ENLIGHTENMENT PHENOMENOLOGY:
THE FOCALIZATION OF PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY URBAN NARRATIVE

by

JOSHUA ISRAEL FESI

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School—New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Program in Literatures in English
Written under the direction of
Colin Jager
And approved by

____________________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________

New Brunswick, New Jersey
October 2016
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Enlightenment Phenomenology: The Focalization of Perceptual Experience in Eighteenth-Century Urban Narrative

by JOSHUA ISRAEL FESI

Dissertation Director:

Colin Jager

This dissertation examines the development of focalization as it occurs in urban narratives over the course of the British eighteenth century, specifically urban observer narratives which foreground modal shifts between external and internal perspectives, which, in the words of cognitive linguist Ronald Langacker, “objectify” an otherwise peripheral observer. Drawing from a range of literary genres that include early urban satires, periodicals by Edward Ward and Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, prints by William Hogarth, and novels by Frances Burney and Jane Austen, my dissertation situates narratological innovations in focalization within a broader history of ideas – that of phenomenological inquiry. I argue that eighteenth-century urban narratives offer an alternative to contemporaneous empiricist epistemologies, which model perception as fundamentally passive and disembodied, by modeling phenomenological concerns such as active perception, delimited attention, pre-reflective consciousness, social attunement, and everyday being-in-the-world.
DEDICATION

To Samuel David.

Love can touch us one time

And last for a lifetime

And never let go ’til we’re gone.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my director Dr. Colin Jager, for dedicating his time to this project and providing me with the direction and encouragement I needed to finish. Also, my deepest appreciation to my committee members, Drs. Michael McKeon, William Galperin, and Jonathan Kramnick, for their invaluable insights and guidance. Many thanks to my professors, Drs. Lynn Festa, David Kurnick, Richard Dienst, Chris Iannini, Paula McDowell, for overseeing my academic growth at Rutgers.

My commitment to this project was sustained throughout the years by the intellectual rigors of conversation with my friends and colleagues: Phil, Tavi, Debapriya, Lizzie, Tony, John, Greg, Naomi, Ja Yun, Omri, Sascha, Princess Gavy Kaleidoscope, Mister Trouble, Carlo Maria, Cüpcakke, Kosmic, Amichai, Robert, Vlada, Adam, Bruno, and, of course, Anton.

Thank you to everyone who supported my efforts, emotionally and financially: Mom, Dad, Katie, William, Michael, Leah and Chris, Jessica, Haruka and my twin brother Jeremy. And, finally, this dissertation could never have been realized without the love, friendship, and incredible generosity of my dear friends, Chris and Misha; I am forever in your debt.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.................................................................................................................. ii

Dedication.................................................................................................................. iii

Acknowledgements.................................................................................................. iv

Table of Contents..................................................................................................... v

List of Illustrations................................................................................................... vi

Introduction. Histories of Immediate Experience................................................... 1

1. Structuring Experience....................................................................................... 1

2. Activating Experience....................................................................................... 3

3. History of Philosophy: The Shades of Perceptual Awareness......................... 11

4. History of Narratology I: The Immersive Reflector-Self.................................. 19

5. History of Narratology II: The Perceptual Scene............................................. 24

6. History of the City: The Ground of Observational Experience....................... 34

Chapter 1. Ground Rules: The Empirical Periphery in *The London Spy* and *Spectator*... 44

1. Narrating the Speed of the Urban Everyday..................................................... 44

   1-1. Iterative Frequency and the Watchman’s Habitation............................... 47

   1-2. Singulative Frequency and the Naïve’s Inexperience............................. 53

2. Locke’s Naïve Ideas of Passivity..................................................................... 59

3. Everydayness Obtruding in *The London Spy*............................................. 64

4. Peripheral Pleasures in *The Spectator*......................................................... 76

5. Seer Unseen, Seer Seen.................................................................................... 85

Chapter 2. Picturing Noise: The Limits of Attention in Hogarth’s Prints............... 91

1-1. The Ideas of Beauty....................................................................................... 92
1-2. The Movements of Interest................................................................. 98
1-3. Ut Pictura Poesis............................................................. 103
2-1. The Tracing of the Instant....................................................... 110
2-2. The Crowding of the Instant..................................................... 118
2-3. Picturing the Instant as Noise.................................................. 129
2-4. The Urban to the Everyday....................................................... 135

Chapter 3. Divided Selves: Economies of Attention in Smith and Burney........... 144
1-1. Mindreading and the Spectator’s Perspectives.............................. 144
1-2. The Splintered Stage of Spectator and Actor............................... 160
2-1. Performance Anxiety and Displacement...................................... 167
2-2. Situating Self, Spatializing Desire.............................................. 182

Chapter 4. Perpetual Estrangement: Truth and World-Sharing in *Persuasion*........ 202
1. Subordination and Splitting at the Periphery........................................ 203
2. The Silence of Pre-Reflective Speech.............................................. 209
3. Truths Spoken and Unspoken....................................................... 217
4. Present Absence, Absent Presence................................................. 232
5. Sociability, Sense, and Surrounding Noise....................................... 243

Coda. A Brief History of Cruising....................................................... 250

Bibliography......................................................................................... 256
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *Hudibras 'First Adventure* (1725) by William Hogarth.......................... 116
2. *The True Maner of the Execution of ... Earle of Strafford* by Wenceslaus Hollar... 120
4. *Southwark Fair. 1734* by William Hogarth......................................... 126
5. *The Enrag'd Musician* (1741) by William Hogarth................................. 130
6. *A Chorus of Singers* (1733) by William Hogarth................................... 132
7. *An Election Entertainment* (1755) by William Hogarth............................. 140
8. *The Laughing Audience* (1733) by William Hogarth............................... 142
Introduction. Histories of Immediate Experience

These are the things that for ever interrupt the process upon which I am eternally engaged of finding some perfect phrase that fits this very moment exactly.

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

1. Structuring Experience

Can experience have a form? Can it be said to have a specific structure? In everyday conversation, when we discuss our own experience, we seem to refer to something so personal, so intimate, so particularized yet so limitlessly multidimensional, it might seem absurd to raise such a question. How can my experience, the full range of my sensory, emotional, intellectual, and social interactions in the world, be confined within the limits of form, or abstract structure? When we are infants born into the world, we experience that world. We continue to experience the world as we move through each stage of development, from adolescence to adulthood. Experience is basic to our life as human beings, yet it is hardly exclusive to humankind. Innumerable non-human creatures also experience the world, perceive the world and engage with it, even if they do not refer to their experiences through language. Surely something so fundamental, so seemingly universal to animal life, exists without reference to language, to form, to history.

And yet it is possible to trace the history of experience as part of the history of cultural forms, a history of indicating and communicating various aspects of experience in highly specified ways. For how is experience to be reflected on as such, even discussed as such, without being formulated within the structuring terms of a shared language or cultural form? Indeed, as I will explore through the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, and the tradition

---

of linguistic narratology informed by Ricoeur’s philosophy, our everyday use of language itself provides an organization of our experience into meaningful statements, as actions, propositions, descriptions. This dissertation attempts to trace a cultural history of experience that, through the development of certain techniques of focalization in eighteenth-century narrative, builds upon this structuring premise inherent in everyday language. I weave together a cultural history of urban development and a narratological history of focalization with a philosophical pre-history of phenomenology. By tracing the development and experimentation of focalization in eighteenth-century British urban narratives, I hope to trace the history of a cultural transformation in the way that narratives model everyday, phenomenal experience.

In the project that follows, I highlight key passages of focalization in the works examined, forgoing many other narrative features to attend to a few choice moments—important moments, passing moments. The passages of narration that I highlight are rarely foregrounded by their authors as formally noteworthy, let alone as philosophically profound. While many of the authors I examine are in explicit dialogue with contemporary philosophical debates, very few would posit their techniques of narration as direct contributions to philosophical discussions of being, perceiving, and knowing. The claim is not that any of these literary works were intended as philosophies or phenomenologies proper, but rather that they perform a significant theoretical function akin to phenomenology nonetheless, and so contribute to the history of philosophy and ideas whether intentionally or not. Indeed, one of the most profound contributions that these texts offer may be considered as naïve, or under-theorized—in narrating immediate experience, they merely take for granted the lived integrity of an individual’s experiences, and, in so
doing, confidently attend to the coincidence of mental experiences with ongoing external realities. Intentionally or not, the result of these narratological experiments is to provide alternative ways of conceiving an individual’s relation to perception and knowledge of the world.

