

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SENTIMENTAL
NOVEL

by

ERIN AILEEN O'KANE

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I. Introduction.

When one contemplates the sentimental novel of the eighteenth century, the established topics of the figure of the man of feeling, the concept of domestic/public spheres, passion versus logic/reason, and bodily illness as a result of emotions all come to mind. These topics have been discussed in depth for so long they are considered tropes of eighteenth-century literature. While these topics still receive much attention, discussion of contemporary issues such as race, the portrayal of children, gender, and the obsession with objects has given a fresh look at eighteenth-century literature. In a sense, these studies take twenty-first-century ideas and apply them to the eighteenth-century sentimental novel to see how an old genre can still raise timeless issues.

While race was a topic for debate in the eighteenth century, it has more recently turned into a very central debate. In looking to the eighteenth-century portrayal of race, critics are searching for a means to identify where these issues of race began, such as George Boulukos' discovery that the term 'slave' became synonymous with 'black' thanks to Defoe's novel *Colonel Jack*. The effect Defoe's writing had is one such example of how the portrayal of race in literature had a greater affect on popular thought regarding race, which we have inherited.

The portrayal of racial minority figures is not the only social issue critics are concerned with. Children are an example of another marginalized group whose portrayal in literature in the eighteenth century evolved rapidly, most notably illegitimate children such as the foundling in *Tom Jones*. Going hand-in-hand with these changes, the way in which works of literature were designed and marketed for children also changed. The changes made by individuals such as John Newbery to offer literature designed with

children as the intended audience created the field of children’s literature, which in turn had an effect on the development of childhood.

Scholars such as Dorothee Sturkenboom would argue that another key audience writers and publishers needed to consider was women. Particularly for the sentimental novel, a large portion of the readership was female. Not only were women consumers of the novel, they quite often played a key role in the novel. Just like the portrayal of racial figures in the novel had an effect on how society viewed issues of race, Chris Roulston discusses how the portrayal of women in the novel had a profound effect on the women themselves, as well as how society viewed them and how they thought of themselves as women. Some sentimental novels were even blamed for putting radical ideas in women’s heads, which led to disquiet in the domestic sphere of the home as women attempted to claim some semblance of sovereignty.

As the domestic sphere in general (and home in particular) was associated with women, Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins states that the items in the home were also associated with the women who ran the household. Today’s culture has become inundated with ‘items’ – our very lives are practically ran *by* them *for* us. As a result, critics like Barbara Benedict have reviewed eighteenth-century literature to study how items were portrayed in hopes of understanding when our obsession with ‘things’ began.

This twenty-first-century take on the eighteenth-century novel reveals the current interest in topics that have recently been brought to the foreground of discourse. This paper will attempt to review recent scholarship that focuses on how race, children, gender, and items were portrayed in the sentimental novel.

II. Discussion

Portrayal of Race

While race issues have always been a topic for debate, scholarship specifically dedicated to studying the perception and portrayal of race in literature is relatively new, particularly where eighteenth-century literature is concerned. Here scholars utilize the cultural artifacts left for them in popular literature of the time to unearth how racial discourse was viewed in the eighteenth century. The changing nature of how sentimental authors dealt with the topic of race in their novels reveals the steady progress towards the abolitionist movement in the late eighteenth century. Some of these authors notably played a role in the racial discourse of their time, while others appear to have accepted the status quo stereotypes about race in their works. One of the earliest sentimental novelists, Aphra Behn, caused a stir in racial discourse with her novel, *Oroonoko*.

Albert J. Rivero and Nicholas Hudson both focus on Behn’s novel to discuss issues of race, but they take two very different stances in regards to how Behn’s novel affected racial discourse. Rivero uses Behn’s tale of *Oroonoko* to show that, while Behn attempts to make the race-gap bridgeable, it is inherently focused on an “attempt to preserve, by acts of rhetorical violence, hierarchies of class and race, while representing the virtual impossibility of doing so in those chaotic, carnivalesque colonial spaces” (444). Behn’s various descriptions of flora and fauna promote wonder and intrigue, and the natives are described as innocent and pure like Adam and Eve, untempted by their nakedness (450). Yet this scene inevitably collapses into a brutal and violent end Rivero likens to *Heart of Darkness* (written nearly 200 years later). A brief comparison is drawn to George Warren’s *An Impartial Description of Surinam*, pointing out how Warren’s

perspective is much cruder, going for immediate satisfaction versus Behn's romantic notion of loving restraint (451). In this way, Rivero portrays Behn's work as a romantic novel as much as an historical fiction. Rivero points out that by mastering nature, Oroonoko only shows himself to be a savage, proving himself less civilized than his weaker European travel-companions by the very act of showing superior skill in the exotic environment (454). Behn eventually portrays a descent into darkness for her story: Oroonoko's failed vie for freedom leads him to kill his own beloved as the last avenue to freedom. This savage act spoils Behn's paradise, and Rivero views the story as “a memorial monument—a cenotaph, perhaps, since the real corpses are buried elsewhere—with its plot containing the textual bodies of the young narrator and of her beloved African friends, the latter in both their classical and grotesque incarnations” (456). Rivero was very keen to address the apparent double standard in dealing with race found in Behn’s work. While the narrator expresses sympathy towards Oroonoko’s plight, every other white character in the novel systematically lies to Oroonoko. While they claim to treat him as an equal and promise his freedom, the undercurrent of the text is that Oroonoko needs to accept his fate as a slave so that everything can turn out all right. Every white character fails Oroonoko in the end, except for the hired Irishman who tells Oroonoko he’s going to end his life and then proceeds to do so. In this way, Rivero’s work is a very useful tool in studying the inherent hypocrisy of *Oroonoko*, though credit should be given to even a flawed attempt at changing the portrayal of race for the better.

On the other hand, Nicholas Hudson views Behn's *Oroonoko* as a sympathetic view to the plight of African slaves, despite its flaws. A later reinterpretation of the novel for the stage received great attention, especially one performance where the emotional

response of two African ‘princes’ triggers sympathetic grief in the otherwise white audience (564). Hudson’s article primarily references key figures in British political society such as Samuel Johnson, William Warburton, Edmund Burke, James Ramsay, William Wilberforce, and Hannah More for their perspectives on slavery, arguing that religious and conservative elements actually initiated abolitionism in England on the grounds that slavery was contrary to proper British cultural ideals (560). Poems and certain novels come into Hudson’s argument as he develops it in more detail. Hudson discusses Philmore’s *Two Dialogues on the Man-Trade* as an anti-slavery narrative, showing that, while slavery was a profitable trade, it was not consistent with “true” British morals (562-63). Poetry from authors such as Richard Savage and “Moses Bon Saam” (“a supposed free slave” as Hudson calls him on 565) come into the work, and Hudson references the importance of Pope’s “Essay on Man” and poetry by “Francis Seymour[,] William Shenstone, John Dyer, and Thomas Day” for their influence in the anti-slavery movement (566). The anonymous novel *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman, Return’d from a Thirteen Years Slavery in America* is discussed in terms of its comparison between Britons and Africans (565). The main character is forced to work alongside slaves, and the commentary within the text clearly condemns American slavery as even worse than the Turkish slave-trade, and makes a direct comment on British slave-trade as a result (565). Hudson’s focus on works that rationally debate racial issues and therefore directly seek to affect racial discourse was an excellent way to outline the progress of the racial debate towards abolitionism. While some of the works Hudson discusses dealt with race somewhat more indirectly, they still called British people to a higher standard.

Narrative pieces, such as *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman* and others are also addressed by Roxann Wheeler, who argues that “Although race and postcolonial theories have resulted in major critical rethinking of seventeenth-century drama and the nineteenth-century novel, eighteenth-century literary historians have not generally perceived race to be central to their research” (310). Wheeler cites various novels that indicate the racial divide was less due to skin color, and more to religious and cultural gaps that could be bridged by education to European concepts (311-312). The process of bridging the racial gap is especially focused on conversion to Christianity as the means of making a different-race person palatable to European society. Wheeler analyzes each of these texts in more depth after a broader overview, using each as a lens to offer support for her thesis. All the novels she reviews saw multiple editions, which Wheeler holds to indicate a strong European readership. In all of these novels, the “narrative desire underwriting the intermarriage novels is to erase divisions, not to establish them” (312). The growing slave trade seems to be the true source of ingraining divisions to maintain purity and superiority of race (314). Wheeler’s later analysis of Sarah Scott’s *The History of Sir George Ellison* shows the lead character’s desire to humanize slaves, yet with an adamant dislike of interracial marriage, which was most likely a response to interracial novels in the vein of Edward Long (316). Wheeler argues that “because mid-century intermarriage novels bear traces of an older conception of racialized ideology based chiefly on religious difference and on a newer concern with skin color, they capture ideology in transition by juxtaposing two distinct ideas about race” (310). Wheeler saw a gap in scholarship and admirably attempted to fill that gap. She continues Hudson’s

theoretical work in her treatment of the apparent transitions in popular thinking regarding race.

