1   The Rise of the Novel
in the Eye of Literary History

A GENEALOGY OF THE NOVEL'S RISE

Like every discursive practice that aspires to produce knowledge, literary studies uses narrative to map the terrain and explain the emergence of the objects it seeks to understand. One of the grand narratives of British literary studies might be entitled "The Progress of the Novel." It tells the story of the novel's "rise" in the eighteenth century (with Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding), of its achievement of classical solidity of form in the nineteenth century (with Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, the early James, and Conrad), and of its culmination in a modernist experimentation and self reflection (with the later James, Woolf, Joyce, and Beckett) that paradoxically fulfills and surpasses "the novel" in one blow. Or so one version of the story goes. Much of the labor of literary history—whether its task is considered additive or oppositional—has been directed toward discovering line of influence, traditions and countertraditions, biases, lacunae, and hidden subplots to refine, challenge, and complicate this grand narrative of the novel's progress. The eighteenth-century segment of this narrative was consolidated in 1957 with the publication of Ian Watt's enormously influential book, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding.* Watt's study correlates the middle-class provenance of the eighteenth century British novel with a realism said to be distinctively modern for the way it features a complex, "deep" reading subject.

Over the last forty years, "the rise of the novel" has been one of the most widely circulated narratives of English studies. Within the university curriculum, this narrative has functioned as a rationale and advertisement for our "pedagogical commodities"—guaranteeing the canonicity of certain texts by providing a literary history that frames their centrality. Fa

from having lost its fascination over time, the rise of the novel thesis has been updated and extended in recent books by Lennard Davis, Nancy Armstrong, John Bender, Michael McKeon, J. Paul Hunter, and Catherine Gallagher. More than a mere thesis about a genre, "the rise of the novel" has come to prestructure our approach to "the" novel, functioning like an optical apparatus for seeing the novel and its history. Alternative critical paradigms have been developed for interpreting both individual novels and the novel as a genre—I am thinking especially of the concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia (Bakhtin), mythic archetypes (Frye), the rhetoric of fiction (Booth), reader response (Iser), and textuality (Derrida), to name only a few of the most influential; however, all of these approaches, because they don't engage the distinct two-hundred-and-fifty-year history of the British novel's elevation into cultural centrality, fail to interpret our culture's investment in the novel. It is precisely because of the way in which history flows into and through Watt's book that it functions as a watershed in the consolidation of the novel's rise.

The limitations of Watt's account derive less from any misrepresentation of that earlier history than from the unreflective and unself-conscious way in which it repeats that history. Paradoxically, the early modern elevation of the novel speaks so clearly through Watt's enlightenment narrative of the novel's rise that his book obscures the historical and cultural strife that produced "the novel" as a coherent cultural object and then elevated its cultural address. In short, Watt's book speaks the modern institution of the novel so transparently that his reader is confronted with a certain opacity. This is not so much because of what he demonstrates or asserts; rather, it is because of what he can assume his reader will accept without demonstration, which has thus, over the long history of the novel's institutionalization, been half forgotten. From the first paragraphs of Watt's introduction to *The Rise of the Novel*, it is assumed that "the novel" is a legitimate aesthetic cultural object; that "the novel" is characterized by its realism; and that it begins with three English novel writers of the eighteenth century—Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. How did it come about that Watt could assume the novel's aesthetic legitimacy, its realist calling, and its beginning with these three writers? These questions can only be answered by doing a genealogy of the literary history of the rise of the British novel, which is what I attempt to do in this chapter.

My strategy for breaking the spell of "the rise of the novel" and opening it to critical scrutiny is to ask where and when and why does that story begin to be told? This history of the British novel's beginnings turns out to have a history itself. In order to grasp the strangeness and difference, the

complex diversity of earlier cultural inscriptions of novel reading and writing, one must defer the question that haunts and hurries too many literary histories of the early novel: What is the first real novel? This question is too determined by the bottom-line concern to maximize cultural value and minimize unwanted cultural expenditure. For several reasons, we should be skeptical of the efforts of those novelists and literary critics who hasten to designate the first real novel. First, the absence of an authoritative Greek or Latin precursor for the modern novel—the fact that there is no Homer or Sophocles for the modern novel—has encouraged the wishful performative of claiming that position for a range of different novels, within different national settings—among them, *Don Quixote*, *La Princesse de Clèves*, and the "new species" of writing of Richardson and Fielding. When one watches how literary critics have sought to adjudicate these claims, one inevitably finds a suspicious feedback loop: the general minimal criteria for being a "true" novel is elucidated through a first paradigmatic instance which then confirms the initial criteria (Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 84). The steady shift in the test criteria brought to bear over the last three centuries makes the definitive designation of the first real novel seem increasingly implausible.[1]

Any literary history focused around designating the first real novel—with its restless intention to promote and demote, and to designate winners and losers—cannot stand outside, but instead inhabits the terms of that culturally improving enlightenment narrative that tradition has dubbed "the rise of the novel." Before the emergence of the novel into literary studies and literary pedagogy, novels played a subsidiary role in several crucial cultural episodes: the debate, over the course of the eighteenth century, about the pleasures and moral dangers of novel reading; the adjudication of the novel's role in articulating distinct national cultures; and finally, the various efforts to claim that a certain representation of modern life is realistic. It is through these three articulations that the novel secures its place as a type of literature. By reconstructing these three episodes in the cultural institutionalization of the British novel, I hope to jump back to a time before Watt—to a time before the sedimentation and consolidation of criteria and cultural functions that institutionalize the idea of a "real," legitimate, valued, modern novel, which can then be given its lead role in "the rise of the novel." Fredric Jameson has suggested the analytical use-

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1. See Cathy Davidson's witty and illuminating discussion of a bookseller's calculated promotion of the "first American novel" as at once patriotic and commercial (*Revolution and the Word*, 83–98).

fulness of genealogy for seeing a familiar object in a new way: "genealogy is not an historical narrative, but has the essential function of renewing our perception of the synchronic system as in an X-ray, its diachronic perspectives serving to make perceptible the articulation of functional elements of a given system in the present" (*Political Unconscious*, 139). It is only through compiling a genealogy of over two hundred years of literary history of the novel's rise in Britain that the latent elements of the novel's function in the generic system of modern literary studies can be exposed. I hope that such a genealogy will clear the ground for a cultural history of the early novel as a type of print-media entertainment.

THE SCANDAL OF NOVEL READING

Novels have been a respectable component of culture for so long that it is difficult for twentieth-century observers to grasp the unease produced by novel reading in the eighteenth century. In the later chapters of this study I will suggest why, during the decades following 1700, a quantum leap in the number, variety, and popularity of novels led many to see novels as a catastrophe to book-centered culture. Although the novel was not clearly defined or conceptualized, the object of the early antinovel discourse was quite precise—namely, seventeenth-century romances and novellas of continental origin, as well as the "novels" and "secret histories" written by Behn, Manley, and Haywood in the decades following the early 1680s. Any who would defend novels had to cope with the aura of sexual scandal which clings to the early novel, and respond to the accusation that they were corrupting to their enthusiastic readers. When Richardson and Fielding convinced many—both through their fiction and through its framing critical defense—that they had given modern fiction a more valuable range of purposes, the way was cleared for novels to become the object of literary criticism and literary history. Between Samuel Johnson's 1750 *Rambler* no. 4 essay on the new fiction of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett and John Dunlop's three-volume *History of Fiction* (1814), a succession of essays, reviews, and literary histories mobilize criticism and alarm, praise and prescription in order to modulate the comparatively new vogue for novel reading. This body of criticism, the first sustained novel criticism in English, incorporates many of the themes developed in the previous fifty years to condemn or defend novel reading. Thus, in "An Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding: With a Word or Two upon the Modern State of Criticism" (1751), Francis Coventry sounds a familiar thesis in

mocking the "emulation" produced in readers by the French romances of an earlier day: "This [vogue] obtained a long Time. Every Beau was an Oroondates, and all the Belles were Statiras." Though Samuel Johnson could not account for the fashion for romance, his *Rambler* no. 4 essay describes the more powerful identification that recent "familiar histories" such as *Clarissa* and *Tom Jones* induce in their readers: "if the power of example is so great, as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken that . . . the best examples only should be exhibited" (12). In other words, if novels put readers at risk of becoming automatons, the author must assume responsibility for the novel's moral effects.

The power and danger of novels, especially to young women not exposed to classical education, arise from the pleasures novels induce. But what, one might ask, is so pernicious about reading novels? Clara Reeve's *Progress of Romance* (1785) ends with a staged debate between the book's protagonist, the woman scholar Euphrasia, and a high cultural snob named Hortensius. Hortensius develops a wide-ranging indictment of novel reading, arguing, first, that novels turn the reader's taste against serious reading: "A person used to this kind of reading will be disgusted with every thing serious or solid, as a weakened and depraved stomach rejects plain and wholesome food" (II: 78). Second, Hortensius claims, novels incite the heart with false emotions: "The seeds of vice and folly are sown in the heart,—the passions are awakened,—false expectations are raised.—A young woman is taught to expect adventures and intrigues . . . If a plain man addresses her in rational terms and pays her the greatest of compliments,—that of desiring to spend his life with her,—that is not sufficient, her vanity is disappointed, she expects to meet a Hero in Romance" (II:78). Finally, Hortensius argues, novels induce a dangerous autonomy from parents and guardians: "From this kind of reading, young people fancy themselves capable of judging of men and manners, and . . . believe themselves wiser than their parents and guardians, whom they treat with contempt and ridicule" (II: 79). Hortensius indicts novels for transforming the cultural function of reading from providing solid nourishment to encouraging exotic tastes; from preparing a woman for the ordinary rational address of a plain good man to conjuring romance fantasies of a "hero"; from instilling a reliance upon parents and guardians to inciting a belief in the reader's autonomy. Taken together, novels have disfigured their reader's body, vitiating the taste, passions, and judgment of stomach, heart, and mind. Here, as so often in the polemics around novels, the novel reader is characterized

as a susceptible female whose moral life is at risk. By strong implication, she is most responsible for transmitting the media virus of novel reading.

From the vantage point of the late twentieth century, and after nearly nine decades of film and five of television, the alarm provoked by novel reading may seem hyperbolic, or even quaint. But a condescending modern "pro-pleasure" position renders the alarm with novel reading, and its effects on early modern culture, unintelligible.[2] Sometimes it is difficult to credit the specific object of the alarm of the eighteenth-century critics of novels: after all, we recommend to students some of the very novels these early modern critics inveighed against. However, given our current anxieties about the cultural effects of slasher films, rap music, MTV, or soaps, it is contradictory to dismiss those who worried about the effects of novels when they were new. Although it is difficult to know why early or late modern readers experience pleasure, we can trace specific effects of the eighteenth-century campaign against unlicensed entertainments. First, cultural critics sketched the first profile of the culture-destroying pleasure seeker that haunts the modern era: that of the obsessive, unrestrained consumer of fantasy (see chapters 3–4). Following this, such novelists as Richardson and Fielding, assuming the cogency of this critique, developed replacement fictions as a cure for the novel-addicted reader (see chapters 5–6). In doing so, they aimed to deflect and reform, improve and justify novelistic entertainment.

At least since Plato's attack on the poets, philosophers and cultural critics had worried about the effects of an audience's absorption in fictional entertainment. During the early eighteenth century the circulation of novels on the market gave this old cultural issue new urgency. Often published anonymously, by parvenu authors supported by no patron of rank, novels seemed irresponsible creations, conceived with only one guiding intention: to pander to any desire that would produce a sale. Like the slighter and cheaper chap books sold by peddlers (Spufford), novels were "disposable" books written in anticipation of their own obsolescence, and in acceptance of their own transient function as part of a culture of serial entertainments. Although they represented only a small part of print culture in the early decades of the eighteenth century, by the 1720s novels comprised one of the most high-profile, fashionable, and dynamic segments of the market.