2. Activating Experience

In the history of British literatures, the English word *experience* appears as an epistemological category essential to the constitution of knowledge, but, in its earliest uses, it does not designate an individual’s active and ongoing engagement with the world. Experience is, for medieval and early modern writers, first and foremost, the foundation for obtaining practical knowledge of the world. It is intimately connected with the word *experiment*; indeed, *experience* and *experiment* were synonymous terms for testing an idea, or trying one’s hand at a skill. ² While this might refer to a singular event of experimentation, *experience* in its oldest sense most familiarly stands for the practical knowledge culled from a series of trials or experiments. This cumulative understanding of *experience* is especially emphasized in Samuel Johnson’s definitions of the word; Johnson defines *experience* as “Practice; frequent trial” and also as the “Knowledge gained by trial and practice.”³ However, whether singular or cumulative in nature, *experience* comes into being in this epistemological schema as an antonym to *theory* or *hypothesis*, or as the rigorous practices which lead to the acquisition of positive skills or wisdom predictive of future outcomes. Because of the emphasis on obtaining practical knowledge, the lived


event of the experience or trial itself is consequently de-emphasized. Significantly, as a result, there is little sense that, at any and every given moment, a subject continues to experience. Thus experience in its oldest sense functions reliably within the past, as the cultural memory for practical experimentations with the world.

In modern usage, experience still retains this relation to practical knowledge, yet the word has also come to signify something far more expansive. When we speak of experience, we just as often use this word to refer to our ever-continuing engagements with the world, no matter their relation to skills or practical knowledge—or, as The Century Dictionary puts it in 1909, “the totality of the cognitions given by perception, taken in their connection.” The referent of experience is in this way brought into the present moment as an active and ongoing process nearly synonymous with the noun perception and the verb perceive. Indeed, as I hope this project will demonstrate, it is only through a close attention to perception that this understanding of experience is activated at all. This is because localized perceptions provide seemingly limitless information about one’s immediate world from moment to successive moment. It is in this sense that we can ask, “What are you experiencing right now?” without any sense that the experiencer will be putting a hypothetical idea to trial. We are merely inquiring, as it were, into the contents of that individual’s present perceptions.

It is this perceptually active sense of experience to which Edmund Husserl refers in the second volume of his Ideas, when he explains that “the perception I am presently

---

4This remains true even of Thomas Hobbes’ definition of the term, which downplays the practical relation of experience to experimentation but maintains its cumulative nature, which places it in the past as memory: “much memory, or memory of many things, is called experience.” See Leviathan: or, The matter, forme & power of a commonwealth, ecclesiastical. ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1904) 4.

undergoing [...] stands there as an experience of this experiencing person, as this person’s state, as its act.” For Husserl, the experience in question is unambiguously situated in the present moment of perception ("presently"), and the phrase “this experiencing person” suggests how experience becomes active through an individual’s ongoing perceptual engagements. Indeed, perception itself is understood not only as an individual’s state but their act. And it is precisely this active and individualized understanding of experience that serves as the starting point for phenomenological inquiry, and grounds its methodology of descriptive analysis. Husserl characterizes this object of study as “What experience first discloses to us here as a stream, with no beginning or end, of ‘lived experiences.’” This limitless stream or flux of experience is likewise evoked in the work of Merleau-Ponty, who chastises empiricist philosophers for not examining perception as it unfolds “in the process of perceiving.” Although designated by many terms and phrases, for the sake of clarity I shall hereafter use the term *immediate experience* to refer to this new understanding of experience, although *direct experience* is often used interchangeably with this term in other works.

While we have thus far identified the philosophical theorization of immediate experience with the historical advent of phenomenology, this advent is itself part of a larger cultural shift and thus not limited to only those thinkers who self-identify as phenomenologists. In this study, I will use the term *phenomenology* to refer more broadly to the philosophical study of immediate experience, or the world as it appears

---


7 Husserl’s tautology here reflects a difficulty of phenomenological analysis, moving conceptually between levels of perception and apperception, a difficulty discussed later in the introduction.

phenomenally. Thus, unconcerned with phenomenology proper, cultural historian Jonathan Crary, in his book *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, situates the cultural shift toward theorizing immediate experience somewhat earlier than Husserl, within the nineteenth century, when:

> The problem of consciousness becomes inseparable from the question of physiological temporality and process. Beginning with Schopenhauer and continuing into the early twentieth century in Bergson and Whitehead, there are a diverse range of attempts to articulate epistemological positions that take account of the shifting processual nature of a physiological subject who effectively coincides with the ceaseless pulsings and animations of the body.\(^9\)

For Crary, this shift toward the processual embodiment of immediate experience is premised upon the “collapse of classical models of vision and of the stable, punctual subject those models presuppose” as well as “the untenability of a priori solutions to epistemological problems” which had presupposed “permanent or unconditional guarantees of mental unity and synthesis.”\(^10\) The result is a newfound philosophical interest in the faculty of perceptual attention, a faculty which, according to Crary, is only meaningfully interrogated in the nineteenth century. In this project I will examine, however, how narratives of the eighteenth century, as well as some exceptional philosophies, are also necessarily concerned with the faculty of perceptual attention in rendering the immediate experience of a given character.

Interestingly, according to Crary, the emergence of attention as the central faculty of immediate experience can be understood as “a sign, not so much of the subject’s disappearance as of its precariousness, contingency, and insubstantiality.”\(^11\) As Crary’s

---


\(^10\)Ibid 19-20.

\(^11\)Ibid 45.
claim indicates, although “immediate experience” emerges in nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophies as an object of study, its implications for knowledge and the moral subject are decidedly vexed. While experience might be understood as the accumulated cultural wisdom gleaned from innumerable and unnamed practitioners, it is not so easy to render immediate experience as collective or even cumulative in the same way. What becomes of cultural memory if experience is rendered as constitutionally active? Immediate experience is necessarily limited to individual perceivers, and so it cannot easily stand for a collective accumulation of knowledge. What’s more, it cannot easily stand as an accumulation of knowledge at all. While one’s immediate experiences might refer to past experiences through recognition and memory, the term immediate experience designates not a coherent accumulation, but, in Husserl’s words, the “stream” of experience, or the ongoing flux of incoming and indeterminate information. By emphasizing perceptual process over epistemological output, the concept of immediate experience distinguishes individual experiences from collective and historical efforts of knowledge-making.

Quite apart from the experience that is “[k]nowledge gained by trial and practice,” as recorded by Johnson, the emphasis on experiential process also distorts experience’s relation to the empirical categories of experiment or trial. Indeed, if these terms are made applicable to the expanse designated by immediate experience, then every conscious observation, every passing thought, and every practical interaction experienced by an individual might be understood as an experiment, or a foundation for practical knowledge. The poet William Blake foregrounds this transition from experiment to active experience in his 1794 illuminated manuscript All Religions Are One, in which he observes that, “As
the true method of knowledge is experiment[,] the true faculty of knowing must be the faculty which experiences,” suggestively playing on the final word’s evolving relation to both discrete experimentation and ongoing perception. Blake makes clear that it is “This faculty I treat of” rather than the knowledge that results. This shift in the understanding of experience ushers in a reevaluation of what constitutes knowledge, wherein, in the works of later philosophers, as well as Blake, tested knowledge of the world is sidelined for the perceptual act of attending or knowing. Although Francis Bacon’s new system was intended “to ground our beliefs upon Practice, and well ordered experience,” experiences might never be fully or intelligibly ordered when remaining immediate. Concentration on the active process of knowing leads to a corresponding focus on the relative indeterminacy of incoming information. Thus, Merleau-Ponty, emphasizing the influx of new information made available through perception, forges a mythical drama out of everyday experience that sounds vaguely Blakean: “The miracle of consciousness consists in bringing to light, through attention, phenomena which re-establish the unity of the object in a new dimension at the very moment when they destroy it.”


13 This concept of perceptual knowing arises indirectly and directly in the work of all phenomenologists. For Husserl, this perceptual knowing begins with the self-given immanence of perception: “This givenness, which excludes any meaningful doubt, consists of an immediate act of seeing and apprehending the meant objectivity itself as it is. It constitutes the precise concept of evidence, understood as immediate evidence.” See The Idea of Phenomenology. Trans. Lee Hardy (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999) 28. Heidegger makes an explicit distinction between knowledge and knowing, the latter of which is privileged as “a mode of being of Da-sein as being-in-the-world, and has its ontic foundation in this constitution of being.” See Being and Time. Trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) 57.


15 Phenomenology of Perception 35.
means of discovering knowledge about the world, but as an individual’s ever-ongoing, ever-incomplete, ever-incoherent flux of processing and continued engagement.