One such major transition in popular thought occurred with the publication of Daniel Defoe’s *Colonel Jack*. George E. Boulukos is quick to point out that at the time of the novel’s publication, the synonymous definition of “slave” as an African was not yet established (615). A slave was a slave, regardless of skin color. Boulukos also specifies that Jack’s sympathy for slaves has a direct origin: he lived as one (616). Boulukos uses Defoe’s *Colonel Jack* as his primary literary lens on the concept of promoting slave humanity, but maintaining the racial inferiority of Africans, exemplified in Jack’s actions and his experiment in better slave-management.

When Jack’s attempts at merciful mastery backfire, he begins to fall into drawing distinctions between himself and them. African and slave become synonyms for him. He quickly falls into believing that Africans’ nature leads to their brutal treatment by their masters (617). Jack comes to an epiphany that brutal treatment creates the bad temper he sees in the slaves. Boulukos phrases this system as “slave-owner paternalism” (618). Jack then turns to using fear of horrible punishments, which he then ‘saves’ the slave from with offered mercy at the final moment, to install slavery-by-gratitude as part of his self-perceived experiment in the nature of Africans, whether they are feeling men or savage brutes (620). The experiment comes to a head when Jack tells one slave that Jack himself is to be hanged by the ‘great master’, and the slave Mouchat offers to die in his place, because Jack saved him before (so the slave believes). This system of perceived mercy makes the threat of selling off a slave very strong, as the slave is desperate to avoid harsher treatment elsewhere. They are viewed as men by Jack (only as a tool to

maintaining their slavery), but elsewhere like beasts (622). Boulukos then turns to Sarah Scott's *Sir George Ellison*. Ellison’s disposition and sentimental nature lead him to reform how slaves are treated rather than a direct personal experience. Like Jack, with Ellison, a slave only proves his humanity by being obedient, though Ellison’s method of enforcement differs (623). While admitting slaves to be human, they remain inexorably inferior by nature in both cases and in later examples also mentioned by Boulukos, including novels and pamphlets (624). Boulukos’ work makes it clear that *Colonel Jack* had a profound influence on the portrayal of race in literature and the discourse of race, but it may have been an even better piece if he had drawn additional connections between the piece and its direct effect on discourse, such as the skin color association mentioned previously.

Though Boulukos does not discuss any plays in his work, the role of stage adaptations of sentimental fiction cannot be denied. A popular story first published in Richard Ligon’s *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, the tale of *Inkle and Yarico* saw several revisions and adaptations. Nandini Bhattacharya explores how George Colman, Jr.’s version of *Inkle and Yarico* differs from others in its attempt to domesticize Yarico, and make her a sympathetic character despite the race-gap. Bhattacharya believes that Colman is trying to create a “supposed moral, private economy” through his portrayal of the story, rather than a crude, blunt financial ‘value’ for slavery (218). Colman wants to allow the sharing of certain commodities in British culture, which racial bias would normally prevent from even being tolerated in a pure English society. Toward this end, Yarico is heavily objectified, including metaphors of what she looks like matching her skin tone to a teapot, with known links to theatrical figures (208).

Bhattacharya points out how Colman’s version tends to keep Yarico as close to Western appearance as possible, while other versions embrace her ethnic appearance more (209). Keeping Yarico Western-looking softens the blow to an English audience, and allows Colman's perspective to eke through. Bhattacharya also points out how Colman's family was tied into the connoisseurial markets, undoubtedly influencing his view and choice of approach to Inkle and Yarico (210). He even wrote commentary on Omai the “savage” and his knowledge of earth-ovens for similar reasons: creating a new market for unique goods (210-211). To create a new kind of economic opportunity, Colman tried to mitigate the obstacle of race. Bhattacharya seems to focus a little too heavily on the commodification of race as well as the private life of Colman, but her insights into how race is portrayed on stage in an adaptation of a sentimental story are useful for consideration.

The commodification of race reached a unique level in the slave narrative of Mary Prince, where Prince herself is treated as an object not only by her slave masters, but also by the white ‘friends’ and abolitionists seeking to get her message to the world. Barbara Baumgartner uses Mary Prince’s biography as a lens on perspectives of slavery and the portrayal of race in autobiographical literature. In the narrative, the abuse of Mary Prince reduces her health to such a point that she refuses further work, ironically using the very suffering from slavery to resist slavery (253-54). Miss S— and Thomas Pringle (a white man) both influenced the text’s creation extensively, limiting its value in the eyes of many literary critics (254). Baumgartner explains how a later revision by Henry Louis Gates Jr. shifts from the sexual focus Pringle gave Prince, to a stronger focus on the narrative rather than her body, though Gates seems to have ignored “two appendixes that

discuss Prince’s debilitated state” (254). The text itself reflects Prince’s own experience, “even as a free woman, Prince’s body and text remained (and remain) subject to ongoing appropriation and interpretation” (254). Parts of Prince’s writing seem highly sentimental, with her strong emotional ties to her mistress and her mistress’ daughter (255). Baumgartner also comments on how Prince’s *lack* of description for her pain after torturous punishment is a symbolic destruction of language itself, and fits her own choice of a title (“Unmaking”) inside her biography (256). This article argues that Prince’s narrative eventually becomes a description of quiet resistance to slavery, as opposed to violent uprisings that are more popularly analyzed (258). Mary Prince was writing during a time when the abolitionist movement had really become a force to be reckoned with. Though Baumgartner addresses other critic’s treatment of Prince, she seems to fail to acknowledge Prince’s writing as what it is: an autobiography. While Prince’s autobiography certainly serves as another example of the portrayal of race in literature, her writing differs from Defoe’s because hers is based on her own real, personal experiences – not those of a fictional character.

Stories of more violent uprisings certainly corner the market in critical analysis, but even so some well-thought-out studies on lesser-analyzed pieces can be found, such as Sara Salih’s analysis of Jane Austen’s *Sanditon*. Salih argues that Jane Austen’s perspective on ‘mulatto women’ as part of morality is “inseparable from its local social basis” (330). Without the wealth from plantations in the Caribbean, Austen’s social morality would collapse. In the text itself, economic benefit from the ‘West Indians’ is the primary concern among the English, yet there remains a constant fear of ‘brown West Indians’ in England and the colonies alike. Salih finally concludes that Austen’s

perspective actually moves away from the sentimental representation, and toward one where the mulatto woman’s “economic role in society...supersede[s] morality” (331). Salih makes comparisons to other, earlier mulatto schoolgirl representations, which argue against the injustice of slavery or second-class treatment, while Austen focuses on the economic value of mulatto people. Salih later uses Elizabeth Helme’s *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest; Or, An Affecting Portrait*, Helena Wells’s *Constantia Neville; or, the West Indian*, and Amelia Opie’s *Adeline Mowbray: The Mother and Daughter* as lenses for further analysis of this ‘ambivalence’ about ‘brown women’(340). In Helme’s and Opie’s works, mulatto characters are highly sentimentalized (346).

Novels such as *Constantia Neville* present negative stereotypes about mulatto women by portraying them as extravagant, ostentatious, and also spendthrifts (344). Austen’s version also carries a delicacy of constitution assumed to be caused by the English environment on mulatto women born to warmer climates (335). Salih generally discusses and cites support for the development of racial perspective in the eighteenth century. She specifically cites Wheeler’s argument that race was not predominantly defined by ‘skin tone’ until the latter third of the eighteenth century (333). Salih believes this context is vital to understanding Austen’s perspective when writing *Sanditon* (334). Salih also points out how other analyses of *Sanditon* seem to ignore the greater context Salih herself points out in earlier discussions. Salih does an excellent job of bringing these issues to the surface, and providing additional angles to consider the race debate from.

