimately connected to the idea of the spleen and, hence, each other. For Midriff as for Fisher, the spleen was a productive anti-ideal, a problem whose very severity justified and hence occasioned the promulgation of a positive ideal.

Activity was prescribed as a cure for happiness because happiness was increasingly unacceptable – Midriff himself emblemized its unacceptability and, by extension, England’s own advancement. If Midriff’s purpose was to cure the afflicted, the purpose of the text was to make a hero out of “Midriff.” The collapse of the South Sea Bubble had provided the author of this anonymous treatise with an opportunity to describe unhappiness in the most unfavorable terms possible, whilst simultaneously exhibiting his own very eminently enlightened resourcefulness, intelligence, and empathy. Midriff’s emphasis on the spleen was rooted in his inability to countenance all this unhappiness, and especially when so much of it was rooted in delusion. This author’s decision to write this treatise was partly a product of *his* valorization of happiness: his impatience with unhappiness was amplified by the fact that the spleen was as baseless as it was intolerable.

But this author, at the same time, *needed* the fears associated with the spleen to remain real in his readers’ minds. Only then could the narrative itself remain

⁷¹ *ibid*, 70-71

compelling. By resting his attempt at nation-wide healing upon the image of the spleen he was also, by extension, opening up a Pandora's Box containing all of the fears that had long converged around the spleen. Thus it was that the image of the spleen was perpetually propagated. It was, we might recall, the desire to include women in commercial life, not the fear of the spleen, that drove "Sally Fisher" to write *Britain's Golden Mines*. A similar desire for an active and happy city drove the publication of Midriff's observations. It is because the spleen was already associated with unhappiness that the collapse of the Bubble revitalized these fears. The investment in activity and happiness cannot then be described as *rooted* in the spleen. But it *is* because the spleen was so intensely feared that the need to propel these ideologies drove these writers to facilitate its reification.

Uncertainty and Skepticism

If the spleen was the anti-ideal of Enlightenment – if the very idea of it motivated the English into action and contentment – then we must also explore how the city *sustained* these fears. It invites us to connect the city to this Enlightenment, and to do so *through* the image of the spleen. We must engage, in order to accomplish this, with another set of anxieties surrounding the spleen – having to do with its own uncertainty and, beyond, the cultural centrality of uncertainty. The power of this uncertainty is suggested by the snapshot of London provided by *London Journal* in September of 1720:

We hear that a *Director*, digging by Moon-Light under the North-Wall of his Garden, to bury a Chest full of Guineas; was assaulted by the Ghost of an unfortunate StockJobber, who demanded the Treasure, as the *Difference* due to his Wife and Children, that he might rest undisturbed.

The ingenious Mr.____, Student in Astrology, prognosticates, that the Spleen will rage to a greater Degree within this populous City than ever

was known, in the Month of November next. *The Truth of which Time will Shew.*⁷²

Here we have a ghost story, inconspicuously noted amongst reports of rising stocks, drowning watermen, and proliferating copies of the *Free-Thinker*. The substance of the ghost story is suggestive of resentments and divisions caused by the collapse of the South Sea Bubble, as described in Chapter One. The story, in other words, is at least *emotionally* realistic. The stock-jobber's ghost was a symbolic manifestation of a national feeling: that the South Sea Directors were not being held responsible for their sins. It is telling, then, that the next story concerns a possible outbreak of the spleen. The *London Journal* did not posit a causal connection between the two stories. But the presence of both in such close proximity is suggestive if not illustrative of how a sense of uncertainty was constituted. The journal itself is skeptical of the almanac's predictions. But the fact of the matter is that the predictions would almost certainly come true. Popular discontent was inevitable, as the story of the stock-jobber suggested, so the almanac would be vindicated. It did not take a psychic to predict that the symptoms of the spleen – anger, bile, resentment – would rage through the city thrown off kilter by financial collapse. But the use of italics to emphatically question this psychic prediction is nonetheless suggestive of a deep-set impatience with the spleen as an all-encompassing concept.

The problem of spleen was closely associated with the problem of knowing itself. Anxieties about the spleen were at least partly ontological. By evoking the spleen, and by seeking to cure the problem of the spleen, Fisher and Midriff were both also tapping into fears of uncertainty. The English in the 1720s were deeply unclear about where fact ended and fiction began. Of course this could be said

⁷² *London Journal*, (September 10, 1720)

about every period. But every period does not in fact feel this uncertainty with equal force. The rise of the novel and the emergence of credit were both definitive of this era and both, in their own way, raised fundamental questions about what was and was not real.⁷³ Mark Knights has recently unpacked the paradoxical consequences of Tory histories like *The Secret History of the Calves Head Club*, which went into fifteen editions between 1703 and 1721. On the one hand, *The Secret History* reflected an investment with the distinction between polemic and historical fact; on the other, it “contributed to a sense of the fictionality of history: fact and fiction seemed unstable categories under the pressure of partisanship.”⁷⁴ The case of the spleen illustrates how ideas of the body also cracked under the pressure of these deeper uncertainties.

Here we might find another set of connections between spleen and Enlightenment. Enlightenment, it has been suggested, was about the betterment of society; betterment, inasmuch as it reflects Enlightenment, requires intellectual production; and intellectual production thrives upon uncertainty. Uncertainties surrounding the spleen multiplied, I suggest, as the city was continually glutted with contradictory ideas. This was a modern and urban kind of uncertainty: one that resulted from the proliferation of ideas, and not their absence or unavailability. In the following pages, I explicate two related phenomena: first, how and why these uncertainties were reproduced; second, how their reproduction led to the production of a form of skeptical certainty that is

⁷³ Catherine Ingrassia, “The Pleasure of Business and the Business of Pleasure: Gender, Credit, and the South Sea Bubble.” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 24 (1995): 191-210; *Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century England: A Culture of Paper Credit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

⁷⁴ Mark Knights, “The Tory Interpretation of History in the Rage of Parties,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68:1/2 (2005), 353-VII

particularly characteristic of Enlightenment – one that engages with the inevitable fact of variety and contingency.

Differences of opinion about the spleen were partly rooted in deeper uncertainties about the soul's relationship to the body. "Unless we knew the Bond of Union," opined the author of *Medicina Gymnastica*, "and understood how the Rational Soul acts upon the Animal Powers, we must be content to be most ignorant, the nearer we approach in our Disquisitions to that Union."⁷⁵ In such an environment, no one theory of the nature of the spleen (the organ) or the origins of the spleen (moral disease) could stand. Mary Astell did declare that "setting aside some few, very few Instances and Exceptions, were I to account for Spleen and Vapors, the reigning Distempers of our Age, I shou'd ascribe them rather to a Moral than Physical Cause."⁷⁶ But some years later, the *Independent Whig* could easily make a somewhat opposing claim: "People under Trouble, or in the Spleen, are too apt to mistake their bodily or mental Disorders for the Workings of divine Grace."⁷⁷ Thoughts such as this could not easily be *policed* when the entire ecclesiological and medical establishment was itself facing a crisis of uncertainty.

The absence of intellectual control in a discursively open society thus partly helps account for the depth of the uncertainties that surrounded the spleen. While some sought to distinguish between the moral and physical origins of the spleen, others continued to conflate the two. Everyone, at the same time, was free to publicly hypothesize about these matters: not only was there no censorship,

⁷⁵ *Medicina Gymnastica*, 39

⁷⁶ Mary Astell, *Bart'lemy fair: or, an Enquiry After Wit; in which Due Respect is had to a Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, to my Lord* (London: R.Wilkin, 1709), 125

⁷⁷ *The Independent Whig* (Wednesday, October 5, 1720)

there was an avid market for these theories – itself a product of middling readers’ avid yearning for self-improvement and non-middling readers’ desire to be as middling as possible.⁷⁸ The idea of the spleen grew in response to this synergy – between commercial vibrancy and intellectual uncertainty. Those who expatiated upon the spleen, or used the spleen to expatiate, were not prone to forging clear distinctions of the kind made by Astell or the *Independent Whig*. They constantly and happily conflated the moral with the physical. *The Mist’s Weekly Journal*, for instance, published a letter persuading Londoners that tea-drinking (“which so universally prevails throughout this great Metropolis”) was “a Custom of the most fatal Consequence.” The constant inflow of nutritionally empty hot water threw the body into “a State of a sure, though slow Decay.” The problem of tea-drinking was not, however, exclusively physical. “Nor does the Body suffer alone,” this author continued, “the Soul also is hindred in the free Performance of its Functions, and has its Share of the Disorder.” This, in turn, resulted in various psychological defects: melancholy, heaviness, peevishness, and groundless apprehensions. “In short,” this author wrote, “whatsoever comes under the Name of Spleen, I may very justly charge here.”⁷⁹ The spleen, this suggests, was accomplice in the act of conflation. It was a convenient and ready-made category – so expansive and exclusive that it rendered it unnecessary to make clear conceptual distinctions between the bodily and moral origins of things. It was a tool for evasion. The word, as George Cheyne wrote, had become

⁷⁸ Lawrence E. Klein, “Politeness for plebes : consumption and social identity in early eighteenth-century England,” in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, (ed.), *The consumption of culture 1600-1800 : image, object, text* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 362-82

⁷⁹ [Anon], *A Collection of Miscellany Letters, Selected out of Mist’s Weekly Journal* (London: N. Mist, 1722-27), 209

of “so general and loose a Signification” that it was “a common Subterfuge for meer Ignorance of the Nature of Distemper.”⁸⁰ Cheyne was reacting to the kind of argument made in *Mist’s Weekly Journal* but also, in part, to the fact that the argument *could* be made in such a venue – to the laxity of the intellectual restraints that allowed anyone, however inexpert, to expatiate on matters of the body.

We must remember, throughout, that the fear of the spleen was also a *function* of the fear inspired by the disordered body. As Sir Richard Blackmore was to remark in a treatise on the plague, written when fears of an approaching Marseille plague were at an all-time high, signs of that fatal distemper were often very dangerously mistaken for the spleen, and not vice versa:

for several Days a Malignant Fever has so near a Resemblance to one, that is only Hysterick, that many Physicians and Standers by, I am apt to believe, mistake the first for the last, and look upon a great and dangerous Disease to be only the Spleen or a Fit of Vapours to the great Hazard of the Patient.⁸¹

He referred his reader to his previously-written treatise on the spleen, where he had absolved “that Bowel from the Guilt charg’d upon it by a general Mistake.”⁸² For Blackmore, the problem was not an excessive nervousness about the body, but its converse: a potentially disastrous sense of complacency – the attribution of serious physical problems to a relatively benign cause. Midriff himself exemplifies the attitude that Blackmore found so troubling. He assured a Lady Arabella that “London was very free from the Plague, and that she needed not be under any Apprehensions.” He then impugned the woman’s apothecary, who had planted this thought in her head, and took care of the problem, he told the

⁸⁰ Cheyne, *The English Malady*, 201-202

⁸¹ Sir Richard Blackmore, *A Discourse Upon the Plague, With a Preparatory Account of Malignant Fevers* (London: John Clark, 1721), 17

⁸² *ibid*

reader, by furnishing her with pills and a “cephalick Mixture” which, he was sure, would soon solve the problem – the problem being nothing more serious than that of the spleen.⁸³ But if the plague was indeed misdiagnosed as the spleen, then the idea really was worse than just amusingly trifling – it was dangerously deceptive, and especially so in an age so fearful of mortality. It was the desire for happiness that drove Midriff to ease this lady out of her doubts; and it was a frustration with intellectual sloppiness undergirded by fears of mortality that drove Blackmore to make the opposite point.

But Blackmore himself was prevailing against a rising tide that he by himself would not be able to reverse. The fact that the spleen was figuratively indispensable added to the pool of theories about its nature and origins, and consequently exacerbated these uncertainties. The English loved to play with the idea that the spleen was fictitious, but never really convinced each other that it was totally unreal because they *needed* it to convince each other of a variety of things: activity, for instance. They toyed with the idea of its unreality, but never actually abandoned the idea. Efforts to disprove the reality of a disorder arising from a malfunctioning spleen did not successfully dissipate beliefs in the reality of a problem with symptoms that bore a striking resemblance to those which were believed to arise from the spleen, and which thus continued to be described as “the spleen.” Like Temple, Jeremy Collier dismissed the spleen as a mostly imagined problem: “‘Tis commonly said that the Spleen is a Wise Disease, which I believe makes some fond of catching it,” he quipped, alluding to the argument from Thomas Sydenham.⁸⁴ But Collier himself did not summarily refute the idea

⁸³ Midriff, *Observations on the Spleen*, 5

⁸⁴ Jeremy Collier, *Essays Upon Several Moral Subjects* (London: R. Sare, 1698), 36

of a psychological problem that had produced the set of symptoms customarily attributed to the spleen. The idea of the spleen was simply too useful to be abandoned entirely. Upholding the specter of the spleen enabled Collier to emphasize the importance of business and conversation. "He that would live at Ease," he remarked, "should always put the best Construction on Business, and Conversation."⁸⁵ Years after Temple and Collier had tried to demolish the myth of the spleen, John Dennis would vociferously uphold its reality: "'tis observ'd every Day in splenetick People, that their Passions move, for the most part, with a contrary Motion to that of their Wills."⁸⁶ It was an evocative idea, and useful for Dennis as he veered toward the real and final point of this essay: "That the *English*...have more need of the Drama."⁸⁷ Fisher did something similar. It was "impossible for any Body to give a satisfactory Description of this Disease", she wrote of the spleen, which was "never the same in two Persons." But the fact that it was a "most fashionable disease" did not prevent her from using it at a rhetorically critical moment in her treatise on fisheries.⁸⁸ The eradication of the spleen would potentially kill three birds (fears of inactivity, unhappiness, misinformation) with one stone. But this was a difficult task when the birds flew in separate directions – to allow the spleen to do its work in eradicating unhappiness or inactivity involved loosening the restraints of conceptual control. This, in turn, led to further uncertainty.

The spleen's ability to be simultaneously real and fictional was intensified in the city, where both ideas – that it was real and that it was imagined – were

⁸⁵ *ibid*, 39

⁸⁶ Dennis, *The Usefulness of the Stage*, 310

⁸⁷ *ibid*, 311

⁸⁸ *ibid*

incessantly reproduced. Newspapers and periodicals in the early eighteenth century often reprinted or otherwise recapitulated theories and ideas from more rarified texts. *The Guardian*, in 1713, told of a man who had “no more Spleen than a Dutchman, who, as Sir W. Temple observes, is not delicate or idle enough to suffer from this Enemy, but is always Well when he is not Ill, always Pleased when he is not Angry.”⁸⁹ This statement, when it was published, would have reached a body of bourgeois middling readers that would not have been reading *Observations on the Dutch*. It would have added to the sense that the spleen was a delusion, but also, at the same time, would have enhanced its evocative usefulness. Periodicals, at the same time, reinforced the physical reality of the spleen. *The Weekly Journal, Or Saturday’s Post* commentated thus on the matter of the spleen and the vapours:

The Distemper so call’d, I take to be begot of Idleness, not that I would insinuate as if I thought that idle People only fancied themselves sick; I am satisfied their Constitutions are really disordered, for when the Mind wants both Exercise and Entertainment, it forms imaginary Evils, and ingenders black Melancholy, which affecting the Blood, is the Cause of the Distemper, call’d the Vapours.⁹⁰

The spleen, this suggests, was entirely real except for one crucial detail: it was formed in the mind and not, in fact, rooted in the spleen. Periodicals thus continued to skirt around the fence. In *The Spectator* alone, there are at least forty-five references to the phenomenon. One individual writing to the journal found that “every Heavy wretch, who has nothing to say, excuses his Dulness by complaining of the Spleen.”⁹¹ But the journal itself was too preoccupied with cannibalizing cultural practices to deny the existence of the spleen in any

⁸⁹ An August 12 1713 article reprinted in *The Guardian* (London: J. Tonson, 1723), 177

⁹⁰ *Weekly Journal or Saturday’s Post*, Issue 331, (October 10, 1724)

⁹¹ *Spectator*, Issue 53, (May 1, 1711)

consistent way. It was, after all, so useful in the propagation of new ideas.

“Learned Men,” it proposed, should engage in shadowboxing, “which might conduce very much to evaporate the Spleen, which makes them uneasy to the Publick as well as to themselves.”⁹² The shroud of anxiety surrounding the spleen was thus partly a product of the vagaries of the marketplace of print.

The idea of the spleen also grew in power because it sold well, as popular songbooks suggest. For the producers of a mass culture, the idea of providing a cure for the spleen was a wonderfully useful selling point, and so was the idea of its fictionality. The spleen, according to the preface to the fourth volume of the second edition of *Wit and Mirth: Or, Pills to Cure Melancholy*, “reigns among the English,” and “if not remov’d in time,” “will be as much the distinguishing Character of a Native of this Island, as Vanity of a French Man, Formality of a Spaniard, and revenge of an Italian.”⁹³ The songbooks are significant as yet another instance of how the eighteenth-century English were bombarded with the idea of the spleen – used not just in titles and dedications but also in the actual songs: just by itself, the first of the six volumes of the last edition of *Wit and Mirth*, published between 1719 and

⁹² *Spectator*, Issue 115, (July 12, 1711). These are, it is notable, at least 45 references to the spleen over the course of *The Spectators* tenure of publication.

⁹³ Henry Playford, *Wit and Mirth: Or Pills to Purge Melancholy: Being a Choice Collection of the Best Songs, Old and New. Volume IV, 2nd edition* (London: William Pearson, 1709), preface. This was a guise with a long history. Music had been prescribed as an antidote to melancholy at least as far back as Thomas Ford’s 1607 *Musick of Sundrie Kinds*, which included “A Pill to purge melancholie.” Cyrus L. Day, “Pills to Purge Melancholy”, *The Review of English Studies*, 8,30 (1932), 183. It contains 26 other collections with names that are variations upon this. The song was No. 18 in Part 2. Subsequent musical texts marketed as such include *Musicks Recreation on the Lyra Viol* (1652), No.11 of which is entitled “A Pill to Cure Melancholy.”

1720, contained eight references to the spleen.⁹⁴ But the same competition that got songbook publishers reaching for the spleen also heightened uncertainties, as rival publishers capitalized upon its ambiguous status in order to denigrate each others' efforts. Hence the fictive doctor-cum-songbook-marketer routinely vied for his prospective customers' attention by dismissing his rivals as quacks. The compiler of *The Merry Musician; Or, A Cure for the Spleen*, having assumed "the Office of the Doctor," told his readers that these songs were for "the Good of you" that have been "impos'd on by impudent and ignorant Quacks; the dedication to the second edition of *Wit and Mirth*, warned those of its readers who had "any Value" for their "pretious Healths" that they were to "advise with Dr. Merryman who to distinguish himself from Quacks and false pretenders is to be spoken with from Morning till Night, not at particular Hours to make a shew of more Practise then he already has."⁹⁵ Each individual songbook presumed to offer its reader solace from the confusion that arises from variety; together, the songbooks simultaneously exemplified and intensified that confusion. What is true of the songbooks was true as well of other genres, including medical treatises. Stukeley saw the spleen as an engine of circulation, Blackmore described it as a *sexual* organ. While the prospect of dissecting an individual body produced a sense of certainty, multiple dissections did not, in fact, lead to certainty when these ideas, like all others, had to compete for their reader's attentions by emphasizing their difference from *other* ideas.

⁹⁴ Henry Playford, *Wit and Mirth: Or Pills to Purge Melancholy; Being a Collection of the Best Merry Ballads and Songs, Old and New* (London: W. Pearson), 28, 44, 52, 60, 69, 122, 188, 313

⁹⁵ [Anon] *The Merry Musician; Or, a Cure for the Spleen: Being a Collection of the Most Diverting Songs and Pleasant Ballads, Set to Musick* (London: H. Meere, 1716); Henry Playford, *Wit and Mirth: Or Pills to Purge Melancholy: Being a Choice Collection of the Best Songs, Old and New*. Volume III, 2nd edition (London: William Pearson, 1709), preface

Satire widened the shroud of uncertainties that surrounded the image of the spleen. “In few periods do the published contemporary sources give less away”, E.P. Thompson wrote about the years 1722-23, and then made an exception for the “savage cartoons, political ballads and innuendos which survive here and there.”⁹⁶ But while satire cannot be reduced to realism any more than it can be dismissed as fiction: satire was also a way of engaging head-on with things that appeared half-real, half-imaginary. Weather was connected to the spleen in a captivity narrative published in a 1724 newspaper, the protagonist of which was imprisoned in a “Kingdom of Birds”:

I fancied that the Weather had made ‘em afraid of sitting there any longer, for fear of the threatening Storm; but the Attorney-General, by Order of the Court, came to inform me, that they never tried a Criminal but in calm Weather, least the lowering Air should have some Effect upon the Judges Tempers; for it being usual for such Weather to give the Spleen, they might discharge it upon the Prisoner, and for that Reason my Tryal was deferred.⁹⁷

A more striking assessment of the powers of the spleen can, on the face of it, scarcely be imagined. By describing the spleen as an impediment to justice, and suggesting that its very existence could alter judicial decisions for the worse, this author was apparently confirming the reality of a problem that went under the name of “the Spleen” and strikingly resembled “the Spleen.” The ability of this passage to propagate the value at stake – restraint and self-awareness amongst those in power – was proportional to the power of the fear of the spleen. But the larger context in which this passage exists should cause us to doubt the extent to which its author was actually endorsing the *real* powers of the spleen rather than merely satirizing his contemporaries’ somewhat exaggeratedly real convictions in its powers. The “Kingdom of Birds” was, like Pope’s “Cave of Spleen” or the

⁹⁶ Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*, 200

⁹⁷ *Universal Journal*, Issue XXXIV, (August 1, 1724)

many places to which Gulliver traveled, modeled upon England. It is relevant, then, that this piece was offered to the *Universal Journal* with the following endorsement: “the Author has taken a great deal of Pains to set many of our Actions off in a very ridiculous Light; but at the same Time has made his Work an excellent Mirror, in which we may not only see, but by which we may also correct, our Deformities.”⁹⁸ The spleen-inspired decision to defer the trial was, presumably, one of these deformities. But the fact that it was worthy of satire suggests that there were many who actually believed in the spleen. We do not know if any given reader of this passage would necessarily have read it as satirical. We can only imagine the range of this passage’s possible effects upon readers’ ideas of the spleen, but we *can* guess that it would have exacerbated and not resolved the uncertainty. And we can owe this uncertainty to the vibrancy of the culture of print: the very presence of satire in a newspaper piece, and a market of readers eager to be presented with “an excellent Mirror” of themselves.

The origins of the confusion surrounding the spleen also lie in the very Augustan tendency to almost willfully participate in one’s own self-deception – most colorfully revealed in Thomas Gordon’s *The Humourist* – a mock conduct manual that did not purport to be satirical so much as toy with its reader’s insecurities. The spleen, Gordon suggested, was a flexible concept in a constantly changing city, and it is for this reason that it was both powerful and fundamentally uncertain. “As I frequently feel it myself,” Gordon irreverently quipped, “I am the fitter to describe it to others. I know several excellent Pens have been employ’d on the same Subject; but as I do not remember one Word

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which they have said upon it, my Manner of handling it will, perhaps, appear as new to others as it does to myself."⁹⁹ He then held the spleen responsible for a bewildering array of socio-psychological problems: fanaticism, despair, gluttony, moodiness, noise-sensitivity, self-murder, marital conflict, and random acts of violence, among others.¹⁰⁰ Gordon's *Humourist* was spoofing his contemporaries for the unrestraint with which they attributed everything to the spleen. But he was not himself following through with any genuinely constructive suggestions: the text did not offer any applicable provisions for conceptual control. It was unapologetically solipsistic.

Gordon never let on if he was being entirely serious, but he was isolating, in his passage, one of the essential facts about how the idea of the spleen managed to reproduce itself. The image of the spleen might not have inspired such fear, and would not have seemed so real, if it did not also bear an uncanny similitude to London in the early eighteenth-century. The city, like the spleen, was a breeding ground of idleness, uncertainty, and inexplicable discontent. Nervousness, irritability at bad sounds, and an inexplicable feeling of sickness (all of them evoked by Gordon) were all real phenomena, and if they were, indeed, perceived to be signs of the spleen, then the spleen really *was* a source of concern.¹⁰¹ The spleen's evocative powers were rooted in a confluence of mutually-reinforcing forces that were partly real (city-dwellers were incontrovertibly jittery) and partly imagined (it was not their malfunctioning or absent spleens that made them nervous, it was the experience of life in an overpopulated metropolis). But if you assumed, as some

⁹⁹ Thomas Gordon, *The Humourist: Essays upon Several Subjects. Enthusiasm. News-writers. The Spleen* (London: W. Boreham, 1720), 12. By 1730, this text was in its fourth edition

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, 13-17

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, 17, 26

apparently did, that nervousness originated in disorders arising from the hypochondriac area of the body (quite literally, its nether regions), it was easy to believe that England's spleen was disordered, as nervousness was patently ubiquitous. This, in turn, confirmed the original assumption. And it partially exonerated the city from a problem that it had itself caused. Uncertainty about the spleen – and, by extension, the body – thus evolved through a symbiotic interaction of fears. Midriff's *Observations on the Spleen* further illustrates the psychological cycle through which the post 1720 city reinforced fears of the spleen: first, it was a cold, damp, and sickly place; second, the new world of finance had intensified already prevalent fears of mental weakness; third, spurious medical thinking was ubiquitous. These three problems reinforced each other. The city's filthiness and the illness that suffused its atmosphere explain why so many of its inhabitants felt sick or lethargic, even if there was no discernable disease. The complaints that arose from this feeling of sickness fed into an already-robust skepticism about people's ability to understand their own bodies. Fears of physical degeneration and those of mental degradation spiraled into each other – to the extent that they became occasionally indistinguishable. The melancholy of the post-South Sea years might not have been rooted in the spleen, but bad weather, combined with a feeling of sickness, and exacerbated by the trauma of financial collapse, might well have generated bouts of depression, and led to a city-wide outbreak of nervous breakdowns, which, in turn, were all too easily attributed to the spleen.

It is because the spleen was so flexible that it gave shape and form to the novel feelings of anger and hopelessness generated by such disparate problems as financial disaster and religious heterodoxy. But the feelings, we must remember, were enduringly productive of the Enlightenment spirit. "The best of

the urban spirit – experimental, mobile, irreverent – was in the *philosophes'* bones," as Peter Gay has argued¹⁰² Midriff suggests what was experimental about this spirit, Gordon keys us into its irreverence, Fisher reflects its investment with mobility. It is relevant, then, that the city added to its rhetorically flexibility and ability to compel emotionally. There was, it sometimes appeared, no limit to the problems that might instinctively be attributed to the spleen, thus perpetually obfuscating the question of its moral or physical origins. It was used, for instance, to deride the incorrigibly unreasonable and the baselessly vituperative. "The Root of the Spleen, is often *Pride disappointed*," according to another 1724 newspaper: "the greater the Merit is, the more obnoxious to Ill-will and Reproaches."¹⁰³ In the 1720s, the long-standing problem of the spleen was also progressively held responsible for the problem of irreligion. "If we were to take a Survey of all the Church-Endowments in *England*, and put them into an *Average*," the *St. James's Journal* commented in 1722, "we shou'd not find 'em considerable enough to justify the half of that Spleen and Ill-blood that boils upon this account in the Bosom of a Modern *Free -Thinker*."¹⁰⁴ The spleen evoked by this author was closer to the bilious substance produced by the distemper than it was to the distemper itself. But this author was not required to be precise, and nor were the readers of the newspaper. The act of association was also a *de facto* act of defamation.

The history of the passage from *The Humourist* further helps account for the way in which the idea of the spleen absorbed new-found anxieties about

¹⁰² Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 16

¹⁰³ *Plain Dealer*, Issue LV, (September 28, 1724)

¹⁰⁴ *Compleat Set of St. James's Journals*, XXVIII, (November 8, 1722)

irreligion. The spleen, Gordon had suggested in the original passage, was almost absurdly all-encompassing. Three years after the fourth edition of *The Humourist* was published in 1730, *The London Magazine* plagiarized a section of the entry on the spleen – almost verbatim, but not quite.¹⁰⁵ The spleen was also blamed for “Skepticism, Free-thinking and Dissent.”¹⁰⁶ In the mind of this passage’s author, the problems of heterodoxy and suicide were inextricably entangled: “for as I believe,” he opined, “from the Spleen most of the Self-Murders that have been committed take their Rise, so I doubt not in the least but of Contempt of Christianity may be justly attributed to the same Cause. How many Volumes of the Tindals of several Ages have been compos’d thro’ the Inspiration of the Spleen.”¹⁰⁷ There was no need for this author to actually *prove* this point. The spleen’s salability was a product of its conceptual expandability, which, in turn, added to the fear it elicited. As the spleen provided a neat explanation for the recent spate of heretical polemics in the passage reprinted from *The Humourist*, the fact of irreligion would have correspondingly worsened the culture’s hypochondriac anxieties about the spleen.

Thus far, I have identified the origins of the uncertainty about the spleen; to a certain extent, what I have suggested also extends to the body at large. For any given force or phenomenon to suggest that the spleen was real was also to contribute to the deeper uncertainties by which it was surrounded, as the English were half convinced that it was *not real*. This is in part because the spleen was so useful to the widest range of people: songbook marketers, dramatists,

¹⁰⁵ *The London Magazine: or, Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer* (London: Charles Ackers for John Wilford, Thomas Cox, John Clarke and Thomas Astley, 1732-1735). Vol. 4, April 26. 1735, No 342, p. 206

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 206

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

proponents of fisheries. All benefited from the fact that the spleen was an object of fear.

An enlightened skepticism emerged out of the crucible of a society beset by these uncertainties and anxieties. The depth of these uncertainties helps account for the cultural centralization of this skepticism. Because the spleen was a matter of *particular* uncertainty, for the reasons outlined earlier in this chapter, discussions of the spleen vividly reveal this ideal at work. Daniel Gordon has described this *enlightened skepticism*: "If people today no longer have to work painfully through the implications of skepticism, before reconciling themselves to the limits of the world, it is partly because the Enlightenment version of skepticism has become the answer to many of our important questions...Largely as a consequence of Enlightenment thought, anguish over what can never be attained has ceased to be respectable."¹⁰⁸ Enlightened skepticism, as I define it, involved dividing novel experiences into artificial categories that were left open to modification and provisional, with no commitments made to their truthfulness, and no proclamations of their indisputable solidity or permanency. Enlightened skepticism presumed a perpetually changing world. This was the spirit in which George Cheyne proclaimed that

the Reader is neither here to expect Accuracy nor Certainty, that may be depended upon, in such a *Proteus-like* Distemper, because some of the Symptoms of what I call the *second Degree*, may happen in the *first*, and so on the contrary.¹⁰⁹

Contained within this passage are epistemological sensibilities that ran deeper and wider than the spleen or, for that matter, the body. The spleen, in this passage, drove Cheyne to articulate an increasingly salient distinction between absolute and relative truths. In a preface to his 1728 *Cyclopaedia*, Ephraim Chambers distinguished

¹⁰⁸ Gordon, "The City and the Plague in the Age of Enlightenment," 73

¹⁰⁹ Cheyne, *The English Malady*, 135-6

between knowledge that was “*absolute*” and that which was “*relative*” or “*occasional*” – the former being “permanent”; the latter being “transient...vague, and uncircumscrib’d by any Bounds...may be said to be infinite.”¹¹⁰ But the passage also channels an idea that was later to be articulated by David Hume – who was, as it happens, one of Cheyne’s correspondents – about the need to soldier on despite the elusiveness of truth:¹¹¹

A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical convictions and will never refuse any innocent satisfaction, which offers itself, upon account of either of them...We shou’d...indulge our inclination in the most elaborate philosophical researches...but also yield to that propensity, which inclines us to be positive and certain in *particular points*, according to the light, in which we survey them in any *particular instant*.¹¹²

An Enlightened person was equally skeptical of truth, but open to the possibility.

For Hume, as for Cheyne, this epistemological skepticism involved an attention to the particularity of things. As such, it fits into an “epistemological empiricism” which underwrote the Enlightenment, according to Dale Van Kley, one that “spelled an appeal to concrete experience, a valuation of the particular.”¹¹³ The attention paid to the particular was, I suggest, directly proportional to a rising consciousness of variety. Contingency and uncertainty led many, not just prominent Scottish philosophers, to embrace the diversity of the human experience. It was firmly enshrined in the opening words of a pamphlet written in the wake of the earthquake of 1750:

¹¹⁰ Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (London: James and John Knapton, 1728), vi

¹¹¹ The “literary doctor of uncertain identity” to whom wrote about his melancholy is, as Helen Deutsch writes, “assumed by many to be “George Cheyne”. See “Symptomatic Correspondence: The Author’s Case in Eighteenth-Century Britain” *Cultural Critique* 42 (Spring, 1999), 58. And while Hume was not explicitly referring to the spleen here, he had, in this text, described his intellectual pursuits as aspects of his attempts to overcome his own spleen.

¹¹² Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 474-5

¹¹³ Dale K. Van Kley, “Religion and the Age of ‘Patriot’ Reform,” *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (June 2008), 268

You are not to expect a compleat and fully satisfactory Account from any one individual; for as we do not form our Notion of a Battle from one or two Letters, but by comparing the Accounts received from each Part and Division of the Army; so we are carelessly to peruse what every one had to say, who was present in an Earthquake, and to learn the general Fate from particular Narrations.¹¹⁴

Discussions of the spleen illuminate the formation of this empiricist-skeptical epistemological framework. Cheyne's subtitles to his chapter on the spleen similarly evince a dedication to difference rather than sameness: "different Kinds or Degrees of Vapours...second and third Degrees of Vapours and their Symptoms...the Difference between acute and Chronical Diseases, in their Origin and Production."¹¹⁵ It was crucial to engage with variety as "the true Reason of the Multiplicity, Variety, and Inconstancy of these Symptoms" was "the vast Multitude of the Combinations possible."¹¹⁶ This sense of variety, I am suggesting here, might profitably be related to a feeling of experiential diversity relatable to the city. Varieties of the spleen are avidly documented by Richard Blackmore:

As the several Combinations of Splenetick Madness and Folly produce an infinite Variety of irregular Understandings, so the amicable Accommodation and Alliance between several Virtues and Vices produce an equal Diversity in the Disposition and Manners of Mankind; whence it comes to pass, that as many monstrous and absurd Productions are found in the Moral, as in the Intellectual World.¹¹⁷

The diversity of human manners was an eminently metropolitan condition. A recognition of diversity, like other enlightened and skeptical ways of dealing with uncertainty, was rising throughout this period. The title of 1727 compilation of poems *The Altar of Love* was extended in its third edition, published in 1731, as *The Altar of Love: Or, The Whole Art of Kissing in All its Varieties*. Third Edition (London, 1731). Perhaps most revealing is a 1735 issue of *The Grub-Street Journal*,

¹¹⁴ [Anon] *Adventures Under Ground: A Letter from a Gentleman Swallowed Up In the Late Earthquake* (London: William Falstaff, 1750), 5

¹¹⁵ Cheyne, *The English Malady*, xxviii

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, 193

¹¹⁷ Blackmore, *A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours*, 279

which describes an informal debate over the origins of happiness. Happiness was alternately attributed to the possession of money, the pleasures of the city, the wonders of the country, marriage, single-hood, friendship – all until one dyspeptic observer intervened with the declaration that it was “a relative thing,” which “varies as much as every individual of the human species from each other.”¹¹⁸ This particular conversation was metonymic of a process that was occurring in the nation at large, where all things, not just happiness, were increasingly being defined as variable and relative. But the narrative of the conversation also relays something about the evolution of ideas in a city, where the variety of life is rendered more manifest and inescapable, and where it is easier, by consequence, to embrace a vision of happiness that is fundamentally relativistic, which engages with contingency and difference.

The spleen, as we know, was often held responsible for the absence of happiness – so it is not surprising that ideas of the spleen would be similarly refracted by variety and diversity. There were varieties of the spleen, as there were varieties of happiness. This is suggested, as I have discussed, by Cheyne’s title. But the rest of the material presented in this chapter – from Midriff’s efforts in cataloguing the varieties of the post-1720s spleen, to Fisher’s contention that it was “never the same in two persons” – further illustrates this point. What is critical is the desire to embrace and engage with this diversity. Blackmore’s recognition of “infinite Variety” – itself a tacit acknowledgement of the impossibility of taxonomic control – nevertheless led into an extended discussion of the different possible ways in which the problem of spleen could potentially interact with the manners of men.

