

Cultural Institutions of the Novel

Deidre Lynch and William B. Warner, Editors

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Deidre Lynch and William B. Warner

Introduction

The Transport of the Novel

☞ We were motivated in the initial stages of our work on this anthology by our common experience of a thoroughly institutional occasion: one of those occasions when the professional trumps the personal and individual agency gets folded into the way things have always been done. As teachers of eighteenth-century English literature, we are regularly compelled, by the design of the curriculum and by the customs of the discipline, to begin the course catalogued as "The Eighteenth-Century English Novel" with an explanation of why it is in this course and period, and not some other, that prose fiction makes its curricular and cultural debut. The usual business of historical lectures and close readings must be postponed at such moments to make room for accounts showing why *Oroonoko* or *Roxana* really are, despite their antiquity and unfamiliarity (their lack of chapter divisions, their plethora of capitalized nouns, their odd prefatory material), more like the "novels" by Dickens or Toni Morrison that our students encounter in the modern sectors of the curriculum than they are like the early narratives, by Chaucer, say, or Sidney or Bunyan, that they encounter elsewhere.

In short, these occasions oblige us to commit to a concept of genre: we must then reveal what makes the eighteenth-century narrative a novel. The results always dissatisfy. In delineating *what the novel is*, one invariably finds oneself resorting to outlines of what novels *are not* (e.g., they are not romances, and so, by implication, they are not "aristocratic" but bourgeois, and they are not French, or at least not yet, but English). And if one falls back on Ian Watt's list of the elements of formal realism (1957), at the point when one reaches the analogy between novelistic prose and empiricists' call for "the correspondence of words to things,"

students will, invariably, pull books like *Star Trek: Death Star* out of their backpacks and ask, "But isn't this a novel?"

Introducing the eighteenth-century "origins" of "the" novel, we validate the assumption that what novels are now was already immanent in what they were then. We ratify geopolitical boundaries (between, for example, England and France). We legislate for a canon of exemplary, "truly" novelistic texts and legislate against popular practices of reading and writing. These are problems endemic to efforts to ascribe a distinct, essential nature to the novel.

The shortcomings of this discourse of genre are, of course, hardly a secret. There is an everyday tension between the place of the novel in the classroom and novels' place in the corner store—where they appear not as instances of "the" genre but as "genre fiction," as romances, mysteries, westerns, and so forth. Nevertheless, in classrooms as well as in criticism, there is no end to definitions of the novel. With this anthology, we project a form of novel studies that would take as its object the semantic and social contests through which *the* novel keeps hold of its definite article and stakes a claim to cultural capital. By acknowledging novels' global circulation, we aim to redress the bias at work in restricting theoretical speculation about novels to fictions originating inside Europe or the United States.

This collection is shaped both to build on the novel studies of the 1980s and to take a logical next step. In British and American studies there has been a fruitful but inconclusive debate over the origins of the novel. Reworking the terrain of Watt's classic study *The Rise of the Novel*, participants in that debate have demonstrated how novels reshape the cultures in which they win currency and mediate conflicts within them.¹ At the same time, building on exemplary critical texts like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and Henry Louis Gates's "The Blackness of Blackness" (1984; extended in *The Signifying Monkey* in 1988), new modes of historicist criticism and of cultural studies have analyzed broad cultural phenomena such as gender, sexuality, race, and class by analyzing how fictions exercise real power in the social order. Together, these strains of novel studies—that concerned with origins and that concerned with power—have redirected critical attention from refining the definition of the novel as a literary type to understanding how novels produce social divisions: from *what a novel is* to *what novels do*.

While endorsing this emphasis on novels' productive role in culture, we believe that there are two ways in which these studies fall short of what we are attempting. First, they fail to take into account how ideas about what counts as a novel themselves register and shape social struggles. The divisions that define genres—the divisions, for instance, between "realism" and "romance"—have frequently been articulated with the gender and class hierarchies that organize the social order. For this reason, efforts to define "the" novel—as either entertainment or literature, a conveyor of fantasy or reality—are implicated in the question of cultural power. Second, although these studies challenge the Jamesian project of locating the novel inside an aesthetic "House of Fiction," they have not fully acknowledged novels' mobility.² The global dissemination of novel reading and novel writing has, however, made "the" novel a discursive site where the relations among nations are brokered. By bringing the question of genre back into the foreground of novel studies, by attending to transnational institutions of the novel, this collection finds new ways to analyze the productive powers that novels exercise in culture.

In titling this collection *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*, we aim in part to exploit the customary sense of the word "institution," which gestures toward those establishments where ideas of "the" novel are endowed with a kind of solidity. Within such institutions as the university or the publishing house, "the" novel can seem perpetually *prior* to writers and readers, in a position to ghostwrite their practices. But, as Homer Brown notes in the prologue to this collection, since "institution" designates an action or happening as well as a place or a thing, the word can also designate the act of establishing that breaks with business as usual, providing a "novel" departure from institutional protocol. This second, active sense of "institution" interferes with the pledge of continuity and integrity inscribed in the term "the" novel. "Institution" in this sense evokes the contingency of what has happened. It encourages us to study the novel as that which was once "novel."

In order to clear the ground for a study of the cultural institutions of the novel, the authors of these essays investigate the implications of three principal ideas about novels: their status as print commodities, their mediation of national cultures, and their role in transnational exchange. While none of these ideas is new in itself, their alignment in these essays allows the collection as a whole to take a step forward in novel studies.

First, novels are the first literary genre to emerge into cultural centrality within the medium of print. Novels have accordingly a unique capacity for mobility. As commodities within the print market, novels have proven particularly adept at moving the desires of readers, often triggering identification with a central character and transporting readers into alternate identities. As commodities novels also have followed fashion and, by virtue of their adaptability and mobility, have circumvented the generic rules that authors and critics have laid down for the novel (Bakhtin 1981). Publishers and teachers, as well as critics and authors, have frequently resisted the commodity status of novels: by ascribing to fictions more elevated cultural functions—the moral improvement of readers, the representation of reality—they have tried to place the novel firmly inside the category of Literature. At the same time, novels' portability has allowed them to circulate among a diverse readership within the nation, to cross the frontiers of gender and class.

Second, their wide popularity has allowed novels to assume a crucial role in the constitution of the nation as an imagined community (Anderson 1983). To act in this way, novels exploit the claim to offer a detailed and inclusive representation of everyday life. From the great national literary histories of the nineteenth century, such as Taine's *The History of English Literature*, to the most recent multicultural syllabi, the novel has been privileged as a window opening onto the characters of nations and peoples. But the novel is more than a reflection of the social history happening outside its confines. Participating in the social practice of novel reading can give readers the sense of participating in a nation that they imagine to be the product of consensus. When novel reading traverses the social boundaries within the nation, novels' popularity can seem an index of the nation's essential coherence. This also means that efforts to define a select canon of paradigmatic instances of the national novel—and to define the terms of that consensus and the nature of that essence—are contentious. They render the novel the site where struggles over cultural identities are most acute.

Third, and finally, precisely because the novel is neither a Western invention nor a Western franchise, novels serve as a nexus of transnational exchange. Emphasizing the success novels have met with as components of a global import-export trade does *not* entail subscribing to the colonial sequel that has been appended to many European literary histories. If these literary histories often tell how the novel as a new type of narra-

tive is invented in seventeenth-century Spain or France, or eighteenth-century Britain, their sequel recounts how the novel then disseminates its form and idea outward to the peripheries of the European empires, producing new inflections of the original paradigm. Such accounts of novelistic writing present the novel as a franchise, one whose export reaffirms the greatness and identity of its source. Certainly, it has sometimes appeared that the new nations emerging out of empires have been required to produce novels in order to certify their distinct and modern nationhood. "The" novel is the universally prescribed form for bearing witness to the locality of the group, and so every one "has to" have the local equivalent of the Great American Novel. Nonetheless, however this requirement is negotiated, novels' capacity for representing nations and peoples has enabled the novel to become a relay for transnational exchange, in a way that challenges the monopolies on representation sometimes claimed at the metropolitan center.

The interchanges among these three ideas about novels open up a global horizon for novel studies. Instead of an Enlightenment narrative of the novel's vertical "rise"—a narrative that is always normative as well as descriptive—this collection develops narratives of novels' horizontal displacements. By analyzing canon wars in Nigeria and New Zealand as well as the United States, Canada, and Japan, these essays bring into relief the function of novelistic canons in consolidating national identity. At the same time, by studying exchanges in the contact zones between nations, these essays modify our sense of what happens "within" national literatures: revising accounts of "the rise of the novel" means reworking the historical roles that have been imagined for an old canonical favorite like Jane Austen; and Austen's English novels will, when placed in this new context, seem less securely English. In short, by tracking the institutions of the novel within and between nations, and backward in time, this collection broadens our sense of what counts as the novel and of how novels do things in culture.