After reviewing such critical theorists, race discourse certainly seems to have slowly gained momentum until it came to a critical turning point in the abolitionist

movement, and a major contributing factor to this momentum was the manner in which race was portrayed in sentimental fiction. While some works clearly advanced the goals of the abolitionist movement, other works directly affected the way we still view race today, even though few people are aware of that fact. Most people would associate the term ‘slave’ with a person of African descent with the assumption “that’s how it has always been,” not knowing we have the portrayal of race in literature to thank for that assumption.

How Childhood Affected Literature

Like the issue of slavery in the eighteenth century, the issue of childhood and the literature appropriate for children was also a key focal point in eighteenth-century debate. At the start of the century, children’s literature (as we would consider it today: literature designed specifically for children) did not exist. Children either read ‘adult’ novels, or redactions of those novels. Some adults began writing specifically for children audiences, while other adult authors saw their works become popular as children’s stories, even though that is not how they intended them, such as Jonathan Swift. Swift’s own childhood experiences indelibly marked him which affected the way he wrote, which in turn affected what children read when his stories became popular as children’s stories. In addition to the complexities of childhood experience, the issue of portraying children in literature also entered popular discourse, particularly where the case of illegitimate children was concerned. Sentimental fiction was aimed at instilling moral instruction in the reader, and nowhere does one see that more consciously present than in the writing of Samuel Richardson.

Though one might scoff today, Samuel Richardson’s works were some of the first novels deemed educational for children. Bonnie Latimer sees Samuel Richardson’s purpose in his fiction as garnering the result of “a joint engagement of the imagination and the intellect: while enthraling the emotions, he would also foster judgment—in terms of the ability to read fiction, but more importantly, in the capacity to form desirable moral views” (167). While Richardson’s didactic take on the novel led to his novels becoming highly controversial, that controversy led him to edit and attempt to change the later editions out of fear that the wrong meanings might be drawn from his texts. This issue

did not only affect Richardson. As Latimer states, “in offering fictional scenarios susceptible to polyvalent interpretations, his novels lay themselves open to undesirable readings, far from their educative intent,” and while this is a critique of Richardson’s work in particular, it certainly could apply to many other sentimental authors as well (168). Sexual voyeurism became the topic of *Pamela Censured*, which Latimer puts forth as one such example of the dangers of putting *Pamela* into the hands of young people who might read it the wrong way, or for the wrong reasons. Even with these concerns, “Richardson’s work retained immense cultural authority—not least as an educational tool for children” (168). Latimer mentions other authors who held a similar position—namely Shakespeare, Boyle, Milton, Locke, Pope, Swift and Addison—but she chooses to focus her article on examining two specific cases of children’s stories that were adapted from Richardson’s novels and how they “negotiate the difficult category of the young moral imagination” (168).

The first such case Latimer targets is a redaction of Richardson’s novels, geared towards young children. As much as Richardson intended his novels to be instructional to youths, he never meant them directly for very young readers, and so this anonymous redaction sought to capitalize on that by removing the more sensational parts of Richardson’s works. While the grand majority of literature for children in the eighteenth century remained redactions of Biblical stories, such redactions of secular novels attempted to carve a niche for themselves. Even so, the taste in what was deemed ‘appropriate for children’ was clearly different from how one would think of it today, as the sex scenes from *Pamela* and *Clarissa* are left intact in the redaction. Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Young Grandison* is different enough from Richardson’s work to

constitute a separate work, and yet is clearly based in his fictional world. She also manages to avoid more adult-based topics such as the dueling and gambling scenes Richardson wrote, by setting the action among children. In this way, Wollstonecraft “creat[ed] pleasures for [children] that subtly direct curiosity toward particular ends and insistently model a vision of desirable moral and social order” (178). While Latimer’s work was instructive in how redactions were handled and why they came about in the first place, at times she seemed a little less like an impartial critic and more like an individual reacting to the topics one would view as taboo for children today, but were deemed acceptable for children in the eighteenth century. She underplays the importance these redactions had in forging a path for books developed solely for children to emerge.

The concept of using subtle hints in a story to instill a moral lesson for children was not lost on other eighteenth-century writers, as Margaret R. Higonet broadly shows. Higonet sets forth her argument based on Kant’s term for *aesthetic*, hereby “referring to the pleasure derived from works of art, [which] was critical to the concept that verbal arts should be distinguished from more practical, utilitarian, or purposive kinds of verbal practice” (30). She asserts that Kant’s aesthetic is particularly pertinent to children’s literature because of the image of childhood created by the Romantics, which places a “golden aura of innocent play” around the child that protects it “from adult purposiveness” (30). Even so, adults are the ones writing the literature for children, even if they have to “write across a gap in ‘experience,’ ‘knowledge’ and ‘wisdom’” (30). Higonet identifies several motifs and narrative formats for children’s literature (such as the *Bildungsroman*, a very popular variant in the eighteenth century), all of which stem from the Romantic influences. Higonet continues her argument through the lens of

theorist Perry Nodelman’s work, focusing on the opposite effect children’s literature can sometimes occasion in the reader, citing William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* as examples. Higonet strings this argument through more recent works, and argues against Nodelman’s need to create binaries in children’s literature. Though this piece provides criticism on poetry rather than novels, it discusses the effects of literature on the child, thus it can speak to questions of appropriateness and provides a useful model for considering how child readers received the sentimental novel.

In an attempt to address the new market for children’s literature, printers began crafting literature designed specifically *for* children. Gillian Brown’s article discusses Locke’s theory that children’s books should always have images, and uses *Alice in Wonderland* as her case study/lens. Her argument stretches back to the seventeenth century and traces children’s literature forward into the mass print culture that bloomed in the eighteenth century, as well as the literature produced by that movement. A founding father of that movement (in regards to mass production of children’s literature), John Newbery “sold his little books for children along with pincushions, tops, cards, thimbles and balls” so that children of the day might see reading as a playful activity, and the book itself as toy as well as useful instruction tool (352). Furthering Locke’s argument, Brown posits that “because children have less experience, and a relatively low stock of observations, they benefit especially from the materials supplied by pictures” (353).

In that way, pictures can take the place of a child’s real-life experience, which may be lacking in many ways. However, Brown still sees the need for a parent to carefully guide a child through a book to make sure they catch the author’s meaning, and

therefore benefit from the reading of the book. Even still, the “eighteenth-century publishers of printed picture books for children register the range of available communicative forms and the interrelation between them by pairing books with non-printed toy items (as Newbery did) or by fashioning convertible books, such as a folded edition of *The House that Jack Built* which could be shaped into a house” (355). While Brown discusses *Alice in Wonderland* frequently, she also details the book’s predecessors, such as *Little Goody Two-Shoes* (written directly for children but based on similar parables as *Pilgrim’s Progress*) and books which “transported readers to far-off places and exotic encounters” such as *Robinson Crusoe* (358). The popularity of children’s books and their link to ‘moveable’ aspects of the book (such as woodcuts) causes adult literature to shift and move away from such aspects: “For example, the variety of print styles and woodcuts that we see in *The Life of Tristram Shandy* disappear from the novel except in its serial publication” (359). As a continuation, Brown argues that “the phenomenology of reading developed by Locke and incorporated by Newbery and the publishers of the metamorphoses likewise applies to sentimental novels” (360). Brown’s piece performed some very clever detective work in order to further our understanding of why children’s books are crafted the way they are today, thanks to a long tradition stemming from the eighteenth century. Brown neatly wraps up her argument by tying this literary tradition to more recent children’s literature such as the *Harry Potter* books.

Perhaps the popularity of such children’s series as the *Harry Potter* books has inspired the increased scholarship in children’s literary studies as well as in their lives. The study by Mary Shine Thompson is very interesting because it starts by pointing out a

hole in historical scholarship (namely, focus on Irish childhood) and then seeks to fill in that hole with a case study on Jonathan Swift’s “childhoods.” Thompson discusses Swift’s childhood and early life, finding clues not only in historical facts and Swift’s letters, but also in his literary works, particularly in *Gulliver’s Travels* and “A Modest Proposal.” In this way, Thompson “finds ways of thinking about early modern children’s complex and varied everyday practice” in order to discuss the historical experience of this “fragmented group with no specific site of operation” (12). Thompson argues that, while fragmented, children still form “an identifiable group [which] can ‘inhabit’ texts” and which she claims they do in Swift’s work (12).