¹¹⁸ *Grub Street Journal*, (August 21, 1735), Issue 295

Medical treatises on the spleen reveal the connection between this epistemological sensibility, which emphasized contingency and skepticism, and moral-religious codes of restraint and politeness. The publication of a treatise on the spleen was, on some level, an inherently arrogant act, and became more so when the anatomists had to justify the existence of yet another treatise on the spleen. This arrogance – a product, in part, of the competitive commercial market for ideas – conflicted with what were deeply entrenched Augustan and Anglican ideas of modesty. This, in turn, formed into a posture that combined self-effacement with skepticism. “They that are most conversant in human nature,” Stukeley declared, will know, that perfect treatises upon any subject, are not to be expected from any person.”¹¹⁹ Blackmore also consciously retreated from his own suppositions of certainty. “Man is a vain Being,” he insisted, “and would be too apt to triumph, to boast of his Conquests, and neglect to admire the supreme Cause of Things, should all the wonderful Scheme of Nature be laid open to his View, and no Secret escape his Enquiries.”¹²⁰ The spleen’s apparent sexual usefulness opened a series of questions that would not be answered in the foreseeable future: “How this Office is performed by the Spleen, is not easy to explain, nor to answer the Difficulties that may be started on this Subject...the Divine Author...lets Mankind by degrees into the Knowledge of his Works...some sagacious Anatomists may arise in coming Ages, who may unfold this Difficulty.”¹²¹ Often, this modesty was thinly veiled – no more than a smoke-screen for a form of self-propulsion enlivened by the marketplace for ideas, where every scientific treatise, like every songbook, had to vie for its reader’s attention with provocative assertions of its own originality. The

¹¹⁹ Stukeley, *Of the Spleen*, preface

¹²⁰ Blackmore, 226

¹²¹ *ibid*, 226-7

subject, Blackmore acknowledged, was “intricate and abstruse.” But he had nevertheless attempted to ease the conceptions by “opening the way by which the Spleen may perform the Office before named.”¹²² To declare something as indescribable before proceeding to describe it is also an insidious yet barely-concealed form of self-promotion. But this presumed modesty nevertheless helps account for the skeptical attitude to certainty that evolved in this period – skeptical self-effacement was still skeptical, however disingenuous the self-effacement.

There is an increased scholarly interest in the heuristic value of the body.¹²³ A focus upon the spleen helps explain why the body remained so central a figure of modern social and political thought. It was, as I have suggested, far too useful to be entirely extirpated. The body, if the spleen is any indication, was rhetorically useful because it was confounding but also, conversely, increasingly confounding the more useful it became. Modernity created confusion, and the body helped resolve this confusion – in the short term, that is. At the same time, the usefulness of the spleen in the propagation of Enlightenment ideals – activity, happiness, and a skeptical striving for certainty – was a product of the fact that the idea of the body was both amorphous and visceral, and fears of the body were both abstract and primeval. The life of the city, as I have shown, in different ways heightened and resolved these fears.

¹²² *ibid*, 227

¹²³ Two recent examples: Giulia Pacini, “A Culture of Trees: The Politics of Pruning and Felling in Late Eighteenth-Century France,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41:1 (2007), 1-15; Daniel Beer, “Microbes of the Mind: Moral Contagion in Late Imperial Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History* 79 (September 2007), 534-5

The next chapter will continue to explore the set of themes covered in the last section of this chapter: the cultural and intellectual consequences of rising perceptions of human temperamental variety, as discursively and viscerally exemplified by the commercial metropolis. Different forms of restraint emerged, I will reveal, as secular strategies for *survival*. As such, the results of these two chapters might combine into a clear organic whole. Activity, happiness, and a skeptical approach to uncertainty might not have been forms of restraint, but they were, nonetheless, forms of survival and, in the true Enlightenment spirit, keys to human betterment in the secular, temporal world.

Chapter Three: The (Partially) Secular Restraints of the Early Eighteenth-Century Metropolis

“Precocious modernity pre-empted Enlightenment,” John Robertson has declared, as part of a larger attempt to write the Enlightenment out of the history of England.¹ Mary Gluck has detected a different perception of Enlightenment’s relationship to modernity: “Occasionally juxtaposed to the abstract philosophic inheritance of the Enlightenment, the modernity of the urban experience has remained an amorphous and anomalous category.”² This dissertation posits a *third* possible relationship: an Enlightenment that developed as a *response* to the pressures of urban modernity. Enlightened sensibilities of activity, happiness, and skepticism emerged, I argue in the previous chapter, out of the interpenetrating pressures exemplified by the idea of the spleen. In this chapter, I focus upon another sensibility of Enlightenment: the idea of restraint. London in the early eighteenth century was, at once, racked with disorder – social and moral – and yet, at the same time, glutted with theories of restraint: again, more so than any other place. This was the disparity – the productive tension -- that helps explain how it might have “totally dominated English urban culture and indeed invented it,” as Peter Clarke has written.³ The social complexity and psychic disruptions of an advanced metropolitan society generated a force-field of tensions that were resolved, as I argue in this chapter, through visions of *restraint* that might appropriately be described as *enlightened*.

¹ John Robertson, “Unenlightened England,” *ibid*

² Mary Gluck, “Reimagining the Flaneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukacs, Bakhtin, and Girard,” *Modernism/Modernity* 13:1 (2006), 747-764, 747

³ Earle *The Making of the English Middle Class*, xi

I identify six forms of restraint that evolved in relation to the world and affairs of the early eighteenth-century metropolis: alienated navigation, individualistic self-preservation, sexual control, concealment, a shame-fearing sociability, and venting. The restraints I discuss were, to different degrees, combinations of two needs: the preservation of the self and the preservation of society. The Enlightenment I describe is thus not entirely dissimilar to John Robertson's Scottish-Neapolitan affair: an "original inquiry into the fundamentals of human sociability" with a "new focus on betterment in this world."⁴ But it is distinguished from Robertson's for having happened in England, in an advanced society, and because of that advancement. These forms of restraint were designed for an urban audience, and evolved in response to the spatial, cultural, and socio-economic upheavals of metropolitan life. This chapter thus follows Albert Hirschman in tracing how "the new arose out of the old to a great extent than has generally been appreciated."⁵ None of the restraints I consider in this chapter were entirely unprecedented. The ideal of restraint is clearly unspecific to the city, or to the age of Enlightenment, English or not. "It is already quite clear," as Elias has written of the milieu of the early modern court, "how human beings are becoming more complex, and internally split in a quite specific way...Each man, as it were, confronts himself. He 'conceals his passions', 'disavows his heart', 'acts against his feelings.'"⁶ In the seventeenth-century, as Linda Pollock has argued, "English culture was suffused

⁴ Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 47, 8

⁵ Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 4

⁶ Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 484

with the ideal of restraint.”⁷ The investment in restraint has been linked to the ascendance of the Second Table of the Decalogue, with its increased emphasis upon man’s duties to man; it has been related to the emergence and subsequent struggle over the ideological ownership of “right reason,” between latitudinarians and others in the late seventeenth century.⁸ But while restraint certainly thrived in other places and at other times, the eighteenth-century metropolis posed challenges of a different order, with different ramifications. The metropolitan experience did nonetheless lead to their amplification and elaboration. “Prosperity, commercialization, and consumption,” as Lawrence Klein has written, “changed the kind and range of opportunities that Britons had to actualize their identities.”⁹ The same is true of the city. It was in the city – and, more often than not, London – that these forms of restraint were practiced, theorized, and discussed. Each was in some important way a *secular* response to varieties of moral or social disorder endemic to the metropolis. Each was driven by a caution that was somehow pragmatic, expedient, individualistic, or worldly – even if it was moored in moral precepts and presumptions with strong Christian variations. An “urban-commercial rationality and foresight instilled by functions in the trade network” was important, Norbert Elias has suggested, “in

⁷ Linda Pollock, “Honor, Gender, and Reconciliation in Elite Culture, 1570-1700,” *Journal of British Studies* 46:1 (January, 2007), 3-29

⁸ J. Sears McGee, *The Godly Man in Stuart England: Anglicans, Puritans, and the Two Tables, 1620-1670* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); John Spurr, “Rational Religion” in Restoration England’, *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49, 4 (1988), 564; Karen Halttunen, “Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture,” *The American Historical Review* 100:2 (Apr 1995), 303-334

⁹ Lawrence Klein, “Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal* 45:4 (2002), 869-898, 898

the development of what is called the 'Enlightenment.'"¹⁰ The urban experience can thus often help explain what the influence of any particular intellectual tradition will often obscure. Something did happen, and the following pages seek to identify what it was.

The experience of the commercial metropolis serves a window into the evolution of an urbane and, to a certain extent, *secular* Enlightenment. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "secular" as "belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the church and religion; civil, lay, temporal...non-ecclesiastical, non-religious, or non-sacred."¹¹ While there was, as I suggest, no clear separation between religious and non-religious worlds, it is not entirely meaningless to speak of the "secular" if we define it as "any ideology or sensibility that is focused upon the progress or betterment of any particular aspect of the human predicament in the temporal world." If we adopt such a definition of "secular", the restraints I discuss emerge as fundamentally amphibious. They were not fundamentally anti-Christian, as they were intrinsically tied to Christian notions of modesty, temperance, and self-control. The Christian underpinnings of restraint are suggested, for instance, by the fears of shame that lay beneath discourses of sociability, or the Anglican notions of temperance that amplified the emphasis upon agency. Sermons constitute a significant proportion of the texts I consider, in the following pages, as it here that the values of self-preservation were most assiduously and explicitly promoted. But while each of the restraints I discuss had religious moorings, none

¹⁰ Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 484

¹¹ "secular, 2a" *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 4 June. 2008
<<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00181778>>.

were entirely *dependent* – conceptually or ideologically – upon a religious idea. Each might be related to religious ideas of modesty or temperance, but their secular dimensions are also profitably examined, for they are closely related to modes of metropolitan life, and to the preservation of the self and that of society in *this* world. Even manifestly religious entities like the Societies for the Reformation of Manners were causally related to structures and problems that might be described as secular. The campaign, as Mary Fissell and Tim Hitchcock have argued, was rooted in a pan-European radical millenarianism.¹² But it is the secular realities of London, and an eminently secular desire for social improvement in *this* world, and not the next, that explain why they flourished as they did. As Robert Shoemaker has argued that “the fact that the campaign was most active in London is significant, because it was the fact that the campaign offered the possibility of addressing some of London’s social problems which made it attractive to many of the informers, constables and justices of the peace who supported it.”¹³ At any given point, one or another of these concerns – millenarian thought or London’s problems – could have been more or less formative. It would be absurd to proclaim the Societies for the Reformation of Manners an entirely secular institution, but it would also be inaccurate to claim that there was nothing at all that was secular about them. The campaign, in other words, was ideologically hybrid: a product of both secular and religious

¹² Mary E. Fissell, “Charity Universal? Institutions and Moral Reform in Eighteenth-Century Bristol” and Tim Hitchcock, “Paupers and Preachers: The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement,” in Tim Hitchcock and Lee Davidson, ed. *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems* (Stroud: New York, 1992), 121-166

¹³ Robert Shoemaker, “Reforming the City: The Reformation of Manners Campaign in London, 1690-1738,” in Tim Hitchcock and Lee Davidson, ed. *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems* (Stroud: New York, 1992), 100

concerns. So while England as a whole might not have been secularized in this period, I am reserving the right to use variations of “secular” to describe particular changes, developments, or processes that were, in their different ways, critical or formative.

Preconditions

Three preconditions must first be established, before moving the discussion into the specific restraints: first, the fact of an ascendant social segment that might alternately be described as the “middling sort” or middle class; second, the cultural formation of his class or “sort”; third, the drive to discover the city in all its bewildering variety. Commercialization and urbanization spurred the growth of a middle class. “The City,” it has been argued of this period, “retained its disorderly neighbourhoods, lively markets and open sewers, but admixed this cacophony of life with an increasingly wealthy and self-confident financial elite, housed in the classical architecture of Georgian buildings.”¹⁴ At the same time, a combination of factors – rising agricultural productivity, the consolidation of agricultural land, increased urban wealth – led to the “shedding” of agricultural laborers, many of whom traveled to the cities and, in particular, to London.¹⁵ The poor, the rich, and the in-between were forced to share this city’s streets in ways that they had never had to before. It was because of this mingling of classes, in part, that the Societies for the Reformation of Manners came to prominence, assiduously targeting vice,

¹⁴ Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, “London, 1715-1760”, *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 17 June 2008)

¹⁵ Hitchcock and Davidson, xxix

debauchery, and profaneness.¹⁶ The fact of this confrontation was perpetually described and recreated in the periodical press. “The Rabble,” according to a writer for *The Tea-Table*, would “continually throng the Masquerades in the *Hay Market*” and “interrupt and profane the Diversions of the *Place* with their Ribaldry and Ill-manners.”¹⁷ Frequent masquerades and a disorderly rabble stationed outside their gates: both were symptoms of commercial modernity. The middle class differentiated itself from the rabble, but also from the masqueraders. “These Manners are so various, so complicated, so prodigious, that one might compile Volumes of them,” John Dennis had insisted in a pamphlet inveighing against opera-mania, “There is not a greater difference between what *London* was in *Harry the Eighth’s* Time and what it is at present, than there is between the Manners of our Ancestors and our own.”¹⁸ This is a forceful statement, if we examine it closely. It was not the city’s new buildings, bustling docks, noxious smells or irritating smells. It was the novel affectations of the urban elite.

It was in this context that the idea of restraint became integral to the process of the cultural formation of distinct classes. At times, this process was invisible. Consider the following exchange from the 1718 *British Apollo*:

Question: Whether is most Glory, To Conquer One’s Self or Others?
 Answer: One’s self, since it will render a Conquest more easie over others; whereas a Conquest over others first, by puffing up the Mind with Pride, makes a Conquest over one’s self more difficult after.¹⁹

¹⁶ Robert Shoemaker, “Reforming the City,” 101

¹⁷ *The Tea-Table* VI (9 March 1724)

¹⁸ John Dennis, *An Essay upon Publick Spirit; Being a Satyr in Prose upon the Manners and Luxury of the Times, the Chief Sources of our Present Parties and Divisions* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1711), 11

¹⁹ [Anon] *The British Apollo: Containing About Two Thousand Answers to Curious Questions in Most Arts and Sciences, Serious, Comical, and Humorous, Approved of By Many of the Most Learned ... Perform’d by a Society of Gentlemen* (London: printed

The fact that *The British Apollo* was a middling newspaper suggests that there is something bourgeois about the sensibility captured in this exchange. The “others” under question presumably encompassed the wives, children, and servants of this supposedly self-controlled person. The idea of restraint, this suggests, was crucial to the cultural formation of the rising middle classes. But the idea also evolved because of the need for this class to differentiate itself from others with whom it shared the bustling metropolis. A particularly middling vision of London is suggested by a 1723 piece from *The Guardian* on the scourge of vicious, licentious servants that were insidiously parroting their foppish masters: “Poverty and Servitude accompanied with the Vices of Wealth and Licentiousness is, I believe, a Circumstance or Ill peculiar to our Age.”²⁰ By simultaneously demonizing the ills of poverty and those of wealth, *The Guardian* was actively constituting a middling sensibility of restraint. In so doing, it was also contributing to the idea of a city that was both poor and rich, sexually liberal and morally sanctimonious – in all these different ways, defined by diversity and disorder.

The Guardian's and *British Apollo's* pronouncements were products of a discursive freedom that had greatly exacerbated anxieties about disorder. Following the lapsing of the Licensing Act of 1695, London was a city as freed as it had ever been from the bounds of censorship.²¹ This explosion of print did not solely benefit texts that would otherwise have been censored – it led to a more whole-scale upheaval, as it fueled the creation of new markets for print. It is fears

for John Isted; and Richard King, 1718), 375

²⁰*The Guardian*. Third edition. (London: J. Tonson, 1723), 20-21

²¹ Bob Harris, “Print Culture,” in H.T. Dickinson, ed, *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 284

of an uncontrollable market that drove many of London's leading booksellers to rally the reimposition of censorship. But they faced, in this regard, an uphill battle. A rising middling class that yearned avidly for improvement sustained the growth of a vibrant commercial marketplace for ideas. Ideas of decline, such as that evoked by the *Guardian*, were commonly employed to address this audience. This did not just result in moral panic – there was, in this literature, a powerful drive towards understanding the city in all its bewildering diversity. This helped develop the idea of a city that was both intrinsically and inevitably diverse and disordered.

The sense of a city that could not be contained ultimately established the need for secular and urban restraints – wherein it was the city-dweller that had to practice the arts of restraint, and protect him-or herself from the city. The sense of such a place was gradually and continually formed. London, like *fin-de-siecle* Paris, was a city of “roving eyes” —a place at once self-conscious and self-involved.²² Of the several possible reactions to the upsurge of drinking establishments, one was a text that painstakingly and earnestly documented their “manners and customs”: *A Guide for Malt-Worms* (London: T. Bickerton, 1720?), sometimes attributed to Ned Ward.²³ The city was described as a constantly shape-shifting kaleidoscope of tempers and bodies: what you saw depended on where you were and who was there. An ale-house adjacent to the court was described as a scene of great moral corruption: “Here Turnkeys, Tipstaves, Waiters, jointly drein,/ Poor Debtors out of every Jack of Cole,/ Without

²² Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-De-Siecle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 16

²³ [Anon] *A Guide for Malt-Worms... Done by several hands* (London: T. Bickerton, 1720)

Compunction, or Remorse of Soul.”²⁴ One Spittlefields establishment accommodated jousting gentry-men on Tuesday nights and a music club on Friday nights.²⁵ The city that emerged from these descriptions was disorderly, chaotic, vicious, and repugnant – yet also somehow magnificent for the sheer variety of human experience that coalesced in its spaces. *Hell Upon Earth: Or the Town in an Uproar* (London: J. Roberts and A. Dodd, 1729), published some years later, similarly catalogued varieties of urban behavior. Hour by hour, the narrator of this text weaved into and out of churches, shops, taverns, and private houses, observing bodies surrendering themselves to the passions. “Infirm and superannuated Letchers plagued in their Beds with impracticable *Desires*” at six in the morning; at three o’clock, “City Tradesmen with *full Bellies* and *empty Minds*” gaped at the nobility passing by from court.²⁶ As the years progressed, these descriptions proliferated. “The town of London is a kind of large forest of wild beasts,” declared the author of *A Trip Through the Town*, “where most of us range about at a venture, and are equally savage, and mutually destructive of another.”²⁷ The writer persuaded his readers of the problem by pointing at particular kinds of spaces:

Observe the shops, and you’ll see an universal discontent, and melancholy hanging in the faces of their respective occupiers. Look into the *Churches*, and there only a few *elderly Widows* and *antiquated Virgins*.²⁸

The feeling of despair accumulated as the narrator moved through space.

Audiences in opera houses chanted “ONE GOD, ONE FARINELLI!”²⁹ Impetuous

²⁴ *ibid*, 15

²⁵ *ibid*, 18

²⁶ *ibid*, 2, 7

²⁷ [Anon] *A Trip Through the Town: Containing Observations on the Customs and Manners of the Age* (London: J. Roberts, 1735), 1-2

²⁸ *ibid*, 2

²⁹ *ibid*, 60

maidservants controlled the floors of dining establishments: when tapped on the arm, one “flew into as violent a Passion, as a *Welch* Cook in a Tavern Kitchen.”³⁰

The human temperament provided a conceptual framework for conceiving of the diversity of the city; the city, conversely, threw into sharp relief the varieties of temperamental possibilities. The figure of the ambulatory narrator repeatedly made it possible to engage with the variety of urban life without actually flattening it. At one point, the narrator of *Trip Through the Town* encountered a paranoid usurer, an impudent porter, and an angry crowd of strangers in a coffeehouse – “a promiscuous Company...unacquainted with one another.”³¹ A paragraph was devoted to each of these characters. Each was described as a distinct bundle of thoughts, ideas, dispositions, body types, professions – from a member of Parliament expatiating on the Tobacco Bill, to a Justice of Peace bemoaning the crime wave, onto farmers, captains, and churchwardens, amongst others. All were given their time on the page. The text only purported to cast opprobrium: what it actually achieved was something different – it humanized the city. London might well have been a town of wild beasts, but this author’s attitude to these beasts – and, more generally, to the forest – was one of fascinated engagement, at least as much as it was of fear. In this sense, this text was ideologically equidistant between a moral panic and *A Treatise of Human Nature*. There was a the slippery slope from engagement to acceptance, as Hume suggested in the latter:

It often happens, that after we have lived a considerable time in any city, however at first it might be disagreeable to us; yet as we become familiar with the objects, and contract an acquaintance, tho merely with the streets and buildings, the aversion diminishes by degrees, and at last changes

³⁰ *ibid*, 18

³¹ *ibid*, 10

into the opposite passion.³² Hume might not have been a Londoner, and the transition he suggests is indeed unspecific to London. But these texts about London suggest, to an extent, the origins of the sentiment expressed by Hume in this passage.

A recognition of human and cultural diversity was, as Sankar Muthu has argued, essential to the world-view of Enlightenment writers railing against empire. “The rapidly proliferating literature about human unity and diversity in the Enlightenment era reflects,” he has argued, “a cross-fertilization of concepts, arguments, and perspectives from diverse intellectual contexts.”³³ One of these contexts, I would like to suggest, was this literature about the city. These writers did not embrace diversity in some abstract, hypothetical sense. They did so because they had to – they were compelled by circumstances to accept diversity as inevitable. But once they did, this diversity became a fact of life. Once it did, self-preservative restraints became all the more important. “While their view of their world was critical, and especially in religion, disruptive, they knew and loved the world they wished to change,” Peter Gay has written of the *philosophes*.³⁴ The same might be said of less overtly enlightened texts like *A Trip Through the Town or Hell Upon Earth*. In the previous chapter, I cited Richard Blackmore’s expressive recognition of the diversity of the human temperament:

As the several Combinations of Splenetick Madness and Folly produce an infinite Variety of irregular Understandings, so the amicable Accommodation and Alliance between several Virtues and Vices produce an equal Diversity in the Disposition and Manners of Mankind.³⁵

³² *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Volume II, 139

³³ Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 6

³⁴ Gay, *The Party of Humanity*, 119

³⁵ Blackmore, *A Treatise on the Spleen and the Vapours*, 279

The underlying sensibility of this passage – a sense of wonder at the variety and diversity of human temperaments – might profitably be related to descriptions of the metropolis. Their authors were not *philosophes*. But there was something markedly enlightened about their propensity to engage with the inevitability of diversity: an inevitability that was itself a function of commercial freedom and the draw of the metropolis.

Restraints

Texts such as those quoted in the preceding section persistently manufactured a sense of what Daniel Gordon has described as the “secular miracle of a vibrant collectivity in the midst of everyman’s moral limitations.”³⁶ The recognition of diversity was a precondition for the emergence of the partially secular restraints that I will now begin to identify. How, I will ask, did London writers advise the citizens of the metropolis to survive amidst this diversity? The restraints I identify help account for Gordon’s secular miracle.

One of the coping mechanisms, already revealed by the texts I have considered in the previous section, is a restrained and non-intrusive *navigation*. A seasoned city dweller had to learn to walk around the problem of socio-economic diversity, as John Gay suggested in *Trivia: Or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1716). His readers were advised of how to “walk clean by Day, and safe by Night...How jostling Crouds, with Prudence, to decline,/ When to assert the Wall, and when resign.”³⁷ This last word was key: civility, in *Trivia*, required *resignation* – a recognition of the fact that the

³⁶ Daniel Gordon, “The City and the Plague in the Age of Enlightenment,” 74

³⁷ *Trivia: Or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1716), *ibid*

disorderly were there to stay. It was in this context of this realization that a restrained navigation was described with such painstaking precision:

Let due Civilities be strictly paid.
The Wall surrender to the hooded Maid;
Nor let thy sturdy Elbow's hasty Rage
Jostle the feeble Steps of trembling Age:
And when the Porter bends beneath his Load;
And pants for Breath; clear thou the crouded Road.³⁸

Trivia thus signals an increasingly discernable relationship between resignation and agency; fearing the city and taking control of one's own life; acquiring a conscious awareness of disorder and endeavoring to evade it as well as possible.

The idea of navigation requires us to consider a causal relationship between a rising middle class and a secular sensibility of self-preservation, one that focuses upon survival and, above all, an individualistic form of caution that is fundamentally *alienated*. "In the simple act of being a pedestrian," it has recently been observed, "Gay was participating in a metropolitan experiment that was creating a new urban way of life, particular to London."³⁹ But Gay's pedestrian was as alienated as he was restrained. Those who were resigned to the inevitability of a temperamentally tempestuous city were better equipped to determine when and where they had to remove themselves from a potentially incendiary situation. Often, this removal involved walking away from brutality. "O barb'rous Men, your cruel Breasts assuage, / Why vent ye on the gen'rous Steed your Rage?," Gay cried of the hackney coachmen, and then fantasized about turning the coachman into a horse – doomed to range the town dragging

³⁸ *ibid*, 13

³⁹ Clare Brant and Susan Whyman, *Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2

enormous loads of goods.⁴⁰ But only in Gay's imagination did the coachman suffer this agonizing fate. In practice, he simply sublimated his rage and moved along. The reader was advised to avoid all public transport: "Let others in the jolting coach confide,/ Or in the leaky boat the Thames divide;/ Or, box'd within the chair, condemn the street,/ And trust their safety to another's feet."⁴¹

The alienated were thus psychically disconnected but spatially immersed: their need to alienate themselves intensified in response to the escalation of the disorder by which they were surrounded, and against which they needed to protect themselves. The author of *Hell Upon Earth: or the Town in an Uproar* was, similarly, both alienated and reconciled as he walked through the chaos of the city. The need for a new way of walking was a function, in part, of such newfound challenges as the belligerent beggars that thronged the streets of the city. "People not used to great Cities, being thus attack'd on all sides," Mandeville wrote in the charity schools essay, "are commonly forc'd to yield, and can't help giving something tho' they can hardly spare it themselves."⁴² To say that a seasoned city-dweller was necessarily alienated was also, perhaps, an intrinsically alienated declaration. People who *were* used to such a way of life, it was implicitly suggested, found ways to ignore the supplicants and kept on walking, unperturbed. We might turn as well to *Journal of the Plague Year*. "For Defoe," Daniel Gordon has written, "the plague shows that there are times when

⁴⁰ 15; Mark Jenner, "Circulation and Disorder: London Streets and Hackney Coaches, c.1640-c. 1740," in Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore, ed., *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (Rivers Oram Press: London, Sydney, and Chicago, 2003), 44

⁴¹ Gay, *Trivia*, 33

⁴² Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (London: J. Tonson, 1724), 291

the whole city is nothing but human fragility writ large."⁴³ But 1666 London as imagined in 1722 was also, in a way, human *caution* writ large. "Coaches were dangerous things," its narrator, H.F., reported on one occasion, "and People did not Care to venture into them, because they did not know who might have been carried in them last."⁴⁴ Elsewhere, H.F. described how they "walk'd in the middle of the great Street, neither on one Side or other, because, as I suppose, they would not mingle with any Body that came out of Houses."⁴⁵ Sophie Gee has found echoes in this passage of the "alienated setting of Dryden's, Pepys and Evelyn's London," or "the secular wasteland of post-Fire London" – "where the individual walks, anonymously, through unmarked streets."⁴⁶ Gay's, Mandeville's, and Defoe's Londoners are all thus restrained by their alienation, and alienated by their restraint.

An individualistic desire for self-preservation, of which the sensibility of alienation was one manifestation, was continually deepened by the life of the city and the world of commerce. Self-preservation individualism was rarely if ever explicitly recognized as ideologies, or even as ideological frameworks. But we might nonetheless penetrate explicit articulations in search of what Dror Wahrman has called "the unselfconscious traces, the unintended marks, the signs of those 'unstructured intuitions' that underlay people's fundamental assumptions about who they were and who they could be."⁴⁷ Hence in a 1723

⁴³ Gordon, 76

⁴⁴ Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year: Being Observations or Memorials, of the Occurrences, As Well Publick as Private, Which Happened in London During the Last Great Visitation in 1665* (London: E. Nutt, 1722), 118

⁴⁵ 21

⁴⁶ Sophie Gee, "Waste and Restoration: The Politics of Discarding from "Paradise Lost" to the "Dunciad," PhD Dissertation, Harvard University (2002), 135

⁴⁷ Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, xv

version of the Ordinary's accounts of the criminals hanged at Tyburn, Thomas Purney thus introduced the case of John Stanley:

We are here to give some Account of this unfortunate Person, to show all People by what gradual Steps he proceeded from Gaiety to Vice; That observing his Life, others may the better direct their own, and learn to avoid the Beginnings of Debauchery, and in time to curb their Passions.⁴⁸ Here we find in explicit form the implicit framework behind the majority of the stories reproduced by the Ordinary – that *each individual* must learn to navigate around his or her own frailties and weaknesses, as they could lead him or her to actions that would ensure his or her own destruction. This particular form of individualistic self-preservation could also be articulated as a positive ideal. A 1706 sermon focused upon the importance of what it called “*Thinking on our Ways...to make us, I say, digest Religion, and be able to chuse our own true Happiness.*”⁴⁹ The sermon itself was delivered to the merchants of the Levant company, and designed to pre-condition them with the mental strength required to confront the obstacles of a perilous commercial world. The need for self-preservation was used to accentuate the importance of the Scriptures in another sermon delivered in 1724 to an audience of merchants in the employ of the Levant Company. “And what do they restrain us from,” Charles Burdett, the author of this sermon, asked of the Scriptures, “but from the Commission of such Vices, as would raise Horror and Remorse in the Conscience, press down the Mind with Anguish and Vexation, blow up Discord in the Affections, swell the Body with Disease, prejudice our Interests, and scatter Confusion and Distraction

⁴⁸ Thomas Purney, *The Ordinary of Newgate, His Account, of the Behaviour, Confession, and Last Dying Words of the three Malefactors, Who Were Executed at Tyburn* (London: John Applebee, 1723), 2

⁴⁹ Thomas Owen, *A Sermon Preach'd Before the Honourable Company of Merchants Trading to the Levant Seas* (London: Ralph Smith, 1706), 19

through human Societies.”⁵⁰ Self-preservation was described as an aspect of a larger striving towards happiness and pleasure:

GOD there grant...that our Lives and Behaviour may be so well formed by the Rules of Decency, Temperance, and Chastity, as may preserve the Constitution of our Bodies in full Strength and Vigor, and enable all their Faculties to perform their several Functions, and that we may enjoy the *Pleasure* of well-doing in *this* World, and obtain the glorious Reward promised to it in the *next*.⁵¹

“The values of city life,” Arthur Weitzman has argued, “inevitably clash with Christian values, which prize fellowship, asceticism, humility, and simplicity; the city man prospers by adhering to a very different code: individuality, acquisitiveness, aggressiveness, and sophistication.”⁵² But must be wary, these sermons suggest, of creating a false divorce between urban individualism and Christianity, on the one hand, and of extrapolating a secular nation from secular arguments, on the other hand. Secular arguments could so easily be used to support theological positions and institutions – this, in turn, led at once to the diffusion of secular sensibilities and the strengthening of religious ideologies. “We are commanded by revelation to do no injury to our bodies in any of its members,” the Scottish theologian George Turnbull (Horace Walpole’s to-be tutor) insisted in his *Christian Philosophy*, “but to take care of our health, and to preserve ourselves in a sound state of body.”⁵³ “It is very conspicuous,” he wrote of health, “that by prudence and care, we may, for the most part, pass our days in tolerable ease and quiet: and that it is by rashness, ungoverned passion,

⁵⁰ Charles Burdett, *A Sermon Preach’d Before the Right Worshipful the Deputy-Governour and the Company of Merchants Trading to the Levant Seas: At St. Mary le Bow, November 22, 1724* (London: Robert Knaplock, 1724)

⁵¹ *ibid*, 24

⁵² Arthur J. Weitzman, “Eighteenth-Century London: Urban Paradise or Fallen City?” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36:3 (Jul. 1975), 469-480, 484

⁵³ George Turnbull, *Christian Philosophy: Or, the Christian Doctrine Concerning God, Providence, Virtue, and a Future State, Proved to be Agreeable to True Philosophy* (London: J. Noon, 1740), 221

willfulness or negligence, that men, generally speaking, make themselves very miserable.”⁵⁴ The preservation of the body was, this reminds us, a Scriptural injunction that germinated, it seems, in the theological literature of the 1730s. But the fact that it was championed by Turnbull – who dedicated much of his life to writing against the deists – does not mean there was nothing secular about individualistic self-preservation.⁵⁵ The Scripture had countless injunctions, and if this particular idea was picked up repeatedly, it is because it *resonated*. The vociferousness with which Turnbull made his case about the worldly importance of the individual’s self-preservation, and the increased frequency with which this idea was expressed in the Levant Company sermons, is suggestive of a *conscious* shift away from a focus on the ramifications of immorality in the afterlife. Together, the previously-cited passages suggest an increased emphasis upon agency, individualism, happiness and success in the temporal world.

A self-preservative individualism was not necessarily metropolitan, but it was, nonetheless, the foundational basis for the disparate forms of restraint that evolved in response to the secular realities of the commercial metropolis. One of these was the increased emphasis upon self-preservation in the sexual realm. Sexuality, in this period, was a preeminent object of reform. “Lewd and disorderly practices” were the Societies for the Reformation of Manners’ most frequently prosecuted offense between 1708 and 1724, as Robert Shoemaker has demonstrated.⁵⁶ To a great extent, as Shoemaker has shown, it was the prostitutes, and not their clients or proprietors, that were prosecuted most

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ Paul Wood, “Turnbull, George (1698–1748),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40216> (accessed August 23, 2008).

⁵⁶ Shoemaker, “Reforming the City,” 104

frequently. But as the decades progressed, so did a relatively secular vision of sexual self-preservation also begin to emerge, designed to caution the kind of person who would patronize a prostitute. Sexual restraint was subtly secularized in Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (a text to be later contested by George Turnbull). It was extricated from religion and described as dependant upon reason, which, it was contended, was the best of all guides for self-preservation:

Because not only all irregular passions, all unfriendly affections carry their own torment with them, and endless inconveniences attend the excess of sensual delights; and all immoderate desires (human nature being able to bear but a certain proportion) disorder both mind and body; we can't but know we ought to use great moderation with relation to our passions, or in other words, govern all our actions by Reason; that, and our true interest being inseparable.⁵⁷

This passage must be read against the counter-argument, as laid out by Bishop Edmund Gibson, that it was *religion* that “lays the strongest Restraints upon sensual Pleasures and Delights.”⁵⁸ Tindal's statement might thus be contrasted to a less secular view of sexual restraint, wherein the self could only preserve itself once it had surrendered to the dictates of the Scriptures. In so doing, Tindal was also giving shape to an idea that existed in many different forms: that it was the onus of the modern urban citizen to practice the arts of sexual self-preservation. Each individual could save himself – this was an idea that was repeatedly articulated, and not just by deists, as Turnbull's treatise suggests. Venereal disease was prime amongst the “endless inconveniences” that attended “the excess of sensual delights”, and a treatise on venereal disease entitled *The Scourge of Venus and Mercury* was described by its rebutter as having been posted on “every Corner and Pissing Post in London”, “obvious to all that walk the Streets of

⁵⁷ Tindal, *Christianity as Old*, 16-7

⁵⁸ *ibid*

this *Great City*.” It is instructive, then, to note that it began with a claim that interlocked neatly with Tindal’s contention:

It is a most melancholy Reflection to Consider, that Mankind, Endued by the supream Creator of the Universe, with so much Reason, and a Power to distinguish *Good* from *Evil*, should nevertheless be so prone to treat the Path of *Vice*, rather than that of *Virtue*, without taking Warning by the Footsteps of those whom they see daily falling into almost irretrievable Dangers and Precipices.⁵⁹

The warnings provided by the “footsteps” of others did not just replicate those provided in the Scriptures. Sexual unrestraint was a crime of man against himself, not against God.