In "Why the Story of the Origin of the (English) Novel Is an American Romance," Homer Brown provides the prologue to this endeavor to relocate the novel. He reminds us of the disciplinary positions occupied by most of the writers and readers of the volume, and of academics' interest, in a double sense, in the narratives of origin that we transmit and by which we are empowered. Brown's engagement with the retroactive

narratives that have made the 1740s look like the inaugural moment for “the” novel leads him to consider two moments of generic institution: the 1950s and the U.S. university’s appropriation of the English novel as a component of American national identity; and the Scott phenomenon of the early nineteenth century, another deliberate reinvention of the novel, provoked in part by the Scottish invention of the discipline of English.

The double emphasis of Brown’s meditation on institutions—on the novel’s production of cultures and on the production of the novel in the spaces *between* cultures—is continued in part 1. There Michelle Burnham, Bridget Orr, Lisa Lowe, and Dane Johnson engage the questions of translation, assimilation, cultural belonging, and cultural authenticity that are brought to the fore when one situates novel reading and writing in “the contact zone.” Burnham’s account of the transatlantic circulation of “English” novels and “American” captivity narratives calls attention to the part that sentimentality plays in producing identities while brokering intercultural contacts. The pathos of the tales of transgressive mobility that Burnham engages, Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative (originally published in 1682) and Richardson’s *Pamela* (from 1740) among them, depends, paradoxically, both on readers’ identification with the protagonist’s displaced or liminal cultural location and on the obscuring of that movement through fantasies of integration and commonality.

Whereas Burnham’s work in the eighteenth century treats an inaugural moment in the cooperative relations between novel, empire, and nation, the other three essays in part 1 engage a recent history of decolonization and diaspora as well as the increasing permeability of national boundaries in the face of economic globalization. Each of these essays asserts what Lowe calls “the paradoxical fluency of the colonized subject in the colonial language and culture.” Lowe finds in contemporary Asian American novels a displacement of the forms of development and identification encoded within imperial institutions of the novel and Orientalist histories, forms invested with prescriptive force within the history of U.S. immigration, naturalization, and citizenship laws. Orr’s essay first surveys a comparable field of cultural contestation—one created as the Maori, laying claim to “the” New Zealand novel, have become subjects rather than objects of representation—then provides a close analysis of how the operative premises of interpretation must change in this altered context. Her readings of two Maori novels break through the impasse created when critics polarize indigenous content and Western form and

find themselves trapped between “the Scylla of ethnographic reductionism” and the “Charybdis of Eurocentric formalism.” By contrast, in Johnson’s examination of “the rise of Gabriel García Márquez and Toni Morrison” within the U.S. book market and classroom, the emphasis falls on failures of reading. The installation of the Latin American and African American authors’ novels within a pantheon of Great Books may instance a new cosmopolitanism, but their “import” has yet to disrupt hegemonic systems of literary evaluation.

The remarks Johnson makes in passing on the resilience of the Great American Novel—an institution newly redeemed by its incorporation of “news from other worlds”—anticipate the questions about “(trans-)national canons” that are the focus of part 2. A canon is a receptacle for certain texts or aesthetic norms. It is also a site where the national heritage is displayed and produced, and a means of asserting the isomorphism of place and culture and nation. As such, canons are inevitably put under pressure by novels’ movement across geographical divides and across the boundary lines that segregate the serious from the popular and underwrite ideas of the “real” novel.

The essays by Deidre Lynch and Katie Trumpener that open part 2 engage that mobility by displacing Jane Austen and Walter Scott from the positions of privilege they occupy in accounts of “the” novel’s rise and illuminating the conflicted ways in which those figures have been scripted into national narratives that make both old and new states seem like home. Lynch examines the social contests mediated by the early-twentieth-century rearticulation of Jane Austen as an English national institution, a process that saw the Austen novel written into diverse discursive sites—from the English syllabus to the Regency romance, from detective fiction to the modernist program for a streamlined prose style. In her discussion of “Romantic fictions of empire and the narratives of Canadian literature,” Trumpener first shows how Scott’s novels offered colonizers and colonized a guide to subsuming national differences within the unifying frame of the British empire. She then identifies a countertradition to this imperial historiography of colonies’ founding fictions, turning to the acerbic, “transcolonial” consciousness that John Galt and Thomas Chandler Haliburton elaborated in narrating the empire’s flows of capital and peoples.

Like Trumpener, who traces how “a ‘transcolonial’ writing of empire is preserved and studied so partially that only ‘national literatures’ re-

man," James Fujii and Susan Andrade also confront the constitutive role of amnesia in national literary histories. Fujii considers how the canonization of Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro* (first published in 1914) has enabled a definition of Japanese modernity that "writes out Asia," suppressing the colonial expansionism that is an integral element of Japan's emergence as a modern state. The failures of communication that structure Sōseki's narrative raise questions about the place that memory and narrative can claim in Japan, once the state's involuntary embrace of Western modernity signals the irrelevance of the past. It is nationalist literary histories' forgetting of women and of women's resistance to empire that prompts Andrade's essay. Against commemorations of Chinua Achebe as the "father" of the African novel, Andrade offers a genealogy of African literary "daughterhood," relating how Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta renegotiate the territory of the Nigerian national novel and remembering the Igbo Women's War against colonial rule as an occasion for Achebe's own coming to writing.

Our final section, "The Romance of Consumption," puts the canonical into dialogue with the salable, while returning this book to the issue—first raised by Burnham's discussion of sentiment, fantasy, and transculturation—of how novels move and move their readers. Fiction is apprehended in part 3 as a social machinery that helps produce individuals as subjects of sexuality and aligns their desires with the norms of family and/or the demands of consumer capitalism. For many contributors to this section, attending in this manner to what novels do in culture involves engaging the romance, construed either as the novel's figure for its own origins or as the generic location in which narrative eludes the reality principle and responds to desire.

William Warner's account of the institution of formula fiction on the English print market of the 1720s reconsiders narratives labeled as "romances" and written out of histories of the novel's rise. Displacing the representational model in which female-authored fiction is interpreted as an expressive effort by and for "women," Warner emphasizes what the new "media culture" that Eliza Haywood helped to consolidate does: license the desires of a "general reader" and so offer "an infrastructure for the diverse ideologies and class positionalities contending in culture." In a parallel way, Dorothea von Mücke, reading William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (from 1794), contests the presupposition that what makes the political novel political is its mimetic ambition to narrate "things as they

are"—in this case, the persecutions inflicted on a servant narrator by his master. Instead, the political import of *Caleb* lies in how, by chronicling the paranoid interactions between servant and aristocrat, between the subject of the novel and the subject of the romance, Godwin models writing's pragmatic effects. Sexuality, the secret kernel of the subject's individuality, is here located in words not bodies, as the precipitate of the subject's encounter with the discourse of another. Jann Matlock's essay, "The Limits of Reformism: The Novel, Censorship, and the Politics of Adultery in Nineteenth-Century France," adumbrates other consequences of the power that novels wield in licensing desire. Auguste Luchet's 1842 publication of the scandalous *Le Nom de famille* occasioned a trial in which the state and the novel emerged as rivals in the effort to replot the reader's private life. Matlock shows how Luchet's polemics on behalf of a law guaranteeing the right to divorce allowed the novel to transgress its own fictive codes, and how new novels, no less than new law, could tantalize readers with "a second chance at sex."

Realism is again on trial, along with the system of literary value it organizes, in the critical discourse that Nancy Glazener analyzes in her account of Henry James and the romantic revival of late-nineteenth-century America. In addition to locating *The Turn of the Screw* as a canny response to this discourse's reconfiguration of reading, Glazener identifies the material effects of critics' promotion of adventure fiction and historical romance over realism. Explicitly, the project of reading like a boy or a primitive was advocated as a cure for "overcivilization"; tacitly, it operated to legitimize the commodification of novels. In her essay on Edna Ferber's 1926 novel *Show Boat* and its theatrical and cinematic adaptations, Lauren Berlant, like Glazener and Warner, asks us to consider the detours that attention to consumer fantasy might introduce into our narratives of the novel. In particular, she asks us to consider how the participation in the polis that national novels promise their readers is represented as access to consumer culture: thus Ferber's romance plot is the frame for a national history, one in which modes of entertainment are modernized as they are transported from the Mississippi to Hollywood, ex-slaves become consumers, and the memory of slave pain becomes the sentimental stuff of Americana.