Swift led a complicated childhood, which led to an even more complicated adulthood, especially where relationships with children and females were concerned. Particularly in the case of Esther (“Stella”) Johnson, a girl he met when she was 8 and he was 23, his letters utilized his playful, punning way of using language to convey perhaps pseudo-erotic messages to the young girl. Thompson claims such complicated relationships can be found in many of Swift’s writings. In regards to Swift’s views on children, this article reveals a much darker side of the author. He never lamented being childless, and went so far as to wish friends’ children would die soon after birth so the friends would not be burdened with them. Thompson draws direct connections between Swift’s issues with parental authority and the representation of children and educational systems in *Gulliver’s Travels*. Much like Swift, the “only paternal responsibility [Gulliver] recognized was financial. As he left on his final journey, his wife was pregnant. The possible addition to the family was never again mentioned, except in the penultimate chapter, when Gulliver voiced his utmost ‘Shame, Confusion and Horror’ at

begetting children” (25). Although his work inevitably became popular as a children’s favorite, Swift never regretted his own childlessness, and viewed the children of “the hordes of the poor” as worthy topics for his most satirical pieces (20). Leaving children to the responsibility of the public was something Swift protested against in both his every day life and his written works. Though Swift led a less-than-perfect life, Thompson occasionally seems a little too judgmental of the author, particularly when her own knowledge of his real life would provide insight into the way he acted.

Another point where the real lives of authors collide with their work is described by Lisa Zunshine’s article on the London Foundling Hospital. Zunshine claims this facility “loomed large in eighteenth-century cultural imagination. It embodied both the noblest philanthropic aspirations of the British Enlightenment and some of its worst fears” of women gaining control of their bodies and reputations (1). Henry Fielding was a notable supporter of the hospital, though he also had to make some “underhand commendations” of the place regarding the ability it gave women to be sexually promiscuous without any long-term retribution. Many people made the claim that supporters of the institution were merely raising the public’s awareness in order to make the public support their own bastard children. Even so, foundlings were becoming more prevalent in eighteenth-century English society, especially as such works as *The Conscious Lovers*, *Tom Jones*, *Emmeline* and so forth became common works read at home. Zunshine maintains that, while the hospital remained more of a silent threat lurking in the background than a viable setting for a story, it remained a constant presence nevertheless.

Zunshine defines the Foundling Hospital's presence in the form of "spectral" representations. She makes a case for the hospital's spectral presence in six novels from 1730 to 1810, and then moves to "Ala A. Alryyes's recent analysis of the relationship between eighteenth-century nationalism and the novel" so that she can argue her case for the hospital as a standard institution focused on "regimented upbringing and modest social aspirations" versus the "novel's interest in celebrating the specifically 'English' desire for liberty" (3-4). That liberty is contrasted sharply when the idea of the illegitimate child is introduced. Zunshine perhaps gives a little too much credit to the influence a building had on the sentimental novel, but the concept of it is certainly intriguing, especially in the context of how it affects the portrayal of various types of childhoods in literature.

Not only speaking to childhood in the eighteenth century, but also to a particular dilemma found in childhood, Wolfram Schmidgen's article on the position of the illegitimate child in eighteenth-century life and fiction furthers the arguments made by Michael McKeon in *The Origins of the English Novel* while putting forth his own opinions as well. The Renaissance portrayal of the bastard was someone who "possessed overwhelmingly negative attributes" and "rarely escapes an unhappy end" (133). However, the 'bastard hero' began to emerge "as a positive figure in British eighteenth-century narratives" (133). Though Renaissance literature portrays predominantly male bastard children, the eighteenth century saw the introduction of the female bastard in several genres. In many novels and plays of the time, "male and female bastards emerge as positive figures whose hardships we are invited to commiserate and whose social betterment we are assumed to desire" (134). This shift in perspective on the illegitimate

child seems to mirror “moving from a defense to a critique of aristocratic ideology” (134).

The symbol of the bastard in literature accomplished much more than just a critique, however, and continued change in the perception of illegitimate children followed social changes in perspective on nature, the inherent goodness of man, and most notably the changes to the constitution that took place in 1688. Not only did authors such as Daniel Defoe take part “in the last rebellion by a royal bastard in English history,” but also their works waged a battle on the public mind (135). On the other hand, authors like Dryden and Milton fought back by keeping alive “the old association of the bastard with satanic forces” in works like *Absalom and Achitophel* and *Paradise Lost*. Schmidgen argues that “in Defoe’s satiric defense of 1688 [though written in 1701], the bastard becomes an everyman figure and is able to embody an extensive and unregulated social contract precisely because the Protestant Succession rejected a narrow definition of genealogical legitimacy” (137). However, the in-between status of the bastard remained a problem, particularly where the crossing of social classes was concerned. Following in Defoe’s literary footsteps, Henry Fielding’s novel *Tom Jones* “produced the most famous eighteenth-century literary bastard” in order to represent the changes in perception. Schmidgen illustrates how Tom portrays a man of feeling, while many of the characters he is surrounded by display their ignorance and lack of ‘proper’ humanity. The same sort of theme runs throughout Frances Burney’s *Evelina*, another example Schmidgen makes use of (among others). Schmidgen argues that “Frances Burney’s complex reappropriation of the bastard figure in *Evelina*” suggests that the acceptability of an illegitimate child to society may also largely depend on gender (151). According to

Schmidgen the “lack of observational stance may be a particular liability of the male bastard” in works by Fielding and others (151), while Evelina’s social circle create “the net of allegiances that delimit the female bastard’s sphere of circulation” (153).

The creation of literature for children as well as the portrayal of children in literature creates an interesting cycle where childhood experiences influence the way an author writes, that author’s work is presented in a way geared towards children, and reading that author’s work influences the child who reads it, which starts the cycle over again. This process worked a gradual change in the perception of childhood in the eighteenth century, as well as the role literature for children played in that process.

Gender and Sexuality

Intimately linked to the position of illegitimate children (and children in general) in the eighteenth century is the portrayal of gender and sexuality issues in sentimental fiction. Not only did advice literature seek to influence women of that age, but their portrayal in popular literature also had an effect, leading to the rise of feminism with female authors caught in the middle between 'being proper' and assisting the feminist movement. Popular themes of the eighteenth century forced many women to lead a sort of double life to attempt to counter-balance their literary counterparts. The attempt to lead a double life is especially true of a woman attempting to act outside social norms without becoming a 'fallen woman.'

Playing to the popular sentimental theme of virtue in distress, Jennie Batchelor raises the issue of the 'fallen woman' and how eighteenth century society saw fit to rehabilitate her. Batchelor compares John Fielding's *A Plan for a Preservatory and Reformatory for the Benefit of Deserted Girls and Penitent Prostitutes* with Magdalen House pamphlets and contemporary pieces in an overall display of how a female laborer becomes "a vital and active agent in the nation's moral and political economy" (3). The Magdalen pamphlets tended to differ on the source of prostitution between the predations of libertine men or economic hardship creating desperation (2). As part of the debate on the economic value (or lack thereof) of prostitution, Batchelor cites Bernard de Mandeville ("A Modest Defense of Publick Stews" 1724) for his point that since female chastity is so delicately balanced (and so easy to lose), maintaining a certain productivity from women who have lost their virtue would be advisable (4). Mandeville implies that prostitution should be regulated, not abolished. Even so, Mandeville clearly considers

whores infectious and socially virulent, in concept and physicality, seeming to belie his own point of their value (4). Other works by Defoe, Welch, Dingley, and Hanway argued that prostitution did not contribute to economic or social wealth (5). Fielding's plan for a 'Magdalen House' sought to find a mean between these extremes.