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2. For an example of an uncritical pro-pleasure position, see Ross, 1989; for my sense of the inevitable resistance to popular culture, see W. Warner, "The Resistance to Popular Culture."

Many of the vices attributed to the novel are also attributes of the market: both breed imitation, incite desire, are oblivious to their moral effects, and reach into every corner of the kingdom. As part of a culture of the market, novels appear as conduits of an uncanny automatism. In an introductory chapter to *Tom Jones*, Fielding relegates novel writers to the lowest rank of authors, because "to the composition of novels and romances, nothing is necessary but paper, pens and ink, with the manual capacity of using them" (IX: i). Once they had become the rage, nothing could stop novels on the market. Producers of novels appear as mere factors of the market. Using the by-now-clichéd terms for describing the Grub Street hacks, Clara Reeve emphasizes the accelerating multiplicity of novels, with rampant production allowing bad imitations to proliferate, and developing and using new institutions to deliver novels indiscriminately into the hands of every reader: "The press groaned under the weight of Novels, which sprung up like mushrooms every year . . . .[Novels] did but now begin to increase upon us, but ten years more multiplied them tenfold. Every work of merit produced a swarm of imitators, till they became a public evil, and the institution of Circulating libraries, conveyed them in the cheapest manner to every bodies hand" (II: 7). An uncontrolled multiplicity of novels threatens culture with metastasis. For the scholar surveying the production of many ages, the market has the effect of blurring the distinctness and expressive readability of culture. Thus, in his *History of Fiction* (1814), John Dunlop complains that while earlier epochs developed "only one species of fiction" which then could be read as "characteristic" of their age, more recently "different kinds have sprung up at once; and thus they were no longer expressive of the taste and feelings of the period of their composition" (III: 362). The critical histories written by Reeve and Dunlop aim to restore the character to culture.

If, according to a formula developed in the writings of Foucault, power operates less by repressing or censoring than by producing new realities and new objects and rituals of truth (*History of Sexuality*, 77–114), then the success of novels on the market changes culture by producing a need to read. Clara Reeve gives expression to this newly incited desire, writing: "People *must* read something, they cannot always be engaged by dry disquisitions, the mind *requires* some amusement" (97, emphasis mine). Between uncritical surrender to novel reading and a wholesale rejection of novels in favor of "serious" reading, Richardson and Fielding trace a third pathway for the novel. Reeve describes the strategy in terms of "writ[ing] an antidote to the bad effects" of novels "under the disguise" of

being novels (85).[3] Coventry describes the manner in which Fielding, "who sees all the little movements by which human nature is actuated," intervenes in the market for novels: "The disease became epidemical, but there were no hopes of a cure, 'till Mr. Fielding endeavored to show the World, that pure Nature could furnish out as agreeable entertainment, as those airy nonentical forms they had long ador'd, and persuaded the ladies to leave this extravagance to their Abigails with their cast cloaths" (14–15). Here, according to Coventry, the addictive "disease" of romance, associated with the craze for new fashions, can only be "cured" by cutting new paths toward pleasure; then the old novels, with their corrupting pleasures, can be passed on, along with old dresses, to their lady's servant.

THE DEBATE ABOUT NOVELS

There is a striking difference between the British debate about novels conducted before 1750 and that conducted after. In the first half of the century, novel writers still felt obliged to respond to the old Puritan condemnation of stories as lies. Those who attacked novels attacked all novels, and comprehended a great deal in that category. The defenses offered for fiction by Manley, Defoe, and Haywood—that this "history has its foundation in fact"; that its representations of vice are cautionary; and so on—could seem "transparently insincere" to the skeptical (Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700–1800*, 7; see chapter 4 below). After the success of *Pamela* (1740), *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Clarissa* (1747–1748), and *Tom Jones* (1749), however, the terms of the debate about novels shifted; those critics who stepped forward after the middle of the century to describe the salient features and communicable virtues of these two authors' works offered an unprecedented countersigning of the cultural value of their novels. Since the novels of Richardson and Fielding appeared to have merit, and since they developed solutions to the general threat presented by novels, banishing all novels from culture was now more than most critics were willing to wish for. After Richardson and Fielding, the issue for debate became much less whether to read than what kind of novel should be read, and what kind should be written. This gave new critical subtlety and specificity to the

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3. This requires a cunning pharmacology. When Lady Echlin, Richardson's most morally exacting correspondent, warns that "the best instruction you can give, blended with love intrigue, will never answer your good intention," Richardson replies with a celebrated reformulation of the old demand that art should both amuse and instruct: "Instruction, Madam, is the Pill; Amusement is the Gilding. Writings that do not touch the Passions of the Light and Airy, will hardly ever reach the heart" (*Selected Letters*, 322 [Sept. 22, 1755]).

debate about novels. Attention became directed toward the psychology of response and toward the moral and pedagogical uses of novel reading. At the same time, as Ioan Williams has pointed out, there was a paradoxical countertendency, as the growth in number and influence of novels after mid-century makes novel reading a more pressing cultural issue and intensifies the conservative reaction against any novel reading for entertainment (Williams, *Novel and Romance*, 13–15).

A range of different critical strategies are used to situate, defend, and delimit this new segment of culture on the market. Particular acts of criticism rescued certain works from the general condemnation of novels. For Samuel Johnson, a critical intervention on behalf of the new novel meant arguing in favor of the "exemplary" characters of Richardson over the more true-to-life "mixed" characters of Fielding or Smollett (*Rambler* no. 4). William Warburton wrote a preface for the second edition of *Clarissa* in which he supports the improvement brought by entertaining fictional works and compares Richardson to Marivaux. Likewise, Diderot celebrates the wonderful moral efficacy of Richardson's fiction in his eloquent "Eulogy to Richardson" (1762). In a pamphlet published anonymously, "An Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding" (1751), Francis Coventry, like Arthur Murphy in his biographical essay introducing Fielding's *Works* (1762), follows the basic procedure Fielding had devised in the many interpolated prefaces of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, transporting critical terms and ideas developed earlier for poetry, epic, and drama to the novel.

Since criticism presupposes a literary object for its discourse, the question arises as to how, within the context of the opprobrium directed at novels in the British context, one legitimizes criticism of novels. Coventry's pamphlet suggests the way his own performance of criticism develops in symbiotic relation to Fielding's original performance. Just as Aristotle extracted the "rules" of tragedy from Sophocles, so Coventry would make Fielding's performance the template for the "species" of writing he had "founded." As the "great Example" and "great original" for "future historians of this kind," Fielding's work provides the terms for a new inventory of neoclassical "laws": "As Mr. Fielding first introduc'd this new kind of Biography, he restrain'd it with Laws which should ever after be deem'd sacred by all that attempted his Manner; which I here propose to give a brief account of" (16). Coventry's manner of posturing as a critic—unctuous, defensive, and yet arrogant—is the very antithesis of the imperious law-giving practiced by Fielding's narrators. But both styles of address suggest that there is no preestablished discourse for the criticism of novels.

The critical defenses of individual novel writers did not convince all cultural critics who turned their attention to the new vogue for novels. The Reverend Vicesimus Knox, the master of Tonbridge School, puts the problem of the baleful influence of the new novels on boys at the forefront of his essay "On Novel Reading" (1778). He begins his meditation with a correlation that is unfriendly to all novels: "If it be true, that the present age is more corrupt than the preceding, the great multiplication of Novels has probably contributed to its degeneracy" (*Essays Moral and Literary*, 1778, in Williams, *Novel and Romance, 1700–1800*, 304–307). Knox then itemizes the problems with even the most favorably received of the modern novelists, declaring that, unlike the old romances, which exhibited "patterns of perfection" that "filled the heart with pure, manly, bold and liberal sentiments," or the "immortal work of Cervantes," whose "decent humour" could "excite a laugh, and leave the heart little affected," modern novelists all have features that render them not "perfectly adapted to the young mind." While Richardson's novels "are written with the purest intentions of promoting virtue," Knox complains that "scenes are laid open . . . and sentiments excited, which it would be more advantageous to early virtue not to admit." While the "cultivated genius" of Fielding entitles him "to a high rank among the classics," here too there are "scenes, which may corrupt a mind unseasoned by experience." He goes on to say that the writings of these better novelists often help to gain circulation of the novels of "our neighboring land of libertinism" [France], which "have seldom anything to recommend them to perusal but their profligacy." While the "licentious ideas" of the "coarse taste" of the "reign of Charles the Second" seem to have been supplanted most recently by the "sentimental manner" associated with Sterne, Knox worries that this still gives "a degree of gracefulness to moral deformity," and that it gives "the mind a degree of weakness," making it "unable to resist the slightest impulse of libidnous passion."

Before offering his own paranovelistic prescription for boys' reading—the *Telemachus*, *Robinson Crusoe*, Rollin's *History*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and the *Spectator*—Knox's critique of novels reaches the following climax:

> Such books, however pernicious their tendency, are the most easily attained. The prudence of their publishers suggests the expediency of making them conveniently portable. Every corner of the kingdom is abundantly supplied with them. In vain is youth secluded from the corruptions of the living world. Books are commonly allowed them with little restriction, as innocent amusements: yet these often pollute the

> heart in the recesses of the closet, inflame the passions at a distance from temptation, and teach all the malignity of vice in solitude.
> [Knox, from Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700–1800*, 306]

Among nonreligious critics, Knox defines the most extreme antinovel position. The essay also focuses one of the questions that shapes the eighteenth-century debate about novels—namely, what is to be done about the inordinate attraction that the young are showing to novel reading? Knox suggests the scope of the challenge the novel posed to earlier methods of controlling the amusements of a young boy or girl. When the novels' octavo and duodecimo format makes them "conveniently portable," and the post and the circulating libraries carry them to "every corner of the kingdom," novels become an ambient presence. This saturation of culture by novels defeats that most time-honored method for protecting the innocence of youth from "the corruptions of the living world"—namely, physically secluding them from the "temptations" and "vice" of that world. Still worse, when novels are transported into the "recesses of the closet" used for free private reading or writing, they insinuate themselves into the mental life of the young reader, where they can "pollute the heart," "inflame the passions," and "teach all the malignity of vice."

The new criticism of the novel often bolsters its authority through an appeal to history. While Knox's essay inserts the emergence of the modern novel into a conservative, devolutionary history, other commentators conceptualize novels as part of a progressive movement toward a valuably enlightened modernity. Thus Pope's editor, William Warburton, the Scottish divine and rhetorician Hugh Blair, and the professor of moral philosophy and logic James Beattie follow the tack of Samuel Johnson in *Rambler* no. 4 by offering brief histories of the development of the novel out of romance. While Warburton and Blair (in "On Fictitious History" [1762]) credit the French novelists (especially Marivaux) with inventing the modern moral novel, whereas Johnson and Beattie do not, all four of these early, anecdotal historians of the novel find a way to mark a sharp divide between the illusions of old romance and what the novel brings: "a faithful and chaste copy of real Lives and Manners" (Warburton, 123). The recent vogue for the *Thousand and One Nights* leads Beattie to develop a fanciful genealogy that traces its origins to the "fabulous narrative[s]" of the East: "the indolence peculiar to the genial climates of Asia, and the luxurious life which the kings and other great men, of those countries, lead in their seraglios, have made them seek for this sort of amusement" ("On Fable and Romance" [1783], Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700–1800*,

310). All four of these commentators represent the modern novel as an agent of an enlightened modern surmounting of old romance fictions. The novel breaks storytelling's self-imposed tutelage to outdated aristocratic notions of honor and love. The following is Beattie's account of the effect of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* on the martial romances previously in vogue:

> This work no sooner appeared, than chivalry vanished, as snow melts before the sun. Mankind awoke as from a dream. They laughed at themselves for having been so long imposed on by absurdity; and wondered they had not made the discovery sooner. It astonished them to find, that nature and good sense could yield a more exquisite entertainment, than they had ever derived from the most sublime phrenzies of chivalry.

[Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700–1800*, 319–320]

Beattie places his own critical writing on the side of that solar power of reason to banish illusion and promote good sense in entertainment. While Warburton and Johnson evidence a scholarly range of knowledge, Beattie offers a slightly learned, gentlemanly blend of condescension and negligence about the earlier novel. The novel, after all, was still a cultural object it would not "do" to know too much about. Like Coventry and Blair, Beattie ends his text by extending his only unqualified enthusiasm for novels written in English to Fielding and Smollett. These three writers cast most other novels into the trash bin of culture.

Reeve's *Progress of Romance* (1785) is a carefully contrived strategic defense of the novel developed on two fronts: first, in response to conservative moralists such as Knox, who would interdict all novel reading for young people; and second, as a rejoinder to scholars and professors such as Beattie, who blend a patronizing and highly selective cryptohistorical support for a few novels with a sweeping condemnation of most novels and romances, whether old or new, foreign or domestic. Reeve promotes a tolerance for a broad spectrum of romances and novels in several ways. Her survey of the romance, from ancient times to the present, is more scholarly and patient than those of her precursors. Her use of the dialogue form allows her to avoid the pretensions to authority characteristic of a formal treatise, while incorporating into her text the debates about novels she is laboring to rearticulate. Within the term "romance" Reeve comprehends not only the Greek romance, the medieval romances (in both verse and prose), and the seventeenth-century heroic romance; she also includes the epics of Homer and the seventeenth-century novella, as well as the "modern novels" of France and England. Her inclusion of Homeric epic in

"romance" is a classification dubious enough to be rejected by virtually every subsequent literary historian of the novel; but it gives Reeve's protagonist Euphrasia a way to refute the high cultural bias of her polemical antagonist Hortensius. In addition, by developing the term "romance" into a global category inclusive of narrative entertainments in print produced over a vast expanse of "times, countries, and manners," she uses the historical axis of her study to champion both unfashionable old romances and modern novels.

In the second half of the century, different positions upon what novels should be were often inflected through divergent critical valuations of Richardson and Fielding. In this way, the rivalry of Richardson and Fielding on the market in the 1740s is reproduced in the earliest literary criticism and history of the novel. Coventry proclaims Fielding's unheralded achievements and ignores Richardson, while Johnson's prescription for the novel's cultural role is rigged to favor Richardson's fictional practice. The pride of place that male critics such as Blair and Beattie give Fielding in the second half of the century is embedded in Reeve's *Progress of Romance*, in the arguments of Hortensius. Hortensius complains that Richardson's epistolary novels "have taught many young girls to wiredraw their language, and to spin always long letters out of nothing." Euphrasia responds by defending the cultural value of studying and imitating Richardson over the "studies" of an earlier generation: "Let the young girls . . . copy Richardson, as often as they please, and it will be owing to the defects of their understandings, or judgments, if they do not improve by him. We could not say as much of the reading Ladies of the last age. . . . No truly, for their studies were the French and Spanish Romances, and the writings of Mrs. Behn, Mrs. Manly, and Mrs. Heywood [*sic*]" (I: 138). For Reeve, Richardson reorients the spontaneous reader identification that worried the moral critics of the novel. In her view, none had demonstrated more clearly than Richardson how a morally improving emulation could be promoted. When the critic and dramatist Richard Cumberland writes of the dangers of allowing young women to read *Clarissa* and emulate its heroine, Anna Seward responds with an impassioned defense of Richardson's novel and its moral tendency (Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700–1800*, 332–335; 357–366). Letitia Barbauld edited Richardson's correspondence, and gives him the privileged beginning position in *The British Novelists* (1810), her fifty-volume selection of the most valuable novels of the previous century. By contrast, Scott devotes part of his introductory essay to defending Fielding against those who condemn his morality and indelicacy, especially when comparing him with Richardson. That the debate about the cultural

value of novels often modulated into a debate about the comparative worth of Richardson and Fielding may explain the remarkable consensus transmitted into subsequent literary histories—which can seem very arbitrary to twentieth-century literary historians—that either Richardson or Fielding must be the true "father" of the British novel.[4]

THE CLOSURE OF THE DEBATE: SUBLIMATING NOVELISTIC ENTERTAINMENTS INTO LITERARY HISTORY

By the second decade of the nineteenth century there is evidence that the debate about novels had reached closure. Some would still oppose all novel reading, but it was an extreme position, usually held by members of the religious right (Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700–1800*, 17). Two ambitious editing projects give a new eminence to the novels of the previous century, and suggest the consolidation of the novel's cultural legitimacy. Each selection in *The British Novelists*, Barbauld's fifty-volume, twenty-eight-work collection, received an introductory essay, and every author—except Francis Coventry received a biographical and critical essay rationalizing his or her inclusion. Between 1821 and 1824 the *Ballantyne's Novelist's Library* appeared, offering a selection of fourteen authors in ten volumes, edited and introduced by Walter Scott. Through these collections, the eighteenth-century canon of British novels begin to acquire palpable form (H. Brown, "Of the Title to Things Real"). A still more comprehensive rationale for novel reading is developed in the ambitious, scholarly

4. In the twentieth century, critics across a broad spectrum have tendered competing claims for Richardson (among them, Frank Kermode, Ian Watt, and Margaret Doody) and Fielding (including Wayne Booth, Ronald Paulson, and Martin Battestin). If one considers Richardson and Fielding as representing a synchronic opposition produced by literary history, then it may seem most reasonable to halve the matter amicably. In *Occasional Form*, J. Paul Hunter ends up agreeing with William Park that the only fair thing to do in this paternity suit concerning the true father of the British novel is "[to] divide almost equally the credit for creating what we call the novel"; in his formulation, their "polarities" "destined a rich dialectical future for the genre" (225). The implications of such a solution are worked out by Michael McKeon (*Origins of the English Novel*). However, making Richardson and Fielding appear as an exhaustive novelistic dyad, and locating that antagonism securely within the rise of the novel narrative, merely enhances the authority of that narrative. It is the writers of the novels of amorous intrigue, and (more generally) formula fiction as media culture, that get excluded. For a suggestive critique of the mythos of Richardson and Fielding as the double origin of a singular genre, as the gendered originators of the (British) novel, see Campbell, *Natural Masques*, 3–4.

three-volume history published in 1814 by John Dunlop and entitled *The History of Fiction: Being A Critical Account of the Most Celebrated Prose Works of Fiction, From the Earliest Greek Romances to the Novels of the Present Age*. In order to argue the cultural superiority of "fiction" to history, Dunlop quotes the following words from Francis Bacon:

> Fiction gives to mankind what history denies, and, in some measure, satisfies the mind with shadows when it cannot enjoy the substance: . . . Fiction strongly shows that a greater variety of things, a more perfect order, a more beautiful variety, than can any where be found in nature, is pleasing to the mind. And as real history gives us not the success of things according to the deserts of vice and virtue, Fiction corrects it, and presents us with the fates and fortunes of persons rewarded or punished according to merit. And as real history disgusts us with a familiar and constant similitude of things, Fiction relieves us by unexpected turns and changes, and thus not only delights, but inculcates morality and nobleness of soul. It raises the mind by accommodating the images of things to our desires, and not like history and reason, subjecting the mind to things.

By appealing to Bacon on the value of fiction, Dunlop not only invokes the authority of a major British thinker, he also leaps over one hundred years of wrangling about the moral effects of reading novels. In using the general term "fiction" for his history of romances and novels, Dunlop blurs the polemical stakes of the debate he would nonetheless recast. Eighteenth-century defenses of the novel (from Congreve and Richardson to Fielding and Reeve) usually engage a set of polar oppositions still familiar to us: the novel is to the romance as the "real" is to the "ideal," as fact is to fantasy, as the probable is to the amazing, as the ordinary everyday is to the high-flown exotic, and so on. Fiction was developed by Dunlop as a third term that can finesse yet reconcile these polar oppositions. Fiction does this by becoming art, delivering "a more perfect order, a more beautiful variety" than "nature."

Through Dunlop's use of Bacon, Renaissance and romantic aesthetics meet in a justification of fiction that is finally psychological. Through fiction, the reader is no longer "subject" to, or disgusted with," a familiar and constant similitude of things." Instead, fiction "relieves" and "delights," and "raises the mind" "by accommodating the images of things to our desires." "The cultural efficacy of fiction is argued to come from its successful gratification of the reader's pleasure. Dunlop's adaptation of Bacon to his argument assumes yet reverses the anxiety about the reader's pleasure that had motivated condemnations of the novel. In his glossing of Bacon's emphasis on "delight," it is apparent that the pleasure Dunlop was

promoting is quite different from the pleasure which novel readers had been accused of indulging. Instead of obsessive, personal, deluded, erotic pleasures, we are called to soft, social ones: "how much are we indebted to [fiction] for pleasure and enjoyment! [I]t sweetens solitude and charms sorrow . . ." These pleasures are argued to improve and uplift the reader, by taking him or her into an elevated social and emotive space: "The rude are refined by an introduction, as it were, to the higher orders of mankind, and even the dissipated and selfish are, in some degree, corrected by those paintings of virtue and simple nature, which must ever be employed by the novelist if he wish to awaken emotion or delight" (xi–xii). Having affirmed its beneficent effects, Dunlop goes on to confirm the novel's rise from its earlier disreputable cultural position: "this powerful instrument of virtue and happiness, after having been long despised, on account of the purposes to which it had been made subservient, has gradually become more justly appreciated, and more highly valued. Works of Fiction have been produced, abounding at once with the most interesting details, and the most sagacious reflections, and which differ from treatises of abstract philosophy only by the greater justness of their views, and the higher interest which they excite" (xii–xiii).

This characterization of the novel helps us to apprehend the broader purpose of Dunlop's literary history—namely, to sublimate the novel so as to produce a new disposition, or arrangement, of novel reading. Neither exiling all novels from culture in favor of drama, epic, sermons, or conduct books nor favoring the simple uncritical acceptance of all novels into his narrative of the history of fiction, Dunlop's title tells us his history is to be "critical"—that is, it will judge works as to quality so as to focus only on "the most celebrated" prose fiction. What results in the works of both Reeve and Dunlop, as in every subsequent literary history, is a chronological panorama of culture in which selected cultural practices and productions are narrated as significant and valuable. By this means, literary history licenses (selected) entertainments by sublimating them.

The new dispensation for novel reading is developed by rearticulating the terms of the old debate. In introducing *The British Novelists*, Barbauld makes fun of the tendency of eighteenth-century apologists of the novel to downplay the centrality of entertainment as a motive for novel reading:

If the end and object of this species of writing be asked, many no doubt will be ready to tell us that its object is to call in fancy to the aid of reason, to deceive the mind into embracing truth under the guise of fiction . . . with such-like reasons equally grave and dignified. For my own part, I scruple not to confess, that, when I take up a novel, my end and object is entertainment; and as I suspect that to be the case with most readers, I

hesitate not to say that entertainment is their legitimate end and object. To read the productions of wit and genius is a very high pleasure to all persons of taste, and the avidity with which they are read by all such shows sufficiently that they are calculated to answer this end [I: 43–44]. . . . The unpardonable sin of a novel is dullness: however grave or wise it may be, if its author possesses no powers of amusing, he has no business to write novels; he should employ his pen in some more serious part of literature. [I: 45]

In turning away from "grave and dignified" justifications of the novel, Barbauld shifts to the first person ["I scruple not to confess"] to insist that the novel's "end and object is entertainment." But this is not the "mere" entertainment or empty pleasure-taking that had so worried the moralists of the previous century. Instead, Barbauld builds upon the idea of the novel as a sophisticated vehicle of performative entertainment, as Fielding's critical essays first conceptualize it to be (see chapter 6). Barbauld glosses what she means by the "legitimate" "end" of entertainment by applauding the "very high pleasure to all persons of taste" provided by "productions of wit and genius." As noted above, she culls twenty-eight works from a century of novel writing and frames the productions of each of fourteen authors with suitable introductions. In this way, novel reading is socialized and refined. Thus, while giving special privilege to Richardson's novels (*Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* occupy the first fifteen of the fifty volumes), Barbauld also censures some scenes in *Pamela* and *Clarissa* as too inflaming.