The last word goes to Clifford Siskin, who argues that novels and the discourses that packaged them emerged in early-modern Britain to accommodate people to the nation, to the divisions organizing the disci-

plines, and, above all, to a new technological configuration of writing, print, and silent reading. Through “novelism,” writing was naturalized. In the late twentieth century, Siskin avers, writing is again becoming strange, as a new media order takes shape. If, by virtue of its revivals (on stage, screen, video, c.d.), *Show Boat*’s story is also the never-ending story of the staying power of romance—and of the novel—within this new media order, Siskin’s account of the “rise of novelism” invites us to write the sequel to the novel’s success story. He provides the coda that historicizes and ironizes the project of this volume.

Notes

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1. See, e.g., Davis 1985, Davidson 1986, McKeon 1987, Armstrong 1987, Bender 1987, and Hunter 1990. This debate has been conducted in rather different terms in French studies. See, e.g., DiPiero 1992.
2. For a notable exception, see Layoun 1990.

Homer Brown

Prologue Why the Story of the Origin of the (English) Novel Is an American Romance (If Not the Great American Novel)

Romance and real history have the same common origin. A moment’s glance at the origin of society will satisfy the reader why this can hardly be otherwise. The father of an isolated family, destined one day to rise into a tribe, and in farther progress of time to expand into a nation, may, indeed, narrate to his descendants the circumstances which detached him from the society of his brethren, and drove him to form a solitary settlement in the wilderness, with no other deviation from truth, on the part of the narrator, than arises from the infidelity of memory, or the exaggerations of vanity.
—Sir Walter Scott, “An Essay on Romance”

We know the scene: there is a gathering, and someone is telling a story. We do not yet know whether these people gathered together form an assembly, if they are a horde or a tribe. But we call them brothers and sisters because they are gathered together and because they are listening to the same story. . . .

It is an ancient, immemorial scene, and it does not take place just once, but repeats itself indefinitely, with regularity, at every gathering of the hordes, who come to learn of their tribal origins, of their origins in brotherhoods, in peoples, or in cities. . . .

We know this scene well. More than one storyteller has told it to us, having gathered us together in learned fraternities intent on knowing what our origins were. Our societies, they have told us, derive from these assemblies themselves, and our beliefs, our knowledge, our discourses, and our poems derive from these narratives.

—Jean-Luc Nancy, “Myth Interrupted”

☞ Publication of arguments concerning a discrete eighteenth-century English origin for the novel might now seem to approach the dimensions

William B. Warner

9 Formulating Fiction

Romancing the General Reader in
Early Modern Britain

☞ The global circulation and undisciplined plurality of novels so evident from other essays in this collection may have first become visible on the print market of the early eighteenth century in Britain. Such a speculation should *not* be assimilated to the dominant narrative of the novel's rise. There and then, according to a narrative given its definitive formulation in Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), it is supposed that Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding authored the first genuinely modern novels. This narrative of origination constitutes the novel as an object of literary value so that it may be inserted into the pedagogy of the literary classroom and, in turn, confirm the self-evident form of several institutions: that of literary studies, the novel, and the university. In such a reciprocally supporting circuit, endemic to the conservative function of so many institutions, what gets lost? what's missing? In *Institution and Interpretation* (1987), Sam Weber argues that the appearance of a stable disciplinary institution like literary studies, with its proper objects, method, and boundaries, depends upon a prior, often obscured moment of active instituting, where the marking of limits and boundaries casts out cultural objects and inhibits some cultural practices while legitimizing others. How then do I answer my own question, what's missing from the hegemonic account of "the" novel's rise in Britain? This essay will argue that what is lost is the eighteenth-century vogue for the novels of amorous intrigue authored by Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood, which begins in the 1680s and culminates in the institution of formula fiction in the early 1720s. This alternative "institution" of another kind of "novel" precedes, and in fact helps to motivate, the cultural elevation of the novel in Britain in the 1740s around the reception

of Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. But the later, finally hegemonic institution of the novel erases the earlier novel and co-opts and detours the reading pleasures it had licensed.

The plausibility of Watt's "rise of the novel" thesis depends upon two hundred years of the cultural institution of the novel as moral, English, and realist. Through the lens of that progressive narrative of the novel's birth, and the literary histories that tell of the novel's progress, Behn, Manley, and Haywood were grouped together as a "notorious trio" of novelists unreadable because they were sexually immoral, too French, and either scandalously factual or abandoned to fantasy (Saintsbury 1913; Baker 1924). These oppositions between the first real novels and their abjected precursors are fortified and extended when literary histories code the true novel in English as "masculine," the novels of amorous intrigue as all too "feminine." It has been the project of a revisionist feminist literary history to challenge this masculinizing of the novel consolidated by Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* but also found to be working, in updated theoretical garb, in the more recent histories of the novel of Lennard Davis (1985), Michael McKeon (1987), and J. Paul Hunter (1990) (see Gardiner 1985; Ballaster 1992; Straub 1994). The occasional feminist response—to align the genre of the novel with the female gender—simply reverses a tendentious mapping of culture. This essay suggests reasons why the early novel, in fact, cannot be gendered.

In the essay that follows I will argue that the new formula fiction of Eliza Haywood achieves its distinctive popularity and scandal by appealing not to any particular type of reader but to what I will call the general reader. What do I mean by general reader? Haywood's reader is "general" in the negative sense of "not being limited in scope." Joined only by their engagement with the novel, a diverse plurality of readers can align their activities by reading a novel, so its reading can become "general" in the second sense of "widespread," "common," or "prevailing." It is clarifying to specify what the general reader is not. The general reader does not have a clearly delimited ideological position within the cultural field; nor is the general reader a subject with a defining difference of class, race, gender, sexual preferences; nor does the general reader have a specifiable identity, such that a novelist would know in advance how to move her or him. Instead, the sort of formula fiction that I will be investigating in this essay requires thinking of the reader as plural in interests and pleasures, a perversely polymorphous being capable of being "hooked"

by many zones of readerly enjoyment. The general reader is not a vague or capacious universal; the term does not, as Joan Copjec argues about the general subject, "poorly or wrongly describe a subject whose structure is actually determinate but precisely indicates a subject that is in some sense objectively indeterminate" (Copjec 1994, 147). For the writer and bookseller working the early modern print market, this indeterminate but alluring "general reader" becomes the phantasmatic object the successful appeal to which assures monetary advantage. It has been so for publishers ever since. The popularity of Eliza Haywood's 1719 best-seller *Love in Excess*, and the notoriety of the many novels she published throughout the following decade, seems to depend upon her formulation of fiction with traits appealing to this "general reader."

To read the early novel through its appeal to the general reader will help overcome some of the difficulties that have arisen within recent feminist literary histories of these early novels. Since the 1970s, the feminist study of early writing by women has brought the novels of Behn, Manley, and Haywood back into print, critical discourse, and literary histories of the novel. But this project of feminist reappropriation has been guided by political values and conceptual terms that have obscured the actual significance of Behn, Manley, and Haywood in early modern culture. One strand of feminist criticism has considered these three novelists as early instances of "women's writing," writing, that is, by a female author who writes as a woman for other women so as to reflect upon, and sometimes contest, life within patriarchy. Even when the feminism of these early women writers is open to sustained questioning, as in the work of Jane Spencer (1986) and Judith Kegan Gardiner (1985), the goal is to isolate a more or less autonomous current of women's writing for inclusion in the canon of valued literary works (see Todd 1989; Schofield 1990). It is this pluralistic representational model (Guillory 1993) that leads critics to dub Behn the first real novelist in Britain (Duffy 1987; Gardiner 1985). A second strand of feminist criticism reads novels of amorous intrigue backward from the contemporary Harlequin romance so as to situate them as an early instance of women's popular culture. Developed out of the Marxist understanding of the various ways narrative can express the legitimate utopian longings of subordinate groups, and following modern cultural studies of women's romance by Tania Modleski (1984), Janice Radway (1984), and others, this mode of reading enables critics to put aside questions of literary genre or aes-

thetic value and focus on the fantasy life of early modern women (Bowers 1994). By assuming that these novels originate in the expressive efforts of an explicitly feminine subject, these strains of criticism seek to secure these texts for a modern imagining of early modern women's identity.