John Bender and Michael Marrinan, in their fantastic study The Culture of Diagram, examine eighteenth-century texts that foreground open-ended engagement in order to trace a history of process—as opposed to determinate product—in Western thought and culture.\(^ {16}\) I am in many ways providing a complementary project, insofar as this book will look to eighteenth-century texts to consider how, formally and theoretically, experience itself came to be activated as an ongoing process of perceptual engagement. Bender and Marrinan’s book celebrates the emergence of probabilistic and technological methods that, in their words, move investigations of the world “beyond the human sensorium.”\(^ {17}\) The present study is instead interested in precisely what Bender and Marrinan are eager to move beyond: the experiential realm of the human sensorium, as well as its emergence as an object of inquiry in Western thought, an emergence that coincides, perhaps, if one heeds the moral of Bender and Marrinan’s thesis, with its increasing obsolescence in the natural sciences.

When framed in this way, however, it also becomes possible to see how phenomenology, or an interest in the experiential realm of the human sensorium, might be understood to come into being well before it emerges as an explicit philosophical methodology. One can even see phenomenological premises as emerging amid the

\(^{16}\)The Culture of Diagram (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

\(^{17}\)Early in the book the authors highlight “user” processes of inquiry, exploration, engagement and imaginative correlation as practices whose experiential qualities point to the insufficiency of more determinate representations. However, Bender and Marrinan’s epistemological concerns ultimately take precedence, with experience being cast largely in its traditional role as obstacle to reliable knowledge of the world: “Eventually, the abstract precision of mathematical terms and the implacability of instruments displaced the coarse-grained, fatigue-prone senses of the human body as the cornerstone of knowledge.” Ibid 198-99.
epistemological skepticism that, in Britain and the Continent, attended the growing interest in natural philosophy, especially empiricism. It might seem strange to make such a claim, since the philosophical project of epistemology most often operates in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a skeptical critique of the reliability of human experiences, and most often as a critique of sensuous perception. According to Bacon, “the greatest obstacle and distortion of human understanding comes from the dullness, limitations, and deceptions of the senses.”\(^\text{18}\) However, the senses remain potentially most “dangerous” for an empiricist like Bacon only because he considers the constitution of knowledge as coming into being through individual perceivers. Bacon’s empiricist epistemology begins with the assumption that individuals come to know the features and qualities of the world through perception, repeated interactions, and controlled experiments, and so it is his preoccupation with individual perceivers that comes weighted with the ancient mistrust of the senses. By focusing attention on the operations of perception and the fine mechanics of the senses even despite this distrust, empirical and epistemological projects often approach the description of immediate experience, even if only tangentially and even if this was not their objective. This is especially true of the epistemologies of Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, all of whom attempt to investigate and explain at length the operations of the human mind. The process of introspection that is so often employed by such philosophers might thus be understood as a prototypically phenomenological practice,\(^\text{19}\) even if it is not consistently employed to flesh out the features and quandaries of immediate experience.


What separates these philosophical projects from phenomenological methodology is at least partly a difference in priority and emphasis, although these ultimately bear upon the conceptual assumptions about perception as well. Although many of the assumptions necessary to phenomenology, and even some phenomenological procedures, are at play, for example, in a text such as Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke is not a phenomenologist. Because his enterprise is framed as a meditation upon the ways that human understanding corresponds to real knowledge of the world, individual experience becomes a necessary but second-order consideration in such a schema. For later phenomenologists like Heidegger and Husserl, even Hegel, early epistemological approaches to knowledge fall short because they do not sufficiently consider the perception of information about the world *as it appears* to the individual, that is to say, via immediate experience. One result of this is that the terminology concerning immediate experience employed by Locke and his contemporaries is often imprecise. This is famously true in Locke’s *Essay*, where *idea* is employed to refer to both sensible perceptions and reflective concepts, a terminological choice, derided by subsequent authors like Hume. However, Locke’s choice is symptomatic of a much larger epistemological dilemma explored by phenomenologists: the relation between perception and what is often termed apperception. By considering this issue for a moment, it will be possible to appreciate what literary phenomenologies offer in response to these epistemological debates of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

---

The concept of *immediate experience* turns on two assumptions, potentially in some tension with one another, that thus introduce difficulties into traditional accounts of knowledge: 1. the subject is constantly and successively perceiving perceptual data, and, 2. the subject is aware of, on some level, all of their conscious perceptions. For, according to Locke, “When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will any thing, we know that we do so.”

Indeed, without some degree of awareness, experience would not be *experience* and perception would not be *perception*, as both words imply a level of awareness in their very meanings. The word *perceive* is even used as a synonym for *being aware*. Similarly, *being conscious*, which in this period obtains its modern usage as a term for mental activity, is also employed synonymously with *being aware*.

However, this is complicated by the possibility that immediate experience can encompass various levels of awareness, ranging from vividly conscious to semi-conscious experience, and even into lower gradations of pre-conscious experience. What happens to our conception of knowledge when perceptual experience of the world, from which knowledge is ultimately derived, is understood to encompass, in Husserl’s terms, “the lower levels of the experience which lies prior to all induction and deduction – in short, prior to all logically mediated cognition in the usual sense”? If, following Descartes, certainty about the world is derived from “clear and distinct perception,” what is the relationship between these lower and higher levels of perceptual experience in constituting

---

21 Essay 335.


23 *Meditations on First Philosophy, with selections from the Objections and replies*, ed. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 43. Husserl explicates and revises this passage of Descartes in *The Idea of Phenomenology* 37, and Heidegger, critiquing Kant’s revision of Descartes, also weighs in on this aspect of the cogito, responding to Husserl in so doing, *Being and Time* 296, each of them recovering the “lower level” of sensory perception to some extent.
this certainty? In other words, how do these lower levels of experience and perception translate into ideas or knowledge? These are just a few of the issues that arise as a result of interrogating the problematic of experiential awareness.

Although they share fundamental differences on many issues, Locke and Descartes address this issue similarly, maintaining that there is no qualitative difference between direct perception and reflective perception—also called apperception. Locke puts it the most simply, claiming outright that it is “impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive.” The phrasing is intentionally slippery. All perceptions might imply awareness, but not all perceptions imply apperception, and his definition of perception minimizes this potential difference. This solution is indeed akin to his decision to use idea as an umbrella term for all mental states perceived, whether sensory or cognitive. In Locke’s schema, all perceptions are ideas, no matter the content, and all perceptions are aware, no matter the level of awareness. In this way, Locke follows Descartes, who, below, defends the position more explicitly:

the initial thought by means of which we become aware of something does not differ from the second thought by means of which we become aware that we were aware of it, any more than this second thought differs from the third thought by means of which we become aware that we were aware.

Descartes is quite clear: there is no distinct difference between perception and apperception—they are the same thought. However, this particular solution can be seen as more semantic than satisfying. Other authors maintain that attending to the difference between the levels of perception is necessary. According to Godfried Leibniz, “it is good to distinguish between perception, which is the internal state ... representing external

---

24 Essay 335.
25 Meditations 75.
things, and apperception... the reflective knowledge of this internal state,” because, he points out, the faculty of apperception is “not given to all souls, nor at all times to a given soul,” reminding us of the animal embodiment at issue in these considerations of perceiving souls.

Hume takes this critique even further, suggesting that there is a qualitative difference between immediate perception, or impressions, and higher level processes such as reflection, memory, ideas, and understanding. Hume suggests that apperception is a mediation of perception dependent on memory. In fact, it is from this premise that Hume is able to build his epistemology of extreme skepticism, for if certainty about the world is founded only on fleeting impressions, then, for Hume, nothing can be certain:

Nay, even to these objects we cou’d never attribute any existence, but what was dependent on the senses; and must comprehend them entirely in that succession of perceptions, which constitutes our self or person. Nay, even farther, even with relation to that succession, we cou’d only admit of those perceptions, which are immediately present to our consciousness, nor cou’d those lively images, with which the memory presents us, be ever receiv’d as true pictures of past perceptions.27

Hume here discusses explicitly the realm of immediate experience—“that succession of perceptions...which are immediately present to our consciousness.” However, the effect of Hume’s skepticism is to dramatically isolate the immediacy of perception not only from its successive moments of perception, but also, as a result, from any capacity to cognize and thus respond the incoming perceptual information, for “[w]hen the mind looks farther than what immediately appears to it, its conclusions can never be put to the account of the senses.”28 The conclusion at which Hume arrives in this passage is that the “memory,

27Hume, Treatise 265.
28Ibid 189.
senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination." It is this critique of immediate experience, rendered unintegrated without the connective sutures of the imagination, that serves as the cornerstone of Hume’s skeptical epistemology. A person may be certain of their immediate perceptions but, for Hume, these perceptions, because they are merely passing impressions, can play no direct role in one’s knowledge of the world.