Batchelor writes that, against the backdrop of the Seven Years War, the belief that prostitutes weakened the very fabric of English society and its people led to a further, almost desperate, need to rehabilitate them, so that strong boys could be born and sent out to fight (6). In this rehabilitation, the prostitute's identity had to be cleaned as much as her body, as postulated by Dingley and others (7). Without a blank slate, she could never rehabilitate. Example novels to help bolster these concepts begin to appear in the 1750s, such as the anonymous sentimental novel *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House*, and its main character, Emily, who—without laboring skills—falls victim to a villainous employer, becomes pregnant, and is summarily abandoned, left with prostitution as the only option to support herself. Batchelor argues that Emily's sister, who follows a predetermined path set out by the family in a laboring job, ends up happier and more stable (9). Batchelor explains that, without some kind of working skills, a woman was doomed to whoredom. In most fiction of the period, exile was the end fate of any fallen woman, leaving the Magdalen House literature a stark contrast in its promise of (at least partial) redemption (11). A rewrite of the Emily story by the Magdalen writers features her rising out of prostitution to a station of esteem through labor (12).

Batchelor also discusses Sarah Fielding's later novel *History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759) which uses the main character to show how an industrious woman can save her whole family after the husband ruins the family with debt and illegitimate

children (13-14). Mrs. Bilson reforms her husband, becomes successful, and they establish reformatories for children (14). John Fielding's *Plan* has a critical error Batchelor points out, wherein it condemns various occupations (for which the House would train the women) as leading too easily into debauchery (15). The women could not reform outside of the House based on the tenets of his work. While reclaiming the virtuous woman, the Magdalen pamphlets marginalize her as an object of pity, as in Burney's *Cecilia* with the character of Mrs. Hill (17). Batchelor concludes that, while deeply flawed, the concept of giving women a chance to redeem their reputation through labor, as demonstrated with Magdalen pamphlets and sentimental novels, created a “startling... reformulation of notions of labor, gender, and sexuality” (18). The examples Batchelor outlines give clear indications of how the portrayal of these women, their sexuality and the question of their morals affected not only the perception of women, but also social policies and practices created specifically as a response to the issues raised in these works. Raising awareness of gender inequality and the affect that had on women went a long way towards establishing additional social reformations.

Other reconsiderations of gender were seen across Europe. Dorothee Sturkenboom uses the literary lenses of *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, and other works to show how the archetype of the emotional woman is deeply variable rather than a fixed form, and how that fact allows for fresh analysis of the dichotomy between female emotionalism and male rationalism (56). Specifically, Sturkenboom focuses on how Enlightenment thought affected the Netherlands through literature, including periodicals (57). Sturkenboom explains that the Dutch Republic’s relatively common literacy and plethora of bookshops allowed the common people to

participate substantially in the Enlightenment there (57). Due to a lack of female access to these periodicals, the writers represented a “collective (male) consciousness,” of key interest when they tackled the concepts around women, particularly their emotionalism (57). Further, Sturkenboom cites various examples of female figures who develop “impulsive and undisciplined character that women develop in the absence of male leadership,” taking that role for themselves (58). Of interest is “Kenau,” a female hero of the Dutch war of liberation from the Spanish, who was later rejected due to her “unfeminine pugnacity” (58).

This discussion leads to Sturkenboom's definition of the “bad-tempered wife” who represents wrath and a thirst for power, overriding her husband: “Thus the ‘bad-tempered wife’ represents the emotionalism attributed to women in its most negative form” (58). The portrayal of emotionalism in women was an old concept that Enlightenment thought was trying to move beyond, but with difficulty (58). Sturkenboom discusses the origins of the “bad-tempered wife” concept from Dresen-Coenders’ works, where the change in division of labor between the sexes occurred as the Middle Ages faded to the modern period (58). There was a class restriction on this ability to have emotional outbursts, as only a woman of higher class could even risk it, being as she was challenging not only her husband, but her very role in society as a secondary individual (59). Richardson's *Pamela* shows the English development of a new emotional woman (60). *Clarissa* followed in its steps, as did the later *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (60). These epistolary novels focus “entirely on the emotional lives of his characters” and they came to be called “moral or didactic novels” (60).

According to Sturkenboom, Pamela's various emotions, expressed through her letters, testify to her strength of character and virtue in the ideal sense acceptable to the English audience (61). Clarissa is abused, and her noble feelings inevitably destroy her because of the demands of the cultural definition of virtue (60). The male hero of Sir Charles Grandison represents a new kind of man, the sentimental man, who seems somewhat of a mix of the genders due to his emotional understanding (61). While Richardson was not the first to explore emotionalism in this way, his work "became the standard against which all literary work was measured" (61). The popularity of Richardson's work came back to Dutch society, and had similar influence there (62). As women were considered more easily influenced than men, "[t]he sentimental novel satisfied the demand for 'safe' secular reading for women" (62). The emotional archetype of women changes from the 'bad-tempered wife' to the 'refined woman,' whose emotions are virtuous in their heightened expression (63).

Sturkenboom goes on to discuss how the development of the 'man of feeling' caused conflicts over the male gender role, an area that has been neglected because "studies of sentimentality and masculinity have largely been conducted in separate circuits" (68). Sturkenboom further explores the new concepts of the sexes rising around the time, but she does so through a lens of historical literature rather than sentimental or moral (67). In the Netherlands, the common concept that a man with a woman's emotions, or a woman with a man's "courage and resolve" were both repugnant pushed the man of feeling concept to the side (Van Engelen as qtd. in Sturkenboom, 68). The clear flaw with Sturkenboom's work is the fact it focuses almost entirely on Dutch Enlightenment, but its treatment of popular eighteenth-century English novels is still

pertinent to the discussion of the portrayal of gender in literature. This piece provides a unique insight into an aspect of the reception of eighteenth-century literature that is not often considered; that of the reception such works saw outside of England.

In a much more direct way, Chris Roulston shows how advice literature of the eighteenth century strove to construct a firmer structure of marriage in which to keep women. The advice literature attempted to “‘privatiz[e]’ the married subject” especially through the metaphor of the architecture of the home (26). At the same time, various literature, including periodicals (particularly Addison’s *The Tatler* and Steel’s *The Spectator*) resisted such a set distinction between public and private spheres (28). As Roulston states, “Advice literature is defined here in its broadest sense: in the emerging print culture of the eighteenth century, fictional narratives could often have a didactic intent, while conduct literature frequently used fictional models to convey a particular moral message” (27). Roulston cites Wigley, who argued for a ‘sexuality of space’ (26), especially focused on the household, which becomes not the symbol, but the expression of domestic versus public spheres. Roulston pulls on Armstrong to further make the point that with women being consigned to the internal side of society, this subjectivity became definitional to society, and thus changes the ‘modern individual’ from the political man, to the domestic woman (27).

However, saying that an internal sphere influences society is a contradiction, and Vickery is used by Roulston to point out that advice literature was creating an ideal that didn’t actually exist, yet wielded real influence (27). In the ideal, the woman controls the inside, man the outside, and if either attempts to shift these positions, social chaos is feared to result (27). Meanwhile, “advice literature on married life was working hard to

erect firm boundaries between public and private and to construct a domestic space that was sealed off from the public sphere” (25). Roulston draws the conclusion that because advice literature was so transparent in its fear of chaos, it continued to create conflict from other sources of literature despite its constant effort to stabilize marriage ideals (38-39). Roulston’s arguments show the very direct way literature could have an affect on the female reader herself, as well as the way that female reader was perceived. It is interesting to consider how, much like the cyclical nature of children’s literature, advice literature for women also seemed to operate on a self-fueling cycle, particularly when men reacting to women wrote the advice.

The interplay between male and female interactions comes under scrutiny as Binhammer uses the lens of *Clarissa* to analyze how women should handle male advances, how to distinguish between love and lust, and how to address rape. Binhammer argues that, especially with *Clarissa*, sex is not the key to understanding the “seduction novel,” but rather love is key (861). Citing Foucault’s argument that sex “has become ‘our master key’ to understanding” in the modern era, Binhammer challenges us not to rely so much on our perspective of the event, but rather on the contemporary view when it was written (861). By trying to tell her own story, and how she attempts to do so, the character of Clarissa is not merely suffering from being undersexed, but seeking something beyond physicality, “an ontological status which is not sexed” (862). The article also uses letters written to Richardson in response to the text to argue this point, showing that the female readers understood Clarissa because of love rather than their common desire (or lack of desire) for sex, even when the heroine is raped and dies as a result (863). Binhammer goes on to analyze the Lovelace character, who views Clarissa

in terms of sexual conquest only, and who is viciously clever in his application of how to manipulate a woman of virtue into his clutches (864). Lovelace believes “that sexual insatiability is the true nature of women,” and that by raping Clarissa, he’s actually just getting her to admit she has wanted him all along (864). Clarissa’s response afterward, however, shows that he has missed the mark entirely (865). As Binhammer writes, “If the will to knowledge is the will to carnal knowledge in Clarissa, then Lovelace certainly is master of it, but the novel shows that his model of sexual difference and love is monumentally ignorant when it comes to reading Clarissa’s heart” (866).