In the first sustained study of the novels of amorous intrigue, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*, Ros Ballaster offers critiques of both these alternative feminist ways of reading. Faulting that criticism which assumes "that women readers identify solely with the dominant female subject position . . . of the embattled heroine" (1992, 28), Ballaster finds another way to chart the compositional strategies of Behn, Manley, and Haywood. Lacking British models for their fiction, these authors looked to seventeenth-century France, where they found a broad band of "feminocentric" narratives that they could popularize (66). Because we don't know the precise ways in which these novels were read by their consumers, Ballaster undertakes an "analysis of the specific address that Behn, Manley, and Haywood make to female readers and the interpretative conflict between the genders that is the structuring feature of their amatory plots" (29). However, it is Ballaster, not Haywood, who destines this genre for women; it is she who puts the apostrophe *s* after the first word in her generic designation, "women's amatory fiction." The term "feminocentric" allows Ballaster to obscure the fact that the French romances, secret histories, scandalous chronicles, and novels that offered models for Behn, Manley, and Haywood were written and read by both men and women, and often centered upon the affect and adventure of the male characters who love and serve the relatively remote women they aspire to win. Are these texts centered on the women they monumentalize or the men who love them? It is difficult to know what Ballaster means by the "address" to "female readers." Like Behn and Manley, Haywood dedicates books to men; all three feature men as well as women as central characters; at the beginning of the second part of *Love in Excess*, the poet Richard Savage celebrates Haywood as a mistress of passions for both sexes. Only much later in Haywood's career, does this author's writing become more clearly directed at female rather than male readers. After 1740, Haywood may participate in a market segmentation for which there is no evidence earlier in the century.

When Ballaster turns to reading Behn, Manley, and Haywood, it becomes obvious why she wants to suppose these texts have a female address: the movement from Behn to Manley to Haywood is inter-

preted as a gradual gendering of "women's amatory fiction." In writing of Manley's autobiographical writing, Ballaster develops a heroic celebration of a resistant woman writer that she elsewhere complicates and historicizes: "*Rivella* and the story of *Delia* read side by side constitute a resistance to the madonna/whore opposition imposed on women by masculinist ideologies, subverting them by exposing their status as 'fictions' and insisting on the prerogative of the woman to write her own fictions of the female self" (1992, 151). Over the course of *Seductive Forms*, the more political writing of Behn and Manley evolves into an increasingly sustained engagement with the plight of the female heroine striving to desire in a system rigged against her. By seeking to gender the origin, content, and address of these novels—as from women, about women, to women—Ballaster aligns her study with the project that underlies virtually all post-Enlightenment feminist and Marxist interpretation of popular culture: how does the subject who would be free (here woman) resist or negotiate some compromise with the power of an oppressive system (here patriarchy) in order to win authority in view of (some possible future) liberation? In order to sustain the female address of these texts, Ballaster must underestimate what we will find repeatedly in the novels of amorous intrigue, that their inventive complications of the ordinary courtship plot, through the use of masquerade, incite a desire that is polymorphous and that exploits the pleasures of cross-gender identification. By blurring the identity of subject positions, these fictions can interpellate a general reader.

There is another, albeit more circuitous, way to articulate the novels of amorous intrigue with feminism. Although they cannot be assimilated to a consistent feminist politics, Behn, Manley, and Haywood's novels develop the motifs of gendered sexual power essential to a later, post-Enlightenment feminism. Like their precursors on the Continent, Behn, Manley, and Haywood articulate new comic situations with a cynical "modern" libertine ethos in a manner that intensifies the erotic tension, gender strife, and sexual explicitness of the conventional love story. The discourse of liberation propounded in their novels is also indebted to particular Restoration and eighteenth-century contexts—the realist political discourse developed out of Hobbes, Machiavelli, and Mandeville; the Tory individualism and libertinism epitomized by Restoration rakes like the First Earl of Rochester; and a baroque aesthetics of excess. Behn, Manley, and Haywood weave these elements into tightly plotted

narratives that represent sexualized bodies and amoral egos scheming to secure their own pleasures at the expense of others. The formal traits of these novels—their brevity, their subordination of all narrative interest to intricate plotting, and the shell-like emptiness of their protagonists—support their ideological content—a licentious ethical nihilism and a sustained preoccupation with sex, explicitly rendered. The popularity of these novels seems to depend upon turning the empty ego of the central protagonist into a “reader’s seat” from which anyone can follow a blatantly self-interested quest for victory on the field of amorous conquest. Even after they lose their explicit relation to politics, the novels of amorous intrigue retain the agonistic assumptions, the necessary duplicities, and the cruel realism of political discourse.

By eschewing the anachronism of depicting Behn, Manley, and Haywood as women writers contesting women’s subordination as understood by contemporary feminism, we can suggest their crucial early role in the formation of an Enlightenment subjectivity. By transporting the continental novella to the British market, Behn, Manley, and Haywood played a decisive part in establishing the early novel as the first formula fiction on the market. As a type of private entertainment their texts incite desire and promote the liberation of the reader as the subject of pleasure. Later in the century, Richardson and Fielding set out to reform and replace the novels of amorous intrigue, and all these early novelists—from Behn to Fielding—become, as Habermas has argued, a crucial factor in the formation of the bourgeois public sphere, the Enlightenment critique of the self’s self-imposed tutelage, the late-century revolutions, and modern feminism. This is, I will argue, the actual sense in which Behn, Manley, and Haywood contribute to the formation of modern feminism. Rather than anticipate the feminism that begins with Wollstonecraft, as do the French *Quercelles des femmes* and Mary Astell’s *Serious Call*, the novels of amorous intrigue do something more general and global: as early instances of formula fiction they teach readers, men as well as women, to articulate their desire and “put the self first,” in the same way their characters do.

In order to tell my alternative story of the novel’s early institution as formula fiction, in the following essay I will describe the important changes undergone by the novels of amorous intrigue between 1684 and 1740. In texts like Behn’s *Love Letters* and Manley’s *New Atalantis*, the novel of amorous intrigue develops a coded system of reference to “great

men and women” so as to use fiction to inflict scandal upon political opponents (Ballaster 1992; Gallagher 1994). By separating these novels from the context of early political party writing, and shaping stories of thin fictional characters into complexly plotted action, Haywood develops “formula fiction” addressed to a market of general readers. As streamlined and autonomous vehicles of fictional entertainment, the novels of amorous intrigue elude the post-Enlightenment conception of a coherent political identity and predate the narrative of liberation and enslavement, subversion or co-optation, that provides the Urplot of Marxist and feminist accounts of popular culture. In order to read these novels as not written from or toward any definable collective or individual subject position, whether women, the bourgeoisie, the people, or the author, I will argue that the novels of amorous intrigue are an early instance of what I suggest we call “media culture,” provisionally defined as the cultural practices associated with the consumption of print media. This culture of, by, and for a print market is more polyvalent and promiscuous in its address and effects than feminist and Marxist readings have allowed. Media culture does not exclude ideology of different sorts; instead, it offers an infrastructure for the diverse ideologies and class positionalities contending in culture in the early modern period. Its only consistent ideology is the ideology of pleasure itself. The novel of amorous intrigue—through the plotting of its pleasure-seeking protagonists—supports the pleasure-seeking reader sequestered in a more or less private act of reading.

Behind the scandal produced by Haywood’s novels is a worry about a fundamental shift in the purpose of reading. If an earlier, reverential practice of reading was grounded in the claim that books represented (some kind of) truth, Haywood’s novels seemed ready to deliver nothing more than pleasure (Woodmansee 1988). In formulating the first disposable books for the market, and winning extraordinary popularity, Haywood produced novels that won effects of cultural authority without any grounding legitimacy. So from the *Tatler* (1709–11) and *Spectator* (1711–14) to Pope’s *Dunciad* (1728), and in the innumerable defenses of fiction formulated in the prefaces to novels written by Manley, Haywood, Aubin, and Defoe, novels become a focus of a public sphere debate about reading: how is culture to license—that is, sanction but also control—the powerful new reading pleasures these novels produce? As both novelists and their critics align and conflate the dangerous pleasures of reading

novels with those associated with the sexualized body, the debate that swirls around the novel of amorous intrigue becomes embedded within the novels of Manley and Haywood. Reformers of the novel like Aubin, Defoe, and Hogarth, and then Richardson and Fielding, would challenge and overwrite the novels of Behn, Manley, and Haywood.