Apart from the skepticism, the conclusion that the imaginative faculty plays a necessary role in perceptual experience is not itself at odds with a phenomenological analysis. Indeed, ever since Augustine, philosophy has accepted the imaginative mediations of memory and expectation as necessary aspects of immediate experience, and phenomenological analysis does not challenge but merely builds on this premise. Hume, following Augustine, posits imaginative procedures like “memory” within the experiential present of what is “present to our consciousness,” even as he severs such procedures as too imaginatively mediated to be “immediately present to our consciousness.” In the service of advancing his skeptical critique, then, Hume paints a complex portrait of the reflexivity of imaginative mediation, one that is at odds with the simplicity that underlies both Locke’s and Descartes’ theories of apperception. Unwittingly, by advancing his skeptical critique into the realm of immediate experience, then, Hume provides a conceptual modulation of the imaginative “apperceptive” faculties. Such a modulation reconfigures the present moment of immediate experience, distancing it from the presumed standard of reflective apperception, and it is in this specific sense that it can be said that phenomenology, which

29Ibid.
attends to the imaginative as well as the sensory aspects of immediate experience, follows in Hume’s and Augustine’s footsteps.

What is then most disconcerting in Hume’s analysis—that no evidence for reality is available other than what is given in immediate experience—is readily accepted by phenomenological thinkers as the starting point for analysis. Thus Husserl observes that “the world – in its existence and in what it is – is an irrational fact,” one that makes little sense to dispute when addressing the world as experienced.30 Merleau-Ponty makes a similar case, insisting that, “We must not, therefore, wonder whether we really perceive a world, we must instead say: the world is what we perceive.”31 Importantly, even before such writers, this point was also underscored in the eighteenth century by Thomas Reid, the founder of Scottish common-sense philosophy and one of Hume’s most influential critics. Reid claimed that sensations, insofar as they “cannot exist but in being perceived, so they cannot be perceived but they must exist” and so he consequently proclaims his philosophical commitment “to take my own existence, and the existence of other things, upon trust.”32 In his Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, Reid takes Hume to task for perpetuating the representational theory of ideas, which leads to conclusions of extreme skepticism. This model of the perceiving mind, driven, as by an engine by the association of ideas, leads to Hume’s skeptical conclusions, according to Reid, only because of the conceptual limitations inherent in the theory of ideas itself, which does not provide a model of mind that adequately conforms to everyday experience. Reid

30 Thing and Space 50.
31 Phenomenology of Perception xviii.
32 Thomas Reid. An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense (Edinburgh: A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1764) 43; 34-5. As I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter Four, Reid theorizes such naïve, pragmatic trust as the condition for not only perceptual experience and learning but also language and communication.
thus becomes an early advocate for taking the factuality of experience as the foundational premise for experiencing the world and thus as the starting-point for a nuanced analysis of perception. For this reason, Reid emerges as a sort of philosophical hero for the current study of *Enlightenment Phenomenology*, popping up throughout the chapters insofar as his philosophy of common sense touches on a number of the theoretical issues also raised by the narrative phenomenologies developing during the same period. Reid’s common-sense philosophy influences both pragmatism and phenomenology after it, and his approach provides a fascinating and contemporaneous alternative to the representational theory of ideas that otherwise predominates among eighteenth-century philosophies.

By taking perception of the world for granted, Reid encourages a nuanced conception of perceptual interfacing with the world. Perception is recast in these accounts, not as a passive transmission of ideas into the mind, but, in Reid’s terms, “as acts of the mind” (60), as acts of *knowing*. The way beyond Humean skepticism, then, is not to privilege apperception or conflate it with perception, but, instead, to complicate traditionally impoverished views of everyday perception. In twentieth-century philosophy, this is achieved by theorizing forms of knowing, understanding, and learning that occur at the level of perception, rather than at a higher level of awareness. Thus, Heidegger, clarifying his use of the term *understanding*, a term freighted with the history of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century epistemologies, attempts to explain how responsive perception need not be fully distinguished from cognition:

> With the term understanding we mean a fundamental existential; neither a definite kind of cognition, as distinct from explaining and conceiving, nor a cognition in general in the sense of grasping something thematically. Understanding constitutes the being of the There in such a way that, a Da-sein in existing can develop the various possibilities of sight, of looking around, and of just looking.\(^{33}\)

---

\(^{33}\) *Being and Time* 309.
What is essential to Heidegger’s reconstitution of understanding is his interest in the perceiving beings which actively comprehend their immediate environs. Unlike Humean impressions which remain transient and elusive to the perceiver, Heidegger’s conceives “looking” as an active and ongoing exploration of a world immanently available to the perceiver. Perception is not merely the passive accumulation or association of ideas in this view but requires a dynamic and mobile body for ongoing acts of knowing, recognition, or understanding. By making knowing constitutive of being-in-the-world, Heidegger suggests that it is a central facet of perception, rather than a distinct or higher-level abstraction of perception.

More recent thinkers have sought to develop this re-conceptualization of perception as active and necessarily embodied. J.J. Gibson, a psychologist writing about visual phenomenology, points out that the “redefinition of perception,” which is necessitated by phenomenological analysis, necessarily “implies a redefinition of the so-called higher mental faculties” from which perception was, for philosophers like Hume, traditionally distinguished. Gibson is famous for advancing a perceptual “theory of affordances,” which describes an environment as various invitations to possible actions readily available to a perceiver. Interestingly, a similar claim can also be found in Reid’s philosophy of common sense. Like Gibson, Reid analyzes the “natural signs” of perception for features of responsive learning that are pre-linguistic: “They pass through the mind instantaneously, and serve only to introduce the notion and belief of external things, which by our

34 According to Heidegger, “Knowing is a mode of being of Da-sein as being-in-the-world, and has its ontic foundation in this constitution of being” (57).

35 According to Gibson, “These higher processes were vaguely supposed to be intellectual processes, inasmuch as the intellect was contrasted with the senses. They occurred in the brain. They were operations of the mind.” See An Ecological Approach to Visual Perception. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.,1986) 255.
constitution are connected with them. They are natural signs, and the mind immediately passes to the thing signified, without making the least reflection upon the sign, or observing that there was any such thing.”

Eminently more practical than Humean ideas, because inseparable from embodied perceptual practice, Reid’s natural signs and Gibson’s affordances both have the effect of giving newfound subtlety to the immediate experience of perception. By paying closer attention to everyday perceptual engagements, these thinkers re-conceptualize thinking and knowing itself. And it is in attending so closely to such perceptual attentions that narratives of the eighteenth century, whether fictional or otherwise, are able to provide their own implicit critique of skepticism and their own modeling of immediate experience. Indeed, it is narrative’s attention to the gradations between reflective and pre-reflective consciousness that positions it as an alternative to contemporaneous models of perception.

4. History of Narratology I: The Immersive Reflector-Self

In leveling his critique against Hume’s skepticism, Reid traces Hume’s conclusions to the environment in which they were penned. Paraphrasing Hume’s own words, Reid reminds us that the author of the Treatise “ingenuously acknowledges it was only in solitude and retirement that he could yield any assent to his own philosophy; society, like daylight, dispelled the darkness and fogs of skepticism, and made him yield to the dominion of Common Sense.”

According to this logic, it is only in the special environment of solitude that Hume can lend credence to his skepticism, a credence which is challenged when moving from an environment of isolated solitude to one of engagement.

---

36 Reid, Inquiry 135.
37 Ibid 18.
It might not seem apparent at first, but Reid’s criticism of Hume is premised upon the interplay between reflection and pre-reflective immersion. The special environment of isolation is characterized as especially conducive to such reflection while, by contrast, the immersive demands of social engagement militate against such reflectiveness. According to Reid, it is the deceptive condition of isolated reflectiveness that allows Hume to neglect the condition of immersive engagement that, on some level, structures everyday experience.

In a way, as I shall now examine, Reid’s critique discovers a narrative dimension in Hume’s experience, as it casts Hume the philosopher not as a disembodied author but as a character-perceiver immersed in his environment. It is by way of elaborating upon this same distinction between “pure” reflection and shades of pre-reflective immediacy that urban narratives of the eighteenth century engage in a similar phenomenological analysis, through mechanisms of focalization. They perform this work by taking immediate experience as their object of study, providing a formal framework for organizing the moment-to-moment experiences of perceiving characters and providing an adequate language to describe the dimensions of such experiences. In their own way, these literary developments—techniques which, in any given instance, may not appear groundbreaking and which are, admittedly, all too easy to overlook—in fact contribute significantly to the re-conceptualization of knowledge outlined above, in which knowing and thinking are recast as active and ongoing aspects of everyday perceptual experience.