Clarissa from the start draws a distinction between love and sex, but Binhammer suggests that she is really trying to aspire beyond the social limitations of womanhood. This aspiration, however, draws her too close to Lovelace, and she is then trapped far worse than ever before by the rape (868). Clarissa shows a mastery over her own physical attraction (or lack of it) to men throughout the text, showing not only understanding, but a desire for something far more than sexual satisfaction (869-70). The world’s standards for women simply do not allow Clarissa to achieve the goals of love and/or life she wishes for herself (871). Binhammer points out that by having Clarissa die as the “beautiful, dead chaste saint” many modern feminists view it as a “dangerously mixed legacy” (Backscheider as qtd. in Binhammer 874). Many women would have identified with this portrayal of the literary female, which in turn could have led to domestic disputes on the role a woman should act. Regardless, Binhammer’s central point remains: Clarissa was not defined by sex, but her struggle for love, and was inexorably trapped by society’s limits on her gender.

The concept of being trapped by society was a major influence on satirical work as well. Sara Gadeken shows how Sarah Fielding's novels were a Herculean effort to offer a female satirical perspective without immediately alienating her society as an unrespectable, upstart of a woman (542). With the rise of the middle class, a proper woman was a 'passive woman', an example of "obedience, modesty, and compassion" (Pollack as qtd. in Gadeken, 542). This portrayal of women was an ideal which the writing of satire directly contradicted. Gadeken cites various powerhouses of literature, such as Pope, Swift, and Richardson as support for this point. Though female authors already committed the 'sin' of 'writing against the grain,' female satirists were perhaps even worse off because of the way in which they chose to write.

With the medium of the novel, a woman can express satire in safer conditions than by publishing satirical articles or poems (543). Gadeken phrases this balancing act thus: "Mid-century female satirists, then, negotiate the difficult course of producing morally forceful satire while avoiding manly vigor" (543-544). As a woman must be a force of moral benefit, she can't risk seeming to be aware of evil, or have her own character questioned, cutting off a major use of satire as a weapon rather than moral tutelage (543). Fielding's earlier works are cited as a foundation for her endeavors to express her satirical commentary before Gadeken truly begins her analysis of *David Simple* and *Volume the Last*.

A satirical archetype, the naif, ironically is changed by Fielding in the character of David Simple into a benevolent, compassionate creature, avoiding "becoming...an object of desire" (546). As "arguably the first man of feeling in English literature," David does not become a satirist; he learns from women and creates a wonderful medium for

Fielding's arguments and perspectives (546). Fielding in her later works explicitly declares that “authentic satire must always be informed by compassion” (546). David is juxtaposed with Orgueil and Spatter. Orgueil (a name meaning pride of the more serious variety, such as hubris) is a stoic, doing good but for the wrong reasons, as Gadeken puts it, only so that he can be prouder and prouder of his moral superiority (547). Spatter is less posturing, but equally self-absorbed, eagerly displaying his skill for attention. Both characters represent satirical notions, seeing through the pretenses of those around them, but both fail in the area of true moral uprightness (547).

Orgueil and Spatter are contrasted directly with Cynthia, David's new guide. Rather than a satirical attack on stereotypes, Cynthia, Gadeken posits, is a rational being: “In this figure, Fielding argues that women of wit and learning, if motivated by a desire to help others rather than by self-promotion, can be accommodated within the sentimental vision” (547-48). Gadeken supports the concept of the woman as a rational being with examples of other important literary figures, such as Mary Astell and Hilda Smith, even tying Cynthia to the development in society that would eventually culminate in Wollstonecraft's later demand for women's education and equity (548). Gadeken states that in being highly educated yet not highly ambitious, Cynthia blends sentimental language with the rational ideal (548).

Cynthia's key strength is her ability to truly see things from other's perspectives, not just the sentimental empathy of how the self would feel in the same situation (548). This strength comes with the price that few in society could ever appreciate; “rather than benefiting from her knowledge, her family spitefully ridicules it” (550). By her sympathy, Cynthia blends into the sentimental zone, yet retains her satirical nature,

pulling satire into the acceptable zone that sentimentality occupies (550). However, this mixture is untenable. Cynthia, because she knows evil exists in others, can’t remain in the sentimental society created by David, and her concessions to their society cost her child her life, and inevitably lead to Cynthia’s leaving the story (551-2).

In *Volume the Last*, David’s whole family suffers for his assumption of others’ kindness, yet the text never judges him for it (553). Cynthia, widowed, returns to rescue the last remnant of David’s family, the young Camilla, and seeks the mercies of a reportedly kind household, of which satire would demand mistrust (553-4). Thus, sentiment without rationality is just as flawed as vicious satire (554). The childish satire of men against women is directly mocked in this same vein, a weapon without moral purpose (554). So Fielding uses “sentimental discourse” to propel her view of satirical values in a safer and more acceptable value, working to avoid a loss of meaning, yet accommodating rigid societal requirements of proper womanly behavior (555). Gadegen proposes that Fielding evaded the ‘Salic law of wit’ rather than defeated it.

Using such ‘double-voiced’ methods of writing was practically a requirement for women writers in the eighteenth century. The need for a woman to frame her message in acceptable language goes hand-in-hand with the need for a woman to live a double-life in terms of acting how society expects her to act, while simultaneously seeking her own happiness. It was a fine line difficult for most women to manage successfully.

'Things' in Literature

Perhaps the best example of the modern era looking back and applying its values to eighteenth-century literature is the rise in studies on materialism and 'items' in sentimental fiction. In this sense, 'materialism' is used along the lines of Bill Brown's "Thing Theory," not Karl Marx's class struggles. As objects are everywhere, so is the discussion on this field of study. From the way objects are portrayed in literature, to the 'speaking' quality items have in advertisements and economy, items in the eighteenth century played an important role in everyday lives and the portrayal of the domestic sphere in literature.

The dependence on items is so profound that while Barbara M. Benedict argues that "the commercialization and consumption of the eighteenth century has been a rich topic for critics" she also states that "objects have rarely been understood separately from their human and cultural contexts," which is how she situates her own argument (193). Benedict constantly relates objects to their human counterparts, while simultaneously asserting the separate 'objectness' of the object and how it escapes temporal meaning by already being a *fait accompli* since "it is without finitude and without desire, for it has already reached its end...this is what makes the Object a perpetual enigma for the subject" (Baudrillard as qtd. in Benedict, 194). The eighteenth century was filled with objects, or as Benedict wrote, "things were the new immigrants, invading a city emptied by the Great Fire and plague" (194). The central paradox of Benedict's article is that things "connected identity to the material world, but they also threatened to usurp literary discourse. In holding this ambiguous power, objects in eighteenth-century literature

threaten to overtake human agency and reverse the power dynamic of human, the creator, and object, the created” (194).

According to Benedict, eighteenth-century writers (particularly poets) used their satires and poems to “articulate this struggle between durable object and transient subject, this fight for urban space and time” (194). She makes a very physical case with her description of new forms of advertisement “obtrud[ing] on the city’s space” particularly when the collapse of one sign killed four people in 1718 (195). Early eighteenth-century writers recognized advertisement as a new literary form, and parodied them quite often, especially in such publications as *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*. Often citing many examples of popular eighteenth-century writers who utilized the advertising form or satirized it, Benedict states “such instances show that advertising constitutes a literary technique as much as theme, target, and threat” (198). Benedict relates this new literary form to its representations in sentimental fiction, such as Richardson’s *Pamela*, and especially in poetry such as the works of Pope. She then makes a case study of posies, or the poetic inscriptions on gifts, because as Benedict argues “as early versions of thing-poems, posies record the power of objects to convey or evade, represent or misrepresent, embody or outlast the feelings of their human custodians” (200). Benedict concludes that “such discourse infuses these poems with a new sense of time, occasion, and the role of poetry itself. For Pope, Swift, and Gay, the durability of objects throws human vulnerability into relief” (205). In this way, Benedict’s piece illustrates how the portrayal of items ultimately reflects on the portrayal of humanity itself. Though it can be challenging to work past some of the theoretical claims made by ‘thing theorists,’

Benedict does a good job of relating the portrayal of objects to their importance within the written works.