Political Intrigue, Novelistic Intrigue

What is a novel of amorous intrigue? Near the end of Behn's *Love Letters* (1684–87), Sylvia carries on an intrigue with a young nobleman named Don Alonzo. Not only does this affair offer an extension and simplification of earlier intrigues in the novel; within the context of the novel's account of Sylvia's movement from impassioned lover to jaded libertine, it suggests her gradual moral debasement. Sylvia's character becomes flattened and simplified as character is subordinated to the intrigue and the wit of artifice, coolly and cunningly performed. This episode offers a relatively self-contained example of the sort of narrative formula that Behn uses in her short novels (e.g., *The Fair Jilt*, *The Unlucky Chance*, etc.), a formula that Manley would modify and incorporate into the anthology of adventures making up the *New Atalantis* and that Haywood perfects in the numerous novels she publishes after the success of her best-seller and first novel *Love in Excess* (1719–20). By describing Sylvia's affair with Don Alonzo as if it were an autonomous novel and suggesting what makes it typical of many novels published by the notorious trio of Behn, Manley, and Haywood through the 1730s, I can develop a general description of the novel of amorous intrigue, and clarify the moral scandal of its popularity.

Here is a brief sketch of the Don Alonzo adventure. Sylvia, "going on a frolic to divert herself a day or two," disguises herself as a young man attended by a page and sets out on the road. At a small tavern she is struck by the appearance of a young Don Alonzo, who, according to the master of the hotel, is a man of quality but is now "incognito, being on an intrigue." At supper Don Alonzo and Sylvia, posing as Bellumere, drink wine and share stories of erotic conquest. Don Alonzo tells Bellumere/Sylvia of the wager he entered into at court with one Philander (Sylvia's first love) that he can seduce a countess about whose favors Philander had been bragging. Don Alonzo describes his successful

intrigue—which involves deflowering the countess's maid and then receiving, on three successive nights, the favors of the lady herself. Sylvia is fired with passion, meditates exposing her true sex, but conceals herself for fear of his proven "inconstancy." She then asks, "Were you never in Love?" Don Alonzo denies having ever been subject to love but reports his passion at the sight of a woman he had seen passing on the street in Brussels, the "whore" of a man who had recently taken orders (Octavio, Sylvia's second love), who turns out, of course, to be Sylvia herself. Sylvia blushes. Forced to share a bed with Don Alonzo in the crowded inn, Sylvia delays going to bed, avoids discovery, and stays awake, looking at Don Alonzo asleep, while reading "a little Novel, she had brought." After exchanging rings as a token of friendship, each goes by a separate road to Brussels. The second part of the episode begins with Sylvia's diversion of the money Octavio had offered her for a respectable retirement from the world so that she may appear in lavish equipage and apparel on the "Tourc." Don Alonzo and Philander fall in love with this anonymous beauty. Sylvia then assumes a masker's garb to follow Don Alonzo into the park. She contrives for him to see upon her ungloved hand the ring that Don Alonzo has given Bellumere (Behn 1993, 418). After an artful duel of wits, Sylvia refers the aroused and ardent Don Alonzo to Bellumere's apartment. Sylvia believes "her Conquest was certain: he having seen her three times, and all those times for a several person, and yet was still in love with her: And she doubted not when all three were joyn'd in one, he would be much more in love than yet he had been" (420). At her apartment, Sylvia greets Don Alonzo as Bellumere, leaving him ravished and confused to hear the same voice emanating from this man that he has just heard issuing from the fair incognito in the park. Sylvia/Bellumere offers to introduce her/his "sister" to Don Alonzo, retires to get the "sister"/the anonymous court beauty/the incognito, and returns in "a rich nightgown" as Sylvia (421). Now Alonzo renarrates the desire he felt on their night in the tavern as a homoerotic temptation he had resisted (422). After eight days and nights of erotic pleasure, Sylvia arranges a temporary return to her affair with Philander and pays off with sex Philander's retainer, Brilliard, a slavish admirer of Sylvia's who has been an invaluable assistant throughout the intrigue. The novel's last page offers a final postscript on the affair: Sylvia and Brilliard take such good advantage of Don Alonzo that "they ruined the fortune of that young Nobleman" (439).

In the Don Alonzo episode of *Love Letters* one can follow the emergence of the distinctive contrivance of the novels of amorous intrigue: narrative action comes under the sway of the intriguer's intrigue. The adventure begins with a disguised encounter that produces a strong and immediate erotic charge. Alonzo's arousing narrative (the story of his wager with Philander) embeds a "brag"—his absolute erotic mastery—and issues in a claim—not to have ever been in love. Finding her ambition piqued, the protagonist is called to a particular action: the seduction of Don Alonzo. Although contingencies of setting and situation (with the two forced to share the same tavern bed) are fraught with erotic potential and open doors to a promiscuous and polymorphous sexuality where anything might go, sexual resolution is blocked. The libertine's aim is not merely a physical possession but a psychic mastery won through the other's confused erotic surrender. This requires an organized imbroglio or entanglement of the action, achieved through an "intrigue," allowing the intriguer to prevail over the dupe and communicate that victory to a third party, the "ear of the social"—sometimes a general public, sometimes a select intimate—who can register, enjoy, and applaud the intriguer's skill. To develop such an action and circuit of communication, part 2 of the Don Alonzo episode shows the intriguing protagonist developing a scheme—pivoting upon a succession of cross-gendered masquerades—that takes control of the action. The intriguer develops probabilistic calculations of his or her opponent's behavior out of a Machiavellian anthropology that assumes "the uniformity of human nature, the power of the animal instinct and emotions, especially emotions of love and fear" (Wilhelm Dilthey, qtd. in Benjamin 1963, 95-96). The mastery of the schemer depends upon a general knowledge of human nature, psychology, and even physiology; the intrigue becomes a test of this mastery. Over the shoulder of the intriguer, the reader watches the social exchange illuminated and refracted through the harsh, artificial light of the scheme.

The intriguer's machinations, consolidated into a scheme, become the plot's engine; this mechanism requires a sadistic flattening of the social field and its agents that assures the cynical superiority of the intriguer. While embedded in intrigue, the protagonist cannot have the luxury of a "deep" identity; a shifting set of social masks allows him or her to manipulate the social, as if from the outside, as a fixed and limited set of codes, conventions, types. The intriguer is essentially alone

and self-interested in his or her intriguing; alliances of purpose are provisional and open to disruption; the scheme is shaped to divide all others into solitary agents. By becoming an artist of disguise and manipulation, the intriguer turns plot into plotting, the theater of "history" or politics that plot often denotes into a spectacle of theatricality. Issues of point of view, epistemology, or narrative framing so important in other types of novels are here subordinated to a direct narration of the headlong rush of the action. The very simplicity of character and motive—characters come freighted with almost no history, each agent automatically seeks to expand his or her power vis-à-vis others—gives these novels a strong sense of ludic transparency. At the same time, the plotting of rivalrous egos produces an accelerating complication of the action that none can fully control. For the duration of the intrigue, the plot produces variety, interest, and absorption, offering a kind of performance by intriguer and author for the reader. The plot "hooks" the reader. Whether the scheme succeeds (as here) or misfires, results in sex (as here) or death (as in other novels), an unveiling of identities closes the action. The fiction often ends with a movement out of the magic circle of intrigue to the banality of the ordinary, here signified by Don Alonzo's financial ruin.

To adapt Karl von Clausewitz's famous adage, the novel of amorous intrigue suggests that not war but sex is politics pursued by other means. Behn composed the first novels of amorous intrigue in Britain by splicing together several distinct elements: the stinging abusive satiric discourse of early English party politics; the secret histories of Lafayette and Bremond in France, with their disguised references to public figures; and the Spanish dramas and novellas of court intrigue, with their scheming protagonists. In this chiasmic binding of love and politics, the machinations of the schemer at first are articulated with the ground rules and ruses of political strife but end up transforming the love plot into a kind of political discourse. Critics have suggested how Behn's *Love Letters*, as well as her most famous novel *Oroonoko* (1688), lends itself to being read as a political allegory of the betrayal of a monarch by his people (Brown 1993, 56). But when Behn publishes several novels of amorous intrigue that have no overt political reference—*The Fair Jilt*, *Agnes de Castro*, *The History of the Nun: or, The Fair Vow-Breaker*—one finds an ethos of power, rivalry, and cunning consonant with the diplomatic and military maneuvering of the early modern state.