However, before appreciating how eighteenth-century urban narratives innovate developments of focalizing experience, it is necessary to understand the linguistic features upon which narrative focalization builds. As Monika Fludernik suggests, the dynamic
interplay between reflection and immersion in linguistic description can be traced to the
dependence of all conversational narrative ("natural narrative" in Fludernik’s terminology)
upon the act of recollection, for "[it is only within a recollective experience that narrative
as such can properly develop. Narrative reconstitutes the primary experience, reproducing
it and, at the same time, enabling an objective perception of the experience in its inception,
development and conclusion." In discussing "primary experience" and "recollective
experience" in this way, Fludernik here evokes Paul Ricoeur’s conception in Time and
Narrative that proto-narrative structures of experience are organized through linguistic
structures of narrative, which Ricoeur explains as a movement from the realm of action to
the realm of narrative:

In passing from the paradigmatic order of action to the syntagmatic order of narrative,
the terms of the semantics of action acquire integration and actuality. Actuality, because
the terms, which had only a virtual signification in the paradigmatic order, that is, a pure
capacity to be used, receive an actual signification thanks to the sequential
interconnections the plot confers on agents, their deeds, and their sufferings.

It is through this passage from paradigmatic to syntagmatic that the recollective act,
according to Fludernik, "reconstitutes the primary experience" of action and event,
actualizing it and objectifying it within the syntactic structure of the recollection. As the
objectified experience reflected upon, the primary experience indicates a sense of
immersion in the world and of narrative engagement, especially in contrast to the
recollective state, which remains disengaged enough to allow for an imaginative reverie of
recollection. It is this interplay, and the tension between them, that Virginia Woolf
addresses in the quote from The Waves that serves as the epigraph to this introduction, for

---

38 Monika Fludernik. The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction: The Linguistic Representation
39 Paul Ricoeur. Time and Narrative I. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University
it is Bernard’s immersive engagements with the world that “for ever interrupt the process upon which I am eternally engaged of finding some perfect phrase that fits this very moment exactly,” or, interrupts the act of narrating such engagements. And it is this interplay between recollective and primary experience—and its formalization in language—that serves as the foundation for focalization, or in F.K. Stanzel’s terms, the interplay between the teller-mode and reflector-mode narration. Focalization thus refers illusionistically, through linguistic expressions, to the paradigmatic dimensions of experience.40

Fludernik characterizes this interplay between teller and reflector as “the separation of the distanced evaluative perspective and of the quasi-immediate immersion within the first-person protagonist’s past experience”41 and she explicitly grounds reflector-mode focalization in considerations of consciousness and experience, arguing it is “already firmly constituted by the natural parameter of human consciousness, of experientiality. In Fludernik’s terms, experiencing, as well as telling, viewing and thinking are “holistic schemata known from real life and therefore can be used as building stones for the mimetic evocation of a fictional world.”42 However, because focalization’s reflector-mode deals with immersion in the world, it implies varying degrees of awareness in such experience,

40I am opting to use Gerard Genette’s term focalization to describe what Genette himself would call internal focalization, which is the modulated restriction of narrative information conveyed to the reader as if from a given character’s experiential point of view. Distinct from narrative voice, Genette famously formulates the concerns of focalization in the questions “who perceives?” or “where is the focus of perception?”, as opposed to “who speaks” the words of the narrative.” See Gérard Genette. Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980) and especially Narrative Discourse Revisited, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988) 64. It is thus the adopted “point of view” in the narrative, fixed or shifting, around which narrative information is organized, or the “perspective in terms of which the narrated situations and events are presented.” Gerald Prince, ed. A Dictionary of Narratology, Revised edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) 31. See also F. K. Stanzel. A Theory of Narrative, trans. Charlotte Goedsche (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

41 Fludernik 53.

not all of which can be the direct object of perspicuous reflection in the moment of experience. Discussing the shades of pre-reflective, or “nonreflective,” consciousness implied in reflector-mode narration, Ann Banfield explains that “the intermediate level of nonreflective consciousness cannot be subsumed into either reflection or the unconscious. There are things which we are consciously aware of but are not the object of reflection.”

Because of this immersive pre-reflectiveness, the reflector-mode thus emerges, according to Banfield, only in a teller’s recollection of such primary experiences: “it is the subject’s being asked what he is doing which forces consciousness to become reflective. A request for linguistic information is the catalyst, for to speak of something always implies reflective consciousness of it.”

There can be no reflector-mode without the teller to recollect and reconstruct the primary experience, and so the teller always provides a degree of distanced, mediating reflection to the primary experience.

Indeed, precisely what lends to the reflector-mode its sense of immersive immediacy is this sense of the gradations of pre-reflective consciousness, itself made possible by the recollective attitude of narration. For this reason, in the reflector-narration of internal focalization, the teller’s distance is clearly distinguishable from the reflector’s immersion. Unlike the sentences presented in the teller-mode, which are taken more or less straightforwardly as descriptively factual utterances by the narrator, those presented in the reflector-mode of internal focalization are meant to indicate the seemingly immediate experiences of a given character. The attention of the narrator or the narration is thus given over to the attentions of the reflector-character as they occur as events in the story.

---


reflector-mode narration becomes more central to literature, the modeling of the faculty of attention thus comes to be regularly modeled as the focalization of a given character’s immediate experiences. While William James claims that this faculty of attention implies “a degree of reactive spontaneity” that “would seem to break through” the assumptions of eighteenth-century epistemology, such as the “pure receptivity” of “the creature as absolutely passive clay, upon which experience rains down,” this faculty is in fact already of central importance to eighteenth-century literature, especially, as I hope to demonstrate, in urban narratives. It is the development of first-person reflector-mode narration during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in urban narratives, that allows for the literary modeling of immediate experience, in all of its shades of reflective and pre-reflective awareness. In the next section, I will turn to some concrete examples of these narratological developments.

5. History of Narratology II: The Perceptual Scene

Perhaps the most effective method for better understanding the developments in focalization is to turn to an early example. In the reading of an example from the seventeenth century, I will argue that the passage, representative of the innovations introduced by urban observer narratives, foregrounds two distinct permutations of what cognitive linguists call a scene of construal, specifically, the perceptual scene of construal. This concerns the relative degree of objectification that a statement gives to the perceiving subject’s own position and ground of perception. This gradational shift in the subject’s objectification, as discussed by linguist Ronald Langacker, corresponds directly to the

---

narration’s shift toward internal focalization, as theorized by narratologists like Genette, Mieke Bal, and Fludernik. Focalization in these texts thus emerges as an effect of staging the perceiving subject as objectifiable and thus as integrated within the perceptual scene.

In his highly influential approach to linguistics, Ronald Langacker argues that there exists a profound correspondence between perceptual acts and linguistic acts, positing that “the perceptual relationship between the observer and what is observed is a special case of the more general construal relationship between the conceptualizer and what is conceptualized” in semantic constructions, regarding them as “intergrading manifestations of the same basic cognitive principles.” For Langacker, perceptual and linguistic acts both operate as acts of construal and thus both posit subjects and objective scenes. Drawing from this correspondence, Langacker’s research analyzes evidence of this interrelation with the embodied conditions of perceptual observation in a range of linguistic constructions. An important feature of this interrelation, for Langacker, proves to be the objectification of the perceiving/speaking subject in any given construal. From this point of view, in the functionally “ideal” arrangement of both perception and language, the perceiving/speaking subject is not objectified in the construal at all; what is presented is not the subject but the objective scene that is observed/discussed, implicitly, by the subject: “An entity is therefore said to be subjective to the extent that it functions asymmetrically as the observer in a viewing situation, losing all awareness of SELF as it observes an OTHER.” The “idealness” of this arrangement, however, is just as often augmented by indications of the

perceiving/speaking subject, which serve to include this subject, or the subject’s deictic ground of reference, as part of the objective scene. In such instances, “The observer S is thus situated within the boundaries of this more extensive objective scene, reflecting the fact that S is no longer simply an observer, but also to some degree an object of observation” (122). One can already notice in Langacker’s terms a distinction in the ways that a subject can be immersed in the world. In the ideal arrangement, the subject is fully immersed in the reflective observation of the objective scene: as Langacker’s phrases it, “What S observes, in other words, is O, not S observing O” (121). However, in more “egocentric” construals, to the extent that S now observes S observing O, the subject seems to be immersed by competing, if adjacent, fields of attention. For the ideal arrangement, this sense of subjective immersion can only ever be implicit; the very absence of any objectifying indication of the subject becomes evidence of the subject’s complete and attentive immersion. It is only in more “egocentric” arrangements that the construal itself refers to the immersive attentions of the subject, insofar as the observing subject is revealed through objectifying constructions.

As will become evident when examining the selection from the seventeenth-century urban observer narrative, the shift from the ideal arrangement to more egocentric permutations corresponds with a shift toward the reflector-mode of internal focalization, whether from external focalization or even zero focalization. This is an important claim, because it reveals reflector-mode narration as a mode of narration primarily concerned with perceiving/speaking subjects revealed through objectification. It is all too easy to think of reflector characters primarily as objects rather than subjects; indeed, the reliance of the reflector-mode upon the teller’s narration supports this sense of objectification. When
contextualized within Langacker’s linguistic analysis, however, it becomes clear that this salient sense of objectification is in fact a primary feature of the egocentric arrangement, that is, of the formal indication of the perceiving subject. With this in mind, it is now possible to discuss the features of focalization introduced by urban observer narratives.