Although in introducing his history of fiction Dunlop writes as though the culturally elevating role for fiction were already achieved, in fact his own literary history is designed to further that end. To argue the centrality of fiction to culture, Dunlop begins his introduction with an elaborate analogy between gardening and fiction-making that quickly implicates his own literary history. Dunlop's development of the analogy between fiction, gardening, and literary history suggests that violence is a necessary element of cultivation. Just as the "savage" has gathered and placed around his dwelling plants that pleased him, so too has man lived events "which are peculiarly grateful, and of which the narrative at once pleases himself, and excites in the minds of his hearers a kindred emotion" (v). What are gathered are "unlooked-for-occurrences, successful enterprise, or great and unexpected deliverance from signal danger and distress" (vi). A gardener learns that one must not just collect, one must also weed the

useless or noxious, and [those] which weaken or impair the pure delight which he derives from others. . . . the rose should no longer be placed beside the thistle, as in the wild, but that it should flourish in a clear, and

sheltered, and romantic situation, where its sweets may be undiminished, and where its form can be contemplated without any attending circumstances of uneasiness or disgust. The collector of agreeable facts finds, in like manner, that the sympathy which they excite can be heightened by removing from their detail every thing that is not interesting, or which tends to weaken the principal emotion, which it is his intention to raise. He renders, in this way, the occurrences more unexpected, the enterprises more successful, the deliverance from danger and distress more wonderful.

[Dunlop, *History of Fiction*, vii]

The same process that describes the "fine arts" of gardening and fiction-making—selecting, weeding, and intensifying, in view of pleasure—applies also to the literary history Dunlop composes. Dunlop's "critical" history of fiction becomes an improving and enlightening cultivation of fiction for culture. By using the fiction of widely different epochs to survey the variety of cultural achievements, literary history makes novels more than instruments of private (kinky, obsessive) gratification. Instead, they are drawn into the larger tableau of cultural accomplishment—what Dunlop calls "the advance of the human mind"—until disinterested moral and aesthetic pleasure appears to be the telos of all fiction-making.

To Dunlop, civilizing the novel requires a calculated violence. In a chapter entitled a "Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the English Novel," he offers a typology of the elevated novel whereby novels are divided into the "serious" (Richardson, Sheridan, and Godwin), the "comic" (Fielding and Smollett), and the "romantic" (Walpole, Reeve, and Radcliff). But before offering this schematic overview of what we would now call the "eighteenth-century novel," Dunlop weeds out others, giving cursory, negative treatment to the novels of Behn, Manley, and the early Haywood. Behn's novels, he informed his readers, "have not escaped the moral contagion which infected the literature of that age." Though Dunlop merely alludes to "the objections which may be charged against many" of Behn's novels, he ends by describing the "faults in points of morals" of Behn's "imitator," Eliza Haywood, as follows: "Her male characters are in the highest degree licentious, and her females are as impassioned as the Saracen princesses in the Spanish romances of chivalry" (III: 369–370). By "orientalizing" these early novels as inappropriately erotic—too feminine, too Latin, and too immoral—he writes into the margins of "The History of Fiction" some of the most popular novels published in England between 1684 and 1730.

While the writings of Reeve, Dunlop, Barbauld, and Scott suggest the closure of the debate about whether one should read novels, their novelis-

tic criticism and literary history transmit two of that debate's central ideas: First, they accept the assumption implicit in the arguments of both the critics and the supporters of novels—that novels should be written in such a way that teenagers of both sexes can read them without harm; and second, they view novel reading as part of a reader's moral education. Like Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1793), Clara Reeve understands the novel as a form for transmitting valuable social knowledge. Thus Reeve ends her literary history by describing a curriculum for the young reader. She quotes dire warnings, written by the moralist John Gregory and others, against the indiscriminate reading of novels by the young, and then extends these strictures to the blasphemous and indelicate classical texts put into the hands of young boys by their educators. Finally, she concludes that "selection is to be strongly recommended, and good books to be carefully chosen by all that are concerned in the education of youth" (II: 97). At the end of her history Reeve appends two lists for parents, guardians, and tutors, and "intended chiefly for the female sex"—"Books for Children," and "Books for Young Ladies." This two-stage course of reading includes fables, spellers, conduct books, periodical essays, and only one item on the second list that would be described today as novelistic: "Richardson's Works." Ironically, the final pedagogical turn of Reeve's literary history withholds from the young reader almost all of the romances and novels she has described in the foregoing work. Evidently, she expects that her two-stage curriculum will prepare young female minds for an informed and critical reading of the romances and novels described in *The Progress of Romance*. With Reeve, literary history acquires the pedagogical function it has continued to serve in literary studies: it becomes a reading list, with its entries contextualized by narrative, and the literary historian functions as the novel's culturally redeeming filter.

THE NATIONALIZATION OF THE NOVEL

How do eighteenth-century novels that happen to have been written in England come to be understood, by the late nineteenth century, as the first instances of that complex and valued cultural object known as "the English novel"? This change of the novel into a literary type is coextensive with the nationalization of culture and the rise of the discipline of English literary studies. The global shift by which European cultures moved from an older patriotism of competing characteristics to a modern idea of each nation's comprehensive and essential difference is beyond the scope of this study; nonetheless, given the central role that novel reading comes to have in the

imagination of the nation as a community (Anderson), the emergence of literary histories of the novel is traversed by, but also helps to perform, what one might call the nationalization of culture (Brennan, "National Longing for Form," 49–56). By shifting the reference point backward in time, it is possible to understand how literary history contributes to the nationalization of the novel.

The consensus within contemporary British literary studies that the first "real" novels appeared in England is a post-Romantic idea. By contrast, eighteenth-century British cultural critics often gave France precedence over England in the invention of several different species of romances and novels. Above, it was noted that the anecdotal histories of the novel offered by Hugh Blair and William Warburton maintain that the general species of morally serious novels written by Richardson and Fielding gained its strongest initial expression in France. The British eighteenth-century "debate about the novel" assumes that the novels of different nations belong to the same cultural field: dire warnings against the pernicious effects of foreign novels imply their transnational mobility. Novels in the eighteenth century, like silent films early in this century, were considered a species of entertainment most likely to move easily across linguistic and national boundaries. Both the opponents and proponents of novel reading selected the novels of different nations from off the same shelves.[5]

As the producer of the greatest number and variety of fictions, France of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is positioned as something of a "Hollywood" for romances and novels. Whether they favor or oppose novel reading, eighteenth-century critics assume that the novels of different nations, whatever their origin, become part of the same cultural terrain of readable entertainment. Literary historians such as Reeve and Dunlop discuss the novels of Cervantes, Marivaux, and Rousseau within the same conceptual coordinates as they discuss the novels of Richardson and Fielding. But during the nineteenth century, the novel was gradually nationalized. Influential critics such as Hazlitt and Scott came to understand novels as a type of writing particularly suited to representing the character, mores, landscape, and "spirit" of particular nations. In a different but no less complete way than poetry, the novel is reinterpreted as a distinct expression of the nation. However, this articulation of nation and novel has a rich pre-

history. Over the course of the eighteenth-century debate about novels there develops a correlation that would inflect the whole institutionalization of the novel. Repeatedly it is claimed that England is to France as the (elevated) novel is to the romance, as fact is to fantasy, as morality is to sensuality, as men are to women. (Terms can be added to this series: genuine and counterfeit, simple and frothy, substantial and sophisticated.) Grounded in a caricature of France as effeminate and England as manly, this loaded set of oppositions is simultaneously nationalist and sexist. Proliferating inexhaustibly, these oppositions seem to touch every region of culture, and weave themselves like a gaudy thread through all the literary histories of the novel's rise. It is one of the goals of this study to unravel the gender politics of the institution of the (elevated) novel (see chapter 4).

We can grasp what is at stake in the nationalization of the novel by contrasting the early and later literary histories of the novel. In the literary histories of Reeve, Beattie, and Dunlop, the assessment of the value of different sorts of novels sometimes echoes clichéd tropes of national difference. However, the interpretations of particular writers unfold within the universalist horizon of a generous, catholic, enlightenment cosmopolitanism.[6] Such a broad, enlightened perspective on history, accessible to the leisured and cultured members of a certain class, is quite explicitly engaged in Dunlop's introduction to his History of Fiction:

> I have employed a few hours of relaxation in drawing up the following notices of [fiction's] gradual progress. . . . No works are perhaps more useful or agreeable, than those which delineate the advance of the human mind—the history of what different individuals have effected in the course of ages, for the instruction, or even the innocent amusement, of their species. . . . Such a delineation . . . retrieves from oblivion a number of individuals, whose now obsolete works are perhaps in detail unworthy of public attention, but which promoted and diffused in their own day, light and pleasure, and form as it were landmarks which testify the course and progress of genius. By contemplating also not only what has been done, but the mode in which it has been achieved, a method may perhaps be discovered of proceeding still farther, of avoiding the errors into which our predecessors have fallen, and of following the paths in which they have met success. Retrospective works of this nature, therefore, combine utility, justice, and pleasure . . . [xiv]

Dunlop's statement exudes a heady enlightenment confidence that he occupies a secure vantage point for the study of the "works" and "landmarks"

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5. My informal survey of advertisements for novels on the front and back pages of novels in the Clark Library, dating from the forty years after 1684, shows French novels—both in French and in English translation—commingled with novels in English written by British writers.

6. For an account of how cultural critique across boundaries of nation, race, and time is enabled by "cosmopolitanism," see the "Cosmopolitanism" entry in Yolton's Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment.

of different epochs, languages, and individuals. It is from this analytical and reflective standpoint, presumed to rest outside the bias of a particular time or national place, that he allows fiction's variety to come into his view, and that allows him to "delineate" the progress of fiction. In short, Dunlop can write history because his knowledge makes him no longer a part of it. To unsettle this cosmopolitan perspective on fiction, one need only radicalize the difference among cultures and locate the historian of those differences within rather than outside a particular culture. This is a step we can begin to see taking place in Hazlitt and Scott.

Although Reeve, Beattie, and Dunlop recognize that novels afford a particularly vivid and exact representation of the manners of a time and people, it is not until Hazlitt, Scott, and Taine that the idea of the novel as a vehicle for expressing cultural difference becomes folded into an historicism that assumes a people and their culture are an organic totality, essentially different from other cultures in every aspect of their identity. Hazlitt gives Fielding first rank among English novelists for the way in which his realistic representation of character and manners helps express this difference. In his view, Fielding's novels come to embody English distinctness because his novels "are, in general, thoroughly his own; and they are thoroughly English . . . .What they are remarkable for is . . . profound knowledge of human nature, at least of English nature; and masterly pictures of the characters of men as he saw them existing" (112–113). Notice how these sentences detour general qualities of Fielding's novel, from being "thoroughly his own" to being "thoroughly English"; and from providing knowledge of "human nature" to providing knowledge of "English nature." Without defining the term "English," Hazlitt narrows the focus of Fielding's fiction to a rich, particular character and nature—namely, England. This nationalist interpretation of the final signified of Fielding's fiction is what, for Hazlitt, distinguishes Fielding from other novelists, and is also what gives him title to the greatest value.