Tindal’s passage and *The Scourge of Venus and Mercury* were alternative voices that represented, as the eighteenth-century progressed, an increasingly audible chorus. The appeal to sexual self-preservation was also integral to the classical humanist tradition, and propagated with force through stories and fables about popular heroes such as, for instance, Hercules. His inability to rightfully abnegate the advances of a dangerous woman, despite his superhuman strength, became, in each of these stories, a testament to the “boundless and despotick Empire” that the passion of Love extended across the whole species of man.⁶⁰ Reason, it was repeatedly stressed, was the ultimate key to willful self-preservation. “Nor are they barr’d from Pleasures of the Sense,” argued the author of *The Judgment of Hercules*, “Pleasures within right Reason’s

⁵⁹ Jonathan Sintelaer, *The Scourge of Venus and Mercury, Represented in a Treatise of the Venereal Disease; Giving a Succinct, But Most Exact Account of the Nature, Causes, ... and Symptoms of that Dreadful Distemper; ... Unto Which is Added, The True Way Of Curing* (London: printed for, and sold by G. Harris. R. Gosling. J. Helmes. W. Carter. J. Philips. H. Ribetteau. B. Picard. And J. Harding, 1709), preface; *An Appendix to Mr. Sintelaer’s Late Treatise of the Venereal Disease; Entitled The Scourge of Venus and Mercury* (London: G. Harris, 1709), 11

⁶⁰ Richard Steele, *The Lover and Reader* (London: J. Tonson, 1723), 145

sacred Fence.”⁶¹ This author was not withholding the possibility of sexual pleasure: he was merely suggesting that the dictates of reason be used to distinguish right from wrong. The use of stories to propagate the ideal is itself an acknowledgment of the merits of self-preservation. They endeavored to instill the fear of sexual depravity by describing what happened to those who lost control. Another version of the story went at length to describe how the physically superhuman savior, who succeeded in protecting the City from a bewildering variety of equally formidable forces (giants, serpents, bloodthirsty human tyrants), eventually succumbed to the advances of a woman who tricked him with a poisonous shirt: “*A Woman had ensnared him,*” the author declared, after telling of how she drove Hercules to commit suicide by bashing his own head against the rocks.⁶² The effusion of cultural production that defined the early eighteenth-century thus helps recreate the context for Tindal’s very rationalistic vision of self-preservation. The vision, in turn, multiplied in force as the middling readers that were targeted by these texts went on to write plays, pamphlets, and treatises of their own. The psychology of sexual desire was assiduously dissected and the value of sexual self-preservation painstakingly propagated in a 1740 text called *Conversations Moral and Entertaining, Between an English Gentleman and a Knight of Malta: Containing a Lively Picture of the Heart of Man*. The need for sexual restraint could be preemptively instilled, this author suggested:

The soul cannot be affected by two opposite passions at once; if truth once enters it, error is immediately discover’d and expell’d... Truth is a lambent flame which consumes error, and yet is as balsamic and sweet as honey in

⁶¹ [Anon] *The Judgment of Hercules*, (London, 1727), 26

⁶² [Anon] *The Famous and Renowned History of the Life and Glorious Actions of the Mighty Hercules of Greece* (London: S. Bates, 1720), 13

the mouth. Let us then but take a taste of it's sweetness, and we shall find an insupportable bitterness in error.⁶³

The purpose of this passage, if we penetrate beyond the florid rhetoric, was to promote the self-preservative effects of reason and rational discourse. A text such as this – which went on for pages on themes such as these – suggests the availability of sophisticated theories of the sexual passions. It is perhaps for this reason that the efforts of the social reformers – who responded to venereal disease and moral dissolution by rounding up the prostitutes, instead of educating their clients – were confronted with an increasingly articulate resistance. Hence a 1737 writer reflected upon the contempt heaped upon the Societies for the Reformation of Manners: “the Treatment they met with...every where exposed to Scorn and Insult, till their Zeal and Patience were quite tired out with ill Usage; and those Societies fell into the Languishing Condition they are at present.”⁶⁴ It is in this context – of a society increasingly ambivalent about the reformation of manners – that relatively secular visions of self-preservation began to accumulate.

The forms of restraint I have discussed in the preceding pages – navigation, alienation, and sexual self-preservation – were developed in order to protect the individual from temporal pressures, especially the life of the metropolis. Another set of restraints were focused upon transforming metropolitan society by reconfiguring the individual. Enlightenment, writes Pocock, was “a moral philosophy that made humans capable of society without needing recourse to God... we currently see “Enlightenment” as the growth of a non-theocentric

⁶³ [Anon] *Conversations Moral and Entertaining, Between an English Gentleman and a Knight of Malta: Containing a Lively Picture of the Heart of Man* (London: John Hawkins, 1740), 128

⁶⁴ *Daily Gazeteer*, Issue 772, (December 15, 1737)

“philosophy” of civil society.”⁶⁵ Those who emphasized self-preservation both assumed such a society and also, in their own way, promoted it in their sermons, catechisms, and treatises. But such a society was more deliberately constructed in texts that promoted concealment, a shame-fearing sociability, and venting.

There was, in the early eighteenth century, a mounting investment in concealment. Dangerous beliefs were condoned as long as they were buried deep down inside a person’s consciousness. “A man may be allowed to keep poisons in his closet,” opined Jonathan Swift’s King of Brobdingnag, “but not to vend them about as cordials.”⁶⁶ Italian opera, John Dennis suggested, might not be so pernicious if shuttled away behind closed doors: “If they are so fond of the *Italian Music*,” he demanded, “why do they not take it from the *Hay-Market* to their Houses, and hug it like their secret Sins there?”⁶⁷ Dissimulation – white lies, disingenuous platitudes – was often described as expedient and necessary, self-protective and socially desirable. Civil society, explained Robert Burrow, chaplain to the Lord Mayor, preaching at the Guildhall in 1723, brought along a certain “*Artfulness of Behaviour*.” Men who lived in civil societies were used to “concealing their ill Qualities” or “in hiding immodest, or ill-natur’d, or any other sort of Thoughts that are unbecoming them.”⁶⁸ These habits had “obtained the Names of *Civility* and of *Urbanity*,” he approvingly observed, “which are

⁶⁵ J.G.A. Pocock, “Historiography and Enlightenment: A View of Their History,” *Modern Intellectual History* 5:1 (2008), 84

⁶⁶ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Puffin Classics (1997, first published 1726), p 143

⁶⁷ See, for instance, John Dennis, *An Essay upon Publick Spirit; Being a Satyr in Prose upon the Manners and Luxury of the Times, the Chief Sources of our Present Parties and Divisions* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1711), 301

⁶⁸ Robert Burrow, *Civil Society and Government Vindicated from the Charge of Being Founded On, And Preserv’d By, Dishonest Arts: In a Sermon Preached for the...Lord Mayor* (London: John and Barnham Clark, 1723), 29

deriv'd from *Latin Words*, signifying a *Community* and a *City*." A city in which the iniquitous pretended to be virtuous, thus preserving its public peace, was better than one in which they revealed their inner rottenness for all to see. Those who dissembled and dissimulated were revealing their "Humanity" – they were simply doing what was "*kind and beneficial*" to their neighbors.⁶⁹ In the context of a city, truth-telling was likely to be socially destructive and hence inhumane. These words, we might recall, were uttered in a *sermon*.

The investment in concealment had been deepened, in part, by the apparent openness of unrestraint. When Londoners in the early eighteenth-century endeavored to locate the roots of their fears, they often pointed at this openness. "The Way and Manner of this City is strangely alter'd for the worse," opined the author of one 1725 text entitled *A Conference About Whoring*. It was difficult to identify precisely what it was that had changed in recent years. "I can't say there are any new Vices in this Age," he admitted, "for the same Passions, Infirmities, Temptations, Mistakes, obtain at all Times." But it did seem that "Wickedness" was "more open and bare-fac'd of late...not under that Curb and Restraint as formerly."⁷⁰ The reaction to openness was a response, on the one hand, to conspicuous sexual morality, and, on the other hand, a rising tolerance for heterodox ideas. It was in this spirit that Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London, bemoaned what he saw as the untrammelled diffusion of heterodox ideas: "Those who live in these great Cities, or have had frequent recourse to

⁶⁹ *ibid*, 23

⁷⁰ [Anon] *A Conference About Whoring* (London: J. Downing, 1725), 7-9

them, and have any concern for Religion, must have observ'd to their great Grief, that Prophaneness and Impiety are grown bold and open."⁷¹

The flip side of concealment, but also rooted in the fear of openness, were evolving notions of sociability, which carried forth the belief that the best society was a civic and urban society, where restraint was ensured through an intricate system of tacit interpersonal checks and balances. These notions of sociability were nourished by proliferating theories of the restraining effects of shame. There were at least two versions of the connection between shame and restraint. According to the first, shame was an internal barometer, or an in-built moral compass. "I cannot think," wrote Locke, "any Correction useful to a Child, where the Shame of Suffering for having done Amiss, does not work more upon him, than the Pain."⁷² Ideas such as these were avidly developed in sermons on education. "The acute Sense and Shame of Sin," according to one 1705 divine, was sharper and more pungent "than the acutest Pains of the Body."⁷³ "A consciousness of guilt begets shame in the soul," wrote another.⁷⁴ Also at work – and increasingly so, in the early eighteenth century – was an alternative vision of shame as an *external* and *socially-enforced* restraint. The importance of social shame to middling notions of self is suggested, for instance, by the quotations furnished in the 1722 edition of *Wits Common-Wealth* – many of them written in

⁷¹ Edmund Gibson, *The Bishop of London's Pastoral Letter to the People of his Diocese; Particularly to Those of the Two Great Cities of London and Westminster. Occasion'd by Some Late Writings in Favor of Infidelity*. 2nd Edition. (London: Sam Buckley, 1728), 2

⁷² John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Fifth Edition. (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1705), 65

⁷³ Zachary Wells, *The Advantages of a Learned and Religious Education. In a Sermon Preach'd at St. Austin's Church* (London: T. Warren, 1705), 24

⁷⁴ Obadiah Hughes, *The Enemies of Good Kings Clothed with Shame* (London: John Clark, 1725), 16

the Renaissance, but here distilled anew for the metropolitan readers of the early eighteenth century. Shame was alternately described as *a marker of bourgeois refinement* ("The better sort eschew evil for shame, but the common people for fear of punishment"); *an inevitable by-product of iniquity, however well-concealed* ("Such as seek to climb by private sin, shall fall with open shame"); and *the penultimate internal restraint*: ("Shame and dishonour are the two greatest preventers of mishap").⁷⁵

Such a secular understanding of shame – in which sociability, and not a person's inner moral resources, instilled through education and sermonizing, was the most effective control of all – was repeatedly theorized in relation to the metropolis. Only certain men were likely to be introspective, according to a *Weekly Journal* piece on solitude, and of those only a subset could be successfully self-correcting:

especially in those Men whose Passions are strong; we lye more exposed to Temptations, when we are alone; in Publick, if a Person be inclined to do good, he will be both praised and encouraged, and he may often be hindered from doing Mischief.⁷⁶

The idea of shame as the penultimate restraint could, this suggests, lend itself to the formation of the notion of the self-correcting city. But the assumption upon which the above passage rested – "He that is wicked will hardly grow worse by Company; and he that is good should not live out of the World, to hinder others from profiting by his Example" – was not shared by all. Also enduringly powerful was the previously-discussed theological visions of shame as an internal barometer (associated, as I have written, with Locke's theories on

⁷⁵ Nicholas Ling, *Wits Common-Wealth: Or, a Treasury of Divine, Moral, Historical and Political Admonitions, Similes and Sentences* (London: W. Taylor, 1722), 159; 226; 226

⁷⁶ *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, Issue 331, (October 10, 1724)

education). This is why the debate continued. The metropolis, according to the *Universal Spectator*, would naturally protect the guilty and the faulty from the restraints of shame. "If the Country be less polish'd than the Town, it is also less corrupted," it wrote, and then continued:

Not but that there are People guilty of Faults even there, but then they acknowledge them to be Faults, and those are ashamed who have committed them: Whereas in Cities, People are of so different a Cast of Mind, and mingle so much of Disguise in all they do, that it's a hard Matter very often to distinguish between Good and Evil.⁷⁷

The metropolis, these passages suggest, was becoming an increasingly critical factor in the English discussion of shame. The passages also suggest the *absorption* of the belief in the restraining effects of a public and social rather than internal and moral type of shame. They are based upon the assumption that people, ultimately, *are* the best checks upon each other. It is for this reason that the life of the country is described as preferable to that of the city. Both theories, in other words, are closer to each other than they are to the Lockean vision of shame as an internal barometer – something that can be "planted" inside a child through education. The *Universal Spectator's* fear of disguise is also a function of its desire for social correction. The idea of a city of masks and disguises -- form of *concealment* that had alternately been prescribed as forms of restraint -- functioned thus to reinvigorate the desire for social shame.

The desire for sociability thus had an uncomfortable relationship with the ethos of concealment. As disguises disconcerted the *Universal Spectator*, masquerades troubled Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London because they allowed the release of what was better left concealed and yet, at the same time, kept it hidden enough to protect the infringer's identity: "They deprive Virtue and

⁷⁷ *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal*, Issue XCVIII, (August 22, 1730)

Religion of their last Refuge, I mean *Shame*," he wrote, "which keeps multitudes of Sinners within the bounds of *Decency*."⁷⁸ The idea of social shame was thus both secular and deepened by the perception of a secular society. If shame guarded the last frontier of virtue and religion, it is because Londoners were less scared of God than of how they were seen by other mortals. For the Bishop to worry about the effects of the masquerade upon shame was also to suggest that depravity was inevitable and most easily extirpated through social censure. Not everyone, it is true, agreed with the Bishop. "What has urg'd thee, to profess such a *Spleen* against *Masquerading*?" it was asked of the newspaper *The Plain Dealer* in 1724, "When nothing less than a *Mask*, can make thee *fit* to keep Company. IT was just such a Vinegar Visage as thine, appearing abroad, *uncover'd*, to the terrifying of whole Parishes, that made *Impudence* be call'd *barefac'd*."⁷⁹ The mockery of fears such as that expressed by the Bishop suggests that the matter was far from resolved and, by extension, worthy of intervention. The formidable force of the currents against which the Bishop was struggling is, in other words, ultimately suggestive of the corresponding strength of his counter-attack.

Passages such as this, it must again be established, do not necessarily signify the weakening of religious and internal forms of shame. Secular and theological notions of shame evolved simultaneously. Both, in different ways, were heightened by metropolitan life. The two are mixed together in the Ordinary's account of criminals executed at Tyburn. It is because they were "suffering so much Shame and Sorrow" that one parcel of thieves could be

⁷⁸ Edmund Gibson, *A Sermon Preached to the Societies for Reformation of Manners* (London: John Wyat, 1723), 19

⁷⁹ *The Plain Dealer*, Issue VI, (April 10, 1724)

advised to “partake in Christ’s Death and Sufferings”⁸⁰ The criminal’s shame was thus purgative and regenerative. But worldly shame was also important – indeed, it was the *modus operandi* of the stories themselves. One criminal “fell into the Courses which brought him in the Prime of his Youth, to publick Shame, and an ignominious Death.” “Let them consider the unavoidable Shame and Destruction that soon or late attends the wretched Sons of Iniquity”, went another account.⁸¹ The fear of societal shame thus developed alongside the belief in the power of moral conscience.

“As an intellectual movement,” writes Robertson, “the Enlightenment was not equivalent to a culture of sociability, however it may have encouraged one to develop.”⁸² But if we concede (as Robertson may or may not) that the emphasis upon sociability fueled the solicitude for betterment in the temporal world, then its persistent theorization was more than just the product of Enlightenment: it was a *catalyst* of Enlightenment. The emphasis upon sociability was itself borne out of the perceived fear of shame and, beyond, the fear of what happened to the disorderly body when surrendered to the rhythms and dictates of the disorderly metropolis.

Sociability was one of several ideas formed out of this body of fears: venting, the last of the restraints discussed in this chapter, was another. This was the conviction that the best way to extinguish the passions was to channel them

⁸⁰ James Guthrie, *The Ordinary of Newgate his Account, of the Behaviour, Confession, and Dying Words of the Malefactors, Who Were Executed at Tyburn* (London: John Applebee, 1729), 1

⁸¹ James Guthrie, *The Ordinary of Newgate, His Account of the Behaviour, Confession, and Dying Words, Of the Malefactors, Who Were Executed at Tyburn* (London: John Applebee, 1738), 10; James Guthrie, *The Ordinary of Newgate, His Account of the Behaviour, Confession, and Dying Words, Of the Malefactors, Who Were Executed at Tyburn* (London: John Applebee, 1739-40), 16

⁸² Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 43

outward; that they would not disintegrate under social pressure, or dissolve and dissipate through sheer will-power; that they needed to be allowed to run their course in order to be expunged from the body and, by extension, body-politic. "There are certain Humours in Mankind, which of necessity must have vent," wrote the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, railing against those who had protested against the "French prophets," the traveling troop of persecuted Huguenot millenarians who had stormed into the city in 1706.⁸³

The idea of venting might at first sound archaic and obscure, but it interlocks neatly with a concept that is familiar to modern ears –*release*, that is, or "liberation from emotional or physical tension."⁸⁴ Of the many possible variants of restraint, venting was perhaps the most metropolitan, secular, and modern. Venting, like concealment and navigation, was good for both the individual and society. Its benefits for both were multiplied as the metropolis became increasingly disordered. It thrived upon the idea that the city was a centrifuge for the passions, and that the passions, like any other effluvium, concentrated themselves in cities. Punishment, it was argued by Thomas Gordon in 1721, "gave way to "vent the Humours that grow in Cities in any manner against any Citizens; and when these Humours have not ordinary Vents, they are apt to break out in violent and extraordinary Manners."⁸⁵ This too was based upon a secular awareness of the realities of human nature amplified by a consciousness of the density of the city. The idea of venting was fundamentally adaptable:

⁸³ Anthony Ashley Cooper, *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (London: J. Morphew, 1708), 21-23

⁸⁴ "release, *n.1*" *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 8 Jun. 2008 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00181778>>.

⁸⁵ Thomas Gordon, *Francis, Lord Bacon: or, the case of private and national corruption, and bribery, impartially consider'd* (London: J. Roberts, 1721)

whereas Gordon identified punishment, Mandeville championed the ameliorative benefits of the public stews (whorehouses). These, he argued, released the passions of disorderly young men who would otherwise commit acts of violence.⁸⁶ “Age,” he insisted, “is very liable to forget the violence of youthful Passions, and, consequently, apt to think them easier curb’d,” he observed, “whereas if we consider the true Source of Whoring, and the strong Impulse of Nature that way, we shall find it is Thing not to be too violently restrained; lest, like a Stream diverted out of its proper Channel, it should break in and overflow their neighbouring *Enclosures*.”⁸⁷ This passage rests upon the belief total restraint was ultimately impossible in a place like the city, and that hierarchies needed to be asserted between different problems. Sexual immorality, for Mandeville, was better than its alternative: violence.

Venting, like concealment, alienation, or navigation, generally involved an acceptance of the inevitability of the passions. It rested upon the belief that some passions were worse than others, so the relatively innocuous had to be released in order to preempt the outbreak of the truly destructive. This, in turn, opened the space for disagreement and, by extension, cultural production. This increased pessimism about the possibility of perfect restraint was accelerated, in part, by the new problems of a commercial society. “*Corruption*,” wrote the *London Magazine*, “if it be allow’d to take Place, in any Shape, or in any Degree, in the Body Politick, can no more be limited than Immoralities in a vicious Man; whose

⁸⁶ Phil-Porney, *A Modest Defence of Publick Stews: Or, An Essay upon Whoring, As it Is Now Practis’d in These Kingdoms* (London: A Bussy, 1725)

⁸⁷ *ibid*, 62

Vices will never be restrained till his Constitution is exhausted.”⁸⁸ What Shaftesbury said about “enthusiasm”, *The British Apollo* said about jealousy: to give it “a free Liberty. For Restraint often creates a real Cause for it; it being natural to imagine more than there is in forbidden Fruit.”⁸⁹ But the *Apollo* did not prescribe the venting of every passion or humour. Grief and sorrow had irreversible effects – “the Blood, Humours and Juices of the Body” were vitiated – and were hence to be avoided at all costs: “all ought to summon their utmost Reason to oppose those fatal Enemies to an happy Being, and not give way to them.”⁹⁰ Both Shaftesbury’s and the *Apollo*’s theory of venting were thus passion-specific. The overarching message, if there was one at all, was that the range of mechanisms that defined the human body – in the internal behavior of its passions, its relationship to other bodies, the laws of nature, and society at large – was one of *variety* and *contingency*.

Only if we engage with the category of restraint can we consider these six forms of behavior – navigation, alienation, sexual control, concealment, sociability, and venting – alongside each other. Only then can we see that each was at once a form of individualism and emollient of social disorder. Each by its own and all six together posit a relationship between pessimism, uncertainty, and cultural production. It was impossible to understand what could bring order to the city, as order was so clearly elusive. There was ultimately no way of knowing if venting or hiding or walking was a better form of restraint, as neither

⁸⁸ *The London Magazine, And Monthly Chronologer*. Volume 8 (London: Charles Ackers, 1739), 404

⁸⁹ *The British Apollo: Containing About Two Thousand Answers to Curious Questions in Most Arts and Sciences, Serious, Comical, and Humorous, Approved of By Many of the Most Learned ... Perform’d by a Society of Gentlemen* (London: printed for John Isted; and Richard King, 1718), 213

⁹⁰ *ibid*, 638

could be proven to have worked – the city was after all still disorderly – even if proponents felt that it had worked in *their* case. The inner machinations of the human body were themselves inscrutable, and it was impossible to predict how any given soul would react to any given aspect of urban life. There were, in other words, two unknowable objects – the city and the body – and the unknowability of each reinforced that of the other. Both could be penetrated, anatomized, or analyzed – but not to the point where the workings of either was entirely explicable, let alone the synergy between the two. It was this uncertainty, combined with this pessimism, which kept the subject open to exploration and, by extension, cultural production.

England is described by John Robertson as missing a “concentrated effort to understand how modern, commercial societies have come into being, how they work, and what their prospects may be, which was at the core of Enlightenment enquiry elsewhere.”⁹¹ Perhaps the key word here is concentrated, for the English in the early eighteenth-century were obsessed with figuring out how their society worked and its future possibilities. “Such a type,” Peter Gay has written of the *philosophe*, “could flourish only in the city, and in fact the typical *philosophe* was eminently, defiantly, incurably urban.”⁹² This chapter has not focused upon the *philosophes*, but the writers I have covered could easily be described as “would-be *philosophes*” and “half-*philosophes*.”⁹³ England’s Enlightenment was a diffuse, un-centered, and contentious affair. Its participants, like the French Enlightenment described by Peter Gay, were

⁹¹ *ibid*

⁹² Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 14

⁹³ Gay, *The Party of Humanity*, 119

“eminently, defiantly, incurably urban.” It is rooted in anxieties that arose from the precocious modernity that Robertson insists “preempts” the very possibility of an English Enlightenment.

Chapter Four:
The Strong and Suffering Type: Political Rhetoric and Enlightenment
Commercialism in the 1730s

There is a strain of Enlightenment thought that is profoundly enamored with commerce. For Voltaire, writing in 1733, commerce and liberty were mutually reinforcing:

As Trade enrich'd the Citizens in *England*, so it contributed to their Freedom, and this Freedom on the other Side extended their Commerce, whence arose the Grandeur of the State.¹

Commerce, for Voltaire, was intrinsically associated with a tolerant cosmopolitanism that enriched urban culture by precipitating the interaction of Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Churchmen, Quakers, Muslims, Christians, and Jews. He was particularly enthralled by the London stock exchange: "a place more venerable than many courts of justice where the representatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind."² This particular brand of thought, which associated commerce with honesty and civility, and which traveled through the writing of Smith and Montesquieu, was known to some as *le doux commerce*.³

But *le doux commerce* was one amongst at least three available theories of commerce present in the public discourse of the 1730s. Also at work was a dystopian vision of commerce, wherein money-making was thought to be fertile ground for the gravest of all moral errors. "Say they," went one 1729 text,

¹ Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques* (London: C. Davis, 1733); Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 69

² *ibid*, 44

³ Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 56-60

*Let the Spaniards and Portuguese sail to the Indes, the Dutch, French, and English, to all other Parts of the World, and we will snack in their Treasure, without stirring from this wicked Spot of Earth the Town.*⁴

“The triumph of capitalism,” Hirschman has suggested, “owes much to the widespread refusal to take it seriously or to believe it capable of great design or achievement” when commerce itself was actually “a hazardous, adventurous, and often violent business.”⁵ But there were many, as this quote suggests, who recognized the connection between violence and commerce. There was, in addition, a third version of commerce, which *embraced* its more aggressive aspects. The triumph of capitalism, I would like to suggest, had much to do with the success of this third vision, the persistent politicization of which made it possible for commerce to emerge as noble and restorative.

This chapter thus tackles a critical yet abstract subject – the politicization of commerce in the age of Enlightenment – by focusing upon a process that was fundamentally particular: the rhetoric of Opposition in 1730s England, with its focus on precisely those aspects of commerce that Hirschman claims were written out of the story: the “unsavory realities” of hazard and violence. Commerce, I suggest, had to be *sold* to the English – morally as well as ideologically. “As Industry produceth Wealth, so Wealth should produce Vice, and Vice Ruin,” George Berkeley had written in 1721 (as previously quoted in the Introduction), thus channeling an intense and widespread anxiety.⁶ But commerce, as I argue, was culturally entrenched because of a vibrant public sphere in which an urban commercial elite were vaunted and glorified as strong

⁴ [Anon] *Hell Upon Earth: Or the Town in an Uproar* (London: J. Roberts and A. Dodd, 1729), 51

⁵ Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, 59

⁶ George Berkeley, *An Essay Towards Preventing the Ruine of Great Britain* (London, 1721), 27

and suffering. Complex fiscal and commercial matters were reduced into sensationalized images of strong and suffering men designed to rally indignation, anger, and a masculine, jingoistic, and anti-authoritarian urban populism. Anyone could be strong, but a hero had to prevail against something even stronger and, in the course of this endeavor, suffer for it. This type was not the only political image of the era but it was, arguably, the most critical one – in some ways, the leitmotiv of 1730s English political culture. It was the staple of the Opposition's pre-election propaganda during the excise crisis of 1733 and the Spanish war of 1738-9. It thrived because of fears of weakness that had *themselves* been generated by prosperity, advancement, and urbanity. The spectral force of the strong and suffering body produced pity and admiration; together these coalesced into a forceful indignation. The strong body eviscerated by oppressive forces was rendered heroic in the process, and hence continually increased in symbolic value. Thus it was that commerce itself was culturally and psychically entrenched.

It was commercial growth, I argue in the first section, that generated the fears of weakness that were then exploited by those invested in perpetuating this growth. A figure that was strong was particularly appealing in a society beset with fears of weakness. The second section, centered around the excise scheme of 1733, focuses upon what I call the "sturdy beggar affair", wherein Robert Walpole insulted the merchants by calling them "sturdy beggars", thus inciting a formidable backlash of propaganda. The merchants professed indignation at the insult and then converted that indignation into moral authority; at the same time, they reclaimed the insult, converting it into an image of collective strength. This strategy worked because feelings about strength and suffering had long

converged around the figure of the strong and suffering man. This was a figure that traveled through myriad genres, including last dying speeches and Robin Hood tales, and which carried forth a variety of references, including the starving yet honest laborer and the convict willing to suffer through death by pressing. These invisible references progressively reveal why Walpole's offhanded comment was so profoundly catastrophic (from the ministry's perspective). More generally, the need to propagandize commerce helps explain how the strong and suffering man became and remained an enormously potent ingredient of political propaganda. Londoners in 1736 had twice as many dailies to choose from as their counterparts in 1726, and the figurative hold of the strong and suffering man was vastly multiplied in the 1730s, as the Opposition took advantage of, and helped constitute, the explosive growth of the press.⁷ Designed to empower the metropolitan trading interest, the propaganda that resulted also helps account for the militant jingoism that suffused the nation in 1738-9, when England embarked upon a war with Spain. This is the focus of the third section of this chapter. Complaints of depredations had also risen in the late 1720s – "yet the problems which had been negotiable ten years earlier led to war by 1739," as Woodfine observes.⁸ This is not, I suggest, because of some ineffable conceptual advancement, but because the strong and suffering body had been so aggressively propagandized in the intervening period. A press and public sphere had diffused these with a speed and depth that was unprecedented.

⁷ Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: A Study of the Origins of the Modern English Press* (London: Associated University Presses, 1987), 31. See also Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 12-13; Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996)

⁸ Philip Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories: The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain I* (Woodbridge and Rochester: Boydell Press, 1998), 1

Political sentiment might be channeled, manipulated, marshaled, appropriated, projected, and redirected – but it is ultimately more than the sum of the agendas of rhetoricians. The motifs of political rhetoric emerge and reproduce when able rhetoricians succeed in locating the currents of anxiety, desire, and aspiration that constitute a society's consciousness. Once they do, others follow suit. Sensibilities are progressively constituted, and identities are gradually formed. Daniel Gordon has written of how the Bishop Belsunce in 1720 Marseille staged a sacrificial rite which “combined urban pride with a sense of suffering, the two fused into the image of Belsunce; and it helped to give the city an oxymoronic identity that has shaped its intelligentsia ever since.”⁹ In the following pages, I am similarly attentive to the combination and fusing of feelings and senses. I am fundamentally fascinated by the propensity of rhetoric to transmute, and to build upon its own power, and especially so in a vibrant print culture, where fears originating in the body were distorted, exaggerated, and deliberately manipulated in other ways. The English Enlightenment, I argue in the next chapter, was a reaction to these deceptions and distortions. But it was also, as I argue in *this* chapter, a product of the deceptions and distortions. In the following pages, I focus upon decoding what it was about these deceptions that allowed them to succeed.

It must be stated, at the outset, that there was, at best, a porous boundary between militant commercialism and *le doux commerce* – the more recognizably enlightened vision of commerce associated with Voltaire, Smith, and Montesquieu. Texts written with militaristic intentions repeatedly borrowed the

⁹ Daniel Gordon, “The City and the Plague in the Age of Enlightenment,” *Yale French Studies* 92 (1997), 83

enlightened idiom of *le doux commerce* and thus functioned to diffuse it. *Strenuous Motives For An Immediate War Against Spain* (London: G. Spavan, 1738) reprinted Addison's essay on trade and commerce; *The Merchant's Complaint Against Spain* (London: W. Lloyd, 1738) expatiated at length on how commerce was "the only Cement of mortal Happiness", one that was "extending its Progress to the remotest Parts of the Earth."¹⁰ By describing the rise of this militant commercialism, I am also, by extension, accounting for the popularization of *le doux commerce*.

Commerce and Weakness

The story I tell, in the pages that follow, is of how the commercial interest, enabled by an institution of modernity – a free press – preyed upon the fears and desires that were felt with particular force in the commercial metropolis in order to politicize and popularize the commercial interest. We might turn, for instance, to the literature of the gin craze. "Gin", as Peter Clark has argued, "became the progenitrix of most of the socioeconomic problems afflicting the country."¹¹ The literature on gin illustrates how the unhealthiness of the city generated fears of weakness that were felt particularly deeply because this weakness jeopardized the very commercialistic aim of productivity. "The *Happiness or Misery* of our dear Country depends upon the *Regulation* of this *Trade*", one writer insisted, and elaborated upon this idea using tightly interwoven images of strength: "I make no doubt this *Postulatum* will be granted me, That the Strength and Riches of a National Community consist in the *Health* and *Numerousness* of its Labourers; for

¹⁰ *The Merchant's Complaint Against Spain* (London: W. Lloyd, 1738), 17

¹¹ Peter Clark, "The 'Mother Gin' Controversy in the Early Eighteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Society* 38 (1988), 63-84, 71

if these be not preserv'd, where will your produce be?"¹² A 1721 committee excoriated gin-sellers for suffering the poor to "sit tippling in their shops, by which practice they are not only rendered incapable of labour...(but by their body being kept in a continual heat) are thereby more liable to receive infection."¹³ No-one knew "what Drugs, what Dregs, what Stuff" went into the making of gin, proclaimed the author of a 1726 tract called *The Tavern Scuffle: Or, the Club in an Uproar*, ventriloquizing the idea that the weakening properties of gin impacted the availability of labor power: "their Stomachs are spoiled, and they can't Eat, this makes them feeble, and unactive."¹⁴ Fears of the disordered body converged, in this text, with those of the body-politic disordered by unproductivity and inactivity. Inactivity, as my previous chapters have shown, was a serious fear: a source of both moral degeneration and economic decline. The association of weakness with inactivity and inactivity with commercial decline partially explains why a rapidly commercializing society would have been so invested in strength.

It cannot be *proven* but it can be very persuasively *suggested* that these fears, hopes and desires were themselves the result of commercial modernity: that is, not only were they felt with particular force in a society invested in its commercial growth, they fed upon the symptoms of that very growth. The paradox of a nation weakened by its own advancement was a prominent leitmotiv of the period. An old man in a 1738 travel narrative *Voyage Up the*

¹² [Anon] *The Trial of the Spirits: Or, Some Considerations Upon the Pernicious Consequences of the Gin-Trade to Great-Britain* (London: T. Cooper, 1736), 3

¹³ Order Book, *Westminster Sessions*, April 1721, cited in George, 31

¹⁴ Saynought Slyboots, *The Tavern Scuffle: Or, the Club in an Uproar; Occasion'd by a Hot Dispute, Between Mr. Swell-Gut,...and Mr. Scorch-Gut,...Concerning Geneva* (London: T. Warner, 1726), 12

Thames bemoaned “the loss of the Art of walking...it is unaccountable that tho’ every Year we are encreasing the number of Turnpikes, to render walking more practicable throughout the whole Nation, yet every Year we find more and more People lose the Use of their legs.” In London, he told the author of this text, he had seen a twenty-six year old soldier call a chair to “carry him the length of eleven Houses, tho’ the Sun shone out, and the Streets were perfectly clean.”¹⁵ The sentiment was pervasive. It suffused thorough contemporary writings on luxury, with all their vivid descriptions of the physically weakening effects of commercial growth. This was true, for instance, of John Dennis’ jeremiads against Italian opera and the writings of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners.¹⁶ It is because this view was powerful that Mandeville satirized it in *The Fable of the Bees*: “It is a received Notion, that Luxury is as destructive to the wealth of the whole Body Politic, as it is to that of every individual Person who is guilty of it... Yet I do confess...that as to luxury’s effeminating and enervating a nation, I have not such frightful notions now as I have had formerly.”¹⁷ Mandeville’s own wording suggests that he was in the minority – or, at the very least, writing against the grain – when he argued that commerce was *not* weakening. So it is particularly interesting that these commercially generated fears of weakness should have been used, as I show, in support of the commercial interest.

¹⁵ Weddell, *A Voyage Up the Thames* (London: J. Roberts, 1738), 79

¹⁶ John Dennis, *An Essay upon Publick Spirit; Being a Satyr in Prose upon the Manners and Luxury of the Times, the Chief Sources of our Present Parties and Divisions* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1711), Stephen Gregg, “‘A Truly Christian Hero’: Religion, Effeminacy, and Nation in the Writings of the Societies for Reformation of Manners”, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 25 (2001)

¹⁷ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees and other writings*, ed. E. J. Hundert, (Indianapolis, 1997), 66, 69

Images of weakness also proliferated as part of the reaction to inequality, which, like luxury, was the product of a commercial society. An impassioned and indignant resentment at the fact of these inequalities was resplendent in Richard Bradley's account of the winter of 1729 – a text analyzed at length in Chapter One:

how much...the Poor must suffer in their Health by such a Scarcity; they had hardly enough, as the above Accounts inform us, even to support Life, and their Loss of Strength for want of their accustomed Nourishment and usual Exercise, might probably prepare them more readily to receive such a Distemper as has proved so fatal amongst them...we find it has hardly attack'd any Person who had Fortune enough to live in his wonted way of Plenty.¹⁸

The very fact of people who were rich enough to survive the winter increased Bradley's indignation at those who could not. Inequality, this text suggests, resulted ideologically in a reification of the suffering body – a point that I will elaborate extensively over the course of this chapter.