As part of this intrusion of objects amidst a racially charged atmosphere, Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins' article focuses on a "particular kind of female subject defined by her symbiotic relationship to decorative objects" (76). These decorative objects often had a Chinese style to them, which was quickly becoming fashionable at the time. Jenkins' piece "examines some of the particular syntactical relationships that bound the eighteenth-century British woman to the Chinese object in cultural sites such as the dressing room and the tea table, as well as in the textual space of poetry" (75). This mixture of real-life and literature-life reveal a highly material culture in the eighteenth century, one which held a great effect on the people of the age, and as a result, their literature. Jenkins complains that other scholarship has focused almost entirely on "portraits of wayward or corrupt desire" which do not do justice to the aesthetic movement (76). Claiming these objects to be luxurious or improper because they are not British is also incorrect, because individual tastes and fashions of the age made these objects proper and desirable. This movement was largely a domestic (and therefore, female) one because it represented "a particular strain of instructive writing aimed at integrating these aesthetic concerns and practices into a preexistent literature of women's domestic management" (76-77). Eighteenth-century poetry also dealt with the practice of beautification, treating "the figure of the woman as both artist and artwork" in a changing world of aesthetic practices, making such a woman "best understood as a poetic construction" (77).

To make her case, Jenkins focuses on Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and Swift's various "dressing-room poems" as well as advice literature of the day to recreate the sense of how the British felt about this emerging aesthetic of objects. Starting with domestic manuals, Jenkins explains how advice literature moved from focusing on three topics (managing a household, practical medicine and cooking) to focusing on four topics ('beautifying' being the new one) at the end of the 17th century. While this beautifying originally focuses on self-beautification, "the arts of beautification expanded beyond cosmetics to include an array of household aesthetic improvements" by the early eighteenth century (78). Jenkins argues that this increased focus on beautification greatly influenced literature of the time, even going so far as to claim it affected the order of 'things' in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. She claims that Pope's work "is a paradigmatic example of early eighteenth-century poetry that focused in particular on the materials of the lady's dressing room in order to test both the possibilities and the limitations of an aesthetic of harmonious confusion" (81).

On the other hand, Swift turned the tables so to speak (as he is often known to do) by "representing the objects of the dressing room, and chinoiserie in particular, in a very different light. Once lauded as material ideals of beauty, both Chinese objects and the women associated with them increasingly appeared as targets for ridicule, an embarrassment to good taste rather than its embodiment" (87). While Swift was not the only author to take up this banner, he is the one Jenkins chooses to focus on, particularly his scatological dressing-room poems which serve as "his so-called excremental vision show[ing] women and Chinese things combining in a grotesque synthesis, whereby subject and object dissolve rather than complete one another" (88). Jenkins pits Swift and

Pope against one another, using their focus on items as the common ground. This clash of writers makes the piece interesting to read, and helps to illustrate her points clearly.

Using the anthropological treatise by Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, as a basis, Charles H. Hinnant focuses on the economy of gift and wage structure in eighteenth-century fiction as a way to delve into how eighteenth-century people would have viewed and treated such things. He has recognized “that the gift economy may be embedded not only in everyday activities but also in discourse” (3). One might question Hinnant’s use of popular fiction instead of historical data to situate his argument, but he argues that popular texts “are the visible manifestation of the way in which public opinion, the *doxa*, is reduced to the straightforward presentation of compressed sayings, commonplace observations, maxims, and witty insights in narrative or dramatic texts that highlight them and present a framework in which they may be subject to ratification or challenge by others” (3). Using Michael McKeon’s argument, Hinnant claims that “any analysis of the exchange of favors and gifts for services is doomed to failure” if it does not acknowledge the ‘theatricalization’ seen in eighteenth-century literature.

Using a variety of literary sources, Hinnant makes his argument quite cleanly about the practices of gifts and wages as seen in the eighteenth century, as well as the importance of physical items as part of this exchange. Pushed to the extreme, this commodification can and did also extend to women, in such literary scenarios as the story of *Inkle and Yarico* and *The Conscious Lovers*. In *The Conscious Lovers*, Lucinda faces “the dilemma of the marriageable virgin,...[which]...is that she could become commodified, sold like an estate, without much in the way of legal recourse” (8). Hinnant

likens these examples to comparing marriage “to the slave auction, for in both spheres the female subject continues to be valued in large part for her labor, whether reproductive, sexual, or managerial” (10-11). Using anthropology studies in a critique of eighteenth-century literature was an interesting move for Hinnant to make, but one which he carried off relatively well. Some of his points seemed a bit forced, but at the same time they made sense in the context of the pieces cited.

As the concept of the object quickly moves to the extreme, Scott Nowka points out how Gildon and Sterne’s mutual need to distance themselves from materialist thought probably led to their production of satirical materialist works. Gildon chose to animate objects as characters (*The Golden Spy, or a Political Journal of the British Nights Entertainments of War and Peace and Love and Politics*), while Sterne (*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*) reduced a human character to an object. Though opposite approaches, they meet at the same goal (197). Nowka posits that both men were eager to separate libertinism from materialism, so that their real philosophies wouldn't be marred by bad connotations (198). Nowka establishes how Gildon cemented his libertine status by editing a collection of famous libertine writings and re-publishing them (199). Gildon's work is a string of short stories, all exploring how gold controls human affairs. This was a direct mockery of the materialistic concept that even consciousness itself is material (202). Nowka also gives passing comment to how much *The Golden Spy* brushes with sentimentalism, though usually in relationship to commerce (203). Nowka goes on to explain how the intelligent coins are deeply humane in their desire to live, directly contrasted with the bestial humans around them. Only through a talking coin is materialism possibly proven to be an examination of humanity (207).

Nowka offers an analysis of Christian/deist debate by comparing various cited articles of both sides, primarily Christians responding to *The Oracles*. Nowka also takes issue with the fact that most analyses of the texts focus on economics rather than materialism for their value as commentary (204). The development of materialist thought is also explored by Nowka through a few published works that blended new scientific understanding with materialism, eager to prove that the human mind was a purely mechanical apparatus (208-209). Of note is David Hartley's work *Observations on Man* (1749), which is said to have influenced Mary Hays and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is highly provocative, but never enters the realm of pornography (210). His acquaintance John Wilkes, a well-known libertine “known for his transgressions both sexual and political” (210), along with this provocative content, gave Sterne a reputation as something of a libertine himself, despite being a clergyman. Wilkes found Tristram's narrative a good description of Sterne's practices, but not Sterne's espoused beliefs (211).

Nowka points out Sterne's disavowal of any libertine leanings in his beliefs by citing another work by Sterne. In the iconic *A Sentimental Journey*, Sterne declares his certainty of having a soul (213). This is the later breaking point between Sterne and Hays, as Hays later quotes this passage as an immature analysis. When she considers it further, Hays has no certainty of a soul other than her body (214). Sterne's greatest critique of materialism comes through Uncle Toby, who is so focused on military fortifications that he ignores all else, even Mrs. Shandy in the middle of bearing a child (215). The ‘man machine’ is patently ridiculous, which gives Sterne a strong counterpoint argument to materialist theory. The metaphors of ‘smoke-jack’ and ‘hobby-horse’ objectify humanity,

and make it absurd in the same process (216). The final proof against Sterne's materialism comes when he has Uncle Toby free a trapped fly. In the end, there's just something about a person machinery can't explain (218). Nowka's article takes the discussion on items to the next step by critiquing how written works like *A Sentimental Journey* and *Tristram Shandy* set about anthropomorphizing the items or directly comparing them to human aspects. Treating the soul as an item seems an extreme example of this argument.