Why did novels written in English move away from the political allegories Behn and Manley used to such effect? Every so often a runaway success changes the shape of media on the market. For example, the use of special effects, stunts, and quick-cut editing in *Star Wars* changed a broad band of Hollywood production after 1977 (Warner 1992b). With the extraordinary success of her three-part best-seller *Love in Excess* (1719–20), Eliza Haywood builds upon the market potential already evident in the novels of amorous intrigue written by Behn and expands the number and popularity of novels on the market through a set of compositional changes. First, by abandoning the political rationale and address of the earlier novelists, Haywood expands the appeal of her novels beyond the context of party politics and patronage.¹ The apolitical address of her novels means Haywood can drop or simplify those narrative elements which had linked earlier novels to political culture. Thus Haywood can dispense with the disguised secret history that allows Behn's *Love Letters* to reference and influence the direction of the Succession Crisis. At the same time, Haywood drops the Theophrastan "character" that Behn uses to deepen and complicate her presentation of Sylvia at the beginning of the third part of *Love Letters*. What results is character simplified into a function of social place and narrative position. Settings—like the lush nocturnal garden—are abstracted into generality. By eliminating any specific social-political reference, mimetic pretensions take on the vague and general form of claiming that "the foundation of this story is laid in truth." While love and lust figure prominently in the novels of Behn and Manley, Haywood gives a programmatic privilege to love over every other social, moral, and narrative value and subordinates traditional claims to improve the reader to the relatively new one of offering "diversion" and "entertainment." All these changes slim down the novel of amorous intrigue into a repeatable formula on a market oriented toward the private life of a reader. Haywood's repositioning of the novel of amorous intrigue is both cause and effect of her remarkable novel production during the 1720s and '30s, and it enables her to become the most prolific British novel writer of the century. It is the quantity and scope of Haywood's production in this period that help give the "bad name" to "novels" throughout the century.

In order to expand the range of readers ready to buy and read novels

for entertainment, Haywood develops a new kind of formula fiction for the market. Her novels of amorous intrigue have the signal traits of formula fiction on the market recognizable from the eighteenth century to the present day, from the Gothic to detective fiction, from science fiction to contemporary romance. I will restrict my description of formula fiction, rather arbitrarily, to an interlocking set of general traits. Formula fiction often unfolds around didactic messages. The main characters in formula fiction are divided into heroes and villains, the good and the evil. In formula fiction, action, incident, and plotting take precedent over ideas or character: what's most crucial here is less the nature of the action than the way in which action is organized and paced according to a "rhetoric of expectation" that keeps the reader asking, "what will happen next? . . . I must know." By following preestablished formulas, this fiction requires no justification on grounds outside itself. Because the basic exchange formula fiction promotes is that of entertainment pleasure for money, readers of such fiction are not expected to be disconcerted by signs of incompleteness, fragmentariness, or last-minute revision. Finally, although formula fiction does not feature the self-reflection familiar from highbrow culture, we shall see that it may incorporate a certain defense of itself. Thus, because *Love in Excess* contends with the resistance it expects to produce in the culture of its reception, Haywood's novel develops a rather complex account of the pleasures of novel reading.

This brief description of formula fiction allows us to see how Haywood, by abstracting and simplifying the novels of amorous intrigue, opens those novels to a potentially endless repetition on the market. With this reformulation of fiction Haywood reaches beyond the implied audiences of earlier novels: the courtly coterie addressed by the *precieuse* with the French *grands romans* and the secret histories of Lafayette, the party political audience of Behn's secret histories and Manley's scandalous chronicles. Haywood's overt didacticism and schematic treatment of character clear the path for an intricate development of absorbing action. The novel becomes an entertainment machine. The very elements of the novels of amorous intrigue that drew the scorn of cultural critics—their thinness and shallowness, their opportunistic seriality and shameless repetition, their absence of compelling ethical justification—all fitted this new commodity to thrive in an urban print market of diverse buyers ready to pay cash for entertainment. Because it established Haywood's fame and set the type that she varied in her novels of the

following decades, I will explore the logic of formula fiction through a reading of Haywood's first and most popular novel, *Love in Excess*. Only if we read *Love in Excess* with some detail and care will we apprehend what this commodity delivers to its reader, and most especially, how it both figures and hails a general modern reader. Then we can see how Haywood's novels anticipate the products of what Adorno and Horkheimer pejoratively dub "the culture industry," products I shall try to describe in less tendentious terms as media culture.

Through the way Haywood's *Love in Excess* opposes virtuous love to intriguing lust, "persecuted innocence" (Richetti 1992) to the rapacious ego, characters come to personify certain values readied for action. At the center of the action is Count D'Elmont, the gay and noble but somewhat enigmatically susceptible hero, who gradually changes from a superficial sexual opportunist to a passionate and high-souled lover. Around this figure are arranged a set of contrasting characters. D'Elmont's magical attractions become the test for the noble, virtuous, and innocent victims of love (Amena in part 1 and Melliora in parts 2 and 3) and the goal for the voracious rivals for D'Elmont's love—the restless, domineering, overpassionate Alouisa (in parts 1 and 2) and the extravagant Italian Ciaramara (in part 3). Nothing appears more central to the novel of amorous intrigue than these improperly desiring women; both Alouisa and Ciaramara are presented as powerful, obscenely desiring mothers descended from the resourceful schemers of Manley novels. Although D'Elmont is positioned to desire women, his early inexperience and his later depth of feeling mean that he contrasts with the heartless male libertine, the Baron D'Espernay, who cares not for love but for mere physical possession. The virtuous heroines, whose whole being becomes ensnared by love, are opposed to the trivial coquette Melantha, who puts only her vanity in play in the erotic games of the "Beau Monde."

What is the function for the reader of this didactic iconography of character? What does the simplification of character—in comparison, for example, to Behn's *Love Letters*—enable? In his extended discussion of *Love in Excess* in *Popular Fiction before Richardson*, John Richetti develops a key insight about the effectiveness of Haywood's novels as popular entertainment. Haywood's extravagant idealization of love alibis her heroine's imprudent actions and pathetic suffering (Richetti 1992, 201). To describe the action, Haywood deploys techniques of arousal and suspense that exert certain mechanical effects upon the reader, whom the

novel thus constructs as a kind of automaton. The mechanical automatism at work in novels of amorous intrigue like *Love in Excess* may be suggested through the headlong propulsion of the action which is controlled by none but influenced perversely by all. The automatism of this novel derives from Alouisa's scheme to capture D'Elmont: her anonymous letter to D'Elmont declaring her love, and asking that he look for her at the ball the following night, incites D'Elmont's desire, which, because he arrives at the ball when he does, comes to rest upon the virtuous Amena, with whom he starts an intrigue. Here the disguise intended to assure Alouisa's control of the action (her anonymity) misdirects the love intrigue toward another. While the narrative follows D'Elmont's erratic and rather incompetent pursuit of Amena, Alouisa works to abort the affair: she warns Amena's father of the danger to her, has D'Elmont trailed, interrupts the lovers' tryst by having her servant cry, "fire," at Amena's house, poses as a rescuer of Amena's honor, and secretly convinces Amena's father to have his daughter put away in a monastery. The ambiguity and errancy of Alouisa's opening letter to D'Elmont enables all the business of *Love in Excess*, part 1. When Amena demands the return of a letter *she* has sent D'Elmont, and D'Elmont accidentally returns to her Alouisa's anonymous love letter to him, Amena recognizes her "friend's" handwriting and in a fit of reproach allows both Alouisa and D'Elmont to see the errant letter. At this moment of hidden desire exposed, Alouisa's letter finally arrives at its proper destination, as a signed love letter to D'Elmont, and the plot can achieve closure. The ending of part 1, with D'Elmont acquiescing in a marriage of interest to Alouisa, a woman he does not love, offers a complete victory for the scheming Alouisa.

This simple outline of part 1 of *Love in Excess* recalls the machinery we found working in the Don Alonzo episode of *Love Letters*: The plotter and the dupe are linked by the scheme and its necessary disguises. The use of the scheme sets a rigorous mechanics in motion, arranging characters in certain roles or positions of knowledge or ignorance. Disguises are used (here, Alouisa's initial letter) to control the perception of the dupe (D'Elmont) and the direction of the action. Whether plots are known in advance or disclosed only as they unfold, the reader's suspense derives from wanting to know if the scheme will succeed. Schemes against the unknowing produce plots with a complicated distribution of sympathy between the plotter and the dupe: the former is favored for his

or her mastery and wit, the latter for his or her vulnerability and innocence. In *Love in Excess* no one character has the predominant authority and power that Manley often confers upon her intriguers, so feelings appear more spontaneous and the action less predestined. The comparative openness and ludic “play” of this plot encourage surprising turns of events. Plots sometimes misfire, appearing as sudden bad fortune for the plotter or good fortune for the dupe. Such reversals seem to be one of the main pleasures of the novels of amorous intrigue. Often the dupe may become knowledgeable and reverse the action through a counterplot. Part 2 of *Love in Excess* is based upon just such a set of reversals, as they issue in a new set of schemes.