The next conceptual step in the nationalization of the novel is readable in the first lines of Walter Scott's introductory essay on Fielding from a volume of the Ballentyne novels. Scott writes from within a related but distinct culture and nation—that of Scotland. For Scott, it is not so much Fielding who embodies England as it is England that embodies Fielding, not so much Fielding who writes England as it is "English Genius" that writes Fielding:

> Of all the works of imagination to which English genius has given origin the novels of the celebrated Henry Fielding are, perhaps, most decidedly and exclusively her own. They are not only altogether beyond the reach of

> translation, in the proper sense of the word, but we even question whether they can be fully understood, or relished to the highest extent, by such natives of Scotland and Ireland as are not habitually acquainted with the character and manners of Old England. Parson Adam, Tow-wouse, Partridge, above all, Squire Western, are personages as peculiar to England as they are unknown to other countries. Nay, the actors whose character is of a more general cast, as Allworthy, Mrs. Miller, Tom Jones himself, and almost all the subordinate agents in the narrative, have the same cast of nationality, which adds not a little to the verisimilitude of the tale. The persons of the story live in England, travel in England, quarrel and fight in England; and scarce an incident occurs without its being marked by something which could not well have happened in any other country. This nationality may be ascribed to the author's own habits of life, which rendered him conversant, at different periods, with all the various classes of English society, specimens with inimitable spirit of choice and description, for the amusement of his readers.
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> [Lives of the Novelists, 46]

Here, as in Hazlitt, it is the novel's mimetic powers—especially its power to represent society as a complex assemblage of types—which makes the novel of the nation, and its author one of "her own" distinct genius. Under this interpretation, one framed by the historicist assumption that time works to transfigure manners, social reality becomes national reality, and the novel its proper medium. "English genius" realizes her own distinct identity through the novels of Fielding; authors become the avatars of this national spirit; and, by implication, the nation is a signified powerful enough to order and unify the history of literature. These assumptions take us close to the axioms of the national literary histories written in the nineteenth century.

How does romantic literary history resituate novels? In his study of literary history David Perkins itemizes the features of a romantic literary history as follows: "the importance attached to beginnings or origins, the assumption that development is the subject of literary history, the understanding of development as continual rather than disjunctive, and the creation of suprapersonal entities as the subjects of this development" (Perkins, 86). The literary histories developed out of these concerns have the formal shape of a *bildungsroman*. Within this very novelistic species of narrative, the central character (or subject) could be a genre (such as "the novel") or it could be the nation. In either case, literary history reads culture as a totality arranged around the subject, and depends upon the relay by which the mimetic claims of the novel allow literary history to represent the nation. The nation, people, or "race" can become, within a romantic literary

history, the truth that particular genres, authors, and periods disclose. Within this global historical frame, bracing new questions about the historical causes of the ebb and flow of national genius can be posed. Thus, in his *Lectures on the Comic Writers*, Hazlitt speculates as to why the four great novelists of the mid-eighteenth century emerged at the same time. This enables him to develop the thesis that the novel's rise can be attributed to one of the bywords of English identity: the idea of liberty.

> It is remarkable that our four best novel-writers belong nearly to the same age [the reign of George II] . . . If I were called upon to account for this coincidence, I should waive the consideration of more general causes, and ascribe it at once to the establishment of the Protestant ascendancy, and the succession of the House of Hanover. These great events appear to have given a more popular turn to our literature and genius, as well as to our government. It was found high time that the people should be represented in books as well as in Parliament. They wished to see some account of themselves in what they read; and not to be confined always to the vices, the miseries, and frivolities of the great. . . . [In France] the *canaille* are objects rather of disgust than curiosity; and there are no middle classes. The works of Racine and Moliere are either imitations of the verbiage of the court, before which they were represented, or fanciful caricatures of the manners of the lowest people. But in the period of our history in question, a security of person and property, and a freedom of opinion had been established, which made every man feel of some consequence to himself, and appear an object of some curiosity to his neighbours: our manners became more domesticated; there was a general spirit of sturdiness and independence, which made the English character more truly English than perhaps at any other period—that is, more tenacious of its own opinions and purposes. The whole surface of society appeared cut out into square enclosures and sharp angles, which extended to the dresses of the time, their gravel-walks, and clipped hedges. Each individual had a certain ground-plot of his own to cultivate his particular humours in, and let them shoot out at pleasure; and a most plentiful crop they have produced accordingly. The reign of George II was, in a word, the age of *hobby-horses*: but, since that period, things have taken a different turn. [248–250]

After these words, Hazlitt goes on to regret the way in which the constant wars of the last fifty years have driven out this "domestic" interest and made what the king and nation do central, even to the point of restoring "the divine right of kings" (251).

There are several remarkable features to the way in which Hazlitt explains the comparatively sudden, and regrettably temporary, effulgence of English genius in the early (and by now canonical) novel writers—

Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne—of the period of George II. First, he offers an early rendering of what is by now the classic explanation for the rise of the novel, correlating it with the rise of the middle class (with its protestantism, individualism, and domesticity—in other words, its subjectivity). But here, that thesis is not an abstract sociological correlation, applicable to all societies undergoing modern economic development. It is interwoven, at every point, with the central myths of English national identity—most crucially with the idea of what separates French "despotism" from English liberty. Thus, the political upheaval that brought the House of Hanover to the throne is said to have given "a more popular turn to our literature and genius." How did this "turn" come about? Although Hazlitt blurs the agency for this change through the use of a passive construction ("It was found high time"), he aligns the cultural with the political demands for representation as they express themselves "in books as well as Parliament." This brings into existence a new species of culturally enfranchised reader: one who demands a turn away from representations of the "vices, miseries, and frivolities of the great" and toward "an account of themselves." This break from cultural despotism (as expressed in the continental romance and novella) is grounded in the flowering of English liberty, which wins for each "a security of person and property, and freedom of opinion." Since this turn toward a more popular and "domestic" culture wins the English reader a certain "life" and "liberty," he (but perhaps not she) becomes propertied—"each individual had a certain ground-plot of his own to cultivate his particular humours in." The novel—in the epoch of its flowering—thus allows every English citizen to realize a claim to the Lockean trinity of life, liberty, and property (Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, VII: 87). English novels thus put English readers of a certain epoch in possession of a self.[7]

This Whiggish interpretation of the free golden age of the Whig mid-eighteenth century, written from the vantage point of Hazlitt's conception of English democratic identity, is embedded in every subsequent version of the rise of the novel thesis. I can suggest the suspiciously circular, self-confirming logic that gives this thesis its coherence by recasting its argument in the following way: If one begins by taking certain English novels of the mid-eighteenth century as the first real modern novels, then "the" novel's rise into popular and aesthetic centrality appears to be the result of the political, social, cultural rise of the middle class. Correlatively, if one

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7. For an analogous argument, in slightly different terms, see Taine (*History of English Literature*, III: 268).

understands "the" (first real modern) novel as the expression of middle-class (democratic, Protestant) culture, then the novel is an English invention. How did the question of the novel's origin come to be posed within this reciprocally supporting circle of assumptions? Although Watt—and recently, more scrupulously detailed literary histories of the novel's rise, such as those of McKeon and Hunter—will correlate the novel's origin and rise with ideas and ideology and cultural formations of many different sorts, there are two common assumptions embedded in their development of the rise of the novel thesis. First, the French novels of the seventeenth century, as well as English novels before Defoe, are expelled from consideration as real modern novels, and exiled into a remote premodern twilight of aristocratic culture. This is done in spite of the fact that many of the claims made in eighteenth-century England regarding the greater verisimilitude of the novel over romance are anticipated in seventeenth-century French critiques of the heroic romance (Williams, *Idea of the Novel*). Second, the rise of the novel thesis affirms nationalist ideas—all too visible in the passage quoted from Hazlitt (above)—about the unprecedented freedom of the modern subject within the English national culture. To Watt and his heirs, the freedom of this modern subject may have required the political changes we associate with the democratic revolutions; but its fullest cultural expression comes from a middle-class reader's unprecedented freedom to consume reality in the form of novels.

How does the rise of "the" novel come to be an English story? The passages from Hazlitt and Scott discussed above suggest part of the answer. The nationalization of the novel prepares it for being interpreted as a privileged modern vehicle for subjectivity. Fielding is not just prized for representing the richly particular external social mores of England; he, along with those who follow him, also ratifies a new demand for middle-class self-representation; but paradoxically, these novel writers enable readers to become more themselves by becoming more English. In order to tell this enlightenment narrative of a people's movement toward freedom, there develops a new discourse—the national literary history—where the people, the race, and the national culture become subject and object, heroic agent and telos of their own autoproduction. This sort of narrative is anticipated by Scott and Hazlitt, but comes to fruition in Hippolyte Taine's *History of English Literature*. Taine's book tells the story of a distinct people, as it has felt the cumulative force of climate and history, through a reading of its literature. Within his narrative, authors are not isolated individuals; rather, they belong to and express different aspects of the "race."

Authors, together with what they write, become the purest expressions of the nation.

For Taine, the English novel not only expresses the English moral desire for virtue; it also expresses a practical impulse to map modes of good conduct. Several elements of Taine's description of the emergence of this "new kind" of novel are quite familiar—for example, his account of the contrast between, on the one hand, Spanish and French novels, which gratify the wish for "imagination" and "conversation," and, on the other, English ones, which depict "real life." For Taine, the novel expresses a middle-class reaction against the "obscenities" of Restoration high life. But these themes are spliced together with a much more sublime idea: that of a people's sudden birth into modern reality.

> Amidst these finished and perfect writings [that is, the English Classicism of Addison and Swift] a new kind makes its appearance, suited to the public tendencies and circumstances of the time, the anti-romantic novel, the work and reading of positive minds, observers and moralists, not intended to exalt and amuse the imagination, like the novels of Spain and the middle ages, not to reproduce or embellish conversation, like the novels of France and the seventeenth century, but to depict real life, to describe characters, to suggest plans of conduct, and judge motives of action. It was a strange apparition, and like the voice of a people buried underground, when, amidst the splendid corruption of high life, this severe emanation of the middle class welled up, and when the obscenities of Mrs. Aphra Behn, still the diversion of ladies of fashion, were found on the same table with De Foe's *Robinson Crusoe*. [456–457]

Within Taine's narrative of the novel's rise, England can only take the step beyond the aristocratic obscenities and the superficial feminine diversion afforded by "Mrs. Aphra Behn" by harkening to a "strange apparition," welling up "like the voice of the people," within culture. What does it mean that this "new kind" of writing is described by Taine in such conventionally romantic terms: as that which comes from within and below, and expresses its own irresistible desire to express itself? What are the characteristics of a writing described in this way? The general form of this movement toward utterance is more crucial than any particular content: its will to express, well up, and voice . . . what? Above all, its *self*. The novel becomes the privileged medium for the self's modern utterance.

If one looks at how Taine specifies the content of this "severe emanation of the middle class," one finds more evidence for the self as the final signified of the English novel. In summarizing the practical and moral impulses

of the writings of Defoe, Addison, and Steele, Taine explains the inward and reflective turn that has given the English a more fully developed character than other peoples: "Two features are common and proper to [these books]. All these novels are character novels. Englishmen, more reflective than others, more inclined to the melancholy pleasure of concentrated attention and inner examination, find around them human medals more vigorously struck, less worn by friction with the world, whose uninjured face is more visible than that of others" (461). In his manipulation of a commonplace about coins and character, Taine aligns the reflective independence of the English with "human medals" more "vigorously struck" with character that is then conducted into their "character novels."[8] Within his survey of particular novelists, Taine attributes the special centrality of Richardson and Fielding to the novel's rise to the way in which their difference from one another expresses a primordial tension in English culture—that between "rule" and "nature." The passage introducing Richardson and Fielding has the heroic cast of grand cultural narrative. Here is one of the moments in which the essence of English race finds expression. If one attends to the way Taine renders this complex tension within the English people, one sees how the two cultural tendencies of this particular people could enact the conflict between law and desire that psychoanalysis makes constitutive of the self per se, and thus how the qualities of a particular race could dramatize the general conflict Freud finds endemic to culture and its discontents.