Excise and the "Sturdy Beggars" Affair

A brief sketch is appropriate, before I proceed to describe the rhetoric. Britain in the 1730s was a minefield of political tension. The government of Robert Walpole, the nation's *de facto* Prime Minister, was widely condemned, reviled, and lampooned for being corrupt, inept, and oppressive. Myriad forces threatened his hold on power. The ruling party fractured as Church Whigs began to differentiate themselves from the fops and degenerates that appeared to have taken over the court. London merchants petitioned against a tax on wine and tobacco; the denial of their request sparked a forceful backlash that accelerated the formation of a strange, heretofore unimaginable coalition of merchants and

¹⁸ Bradley, *A Philosophical Account*, 55

Tories: well into the decade, as Philip Woodfine has observed, “no political issue gave rise to any rallying cry of similar power to the slogan ‘no excise.’”¹⁹ But excise itself was the tip of an iceberg of immensely unsolvable conundrums about social control and legislation. The third, sixth, seventh, and eighth years of the decade were punctuated with acts restricting the production and consumption of gin; these acts, in turn, sparked a series of riots.²⁰ When Lord Hervey identified an “almost ungovernable spirit in the people” in 1736, he was not exaggerating: that year alone saw food riots, riots against Irish laborers, and the Porteous riots in Edinburgh.²¹ It was in this atmosphere that the Spanish depredations on British merchant ships became an explosive issue, intensifying pro-war sentiment, and heightening popular opposition to the administration’s apparent intention to diplomatically negotiate its way out of this quagmire. The depredations had been public knowledge for some time before, but it was not until the late 1730s that they occupied center-stage in political controversy. For the legions of Britons who joined the ranks of the opposition in these years, the administration’s behavior in response to the crisis was simple confirmation of its basic corruption and ineptitude – its already-proven inability to get *anything* right. The much-desired war with Spain, known to posterity as the “War of Jenkins’ Ear,” was eventually fought at the end of the decade. The emotive crescendo of this profoundly cathartic event was Admiral Vernon’s spectacular reclamation of Porto Bello from the Spanish in 1739; the celebratory hysteria that

¹⁹ Woodfine, 48

²⁰ Jessica Warner, “‘Damn You, You Informing Bitch.’ Vox Populi and the Unmaking of the Gin Act of 1736,” *Journal of Social History* 33:2 (Winter, 1999)

²¹ John Wilson Croker, ed., *Memoirs of the Reign of King George the Second, from his Accession to the Death of Queen Caroline. By John, Lord Hervey, vol. 2* (London: John Murray, 1848), pp. 133-134, cited in Warner

ensued made the Admiral into a foil for Robert Walpole and, by extension, a national hero of unrivalled proportions.²² Throughout, Walpole remained a scapegoat for problems that long anteceded his rise to power – such as, for instance, the corruption and inefficiency of excise collection. Again and again, his actions were portrayed as especially pernicious to the *commercial* cause. And to make this case, the urban-commercial Opposition appealed to images of strength and suffering, as contained within the figure of the strong and suffering type – the figurative *leitmotiv* of the 1730s.

The power of the image of the strong and suffering type is most vividly testified by its ability to distort. In 1733, images of strength were used to rally a commercial urbanism that was fundamentally misdirected against the needs of the commercial metropolis. Economic historians are agreed on the point that the excise scheme itself was both unremarkable and sensible, financially sound and commercially beneficial. It made a simple change: the same duties that had once been payable at import as *customs duties* were now to be charged as *excise duties*, to be paid when the goods were released from a warehouse. If instituted, the Bill would probably have reduced smuggling and increased efficiency in collection.²³ In the larger scheme of things, as Jacob Price has written, "the fact that commerce was relatively prosperous at a time when agriculture was in great distress made it both equitable and politically attractive to consider administrative reforms that might shift part of the burden of taxes from agriculture to trade. That Walpole could not bring this off tells us something about the limits of the self-perception,

²² Kathleen Wilson, "Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon," *Past and Present*, cxxi (1988), 74-109

²³ Michael Jubb, "Economic Policy and Economic Development", in Jeremy Black, ed., *Britain in the Age of Walpole. Problems in Focus* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 138

if not the power, of the agricultural interest in eighteenth-century England.”²⁴

The limits of self-perception are a function, in part, to the powers of distortion.

The *London Evening Post*, the most important Opposition newspaper and a main source of information in the 1730s, attacked the bill without so much as hinting at its contents, made virtually no attempt to explain it, and eschewed any discussion of intra-parliamentary debates or intra-ministerial divisions.²⁵

Omission was par for the course, and combined with exaggeration: the Patriots made it seem as if an army of excise officers would descend upon the nation in droves, depriving honest shopkeepers and traders of their hard-earned incomes. Not only would they extract money, they would serve the government’s electoral interests. The reality, however, was markedly different.²⁶ At most, there would be 150 additional excise officers. Moreover, they would be replacing customs officers, who, in turn, would have posed a far greater electoral danger, as they necessarily clustered together in ports – excise officers, by contrast, would be far too diluted to have any real effect. The crisis was also erroneously portrayed as a David-and-Goliath battle between the common shopkeeper and the tyrannical ministry, when the wine and tobacco merchants who spearheaded the controversy were in fact massively powerful monopolists. Another distortion was the repeated suggestion that the excise on wine and tobacco was the first step towards a broader scheme that would culminate in a “general excise” extending to all foodstuffs and clothing. Langford rightfully notes that Walpole

²⁴Jacob Price, “The Excise Affair Revisited: The Administrative and Colonial Dimensions of a Parliamentary Crisis” in Stephen B. Baxter, ed., *England’s Rise to Greatness, 1660-1763* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 280

²⁵G.A. Cranfield, “The ‘London Evening Post’, 1727-44: A Study in the Development of the Political Press,” *The Historical Journal* 6:1 (1953), 20-37

²⁶Paul Langford, *The Excise Crisis: Society and Politics in the Age of Walpole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 74

and his cronies did occasionally mutter about the possibility of a general excise somewhere along the horizon.²⁷ Still, this was not the immediate aim of the 1733 bill – Opposition prints, newspapers, and ballads did everything they could do to obfuscate this fact out of existence. It is far from clear that the people would have responded to the idea of the “general excise” if opposition propagandists had not routinely abstracted complicated problems of political economy into sensationalized visions of disordered bodies and bodies-politic.

My purpose here is not to recreate the City Opposition to Walpole – this has been expertly accomplished by Nicholas Rogers.²⁸ It is to analyze what it is that made this rhetoric work. The glorification of the merchant was an aspect of “the urban translation of Country ideas.”²⁹ What might otherwise have remained a resolutely anti-urban breed of patriotism – focused on the effeminacy and degeneracy of urban life – became a headily pro-urban patriotism. “LONDON,” proclaimed the author of one 1736 text, “is prodigious populous, and abounds with all things both for the necessities of life, and for the indulging pride and luxury. The merchants send to all parts of the world to bring here what the country can’t produce.”³⁰ Even luxury – typically a subject of pessimism, melancholy, and moral panic – was converted, through its association with valiant enterprising merchants, into reason for urban pride.

²⁷ Langford, 159-60

²⁸ Nicholas Rogers, “Resistance to Oligarchy: The City Opposition to Walpole, 1725-47,” in John Stevensen, ed, *London in the Age of Reform* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 2-6

²⁹ Nicholas Rogers, “The Urban Opposition to Whig Oligarchy, 1720-1760,” in Margaret Jacob and James Jacob, eds, *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London and Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 136-7

³⁰ [Anon] *Letters from a Moor at London to His Friend at Tunis*, 29

It is my contention that we cannot understand the commercialization of Englishness without scrutinizing the elaborate structure of the deceptions so skillfully constructed by the Patriots and merchants in the 1730s, out of a myriad of long-standing fears, images, and prejudices. The excise crisis gave vent to a long-developing commercialistic aggressiveness. The culture of print and vibrant public sphere of the 1730s functioned to exacerbate political tension – to draw out latent and yet visceral feelings of strength and fears of suffering, all in the purpose of advancing the merchants’ agenda and, by extension, flooding the public sphere with an aggressive urban commercialism. In the following pages, I will focus upon what I subsequently refer to as the sturdy beggars affair. This was, perhaps, the most compelling instance of a clear divergence between the history of socio-economic reality and that of rhetoric. Kathleen Wilson, one of the excise scheme’s leading historians, accepts the assessment of William Pulteney, one of its leading opponents: “it was Walpole’s dismissal of the merchants lobbying against the excise bill at the door of the House of Commons in 1733 as ‘sturdy beggars’ which did most... to turn national animus against the bill and the minister.”³¹ Wilson does acknowledge that the Tories’ strategy was based upon “deliberate exaggerations”, but that the people were nevertheless moved by its language and images, which “struck a chord with many urban dwellers, whose lives were already touched in unsavory ways by the intrusion of state power.”³² What *was* this chord that rang so loudly that it overpowered the constant mutter of moral panic that accompanied depictions of urban life and commercial actors? In the following pages, I search for this chord by identifying

³¹ Wilson, *A Sense of the People*, 101

³² *ibid*, 129

the invisible references that connected the sturdy beggar to countless other variations of the strong and suffering type. This, in turn, will contribute to what we know about the cultural and emotive forces propelling the constitution of a gloriously free commercial metropolis. “Sturdy beggars,” according to Thomas Sheridan, was what others called the merchants “by way of Ignominy, though the Ignominy retorts upon themselves.”³³ But why would the ignominy have retorted upon itself? If the merchants were suffering in part for being insulted and thus stripped of their dignity, to gauge the extent of that suffering, we must closely examine the depth of their investment in that dignity and the power of the insult. In the following pages, I will consider why.

The story, at its most basic, runs as follows: in 1733, a group of merchants petitioned Robert Walpole to continue an old subsidy on wine and tobacco. Not only did Walpole dismiss their request, he accused them of trying to camouflage their vested interest in excise by pretending to oppose it.³⁴ “Gentlemen,” he is reported as having said, “may give these petitioners what name they please, and say that they come hither as *humble supplicants*; but I know whom the law calls *sturdy beggars*.”³⁵ Walpole was probably not himself thinking of the literal, physical sturdiness of these supposed beggars, but the merchants and opposition were quick to reclaim “sturdy beggars” as a defiant anti-establishment mantra.

This, at least, is how *The Craftsman* portrayed the event:

³³ Thomas Sheridan, *A Letter of Advice to the Reverend Mr. Scurlock: occasioned by his extraordinary sermon, preach'd at St. Paul's Cathedral, ... In Vindication of the Excise Scheme. By a Sturdy Beggar* (London: J. Wilford, 1733), 22

³⁴ Jacob Price, “The Excise Affair Revisited: The Administrative and Colonial Dimensions of a Parliamentary Crisis” in Stephen B. Baxter (ed.), *England's Rise to Greatness, 1660-1773* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983)

³⁵ Lord John Hervey, *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second: From His Accession to the Death of Queen Caroline*, Vol. III, ed. John Wilson Croker (London: Bickers & Son, 1884), 266

They came down to *Westminster*, in a legal Manner, to represent their Case, and supplicate the Parliament against so cruel an Expedient, They were scouted by the *Projector*, and branded with the infamous Name of STURDY BEGGARS.

This Appellation hath however had one good Effect. It hath discover'd the Spirit of the *Man*, who had the Insolence to fix it upon so valuable a Body of *Englishmen*, And united Them all against Him, for their common Security.³⁶

Opposition periodicals like *The Craftsman*, as this shows, were quick to seize upon this episode for their own aims, foiling the image of a corrupt and cruel Walpole with valiant and independent merchants, the shining vanguard of a proud new age. Because of their efforts, the “sturdy beggars” affair rapidly acquired mythic status.

At the center of the sensation, and anchoring my own analysis of the affair, was a massively influential ballad: *The London Merchants Triumphant: Or Sturdy Beggars are Brave Fellows. A New Ballad Proper to be Sung on the 12th of June* (London: T. Reinshaw, 1733), in which “The Jovial Beggar” was set to the tune of Walpole’s insult. The influence of this ballad was recorded in its own time. A “good old Tune,” had become “the favourite Entertainment in all publick Assemblies, without the Verge of the Court,” *The Craftsman* of the ballad, suggesting how the Opposition manufactured and multiplied a sense of its own power. Indeed, the journal alleged, one could not “walk the Streets without hearing it chanted forth to vast Crouds of our honest Countrymen, with visible Marks of Triumph and Exultation.”³⁷ The political life of the city was thus converted into further fuel for triumphalist exaltation. The heroism of the merchants helped glorify the city at large. The ballad was a component of a multimedia rhetorical campaign, which further led to the city’s self-glorification. A print of the same

³⁶ *The Craftsman*, No. 372, (18 August 1733), 128-9

³⁷ *ibid*

name appeared at the same time. The merchants were portrayed as burning an effigy of Walpole: “a Curse on the Slaves, who Excises insist on/,” went the last line of the text below the print, “May they daily be horse-pounded pelted and pist on.”³⁸ The song was also the centerpiece of a 1733 ballad opera called *The Sturdy Beggars... Humbly dedicated to ... the Lord-Mayor; ... and the worthy merchants and citizens of London* (London : printed by and for J. Dormer, 1733). Together, these different media tightened already extant connections between strength, populism, and commercialism, but they also, in their different ways, popularized the image of the glorious and regenerative city.

To insult the merchants by calling them “sturdy beggars” was to deny them their honor and grant them their strength; this allowed them then to respond to the denial with indignation, and bolster that indignation with aggressive posturing. As self-proclaimed sturdy beggars, they reclaimed the dignity that had been denied to them while retaining the strength. The merchants, as sturdy beggars, portrayed themselves as the industrious, active, powerful, and virtuous victims of an oppressive yet decidedly ill-fated tyranny:

Industrious as the *Bee*,
Around the World we roam;
The Courtiers are the *Drones* that suck
The Honey we bring Home
*When a-beggin we do go, & c.*³⁹

The layers of meaning within the word “sturdy” allowed this loose coalition of merchants and opposition writers to convert a term of opprobrium into one of pride. The merchants came through as strong enough to save the nation, yet also suffering: not just for the excise, but also for being *insulted*. Thus it was that one

³⁸ BMC 1927 (June 1733), reprinted in Langford, 95

³⁹ [Anon] *The London Merchants Triumphant: Or Sturdy Beggars are Brave Fellows. A New Ballad Proper to be Sung on the 12th of June* (London: T. Reinshaw, 1733), 4

polemicist's list of "the Terms by which of late our greatest Traders and most wealthy Merchants have been distinguished" culminated pointedly with "STURDY BEGGARS."⁴⁰

A history of suffering had long been evoked to re-describe the merchant as brave rather than iniquitous – defined by the hardships he had endured for the benefit of the nation. In a 1721 treatise on mining prospects, Edward Heton praised the venturesome merchants who exposed themselves to "the greatest hazards of Pirates, Tempests, Storms" believing as he suggested that "nothing ventured, nothing gained."⁴¹ Daniel Defoe's "complete English tradesman" was described as undefeatable: "strip them naked from the waist upwards, and give them no weapons at all but their Hands and Heels, and turn them into a room or stage, and lock them in with the like number of other men of any nation, man for man, and they shall beat the best men you shall find in the world."⁴² The merchant, in the course of this process, began to acquire the characteristics of the "stout yeoman" that was the centerpiece of Tory history: "an uniquely England class...distinctive in that it combined the hardiness of the Nordic peasantry with the authority of the Continental aristocracy, while dodging the barnyard oafishness of the former and the lazy effeminacy of the latter."⁴³

Merchants were also *morally* reconstructed in the early eighteenth-century – this helps explain why they would have been particularly sensitive to the insult

⁴⁰ [Anon] *Seasonable Remarks on Some Proceedings of the Late Parliament*. Second Edition. (London: T. Boreman, 1733), 27

⁴¹ Edward Heton, *Some Account of Mines, and the Advantages of Them to this Kingdom* (London: J. Wyat, 1721)

⁴² Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman, in Familiar Letters; Directing Him in All the Several Parts and Progressions of Trade* (London: Charles Rivington, 1725/1726), 370

⁴³ Christian Thorne, "Thumbing Our Nose at the Public Sphere: Satire, the Market, and the Invention of Literature," *PMLA* 116:3 (May 2001), 533-44, 535

“sturdy beggars.” “Trading formerly rendered a Gentlemen ignoble,” Guy Miede would state in 1693, “now an ignoble person makes himself by merchandizing as good as a gentleman.”⁴⁴ Natasha Glaisyer has written of the “mutability of the merchant” in the early eighteenth-century – at the Royal Exchange, for instance, they were “praised for their national endeavours but criticized for deceitfulness.”⁴⁵ The collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720 further centralized the question of the merchant’s reputation. A concerted effort to sanctify the image of the merchant followed the event, the traumatic aftereffects of which made it necessary to constantly dissociate commerce from dishonesty. More than once, this involved a contrast between the virtuous merchant and the contemptible “stock-jobber.” Thus *The Craftsman* responded to Walpole’s 1725 City Elections Act by asking its readers to distinguish between “fair Merchants and notorious Stock-jobbers, between the true promoters of our Manufacturers and most beneficial Commerce, and overgrown Monopolies which are the destruction of both.”⁴⁶ George Lillo dramatized the question of the merchant’s reputation in the enormously successful *London Merchant*. “Honest Merchants,” the character of Thorowgood insisted in the play’s very first scene, and against the extended resistance of his interlocutor Trueman, “may sometimes contribute to the Safety of their Country, as they do all Times to its Happiness.” The play was a tragedy, its plot summed up in the line “few Men recover Reputation lost, a Merchant never,” but it also did much to rehabilitate the image of the

⁴⁴ Guy Miede, *The New State of England Under their Majesties K. William and Q. Mary* (London: R. Clavell, 1693), 205

⁴⁵ Glaisyer, 18, citing Lisa Harteker, “Steward of the kingdom’s stock: merchants, trade, and discourse in eighteenth-century England”, unpub. PhD thesis, Chicago 1996, i, ch. i

⁴⁶ *The Craftsman*, 9 October 1727

merchant: mid-way through the play, the character once skeptical of the idea of a virtuous merchant described Barnwell as possessing “an Understanding uncommon at his Years; an open, generous Manliness of Temper.”⁴⁷ The Bubble thus both worsened the merchants’ reputation and reinvigorated the reputation-saving effort.

The merchant was thus an ambiguous figure: brave and valiant yet also shrouded with a vague aura of ignobility. To insult the merchants’ dignity was, in this context, to touch the sorest of all spots; to insults them as “sturdy beggars” was to drill it in. The merchants, as we have seen, converted the offensiveness of the insult into moral authority – the extent of that authority became a function of the severity of the insult. It is only because “sturdy beggar” was, in one sense, a terrible thing to call a group of people that the merchants could *legitimately* convert the insult into moral authority for the suffering it supposedly caused them. “Sturdy beggar”, we must thus remember, had long been shorthand for the undeserving poor, or the hordes of able-bodied yet miscreant poor that were thought to live parasitically off the parishes, exploiting the munificence of the state. But by the 1720s, beggary was a problem on an altogether different scale than before. There was, according to a *New Canting Dictionary* “no Country in the World” which abounded so much with vagrants and beggars: “it is impossible to stir abroad in the Streets,” wrote its author, “to step into any of the Shops in *London*, or to take the Air within two or three Miles of this great Metropolis, but one must be attack’d with the clamorous, and often insolent, Petitions of sturdy

⁴⁷ George Lillo, *The London Merchant: Or, the History of Geoge Barnwell* (London: John Gray, 1740), 6, 38

Beggars and Vagabonds.”⁴⁸ The beggar’s menacing body came to the fore on many occasions: “He makes Love,” noted a character from a 1736 comedy, “as a sturdy Beggar asks Alms; that is, he looks as if he wou’d knock one down if one did not consent.”⁴⁹ Statements such as these were ubiquitous, and collectively suggestive of the intensity of the contempt faced by supposedly sturdy beggars.

But “sturdy beggars” would not have been so badly chosen an insult if beggary was not *also* associated with a form of urban defiance that was not just feared, but also *admired*, if not *celebrated*. By appropriating the image of the sturdy beggar, the merchants in the 1730s also managed to absorb what Tim Hitchcock has described as the “powerfully attractive freedom and romance” with which beggars were associated.⁵⁰ There was, as Hitchcock has written, a great disjuncture between the reality of London’s beggars – most of them unhealthy women – and literary perceptions of the beggar: “He is healthy, he is organized, he is entrepreneurial, he is literate and smart, and he is a charlatan free from the constraints of civil society. But, perhaps most obvious of all, he is a he.”⁵¹ Urban spectators reached into their own very real fears of beggars when confronted with literary or other imaginative depictions of menacing beggars tricking their citizens out of a livelihood. Therein ensued a kind of “pornography of pain”: the fear of the beggar transmogrified into a panicked delight at the beggar’s tormenting of other bourgeois fops, especially as the torment brought

⁴⁸ [Anon] *A New Canting Dictionary: Comprehending All the Terms, Antient and Modern, Used in Several Tribes of Gypsies, Beggars* (London, 1725), preface

⁴⁹ [Anon] *The Wife’s Relief: Or, the Husband’s Cure* (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1736), 29

⁵⁰ Tim Hitchcock, “The Streets: Literary Beggars and the Realities of Eighteenth-Century London,” in Cynthia Wall, ed., *A Concise Companion to the Restoration and Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 86

⁵¹ 84

out what was ridiculous about middling or aristocratic affectations.⁵² *The Beggar's Opera* was thus lovingly described in a letter to *The Craftsman* as "the most venomous *allegorical Libel* against the G____t that had appeared for many Years past." The author of this "letter" then went onto bemoan "the coarse Ribaldry and vulgar Catches of a *Newgate Hero* shou'd prevail over the melodious Enchantments of *Senesino!*"⁵³ The point was to ridicule the supposed letter-writer's apparently pathetic reaction to the play. All this was reinforced by the author's admission to being a "*constant Spectator of the Beggar's Opera.*"⁵⁴ By converting "the sturdy beggar" into an icon of heroic bravery, the merchants were capitalizing upon the deep-set fears of enervation that had long been heightened by commerce and luxury – as suggested, for instance, by John Dennis' attacks against Italian opera.⁵⁵

The image of the 1730s merchant as defiant and sacrificially venturesome also contained traces of last dying speeches and depictions of criminals at scaffolds. "The aura of spiritual power and personal charisma that attended the last dying speech and the gallows conversion," Peter Lake and Michael Questier have written of the Catholic victims of the later Tudor regime, "together with the complexities and contradictions inherent in the ascribed identity of the Catholic 'traitor', opened spaces for Catholic agency and speech at the very centre of the persecutory state which was supposedly crushing Catholic treachery into silence

⁵² Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *The American Historical Review* 100:2 (Apr 1995), 303-334

⁵³ Reprinted in "A Key to the Beggar's Opera", which appeared in the second edition of Christopher Bullock's *Woman's Revenge: Or, a Match in Newgate* (London: J. Roberts, 1728), 70

⁵⁴ *ibid*, 71

⁵⁵ John Dennis, *An Essay Upon the Publick Spirit*

and oblivion.”⁵⁶ The last dying speeches were frequently republished in the eighteenth century. Andrea McKenzie has written of the “pretensions to cheerful courage and a professed eagerness to die” that coursed through the early eighteenth-century variations of these speeches: “suffering was both providential and purgative.”⁵⁷ Elsewhere, she has identified the ideologically charged glorification of men who refused to confess while being pressed to death:

This was an age in which courage, resolution, and the appearance, at least, of a cheerful willingness to embrace suffering communicated not merely strength of character but righteousness.⁵⁸

The fact that this was an age of such apparent material excess threw into sharp relief the sublime moral purity of this act. The appeal of the strong and suffering type might also be attributed to another deeply entrenched trope: what Eric Hobsbawm has described as the “social bandit.” Across cultures, and especially in societies that were either poverty-stricken or rapidly industrializing, social bandits were celebrated as “heroes, as champions, as avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even liberation leaders.”⁵⁹

The merchant’s courage became a form of social critique in much the same way as that of the criminal enduring *peine forte et dure* and the social bandit. The “sturdy beggars”, as the title unambiguously stated, were “brave fellows.” The merchant, like the social bandit as avenger, was venturesome, sacrificial, and defiantly willing to break the law.

⁵⁶ Peter Lake and Michael Questier, “Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric Under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England,” *Past and Present* (November, 1996), 75-6

⁵⁷ Andrea McKenzie, “God’s Tribunal: Guilt, Innocence, and Execution in England, 1675-1775,” *Cultural and Social History* 3 (2006), 141, 143

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 13, 17; cited in Tomas Balkelis, “Social Banditry and Nation-Making: the Myth of a Lithuanian Robber,” *Past and Present* 198:1 (2008)

Against the *Sturdy Beggars*,
 The grand *Projector* raves,
 For had they not opposed his Scheme,
 You'd all be *sneaking* Slaves.⁶⁰

The “You’d” is key here, as it establishes a savior to saved relationship between the merchant and the presumed reader or listener of this enormously successful ballad. The ballad thus exploited its urban middling audience’s sense of its own relative weakness. It is the story of Robin Hood, perhaps, that is the most famous of all English legends within the “social bandit” archetype. “*The Story of this famous Robber,*” one early eighteenth-century author hypothesized, “is as well known amongst Men, Women, and Children, throughout the whole Kingdom, as the *Church-Catechism*, or the *Practice of Piety*.”⁶¹ The case could be made that the merchant of 1733 was Robin Hood redux for the Commercial Revolution – Robin Hood’s imaginative hold, in other words, helps account for the appeal of the image of merchant-as-saviour. Robin Hood and his men were described, for instance, as being “valiant, bold, and free” – that is, *exactly* how the merchants were portrayed in 1733.⁶² Like Robin Hood and his men, the merchants were self-driven independent men. While the former stole from the rich to feed the poor, the latter brought the wealth of the world home to distribute across England: “The Wealth of both the *Indies*, / We through our Country spread;” went one of the lines of *London Merchants Triumphant: Or Sturdy Beggars are Brave*. The essence of Robin Hood the rebel was recreated around the merchant. The ballad also used the image of “sturdy beggars” to connect the merchants to a myriad of

⁶⁰ [Anon] *The London Merchants Triumphant: Or Sturdy Beggars are Brave Fellows*, 7

⁶¹ Oswald Dykes, *Moral Reflexions Upon Select British Proverbs: Familiarly Accommodated to the Humour and Manners of the Present Age* (London: George Sawbridge, 1708), 67.

⁶² [Anon] *The English Archer: Or, Robert, Earl of Huntingdon, Vulgarly Call'd, Robin Hood* (London: 1720?), Dedication, 71

other political heroes who shared some of the key characteristics of both the social bandits *and* the sacrificial criminals, both of whose bravery was exemplified by a spectacular willingness to sacrifice their bodies. At the very outset, the ballad referred to William of Orange (“The Prince of sturdy Beggars/ Immortal *Nassau*/ To save his People’s *Rights* and *Lives*/ He freely gave his Own”), and the martyred Dutch opponents of the inquisition (“Firm to our *Name* and *Cause*/ Brave *Horn* and *Egmont* stood;/ Who thought their Country’s Freedom/ Tho’ purchased with their Blood”).⁶³ Throughout, the merchants’ bravery was contrasted to the weakness and effeminacy of those who opposed them: “Vermin that abuse us most,/ Are by our *Labour* fed.”⁶⁴

As the merchant in 1733 became the redemptive savior of a nation enfeebled by excise, his strength and his suffering were both perceived as proportional to the powers of the entity he defeated. The merchant’s valor was measured against the tyranny of excise. Excise had its own iconography, based upon images of hunger, oppression, and the victimization of the strong by the tyrannical. Eighty years earlier, *The Vindication of Christmas* (London: G. Horton, 1652) had distressed over “that oppressing Ringworm called *Excize*” – how the “high and mighty Christmas-Ale that formerly would knock down *Hercules*” and “trip up the heels of a Giant” was “strook into a deep Consumption with a blow from *Westminster*.”⁶⁵ The Patriots and merchants benefited enormously from the essence of the sentiment contained within this image, and the fact that this image was so deeply entrenched. The pamphlets and the ballads, according to William

⁶³ [Anon] *The London Merchants Triumphant: Or Sturdy Beggars are Brave Fellows*, 7 1-2

⁶⁴ *ibid*, 5

⁶⁵ I am grateful to Caroline Boswell for introducing me to this text.

Coxe, “delineated such a hideous picture of the EXCISE, as raised among the people the most terrible apprehensions.”⁶⁶ A print described excise as a “Glutton” that would “roar out for Mutton,/ Your Beef, Bread and Bacon to boot.” “He’ll thrust down his Gullet,” it continued, “Whilst the Labourer munches a Root.” It was a dragon with an insatiable hunger and consumptive capacity: “Five Thousand Mouths to devour us...And a Belly as big as a Store-house.”⁶⁷ Hawkers selling this print were arrested, but a sequel was published a month later, depicting the merchants’ defeat of the excise-dragon.⁶⁸ Another triumphant print – *The Lord Mayor’s Speech and the City Petition Against the EXCISE* (London, 1733) – depicted excise as a monster slain by a circle of merchants – lying within the monster’s belly were a plethora of excised goods, from chocolate to calicoes to parchment. Wine and tobacco, the viewers of this image were reminded, were simply the last of the many things that excise had stolen from Britain.

The strong and suffering type was constantly juxtaposed to an equally powerful contra-type: the powerful and oppressive yet physically weak tyrant – a recurrent figure of seventeenth-century drama, as Robert Zaller has argued.⁶⁹ Charles I did much to reinvigorate the dramatic potential of what Zaller calls the “strong-weak tyrant”, and the enduring potency of the image, as well as the depth of its connection to the strong and suffering type is suggested by *London*

⁶⁶ William Coxe, *Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole*. Vol I. (London: James Easton, 1798), 378

⁶⁷ *Britannia Excisa. Britain Excis’d. A New Ballad to be Sung in Time, and To Some Tune* (London: T. Reynolds, 1733), 5. BMC 1937, April 1733, in Langford, 90-1

⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁹ Robert Zaller, “The Figure of the Tyrant in English Revolutionary Thought,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54:4 (Oct, 1993), 585-610

Merchants Triumphant. Walpole's alignment with the prototype of the weak tyrant correspondingly amplifies the bravery of the merchant:

'Tis Wine, he cries, that makes 'em prate,
Excise just suits my Wish;
If Water I can make them drink
They'd be as mute as Fish.⁷⁰

In another print, the noble lion who stands for "dejected trade" exemplifies the strong and suffering type; excise, triumphantly striding upon the barrel carried by the lion, occupies the role of the weak tyrant.⁷¹ A key subtext to both images is the inherent impermanence of the tyrant's hold over power. The tyrant's tyranny was, ultimately, no match for the collective strength of its victims – before the tyrant was overcome, however, the mismatch between his weakness and their strength was a defining *aspect* of the tyranny.



Figure 2: *Excise in Triumph* (1733)

⁷⁰ [Anon] *The London Merchants Triumphant: Or Sturdy Beggars are Brave Fellows*, 7

⁷¹ BMC 1918, reprinted in Paul Langford, ed, *Walpole and the Robinocracy. English Satirical Print, 1600-1832* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1988), 78-9

The power of the strong and suffering type is a product, in part, of the semiotics of food and hunger. This is suggested, for instance, by descriptions of excise as a ringworm, and also by the fact that the lion in this print is so conspicuously starving (his ribs, after all, are sticking out). Beyond the excise crisis, the image of the starving tradesman had become a conduit for a neurotic breed of commercialism, obsessed with the prospect of starvation and penury. Would it not be in the nation's interest, George Berkeley would wonder in 1737, "if there was a little more Life in our Markets, a little more Buying and Selling in our Shops, a little better Provision for the Backs and Bellies of so may forlorn Wretches throughout the Towns and Villages of this Island?"⁷² One Irish writer, worrying about how his compatriots were squandering the nation's fortunes in London, Paris, and Rome, rallied them to consume only Irish products – that is, "if they mean to preserve the Husbandman from breaking, the Manufacturer from starving, and the *Kingdom from being depopulated*."⁷³ A man calling himself Alexander, Copper-Smith wistfully envisioned a future Britain with no "Tradesmen's Families starving at home, that a merciless Clerk of a Crown may Riot in Luxury abroad."⁷⁴ Because England was a commercial society, in which prosperity was deeply valued, the starving or well-fed body became a potent vehicle of ideological warfare.

Images of beggary and starvation were critical as well to the formation of the *militaristic* commercialism of the early- to mid- eighteenth century. "The

⁷² George Berkeley, *The Querist, Containing Several Queries, Proposed to the Consideration of the Public* (London: J. Roberts, 1737), 37-38

⁷³ [Anon] *A View of the Present State of Affairs in the Kingdom of Ireland* (Dublin and London: Weaver Bickerton, 1730), 2

⁷⁴ [Anon] *Remarks Upon the Religion, Trade, Government, Police, Customs, Manners, and Maladys, of the City of Corke. ... By ... Alexander the Coppersmith* (Cork: George Harrison, 1737), 38

Questions upon this Bill,” Charles King asked in the 1721 *British Merchant; Or, Commerce Preserved*, “are, Whether French, after all her ill Successes in the late War, shall be suffer’d, during the present Peace, under the colour of a Commerce, to exhaust our Treasure, beggar our Gentleman, and starve our Common People?”⁷⁵ The Spanish, according to a 1729 writer, did not pose much of a threat, being as it was “very well known, that empty *Purses* make empty *Bellies*, and empty *Bellies* empty *Heads*; none of which can be reckoned fit *Instruments* for War.”⁷⁶ While this author was confident about British (rather than Spanish) bodies, his confidence was not necessarily confidence-inducing, as British bellies could just as easily be empty, and *were* often described as such. It was never entirely clear where confidence ended and insecurity began.

However extemporaneous, these dystopian visions were always loaded; as they proliferated they became even more loaded. Ennobled by its suffering, the working yet starving body – like the criminal enduring *peine forte et dure*, the merchant enduring insults after ranging the world to supply the weak and corrupt – continually increased in power as a charged indictment of the ruling classes. Thus it was that a thriving public sphere perpetually fueled the proliferation of these images and correspondingly intensified the fear of scarcity and desire for prosperity.

War with Spain, 1738-40

⁷⁵ Charles King, *The British Merchant; Or, Commerce Preserv’d* (London: John Darby, 1721), 202

⁷⁶ [Anon] *The Thoughts of a True Briton Concerning Gibraltar* (London: A. More, 1729), 30

The sturdy beggars controversy had allowed the merchants to revive a defiant and violent anti-hierarchy associated with the gin craze, criminals under *peine forte et dure*, and Robin Hood. The controversy enabled the merchants to combine this defiant stance with the more honorific and sacrificial posture increasingly adopted by merchants in the 1720s. Walpole's *faux pas*, for all these reasons, was not to be soon forgotten. There was an insult at the heart of the accusation, and the feelings of indignation incited by the insult were not to dissipate quickly. A troop of petitioning merchants labeled as "sturdy beggars" were one of the many visual allusions to the litany of Walpolean injustices in one 1739 print, *The European Race*, the focus of which was Britain's place in the world.⁷⁷ Also in the later 1730s, George II's estranged son Frederick II exploited the "sturdy beggars" affair to further his own political aims. He delivered to the Mayor and Alderman of London what contemporary (albeit biased) observer Lord Hervey called "a long speech in great form...in which he made many professions of his regard to the trade and prosperity of the City of London; telling them he knew their importance in this kingdom...and should never look upon them as *beggars* – alluding in this expression to a report which had been industriously spread of Sir Robert Walpole's having called the citizens the Excise year a parcel of *sturdy beggars*."⁷⁸ Frederick's success might also be attributed to the skillfulness with which he inhabited the role of the hero – how he fashioned himself as the strong and suffering type. When a fire threatened to destroy the Temple in January of 1737, he stayed on the scene throughout the night, directing

⁷⁷ BMC 2431 9 April 1739, reprinted in Langford, 156

⁷⁸ John, Lord Hervey, *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second: From His Accession to the Death of Queen Caroline*, Vol. III, ed. John Wilson Croker (London: Bickers & Son, 1884), 266

the rescue effort, and with this gesture enhanced the respect he had already earned for famously standing up to his bitterly estranged father, King George.⁷⁹

The strong and suffering type was a critical ingredient of Opposition polemic in the late 1730s in the build-up to the war with Spain, known to posterity as the War of Jenkins' Ear. "Between 1737 and 1742," writes Woodfine, "the hopes and the prospects of the opposition were sharply revived by developments overseas."⁸⁰ The late 1730s, like 1733-4, were years leading up to an election, and defined by distortions, misrepresentation, and skullduggery. The war was described as a response to Spanish depredations against British sailors, although its main imperative was commercial dominion. This newfound commercial aggressiveness fed upon culturally constructed fallacies. For a propaganda campaign to work, it really had to work well at creating an illusion, and the Patriots accomplished this again through the aggressive dissemination of false information and profusion of provocative, loaded images of tyrannical and brutalized bodies.