By describing the way these reversals unfold, we can grasp the traits that make *Love in Excess* especially well adapted to the early modern print market. Central motifs of Haywood’s fiction—misdirected communication, interruption just before the moment of sexual climax, accidental detours of the action—have the effect of deferring narrative climax, so as to require more novel writing. In this way, what links these novels to the market—seriality and repetition—gets woven into the workings of the plot. Part 2 of *Love in Excess* repeats the action of part 1, with characters now positioned differently, reversing its effects. On his deathbed Mr. Frankville asks D’Elmont to accept his daughter Melliora as a ward. In relaying his daughter to his friend, Frankville cannot complete a sentence, thereby producing a fatal ambiguity in Melliora’s mind: “Therefore, my last command to thee shall be to oblige thee to endeavor to deserve the favours he is pleas’d to do us in accepting thee for—” (Haywood 1719–20, 2:4). Commanded by her father to receive the man he intends as her guardian but whom she misconstrues as a husband, Melliora is thrown together with D’Elmont, and the two are precipitated into love for one another. This turn of events fixes D’Elmont in the position of the lover, with a new innocence, sensitivity, and charm but also a new interest in scheming. But the jealousy of his wife Alouisa motivates *her* schemes to learn the secret of D’Elmont’s love, a secret known to his friend—her admirer—the Baron D’Espernay. The action of part 2 follows the development, intensification, and near consummation of the love of the two good and innocent lovers, who are interrupted in their amorous pursuits first by Alouisa and then by the Baron’s coquettish sister Melantha. Alouisa’s determination to discover the object of D’Elmont’s love, and the Baron’s determination to win Alouisa’s

sexual favors, leads to the “deal struck”—he will show her ocular proof of D’Elmont’s infidelity in return for sex—and to two ironically divergent schemes. The Baron enlists his sister Melantha’s help in allowing D’Elmont access to Melliora at night, but when she puts herself in Melliora’s place in order to have sex with him the first plot misfires. Alouisa enlists D’Elmont’s brother Brillian to save her from the Baron’s sexual attack after she has learned the secret of D’Elmont’s love. When a fatal duel ensues, the Baron is killed by Brillian and Alouisa accidentally runs into D’Elmont’s sword. The automatism of the action is the effect of schemes and machinations contending in a space that, from the position of agents, may appear aimlessly mechanical. But from the vantage point of readers this action is both absorbingly suspenseful and surprising, at the same time that it achieves a pleasing moral design: the villains are hoist on their own petard, while the good characters go to monasteries and on a tour of the Continent. By not resolving the love problem—the two virtuous lovers are still separated—part 2 of *Love in Excess* invites the sequel its market success turns out to warrant.

Figuring the General Reader

Although Haywood does not justify her fiction as productive of political or moral improvement, she does defend the reading and writing of novels. Over the course of three linked debates about reading, and one “big” sex scene in part 2 of *Love in Excess*, Haywood defends novel reading as an autonomous pleasure of the private reader engaged in erotic fantasy. In her defense of novel reading, Haywood figures the general reader of her novels as one free of particular ideological and moral investments, and open to the diverse play of fantasy. D’Elmont initiates the first discussion when Melliora, absorbed in reading in a garden, becomes an object of fascination. With D’Elmont watching her unawares and gradually approaching her to interrupt her reading, Melliora appears to be possessed of the charming self-completeness that Freud ascribes to narcissism and its attractions to others: “he looked into the garden (and) perceived Melliora lying on a green bank, in a melancholy but a charming posture, . . . her beauties appear’d if possible more to advantage than ever he had seen them, or at least he had more opportunity thus unseen by her, to gaze upon them . . . he stood for some moments fixed in silent

admiration. . . . Melliora was so intent on a book she had in her hand, that she saw not the count 'till he was close enough to discern what was the subject of her entertainment" (Haywood 1719-20, 2:24). The circular relay of gazes in this scene defends reading by eroticizing it: the gaze of the reader of Haywood's novel is borne, through the "silent" and "fixed" gaze of the central character, to the body of the heroine, herself absorbed in reading. In an autoerotic movement Freud associates with the ego's turning around upon itself in narcissism, reading (Melliora's reading of a book, D'Elmont's reading of Melliora, and the reader's reading of the whole scene) enfolds and completes the reading subject. Finding that she is reading the philosophy of Fontenelle, D'Elmont frames an elegant conceit: if that gentleman had known her, he would have written of love and Melliora. When she refuses the compliment by "blushing extremely" and affirming the value of serious reading, D'Elmont adds that she is lucky to be born in an age that has these treatises from the previous age, "since (I am very confident) this, and a long space of future time will have no other theme, but that which at present you seem so much adverse to" (i.e., love) (2:25). With the words of her lead character, Haywood reflects upon the vogue for novels of love like her own, which pose a threat to the reading of serious authors like Fontenelle. This debate produces a silence and "disorder" in the heroine, which D'Elmont reads as the first sure sign of her love for him. He holds her in his arms but ventures no further.

The second debate about reading casts Melliora as the strict censor of "softening" and amorous reading. When the Baron D'Espernay's sister Melantha seeks "to divert the company with some verses on love," Melliora uses the occasion to condemn the "passion" as well, the narrator tells us, as "to conceal it in her self" and "check whatever hopes the Count had." But her austere moral condemnation of the verses all others have enjoyed allows her to become the witty and intellectual woman whose condemnation of love merely incites desire for herself: "[Melliora] now discovered the force of her reason, the delicacy of her wit, and the penetration of her judgment, in a manner so sweetly surprising to all that were strangers to her, that they presently found, that it was not want of noble, and truly agreeable thoughts or words to express them, that had so long deprived them of the pleasure of hearing her; she urged the arguments she brought against the giving way to love, and the danger of all softening amusements, with such a becoming fierceness, as made every body of the opinion that she was born only to create desire,

not be susceptible of it her self" (Haywood 1719-20, 2:34). By discovering the fierce force of penetrating reason behind the modest reticence of the beautiful woman roused to speech, this scene does more than give Melliora a phallic power that fascinates. Melliora's chaste arguments against love and softening amusements also invoke the law that makes those amusements all the more delicious. "More than a little alarmed" to see her "appear so much in earnest," D'Elmont seeks a private interview to explore what's behind the austere expressions of this aroused super-ego. There he finds a novel reader in undress (2:34).

Behind Melliora's high-minded condemnation of "softening amusements" there is another kind of reading practice and another kind of desire. As a novel reader Melliora is represented as neither virginally apart nor as a formidable polemicist but as an erotic object, just come from her bath, "lying on a couch in a most charming dissabillee" with her hair flowing down her shoulders. Her gown is white and her body, as open as a book, "discovered a thousand beauties." But D'Elmont is not enchanted just by finding her in "undress." He is also interested in her mind and reading, and anxious to make discoveries; "casting his eyes on the book which lay there, [D'Elmont] found it to be Ovid's *Epistles*. How Madam (Cry'd he, not a little pleased with the discovery) dare you, who the other day so warmly inveigh'd against writings of this nature, trust yourself with so dangerous an amusement? How happens it that you are so suddenly come over to our party?" To deflect this criticism, Melliora deploys arguments that have the contradictory logic of the three reasons Freud describes as being offered to the reproach of having chipped a borrowed tea pot: each reason contradicts the other two, but all three pursue the logic of the alibi. First Melliora insists it is only chance that she reads Ovid: "Indeed my Lord (answer'd she, frowning more disordered) it was chance rather than choice, that directed this book to my hands, I am yet far from approving subjects of this kind, and believe I shall be ever so." Then she bolsters her excuse by exempting herself from the dangers this reading might pose for other readers: "Not that I can perceive any danger in it, as to my self, the retirement I have always lived in, and the little propensity I find to entertain a thought of that uneasy passion, has hitherto secured me from any prepossession, without which, Ovid's art is vain." Then D'Elmont refutes this argument in such a way as to use the topic of reading to take her from representations to the reality of love: "Now you contradict your former argument, which was,

that these sort of books were, as it were, preparatives to love, and by their softening influence melted the soul, and made it fit for amorous impressions, and so far, you certainly were in the right, for when once the fancy is fixed on a real object, there will be no need of auxiliary forces, the dear idea will spread it self thro' every faculty of the soul, and in a moment inform us better, than all the writings of the most experienc'd poets, could do in an age" (1719-20, 2:35-36). D'Elmont's rejoinder pushes Melliora to her third defense of reading novels. To deflect the central reason for condemning novels—that they prepare the fancy to move from fiction to reality—Melliora invokes the powers of the critical reader like herself, who is more intent upon noting the "misfortunes that attended the passion of Sappho, than the tender though never so elegant expressions it produced. And if all readers of romances took this method, the votaries of Cupid would be fewer, and the dominion of reason more extensive" (2:36). Melliora's opposition between love and reason is taken up and contested by D'Elmont, and allows the two to have a disguised discussion of their own forbidden love, in which Melliora asserts the constraints of their situation and D'Elmont uses the device of "a friend's" love problem to describe his own. He finally makes an explicit avowal of love, while she feels more sympathy for him than she should.