> Two principal ideas can rule, and have ruled, morality in England. Now it is conscience which is accepted as a sovereign; now it is instinct which is taken for guide. Now they have recourse to grace; now they rely on nature. Now they wholly enslave everything to rule; now they give everything up to liberty. The two opinions have successively reigned in England; and the human frame, at once too vigorous and too unyielding, successively justifies their ruin and their success.—Some, alarmed by the fire of an over-fed temperament, and by the energy of unsocial passions, have regarded nature as a dangerous beast, and placed conscience with all its auxiliaries, religion, law, education, proprieties, as so many armed sentinels to repress its least outbreaks. Others, repelled by the harshness of an incessant constraint, and by the minuteness of a morose discipline, have overturned guards and barriers, and let loose captive nature to enjoy the free air and sun, deprived of which it was being choked. Both by their

8. I am indebted to my colleague Deidre Lynch for understanding the importance of the conjunction of discussions of the "face value" of coins and character. See Lynch, *Economy of Character*.

excesses have deserved their defeats and raised up their adversaries. From Shakespeare to the Puritans, from Milton to Wycherley, from Congreve to De Foe, . . . irregularity has provoked constraint and tyranny revolt. This great contest of rule and nature is developed again in the writings of Fielding and Richardson. [462]

In this narrative Taine assumes the position of a worldly, knowledgeable cultural critic who can survey the impulses of many cultures and epochs, and narrate each episode in this history so it discloses something particular and fundamental about this national culture. Within this critical narrative, the Richardson/Fielding dyad indexes a global cultural opposition in a synecdochical fashion, so a primary polarity of human culture is formalized, then gathered into a collective national subject.

While Reeve's "progress of romance" and Dunlop's "history of fiction" are inclusively multinational and extend their histories backward to ancient and medieval times, as well as across the channel to include continental romances and novellas, national literary histories such as Taine's cut these temporal and spatial links. Traits of the British culture—empiricism, Protestant individualism, moral seriousness, and a fondness for eccentric character—are promoted from secondary characteristics of novels which happened to have been written in England to primary features of the novel's generic identity. While this process can be seen to begin in Taine's *History of English Literature*, several factors limit the nationalization of literature in Taine. First, his text actually elaborates itself through a sustained comparison of English and French culture and literature. In addition, his interest in the impulses of race and nation finally dissolves aesthetic issues and generic forms into cultural experiences broad enough to epitomize the entire human condition. By contrast, the earliest study that takes the English novel as its primary object—Sir Walter Raleigh's *The English Novel: A Short Sketch of its History from the Earliest Times to the Appearance of Waverley* (1894)—is written within the context of a discursive shift that Taine's book only anticipates—namely, the movement toward the institution of separate disciplines for the study and teaching of national literatures. As a professor at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, Raleigh, like Scott, has a distance from England that encourages him to correlate the novel written in English with his interpretation of English culture. With Raleigh's book of 1894, the nationalization of the novel in England reaches completion. In 1904, Raleigh becomes the first professor of English literature (exclusive of Anglo-Saxon literature) appointed at Oxford (Court, *Institutionalizing English Literature*, 156).

Far from the romantic expressionism of Taine, wherein novels bring to the surface impulses residing deep within the "race," Raleigh consolidates a concept of the nation through a more patient and rational inquiry into the origins of the English novel. What results is an early instance of what Lennard Davis, in *Factual Fictions*, calls a "convergent theory": the novel emerges from the sudden convergence of several different types of non-novelistic writing. While Hazlitt and Taine had assumed the inscription of the novel within a broad horizon of cultural impulses, Raleigh's genealogy is more narrowly focused. Directed less at large abstractions such as class, nation, and epoch, it attends to shifts in style, genre, and idea. Raleigh's study of the novel is familiar from most subsequent English literary history of the novel: it separates "the English novel" from anything not written in English or in England. The following passage shows how Raleigh describes the emergence of the English novel, after he concedes that there was an attempt in Congreve and Behn to bring the romance "into closer relation with contemporary life":

> The attempt failed for the time, and when at last achievement came, and the rise of the great schools of English novelists with Richardson and Fielding at their head was rendered possible, it was not wrought by the professed writers of romance, but by the essayists and party writers of the reign of Anne, by Addison and Steele, by Swift and Defoe, who formed their style under influences remote enough from the high flown impossibilities of the heroic romance. Thus, just as the sixteenth century saw the decline of the older romances of chivalry, so the seventeenth saw the rise, decline, and fall of this later and less robust romantic development; the heroic romance died and left no issue. . . . For the novel least of all forms of literature can boast a pure extraction; it is of mixed and often disreputable ancestry; and the novelist derives his inspiration, as well as his material, not chiefly from the pages of his predecessors in the art, but from the life of his time and the literature that springs directly from that life, whether it be a broadside or a blue-book.
>
> [Raleigh, *The English Novel*, 109]

Raleigh's literary history is predicated upon two separations: first, novels are separated from those earlier romance forms—whether the "romances of chivalry" or the "heroic romances"—which undergo their own "rise, decline, and fall." Raleigh delivers a decisive judgment: "the heroic romance died and left no issue." In discussing the fiction of Manley and the early Haywood, he dismisses them as weak and debased holdovers from romance. Second, Raleigh separates novels from the early novels of Behn and Congreve, whose effort to write in closer proximity to contemporary life "failed for the time." But then, from whence does the novel arise?

Raleigh links the rise of "the great school of English novelists" to a "mixed ancestry" of heterogeneous influences—character writing, Defoe's early realism, Bunyan, Spratt's goals for scientific prose, *Spectator* papers, *Robinson Crusoe*, and other writings—all said to be characterized by their proximity to "the life of [the] time."

Taine and Raleigh put forward a thesis about the novel that would never have occurred to Reeve or Dunlop: that the modern English novel has little or nothing to do with earlier novels and romances, and thus it did not develop out of Italian, Spanish, or French precursors. Instead, the modern English novel is said to derive from distinctly English discourses. This thesis not only narrows the field of cultural study, it also refocuses the question of the novel's origins through a national lens, so that it becomes: *what are the English origins of the English novel?* This question confirms the disciplinary coordinates of the English studies within which it is framed: the answers it finds are guaranteed in advance to emerge from within the study of British culture. By narrowing the vortex of the novel's formation, a nationalist British literary history produces a new object of cultural value now dubbed "the English novel." This then becomes the subject and eponymous protagonist in a series of literary histories, by Raleigh (1894), George Saintsbury (1913), and Walter Allen (1954), all entitled *The English Novel*. It also occurs within other titles, including William Lyons Phelphs' *Advance of the English Novel* (1916), Ernest Baker's ten-volume *History of the English Novel* (1924–1939), and Arnold Kettle's *Introduction to the English Novel* (1951). Within these literary histories, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne become the "dream team" of eighteenth-century fiction. After the revival of interest in Defoe at the beginning of this century, he is added as a fifth early master of the English novel. By the time Ernest Baker sets about writing his monumental work, the self-evident identity and value of the English novel justifies a "glance at pre-existing works," not only within English prose fiction, but also at those in foreign languages and literatures. Far from putting anything into question, the many foreign and domestic influences Baker traces for novels written in Britain merely lend support to what his volumes labor to secure—the distinctness of the "English novel."

With Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957), the modifier "English" is implied but erased. Now the rise of the English novel, as read through the three authors whose names follow the colon in Watt's title, is said to accomplish the rise of "the" novel, that is, *all* novels. Just as the moralizing of the novel allows it to appear distinctively English, so the later nationalization of the novel written in

English allows "the English novel" to become a vehicle for more than a national subject. Within British literature, Watt's concept of "formal realism" becomes the general vehicle for modern subjectivity per se. In this way, a national literary history overcomes what had always worried the earliest promoters and elevators of the novel in Britain: the belatedness and indebtedness of English fiction. Watt's rise of the novel thesis, through its muted but implicit presumption of British priority in the development of "the" novel, underwrites the Anglocentrism of English literary studies while it seems to skirt it. In order to understand this presumption of the priority of the English novel, it is necessary to understand one more component of the novel's genealogy: its supposed realism.

THE NOVEL'S REALIST CLAIMS

Novels that are, at their simplest level, lively stories about people who never existed, have no necessary relation to moral life or national identity. The articulations between novels and morality and novels and nationhood are the contingent effect of the institutionalization of the novel this chapter has described. These articulations both lend support to and are grounded in a third, equally contingent connection—that between the "novel" and "real life." The idea that the novel effects a particularly compelling imitation of "real life" is as old as seventeenth-century critical claims on behalf of the novella against the romance. Similar claims were made on behalf of the anti-romance of Cervantes. But since the eighteenth century, the claim to represent "real" life and manners has never been merely descriptive; it has also been normative. To represent "real" life is to attain a more valuable species of writing. Making this claim on behalf of the novel and against romance was a way in which critics considered elsewhere in this chapter insert the surpassing of the old romance, with its fabulous elements and its extravagant codes of honor, into an enlightened movement toward a rational modern taste in entertainment.

Any systematic effort to deal with the many theoretical and historical horizons of realism is beyond the scope of this study. My concern is to understand how the realist claim so frequently made for novels operates as a third criterion for defining the novel and rationalizing its rise. Ever since critics and novelists have been making the "realist" claim for the novel, there have been compelling reasons for critical skepticism. First, any claim that the novel re-presents the real runs up against a systematic obstacle arising from its linguistic medium. No text, be it history, science, or fiction, once transported from the space or time of its production, and no matter

how earnest its aspirations to facticity or truth, can bear a mark in its own language that verifies its relation to something outside itself. In short, there are no markers to distinguish a representation of the actual and its simulation (W. Warner, "Realist Literary History"). As a result, those who tender the novel's realist claims often augment unverifiable assertions with testimonials of belief and taunting mockeries of "unreal" writing—the early favorite for this treatment being romance. Typical in this regard is Francis Coventry on Fielding: "[*Joseph Andrews*] was not mere dry narrative, but a lively representative of real life. For crystal Palaces and winged Horses, we find homely cots and ambling nags; and instead of impossibility, what we experience every day" (16). In an oft-quoted celebration of the novel's mimetic powers, Hazlitt concedes poetry's affinity with "the divine," but claims novel's closer ties to "humanity":

> We find [in the novel] a close imitation of men and manners; we see the very web and texture of society as it really exists, and as we meet with it when we come into the world. If poetry has "something more divine in it," this savors more of humanity. We are acquainted with the motives and characters of mankind, imbibe our notions of vice and virtue from practical examples, and are taught knowledge of the world, through the airy medium of romance.
>
> ["English Comic Writers," 106]

In this passage the comforting repetition of the pronoun "we" and the use of intensifiers—novels offer a "close" imitation of men, society as it "really" exists comes through its "very" web and texture—suggests what Hazlitt's testimonial style only implies: the unverifiability of the novel's claim to teach "knowledge of the world."

The tenuousness of the novel's realist claim is evident from the wide historical vacillations in accepted critical wisdom as to what constitutes the most truthful representation of "real" life. When the novel's function as a guide to moral life is given greatest weight, as in the late-eighteenth-century debate about novel reading, then Richardson's oft-celebrated "writing to the moment" and his ability to take us into the "inmost reaches of the heart" led many critics to give him the surest claim to having represented "real life." By contrast, Fielding is valued by many critics not for his realism but for the wonderfully artful unity of his plot. But when Romantic critics such as Scott and Hazlitt bring to the fore the novel's powers to accomplish social description of the nation, the realist claim is tendered on Fielding's behalf. The nineteenth-century fascination with the idea of society as an organic totality made the novel seem uniquely appropriate for the study and analysis of society. This underlies the realist claims

made for the novels of Dickens and George Eliot. While twentieth-century critics of Fielding often read his novels as highly artificial constructions of rhetoric, as late as the second decade of this century, George Saintsbury was insisting upon the essential "artificiality" of Richardson's *Pamela* and then describing Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* in these terms: "These are all real people who do real things in a real way now, as they did nearly two hundred years ago; . . . And we are told of their doings in a real way, too" (102–103). The context of these lines from Saintsbury does not elucidate what these four uses of the word "real" mean; instead its circular, tautological reiteration aims to give the word itself talismanic force; that the people and things in *Joseph Andrews* are as "real" "now" as they were two hundred years ago is a judgment the critic's reader must take on faith.