That war with Spain was both unjust and imprudent is amply testified by the secondary literature. The Opposition, as Jeremy Black has written, were "vicious and inaccurate" in their pro-war agitation.⁸¹ "If England had shown the same zeal in suppressing her illicit trade as France, Jenkins would probably not have lost his ear, the British public their temper, and Newcastle his head," Harold Temperley has written.⁸² Public opinion was less than rational, as Kathleen Wilson concedes in an article actually designed to overturn the

⁷⁹ Hervey, *Memoirs*, 643-4; Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories*, 121

⁸⁰ Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories*, 74

⁸¹ Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century*, 167

⁸² Harold W.V. Temperley, "The Causes of the War of Jenkins' Ear, 1739" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1909), 205-6

presumption that the demotic sensibilities of 1739 were merely xenophobic: “the government...anxious not to upset diplomatic alliances on the Continent, insisted, and quite rationally, that peace, and especially a policy of accommodation, ultimately would be more rewarding for British commerce.” But the announcement of the Convention of El Pardo “only inflamed public opinion further.”⁸³ The most damning historical indictment came, perhaps, from Edmund Burke, who found the architects of the war to be entirely unwilling to defend it, only a few years later: “They perfectly satisfied me of the extreme injustice of that war...None of them, no not one, did in the least defend the measure.”⁸⁴

The strong and suffering type reemerged with spectacular force: the dragons and dragoons of excise were replaced, in this case, by Jenkins’ severed ear, and the supposed brutalization of English merchants and sailors. There was, Woodfine suggests, something appealing about the image of Jenkins’ ear: “Worse atrocities were committed in those seas, and not only by the Spaniards, but the case of Jenkins’ ear had a catchy and easily remembered quality.”⁸⁵ But it was not Jenkins’ ear so much as the suffering of strong men that ultimately rallied the nation to war.

The commercialist sentiment of the late 1730s was fueled, in part, by jingoism, which, in turn, was perpetually sanctified by humanitarianism. The strong and suffering type helped the Opposition in constructing a discourse that was simultaneously jingoistic and humanitarian. “The intellectual origins of the

⁸³ Kathleen Wilson, “Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon,” *Past and Present*, cxxi (1988), 79

⁸⁴ Edmund Burke, *Thoughts On the Prospect of a Regicide Peace* (London: J. Owen, 1796), 14; cited in Woodfine, 241

⁸⁵ Woodfine, *Britannia’s Glories*, 1-2

humanitarian sensibility,” as Karen Halttunen has written, “lay with the Latitudinarian divines of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries,” who “argued that human nature is instinctively sympathetic.”⁸⁶ An awareness of suffering was critical: as Halttunen writes, “a sympathetic concern for the pain and suffering of other sentient beings” was at the “heart” of this humanitarianism.⁸⁷ The pro-war writers were channeling a discourse of humanitarianism in their constant focus upon the barbarity and cruelty of the Spaniards. War was necessary because able sailors and merchants had been brutalized by the Spanish Guarda Costas. The merchants succeeded in inciting pro-war sentiment by filling their petition with allegations of the cruelty and barbarity. The crew commanders had been so “inhumanly treated.”⁸⁸ The Opposition press gleefully brandished the idea of a resurgent slavery. *London Evening Post* described English sailors as “chain’d down as slaves in the Dungeons of Spain.”⁸⁹ Contemporaries took note of the frequency with which the war was described as a humanitarian response to excessive cruelty. The citizen in a fictive dialogue between citizen and courtier began the conversation on the following note: “I am glad to see this Day, and that we shall now have an Opportunity of chastising the *Spaniards* for the many Barbarities, Cruelties and Depredations they have committed upon our Countrymen.”⁹⁰

The commercialism of the late 1730s thrived upon the confidence afforded by belligerence, which, in turn, was softened through an explicit association with

⁸⁶ Karen Halttunen, “Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain,” 303-334

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 303

⁸⁸ “The merchants’ petition of 11 October 1737,” reprinted in Woodfine, 245

⁸⁹ *London Evening Post* (1 April, 1738), cited in Woodfine, 40

⁹⁰ [Anon] *War Against Spain Declared: A Dialogue between a Citizen and a Courtier* (London: C. Corbet, 1739), 6

the cult of sensibility. The humanitarian discourse of suffering had several variants, many of which were exploited by these writers. Not only were these men suffering for being brutalized by the Guarda Costas, others like them were suffering for not being sent out to sea. Currents of indignation, sympathy, and braggadocio converged around the myth of the stout and hearty seaman who would cheerfully have fought against Spain had he been given the opportunity to do so. A print entitled “British Hercules” depicted a sailor standing against a backdrop of fleets stationed at Spithead.⁹¹



⁹¹ BMC 2332, reprinted in Paul Langford, p 160

Figure 3: *The British Hercules* (London, 1739)

An image such as this one, which tantalized its audience with the idea of untapped strength, would have resonated with particular force in a society engulfed with fears of weakness and emasculation. Sailors who were kept stationary but were bursting with the desire to go out and fight were also a component of an elaborate discourse of suffering constructed in 1738 by the *London Evening Post*:

The *Merchant*, who is always the greatest Sufferer upon such Occasions, is in the same Disposition, and ready to sacrifice his present Profit to the future Interest of his Country. The poor *Tradesman*, *Mechanick*, and *Husbandmen*, who can hardly supply their Families with the Necessaries of Life, seem willing to part with their last Mite in this glorious Cause. Our *Sailors*, both *Officers* and *private Men*, are alert, and want nothing so much as an Opportunity of revenging themselves on their *cruel Enemies* – What can an *Minister* desire more in his Favour?⁹²

The merchants were described as courageous for their globe-trotting adventurism, resolute in their opposition to the government, and suffering for being deprived of the commerce that could so easily be reinvigorated if the government would just launch a war against Spain. The discourse of suffering – the tradesmen, after all were “poor” – was used to *perpetually* replenish a commercialism that was overtly jingoist and anti-pacifist: defined in opposition to taxes that were peaceable. To describe them as praying for an “honorable and vigorous war” was also to forge a deeper association between honor and vigor. They were as sacrificial as they were militaristic – indeed, sacrifice and militarism were both actively turned into aspects of each other. A figurative public was created in this passage out of the myriad types – gentlemen, farmers,

⁹² *London Evening Post* (17/18 August, 1738), cited in G.A. Cranfield, “The ‘London Evening Post’, 1727-1744: A Study in the Development of the Political Press” *The Historical Journal* VI, I (1963), 20-37

merchants, tradesmen, and husbandmen – defined by this virtuous stolidity, but also united by their suffering. Excluded from this public were fops, Walpoleans, women, fiddlers, and pacifists – indeed, such a utopian public was defined by the exclusion of these degenerates. It is instructive, again, to remind ourselves of McKenzie’s argument about *peine forte et dure*:

the "strong and stout hearted man" was not merely admirable in that he was willing to suffer dreadfully in order to save his estate for his heirs; rather, the courage that could endure such a stern test could itself be read as a species of social critique.⁹³

In recent years, the discourse of humanitarianism had experienced somewhat of an efflorescence – by channeling it, these Opposition writers were widening the ideological reach of their own polemics to include all “gentlemen” (not just those with Tory predilections). The pervasiveness of this discourse is partly suggested by the literature on the debtors prisons, which was pitched to a similar body of literate, middling urban readers. This body of literature provides a useful counterpoint to the anti-Spanish writings of the late 1730s, as it illustrates the characteristic *solubility* of humanitarianism – the ability, that is, of words like *cruelty* and *barbarity* to mix with a discourse that was more fundamentally pragmatic. “Goals pay no Debts,” declared the author of *A Letter to a Member of Parliament*, “they may indeed be proved, to satisfy the Rage and Cruelty of a Creditor.”⁹⁴ Barbarity and cruelty – problems of the passions – were repeatedly described as pointless as well as wasteful, as the prisons offended

⁹³ Andrea McKenzie, “‘This Death Some Strong and Stout Hearted Man Doth Choose’: The Practice of Peine Forte et Dure in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England,” *Law and History Review* (2005), 5

⁹⁴ [Anon], *A Letter to a Member of Parliament, Relating to the Relief of Poor Insolvent Prisoners for Debt, Occasioned by the Several Petitions to the House of Commons. And a Proposal for Strengthening the British Plantations in America* (London: J. Peele, 1724), 3

deep-set convictions about productivity. The strong and suffering type was the emotive center of the anti-prison diatribes: the suffering was rendered worse for the fact that the sufferer was so strong and hence also potentially industrious. A 1727 writer argued that “*The Body of every Subject belongeth to the King, and every Subject is a Member or single part of the Body of the Commonwealth; so that to take this Body and cast the same into Prison for Debt, where he must lye rotting idly and unprofitably all the Days of his Life; and dye miserably; is no other than to Robb the King and Common Wealth of their Limbs and Members.*”⁹⁵ It is far from clear if the primary motivations of anti-prison writers were humanitarian rather than expedient, as the discourse of anti-cruelty afforded them with *moral capital*.⁹⁶ These writings provide an instructive backdrop to descriptions of sailors, as they suggest that the intended audience of the pro-war polemics had been conditioned to rise to indignation at the very thought of the suffering worker. They furthermore help explain why the same humanitarian discourse of anti-cruelty would have combined so easily with the belligerent militarism of the late 1730s.

As the prisons were centripetal to the convergence of the fear of cruelty with that of unproductivity, the Spanish depredations facilitated another convergence: between fears of cruelty and those of insecurity. Again and again, British commerce was described as imperiled by the tyrannical titans of the Bourbon Monarchy: “These towering Projects of the House of Bourbon will

⁹⁵ [Anon] *The Case of Prisoners for Debt Consider'd* (Dublin: George Faulkner and James Hoey, 1727), 16

⁹⁶ Just like the humanitarian rejection of slavery provided Thomas Clarkson and others with moral capital in the wake of American independence. See Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006)

speedily lay our Turkey Trade in the Grave,” one man wrote in a rhetorically typical letter to the *Daily Post* (a major vehicle of Opposition polemic), “and prove the total Destruction of every other Branch of our Commerce in a very few Years, if we don’t immediately rouse up all that is British in us, and exert ourselves like Men who fight for nothing less than all that is valuable and dear to them; for the Loss of our Liberties, *no matter where or by whom our Chains are forged.*”⁹⁷ This belligerence and militarism was continually softened and sanctified with the pretence to humanitarianism. The previously-cited author then recycled a myth which had been awarded the status of historical fact: that “the numberless Depredations of the Spaniards, the unparallel’d Barbarity of their Guarda Costas to such British Seamen as fell into their Hands, and their atrocious Insults upon our Sovereign himself, together with the ill Conduct of those who might have nipt the Insolence of Spain in the Bud, have been the Causes of the present War.”⁹⁸ The idea of English restraint also functioned to *propel* a discourse of militaristic aggression. “The *Spaniards* seem to have cunningly found our Blind-Side,” exclaimed the author of *The Merchant’s Complaint Against Spain*, “and judging of the Nation’s *peaceable Disposition* and great *good Nature* in suffering themselves to be thus treated.”⁹⁹ In this manner, this text persistently sanctified its own belligerence. The English peoples’ suffering was continually converted into evidence of their restraint but also, at the same time, into a form of indignation that could easily transmute into a justification of aggression – which, after all, was a primary purpose of the text.

⁹⁷ *Daily Post*, Issue 6534 (August 16, 1740)

⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁹ *The Merchant’s Complaint Against Spain* (London: W. Lloyd, 1738), 22

The text also professed an enlightened solicitude for human betterment when it channeled the discourse of *doux commerce* in its description of commerce as

bringing together, in a friendly and mutual Intercourse, People of the most different Complexions, Habits and Customs, and...rendering them beneficial to each other."¹⁰⁰

Jingoism, this suggests, was fuel for the propagation of the humanitarianism and commercialism increasingly defined the eighteenth century. Jingoism, in a way, *required* the support of enlightened sentiment and thus paradoxically participated in its diffusion.

The jingoistic fervor of the 1730s was also perpetually emboldened by a consciousness of its own populist appeal. This is suggested by a passage (previously quoted) from a 1738 issue of *London Evening Post*:

The general Cry is War, Revenge on the Spaniards, Restitution for past Losses, Satisfaction to our National Honour, and above all, ample Security to our future Trade and Navigation --- The Country Gentlemen and Farmers who are distress'd with *peacable* Taxes, pray for an *honourable* and *vigorous* War.¹⁰¹

The war was sanctified by the very fact that it was prayed for by country gentlemen and farmers. These figures, in turn, were glorified by the honorable and vigorous war for which they prayed. Commerce emerged as glorious, honorable, and profoundly regenerative.

The political rhetoric of the 1730s was riddled with conceptual obfuscations that helped perpetuate the commercial ideology. The depredations crisis caused the stout and virile seamans' maritime glamour to rub off on the figure of the merchant – this was one more catalyst for the glorification of the figure of the merchant, and, by extension, the English embrace of commercialism. The happiness of the seaman and that of the nation had long been described as

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, 17

¹⁰¹ *London Evening Post*, *ibid*

intertwined.¹⁰² The figure of the sailor and that of the merchant increasingly converged in the 1730s around the figure of the strong and suffering seaman. To recognize the significance of this transition, we must remember that “merchant” was not typically synonymous with “seaman.” The merchant-sailor distinction had, in fact, been critical to the glorification of the merchant: “In *England*,” Sir Dalby Thomas had declared in 1690, “the Merchant-Adventurer is to be encouraged and prefer’d before the Mariner, or any other Artist, Trade or Calling whatsoever.”¹⁰³ But the boundary between merchant and seaman became increasingly porous over the course of the 1730s. All sailors were not seamen, one Opposition writer observed: “There is as great a Difference betwixt a Seaman and a Sailor; as betwixt an Officer and a private Centinel; every Seaman indeed ought to be a Sailor, but every Sailor is not a Seaman...a Seaman is never looked upon as duly qualified till he has made a Voyage either to the *East-Indies* or *America*.”¹⁰⁴ This author’s investment in disqualifying coal trade sailors from holding the title of seamen was both politically motivated – designed to counter the objection that it was the coal trading sailors who had suffered the most – and poorly reasoned. But it is instructive nonetheless for what it suggests about the extent to which the word “seaman” was malleable as well as loaded.

¹⁰² William Petty, *Political Arithmetic, or A Discourse Concerning the extent and value of lands* (London: Robert Clavel, 1690), 17; John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America* (London: printed for John Nicholson, Benjamin Tooke, and Richard Parker, and Ralph Smith: 1708), I, xxi; William Wood, *A survey of trade* (London: W. Wilkins, 1718), preface

¹⁰³ Sir Dalby Thomas, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Growth of the West-India Collonies and of the Great Advantages they are to England, in Respect to Trade* (London: Printed for Jo. Hindmarsh, 1690), 7

¹⁰⁴ [Anon] *Ministerial Prejudices In Favour of the Convention, Examin’d and Answer’d* (London: T. Cooper, 1739), 22

The specificities of the crises of the late 1730s, in which some sailors that were reputedly victimized by the Spanish happened to have been employed by merchant ships, made it possible for merchants, and, by extension, the commercial interest, to benefit from the ideological power vested in the image of the seamen. Seamen were employed by merchants and were crucial for trade – by extension, attacks upon strong, noble, and honorable seamen were described as attacks upon trade. “The Seamen of *Great Britain* are a Race of People, of all other, the most Valuable to this Nation,” reasoned the author of a 1739 pamphlet on the commercial interest, “as they Mann the royal Navy, which is the Kingdom’s chief Defence, and the only Security of its Commerce.” It was because they were a “Body of Brave and Hardy Men, and subject to the greatest Danger,” that “the greatest Care” needed to be taken of them, “and the greatest Regard had for them.”¹⁰⁵ As seamen were described as commercial, commerce was positioned to absorb the moral capital gained from the attacks upon the seamen. “But of late Years our Merchants passing to and from our Colonies have been stopt, examined, plundered, and abused by the SPANIARDS,” explained George Lyttleton, and immediately continued, “our Ships confiscated, and our seamen enslaved.”¹⁰⁶ Again and again, merchant and sailor were mentioned in the same breath. William Wyndham’s speech to the House of Commons, delivered on March 9, 1739, went as follows:

But if we shew that we dare not resent any Injury done to our Trade; if we allow our Merchants to be plundered, and our Seamen murdered and

¹⁰⁵ [Anon] *Reasons for Giving Encouragement to the Sea-Faring People of Great-Britain* (London: J. Millan, 1739), 6

¹⁰⁶ George Lyttleton, *Considerations upon the Present State of Our Affairs, At Home and Abroad, In a Letter to a Member of Parliament from a Friend in the Country* (London: T. Cooper, 1739), 4

tortured with Impunity, our Trade will not only be in Danger, but must be undone.¹⁰⁷ It is worth our while to reflect upon how this important statement (Wyndham was a “leading opponent”, according to Woodfine) worked ideologically.¹⁰⁸ The image of tortured and brutalized seamen was accompanied with that of the plundered merchant and contained within a sentence that began and ended with an invocation of “Trade.” By pairing the merchant together with the seaman, opposition writers could multiply the public’s indignation at the Spanish cruelties and lack of a British retaliatory effort, and, as a result, turn merchant and seaman into twin aspects of Britannia’s glory. Thus it was that commercialism was infused with the spirit of adulation for the strong and suffering seamen, allowing it to be more rapidly bartered as a populist sensibility. The real sailor of course, was rarely if ever heard from as the merchants and Patriots claimed as their own the righteousness he had earned from his supposed suffering.

The whole-scale intensity of the effort to produce deceptions is suggested by the treatment of those who sought, however meekly, to introduce some reason into the public discussion. Counter-oppositional efforts to engage with the use of the strong and suffering man only drove the Opposition to amplify their efforts in manufacturing a contrived indignation. Some did recognize that the Spanish depredations had not in fact been “numberless”, and were no worse than what the British were themselves doing. A dissident voice, urging England’s readers to think critically about what they read, argued as follows:

¹⁰⁷ [Anon] *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons* (London: Richard Chandler, 1742), 68

¹⁰⁸ Woodfine, *Britannia’s Glories*, 16

If the *Spaniards* have enslaved any of our Seamen, I am concerned for it, especially if such Seamen never tempted such a miserable Lot. But even this cruel Usage and Provocation will not warrant a War, if it be discontinued and Reparation offered. Such Practice of enslaving, if it be true, hath not been confined to the *Spaniards*, but is at least equally chargeable upon the *English*.¹⁰⁹

In one rebuttal, the author of this pamphlet was accused of “throwing an

Obloquy not only on our *injured and distressed Merchants*, but even on the whole

British Nation.”¹¹⁰ Rational intervention thus functioned to worsen the

belligerence of the irrational. It is Burke, again, who provides valuable insight

into why the Counter-Opposition was fundamentally incapable of pushing back

the pro-war hysteria: “Cold as ice themselves, they never could kindle in our

breasts a spark of that zeal, which is necessary to a conflict with an adverse

zeal.”¹¹¹

Conclusion and Reactions

Analyzing the standing army debates of 1697, a precocious Daniel Defoe

zeroed in on the muddled thinking habits of his contemporaries: “The Question,”

he dryly remarked of an opposing writer,

here may be more properly, What sort of an Army we talk of?...This Argument of the Militia is strangely turn'd about by him; sometimes they are such Hero's that they are able to defend us...and sometimes so weak that 20000 Men *will ruine us all*.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ [Anon] *Popular Prejudices against the Convention and Treaty with Spain, Examined and Answer'd. With Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled, Considerations Upon the Present State of Our Affairs at Home and Abroad* (London: T. Cooper, 1739), 21

¹¹⁰ [Anon] *Some Remarks on a Pamphlet Intituled, Popular Prejudices against the Convention and Treaty with Spain. In a Letter to a Member of Parliament* (London: n.p., 1739), 1, 2

¹¹¹ Burke, *Thoughts On the Prospect of a Regicide Peace* (London: J. Owen, 1796), 26

¹¹² Daniel Defoe, *Some Reflections on a Pamphlet Lately Published Entituled an Argument Shewing that a Standing Army is Inconsistent with a Free Government and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy* (London: E. Whitlock, 1697), 12-13

Defoe skewered the counterargument by concentrating his attack on his opponents' self-contradictory treatment of physical strength: "If they are strong enough to defend us from all the World, a small number of standing Troops cannot hurt us; if they are not, then we must have an Army, or be exposed to every Invader."¹¹³ Here he was precisely locating an important fact about the political meanings of strength: it was, at once, highly abstract and highly evocative. It is for this reason that it could be so blithely employed to support opposing sides of a case – often, as it happened, by the same writer.

Defoe died in 1731. Had he lived through that decade, he would have been bittersweet, at best, about the urbane, jingoistic, commercialistic, populist, and unthinkingly patriotic nation he saw before him. But he would probably still have been pleased by the commercialistic sentiment itself. This commercialism, we must remind ourselves, was not *necessarily* jingoistic, and could in fact be explicitly pacifist. The citizen (and protagonist) of the 1739 dialogue between citizen and courtier claimed the following of the Dutch: "They are a People that are potent at Sea, they live upon Trade, love Peace, and hate War, because it obstructs their Trade, they never enter into War hastily, but on the most deliberate Considerations."¹¹⁴ The 1737 *Memoirs of the Society of Grub-Street* decoded "*We triumph most, when most the farmer feeds*" to mean "*Peace supplies both our blood and our treasure, by promoting propagation and plenty*"¹¹⁵

Jingoistic or not, commercialistic sentiment also appears to have been conducive to the formal inquiry into the nature of commerce. It is against the backdrop of the aggressive politicization of commerce that commerce was also

¹¹³ *ibid*, 13

¹¹⁴ *War Against Spain Declar'd: Or a Dialogue Between a Citizen and a Courtier*, 16

¹¹⁵ [Anon] *Memoirs of the Society of Grub Street* (London: J. Wilford, 1737), 265

assiduously dissected in the late 1730s. The year 1738 saw the publication of an essay on the sugar trade, an ex-merchant's letter on the linen trade, a guide for the new merchant, a proposal for herring fisheries, and new editions of Defoe's *Complete English Tradesman* and Joshua Gee's *Trade and Navigation of Great-Britain Consider'd*.¹¹⁶ All of these texts were in different ways forwarding central Enlightenment commitments, as defined by Robertson: "the development of the sciences of man and of political economy...the critical application of ideas of human betterment to the existing social and political order."¹¹⁷ Each of these texts applied the principles of political economy to a particular and pressing subject; each endeavored to improve the extant order. "The papers," John Bennett wrote in a preface to his letters to the planters, "are now made publick; and, if you please to correct the Errors, supply the Defects, and improve such Things as you shall find capable of Improvement, I hope they may be of some service."¹¹⁸ This chapter has focused upon the political and rhetorical context in which Bennet professed his heartfelt solicitude for national improvement. It has penetrated into the emotive center of this rhetoric. Formal treatises on commerce might not have attracted readers, and might not have been published, in society not otherwise invested in commerce – however irrational the basis of the interest. The strong

¹¹⁶ John Bennet, *Two letters and several calculations on the sugar colonies and trade; addressed to two committees nominated by the West-India merchants* (London: R. Montagu, 1738); David Bindon, *A letter from a merchant who has left off trade to a member of Parliament, in which The case of the British and Irish manufacture of linne* (London: s.n. 1738); Edward Kervell, *The golden mine: or, The benefits and advantages arising from the herring-fishery humbly offer'd to the consideration of the merchants of the city of London, &c. in order to the revival of so valuable a branch of commerce* (London: s.n., 1738); William Markham, *A general introduction to trade and business. Or, The young merchant's and tradesman's magazine* (London: A. Bettesworth, 1738); Joshua Gee, *The trade and navigation of Great-Britain considered*. Fourth Edition (London: Sam Buckley, 1738)

¹¹⁷ Robertson, *A Case for the Enlightenment*, 42

¹¹⁸ Bennet, *Two Letters*, xxv

and suffering type has thus provided a critical backdrop to the emergence of an enlightened commercialism.

The process I describe did not end in 1740. "Against a background of fragile and uneasy peace with France, the condition of society appeared to threaten the security of the state," Bob Harris has written of the 1740s.¹¹⁹ Social disorder and national insecurity were distinct problems but, as Harris has shown, they were constantly being brought together.¹²⁰ Ideas and feelings of the body, the raw material of this politics, helped *bring* them together. And thus it was that the spirit of commercialism perpetually infused the English national mind. Robin Hood had long been a social bandit, but in the period under question, he became more and more commercialistic in his social banditry. The ongoing adaptation of the Robin Hood story to the ideological needs of the period is explicitly revealed in a 1740 song in which Robin and his men trick and rob a sycophantic Bishop, plying him all night with "Wine, Beer, and Ale."¹²¹ The story of Robin Hood and *this* story of Robin Hood thus helps account for how the ingredients of the latent popular indignation that was directed against Walpole were themselves perpetually replenished.

The next chapter surveys how an investment in thinking evolved in response to the specious political rhetoric such as that surveyed in the preceding pages. If we acknowledge that commercialism and urbanism, actualized by this

¹¹⁹ Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 237

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, 68

¹²¹ [Anon] *The Bishop of Hereford's Entertainment by Robin Hood, and Little John, &c. In Merry Barnsdale. To an Excellent New Tune* (London: William Dicey and Company, 1740?)

rhetoric, were enlightened sensibilities, then these two chapters collectively reveal an internal conflict within British Enlightenment culture.

Chapter Five: The Politics of Thinking and the Enlightenment of the Mind in 1730s England

The 1730s in England are advantageously entered through a 1736 text that describes a controversy spawned by the prospect of a wooden bridge. Citizens of London were, it appears, driven to indignation at the very thought of such a construction – of the “scandalous Effect” it would have, “any where within the Bills of Mortality.”¹ The proposed bridge would be all too precarious and not at all grand – entirely infelicitous for so glorious a city as London. This author then went on to demonstrate how “This general Dislike soon shewed it self in the News-Papers.”² This simple act had unleashed a torrent of conspiracy theories, of which he identified five, each of which imagined some kind of ulterior motive or nefarious, behind-the-scenes machinations.³ This piece suggests a half-panicked, half-resigned attitude to the increasingly audible *vox populi*. It dismisses the validity of popular sentiment whilst simultaneously attesting to its importance in its assiduous attempt at classifying it. The piece also suggests how the rise of the press and, more generally, political representation intensified fears of the peoples’ unclear minds. The proliferation of contradictory opinions was blamed upon on an “unaccountable Vanity of judgment peremptorily in Matters that have not been the Objects of our earliest Enquiries.”⁴ “I think all the Suggestions against it are false and ridiculous,” it was opined later, “tho’ extremely natural in

¹ [Anon] *A Short Narrative of the Proceedings of the Gentlemen, Concerned in Obtaining the Act, for Building a Bridge at Westminster* (London: T. Cooper, 1738), 25

² *ibid*, 26

³ *ibid*, 39-41

⁴ *ibid*, 54

the Mouths of unthinking People.”⁵ Readers were also warned of the dangers of “giving the Common-People false views, and imaginary Prospects of their growing rich by Accident” – this, it was surmised, was “one of the readiest ways to enervate the Minds of a free People.”⁶

This chapter charts fears of thinking and visions of the mind as they deepened and broadened in the 1730s. It is instructive, by way of introduction, to establish the typicality of the above-quoted treatise’s concern for the peoples’ minds. The perceived importance of the peoples’ thoughts is implicit as well in a statement made by Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, in letter addressed to Paul Morant, on the Quaker’s efforts against the Test Act:

They have threatne’d, for some months past, to try their fortune in Parliament for a repeal of the Test-Act; and tho’ it has been less talk on of late, while people’s thoughts have been taken up with fleets and armies, I do not think it is laid aside. Probably, both that and the Quakers’ bill, which has also been much talk’d of, will be pursu’d, or not pursu’d, according to the good or bad news that we receive from the West Indies.⁷

It was in this context, where the peoples’ thoughts, especially as manifested in “talk”, could sway the course of history, that minds, thoughts, and thinking became so integral to the many narratives constructed by the English about their nation. In 1738, a young Samuel Johnson attacked the city of London, his recently adopted home, in a poem written in the idiom of the classical humanists: “With warbling Eunuchs fill our silenc’d Stage, / And lull to Servitude a thoughtless Age.”⁸ In 1739, Richard Glover imagined a Britain of “free / Sagacious converse...And zeal for knowledge”, where “the opening mind / Resigns its

⁵ *ibid*, 59

⁶ *ibid*, 67-68

⁷ British Library MSS, Letter from Edmund Gibson to P. Morant, February 3, 1740, Add. 37221, ff. 297

⁸ [Anon] *London: A Poem* (London: R. Dodsley, 1738), 7

erours, and unseals the eye / Of blind opinion.”⁹ But the image of a thoughtless nation continued to rise inexorably. “Tho’ there are many Causes assigned of the growing Infidelity of this Age, yet I shall here pitch only upon this one, and that is THOUGHTLESNESS,” a 1748 divine exclaimed in a rebuttal to Matthew Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, a radical deist manifesto first published in 1730.¹⁰ This passage is remarkable for what it assumes of its readers’ preconceptions: that it is thoughtlessness – as opposed to foreigners, sodomites, drunkards, suicides, or degenerates – that would most rapidly incite the reader’s indignation, and grab his or her attention. Unlike Glover, this writer was despondent about the minds of the nation. But like Glover, he focused his attention upon those minds. Like Glover, and also like Johnson, he idealized thinking. How, it might be asked, did the fear of thoughtfulness begin to acquire such an exalted status amongst fears – one whose invocation merited the use of capital letters, and whose force transcended all ideological boundaries? How did the value of thinking become so critical to the formation of a national cultural identity? How did this implicate Enlightenment theories of the mind and its functions?

Three converging developments are identified, in this chapter, as factors contributing to the rising interest in the mind in the 1730s: the political empowerment of the public, a deepening philosophical interest in the nature of the mind, and urban modernity, as exemplified the proliferation of cultural forms (pantomimes, fiddlers, comic operas) catering to middling metropolitan

⁹ Richard Glover, *The Progress of Commerce* (London: T. Cooper, 1739)

¹⁰¹⁰ William Crawford, *A Short Manual Against the Infidelity of this Age. In a Discourse, Which...Saps the Foundations of Mr. Tindal’s Book* (Edinburgh, R. Fleming, 1748), 1

consumers. There was, in this decade, an expanded investment in political representation – the explosion of what Kathleen Wilson, writing of the 1730s, has described as “demotic political sensibilities.”¹¹ I have alluded to this already with Gibson’s letter and the treatise on bridge-building. This, it must also be established, was a process that predated the 1730s. “The public,” Mark Knights has written of the late Stuart period, “acquired new prominence and importance as a collective fiction with an enlarged role as a legitimizing power and as an umpire.”¹² But this public was perhaps never so powerful as in the 1730s, when this sensibility of representation was intensified and actualized by the explosion of newspapers, and the divisive political ascendancy of the Patriot Opposition to Walpole.¹³ The press, in the 1730s, was more powerful than it had ever been before.¹⁴ The decades following the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695 had seen the emergence of tri-weekly papers, evening papers, daily papers, and provincial papers.¹⁵ Londoners in 1736 (as previously discussed in Chapter Five) had twice as many dailies to choose from as their counterparts in 1726.¹⁶ Nor was this effusion restricted to newspapers, which flowered in the midst of a bountiful effusion of propaganda. “Opinion,” as Jeremy Black has observed, “was a sphere

¹¹ Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 164

¹² Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Late Stuart Britain* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5

¹³ Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)

¹⁴ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 12-13

¹⁵ Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 9-10

¹⁶ Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: A Study of the Origins of the Modern English Press* (London: Associated University Presses, 1987), 31

in which newspapers had little advantage over pamphlets.”¹⁷ There was a synergistic relationship between the increased empowerment of the public and the rise of the press. “Most contemporary politicians,” Michael Harris has argued, “had a firm belief in the power of the press and their continuous interest combined with the comprehensive availability of the newspapers and their content helped to establish a view of politics in which the emphasis was on responsibility and participation.”¹⁸ This was the context in which the nation’s wellness came to hinge, more than ever before, upon the peoples’ ability to think.

The 1730s were also an age of seminal intellectual and cognitive transformations. The ongoing discovery of the mind was a central Enlightenment process. “A conception of thought itself as a refined form of sensation” was, as Dale K. Van Kley (summarizing Peter Gay) has argued, particular to an epistemological empiricism specific to the European Enlightenment.¹⁹ A theoretical interest in the mind evolved and intensified throughout the 1730s. It is not that this interest was absent from England before the 1730s. “*Thought*,” began a 1705 sermon preached to the Levant company, “is that Excellent and chief Faculty of the Humane Soul... tis a wretchless, Infamous State to live in a continual Hurry without *Thinking*.”²⁰ But it is nevertheless the case that the 1730s witnessed something of a Renaissance in theories of thinking, thoughtfulness, and the mind. “A Discourse Concerning the Nature and Faculties of the Mind”

¹⁷ Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth-Century* (Croom Helm: London, 1987), 145

¹⁸ Michael Harris, “Print and Politics in the Age of Walpole,” in Jeremy Black, ed., *Britain in the Age of Walpole* (Hampshire and London, Macmillan, 1984), 210

¹⁹ Dale K. Van Kley, “Religion and the Age of ‘Patriot’ Reform,” *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (June 2008), 268

²⁰ Thomas Owen, *A Sermon Preach’d Before the Honourable Company of Merchants Trading to the Levant Seas* (London: Ralph Smith, 1706), 1, 5

appeared in a 1730 issue of *Present State of the Republick of Letters*.²¹ “Worldly Employments,” according to a 1731 sermon entitled *Human Wisdom Displayed*, “are but *Clogs and Incumbrances* which hinder us from aspiring after what is truly great and noble, namely the *Cultivation and Improvement* of our *Minds*.”²² The mind’s relationship to the senses was an essential theme of George Berkeley’s *Theory of Vision*, published in 1733; the ability of mathematics to “improve” the mind was a recurrent concern of *The Analyst*, published in 1734; and the mind itself was the primary subject of his seminal *Principles of Human Knowledge*, published in the same year.²³ An interest in the mind was, more than ever before, avidly cultivated in novels, sermons, and plays.²⁴ The gems of continental philosophers were, as I argue, repeatedly distilled for the general reader in the translations and commentaries that regularly appeared in newspapers and periodicals.