Haywood's staging of these interlocked debates does not merely follow the familiar if perverse economy according to which warnings about the dangers of novel reading lead to an enactment of those dangers. By incorporating the critique of novel reading that has anathematized her own writing, Haywood exploits the erotic potential of what we might call the scandal of the reading body. The scenes we have examined unfold three positions in the debate around novel reading: first, Melliora adheres to the improving reading of authors from the previous generation, lamenting the encroachment of new forms of reading; then she delivers a moral rant upon the baleful effect of those "softening amusements"; finally, she is "discovered" to be a novel reader after all, offering inconsistent casuistical arguments to exempt herself from her general proscription of novel reading. By mapping D'Elmont's seduction of the virtuous Melliora onto her own seduction of the reader who would abstain from novels, Haywood allows her heroine to become a figure for the general reader she would seduce. This rehearsal of the reading debate around novels prepares for the fictional climax Haywood uses to implicate her reader in the general desire she ascribes to her characters.

For when D'Elmont, with the help of his "friend" the scheming Baron, inserts himself into a plot from one of the novels whose reading he promotes—and secretly enters Melliora's room when she is sleeping, and for a moment resists waking and seducing her—he finds that Melliora, though she champions philosophy, condemns the danger of "softening amusements" in company, and claims the critical powers to resist emulating the amorous behavior found in novels, has desires indistinguishable from those of readers who succumb to the allure of novels. While she dreams, Melliora is implicated in the delusion she has mocked in both novel readers and lovers: "in a lover's mind illusion seems realities" (1719-20, 2:37).

Haywood's narrator defines, in the terms of a general psychology of human desire, that which makes all men and women susceptible while dreaming: "Whatever dominion honour, and virtue may have over our waking thoughts, 'tis certain that they fly from the closed eyes; our passions then exert their forceful power, and that which is most predominant in the soul, agitates the fancy, and brings even things impossible to pass. Desire, with watchful diligence repelled, returns with greater violence in unguarded sleep, and overthrows the vain efforts of day" (2:47). Freud never said it better. In terms remarkably close to the psychoanalytic understanding of fantasy and of the role of dreams in evading the moral censor, desire here allows Melliora to effect through sleep what others do through novel reading: "Melliora in spite of her self, was often happy in idea, and possessed a blessing, which shame and guilt, deterred her from in reality." This prepares Melliora, at the moment when the desiring hero lingers by her bedside, to act out her desire. Building toward the first erotic climax of the novel, Haywood's narrator tells us that when Melliora dreamt,

imagination . . . was active, and brought the charming count much nearer than indeed he was, and he, stooping to the bed, and gently laying his face close to her's (Possibly designing no more than to steal a kiss from her unperceiv'd) that action, concurring at that instant, with her dream, made her throw her arm (still slumbering) about his neck, and in a soft and languishing voice, cry out, O! D'Elmont Cease, cease to charm, to such a height—Life cannot bear these raptures! (2:47-48)

The modest and proper Melliora's dream-induced words and gesture expose her desire to D'Elmont in all its literality. By offering a parentheti-

cal speculation about D'Elmont's intentions—" (Possibly designing no more than to steal a kiss . . .)"—the narrator assumes an uncharacteristic tentativeness about her hero. After Melliora's rapturous gesture, the narrator alibis his failure to leave his unconscious lover's side: "Where was not the resolution he was forming some moments before? If he had now left her, some might have applauded an honour so uncommon; but more would have condemned his stupidity, for I believe there are very few men, how stoical soever they pretend to be, that in such a tempting circumstance would not have lost all thoughts, but those, which the present opportunity inspired. That he did, is most certain, for he tore open his waistcoat, and joined his panting chest to hers" (2:48). There follow the virtuous protestations Melliora makes upon waking, protestations countered by D'Elmont's resolve not to leave her at the moment when her desire has become so transparent to him. As in the climactic sex scenes in Behn's and Manley's novels, this scene's narrative sponsors an eroticized, roving gaze that ravishes its object, invokes a lawful-conduct discourse to restrain sex, and deploys a euphemistic language for body parts that condenses the drive and the law in a baroque excess of purple prose (2:49). The interruption of Melantha, which "saves" Melliora, merely teases the reader (2:50).

The plot device upon which this scene turns—the coincidence of Melliora's dream about her lover and his presence during that dream—constructs an alibi for both lovers, and for the reader. Because Melliora speaks her desire in a dream, she is spared the charge of immodesty; her grasping D'Elmont at the very moment he is about to depart excuses him for acting on his passion. But these two excuses for the characters also operate within the reading debate about novels as an alibi for the reader. In other words, the readers who gratify their fantasy desire through reading novels do what the privately dreaming Melliora and the adventitiously fortunate D'Elmont do: respond to a desire represented as fateful, necessary, and natural. As Haywood's characters are absolved of the charge of blatant sensuality, the reader is freed to consume the purple prose and eroticized situations of this fiction. Additionally, a scene of intense sexual arousal like this one—by dissolving particularized subjectivity into automatized bodies—helps to generalize subject positions by blurring identity. The two characters and the reader all are swept together into a single experience of polymorphous sexual arousal, in which the drive exceeds the subject position through which it operates.

The Novel of Amorous Intrigue as Media Culture

How are we to define the cultural location of the novels of amorous intrigue? This essay's reading of Haywood suggests the inadequacies of the two main discursive paradigms for understanding the vogue for the early novel in Britain. The feminist readings of Haywood I have critiqued develop out of a Marxist valorization of popular culture as that which speaks of, for, and to a collective identity, "the people." Within this broad cultural theory, these novels are positively valued as means by which women writers can challenge the hegemonic aesthetic system that suppresses writing and reading that articulate women's utopian longings. But my reading of Haywood also suggests the liabilities of the literary paradigm for interpreting the novels of amorous intrigue. Any effort to place these novels under the rubric of literature ends by finding them lacking and falling short, paradoxically, by coming too soon. Thus the literary histories of "the" novel, like those of Saintsbury and Baker, feature Behn and Haywood as false starts and miscarriages on the way to the "real" legitimate novels that follow them (Warner 1994). But even when the high literary agendas of literary histories have been displaced by a more analytical study of culture, a discrediting of the novel of amorous intrigue continues. Thus the important studies of Richetti, Hunter, and McKeon position Behn, Manley, and Haywood as markers on the way to, but always falling short of, the truly novelistic, because they lack any claim to literary realism. Such a positioning of Manley and Haywood is explicit in the title and text of Richetti's pioneering *Popular Fiction before Richardson* (originally published in 1969 and republished in 1992), but it also persists in J. Paul Hunter's treatment of all three novelists as writers "before novels" in his 1990 book of that title. Michael McKeon (1987) allows Behn, Manley, and Haywood to figure in the "origins" but not the actual writing of novels; instead their narrative matter contributes to the ideological matrix out of which, through the dialectical machinery of McKeon's plotting, novels by Cervantes, Swift, Bunyan, Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding may arise. This repeats an old trope: women's bodies give birth to male genius.

Novels of amorous intrigue are different from and other than popular or high culture, and they throw that opposition into question. The very set of oppositions produced by the Marxist and literary historical paradigms—high/low, culture/subculture, legitimate/marginal, offi-