Below is a specimen that appears as early as 1608, in a singular passage of Thomas Dekker’s prose satire *The Belman of London*, which can serve as a provisional model of the shift toward the reflector-mode immersion of internal focalization developed in urban observer narratives. It is worth observing how uncommon this technique is in seventeenth-century writing and even in Dekker’s own text. Only in this one fleeting passage does *The Belman of London* focalize such a moment of reflectoral interfacing. Dekker accomplishes

---

47Bal’s important re-assessment of internal focalization and external focalization can be understood to hinge on this centrality of the observing subject in focalization. For Bal, every instance of focalization posits a subject, whether explicitly indicated or not: “The subject of focalization, the focalizor, is the point from which the elements are viewed. That point can lie with a character (i.e. an element of the fabula), or outside it” (Bal 146). In the instance of external focalization, Genette discusses only the object of focalization, but as Bal points out, such instances of narrational “observation” also posit a subject, even if such a subject is not explicitly described. With reference to Langacker, we can now say that such instances accord with that implied subject’s immersive invisibility in the ideal viewing arrangement.

48Despite the pertinence of perception to focalization, not all focalized passages in fact model acts of perception so explicitly, and not all focalizations provide examples of perceptual interfacing. The language of “perspective” employed when discussing internal focalization, even for Bal, still operates at times on a level of abstraction some degrees removed from perceptual placement within an environment. Thus, focalization can be applied more broadly to account for passages that narrate a character’s internal mental reflections, such as those narrated in free indirect discourse, rather than the visual observations of a spatially situated reflector. For example, we can follow along with the unfolding logic of the Cecilia’s speculations in the following passage: “Delvile’s mysterious conduct seemed the result of some entanglement of vice; Henrietta Belfield, the artless Henrietta Belfield, she feared had been abused, and her own ill-fated partiality, which now more than ever she wished unknown even to herself, was evidently betrayed where most the dignity of her mind made her desire it to be concealed!” See *Cecilia; or Memoirs of an Heiress* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 492. This passage takes on, if indirectly, Cecilia’s limitations of knowledge as well as her idiom, but it ultimately does not offer any information to situate the event of thinking with any particularity in time and in space. Focalization like free indirect discourse does vaguely indicate perception, but it does not indicate that such perception be read as a localized event. Without any additional information, we might just as easily imagine Cecilia’s line of thinking taking place over a course of hours, days, weeks, or even months, and within a whole range of different environments. Because it provides no perceptual indications of body, action, time, or space, such a passage of focalized cognition does not easily or clearly designate a character’s experience as immediate.
this feat through his subtle and well-paced management of perceptual information, concerning the reflector character’s attentions. One can now appreciate such information as egocentric indications of the perceiving subject, and thus as objectifications in Langacker’s sense of the term. Importantly, the passage does not begin immediately as the internally focalized narration of a perceiving subject:

the Moone had shined up to the very top of Midnight, before I had entrance into the gates of the Citie, which made me make the more hast to my lodging. But in my passage I first heard (in some good distance before me) the sound of a bell, and then a mans voice, both whose tunes seemed at that dead houre of the night very dolefull: On I hastened to know what noyse it should be and in the end found it to be the Belman of London.49

Clearly, readers are situated in a first-person narration, as a teller recollects his first encounter with the titular bellman, a quasi-allegorical figure who observes the city’s vices. Importantly, however, the syntactical arrangement of the opening sentence does not place the reader immediately with the reflector’s perceptions; it is only with the third clause “which made me make the more hast to my lodging” that the sentence shifts explicitly to the perceptions and experience of the reflector-subject. The beginning of the sentence, regarding the position of the Moone in the sky, seems to report on circumstantial details that help set the scene. While Dekker might have narrated this introduction more egocentrically, in a way that foregrounds the reflector’s acts of perception (e.g. “As I was heading toward the Gates of the Citie, I perceived that the Moone had already shined up to the very top of the sky, which made me make the more hast”), he chooses instead to begin the narration authoritatively, sidelining the subject’s acts of perception. Presented in this way, these pronouncements at first seem external to the reflector-character, and yet with

---

49 The Belman of London: Bringing to Light the Most Notorious Villanies that are Now Practiced in the Kingdom (London: Nathaniell Butter, 1608) 34.
the introduction of the third clause—particularly the causal logic of “which made me make the more hast”—these pronouncements become recoded, as it were, as internally focalized perceptions. At this moment, readers are to understand that it is not only the teller’s retrospective observation that places the Moone in the sky, but also the reflector’s perception in the narrative present, and it is this diegetic observation—and the implied fears of nighttime dangers which attend it—which prompts the reflector to quicken his pace and haste toward his lodging. Once the passage makes this explicit shift to the perceptions of internal focalization, the syntax of the remaining sentences remain suspensefully within this mode, taking on a sequential ordering (“first,” “then,” “On I hastened,” “in the end”) that corresponds to the reflector’s active attentions as he interfaces with the unfamiliar environment.

It is this focalized sense of the reflector’s attentions in the narrative present, and the implied limits of knowledge that help structure them, that help indicate the quasi-immediacy of the reflector’s immersive experiences in the world, both reflective and pre-reflective. As Stanzel explains of such passages narrated in the reflector-mode, “The relations between persons and things in space and their observation or description from a fixed point of view gain in significance as data for the reader,” as well as “the limitation of the range of knowledge or experience of the teller- or reflector-character” (Stanzel 113). With regard to the above passage in Dekker, the Moone’s position thus becomes more than just a fact of the scene’s setting through the shift into internal focalization; it becomes an immersive act of perceiving and fearing, situated in the specifics of diegetic time and space.50

50If the egocentric arrangement of internal focalization corresponds with the objectification of reflectoral immersion, and thus with the representation of paradigmatic experience, then it is easy to interpret the
It is in this shift from an authoritative to an egocentric subject that I identify the modeling of attention engaged, as if immediately, in a diegetic world. This is the key component of what literature offers phenomenologically and throughout this project, I will refer to this modeling of attention as *interfacing* in order to emphasize the mind-world interaction structured in such moments. Through such internally focalized interfacing, following Stanzel, “a section of fictional reality is isolated and spotlighted in such a way that all the details important for the reflector-character become discernible.”

Again, that this modeling of attention, which spotlights “a section of fictional reality,” registers as attention at all is made possible by the objectification of the perceiving subject, which indicates not merely the object of perception, but the mind attending to it as well, such as Dekker’s reflector attending to the moon or to the sounds of the Bellman. With such objectification, the suspense of narrative temporality becomes organized as the psychologically suspenseful attentions of a perceiving subject. It is thus the alignment of reflector’s psychological suspense with narrative suspense that justifies this cultural attention to the micro-concerns of attention itself and of everyday immersiveness in the world.

The modeling of attention is also central for understanding how such a passage embodies perceptual experience. The terms *embody* and *embodiment* will be very important for any understanding of how literature can approximate phenomenology, yet
these are terms that have met with wide ranging applications in literary studies over the years. I use these terms to describe literary techniques that refer to, whether explicitly or implicitly, the bodily contingencies of the perceiving subject. Following Bal, perception is "strongly dependent on the position of the perceiving body."\textsuperscript{52} Returning for a moment to the Belman excerpt, for example, one finds no explicit references to the reflector’s body anywhere in the passage; all the same, readers do get an appreciable sense of the bodily contingencies that help constitute this character’s immediate experiences. The clearest indications are those verbs that explicitly communicate a perceptual event, such as “heard” and “beheld.” This is because such perceptions necessitate, implicitly, sensory organs with which to perceive. In fact, just as the construction of a perceiver necessarily implies an environment, so too does the construction of a perceiver also necessarily imply a perceiving body. In other words, when focalization posits a perceiver, it posits a perceiver whose bodily contingencies help them navigate their perceptual environment. “To see,” according to Merleau-Ponty, “is to enter a universe of beings which display themselves, and they would not do this if they could not be hidden behind each other or me.”\textsuperscript{53} No matter how the perceiver is characterized, their immediate experience of time and space is contingent upon perceptions that indicate embodiment.

These sensorimotor conditions of perception highlight a crucial element of focalization, which is the importance of movement to a focalizor’s perceptual engagement with their environment. Movement is not a necessary aspect of all forms of embodiment, yet it is close to indispensable to an embodied account of immediate perceptual

\textsuperscript{52}Mieke Bal. Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 142.