The politics of thinking and interest in the mind coincided with what Dale Van Kley has identified as another critical Enlightenment development: “an acknowledgement of the role played by the physical and cultural environment in the formation of human nature.”²⁵ There was, in the 1730s, an increased interest

²¹ [Anon] “A Discourse Concerning the Nature and Faculties of the Mind,” *Present State of the Republick of Letters* 6 (October, 1730), 274

²² Old Gentleman, Of Gray’s Inn, *Human Wisdom Displayed: Or, A Guide to Prudence and Virtue* (London: Thomas Corbett, 1731), iv

²³ George Berkeley, *The Theory of Vision, Or Visual Knowledge, Shewing the Immediate Presence and Providence of a Deity* (London: J. Tonson, 1733); George Berkeley, *The Analyst: Or, A Discourse Addressed to an Infidel Mathematician* (London: J. Tonson, 1734), 5, 8, 13, 28, 74, 86; George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1734)

²⁴ Jonathan Kramnick, “Empiricism, Cognitive Science, and the Novel,” *The Eighteenth Century* 48:3 (2007), 263-5

²⁵ Dale K. Van Kley, “Religion and the Age of ‘Patriot’ Reform,” *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (June 2008), 268

in deciphering how the cultural environment of the city affected the minds of the people. The growth of representative politics and the effusion of philosophical interest had coincided with the rapid emergence of a metropolitan consumer society, which manifested itself conspicuously on the stage and in music. The London theatre scene of the 1730s was far more “fluid”, as Christine Gerrard has written, than what it had been a decade earlier: “The massive success of Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera* at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in 1728 revealed the potential scale of a London theatre audience hitherto untempted by the more conventional fare on offer at the two patent theatres.”²⁶ Culture, as John Brewer has written, was itself aggressively commodified in the long eighteenth-century: it is for this reason that London was such a draw for Italian composers, eighty-three of which were in residence between 1675 and 1750; this too was why *The Beggar’s Opera* went into thirteen English editions.²⁷ Well into the eighteenth-century, as Ann Dean has written, the reaction to this cultural effusion combined with that of political noise, as exemplified, for instance, by the concern expressed by the member of Parliament quoted in the treatise on bridge building: for the “mouths” of “unthinking” people.²⁸

The weak mind, I argue in the first section of this chapter, was the shibboleth of the writers that reacted, for different reasons, to the aggressive skullduggery of the Patriot Opposition. This resulted, I suggest, in perceptions of a nation-wide mental crisis; these perceptions, in turn, brought the mind into

²⁶ Christine Gerrard, *Aaron Hill: The Muses Projector, 1685-1750* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 145

²⁷ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar Straux Giroux, 1997), 85, 446

²⁸ Ann Dean, *The Talk of the Town: Figurative Publics in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 26

center stage. The conception of thought “as something special to ‘thinkers’” has been described by R.G. Collingwood as “illusory”: “when a politician is working at political matters he is thinking about them and embodying his thoughts in action.”²⁹ In this case, I argue, the thoughts about which these political thinkers were thinking were thoughts about the nature of thinking itself. Section II focuses upon the simultaneous construction of the mind in newspapers and periodicals, whose solicitude for human and national betterment, as exemplified by their interest in the mind, resolved itself in an introspective striving for self-awareness. The resentment at the Counter-Opposition continually fueled fears of weak minds; it also progressively brought the image of these minds closer to the center of public attention. Both forces – the reaction to political rhetoric and increased intellectual interest in the mind – were independently powerful, and hence formidable in combination. Most political writers and social commentators did not think too deeply about the inner workings of the mind. They evoked it allusively, without really seeking to identify the origins of its strengths or weaknesses. But by evoking it persistently, in political polemic and social commentary, they collectively brought it to the center of attention, thus partially accounting for the efforts of those who *did* actively theorize upon the mind. Section III considers a third set of interacting factors: anxieties generated by the democratization of urban cultural consumption. Metropolitan consumer cultures – pantomimes, operas, and fiddlers – heightened, refocused, and refracted fears of weak minds. Political rhetoric had raised fear of minds too weak to recognize the fact that they were being deceived; pantomimes, raree-shows, and other such

²⁹ Collingwood, *The Principles of History*, 77

“senseless” entertainments suggested that these minds were being weakened even further. Thus it was that the interest in the mind evolved symbiotically. The minds of the people were progressively revealed as malleable yet important; easily misled yet politically integral. Metropolitan culture also generated a sensibility that was playful and self-conscious, wherein the weak mind was revealed as somehow inevitable and laughable, and tacitly accepted as the inevitable side effect of modernity. But it also contributed to the idea of the mind as an entity that was at once moveable, heterogeneous, and politically vital.

In making this argument, I continue to challenge John Robertson’s somewhat hostile attack upon the very idea of an *English* Enlightenment. The English confidence about English liberty and the English enjoyment of English commerce were, I suggest, the groundswell of tensions that invited the efforts of enlightened voices. The rational-critical form of public discourse identified by Habermas was not the natural by-product of the freedom of the press, as those who controlled political discourse routinely appealed to the emotions, as opposed to the instincts of critical discernment.³⁰ It intensified in desirability once its absence from the public sphere was revealed as destructive. It was further entrenched as a value system by the democratization of cultural consumption and the popularization of “enlightened” ideas of the mind.

This chapter is not the first work of scholarship that contests a triumphalist narrative of progress wherein democracy inevitably leads organically, rather than dialectically, to the Enlightenment ideal of critical thinking. The process I describe was not specific to the 1730s, and nor am I the

³⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, [1962] 1989)

first to posit the notion of Enlightenment as response to political culture. “Knowledge and truth were...political issues,” Mark Knights has argued of the late Stuart era – “In that sense, the period is important in stressing the early stages of a political enlightenment that coincided with the religious and scientific ones.”³¹ I focus, in this chapter, upon a later stage of these converging Enlightenments. The concern for “public judgment” escalated, as Knights has written, in the late seventeenth century, and “the practice of politics,” he has suggested, “helped to establish the languages of politeness, reason, interest, and sociability” as “the routine process of publicly competitive politics provoked each side to castigate irrationality, sophistry, and slanderous abuse.”³² To a certain extent, I am merely suggesting that these ideas continued to evolve. An idea such as “the public”, for instance, had come to prominence over the course of the seventeenth century, but by the 1730s it had been abused and overused to the point of absurdity, and was likely to more instantly elicit cynicism or resistance. But apart from cataloguing an intensified impatience, I am also more specifically concerned with the idea of the 1730s as a turning point, or as a kind of perfect storm of political, cultural, and intellectual developments. “If the questions about sincerity, truth-claims, and the nature of the public were not new,” Knights writes of the earlier period, “they were nevertheless being asked with a new urgency, in a new context.”³³ The 1730s, I suggest, witnessed a crisis on an altogether different scale. Despite the prevalence of “languages of politeness and reason” by 1720, politeness or reason did not become characteristic of political culture. The engines of representation were far more

³¹ Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, 6

³² *ibid*, 5, 336

³³ *ibid*, 336

powerful and hence capable of inflicting greater harm. At the same time, philosophical theories of the mind were better developed and, due to the expansion of the newspapers, more widely disseminated. Culture was consumed with greater avidity on the streets of the metropolis.³⁴ Considered alongside these other developments, a history of resistance to the practices of “democratic” politics – such as that provided by Knights – makes it easier to understand why the onslaught of skullduggery that characterized the 1730s would have elicited the response it did, and resulted, as I argue, in such an overwhelming interest in the mind. Knights writes of the “implicit recognition that the mind could not be forced in politics any more than in religion.”³⁵ But this does not mean that it was not manipulated in attempts to channel desires that were visceral or at least sub-rational. Indeed it was precisely this image that gained in power: of a mind that could be *manipulated, molded, misled, inflamed*, or otherwise *transformed*. Such a mind was as important as it was dynamic. It was a metaphor for a certain kind of politics but also a literal entity, whose connection to that politics also evolved dialectically, as a result of the processes outlined in the following pages.

Pre-Election Tensions

This section focuses upon the years preceding elections: primarily the excise crisis of 1733 and the controversy over Spanish depredations in 1739-40. The Opposition, in these years, drove a formidably powerful propaganda machine that bombarded the city with pamphlets, broadsides, prints, and

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ 7

newspaper articles against the government.³⁶ Like a fugue, the idea of the weak mind murmured steadily in periods of relative calm, but in the heated atmosphere of the pre-election years it soared into a crescendo, and dominated political noise. It is at these moments that the relationship between political freedom and the Enlightenment value of critical thinking becomes most vividly apparent. I use the phrase “Counter-Opposition” rather than “ministerial” or “Walpolean” in order to include writers who were not exactly apologists for the ministry, even if they happened to support particular ministerial measures (the excise bill, efforts at diplomacy in 1738-9). I do not attempt to typologize every variant of Counter-Oppositional argument. Instead, I seek to demonstrate how the Counter-Opposition’s interest in the mind emerged out of what were *genuine* and *legitimate* frustrations with the Opposition’s skullduggery and, more generally, the irrationality, belligerence and militarism of their rhetoric.

Thinking was not *owned* by the Counter-Opposition. The idea of a thinking nation was open to appropriation by divergent political agendas: Tory and Whig, Court and Country, Anglican and Dissenter.³⁷ Rooted in late seventeenth-century latitudinarianism, common sense, as recently told by Sophia Rosenfeld, was revived by the Whig writers of the Augustan period, only to be appropriated by the 1730s Opposition, as vividly exemplified, for instance, by Henry Fielding’s *Pasquin*. Thus it was rendered available for later Enlightenment writers: in Scotland, France, and then, mostly famously, in America, with Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*. By focusing upon the position of the *Counter-*

³⁶ Paul Langford, *The Excise Crisis: Society and Politics in the Age of Walpole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 68

³⁷ Sophia Rosenfeld, “Before Democracy: The Production and Uses of Common Sense,” *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (March, 2008), 1-54

Opposition, I am endeavoring, in part, to rectify a historiographic imbalance to which Sophia Rosenfeld's article is the latest addition. Kathleen Wilson and Paul Langford, perhaps the two major historians of the 1730s, barely stopped to assess the legitimacy of the Counter-Oppositional position.³⁸ They are part of a generation of historians that have vaunted and glorified the Opposition, intending to overturn the conservative vision of the eighteenth century. Like Langford, Wilson, and Rosenfeld, I believe quite strongly that something very important happened in the 1730s. "The real test for the idea of a single English common sense as the foundation for modern social and political life did not come until the mid-1730s," writes Rosenfeld.³⁹ But unlike Rosenfeld, I do not believe that the counter-argument to the Opposition should summarily be dismissed. Rosenfeld writes: "No one writing on behalf of Walpole and the ministerial cause was about to declare common sense unimportant."⁴⁰ But was every Counter-Oppositional attempt to reverse the inflammation of public debate necessarily disingenuous? Implicitly yet decisively, Rosenfeld dismisses the legitimacy of any real or genuine concern. "Current intellectual suppositions are scarcely favourable to such an approach," Jeremy Black wrote of any potential attempt to seriously engage with the arguments made against the Opposition press.⁴¹ But we must, I suggest, try and empathize with the Counter-Opposition's position. If we assume that the people of England were able to engage in acts of critical thinking, we are less likely to dismiss their reaction to the systematic misrepresentation of facts as the desperate bluster of a

³⁸ Wilson, *ibid*; Paul Langford, *The Excise Crisis*

³⁹ Rosenfeld, "Before Democracy," *ibid*

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century*, 152-3

conservative orthodoxy. We are thus better equipped to locate sensibilities of Enlightenment. Bob Harris has written of the “fragmentary, allusive” style of 1730s newspapers, and observed that “the effects of this oblique approach to reporting have never really been systematically examined”, and this despite contemporary perceptions such as that contained within the description of the period as “an allegorizing Age, when all real persons of ancient and modern history are exhausted.”⁴² What Harris suggests, and what I explore, are the critical responses to the distortions and falsities that mushroomed in this culture of political innuendo. In the 1730s, as it happens, it *was* the Opposition, and not the ministry, that was responsible for these distortions. For this reason, not everyone who evoked the idea of the weak mind could believe it equally, and nor could they be equally *believed*. Counter-Oppositional writers *adapted* images of weak minds in order to produce *accurate* descriptions of rhetorical deception – it is for this reason that they *resonated*.

The fear of the weak mind did not originate in the 1730s, and nor was this the first time that it was politicized. Indeed, to truly gauge the significance of its politicization, we must remember that the weak mind was not a necessarily political idea. The figure of the weak mind traveled through early eighteenth-century sermons, where it emblemized the destructive potential of the body’s sensual impulses. One explanation of the catechism spoke of “the Weakness of our Minds, and the Strength and Violence of our corrupt and carnal Affections”⁴³ Another divine castigated those who “through the Weakness of their Reason,

⁴² Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 33; *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Vol. 2, p. 945 (1732), cited in Harris, 34

⁴³ John Ollyffe, *A Practical Exposition of the Church-Catechism* (London: J. Robinson, 1710), 57

and the Strength and Violence of their bodily Passions" were "more liable to sensual Impressions, and irregular Desires."⁴⁴ The explosion of print that followed 1695 deepened the investment in strength of mind. The constant outpouring of words was believed to perpetually jeopardize all mental peace and tranquility. The mind was the owner of the *rational* soul, as Adrian Johns has written, but also reliant upon the *sensitive* soul, and the struggle between these two souls was "a vital struggle, on the outcome of which rested the fate of every individual human being, and hence that of the polity as a whole."⁴⁵ Like words, the regular proliferation of new cultural forms such as operas and novels drove the period's writers to erect psychic barricades against mentally enervating effeminate encroachments. Both were believed to move minds too weak to control the urges of the sensitive soul; both, by extension, raised fears of such minds.⁴⁶ The same is true for popular tales – the weak mind, in fact, was the figurative *leitmotiv* of elite prejudices to all things popular. The 1729 author of *Hell Upon Earth: Or, the Town in an Uproar* opined that "nothing weakens the Mind and turns the Brain more than the delusive Horrors which the common Stories of *Damons* and *Goblins* bring along with them."⁴⁷ The new world of credit similarly intensified latent fears of weak minds. Hence Thomas Baston in 1716 lamented how the "weak and unthinking Part of Mankind," were "commonly

⁴⁴ John Mapletoft, *Wisdom from Above: Or, Considerations Tending to Explain, Establish, and Promote the Christian Life* (London: J. Downing, 1714), 31

⁴⁵ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 404

^{46/46} Ioan Williams, *Novel and Romance, 1700-1800, A Documentary Record* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970); "A Night at the Opera: The Body, Class, and Art in *Evelina* and Frances Burney's *Early Diaries*," in Beth Fowkes Tobin, ed., *History, Gender & Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 141-158

⁴⁷ [Anon] *Hell Upon Earth: Or the Town in an Uproar*, 46

dazzled with Shew, easily impos'd upon by a View of vast Profit, without examining into the Probability or Possibility of the thing proposed."⁴⁸ This was a view substantiated by the collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720. One text spoke of "that uncertain Stock that turns our Brains."⁴⁹ Anxieties over credit combined with those generated by the growth of the novel: "Like a stock scheme, fiction was based on nothing 'real' or tangible; indeed it offered possibilities that may or may not be realized."⁵⁰ They also combined with the fear of noise. Thus Sir Humphrey Mackworth's lacerated "all the Moneyed Men" – usurers, discounters, extortioners – by describing them as bees "humming out their Nonsense in all publick Places, amongst a Parcel of honest, harmless, unthinking People, that will not look to the Bottom, and see the Cheat, but take it all for granted."⁵¹ The true villains were the artificers – the people, in this case, were almost noble in their ignorance. But the image of the weak mind served as a useful focus for the diatribe against the deceivers – the anger at the deceivers was projected onto the minds of the deceived.

The figure of the weak mind might not have been necessarily political, but it had long proved useful to political writers. Weak minds were good for tyrants as Opposition writers were quick to observe. A character from Eliza Haywood spoke of "that Veneration which weak Minds... pay to Kings merely as Kings."⁵²

⁴⁸ Thomas Baston, *Thoughts on Trade, And a Publick Spirit* (London: printed for the athor, 1716), 13-14

⁴⁹ [Anon] *A Guide for Malt-Worms. The Second Part* (London: T. Bickerton, 1720)

⁵⁰ Catherine Ingrassia, "The Pleasure of Business and the Business of Pleasure: Gender, Credit, and the South Sea Bubble." *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 24 (1995), 206

⁵¹ Humphrey Mackworth, *Sir Humphrey Mackworth's Proposal in Miniature* (London: W. Boreham, 1720), 14

⁵² Eliza Haywood, *Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo. A Pre-Adamitical History* (London: S. Baker, 1736), 109

The weak mind also traveled alongside the idea of a generality that could not think, which was easily moved through specious rhetoric, or what David Rollison has called the “specter of the commonalty”, which “regularly yet unpredictably manifested itself in resistance and rebellion.”⁵³ “Strong Passions and weak Minds are the proper Materials for such an Artist to work upon”, Matthew Concanen wrote of rhetorical artificers – the fact that the Mob “banished *Coriolanus*” was one amongst several examples of the power of words.⁵⁴ The story of *Coriolanus* accentuated fears that had already been generated by riots and rebellions, real and anticipated. On June 1, 1720, John Trenchard’s republican paper *Independent Whig* published an article on chaplains, self-professedly intending to expose the “ridiculous Privileges” claimed in behalf of them and “the ill Use which they make of their Influence over weak Minds.”⁵⁵ We cannot gauge the impact of this statement without uncovering its tacit allusion to the riots that followed incendiary Tory preacher Henry Sacheverell’s impeachment in 1710. The Sacheverell riots had raised enormous doubts about instilling “*Fears and Jealousies* into weak Minds,” making “each Man suspect the other of Secret Designs.”⁵⁶

Weak minds were center stage in the pamphlet wars that were waged, in the pre-excite crisis early 1730s, on the subject of the dissenters’ inclusion into the body-politic. Recusant dissenters (to simplify the controversy) were

⁵³ David Rollison, “The Specter of the Commonalty: Class Struggle and the Commonwealth in England before the Atlantic World,” 63.2 *William and Mary Quarterly* (2006), 16, 31

⁵⁴ Matthew Concanen, *The Speculatist. A Collection of Letters and Essays, Moral and Political, Serious and Humorous: Upon Various Subjects* (London: J. Watts, 1730), 269

⁵⁵ *The Independent Whig* (London: J. Peele, 1732)

⁵⁶ [Anon] *A Letter Out of the Country, to the Author of The Managers Pro and Con, in Answer to his Account of What is Said at Child’s and Tom’s in the Case of Dr. Sacheverell* (London: J. Morphew, 1710), 68

understandably troubled by a wave of defections amongst dissenters frightened by the incendiary intolerance of the increasingly powerful Patriot Opposition. They responded by associating conformity with weak-mindedness. One 1731 pro-dissenter author evoked a “Humour” that appeared to have acquired a life of its own and spread inexorably across the dissenting ministry, the members of which had surrendered, one after the other, to conformity, and revealed, as they did, an abject lack of moral and intellectual independence.⁵⁷ He described in what he called “plain *English*” the decision of which he disapproved: “that as, in some Points of Divinity, they are in different Ways of thinking from the generality of the common People, they must either smother their Thoughts on these Heads or belie them.”⁵⁸ The value being promoted, were politics and rhetoric to be extracted from this statement, was the supreme importance of thinking for oneself. “The most infamous Errors and Absurdities”, another wrote of public sermons, “are impres’d upon the Minds of Men” and “Whole Nations may thus be deluded into Ruin, Calamities multiply’d, and Miseries diffus’d.”⁵⁹ The censorship of preachers would “aid the Cause of Virtue and Morality, to assert our Right to Liberty and Happiness.”⁶⁰ Lord Hervey spoke of the circular letters intended to “alarm and inflame the Country, and to sow Apprehensions in weak Minds, of Attacks and Injuries, that were known at the same time, even by those who beat this ecclesiastical Drum, to be neither mediated nor

⁵⁷ [Anon] *Some Observations Upon the Present State of the Dissenting Interest* (London: J. Gray, 1731), 1

⁵⁸ *ibid*, 8

⁵⁹ [Anon] *A Vindication of Liberty of Conscience* (London: printed in the year, 1734), 4

⁶⁰ *ibid*, 4

intended.”⁶¹ Generally, the use of words such as *poison*, *inflame*, *sow*, and *contagious* suggested the transformative effect of active ideas upon passive minds. Fears of sensationalism were thus innately connected to the idea of minds that were objects of discursive action, not its agents. Anthony La Vopa has written of “a profoundly paternalistic and antidemocratic impulse in Enlightenment discourse” in which the Enlightenment elites claimed for themselves a “higher” knowledge, the dissemination of which needed to be controlled, gradual, or restricted.”⁶² Such an impulse is clearly evident in these texts. But texts like this also suggest a fraught and conflicted relationship between religious and political freedoms, or toleration and democracy. Certainly these writers were elitist, but the dissenters who evoked weak minds were not primarily invested in upholding hierarchy – they were simply frightened by popular intolerance and blind conformity.

The problem of thinking was sharply refocused in the course of the excise crisis of 1733.⁶³ The Patriot Opposition manufactured this crisis in order to rally anti-ministerial sentiment in preparation for the election of 1734. “Not the least pretended Proof of their Assertions,” a ministerial writer remarked in an accurate depiction of the opposition’s strategy in 1733, “when we called for an

⁶¹ Lord Hervey, *The Quaker’s Reply to the Country Parson’s Plea Against the Quakers Bill For Tythes* (London: T. Cooper, 173?), 23-24

⁶² Anthony La Vopa, “Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe,” *Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992), 95

⁶³ Jacob Price, “The Excise Affair Revisited: The Administrative and Colonial Dimensions of a Parliamentary Crisis” in Stephen B. Baxter, ed., *England’s Rise to Greatness, 1660-1763* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 280; G.A. Cranfield, “The ‘London Evening Post’, 1727-44: A Study in the Development of the Political Press,” *The Historical Journal* 6:1 (1953), 20-37

Argument, they repeated *a Song*, and to enforce this produced *A Picture*.”⁶⁴ This was not an inaccurate depiction, as Chapter Four attests. Facts and realities were alternately omitted, distorted, exaggerated, and sensationalized. Pseudo-populist fabrications masked the dark truth of powerful wine and tobacco merchants zealously safeguarding their interests. The excise scheme was not a David and Goliath battle between the common shopkeeper and the tyrannical ministry, although this is how the Opposition liked to portray it – as Paul Langford himself argues, the real crisis was between the ministry and the powerful city merchants that linked the parliamentary opposition to the provincial discontent.⁶⁵ “If any generalizations are possible about the nature of politics in English society at this time,” Paul Langford has claimed, “they are those which can be elicited from the excise crisis.”⁶⁶ But with the exception of J.A. Cranfield, historians have only fleetingly, hesitatingly, and parenthetically engaged with what was destructive or problematic about this deception and distortion.⁶⁷ Instead, they have brushed it aside while glamorizing the Opposition for the audacity of its efforts. Kathleen Wilson has recognized that the anti-excise argument was based upon “deliberate exaggerations.” People knew that the measure was “potentially beneficial.” But they were moved by its language and images, which “struck a chord with many urban dwellers, whose lives were

⁶⁴ Friend to the English Constitution, *The Rise and Fall of the Late Projected Excise, Impartially Consider'd* (London: J. Peele, 1733), 23; cited in Paul Boyer, “Borrowed Rhetoric: The Massachusetts Excise Controversy of 1754,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 21:3 (Jul. 1964), 336

⁶⁵ Langford, *The Excise Crisis*, 60, 61

⁶⁶ *ibid*, 3

⁶⁷ G.A. Cranfield, “The ‘London Evening Post’, 1727-44: A Study in the Development of the Political Press,” *The Historical Journal* 6:1 (1953), 20-37

already touched in unsavory ways by the intrusion of state power.”⁶⁸ She leaves it at that. Paul Langford, likewise, only occasionally alludes to the Opposition’s skullduggery, mostly to defend it. “The real intention of the opposition was to squeeze the last drop out of the anti-excite agitation and humiliate the minister still further”, Langford writes in reference to how the Opposition soldiered on after Walpole dropped the bill.⁶⁹ But Langford fails to consider the effect that this might have had on the nation’s attitude to its own political culture. The idea of excise as an overgrown monster, he writes, was “accepted by the country at large because it seemed to suit existing realities and future dangers as well as ancient prejudices.”⁷⁰ But there is much to suggest that the people of England were aware of the fact that they were being deceived. The scheme, the Quaker grocer William Stout wrote in his diary, was “approved of...by most prudent and impartial people”, but the Jacobites and the disaffected “represented it to the people as if they were about to excise all eatables and clothes.”⁷¹ The idea that the excise scheme was accepted by the nation at large is one of the most powerful of all fictions concerning 1733. This was a fiction that was aggressively propounded by the Opposition press: “We may easily judge from the *Voice of the People* what are the *genuine Sentiments of the People*”, *The Craftsman* proclaimed in 1734.⁷² But this claimed correspondence between a person’s voice and sentiments discounts the effects of such prospective pressures as conformity, which could be enforced through violence – Langford himself writes of the many who thought it “safer to

⁶⁸ *ibid*, 129

⁶⁹ *ibid*, 87

⁷⁰ Here he cites *The Craftsman* (20 Jan 1733), 162

⁷¹ J. Harland, ed., *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster. Wholesale and Retail Grocer and Ironmonger, A Member of the Society of Friends* (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1851), 122

⁷² *The Craftsman*, (25 May, 1734)

vote against or not vote at all.”⁷³ Riots, instructions, and pageants do not prove the nation to have been genuinely unanimous in its opposition – if anything, they help explain why dissenting voices did not speak up: they were immobilized by fear of the consequences.

Langford also ignores, or dismisses as ministerial apologists, those who *did* speak up. But these attacks of skullduggery are enormously interesting for being so ideologically formative, and for what they reveal about how attention was persistently refocused upon the mind. The Opposition also evoked the mind, but in *this* case, a rational and critical observer was more likely to believe the Counter-Opposition. These Counter-Oppositional texts thus explain how the value of thinking was solidified and hardened in 1733-4. One Counter-Oppositional pamphlet quoted a letter from one merchant to another: “Some of those that have made the greatest Clamour in Publick, have in private Conversation, talking of the *Tobacco* Trade, assur’d me, they thought it would be much better for them if it is prudently *excised*...But the rash, the heady and noisy, and their Followers, the *Mob*, do not think at all.”⁷⁴ Their inability to think was related, in this passage, as it was in the pamphlet on pusillanimous dissenters, to their need to conform: “I do solemnly and in good Earnest assure that *Seven in Eight* of our Clamourers at an *Excise* are a set of stubborn noisy Sheep following one another.”⁷⁵ The importance of thinking was elsewhere articulated as an indispensable survival strategy, without which it would be impossible to stay

⁷³ Langford, *The Excise Crisis*, 72

⁷⁴ *The Genuine Thoughts of a Merchant: Shewing, That in All the Libels, Remonstrances, and Pretended Letters against A New Method of Levying the Duties on Tobacco and Wine, There is Not So Much as One Word Worth Answering* (London: J. Roberts, 1732/3), 20

⁷⁵ *ibid*

afloat in the turbulent sea of misrepresentations. “Much Art and Declamation,” opined the author of *Englishmen’s Eyes Open’d*, had been “exercised, to infuse a most horrid and frightful Idea of harmless *Excisemen*, into the Minds of the Scum and Dregs of the People; nor is it to be doubted but such florid Rhodomontades have had their desired Effect upon narrow and jejune Minds.”⁷⁶ This pamphlet was elitist in tone, but it is nevertheless significant for its active promotion of critical thinking, as suggested, for instance, by its invocation of the “clear-headed Man.”⁷⁷ Nor can this invocation be dismissed as artifice – the value of clear thinking was, in fact, assiduously substantiated and demonstrated. “The violent Opposition of some *Merchants*, and warm-headed disaffected *Senators*, is not an infallible Characteristic that the Scheme was bad,” this author acknowledged, and only then proceeded to show how it *was*, in fact, bad.⁷⁸ The Opposition’s rhetoric was dissected and deconstructed:

By the Term *Publick* is plainly meant the whole Community, or collective Body of the People, but if the *Publick* be confin’d, as that Author would have it only to signify the *Customers* of the *Vintner*, then indeed every *Vintner* has a Republick to himself, and by cheating them, he only cheats his own Republic, and not the general Community. Wonderful Reasoning truly!⁷⁹

This is, perhaps, a genuinely sensible interpretation of the contradictory uses of the word “public” in 1733, and lends credence to this author’s repeated invocation of thinking. Also crucial is the pro-thinking sensibility that generally suffuses the pamphlet. It begins with a dialogue between a Merchant and a

⁷⁶ *Englishmen’s eyes Open’d; Or, All Made to See, Who Are Not Resolv’d To Be Blind: Being the Excise Controversy Set in a New Light; Completely Discuss’d Upon the Just Principles of Reasoning, And Brought to a Fair and Demonstrative Conclusion: Between a Landholder, And a Merchant* (London: J. Wilford, 1734), 12-13

⁷⁷ *ibid*, 13

⁷⁸ *ibid*, 23

⁷⁹ *ibid*, 48

Landsman. When the former begins to recognize the latter's side of the argument, he makes the following assertion:

I begin to be diffident of my own Opinion, when a *Gentleman* of a cool Way of Thinking, exempt from every Tincture of Prejudice or Partiality, differs from me⁸⁰

The pamphlet's propagation of thinking went far beyond individual references to the act of thinking. The pro-thinking sensibility is also suggested by its author's decision to mock the merchant by portraying him, in the introductory dialogue, as a jumpy and careless thinker, and allowing the Landsman to "win" only once he had made his point clearly and coolly.

Positive ideals were only gradually, unevenly, and ambiguously forged out of negative representations. The fact that the weak mind was an object of such paranoia did not correspondingly mean that the strong mind, or the act of thinking, was always a source of celebration. There were many who believed that the English simply thought too much, and that this excess of thinking was making them depressive.⁸¹ Thoughts, in any case, were not all that passed through the mind -- emotion and will did as well. An overly strong mind could hence be equally dangerous. Hence a self-professed "apologist" for the ministry, who claimed to have assumed this role "with the sole View of conducting somewhat to the *Public Good*, by doing common Justice to *Them*," declaimed how the Opposition argued "by applying to *Passions* and *Prejudices*, which make Fools of us all, when they grew too headstrong for the *Judgment*, as they too often do,

⁸⁰ *ibid*, 4

⁸¹ See Helen Deutsch, "Symptomatic Correspondence: The Author's Case in Eighteenth-Century Britain" *Cultural Critique* 42 (Spring, 1999), and Angus Gowland, "The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy," *Past and Present*, 91 (2006), 77-120

especially when assisted by *artful Fomentation*.”⁸² The mind, in this sense, was theoretically integrated into Augustan sensibilities of balance and moderation, wherein any kind of excess, including excessive strength, was dangerous.

The moral authority of the Counter-Opposition was bolstered by the notion that the Opposition was now itself somehow hegemonic, and perpetuating its tyranny with obfuscation. The Opposition aided this along by manufacturing a sense of its own power. Any kind of opposition was portrayed as morally self-reinforcing, whatever its substance. This is exemplified by the sixteenth of *Common Sense* creator George Lyttleton’s phenomenally successful 1735 *Letters from a Persian in England to a Friend in Isphahan*.⁸³ A party system was described being as powerful as it was destructive and as destructive as it was regenerative.⁸⁴ Even at its most destructive, an opposition was better than an establishment: “let the Consequences of Resistance be what they wou’d, they can produce nothing worse than a confirm’d and establish’d Servitude: But generally such a Ferment in a Nation throws off what is most oppressive to it, and settles by Degrees, into a better and more eligible State.”⁸⁵ The defense of a party system and political freedom segued organically into an ebullient celebration of opposition, which, in turn, transmuted into an encomium upon *the* Opposition. Lyttleton’s Persian inspired a number of rejoinders, which combined partisan attempts to uphold the *status quo* with politically unspecific attacks upon the logic and style of the rhetoric. This was the case in *The Persian Strip’d of his*

⁸² [Anon] *An Apology for Ministers of State. Or, The Rudiments of Modern Patriotism* (London: J. Roberts, 1736), 3

⁸³ George Lyttleton, *Letters from a Persian in England, to his Friend at Isphahan* (London: J. Millan, 1735)

⁸⁴ *ibid*, 173-4

⁸⁵ *ibid*, 174

Disguise: Or, Remarks on a Late Libel (London: T. Cooper, 1735), the author of which was clearly rankled by Lyttleton's anti-monarchical bias, but also by a legitimate impatience with his illogic. The supposed "Persian", as the rebutter pointed out, had alternately praised the English people as glorious (when contrasting them with their governors) and derided them as pitiful (when equating them with their rulers). The rebutter fixated upon this inconstancy, and then commented upon it sardonically: "But see the force of the *Truth!* If an Enemy to the *Government* can speak these Things, they must be *true*."⁸⁶ Here he zeroed in on the sense of moral authority that Opposition routinely bestowed upon itself. Later he expressed his frustration with Lyttleton's arrogance: how the "Persian" had managed to "lay it down as Truth – that the *Friends* of the *Government* are the *Enemies* of the *Constitution*."⁸⁷ The success of Lyttleton's text, combined with its arrogance, and its patently spurious logic, reinforced the intensity of its rebutter's frustration, which, in turn, bolstered its contempt for the "unthinking" audience. It was because of such deceptions that texts like these needed to be "confuted, and exposed in a true light, as often as they are *repeated*; lest their being put into a *new Dress* may captivate and deceive some unthinking people."⁸⁸ The fear of an unthinking people was thus amplified by a rising consciousness of the power of the print to repeat fallacies, either logical or empirical. But the pamphlet also earned itself some moral capital by resting its invocation of thinking with a successful dissection of the rhetoric of obfuscation.

⁸⁶ *The Persian Strip'd of his Disguise: Or, Remarks on a Late Libel* (London: T. Cooper, 1735), 43

⁸⁷ *ibid*, 4

⁸⁸ *ibid*

The brewing indignation with the Patriot Opposition sometimes resulted the *glorification* of entities that *were* able to think: the minds of the deceived were not, that is, necessarily blamed for the efforts of the deceivers. The titular figure of the 1735 *Life of Mother Gin* was a metaphor for the public opinion, the press, or “Voice and Affections of the People”: powerful, moveable, and independent.⁸⁹ This was a cynical, satirical text, but its cynicism was leveled against those who used the media for their political advantage, and also against a particular kind of political discourse. “Speeches and Pamphlets,” the biographer of Gin remarked, “may be answered by other Speeches and Pamphlets, but I think there is no answering a Ballad.”⁹⁰ As the narrative proceeded, Mother Gin was progressively revealed as outsmarting those that had tried to claim her as their own – Whigs, Tories, and Patriots. She was never really moved by the Patriots, as men who switched sides could never be trusted, however excessive the praises bestowed upon her. Even when she appeared to serve the Patriots, her efforts in this regard were sufficiently faint for the “most incurious Observer” to “easily perceive” that her “Heart...was never intirely with them.”⁹¹ She was hard to impress for being possessed with so much common sense:

The Strange Inconsistency and Contradiction that appeared in the Conduct of those gentlemen could not be otherwise reconciled to common Sense.⁹²

Common Sense, of course, was the shibboleth of the Patriot Opposition, as suggested, for instance, by Henry Fielding’s *Pasquin*, in which the following

⁸⁹ [Anon] *The Life of Mother Gin; Containing a True and Faithful Relation of Her Conduct and Politicks, In All the Various and Important Occurrence of State* (London: W. Webb, 1736), 30

⁹⁰ *ibid*, 19

⁹¹ *ibid*, 24

⁹² *ibid*, 25

exchange ensued when Queen Common Sense, protesting against the influx of pantomimes and harlequins, asked the Queen Ignorance why her subjects complained so much:

Queen Ignorance: They say you do impose a Tax of Thought Upon their Minds, which they're too weak to bear.

Queen Common Sense: Wouds't thou from Thinking then absolve Mankind?⁹³

But the fact that the Patriot Opposition also appropriated the idea of Common Sense does not, if *Life of Mother Gin* is any indication, mean that it had *run away* with the idea, as Sophia Rosenfeld has suggested. *The Life of Mother Gin* was a Counter-Oppositional text, not a ministerial one – it was authored, after all, by a figure calling itself the “Impartial Hand” – and it embodied, in its trenchant critique of the nation’s political culture, doubts that were manifest whether or not they were expressed. Again and again, Rosenfeld’s own partisanship is betrayed by sentences like the following: “Apologists for the ministerial party sputtered with indignation in short-lived publications such as *The Nonsense of Common-Sense*.”⁹⁴ But was common sense not, in fact, distorted by the Opposition that endeavored to blame the ministry – as opposed to commercial vitality and the explosion of consumerism across class barriers – for pantomimes, raree-shows, and every other sign of the peoples’ supposed mental enervation? If we assume that the English – some among the English, at least – were intelligent enough to decipher the innuendo of the Opposition, we are better equipped to find an explanation for their resentment of the Opposition.