Why the insistence on the novel's realist claims? Derrida's writing suggests why it is that some concept of mimesis becomes inevitable within formulations of the cultural role of novels: a mimetic relation is implicit in the structure of the sign, in every effort at narrative, in the attempt to bring truth into the presence of consciousness through language. Modern media of representation—from the press to Hollywood cinema, from radio to contemporary television—lend support to a concept of representation as old as Western culture. I would describe that credo about realistic representation in this way: that it is possible to develop systems for representing what exists that have an autonomy, self-evidence, and presence to the spectator analogous to that ascribed to life itself; in other words, that it is possible to have representation that is free of rhetoric. How do readers and critics justify claims that a certain use of language refers to that which is not in language (the referent) in a fashion that is more compelling, precise, or "realistic" than other uses of language? As these claims begin to be made in the mid-eighteenth century, there are certain background axioms operating within such a claim. First, this claim does not establish a naively empirical relationship between word and thing, but unfolds within an understanding that the novel has a mediated aesthetic relation to what it represents (McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel*, 118–128). Thus, for example, a dialogue in a tavern is not, whatever its verisimilitude, the same as a transcript of an actual dialogue. Second, there is no criterion within language by which we can judge that one relation to a referent is more realistic than another. Finally, the realist claim is founded upon a judgment made at a particular time among a social network of readers who produce, consume, and criticize.

A pragmatic historical perspective upon the realist claim helps to explain the *lack* of consensus among readers, even within the same epoch, about the realism of the novels of Richardson and Fielding. First, the

rhetoric used by each author for selecting language and speech genres for representing and entertaining is fundamentally different. Thus, for example, Richardson can draw from the low everyday forms of the personal journal and familiar letter, while Fielding writes "in the manner of Cervantes" and draws upon the formal codes of epic, mock epic, periodical, and criticism. At the same time, these writers select referents from different regions of the social world—for example, from the rich and the poor, from the upper and lower classes, producing effects of the "high" and the "low," the narrow and the expansive both within and between each author. However, the epistemological bias of theories of realism obscures the way in which shifts in the reader's experience of the realist effect can result from non-epistemological factors such as new topics, elements of fantasy, novel techniques of representation, and so on.

By now it should be apparent why claims to realism are so open to decay and revision. For the readers who experience the "realist effect" of a particular text's alignment of language and referent, the judgment that this or that novel is intrinsically realistic is a pleasing delusion. Because this delusion is often shared by a community of readers, it encourages the critical consolidation of a certain specific form of writing—for example, writing to the moment, formal realism, omniscient narrative, stream of consciousness writing—as a prescribed form for realistic writing. But the repeated use of a particular form for fiction wears away its realist effect, until it appears to be a mechanical formula fiction referring to nothing so much as to itself. In fact, because all the terms of the relation declared to be realistic (rhetorics of representation, selected referents, the realist effect experienced by readers) change over time, it is quite inevitable that novel writing and reading breeds new realisms. The decay of the realist effect of old realisms incites those practices and manifestos that promote a new species of realism. Of course, these shifts operate retroactively upon the existing archive of classic novels, producing changes in the critical judgment as to whether a single text—for example, *Tom Jones*—is realistic or unrealistic.

Because history undermines the naturalness and self-evidence of received modes of representing the real, it has proved difficult to sustain any "realist claim" made by or for a novel. Coventry, Hazlitt, and Saintsbury use the novel's realist claim the same way critics have used it ever since: to distinguish novels from non-novels, and to assess the critical value of different novels, and of their authors. In the nearly three hundred years of novel criticism in English since Congreve, one question—"Is it realistic?"—has served as the most generally accepted criterion of value. But while critics have often sought to regularize novelistic production around the goal of representing real life, readers, and the authors who write for

them, have happily indulged periodic returns to romance, with its valuation of the "gothic," fantasy, and the naive pleasures of action and adventure. Thus Horace Walpole set out quite consciously to invent a new kind of "romance" by blending the "imagination and improbability" of old romance with the modern novel's imitation of natural manners and sentiment (see conclusion). Walpole's return to romance is only the first in a series. The early-nineteenth-century romantic novels of Godwin and Shelley develop the entertainment potential of the uncanny double; Scott's historical novels incorporate many elements of the early romances; and there is, in the late nineteenth century, a return by Stevenson and Kipling to stories of naive childhood adventure (Glazener, 369–398). In other words, though some critics and novelists have attempted to hegemonize novels through the concept of "realism," novel readers and writers have never accepted this leadership.

THE ART OF THE NOVEL

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the novel's realism is complicated and enriched by novelists such as Flaubert and James, who aestheticize the novel. While it may seem that such a movement would vitiate the novel's realist claims, in fact it aligns the novel with a critical tradition that goes back to Aristotle, whereby art's power to represent nature is dependent on its acceptance of inherited aesthetic forms and types such as tragedy, epic, and pastoral. While those novelists and critics who contend that the novel is a species of art seldom refer to eighteenth-century texts, their concept of the novel transforms literary histories of its rise. In Henry James' prefaces to the New York edition of his novels, later gathered by R. P. Blackmur into The Art of the Novel, and in Percy Lubbock's Craft of Fiction (1921), a new demand is made of novels that would accede to the condition of art: they must have "form." Of course, James never applies the concept of form as strictly as Aristotle and Boileau attempted to do for tragedy, or as precisely as literary critics routinely do in the interpretation of poetry. In other words, the novel's "form" is never supposed to disclose it essence. In his criticism of the novel, James uses analogies to drama, painting, and sculpture to make the case for its having a graspable contour, shape, or structure which gives it "form." For James, a novel has "form" if it achieves a unified and economic commingling of plot, character, and idea, although because he is so protective of the novelist's prerogatives, it is often difficult to be sure exactly what he means by the novel's "form." It is clear, however, which novels lack form: those "loose and baggy monsters" that James mocks and Victorian novel readers had been all too ready to indulge.

The successful articulation of the novel and art has several important effects upon the novel's cultural placement by the late nineteenth century. First, a new sophistication and irony attend critical considerations of the novel's realist claims. It is assumed that the novel's claim to realism depends upon its position as a kind of art, and its claim to represent the real unfolds not in opposition to the artificial, but through the illusion-engendering resources of art. The consensus among academic critics of this century that successful realism is grounded in a reciprocal interplay between literary form and mimetic function may be typified by the following sentence from the first page of F. W. J. Hemmings' Age of Realism (1971): "[I]n this volume we shall be concerned solely with the specific shape and content that the realist approach gave to the literary forms that seemed most naturally to embody it" (9).

The expectation that the best and most significant novels possess "form" helps transform the literary history of the novel, as well as the imagination of its rise. In the comprehensive literary histories of fiction such as those written by Reeve and Dunlop, the modern novel takes shape gradually, and never loses its affinities with a broad spectrum of earlier works. As long as the novel seemed free of the critical constraints that framed the cultural acceptance of epic, drama, and poetry, and its signal feature was the atavistic pleasures it afforded its readers, literary historians could trace the many interconnections between the modern novel and the romances of earlier epochs; and as long as the moral function or national telos of novelistic writing guided literary histories, the affinities of early English novels with Shakespeare's characters, Chaucer's stories, Cervantes' anti-romance, and the modern French novel seemed plausible and open to exploration. But once the novel's generic identity was understood to depend upon realist claims achieved through a particular form, the arrival of "the" modern novel appeared unheralded, contingent, and unexpected. Its first instance could now be sought. In the first decades of the twentieth century, a new drama comes into heroic enlightenment accounts of the novel's rise out of romance. The emergence of the modern novel comes to be represented as dependent upon an abrupt invention of new and more powerful techniques for representing reality.

In his book The English Novel (1916), Saintsbury develops a rather extravagant metaphor to describe the collective cultural labor entailed in perfecting the modern novel. He sees the four English novelists—Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne—as constructing for the novel four wheels and a "wain," or undercarriage, indispensable to its forward movement through history: "Thus, in almost exactly the course of a technical generation—from the appearance of Pamela in 1740 to that of

Humphry Clinker in 1771—the wain of the novel was solidly built, furnished with four main wheels to move it, and set a-going to travel through the centuries" (132). But each of these novelists are then "found wanting for one reason or another." There is, it turns out, still something missing from novelistic form: "And what we are looking for now is something rather different from this—a masterpiece, or masterpieces, which may not only yield delight and excite admiration in itself or themselves, but may bring forth fruit in others . . . In other words, nobody's work yet—save in the special kinds—had been capable of yielding a novel-*formula;* nobody had hit upon the most capital and fruitful novel-ideas" (190–191). But "time" brings forth two remarkable novelists—Jane Austen and Walter Scott—to provide what is still lacking. These two "provided—for generations, probably for centuries, to come—patterns and principles for whoso would follow in prose fiction" (210). Their acts of formal invention complete the providential design of Saintsbury's literary history. In an analogous fashion, Ernest Baker's ten-volume *History of the English Novel* (1924–1939) attempts to "trace the process of natural selection by which a form evolved combining the two elements" essential to novels: "the interpretation of life" and "fictitious narrative in prose" (III: 5). This form becomes the "type," or prototype, for all the modern novels to follow.

By making "formal realism" the distinctive feature of the modern novel, and the invention necessary for its "rise," Watt's *Rise of the Novel* assumes and extends the arguments for formal invention developed more casually in the earlier literary histories of Saintsbury and Baker. While earlier literary historians had found various reasons to give Richardson and Fielding priority as the first real British novelists, the idea of the novel as a technical invention embedded in the literary histories of Saintsbury, Baker, and Watt gives a radical new sense, and ascent, to Richardson's programmatic claim to have written a "new species of writing," and to the proprietary authority Fielding would exercise over his "new province of writing." That literary historians of our century would have granted to Richardson and/or Fielding what few conceded them in the eighteenth century—patent rights to the invention of the novel—is one of the striking ironies of the novel's progress.[9]

9. In his *Idea of the Novel in Europe, 1600–1800*, Ioan Williams would revise Watt's thesis. By interweaving French and English developments, and showing how the critique of romance in the French seventeenth century anticipates later defenses of the novel over romance in the English eighteenth century, Williams argues not the "development of a new form but the evolution of an existing one."

The wide influence of *The Rise of the Novel* results in part from the way in which Watt adds an important new dimension to the story of the novel's rise, by updating its realist claim. By aligning Richardson's "writing to the moment" with the distinctly modern turn toward a rendering of private experience and subjectivity intensities, Watt redefines the object of novelistic mimesis from the social surface to the psychological interior. Watt's argument ends up redefining "the novel"—and the "formal realism" it is built upon—so as to revalue Richardson at Fielding's expense. How and why does the novel shift the terrain of its realist claims from the social surface to the ineluctable psychological interior? My speculation is that by the turn of the twentieth century, novelistic writing is but one of several kinds of representation within culture claiming to represent reality. Over the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of this century, photography and cinema co-opt the sort of social description and precise verisimilitude of the visible surface central to nineteenth-century realism.[10] To sustain its realist claims, novel writers locate a more obscure object— one inaccessible to the camera lens—by turning inward. Now the most advanced novels—those, for example, of Joyce, Proust, Woolf, and Faulkner—are claimed by critics to effect a mimesis of the inner consciousness. The old aesthetic demand that art have a certain "form" receives a technological spin in the invention of what is supposed to be a narrative of "stream of consciousness." Just as the new media of photography and the phonograph and their merger into cinema enable a new set of realist claims to be tendered, so the novel is reinterpreted as the medium uniquely suited to representing the inner life. Within Watt's literary history, Richardson's "writing to the moment" can be revalued as the early modern precursor of the stream-of-consciousness writing attributed to some late modern novelists.