\textsuperscript{53}Phenomenology of Perception 79.
experience. This is because focalized descriptions are premised upon the focalizor’s own peculiar limitations of information. As Bal reminds us of focalization, “the focalizor’s image can be incomplete,” and this partialized knowledge is what accounts for the narrative suspense so readily achieved in focalized passages. In accounts of focalized perception, the incompleteness of information is most often structured by the very placement of the perceiver—along with the embodied perceptual limitations this implies—within the specificities of his or her environment. For example, Dekker’s narrator remarks parenthetically that the sounds he is able to hear are “in some good distance before” him and, as a result, readers are only given limited information about the sounds that the reflector is able to hear in the moment of perception. Yet, with only partial information available, the incomplete knowledge can become unbearably potent with possibilities. Building from Bal’s definition, then, in internally focalized passages, narrative suspense is realized through the incremental incorporation of information which is made available, from moment to successive moment, by the focalized perceiver’s active engagement with the environment.

This technique of perceptual embodiment is not necessarily exclusively urban, although the suspenseful attention it organizes certainly lends itself to narrating the experience of walking through streets of the city as one fraught with uncertainties and unexpected surprises. It can be found in texts as various as Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* and the Gothic novels of Horace Walpole, Anne Radcliffe, and Matthew Lewis—texts with an investment in staging perception, suspensefully, as an ongoing process of inquiry and investigation.

---

54 This is true especially in the phenomenological works of Merleau-Ponty, Gibson, and most recently Alva Noë, in *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), as all discuss how perception is premised on conditions of mobility.

55 Bal 114.
reassessment. And yet while I do not argue here that internal focalization is essentially urban, I do argue that foregrounding the shift from external to internal focalization is characteristically urban, and occurs in the first-person urban observer narratives explored in this project. I want to foreground this shift of perspective (to employ Stanzel’s term) as just as important as the elaboration of internal focalization itself, for while internal focalization provides a model of perceptual attention, the narratological shift in perspective found in observer narratives elucidates this model’s place within a broader conceptualization of the perceiving subject’s attention, which also encompasses the implicit attentions of the completely immersed, non-self-objectified subject. The shift in perspective thus brings to the fore internal focalization’s linguistic procedures of self-objectification, and situates them as part of the diverse instantiations of the narrator’s perceptual scene of construal. These linguistic procedures might otherwise go unnoticed or unappreciated in focalizations where there is no longer an alignment between narrator and reflector (i.e. third-person narration). Urban observer narratives, however, develop internal focalization from the premise of first-person narration, and, in doing so, link self-objectifications to the rhetorical strategies of the observer-narrator. Through such rhetorical strategies, these texts theorize not only the observer’s attention, through an explicit modeling of focalized attention, but also the observer’s immersion in the world, which suggests a theorization of the observer’s functional inattentions as much as the observer’s conscious attentions.

In the following section, I will explore how urban narratives give rise to such innovative narrative experimentations and the theoretical apparatus of a shifting, self-objectifying perspective. Indeed, it is the increasing attention paid to the urban
environment itself, as a novel perceptual environment, that prompts writers to narrate the conditions of perceptual observation in such innovative ways.

VI. History of the City: The Ground of Observational Experience

In the above section, I argued that urban observer narratives of the early modern era can be studied as exemplary models of the focalization of perception because of the way they foreground the emplacement of the observer within the surrounding environment by way of a self-objectifying shift from external to internal perspective. Although, formally, internal focalization concerns itself with the narration of consciousness more generally, I hope to show that its development is intrinsically bound to a consideration of environment—in this case, the specifically urban environment of the emerging modern city. The phenomenological premise of J.J. Gibson’s *Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* is that any account of perception must take into account the perceiver’s perceptual environment, for these terms co-constitute each other. For Gibson, “exteroception is accompanied by proprioception,” since “[t]he awareness of the world and one’s complementary relations to the world are not separable,” and thus, “to perceive the world is to co-perceive oneself.”56 With this premise, Gibson attempts to sidestep the skepticism that would doubt the existence of the world given by perception, but, in doing so, he provides an account of perception in which perceivers are coextensive with environments. An account of environment is thus always, according to this premise, also an account of a perceiver, at least implicitly, even when this perceiver is not explicitly foregrounded. In this way, attention to the environment itself, as an object of observation,

---

56 Gibson 141.
can very well lead to the directing of attention toward that environment’s implicit observer. This is what I argue occurs in the history of urban observer narratives.

Indeed, it is the unique nature of the modern urban environment, as an object to be observed, that leads narrators to consider the environment as the constitutive ground of observation, revealing the observer and the act of observation in so doing, however seemingly peripheral to the objective scene. Dekker’s *Belman of London* serves as a case in point, providing very early examples of self-objectifying focalization, and precisely at the moment in the text when Dekker attempts to describe features specific to the urban environment: ominous moonlit streets, doleful bells, and chance encounters. It is the uncertain volatility of the modern city which encourages such new, often satirical innovations upon empirical observation and reportage. It is the impact of such volatility upon the observer that reveals observation as an immersive yet vulnerable perceptual act. What Gibson does not foreground in his ecological analysis of visual perception is the social dimension of such a perceptual environment, yet it is important that the volatility of the city be understood as the volatility of a new social environment.

The city of London, over the course of the seventeenth-century, emerges as a very unique and novel object of representation in English writing. During this century, London explodes in population and in physical growth, transitioning from a walled medieval city to the hitherto unheard-of growth of the crowded modern metropolis. It thus becomes something new, a novel and curious place to inhabit and report upon, the site of a new everydayness and seeming stability despite apparent and disruptive instabilities. The modernizing London, as a *new* kind of environment to be experienced, provides writers with an opportunity to reflect upon the very nature of environments, experientiality, and
the cultural norms that undergird them. As Descartes says, “we admire nothing but what seems rare and extraordinary to us,” and he stresses that the admiration of novelty is indeed driven by epistemic limitations: “nothing can seem so to us, but because we were ignorant of it, or else at least because it differs from those things we knew before.”

In this capacity, the modern city becomes the ideal environment for activating empirical inquiry, if only because it provides an environment in which encounters with the unfamiliar are in fact a familiar occurrence.

This new environment provided not just a physical landscape, but also a new way of interacting with others—a new social environment to be observed. The mechanics of perceptual observation that are revealed through urban observer narratives are the result of the city’s distinctive new social landscapes. London, like other modern cities, is commonly characterized as an environment of perpetual motion, and yet this motion is intimately bound up with the London citizenry itself, as the environment and its inhabitants reflect each other. One need not resort to the twentieth-century speculations of Georg Simmel for the observation that the urban environment intrudes upon the psychology of its citizens for, at the turn of the seventeenth century, Thomas Brown observes just such a correspondence between London and its occupants: “You behold [...] the circulation that is made in the heart of London, but it moves more briskly in the blood of the citizens; they are always in motion and activity. Their actions succeed one another with so much rapidity...”

Readers first behold the physical movements in the street, but Brown insists

---

that this perpetual movement is reflected in the very blood of the citizenry, operating, implicitly, either as the internal cause or the internalized effect of the constant hurry in the streets. Later on in the eighteenth century, Tobias Smollet’s Matthew Bramble makes a similar complaint of London in Humphrey Clinker that, “All is tumult and hurry,” as if everyone is animated “by a spirit, more pernicious than in anything we meet in the precincts of Bedlam.” Here the internalized hurry is akin to a kind of madness, but a madness made general, even normative, as a pervasive culture. To inhabit this environment, then, is to become habituated and acclimated to a generalized madness. The unruly social environment thus threatens to intrude upon the urban inhabitant and—in the urban observer narratives foregrounded in this project—even the distanced empirical observer.

Throughout the various chapters of this study, I hope to demonstrate how the empirical authority of certain generic forms—natural history, history painting, travel writing—is both undermined and multiplied when applied to the uniquely volatile environment of the city. At this stage, though, it is important to appreciate that these literary phenomenologies, which seem to operate as a new empiricism in the vein of Thomas Reid, come into being largely in the service of a trenchant social satire. Urban environments may well offer a wholly new conception of everydayness and of perceptual environments, but, for many authors, they do so by amplifying normative ideals to grotesque or monstrous proportions, thus offering a distorted mirror through which to view and notice everyday experience. The shadowy London streets in Dekker’s Belman satire are singled out as noteworthy for empirical observation precisely because of the menacing proliferation of various new types of criminals that occupy such streets. What drives Dekker to focalize the

perceptions of the London streets so closely is to convey the fear his reflector feels while suspensefully exploring such new and uncertain social terrain. Insofar as such texts dramatize an encroachment upon the peripheral observer, and expose the project of observation as a perceptual and experiential act, this encroachment, while rich with theoretical insight, is, all the same, often a very physical encroachment, and thus most often experienced as an assault, or the fear of one. The volatility of this social environment is thus very often made physically volatile for the empirical observers who attempt to maintain philosophic distance from what they observe, and the encroachments which inevitably collapse this distance are produced as satirical evidence of the undesirability or general depravity of the urban environment. This literary phenomenology, then, which models and theorizes immediate experience by way of a new empiricism, initially models such experientiality as a kind of fallen or debased form.