⁹³ Henry Fielding, *Pasquin: A dramattick satire on the times: being the rehearsal of two plays* (London: J. Watts, 1736), 56

⁹⁴ Rosenfeld, “Before Democracy,” *ibid*

The antipathies against the Opposition intensified as the decade progressed. Like the excise crisis of 1733, the Spanish depredations affair of 1738-40 sharpened beliefs about the weak-mindedness of the people. These beliefs, in turn, continued to center public attention around the mind and its functions. Philip Woodfine captures the feeling of these years with beautiful precision: "A sense of disillusioned moralism is the characteristic note of those who looked back, even over the space of only a few years, to the end of the Walpole ministry and the often hysterical campaign against Spanish depredations."⁹⁵ But what Woodfine calls a "moral hangover" was not a *post-facto* epiphenomenon of the skullduggery: it is preceded by the efforts of relatively sober observers, from the Walpoles themselves to obscure anonymous merchants, all of whom sought to intervene in the hysteria while it was still occurring. "In the mean time," wrote Horatio Walpole, prematurely bestowing encomium upon the Convention treaty, "the Minds of the People, that have so villainously been inflamed, will be calmed, and their Heat gradually subside, when they see something is fully and effectually already done." For Opposition propagandists, he sarcastically continued, this was "the great Crime of the Convention, that it will tend to quiet the Peoples Minds; a Thought not to be born by those who can't live but in Storms."⁹⁶ As early as 1736, the Patriots' disapproval of "*Pacifick Measures*" had driven one self-professed apologist for the ministry to declaim the "*Species of Scandal and Abuse*" that were "spread about, to amuse weak and giddy Minds, and divert them from a *calm, unprejudiced Enquiry*."⁹⁷ Ministerial writers were not

⁹⁵ Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories*, 240, 242

⁹⁶ Horatio Walpole, *The Convention Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of the Enemies of Our Peace* (London: J. Roberts, 1739), 22

⁹⁷ [Anon] *An Apology for Ministers of State. Or, the Rudiments of Modern Patriotism*

alone in drawing direct links between a rapidly degenerating political culture and overly free press. The psychic trajectory from an introspective awareness of deception to reification of the importance of “sense” in public discourse is suggested by a 1739 author calling himself “Merchant Retir’d”, who derided his fellow merchants for having been “blind to their own Interest” and all too easily convinced to support a war that would avert only “*imaginary* Dangers.”⁹⁸ He laid the blame equally with the machinations of the propagandists – “*City-Deluders*”, “*City Deceivers*” – and the merchants’ own intellectual recalcitrance:

Let any thing be writ to prevent their Deception, and this with ever so much Modesty, good Sense, and Strength of Argument, ‘tis condemn’d even without Perusal, while inflammatory Invectives, Falshood, and Misrepresentation are pleasantly attended to, and gravely applauded.⁹⁹

The text began with an implicit yet forceful statement of the merits of *thinking*:

“Nothing can give a greater Concern to a thinking and dispassionate Man...than to find so many of the most important Subjects of the Community dissatisfied with those Measures that have been so steddily pursued, by the present Administration.”¹⁰⁰ Like *Life of Mother Gin*, this text is suggestive of the need to distinguish between governmental rhetoric, pro-governmental rhetoric, and rhetoric that simply happened to share the government’s opinion of things. The merchant clearly supported the government, but also professed his removal from the government: “I am as independent of Courts,” he insisted, “and as little

(London: J. Roberts, 1736), 25

⁹⁸ Merchant Retir’d, *An Address to the Merchants of Great-Britain: Or, A Review of the Conduct of the Administration, With Regard to Our Trade and Navigation: Shewing How the Trading Interest Have been Imposed Upon By the Enemies of the Ministry: With a Justification of the Convention Agreed Upon Between Britain and Spain* (London: J. Roberts, 1739), 8, 13

⁹⁹ *ibid*, 2

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, 1

known to Men in Power as any of you."¹⁰¹ He did not oppose the Opposition press for being an Opposition press, but for abusing its very important role by crying wolf: "If we treat all alike, the Press, I fear, will stand us in little stead when we have the greatest Occasion to exert it."¹⁰²

Lines might be drawn between the 1730s and another period in English history: 1753, when the Jewish Naturalization Act, which would have granted rights of citizenship to a handful of wealthy Jews with firm roots in England, was attacked and defeated by the same Opposition newspapers. The intimate relationship between intolerance and populism was evoked by the *London Evening Post*: "what some call the VOICE OF THE PEOPLE, others will call CLAMOUR" it predicted, before going on to use the discourse of liberty – the freedom of the people, the freedom of press – to virulently oppose the government's attempt to restrain the newspaper for its anti-Semitic hate-mongering.¹⁰³ The Jew Bill, like the excise crisis or the Spanish affair, provoked a wave of commentary about the nature of the English popular mind. One pro-Bill writer directed his pamphlet to "All Persons whose Minds are not stifled by the fumes of Passion and Prejudice," and described the opposition with utter contempt: "We see how they have made this *Naturalization* a Specious Pretext, or rather, I may say, a mere Bug Bear to inflame the Country, to set it in an Uproar, to seduce the minds of the Silly, and Ignorant with monstrous fables touching the *Jews*, which, it is certain, no Man of Sense can Suppose to have any other

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, 4

¹⁰² *ibid*, 3

¹⁰³¹⁰³ *London Evening Post* (21 August, 1753), cited in G. A. Cranfield, "The *London Evening Post* and the Jew Bill of 1753," *The Historical Journal* 8 (1965): 16–30, 29

existence in their own idle brain-sick fancies."¹⁰⁴ This led organically to an extensive commentary upon the print culture of the age, and further panic-stricken declamations of the peoples' weak-mindedness. "The minds of the Populace" were "easily led aside by reports" which they "never failed to construe in the worst Sense."¹⁰⁵ These "pious frauds" could "only entangle weak minds in their Snares."¹⁰⁶ Again, indignation raised by skullduggery transmuted into colorful yet generic attacks on the minds of the people. Equally incensed was a more overtly pro-governmental writer, amazed but not surprised at the "Spirit of Delusion" that was coursing through the nation, creating rifts and spreading divisions by convincing the people that the Bill would naturalize all the Jews in the world, and bring them over to England – that the Jew Act would "unhinge the Constitution."¹⁰⁷ "One would think," he wished, "that none but the Politicians of *Moorfields* could have their Heads filled with such extravagant Furniture as this." But the culprits, in fact, were the scribblers: "They are conscious, that Reason and Truth are irreconcilable Enemies to all their Schemes, and therefore they are to work upon weak Minds, with monstrous Nonsense and Contradiction."¹⁰⁸

Well into the mid-eighteenth-century, the culture of political deception kept the mind at the center of public attention. Fears of this culture were projected onto the figure of the mind, which emerged as alternately weakened,

¹⁰⁴ [Anon] *The Unprejudiced Christian's Apology for the Jews. Humbly Offered as a Reasonable Answer to the Several Arguments Lately Set Forth for the Repeal of the Jew-act* (London: printed, 1753), 7, 34

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, 37

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, 55

¹⁰⁷ [Anon] *The Motives to the Senseless Clamour Against the Act Concerning Jews Exposed; and the Act Set in a True Light* (London: M. Cooper, 1753), 3-4

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, 3

worked upon, stifled, misled – but in all these different ways it was also constructed as moldable, malleable, manipulable, dynamic, and important. These constructions were inadvertent, but they are important for two reasons. First, they created the particular image of the mind outlined above. Second, they reflected latent assumptions that were, at the same time, being brought to the fore. In his search for the origins of the modern self, Dror Wahrman chose to disregard the “articulate reflections of contemporaries” and endeavored instead to survey the widest possible range of cultural materials, “with the hope of picking up the unselfconscious traces, the unintended marks, the signs of those ‘unstructured intuitions’ that underlay people’s fundamental assumptions about who they were and who they could be.”¹⁰⁹ It is a similar desire that has driven me to survey the rhetoric of the Counter-Opposition. Like Wahrman, I believe that the historical value of any given “enunciation” is a function of the extent of its “*resonance*”: the extent to which it felt flat or was “picked up to be reproduced or mirrored or objected to or bounced around again and again.”¹¹⁰ But I disagree with Wahrman when he dismisses the value of explicit articulations. Many of the period’s commentators were like cultural historians of their own period: when they focused upon the mind and professed to explore its mechanics they also often unwittingly digested and distilled these “unstructured intuitions” in ways that are profoundly instructive, and especially when considered alongside the intuitions themselves. This is my agenda in the following pages.

Newspapers and Periodicals

¹⁰⁹ Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, xv

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, xvi

Rising fears of minds weakened by politics coincided with a revival of interest in the mind as a philosophical *subject*. These processes were related. The mind was assiduously scrutinized in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*: "it seems evident," he wrote in the introduction, "that the essence of the mind being equally unknown to us with that of external bodies, it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the observations of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations."¹¹¹ Politics was clearly one of these circumstances. The science of politics had "an intimate connexion with human nature", because of which politics was one of four sciences (the others being logic, morals, and criticism) that could import the inquired "to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind."¹¹² This led, on the one hand, to generic theories of the political mind: "men," he suggested in the essay on "The Origins of Government", "proportion their affections more to the light, under which any object appears to them, than to its real and intrinsic value."¹¹³ In an extended commentary upon the psychology of a nation at war, he expatiated upon perceptions of a successful general:

In short, every one of his faults we either endeavour to extenuate, or dignify it with the name of that virtue, which approaches it. 'Tis evident the same method of thinking runs thro' common life.¹¹⁴

Hume was not alone in responding to political tendencies with theories of

the mind. War, in fact, continually fueled an introspective interest in the nature

¹¹¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature; Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*, Vol. 1 (London: John Noon, 1739-40), 7

¹¹² *ibid*, Vol.1, 5

¹¹³ *ibid*, Vol.3, 133

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, Vol. 2, 128

of the mind. Published, like Hume's at the height of the anti-Spanish agitation in 1739-40, was another pamphlet whose investment in discovering the psychology of a nation at war manifested itself in a re-description of the human mental apparatus. "As no Man in a vehement Heat is fit to fight, though then most addicted to fighting, no People in a Rage are fit to enter into a War; for Rage implies the Absence of Consideration...Let the People upon this Occasion, consider well, whether their Passion has not been directed and sharpened, rather towards such as have hitherto studied to preserve Peace, than against those upon whom they are incited to make War."¹¹⁵ Chaos in the political realm had impelled this writer to delve into questions of the national mental make-up. In its interest in the mind, this passage, like that from the *Treatise* introduced a theme, a debate, and a myriad of questions that would stay at the center-stage for decades. More than a half century later, the specter of war with France drove Edmund Burke to expatiate upon the nature of the British peoples' minds, which could never exactly be hoodwinked into a war they did not want:

But whatever may be represented concerning the meanness of the popular spirit, I, for one, do not think so desperately of the British nation. Our minds are light, but they are not evil. We are dreadfully open to delusion and to dejection but we are capable of being animated and undeceived.¹¹⁶ There was, this suggests, a tendency for political commentary to lapse into expostulations on the nature of the human mind.

It is because the mind was both politically and philosophically interesting that the 1730s were such a crucial moment in the history of the discovery of the mind. In the following pages, I will use newspapers and periodicals to explore

¹¹⁵ [Anon] *Popular Prejudices against the Convention and Treaty with Spain, Examined and Answer'd. With Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled, Considerations Upon the Present State of Our Affairs at Home and Abroad* (London: T. Cooper, 1739), 26

¹¹⁶ Edmund Burke, *Thoughts On the Prospect of a Regicide Peace* (London: J. Owen, 1796), 16

the gray zone between philosophical inquiry and political commentary. Newspapers, in particular, vividly illustrate the porosity of the boundary between the philosophy and politics of thinking. Ideas and feelings combined in descriptions of politics as they did in those of the body or what is increasingly called the “self”, and it is at this interstice that the newspapers operated. “If our Minds are clouded with the black Vapours of *Suspicion*, every thing thing we behold will appear in false Light” an unknown writer for the pro-ministerial *Daily Courant* observed in one of the paper’s essays – upon the suspicious and jealous temper, which the paper described as a simultaneously moral and political problem.¹¹⁷ In 1733, it attacked political hypocrites, or the “present Set of Patriots (as they call themselves)” – men who joined parties that espoused principles they had long disavowed. The piece was fueled by a political energy, but the bulk of it was spent on the psychic origins and effects of these political maneuverings. The discourse of human nature and that of politics was revealed as evolving in mutual synchrony. “The People of this Island are extremely given to Change,” the letter began, and then later observed: “the Capriciousness and Instability of our Minds are aggravated and inflamed by base and malignant Passions, by Envy, by unreasonable Jealousies, by an inordinate Thrift after Power, or by Fury of Revenge.”¹¹⁸ Politics was occasion for psychological rumination, and the polemical strategies of the Patriot Opposition had, in particular, substantiated many of the paper’s more pessimistic notions of the peoples’ minds. But the bulk of the critique was leveled against the Opposition, not the people – their willful destruction of the peoples’ minds was used as

¹¹⁷ *Daily Courant*, Issue 9094, (November 28, 1730)

¹¹⁸ *Daily Courant*, Issue 5380, (July 5, 1733)

leverage against them. Consider the language of the following passage, taken from another of the journal's pieces:

I am as often disgusted with the scandalous Use they make of their Knowledge, which is never calculated to enlighten our Minds, but to imbitter our Tempers; and, by forcing of Parallels, and straining of Passages, to make the Mistakes and Miscarriages of former Governments appear so many Libels upon the present; a Practice no less base and scandalous in itself, than irrational and unargumentative as they manage it.¹¹⁹

We cannot simply *assume* that this attack on irrationality was a smoke-screen for a merely hierarchical agenda, as opposed to a genuine solicitude for enlightened minds. The Opposition was not, in this case, being attacked for being an Opposition. They were attacked for being *irrational*, not anti-governmental – for appealing to the basest instinct, not for opposing the government. The *Courant's* interest in the mind is thus revealed as an aspect of its investment in deciphering the mechanics of rhetorical deception. A rational and critical reader, to whom it would be obvious that the *Courant* itself was being precise rather than pointlessly incendiary, would most probably have been sympathetic to its argument. This, in turn, would have contributed to such a reader's investment in the mind.

A passage such as this, and a newspaper such as the *Courant*, is the analytical hinge of this chapter. 1730s newspapers were filled with such passages, and space does not exist to survey them all. But the passage is instructive for the way in which it simultaneously extended the Counter-*Opposition's* critique of the *Opposition* (as surveyed in the previous section) and channeled the general fascination with the workings of the mind that suffused through other newspapers. These other newspapers collectively provide an advantageous window into the divergent roots of the interest, and also a sense of

¹¹⁹ *Daily Courant*, Issue 4990, (April 7, 1732)

its wide-ranging effects. The mind was also perceived as a container of moral sentiment, so an inquiry into the mind was a function, in part, of the demands of a culture so self-consciously invested in redefining itself as charitable and benevolent. “The *Extensiveness* of our Benevolence,” according to a letter sent to the *Weekly Miscellany*, “will always be commensurate to the largeness of our Minds. The more contracted our Views and the more they center in our selves, the narrower, the meaner and the more indigent is our Nature.”¹²⁰ Also at work was an increased propensity to gaze inwards at the self, driven by the motivation to decipher human motivations. “But we need only look into ourselves,” opined a self-named “Democritus” in a letter on the subject of free agency, sent to the *British Journal*, “to be convinc’d that the Will with all our Actions are dependant on our Ideas; for, is not every Action painted out in a Man’s Mind before he designs or wills the Execution thereof.”¹²¹

By gazing inwards, the newspapers were also helping the nation move forward. There is something markedly modern about this particular brand of interest in the mind. “Modern man is turning his attention from outward material things to his own inner processes,” Carl Jung observed in a 1933 lecture, “to me the crux of the spiritual problem today is to be found in the fascination which the psyche holds for modern man.”¹²² It cannot be said that the newspapers were turning *away* from outward things – their desire to penetrate the mind was a function of their desire to penetrate *all* things. But the connection discovered by Jung – between modernity and a desire for human self-discovery –

¹²⁰ *Weekly Miscellany*, Issue CCCLXXVI (March 8, 1740)

¹²¹ *British Journal*, Issue 113, (February 28, 1730)

¹²² Carl Jung, “The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man,” in Joseph Campbell, ed, *The Portable Jung* (New York: Penguin, 1976), 466, 476

is nonetheless salient. Current-day philosophies of mind and other ideas from the realm of cognitive science have indeed been revealed at work in eighteenth-century fiction and philosophy.¹²³ But it is not the particularity of the theory but the intensity of the interest, and the level of investment in the debate, that seems so eminently modern. The state of the “modern” mind might furthermore be clarified with an attention to what Collingwood has described as “the higher forms of mind”: “To know the world, which includes knowing itself as at once part of the world and knower of the world, becomes the purpose upon which the activities of the mind concentrate themselves.”¹²⁴ These newspaper pieces – and, beyond, the evidence presented in this chapter as a whole – is suggestive of the mind’s increased devotion to knowing itself in both these ways: as part of the world and knower of the world. What these newspaper pieces suggest is further clarified by another Jungian idea: that “the field of consciousness...always finds its limit when it comes up against the *unknown*.”¹²⁵ The unknown, as I will show, continued to expand in this period, creating a wealth of opportunity for introspective theorization. “How weak is our Understanding, when we endeavour to penetrate into the Designs of it!” declared a newspaper piece from 1732, when translating some of contemporary French jurist Barbeyrac’s key insights on liberty of conscience.¹²⁶ It is because the mind was a field of uncertainties that an inquiry into the mind was thus conceived as potentially rewarding.

¹²³ Kramnick, “Empiricism, Cognitive Science, and the Novel”

¹²⁴ Collingwood, *The Principles of History*, 261

¹²⁵ Jung, *The Portable Jung*, 140

¹²⁶ *Read’s Weekly Journal Or British Gazetteer*, Issue 366 (March 25, 1732)

The constant influx of continental philosophy persistently generated new questions, which, in turn, fueled debates that were *covered*, as it were, by newspapers. There was a flowering of interest in the powers of the mind in religious sermons, and many relevant passages were reprinted or recapitulated in the newspapers. Minds, in the course of the process, emerged as intrinsically dynamic and ideally active. God, argued Dean Stanhope in a passage to be reprinted in the *Weekly Miscellany*, would be able “to communicate whatever Influences he sees fit, without being necessitated to make use of our bodily Organs.”¹²⁷ This passage was part of a larger debate, waged in the pages of the *Weekly Miscellany*, on the extent to which God would or would not make all of his divine interventions by acting directly upon the minds of men.¹²⁸ Female intelligence was another subject of frequent debate. In an “Apology for the Ladies”, *The Nonsense of Common-Sense* expressed its indignation at the sexism of Opposition journal *Common-Sense*, and concluded with a panegyric for women of sense: “I have some Thoughts of exhibiting a Set of Pictures of such meritorious Ladies, where I shall say nothing of the Fire of their Eyes, or the Pureness of their Complexions; but give them such Praises as befit a rational sensible Being...A beautiful Mind is a beautiful Body is one of the finest Objects shewn us by Nature.”¹²⁹ The contest between *Common Sense* and *The Nonsense of Common-Sense* was an epiphenomenon of a deeper cultural ferment. When Dean Swift published the profoundly misogynistic poem “The Furniture of a Woman’s Mind” in a 1735 issue of *Gentleman’s Magazine*, the *London Magazine* swiftly

¹²⁷ *Weekly Miscellany*, Issue CCLVI (November 18, 1737)

¹²⁸ *Weekly Miscellany*, Issue CCCXXXIII (May 12, 1739;) and *Weekly Miscellany*, Issue CCCXLVI, (August 11, 1739)

¹²⁹ *The Nonsense of Common-Sense*, No. 6 (January 24, 1738), reprinted in *The London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer* 7 (January 1738), 32

published a retort where Swift was himself accused of being “morose and stupid”: “you...make our sex such monstrous fools,/ That were all men to think like you,/ A chaos must of course ensue.”¹³⁰ The debate itself was the outward manifestation of a larger social conflict that organized itself around the figure of the mind. By recycling ideas from a myriad of genres – philosophical, theological, sociological – newspapers (and periodicals) multiplied the reach of the debate and also, by extension, the conflict.

There were patterns, despite the conflict. If there was a common thread running through these debates, it was the notion that all minds should be kept as active as possible. A then-recent spate of articles on the topic of self-love, prime amongst them the work of “that illustrious *Frenchman*” de Rochefoucault, drove the *Daily Gazetteer* to declare: ““We must remember that the Mind of Man is capable of prodigious Improvement, and that tho’ the Structure of Men’s Minds differ widely, yet they differ not more than Soils, which are all capable of some Sort of Cultivation, and are only barren through the Negligence or Ignorance of those to whom they belong.”¹³¹ The theatrical journal *Prompter*, which was coauthored by Aaron Hill and William Popple, evinced great concern about the connection between mental agility and mental activity. In 1734, it wondered about the providential blessing that was temperamental variety, or “*The Desire implanted in our Minds, of enjoying one thing above another, since the Want of such a Desire would either make the Mind sicken thro’ INACTION, and grow a Burthen*

¹³⁰ Dean Swift, “The Furniture of a Woman’s Mind,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* 5 (February, 1735); “To the Author of a Poem Call’d The Furniture of a Woman’s Mind,” *London Magazine ,Or, Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer* 4 (April, 1735), 211

¹³¹ *Daily Gazetteer*, Issue 914 (June 8, 1738)

to itself, or the SURFEIT in the contrary.”¹³² An “ecclesiastical wrestler” known to write for the *Grub Street Journal* was attacked by a later issue of the newspaper for his refusal to brook any Opposition: “THERE Cannot be invented an *Exercise*, more conducive to the *Health* of our *Minds*, than the Labour, the Contest, the TRIED *Strength*, of our *Understandings*.”¹³³

This is a mere sampling of what newspapers provided by way of philosophical commentary, and can only begin to redress the erroneous scholarly misrecognition that newspapers were necessarily negative or conservative. “What was uplifting,” writes Hannah Barker, “occupied less space in English-language periodicals than what was profitable. Their frankly economic orientation, evident at one level in their highly entrepreneurial mode of operation, governed thematic operation as well.”¹³⁴ An inverse relationship between the profitable and the uplifting has limited explanatory power, and especially when confronted by the sheer diversity of themes covered by the different newspapers. The newspaper was a capitalist operation but also a forum for the exchange of ideas and intellectual development. “The city was his soil,” Peter Gay has written of the *philosophe*, “it nourished his mind and transmitted his message.”¹³⁵ The newspapers, to extend this metaphor, were a critical ingredient of this fertile soil, nourishing the minds of the not-quite-*philosophes* and somewhat-*philosophes* that were amongst their readers. Not only did they

¹³² *Prompter*, Issue XI, (December 17, 1734)

¹³³ *Prompter*, Issue CVII, (November 17, 1735)

¹³⁴ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 4, 121

¹³⁵ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 15

transmit the message, they were *part* of the message – the message being one of a mentally overstimulated society.

Theatre and Music

In sum, newspapers and periodicals are suggestive of at least three developments: first, the belief that the mind was *worth* examining; second, that it *could* be discovered; and third, that it had yet to be discovered – that much about it remained unknown. The belief that it was worth discovering was a product, in part, of the fear of its weakness; the sense of its unknowability expanded as the material, social, cultural phenomena that were thought to be mental stimulants themselves proliferated and diversified, causing it to behave in a myriad of different ways. Both are relatable to the political culture of the 1730s, but also to the vibrant cultures of consumerism and myriad forms of representation associated with the metropolis. “The mind is a kind of theatre,” Hume would declare in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, “where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations.”¹³⁶ There was, I will suggest, something very felicitous about this metaphor, given the importance both of the substance of theatrical entertainments and the fact of their proliferation for the theories of the mind that emerged in this period.

If newspapers were mirrors for minds then the city at large was a hall of mirrors in which images of minds were bounced back and forth. Minds and, more generally, the subject of thinking and sense appeared frequently upon the London stage. A fear of the city was expressed in the epilogue of *The Salopian*

¹³⁶ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Volume I, 439

Esquire: "Heaven's preserve the People's Understanding that live in the two opulent Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, for a Man of good Sense is almost as hard to be found as a white Elephant."¹³⁷ The fear of urban entertainments was combined, in this passage, with that of the minds of a new body of urban consumers. The fact that these consumers also constituted the play's own audience suggests that this statement might have been ironic. The hyperbolic grandstanding – clearly a man of good was *not* as rare as a white elephant – also suggests that the playwright was only half-serious. The city might have been senseless, but so was the idea of senselessness.

If the fear of consumerism was laughable, it is because it was also *real*. In this period, it was persistently reproduced. Plays thrived upon anxieties generated by the perceived popularization of music, as attested, for instance, by *The Salopian Esquire*, where senselessness was attributed to the "Misfortune" that in "late Years" had been the tendency of people who had it "in their Power to encourage Men of Sense and Genius" to "court Fiddlers to play them *Italian* Tunes" and then, when they were done, "beg they would please to except of Fifty Guineas."¹³⁸ This passage – also somewhat of an exaggeration – is deeply connected to a socio-cultural reality. From the 1690s onwards, no city was more lucrative for a musician than London.¹³⁹ In the early eighteenth-century, Richard Leppert has argued, "The appetite for music in England was great; the fear of

¹³⁷ E. Dower, *The Salopian Esquire: Or, the Joyous Miller* (London: printed and sold at most booksellers, and at all the pamphlet shops in town, 1739), 87

¹³⁸ 76

¹³⁹ John Harley, *Music in Purcell's London: the Social Background* (London: D. Dobson, 1968)

satisfying that appetite was perhaps still greater.”¹⁴⁰ It is in this context that the fiddler became such a cliché amongst icons of decline. Like the “lustful bugging Jew” stereotype of the Exclusion Era, the fiddler was a Pied Piper-like figure whose ability to entice the nation’s degenerate youth to their inevitable doom focused concerns about the weakness of their minds.¹⁴¹ The metropolitan fiddler figured prominently in plays, where he embodied the wave of rampant profligacy that appeared to have taken over the city. “When People are arriv’d to such a Profusion of Folly as to throw away all their Time upon Sound,” remarked a character in Opposition playwright James Miller’s *Hospital for Fools*, “and their Mony on Pipers and Fiddlers, the World will be as little indebted to their Understandings, as their Understandings are to their own ears.”¹⁴² “The next wise Age will all be __Fiddlers Sons,” Robert Dodsley declared in the epilogue to his massively successful 1735 dramatic satire *The Toy-Shop* (thirty-four performances and seven editions in its first year alone).¹⁴³ For Dodsley, this meant that his age was one of passion, not reason: “so divinely wrapt in Songs and Tunes...And did he think plain Truth wou’d Favour find? / Ah! ‘tis a Sign he little knows Mankind!”¹⁴⁴ The fear of music was itself a product of the fear of the passions and, by extension, the reason/passion debate. The specter of people throwing their money at fiddlers became, in this context, a sign that the passions

¹⁴⁰ Richard Leppert, “Social Order and the Domestic Consumption of Music (The Politics of Sound in the Policing of Gender Construction in 18th-Century England),” *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object*, A. Bermingham and J. Brewer, eds. (London: Routledge, 1995), 514

¹⁴¹ Jeremy Webster, “The ‘Lustful Bugging Jew’: Anti-Semitism, Gender, and Sodomy in Restoration Political Satire,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 6:1 (2006), 106-124, 108, 118

¹⁴² James Miller, *An Hospital for Fools* (London: J. Watts, 1739), (17).

¹⁴³ Robert Dodsley, *The Toy-shop* (London: Lawton Gilliver, 1735)

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*

were gaining ground. As the mind was primarily associated with reason and the body with the passions, the fiddler perpetually functioned to remind urban spectators of the weakness of their own minds.

The plays were complicit in the tendencies they were satirizing: the commercialization of all things trifling – that is, non-religious, non-political, and hence fundamentally unserious. All this suggests why the architects of moral panic would never succeed in a city like London, which was not about to relinquish its vibrant consumerism, however much fun it made of it. It is because the city was awash with consumerism that these satires were so appealing. And it is because the panic-mongers failed that the fiddling – and everything it represented – continued. This, in turn, generated further panic. The mind was thus kept at the center of public attention.

The plot of *The Toy-Shop* illustrates this point. The play proceeded as its protagonist, the toy-shop owner, regaled his constant stream of customers – aristocrats, ladies, beaux – with extended commentaries upon the moral worth of the patently trifling objects that he was trying to sell. The fact that this play was so successful suggests that its audiences found this all very funny, rather than grave or serious. If they were laughing, they were also laughing at themselves, because it was making fun of people just like them – at the experience in which they were participating, and to which they could relate. The age was described as trifling: “Men read none but trifling Authors, pursue none but trifling Amusements, and contend for none but trifling Opinions.”¹⁴⁵ But surely *The Toy-Shop* was itself, by any criteria, a trifling play. If this was, as the last stanza stipulated, a “gay thoughtless Age,” it was because of the culture of consumption

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, 7

and the fear of too much noise – in both of which the play, and its audiences, were complicit. “Surely the World is a great Toy-shop, and all its Inhabitants run mad for Rattles,” the protagonist opined in an utterance that best captures the sensibility of the play – lightly mocking but ultimately forgiving of the unrestrained surrender to the trivial that apparently now characterized urban life.¹⁴⁶ Modernity, in a way, was tacitly accepted, and the interest in the mind – widely perceived as one of its major casualties – was perennially sustained.

The images of minds constructed by newspapers were reflected upon the stage, and then refracted again in the newspapers, where the mind weakened by the stage was examined in greater detail.. *Prompter* in 1734 asked “why the MIND shou’d not *languish*, under the pitiful, thin Regimen of OPERA; and, on the Contrary, grow *stronger*, and more *martial*, when it feeds upon *substantial* Nourishment.”¹⁴⁷ The upsurge of recent fashions drove the *Opposition periodical Common Sense* to suggest that “The Mind is at no Time so apt to receive Impressions of any Sort as when it is *soften’d* by Diversions; -- whatever is stamp’d upon it at such Times leaves a deep Mark behind it.”¹⁴⁸ John Locke was quoted and allusions were made to the disturbing – yet thankfully evanescent – obsession with Italian opera. The fear of the weak mind was thus concentrated by urban entertainments and propagated by urban newspapers. Again, it is interesting that this act of polemical warfare against musical entertainments (music, throughout the essay, was treated with fear and revulsion) was staged upon the figure of “the Mind,” in effect adding to the already vibrant body of philosophical discourse, also disseminated through newspapers, on the same

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, 21

¹⁴⁷ *Prompter*, Issue XIV, December 27, 1734

¹⁴⁸ *Common Sense or The Englishman’s Journal*, Issue 73 (June 24, 1738)

topic.

The mind gained in evocative power for it could so easily be implicated in multifarious problems that were, it was believed, plaguing the metropolis. It could be used to relate the problem of *cultural* consumption to the more general problem of urban consumerism. This was a body of fears shared by the Opposition, the Counter-Opposition, and everyone in between. A 1734 letter sent to the *Grub Street Journal* began by railing against quackery: “the prodigious number of advertisements delivered out at the corners of streets and alleys... is a sufficient demonstration, that quackery was never more in vogue than in the present age.”¹⁴⁹ The latter part of the piece described “ladies and gentlemen of the first distinction” getting thoroughly entertained by a raucous comic opera entitled *Chrononhotonthologos*. The heart of the essay lay in a middle paragraph, in which the author asked the Parliament to “provide for the sanity and health of our minds and morals; which would generally draw after it the consequences of sound bodies.” It was “problems” specific to the commercial metropolis – quacks and comic operas – that drove this author to direct his readers’ attention to the health of the mind.

This passage also suggests a gray zone between the bilious irritation of the conservative curmudgeon and the earnest solicitude of the enlightened social commentator. The idea of betterment, evoked when this author asked for Parliament to provide for the minds and morals, occupied that zone like none other. The culture of print was glutted with such declarations. “Diversion,” according to an eminently obscure (yet thrice-reprinted) 1733 diatribe against the Manchester races, “ought to consist of means that will contribute to the health of

¹⁴⁹ *Grub Street Journal*, Issue 221, (March 21, 1734)

our Bodies, or the improvement of our minds; neither of which can justly be said of these Races.”¹⁵⁰ Combined with *The Grub Street Journal*, this pamphlet suggests a process of convergence wherein the very variety of life that characterized the eighteenth-century city – novelty, in all its bewildering variety – persistently refocused attention upon the gravely imperiled minds of the nation. The tone of the passage was certainly moralistic, elitist, and conservative, but it also evinces a certain striving for human and national betterment that was not *essentially* conservative. There is an enormously porous boundary where this author’s solicitude for minds and bodies comes together with the overwhelming interest in “the improvement or ornament of the human mind” that defines David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*.¹⁵¹ In the depth of its concern for mental improvement, this pamphlet, like the previously quoted passage from *Grub-Street Journal*, might be attributed to a deeper shift in “unstructured intuitions” that can be given the name of “the English Enlightenment.”

Ten years later, this process continued. “Amongst all the curious disquisitions that have engaged the attention of philosophers,” according to a 1750 article in the *London Magazine*, “none has more perplexed them than the inquiry into the nature of the human soul, or how far the mind is actuated or directed by the frame or disposition of the body.”¹⁵² There was a way in which the mind was the largest of all topics – often it seemed, too large a topic, and hence an unviable topic. But the piece itself made an explicit effort to define the

¹⁵⁰ John Byrom, *A Serious Disswasive from an Intended Subscription, For Continuing the Races Upon Kersal Moore. Address’d to the Inhabitants of Manchester*. Third Edition (Manchester: R. Whitworth, 1733), 7

¹⁵¹ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 5

¹⁵² “The Cause, Nature, and Happy Effects of the Presence of Mind,” *London Magazine, Or, Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer* 19 (June, 1750), 265

parameters of the mind as subject. The mind was explicitly distinguished from the soul (which encompassed body and mind) and the brain (which contained the mind). A healthy mind – as exemplified, for instance, by *presence of mind* – was described as a *symptom* of sobriety and a *source* of dignity, honor, reverence, pleasure, and plenty. The mind had become the figurative space where a myriad of ideals continued to converge, interpenetrate, and reverberate – and thus it remained an object and catalyst of Enlightenment. To explain how this Enlightenment happened, I have suggested that we must depart momentarily from the sphere of formal philosophy and into those of political and urban culture.

Conclusion

Preaching in 1720, Edward Calamy proclaimed as unreasonable all “discontented Complaints of the present, compar’d with former Times.”¹ Yet this was not because his age was lacking in problems. It could not be pretended, Calamy observed,

but that the Weakness of some and the Baseness of others, has of late given such a Shock to Publick Credit as that it will require Time, and Care, and Pains, and Application to settle it upon such a Basis as we can reasonably hope and expect will be firm and lasting.²

The new problems of a commercial society required new solutions:

For the Times are, what the Men are that live in them: And therefore in order to the mending of the times, Men must mend themselves.³

It is this process of *mending* that has interested me, in writing this dissertation.

The fear of what Calamy called “the Weakness of some and the Baseness of others” was, I have suggested, the catalyst of intellectual production on a significant scale: a critical catalyst of Enlightenment.

I will engage, in the first section of this conclusion, with the work of other historians as I offer what I believe is a better way of thinking about the Enlightenment.

The issues raised by this dissertation suggest a number of areas in need of more scholarly attention. The second section of this conclusion will focus upon two of these areas.