THE VORTEX MIS-SEEN AS AN ORIGIN

The three episodes I have traced in this chapter—the debate about the effects of novel reading, the nationalization of the novel, and the development of the novel's realist claims—suggest the way in which antagonistic historical strife becomes sedimented in one complex, ambivalent cultural object: "the novel." But discussing these episodes sequentially has

10. While nineteenth-century novels of the first quality are usually adorned with illustrations, twentieth-century novels usually are not. This suggests more evidence for a shift of twentieth-century novelistic representation away from attempts at visualization.

produced a distortion; in fact, all three are entangled and related. In order for the novel's moral effects to be taken seriously, it has to represent character truthfully; the idea that novels represent the social is a precondition for its nationalization; and both improving and nationalizing readers enhance the novel's realist claims. These three aspects of the novel's institution become the minimal criteria for identifying novels and for distinguishing them from "mere" fiction. Finally, this history—of improving novels, building nations, and articulating fiction with knowledge—becomes sedimented, and forgotten, as it functions within the novel as self-evident cultural object (Laclau, *New Reflections*, 34–35).

My genealogy of the novel's rise foregrounds the role of literary history in effacing differences active in the history of culture. By developing an elaborate analogy between fiction-making and gardening, Dunlop's literary history spatializes time, so the successive conflicts of the often-antagonistic types of fiction written in Britain over the course of a century are arranged to appear as one harmoniously balanced array of species which can be surveyed in the same way as, in one leisured stroll, one surveys a garden. However, it proves as implausible to have a literary history without an active literary historian as it is to have a garden without an energetic gardener. It is the evaluative role of the literary historian—in holding the scales over each text within a synchronic moment of judgment—that enables the narrative of the progress or history of romance, novel, and fiction to be told. Then the *way* that story is told has a feedback effect: which writers are included and excluded, brought into the foreground, cast into the shade, or weeded away determines what kinds of writing and authorship will come to count as a "tradition" that grounds subsequent value judgments. This is the ironic culmination of literary history. Literary history can easily become tautological and self-confirming, a garden wall to protect specimens collected against the very factors—history, change, difference—that a critical literary history might have interpreted.

Like a garden or museum collection, literary history turns the strife of history into a repertoire of forms. It does so by taking differences that may have motivated the writing or reading of novels within specific historical contexts—differences of religion, politics, class, gender, social propriety, race, or ethical design—and converting them into differences of a literary kind. Thus, for example, the polemic between Richardson and Fielding about the sorts of narrative and character that fiction should possess becomes deposited, within literary history, as two species of novel: the Richardson novel of psychology and sentiment, and the Fielding novel of social panorama and critique. The novels of amorous intrigue written by

Behn, Manley, and the early Haywood have an unclassifiable difference which puts them entirely outside the frame of literary history of the (elevated) novel.

Here is a way to describe the difference between a cultural and a literary history of the early novel. If we interpret the writings of Behn, Manley, and Haywood, and of Richardson and Fielding, as part of the cultural history of Britain, we would find complex patterns of antagonism and the later authors' conscious and unconscious efforts to distinguish their writing from that of their antecedents. This book charts these antagonisms, as they find expression, for example, in the differences between Behn's *Love Letters* and Richardson's *Pamela*. By contrast, literary history "finds," upon the archival table of its investigations, different novels which it then attempts to distinguish and classify. Differences among novels are no longer effects of history, but instead are the initial data for literary classification. Within its classificatory operation, the category "novel" acquires a paradoxical role: pre-given and yet belated in its arrival, "the novel" is made to appear ready at hand to the literary historian, but it is actually that which the literary history of the novel defines. Often presented as the humble, minimal, and preliminary axiom of a literary history, the idea of the novel as ethical, national, and realistic operates within the literary history of canonical texts as a kind of Law.

How is the eclipse of the influential strain of fiction written by Behn, Manley, and the early Haywood to be understood? Dunlop's dismissal of these three novelists from his history confirms a judgment that critics of the early amorous novel had been making since the 1730s. This negative judgment might be attributed to changes in sensibility, taste, or style, or to the idea that a certain formula has exhausted its appeal. But these words merely re-label rather than explain the cultural change we are trying to interpret. It is no doubt correct to argue that Behn's novels of amorous intrigue are an integral expression of the culture of the Restoration, characterized by the zeal for sexual license exhibited by the court of Charles II, its reaction against the dour asceticism of the Commonwealth, and its enthusiastic translation of French cultural forms. Such an historical placement of the early novel allows one to align its passing with the reaction, after 1688, against the excesses of the Restoration. Pleasures disowned become discomforting and, through embarrassment, a kind of unpleasure. But this fails to explain the popularity of the novels of amorous intrigue written after 1688 by Manley and Haywood. Some feminist literary historians have attributed the devaluation of Behn, Manley, and Haywood to their gender. However, the same critics who condemn this notorious trio

applaud the moral improvement of the novel of amorous intrigue under-
taken before Richardson by Jane Barker and Penelope Aubin. Explanations
based on taste, political history, and gender fail to come to terms with the
particular way in which the novels of Behn, Manley, and Haywood were
devalued and overwritten in the 1740s.

The erasure or forgetting of earlier cultural formations is an obscure
process. Unlike the latest clothing, cultural forms do not become entirely
"used up." Cultural forms—from letters and love stories to national con-
stitutions—can receive rejuvenating splices from sources as various as new
technology, foreign transplants, and political strife. In other words, recy-
cling seems to be the rule rather than the exception in culture. Thus, for
example, the novel of amorous intrigue, developed in the late Restoration
by Behn under the strong influence of the continental novella and the aris-
tocratic literature of love, is exploited for politically motivated scandal and
satire by Delariviere Manley in the *New Atalantis* (1709). Then, following
the spectacular success of *Love in Excess* (1719–1720), this species of novel
is turned into repeatable "formula fiction" on the market by Eliza Haywood
in the 1720s. To remove elements from culture one needs to understand
"forgetting" as, in Nietzsche's words, "an active and in the strictest sense
positive faculty of repression" (*Genealogy of Morals*, II: 493). The incor-
poration of the novel of amorous intrigue within the elevated novel of the
1740s—in, for example, *Pamela, Joseph Andrews, Clarissa,* and *Tom Jones*—
is one of the means by which old pleasures are disowned and forgotten. In
their novels of the 1740s, Richardson and Fielding promote this "forget-
ting," first by defacing the novel of amorous intrigue, and then by provid-
ing their own novels as replacements for novels they characterize as
degraded and immoral. These new novels overwrite—by disavowing but
appropriating, tossing out but recycling—the novels they spurn.

Reeve and Dunlop do not commit their literary histories to exercising a
"good memory." Unlike certain late-twentieth-century counterhegemonic
literary histories—whether feminist, African-American, or gay and les-
bian—they do *not* set out to counteract a biased cultural memory. Reeve
and Dunlop are, like most literary historians who follow them, constrained
by the protocols of a culturally elevating literary history to be critical and
selective, and thus forgetful. In the introduction to *The Progress of
Romance*, Reeve tells her readers she seeks "to assist according to my best
judgment, the readers choice, amidst the almost infinite variety it affords,
in a selection of such as are most worthy of a place in the libraries of read-
ers of every class, who seek either for information or entertainment" (iv).
While Behn's novels are given cursory treatment in these two literary his-

tories, the novels of Richardson and Fielding are given the positions of spe-
cial priority they would retain in all subsequent accounts of the novel's rise.
The success of the elevated novel in the 1740s—its appearance in culture as
the only novel worthy of reading, of cultural attention, and of detailed lit-
erary history—pushes the early novels of Behn, Manley, and Haywood
into the margins of literary histories, where they nonetheless never quite
disappear, but serve instead as an abject trace or degraded "other" needed
to secure the identity of the "real" (that is, legitimate) novel.

Starting with Reeve, a scholarly literary history develops a paradoxical
relationship to the forgotten texts of the past. It retrieves from the archive
and reads again what its contemporary culture has almost completely for-
gotten. This activity pushes Reeve toward a certain regret about the shifts
in cultural value that can appear quite arbitrary to one who has looked long
enough down the "stream of time":

> Romances have for many ages past been read and admired, lately it has
> been the fashion to decry and ridicule them; but to an unprejudiced
> person, this will prove nothing but the variations of times, manners, and
> opinions.—Writers of all denominations,—Princes and Priests,—Bishops
> and Heroes,—have their day, and then are out of date.—Sometimes indeed
> a work of intrinsic merit will revive, and renew its claim to immortality:
> but this happiness falls to the lot of few, in comparison of those who roll
> down the stream of time, and fall into the gulph of oblivion. [105]

Reeve finds two ways to naturalize the process of disappearance and for-
getting she regrets. The first of these is through reference to the wheel of
fortune that gives "princes and priests, bishops and heroes" "their day,"
then takes it away; the second is by using a metaphor, characterizing the
movement of a "work of merit" down "the stream of time" into "the gulph
of oblivion." While conveying the violence of cultural memory, these
analogies, by producing a poetic sense of inevitability, also obscure the cul-
tural strife at work within shifts in cultural memory. Thus for example,
the differences of gender, politics, and class, which cast some down into
"oblivion" while raising others up into prominence, are conducted through
the literary histories that translate them for a later age. Though literary
historians attempt to be "unprejudiced" (according to Reeve), embrace an
ethos of "judgment, candor, and impartiality" (in Coventry's words), and
invoke general moral or aesthetic grounds for critical judgment, they do
not overcome the remorseless decisions of cultural history, but instead
reflect them.

Since one of the meanings of "gulf" is a "whirlpool, or absorbing eddy"
[*Oxford English Dictionary*], I can accommodate my thesis about the

novel's rise to Reeve's metaphor: the elevation of the new novel of Richardson and Fielding over the old novel of amorous intrigue produces a vortex or whirlpool within the land(sea)scape of eighteenth-century British culture. Where one kind of reading is thrown up, another is thrown down; where one kind of pleasure is licensed, another is discredited. *This turbulent vortex of reciprocal appearance and disappearance is mis-seen as the origin of the novel.* But in order for the elevated novel to appear, the novel of amorous intrigue must be made to disappear into a gulf of oblivion. Thus birth requires a murder and burial.

While this vortex at the (apparent) origin of the (elevated) novel first appears in the cultural strife of the 1740s, it is also readable in subsequent histories of the novel's rise, in which Behn almost invariably becomes the abject trace of the effaced "other" novel. For George Saintsbury, Behn's best work, *Oroonoko*, is but "an experiment in the infancy of the novel." For Ernest Baker, although Behn "understood the need for verisimilitude, she never found out how to secure it, never evoked for an instant the illusion of real life" (*History of the English Novel*, III: 99–100).

Given the broad argument of this chapter as to the gradual sedimentation of a certain concept of the novel, it should not be surprising that Behn is disqualified as a real novelist by critics of this century. Her notorious sexual license makes her appear immoral; her indebtedness to the continental novella makes her appear un-English; and she is judged "unrealistic" for two contradictory reasons—while the artful intricacy of her novels of amorous intrigue appears improbable, her secret histories are all too factual. Thus, Baker dismisses *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1683) as a "fraudulent attempt to exploit contemporary scandal" (III: 83). But Behn is still there: a successful and popular playwright, respected in her own day, buried in Westminster Abbey, and publishing novels nearly six decades before Richardson and Fielding, over three decades before Defoe. She also influences the most popular fiction writers of the next two generations, Delariviere Manley and Eliza Haywood. Consequently, Behn is recruited by later literary historians of the early novel as the exemplary instance of a prose fiction writer who stands on the brink of novel writing, but who fails to write novels. Within the classificatory operation of literary history, her writings are non-novels which help us to locate the first real novels. She provides the most celebrated miscarriages in the annals of pre-novelistic prose fiction. Behn serves—within the literary histories of Reeve, Dunlop, Saintsbury, and Baker—as one who helps us to see, through her negative example, the first real novels.