Though there is something about people items cannot explain, Jonathan Lamb would claim they certainly try. In his article Lamb clearly states "by means of gesture, or of deputy or direct speech, things have their say in the eighteenth century" (949). He extends the reach of 'thing' to cover animals as well as physical objects. He puts forth advertisements as a "source of nonhuman language" where the objects are essentially crying to be found, and claims "that under certain circumstances the rhetoric of crying lost things, and of lost things crying, is imitated by humans calling for their kind: Lucy Lockit and Polly Peachum, for example, when in *The Beggar's Opera* they advertise the loss of Macheath; or Moll Flanders when she cries the loss of herself" (949). Henry Fielding spoke very publicly about advertisements for lost goods of a personal nature whose "value was purely personal" because he saw this act as "pure caprice" (951). Lamb stresses that giving these items a voice gives them in a sense a soul, so the jump from considering only material objects as 'things' worthy of advertising for their return to the fact that "the most particular accounts are given not of things, but of humans who have become things—prisoners, slaves or, indentured servants" is not that far a leap to make (955).

Interestingly, advertisements for lost things are narratives that are missing narration. A servant has run away and here is a clear description of said person—but why did they run away? The attempt to complete the story (by returning the object) is an attempt to return what is missing: a sense of unity. This statement presents items in a new light: that of a being with autonomy. Now items are not merely reflecting the human condition, but they are taking it upon themselves and rising as pseudo-equals to human beings.

III. Conclusion

Much as the sentimental novel encapsulates debate on the major themes and arguments of the eighteenth century, new scholarship on the sentimental novel seems to epitomize the major themes and arguments of the present century. Topics of debate key to the twenty-first century are now being applied to eighteenth-century literature, such as materialism, childhood studies, gender and race, which has provided an impetus for further reflection on sentimental fiction. While academia continues to debate the broader themes of the man of feeling, public/private spheres, and the passion/logic binary from eighteenth-century debates, scholars have begun to delve further into details and unexplored regions of the sentimental novel. Some sentimental authors may have intentionally written on these topics, while others unwittingly provided the grounds for future debate, such as Defoe's portrayal of slaves linking slavery to skin color from that moment on.

In-depth study and critique of authors' lives by scholars, such as Mary Shine Thompson's study of Jonathan Swift, reveal that all aspects of an author's life may be studied as intently as the author's fictional work. Studies do not limit themselves to the story itself, but rather every aspect of the novel from how minor characters are portrayed (or have their voice silenced due to class and race issues, as Sara Salih's analysis of Jane Austen's *Sanditon* would contend) to the life the author themselves lived are laid bare for critique and further scholastic study.

With such earnest review of our literary past, one would think scholars are attempting to explain our present more easily. If scholars can explain why certain topics were handled and portrayed in specific ways in the sentimental fiction of the eighteenth

century, they might unlock direct connections to the way in which those topics are considered now. It seems like most scholars and critics are carrying the theoretical banner respectfully in this manner, such as the articles concerned with the portrayal of race in literature. Works like the article by Boulukos have uncovered profoundly interesting knowledge about race relations we have quite simply forgotten. These lost points of interest help form our basis of thought on the issue of race, and many people would not even realize that if it were not for Boulukos' study.

On the other hand, some scholars seem to take their studies a little further than is necessary. While the pieces selected for this paper are all recently-published studies, some of the earlier pieces on Thing Theory seemed to give the impression of theory just for theory's sake. Barbara Benedict and Charles Hinnant's pieces are just two of the more recent examples that seem to have made up for some of their predecessor's faults by combining literary critique with psychoanalysis and anthropology studies to expand the relevance of studying how objects are portrayed in literature. Even so, Thing Theory seems to have more theoretical ground to cover before it becomes fully accepted as a serious literary criticism.

Using critical perspectives to study and outline the development of various discourses in the eighteenth-century sentimental novel help scholars gain a better understanding of 'where our society has been' so to speak, in regards to these issues that have been brought to the foreground. Constantly reviewing and re-focusing in-depth studies on eighteenth-century literature assists us in understanding, critiquing, and improving where we stand in regards to these important discourses, as well as where these discussion may take us in the future.

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IV. Curriculum Vita

ERIN O’KANE

366 S. VIENNA AVE. ♦ EGG HARBOR, NJ 08215
609-965-5494 ♦ Irishwriter3@gmail.com

EDUCATION

9/04-5/06 Atlantic Cape Community College Mays Landing,
NJ

Associate’s in General Education / Associate’s in Communication

- Member of the first graduating class of Communication majors
- Received a foundation in general education as well as specialized training in the writing and communication fields.
- Founded a book club based on the Philosophy in Literature class
- Copy editor, layout assistant and contributor for *Rewrites* literary magazine from fall 05 to spring 06; Editor-In-Chief, layout assistant and contributor fall 06 to spring 07.
- Reporter, columnist and copy editor for student newspaper *The Atlantic Cape Review* fall 05 to spring 07.
- Invited to speak at the tenth anniversary of the death of Libby Demp Forrest Moore as the second recipient of her scholarship, fall 07.

9/06-12/07 Rowan University Glassboro,
NJ

Bachelor’s in Writing Arts

- Specialized training in linguistics, creative writing and compositional English
- Became proficient in publication layout and design using QuarkXPress
- Trained in how to write in a variety of genres and styles
- Contributor and staff member for *Avant* literary magazine
- Contributor to *Venue* humor magazine

Bachelor’s in Journalism

- Received thorough and hands-on training in composing news articles and undertaking enterprise journalism
- Specialized in Copy Editing and writing for publication
- Interned as a Layout Manager for the College
 - Created brochure for the journalism minor, Association of American University Women, “Meet the Journalism Department” booklet, and began work for Medallions Historical Reference Book.
- Columnist, reporter and assistant copy editor for student newspaper *The Whit*.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND MEMBERSHIPS

NJ 9/05-present Atlantic Cape Community College Mays Landing,

Content/Online/Writing Lab Tutor

- Review students’ work and help them improve their writing skills, particularly in the area of grammar, syntax, spelling and content
- Work closely with ESL and special needs students to ensure they receive the attention they require
- Developed several strategies to assist ESL students overcome language and other barriers in order to improve their writing
- Content tutor students in specific courses such as Psychology and Art
- Assist students through web-based communication as part of online tutoring, including devising new ways to interact with students who require additional attention and explanation

Library Assistant 6/06-2/07

- Assist students/faculty with research and other issues
- General maintenance of library and its systems
- General office duties

Adjunct Instructor 2/07-12/08

- Taught two classes/semester: *College Skills* and *Remedial English*
- *College Skills (DEVS111)* designed specialized coursework geared towards students who required specific instruction in how to succeed in various areas of college life through study skills, test-taking skills, etc.
- *Remedial English (ENGL070)* assisted students struggling with basic English skills to improve their paragraph writing and essay coherency. Designed a condensed version of the course for summer semester

Member of the Modern Language Association (MLA)

Committee Member for the Boy Scouts of America

Co-Leader and Secretary of Venture Crew 7811

Phi Theta Kappa community college honor society

Sigma Delta Kappa writing honor society

Golden Key four-year college honor society

Lambda Pi Eta communication honor society

Chi Alpha Epsilon honor society

Founder of the annual Beach Writers Conference writing contest

Preferred Author and Moderator of Writing.com, a world-wide online writing society since Spring 2005

Moderator and copy editor for Unicreatures.com website since 06/09

PUBLICATIONS AND AWARDS RECEIVED

- Wrote “Shopping Districts” section of *The Courier Post’s* south jersey guide, 8/07

- “Smelly Hat” article published in the *Cape May County Herald* as part of spring 07 Special Topics in News writing class.
- Placed 6th in the Elie Wiesel Essay in Ethics national essay contest
- Article “Geek Speak: Gaming Through the Generations” appeared in *The Cape May County Herald’s* summer issue “On Deck,” 7/06
- Dean’s List and President’s List at Atlantic Cape Community College from 9/04 to 6/06
- Received Outstanding Achiever Award from Atlantic Cape Community College upon graduation in 06
- Received Outstanding Transfer Student scholarship and Dean’s List at Rowan University from fall 06 to fall 07.
- Received the Libby Demp Forrest Moore Memorial Scholarship
- Received the Timothy Cain Scholarship
- Bi-weekly article “Geek Speak” published in Rowan’s *The Whit* for my entire time there and establishment of it as a permanent column
- Short story “The Kami’s Gate” won the 2006 *Rewrites* competition
- Graduated High Honors in AS and AA degrees
- Graduated Summa Cum Laude in both BA degrees