¹Edmund Calamy, *Discontented Complaints of the Present Times Prov’d Unreasonable: In a Sermon Preach’d at Rotherhith, On the Anniversary of King George’s Coronation* (London: printed for John Clark, 1720), 13, 27, 28

² *ibid*, 20-1

³ *ibid*, 21

Section One: Summary and Historiography

“Before the 1980s,” writes John Robertson, “English historians had been inclined to accept Tocqueville’s view that the Enlightenment was something England had not needed, since its public life was already open to the participation of men of letters.”⁴ This is a view with which Robertson agrees. But Enlightenment, as Robertson also points out, was more than just a republic of letters: it was an intellectual movement substantively defined by the spirit of advancement, the participants in which routinely lobbied for betterment, change, and rebirth in the secular world. I am, as I write in the Introduction to this dissertation, in basic agreement with Robertson when I define the Enlightenment as the concentrated historical actualization of the belief that intellectual production and, in particular, a critical engagement with evolving realities was required in order to effect positive change in the temporal world. I also agree that this spirit was borne out of a need for improvement. But I disagree with Robertson about the part of Britain that constitutes England – as I do predominately focus upon England. The English, he has claimed, did not feel that they *needed* improvement in any significant way: “Most English men of letters were already confident of their liberty, and of enjoying the benefits of commerce; they evidently felt no pressing need to study them systematically.”⁵ Advancement, I argue by contrast, generated anxieties, which, in turn, fueled the desire for change and inquiry. The need for improvement was continually manufactured. “The Enlightenment,” as Daniel Gordon has written, was a term

⁴ Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 27

⁵ *ibid*, 42

used to describe “the creative energy of the eighteenth century.” Not only is this energy modern, it is contemporary: “we have inherited the spirit of the period as well as its self-descriptive terms,” Gordon has written, “for we continue to live in a time that appreciates independence, criticism, and change.”⁶ But the England (and Britain) described in this dissertation was more than just appreciative: it was *defined* by the appreciation of improvement, in all its forms. It is because they presented serious challenges that commerce and freedom alternately stretched, sharpened, and bolstered this culture’s commitment to independence, criticism, and change.

The first chapter of my dissertation tackles this problem by introducing the case of three characteristically modern phenomena: financial crisis, an over-inflated metropolis, and the transformation of natural landscapes. Each, I show, reinvigorated the desire for human betterment – in this society, not the next. The balanced, equitable, and interdependent body-politic was evoked in order to effect change. The idiom of this concern, around the conceit of mutual interdependence, was a critical sensibility of Enlightenment. Subsequent chapters develop this argument in different ways. The epiphenomena of modernity are repeatedly revealed as catalysts for intellectual production. The fear of the spleen, itself a product of commercialization and urban growth, is described in Chapter Two as productive of three enlightened desires: for activity, happiness, and a skeptical approach to certainty. Relatively secular theories of self-preservation are located, in Chapter Three, in anxieties arising out of socio-economic and cultural diversification of the metropolis. A rising commercial and

⁶ Daniel Gordon, “Introduction” in Voltaire, *Candide* ed, (New York: Bedford St. Martin’s, 1999), 4

urban constituency is described, in Chapter Four, as exploiting feelings of weakness – themselves rooted in the life of the commercial metropolis – in the propagation of a commercialistic ideology. Political freedom and commercial buoyancy are shown, in Chapter Five, to have deepened the desire for a public sphere characterized by balanced minds and clear thoughts.

Enlightenment, as Gordon has written, is defined by change, and here I have surveyed several desired forms of change: discursive change, cultural change, socio-economic change, political change. The ubiquity of change was linked to the propensity to criticize. Criticism was a catalyst of the Enlightenment, but it was also a *product* of the Enlightenment, as it emerged out of knowledge. The investment in betterment, or constructive thought, was a collective response to all forms of information, but especially, it might be argued, to the kinds of information that most vividly revealed the darker side of human nature. The English willingness to appreciate independence, criticism, and change was intrinsically related to a conspicuous propensity to confront the dark side of human affairs: crime, corruption, sensationalism, deception, disease, density, inequality, corpulence, imbalance – all of them somehow related to commercial growth, political freedom, or both. Gay has written of what he calls the “tragic humanism” of the *philosophes*: “The *philosophes* were poignantly conscious of the limitations of human effort, the brevity of human life, the pervasiveness of human suffering, men’s disappointed hopes, wasted lives, and undeserved misfortunes.”⁷⁷ But as Gay has also written: “while their view of their world was critical, and especially in religion, disruptive, they knew and loved

⁷⁷ *The Party of Humanity*, 289-90

the world they wished to change.”⁸ If they had not been tragic humanists, the Enlightenment might not have happened. Since it is Tocqueville, according to Robertson, who presumably had settled the matter of the English Enlightenment (or the lack thereof) for once and for all, it is instructive to consider what Tocqueville himself had to say about the psychological effects of commerce and democracy.

In democratic times...pleasures are more intense...and above all the number of those who partake of them is infinitely greater; but on the other hand it must be recognized that in those times, hopes and desires are more often disappointed, souls are more agitated and uneasy, and worries are keener.⁹

This dissertation has considered how the disappointment of hopes, the agitation of souls, the intensification of worries have, individually and collectively, catalyzed criticism and change, and, by extension, the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment I describe is, in all these ways, a reaction to modernity, urbanity, and freedom at the same time as it promotes them. Tim Hitchcock and Lee Davidson have identified the emergence of a *reactive* state in the early eighteenth-century – one that was “more often than not ‘reactive’ to the litany of domestic social and economic issues facing the nation, relying on those outside of central government and the legislature for information and initiative.”¹⁰ The Enlightenment described in this dissertation was reactive to problems such as inequality and over-extension, but also to the uncertainties generated by efforts at solving these problems. The Enlightenment, in other words, was *sustained* because of the enduring absence of easy answers to questions that were rapidly intensifying in their importance. Could the most important priorities –

⁸ *ibid*, 119

⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Sanford Kessler (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 232-3

¹⁰ Hitchcock and Davidson, xv

prosperity, power, moral and social order –necessarily be reconciled? How much prosperity was too much prosperity? The use of the body – as a figurative ruse and conceptual devise – to *solve* these problems and anxieties resulted, as I also show, in the perpetual flowering of epistemological uncertainties. This, in turn, constantly fueled the torrent of intellectual production that I call “the Enlightenment.” Those who portrayed the city of London as monopolizing the nation’s resources, as discussed in Chapter One, were not necessarily being entirely untruthful, but they were, nonetheless, distorting the truth. The metaphor of the body-politic allowed them to do this, as invocations of the body were felt to be true even when they were imprecise. The resultant ambiguity opened a conceptual space that allowed the writers of this period to repeatedly diagnose the ills of the body-politic and, in doing so, emphasize interdependence. The apparent insolubility of the problem of the spleen, as I argue in Chapter Two, was enduringly productive of enlightened sensibilities of activity, happiness, and certainty – the need to produce these sensibilities contributed to these uncertainties, which made the problem of the spleen less apparently soluble and more rhetorically important. Chapter Three identifies the image of a metropolis defined above all by its temperamental diversity, and the multiple theories of restraint that emerged in this context added to this uncertainty as they vied for urban readers’ attention. The strong and suffering type, that politically useful but empirical dubious shibboleth of 1730s Opposition writers, is revealed in Chapter Four as multiplying inexorably throughout the public sphere. It is for this reason that the clear-thinking mind – one that could efficiently penetrate layers of specious rhetoric – was increasingly valued by the English (and British) in the 1730s, as I argue in Chapter Five.

Commercial modernity, I reveal throughout, was intellectually productive partly because of its paradoxical effects. Commerce and urban growth, while historically convergent, were also, in many ways, ideologically and experientially divergent. They might have happened at the same time and, moreover, *because* of each other, but their effects were contradictory, and the figures at the center of this dissertation – the body and the body-politic – enable us to arrive at a clearer picture of these contradictions.

It is because of Britain's discursive freedom that these contradictions were able to develop as they did. English men and women of letters, Robertson declares, "had to compete with writers and journalists of every level of talent and none in the great literary marketplace of London."¹¹ England, it is suggested, might have had a better chance at Enlightenment if it was a quieter, more intellectually hierarchical place – where those who expatiated upon betterment did not have to compete with the half-baked assertions of amateurish dilettantes. To a great extent, this dissertation has been invested in expanding the ranks of the enlightened and the enlighteners, or what Peter Gay has described as "a spectrum of would-be *philosophes*, half-*philosophes*."¹² Alongside the writings of divines like Edward Calamy, I have included texts as diverse as an exhaustively detailed study of the wide-ranging effects on humans and animals of a devastating winter, a pseudo-medical account of a city sunk into a deep and debilitating depression, and pamphlets exuding great indignation at the specter of potentially industrious individuals being starved to death in debtors' prisons. None of these texts was canonical. But each was fundamentally concerned with

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Gay, *The Party of Humanity*, 119

betterment – in *this* world, not the next. Each (to borrow Gordon’s definition of Enlightenment) was driven by an *individual’s* belief that he or she could effect *change* in the secular realm through *criticism*. “The *philosophes*,” as Peter Gay wrote, “battled for toleration and the humane treatment of society’s victims.”¹³ The same could be said of each of these texts. Each looked out for the victims of commercial excess or over-reaching. Each of these authors was participating in a larger process of Enlightenment, as each contributed to the formation of what Peter Gay has described as “the Enlightenment style”: “The Enlightenment of the *philosophes* was embedded in an enlightened atmosphere, a pervasive and congenial style which supplied them with some of their ideas and much of their vocabulary.”¹⁴

Not every text I have considered can equally be related to the Enlightenment. Some are presented as evidence of the raw material from which enlightened ideas were molded and formulated. The sensibilities identified by this dissertation –interdependence, self-preservation, thinking – were what Gay also calls the “subtle, fine-spun ties” by which the more eminently enlightenment – David Hume, Matthew Tindal – were tied to the more tenuously enlightened segment of the population.¹⁵ It is in this spirit that Chapter Four, for instance, explores the obsession with activity and Chapter Three surveys the countless different ideas of shame available to the inhabitants of London and Westminster, from which they were free to constitute newfound notions of sociability.

We must be wary, I have shown, of summarily attributing the Enlightenment to the enlightened. Much of the Enlightenment, as Gay has

¹³ Gay, *The Party of Humanity*, 115

¹⁴ Gay, *The Enlightenment*, 21

¹⁵ *ibid*, 24

shown, was “pushed forward by men who were hostile to its spokesmen and blind to its implications.”¹⁶ Much of Chapter Four is focused upon texts that were the opposite of enlightened in their irrational jingoism – even though they carried forth a very enlightened notion of commerce as regenerative. Enlightenment, as I argue in the subsequent chapter, emerged in opposition to the challenge this presented. “The *philosophes*,” Gay has written, “were deeply embedded in the texture of their society. Yet this did not prevent them from being at war with it at the same time.”¹⁷ The same might be said of half-*philosophes* and would-be-*philosophes* that I write of in Chapter Five. “He was rarely for or against something entirely but was usually both for and against”: Daniel Gordon’s description of Voltaire might also apply to the average British half-*philosophe* or would-be-*philosophe*.¹⁸

It might be asked: was the British Enlightenment a conservative affair? It is J.G.A. Pocock that is primarily associated with this position.¹⁹ But this is also a view that has thoroughly permeated the scholarly literature on the eighteenth century. “Enlightenment was religious in its rationale,” Jeremy Black has offhandedly declared in his conclusion to *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century*.²⁰ Gertrude Himmelfarb has lauded a conservative, paternalistic, elitist, and moralistic British Enlightenment centered around the writings of Hume, Smith, and Burke, who stressed (she has claimed) social virtues such as

¹⁶ *The Enlightenment*, 27

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Gordon, “Introduction,” 5

¹⁹ J.G. A. Pocock, “Clergy and Commerce: The Conservative Enlightenment in England,” in Raffaele Ellejo, eds, *L’Eta Dei Lumi: Studi Storici Sul Setteento Europeo in Onore di Franco Venturei* (Naples: Jovene Editori, 1985), 525-562

²⁰ Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth-Century* (Croom Helm: London, 1987), 303

compassion, benevolence, and sympathy. This was in contrast to their French counterparts, who were blindly rationalistic in their proto-totalitarianism.²¹

Jonathan Israel has echoed Himmelfarb, although he has not, like her, approved of this supposedly conservative British Enlightenment:

As the eighteenth century wore on, the British, in contradistinction especially to the French materialist Enlightenment, tended to distance itself gradually from the emancipatory, egalitarian, and republican dimensions of Enlightenment thought or, as with Tom Paine, repudiated its more forthright democrats and libertarians. As a result, British culture and thought, well before the outbreak of the American War of Independence, came to be associated (not least by Montesquieu and Voltaire who both thoroughly approved and Diderot and Mably who equally emphatically disapproved) with socially conservative attitudes and strident insistence on English-style limited monarchy, aristocracy, racial hierarchy, and empire.²²

If Montesquieu and Voltaire “approved” of this conservatism, then conservatism

and Enlightenment could hardly be antithetical. Both Israel and Himmelfarb construct parameters that restrict the spirit of Enlightenment right at the point where that spirit becomes definitive of Enlightenment: that is, right where it wrenches itself free from the limiting straightjackets of political or religious affiliation. If Enlightenment (to borrow again from Gordon and to echo Robertson) was an all-pervasive energy – a spirit of betterment that fueled independent intellectual inquiry, criticism, or change – it would not respect the conceptual parameters of what Himmelfarb defines as social virtue, or what Israel sees as emancipatory and egalitarian. The Enlightenment, in fact, was fundamentally defined with a frustration for these restrictions – by the production of a space where these restrictions, or arbitrary equations of political position and intellectual principle, might have been questioned.

²¹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: the British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York: Knopf, 2004)

²² Jonathan Israel, “Enlightenment! Which Enlightenment?,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67:3 (July, 2006), 25

Serious empirical challenges also exist to Israel's equation of Enlightenment with radical republicanism, and Himmelfarb's equation of enlightened compassion with conservatism and religious reform. Both invoke the appeal of social reformers to argue that England's social and intellectual hierarchies were mutually reinforcing. Both, in doing so, discount the presence of a powerful breed of resistance to this hierarchy. Israel and Himmelfarb both focus upon this hierarchy – but it is never clear if the hierarchy was stronger than the resistance. A repugnance at the reformers' platitudes and an acute consciousness of their failure to do what they purported to be doing seeped through a 1701 letter supposedly penned by a play-house actress protesting against the suppression of drolls in Bartholomew Fair:

A Work of such Difficulty as the Reformation of a lewd Age, is an Undertaking of such great Importance that it can move but slowly: and truly so it does, for it makes its Progression by such imperceptible Degrees, that all the Good they have been doing for this many Years, is as yet to none but themselves discernable.²³

The sentiment escalated as the decades progressed. A 1737 writer reflected upon the resistance exerted against the Societies for the Reformation of Manners: "the Treatment they met with...every where exposed to Scorn and Insult, till their Zeal and Patience were quite tired out with ill Usage; and those Societies fell into the Languishing Condition they are at present."²⁴ The reformers – the heroes of Himmelfarb's and villains of Israel's account – were not the only voices. In fact, it is not even clear that theirs was the dominant voice. Many of the period's most powerful texts – Mandeville's essay against charity schools and Swift's proposal

²³ [Anon] *The Second Volume of the Works of Monsieur Voiture, Containing his Familiar Letters to Gentlemen and Ladies...To which is added, A paquet from Will's: Or a New Collection of Original Letters on Several Subjects* (London: Sam. Briscoe John Nutt, 1705), 220

²⁴ *Daily Gazeteer*, Issue 772, (December 15, 1737)

that the Irish eat their babies – were socially hierarchical yet vitriolically resistant to the intellectually hierarchical presuppositions of the Christian social reformers.²⁵

The question of conservatism is thus deceptively complex. Conservatism, for H.T. Dickinson, was a post-Lockean concern for stability (no religious strife, faction, or civil war) and hierarchy (privileges granted to men of property, and none for the lower orders).²⁶ Does this then mean that the champions of religious toleration, who argued routinely by evoking the fear of strife and faction, were *conservative*? If they believed in toleration and were adamant for property rights, were they *more* conservative than the thief who opposed the privileges granted to the propertied, but also wanted the Jews to be run out of the country? “For conservatives,” writes Hannah Barker, “one of the problems inherent in allowing the public – as defined by readers – a voice in politics was that it was largely made up of the sort of people who could not be entrusted to govern competently, or even to advise a government wisely.”²⁷ But newspapers – presumably forms of media aimed at providing a political voice to reading publics – were themselves conservative, according to Barker. “Newspapers were not always radical or forward-looking in their outlook,” she writes, “the newspaper press could also be a powerful force of conservatism.”²⁸ So there is a form of conservatism that is inherent to the substance of particular forms of newspaper discourse, and another that militates against the very fact of newspaper discourse, and these

²⁵ See Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burthen to their Parents or the Country* (Dublin: S. Harding, 1729).

²⁶ H.T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Holmes and Meyers, 1978)

²⁷ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, 26

²⁸ *ibid*, 126

two forms of conservatism are at loggerheads. But not necessarily. “A relatively unfettered press,” writes Jeremy Black, “promoted the diffusion of conservative as well as radical opinions.”²⁹ Here we see a distinction between the kind of conservatism that is restrictive of discourse and the kind that is inherent to particular forms of discourse. But there are tensions even within the *idea* of conservative discourse. Black presupposes a clear distinction that Bob Harris (without referring to Black) has contested: “Much radicalism was also as much conservative in inspiration as progressive,” he writes, citing the Jew Bill of 1753 and the loyalist movements of 1745-46 to show that that extra-parliamentary politics was not necessarily radical, or even liberal.³⁰ The reaction to the Jew Bill revealed a number of unsavory impulses latent within English culture – sexism, xenophobia, jingoism, intolerance – but modern-day conservatives might balk at their classification as “conservative”. Elsewhere, Black writes that the government did not need to coerce and manipulate the press, because of the “strength of the social system and the conservative social and religious ideology of the period.”³¹ Here he cites Geoffrey Holmes, Ian Christie, and J.C.D. Clark. This dissertation is partly designed to prevail against the assumption that went into the making of this statement – namely, that a “conservative” government would have no cause to oppose a “conservative social and religious ideology.” Black simply discounts the possibility that an anti-populist conservatism could be driven by fears of a conservative populism.

Perhaps we cannot do without categories of “liberal” and “conservative.” But we *can* be conscious, when we use them, of their fundamental instability: the

²⁹ *The English Press, 1689-1800*, 46

³⁰ *ibid*, 50

³¹ *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century*, 152-3

fact that different forms of conservatism exerted pressure upon each other, the propensity of liberal ideas to emerge out of conservative environments, the dangers of dismissing an entire society as intellectually conservative because it was politically hierarchical or oligarchical. There is, in the scholarly literature, a dangerous tendency towards intellectual flattening – a polemical refusal to engage with social complexity, or the dialectical evolution of societies. Israel has proclaimed:

the general thrust of the British Enlightenment was predominantly conservative and intellectually insular, indeed disinclined to oppose the powerful xenophobic tendencies present in eighteenth century English culture as well as hostile to the universalist proclivities of the wider European Enlightenment, features which must eventually undermine the currently very fashionable notion that the Enlightenment of liberty, equality, and toleration was primarily British or at any rate Anglo American in inspiration.³²

Where, it might be asked, would Israel place the *innumerable* texts that emerged in *response* to the vitriolic xenophobia that had taken over the nation in the build-up to Spanish War and the aftermath of the Jew Bill? Who were these writers – who clearly were not “disinclined to oppose the powerful xenophobic tendencies”? Can they not in the slightest be described as enlightened? How would Israel respond to the fact of the interdependent bodies-politic incessantly evoked by writers solicitous of the inequality of metropolis and periphery? Israel, of course, would not *have* to respond to them, as historians of the British Enlightenment have, in the most part, ignored them. But these texts, I believe, offer a far more compelling case for English Enlightenment than Voltaire’s or Montesquieu’s conspicuous adulation of Locke, Newton, and Bacon.

This dissertation does not argue for a fundamentally liberal or conservative Enlightenment, and nor does it argue for a fundamentally religious

³² Israel, “Enlightenment? Which Enlightenment!,” 29

or secular Enlightenment. That Enlightenment ideals had religious roots is suggested by charity sermons and sermons delivered to the Levant company (discussed in Chapters One and Three), with their respective emphases upon interdependence and self-preservation. It is suggested as well by medical treatises on the spleen (discussed in Chapter Two), the authors of which presumed a very Protestant modesty about their inability to arrive at perfect certainty, and pamphlets written by dissenters (discussed in Chapter Five), whose obsession with thinking was inversely related to perceptions of rising religiosity. But the important role played by religious ideals in the constitution of enlightened sensibilities does not mean that Enlightenment as a whole was religious in its rationale, or that *nothing* was secularized, or that *everything* was conservative and stagnant. ‘The crisis of secularization’, Peter Gay has written, “was slower and subtler than we have been led to believe. It was also more pervasive.”³³ The Enlightenment I describe had powerful religious undertones, but it was not overwhelmingly religious in its rationale. It was not the mere application of religious ideas to secular realities. The restraints of urbanity were, as I argue in Chapter Three, at least partially secular. The overwhelming emphasis was on self-preservation, and on preservation from the city – not from the afterlife. The solicitude for interdependence that coursed through the 1720s and 1730s was not fundamentally religious in its rationale – even if it *was* consistent with the proscriptions of charity sermons, it cannot be reduced to those sermons. Nor were the desires for activity and happiness that converged around the spleen. If the strong and suffering type, so frequently evoked in the anti-authoritarian and jingoistic commercial polemics of the 1730s, resonated

³³ Gay, *The Party of Humanity*, 123

with religious discourses, it was an inadvertent resonance. There might have been religious undertones, but the fundamental drive was for improvement and expansion. And the interest in the mind that characterized the 1730s cannot be reduced to a “religious” interest – and even when evoked in sermons.

It must be acknowledged, finally, that I am not, in writing of an English Enlightenment, hoping to deny the Dutch, the Scottish, or any other nation of the right to have had its own Enlightenment. “Ironically,” proclaims Jonathan Israel in his thoroughly lacerating review of Alan Kors’ *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*,

while there is no sign of hesitation about the inadequate coverage of the non-French continental Enlightenment we do, once again, encounter Roy Porter’s (once, perhaps, partly justified) complaint that “historians from Ernst Cassirer to Peter Gay have tended to deny, minimize, or marginalize the English contribution to the Enlightenment.”³⁴

“By 2000,” writes John Robertson, “the Scottish Enlightenment was in some danger of being eclipsed – or (worse) subsumed – by a surge of interest in Enlightenment in England.”³⁵ But the Dutch, Scottish, and English Enlightenments – not to mention the French, Russian, German, or Italian ones – need not eclipse one another in the historiography, as they did not in reality. A concern for betterment, change and improvement, such as that described in this dissertation, belonged to no one nation.

Section Two: Moving Forward

“The improvement of historical method,” Collingwood has argued, “comes about mainly through discovering the evidential value of certain kinds of

³⁴ Israel, “Enlightenment! Which Enlightenment,” 30

³⁵ Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 26

perceived fact which hitherto historians have thought worthless to them.”³⁶ I have sought, in this dissertation, to relate the larger question of Enlightenment to a wide range of texts that have generally been considered inapplicable to the question of the Enlightenment. Countless other texts might yet be mined. In the following pages, I sketch out two potential avenues of further investigation.

The first is a more dedicated foray into the realm of law and its interconnections with that of intellectual production. Specifically, the themes covered in the dissertation stipulate the need for an explication of the relationship between two ostensibly divergent historical developments: the emergence of a modern rational penal system and an Enlightenment fascination with the varieties of human nature. There was, in the early eighteenth-century, a synergistic relationship between two processes – first, a perceived upsurge in crime and social disorder resulting in what E.P. Thompson has described as a “complicity between the ascendancy of the Hanoverian Whigs and the ascendancy of the gallows”; second, a market for ideas wherein anyone and everyone could weigh in on matters of national importance.³⁷ It is in this context that the law and, in particular, the failure of the law became a catalyst for moral and psychological inquiry at the widest possible level. One 1725 writer deemed “the unreasonable and immoderate Desire of Revenge” to be “the worst of all those heinous Vices to which our corrupt Nature is inclin’d,” and lauded the wise and prudent nations which had imposed severe penalties on its manifestations, and been vigilant enough to “restrain and suppress the first Motions of this stubborn and rebellious Passion; and accordingly...adapted

³⁶ Collingwood, *The Principles of History*, 164

³⁷ Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*, 23

peculiar Laws to the several Degrees of Guilt.”³⁸ A text like this is fodder for legal history but also for the history of ideas. “All history is the history of thought,” Collingwood has famously claimed, and then elaborated: “when a politician is working at political matters he is thinking about them and embodying his thoughts in action.”³⁹ What Collingwood says of politics and politicians might also be applied to social commentators such as this one. Having started his treatise on this vituperative note, this author proceeded to reflect upon human nature in a manner not dissimilar to David Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature*:

These are Instances of express Malice, because the Acts are cruel or unlawful...But there is Malice also imply'd, when it is not express'd in the Nature of the Act. This may be in three Cases...⁴⁰

As it connects to Hume, a text such as this might also be related to the discursive environment from which it emerged, as exemplified, for instance, by the Ordinary's accounts of the lives of criminals hanged at Tyburn, which presented the average reader with a bewildering variety of conjectural theories about the varieties of revenge and malice. Together, all these texts help elaborate the formation of an Enlightenment-specific skepticism – an epistemological sensibility (previously discussed in the chapter on the spleen) acutely attuned to the fundamental diversity of human nature. As such, the text suggests a relationship between the culture of the city, legal norms, and the reigning spirit of the British Enlightenment.

The above is just one example of how social disorder could lead to intellectual production. We might also, for instance, further examine the image of a secular underclass that lay underneath the rational penology of the early

³⁸ T.S., *A Dissertation Concerning the Evil Nature and Fatal Consequence of Immoderate Anger and Revenge* (London: J. Stagg, 1725)

³⁹ Collingwood, *The Principles of History*, 77

⁴⁰ Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 49

eighteenth century. By following this image, we might arrive at a clearer understanding of the early eighteenth-century obsession with the mechanics of emotions – in this case, fear. Urban crime in the early eighteenth-century led to much theorization about the use of law to engender fear. “It seems apparent,” John Beattie has written, “that much of the evidence that the law was failing to deter crime and the determination to find alternative weapons arose from the metropolis...an urban world that was finding the problems of crime and social order increasingly difficult to contain.”⁴¹ The object of these theories was a class of criminals that could not, it was believed, be moved by the fear of an afterlife. The law, it was suggested by the 1701 author of *Hanging, Not Punishment Enough*, would have to adapt to “Men so far corrupted in their Principles and Practices, and that have no Expectations beyond the Grave (for such, I fear, is the case of most of them) no Argument will be so cogent, as Pain in an intense degree; and a few such Examples made, will be so terrifying, that I persuade my self it would be a Law but seldom put in Execution.”⁴² The merits of fear were repeatedly upheld as the decades progressed. The challenge of this text would continue to resonate as new penal sanctions failed, in the public eye, to stymie the crime wave. One 1723 opponent to the Transportation Acts of 1718 and 1720 believed them to be insufficiently severe: “Terror will cost you less than Love,” he wrote, “and be better attended, for People will do that for Fear, which they will refuse

⁴¹ John Beattie, “London Crime and the Making of the ‘Bloody Code’, 1689-1718,” in Lee Davison and Tim Hitchcock, eds, *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems* (Stroud: New York, 1992), 70

⁴² J.R., *Hanging, Not Punishment Enough, For Murtherers, High-way Men, and House-Breakers. Offered to the Consideration of the Two Houses of Parliament* (London: A. Baldwin, 1701), 3

upon any other Obligation.”⁴³ There was only one remedy for a society in everyone took advantage of everyone else, Matthew Concanen wrote in *The Speculatist*: “have the Laws as few, as coercive, and as certain as possible. Many Inhabitants and few Laws, are the great Happiness of a State. But when the Power of those Laws is dreadful, and the Certainty conspicuous, they are an Insurance for the Permanence of that Happiness.”⁴⁴ This argument was perhaps most famously brandished in Bernard Mandeville’s massively controversial “Essay on Charity and the Charity-Schools.” The severe and frequent punishment of thieves would be “a vast Advantage to a Nation,” he insisted, “not only as to the securing of every ones Property and the peace of the Society in General, but it would likewise save the Lives of Hundreds, if not Thousands, of Necessitous Wretches.”⁴⁵ This passage is enlightened in its supposed concern for the suffering of others, and also in its emphasis on the preservation of prosperity, peace, and society. It is the germ, moreover of an argument that Mandeville would dedicatedly expand in his subsequent treatise on execution: “The greatest Charity...and Compassion we can shew to our Fellow-Creatures,” he remarked in that text, “is an extraordinary Severity, and never-ceasing Watchfulness in a Government against the first Approaches of Dishonesty.”⁴⁶

In all these ways, the realm of the law is ripe for the plucking by cultural and intellectual historians of the Enlightenment. The law, these quotes suggest,

⁴³ [Anon] *Political Reflections for the Year, 1722, &c With Observations on the Conduct of Some Great Ministers of State* (London: T. Warner, 1723), 14

⁴⁴ Matthew Concanen, *The Speculatist. A Collection of Letters and Essays* (London: J. Watts, 1730), 44

⁴⁵ Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (1723), 309-10

⁴⁶ Bernard Mandeville, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Frequent Executions at Tyburn: and a Proposal For Some regulations Concerning Felons In Prison* (London: J. Roberts, 1725), 36

created social pressures, which, in turn, pressurized the proliferation of moral-psychological theories that became foundational to the Enlightenment.

Throughout, we must be cognizant of how the realm of the law was under flux.

There are fundamental inaccuracies with the picture of a hegemonic church-state establishment viciously persecuting the people. The people, as it happens, were complicit in the persecution. The papers of Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, are rife with complaints of men sexually assaulted by other men, impassioned pleas for the further prosecution of Catholics, and an especially angry invective penned by a man incensed at the repeal of laws against witchcraft: "For taking off the Penalty of witchcraft seems to me not only a Repealing a Law of the Land, but the very Law of God himself, who more than ever had enacted Death as the Penalty of that Diabolical Crime."⁴⁷ The state, as Gibson's papers also suggest, was itself actively attempting to arrive at a consensus on an acceptable level of brutality. The papers include a handwritten list of convictions for crimes of sodomitical rape in Colchester, from 1704 to 1724. The document culminates with the case of an "Abominable Offender...who had long made it his Business to Seduce Young Men into this most Detestable Practice." He was sentenced to be pilloried on two consecutive days and "Publicly Whipt About the Market" on the third. The third part of the sentence was not carried out, however, as he was "so Dismally Complimented by the Populace in their Usual way."⁴⁸ Public behavior thus shaped an administrative practice? How did this behavior, and the

⁴⁷ "Allegation of attempt at, brought by Josiah Friend, wigmaker, against William Wharton, silk dyer, 1725," Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Eng. c. 3190, fol. 94; "Letter from Alexander Jephson to Edmund Gibson concerning the growth of catholicism in the parish," 9/11/1723, MS. Eng. c. 3190, fols. 70-1; Bodleian Library, Oxford Ms. Eng. 3190, fol., 136 (1736)

⁴⁸ "List of people convicted of sodomy at the Quarter Sessions, 1704-24," MS. Eng. c. 3190, fols. 65-6

ambivalence suggested by the magistrates' action, transfer into the realm of discourse? It would be interesting, in this regard, to further consider how the set of realizations suggested but not proven by manuscript sources such as Gibson's interlock and interface with the printed discourse on crime.

A second area of development extends from the discussion of shame in Chapter Three. Ideas of shame fluctuated in response to theological trends and philosophical currents that determined the availability of particular theories of man's relationship to God, society, and his own inner conscience. These ideas were also responsive to structural socio-economic upheavals, rising inequalities, the rapid expansion of the press, the growth of a representative political culture, and the emerging consciousness of a British Empire following the events of 1739-1740. In each of these cases, an examination of shame has much to reveal about something that might meaningfully be described as "British Enlightenment Culture", and, in particular, ideologies and sensibilities that might be defined as *secular* or *humanitarian*. Changing beliefs about the power of shame as a form of social coercion are indicative of the effects of a metropolitan culture of print upon the creation of secular sensibilities. The importance of shame to discourses of humanitarianism is revealed in debates on rural scarcity, urban charity schools, and the debtors' prisons. The idea of *mobilizing shame* was integral to a human sensibility, as Thomas Keenan has written.⁴⁹ It might thus also serve as a powerful anchor for comparative inquiry: for instance, discourses of shame promise to highlight similarities and differences between English and Scottish ideas about human betterment.

⁴⁹ Thomas Keenan, "Mobilizing Shame," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004), 435-449

That shame, in this period, was an object of great fascination is suggested by a preliminary foray into its various uses. Internal shame was believed by many to be far more powerful than physical pain. "I cannot think," wrote John Locke, "any Correction useful to a Child, where the Shame of Suffering for having done Amiss, does not work more upon him, than the Pain."⁵⁰ "The acute Sense and Shame of Sin," according to one 1705 divine, was sharper and more pungent "than the acutest Pains of the Body."⁵¹ Shame could be internal, but it also, as Thomas Keenan has written, "signifies involvement in a social network, exposure to others and susceptibility to their gaze."⁵² Both theological and secular visions of shame were responsive to the emergence of a public sphere, or what Jonathan Sheehan has described as a "media-driven concept of the Enlightenment" – one that would concentrate upon "precisely those places where the social, cultural, and intellectual horizons of religion and the Enlightenment fused...because the media of the Enlightenment were fundamental structures through which new religious cultures and practices were created."⁵³ "Publicity and exposure are at the heart of the concept," as Thomas Keenan has written of the idea that shame be *mobilized*.

Newspapers and periodicals promise in particular to reveal much about the relationship between shame and the Enlightenment. Shame was not mentioned, but it was the *modus-operandi* of a 1723 article from *The Guardian*,

⁵⁰ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Fifth Edition. (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1705), 65

⁵¹ Zachary Wells, *The Advantages of a Learned and Religious Education*. In a Sermon Preach'd at St. Austin's Church (London: T. Warren, 1705), 24

⁵² Keenan, 435

⁵³ Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *The American Historical Review* (October, 2003) <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/108.4/sheehan.html>> (4 April 2008)

which described “a very numerous Race of young Fellows about the Town, who have the Confidence to walk the Streets, and come into all Publick Places in open Day-light, with Swords of such immoderate length, as strike Terror into a great many of her Majesty’s good subjects.”⁵⁴ The author of this piece endeavored to *shame* this club out of existence:

I have made it my Business to enquire more particularly into the Cabals of these *Hectors*; and, by the help of my Lion, I have got such Informations as will enable me to countermine their Designs, together with a Copy of some fundamental Articles drawn up by three of their Ring-leaders.⁵⁵

The designs were countermined as the sword-carriers were described as “men of preposterous Bravery, who affect a Military Air in a profound Peace, and dare to look terrible among their Friends and Fellows-Citizens.”⁵⁶ Their bravery was preposterous not because bravery itself was preposterous, but because their ostentatious dress and swords were masks for something more pitiful:

The long Sword, and the swaggering Cock, are the ordinary Disguises of a faint Heart...their very Dress tells you, that they are surrounded with Fears...there is no Weapon long enough for a Coward, who never thinks himself secure while he is within Sight of his Adversary’s Point...I would therefore advise these Men...to a more reputable, as well as a more portable Size⁵⁷

If the author did indeed successfully “countermine their Designs”, it is only by having shamed the *Terrible Club* in the public sphere. He was countermining through shaming from the very beginning, when he sardonically proclaimed that the club threatened “no less than the Peace and Quiet, and (for ought I now) the very Life and Safety, of every inoffensive and well-disposed Inhabitant of this City.”⁵⁸ He did this again when he unmasked the club: revealing to the public view the frailty behind the bravado. We might profitably examine what is

⁵⁴ *The Guardian*. Third edition (London: Jacob Tonson, 1723), 319

⁵⁵ *ibid*, 321

⁵⁶ *ibid*, 320

⁵⁷ *ibid*, 323

⁵⁸ *ibid*, 319

unsaid, or the hidden infrastructure of assumptions: that any given individual or association would be sensitive to his, her, or its depiction in the public sphere of periodicals and newspaper; that reputation, above all, was critical; and that anyone, not just moralizing divines or correcting officers, could cast their judgment upon anyone else and, in doing so, generate a behavioral shift. This, as I have described it, was an essential ingredient of the spirit of Enlightenment in Britain.

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