The literary descendants of Dekker’s satirical dramatization explored in this book follow suit in employing the empirical premise of perception for primarily aesthetic and moral impact: providing ground-level descriptive accounts of perceptual events occurring within an environment, while, at the same time, generating an affective orientation toward what is perceived. From moment to successive moment, expectations are modulated and modified in disappointment or surprise. For explicitly satirical texts, expectations are most often modulated in a way that works to poke fun at what is being perceived. This can be accomplished by emphasizing the minute and, consequently, diminished scale of significance made possible by moment-to-moment perception, such as John Gay cultivates in describing a game of foot-ball in *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London*:

> Here oft’ my course I bend, when lo! from far,  
> I spy the furies of the foot-ball war...
But whither should I run? The throng draws nigh,
The ball now skims the street, now soars high...61

In such focalized satires, readers are prompted to consider what properly constitutes a perceptual event worthy of narrated history, and Gay’s mocking emphasis in descriptors like “war” and “furies” necessarily guides the evaluation. Indeed, it is important to realize that the form for narrating immediate experience as moment-to-moment was, in many of its early instantiations, a tool for mocking the banality of this enterprise and the insignificance of minutia that was its inevitable consequence. Such texts refer to or establish norms of magnitude and significance in order to present certain perceptual events as laughably trivial by comparison, yet they provide a convincing depiction of moment-to-moment uncertainties even as they do so. However, over the course of the chapters, one can notice an aesthetic development from the satirically grotesque into more complexly pleasurable affects and attitudes.

In the chapters that follow, we will see the legacy of urban uncertainty as it develops over the eighteenth century, in texts ranging from spy narratives and journalistic fiction, to polite periodicals and satirical prints, to sentimental and Romantic-era novels. As these texts continue to rework the terms of focalized experience, their preoccupation with specifically urban environments, events, and perceptions shapes their narrative exploration of phenomenological engagement in very significant ways. In Chapter One, I will explore in greater detail the establishment of urban everydayness and thus the narrative temporality for focalizing the immediate experience of urban observers. I hope to show that this urban everydayness depends upon a sense of an established differential between the country and the city, not only as environments, but as communities of like perceivers, habituated to

61 *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (London: Bernard Lintot, 1716) 25.
different levels of stimulations. Building from John Locke’s theorization of habituated and naïve perceptions, I will look at two urban observer narratives that activate Locke’s influential model of passive perception. Both *The London Spy* by Edward Ward and *The Spectator* by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, by displacing the narrating observer within the London streets, play with the condition of embodied experientiality that grounds empirical reportage, modulating the conceit of empirical distance in order to infuse the urban everyday with the charge of affect.

For the most part, the Spy and Mr. Spectator studiously avoid being seen, and so their empirical descriptions do not yet model a properly *social* phenomenology. In a sense, what follows in the rest of the project can be understood as the progressive socialization of the peripheral observer, a progress that is made explicit in narratives that integrate this observer as a principal to be observed by others. In Chapter Two, a unique approach to social phenomenology is considered in the visual narratives and aesthetic theories of William Hogarth. Drawing from the groundbreaking visual theory outlined in his *Analysis of Beauty*, I shall turn to Hogarth’s urban prints that multiply the actions and attentions of reflectors, considering how the subordinated position of the observer is essential for making narrative sense of dispersed attention as conspicuous *inattention*. Unlike *The London Spy*, Hogarth’s crowded pictures suggests that inattention, and its conspicuousness, might be a transitive property shared by both observers and reflectors.

In Chapter Three, I show how this transitive movement between observer and reflector are made explicit in Adam Smith’s theories of sympathetic perception and Frances Burney’s epistolary narratives, respectively. Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiment* provides an active and embodied alternative to passive theories of sympathetic spectatorship, and
theorizes not only the interactive role of the peripheral observer in the sympathetic scene but, importantly, the transitivity between the sympathetic roles. Burney’s novel *Evelina* thematizes such transitivity by narrating the epistolary observer’s paranoid attunement to the observing eyes of others as she finds herself an object of interpretation. While focalization in Ward and Hogarth is employed to convey affects of disgust and disorientation, Burney’s thematized objectifications most often convey a sense of embarrassed and inhibitory self-watching. At the same time, *Evelina*’s narrative attunement to the eyes of others introduces a more immersive, pre-reflective corollary to heightened self-consciousness, and it is this immersive embodiment that structures how desire is read in the novel.

The shifting between reflective and pre-reflective dimensions of focalization will be further elaborated in the final chapter of this project, which follows the urban trope of the objectified first-person observer as it is translated into a narrative that is both third-person and non-urban. Chapter Four analyzes the relative isolation of Anne Elliot’s experiences in Jane Austen’s final novel *Persuasion*, in which urban alienation has been transformed to an existential condition of “perpetual estrangement.” I draw from pragmatist readings of Reid and Coleridge in order to read against the pitfall of Romantic solipsism, and re-contextualize Anne’s isolation as part of an embodied phenomenology of social peripherality, which posits a splitting of life-world, or of the very interweaving of mind, world, and words. More than any other chapter, then, this final chapter moves the focalization of the observer beyond the special case of the urban encounter, from a historical account of experiential narrative to the advent of experiential theories of history premised on narrative.
What remains constant throughout all of these developments is the centrality of the periphery, and the gradations of perceptual awareness that shade into immersiveness. Burney’s and Austen’s novels make clear what is true of all the urban environments in this study: the observer’s periphery is just as often constituted by social divisions, or the invisible rifts that divide proximate interests and awarenesses. In the literary texts analyzed here, the focalized moment of perception is often objectified as a way to narrate the highly complex and fraught interactions of individuals within modern—and thus alienating—social environments. Indeed, it is by paying attention to this peripheral situation of the observer, specifically, that these texts provide such profound theoretical insights on attention itself, its gradations of reflective and pre-reflective perception, and the selective subordination of information that grounds such perception. Necessarily caught in the movement between such divisions, the focalization of the urban observer contains a degree of reflexivity and self-distancing, and thus perhaps, self-alienation. I hope this project suggests how the particularly urban provenance of literary phenomenologies leads them to narrate the structure of immediate experience in ways that emphasize, reflexively, the vulnerability of the observer to the uncertainties of his or her environment.
Chapter 1. Ground Rules: The Empirical Periphery in *The London Spy* and *Spectator*

Habits, especially such as are begun very early, come, at last, to produce actions in us, which often escape our observation. How frequently do we, in a day, cover our Eye with our Eye-lids, without perceiving that we are at all in the dark?

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*¹

John Locke, among other thinkers of his time, famously and influentially characterized perception as “merely passive”; in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke states that “in bare naked Perception, the Mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives, it cannot avoid perceiving” (2.9, 143). This presumption of passive perception is an essential aspect to understanding Locke’s epistemological theory of ideas, which takes as its point of departure the critical role that experience plays in the empirical method: “For the Objects of our Senses, do, many of them, obtrude their particular Ideas upon our minds, whether we will or no” (118). For Locke, ideas about the world are transmitted, via stimulation, to the passive perceiver. As it happens, this presumption of a constitutively passive perception – a mere reception of ideas – stands at odds with the present project, which is concerned with texts which model perception as actively embodied. However, in this chapter I will examine the influence of John Locke’s epistemology upon urban empirical writing, specifically, Edward Ward’s *The London Spy* and key passages of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele’s *Spectator* papers. It will be my argument that these writers activate Locke’s passive model of perception by applying it to empirical scenes of observation in London’s streets. However, as the remarks on perceptual habituation above indicate, even Locke was aware that there was no one-for-one transfer of ideas to the perceiving mind. When paying attention in everyday, habituated

perceptions, there are aspects “which often escape our observation.” Such a sensitivity to habituated blind-spots is central to the focalization of perception in literature, and introduces into perceptual experience shades of pre-reflective awareness that are central to phenomenological inquiry. I will argue that it is the liminal conditions of the empirical observer, in a scene of urban observation, that allows *The London Spy* and *The Spectator* to model such perceptual blind-spots in the eighteenth century.

In this chapter, I will examine more precisely how urban narratives from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries foreground perceptual immersion by objectifying the precarious conditions of empirical observation, specifically the observer’s embodiment and peripherality. *The London Spy* and *The Spectator* papers will serve as the central texts in this analysis, modulating, as they do, empirical distance and proximity to urban scenes of encounter. At the close of the chapter, I will examine the limitations of these empirically-minded models of perception as social phenomenologies. However, before I dilate upon these texts, some elaboration on the emergence of urban everydayness is in order, for this will help explain how the empirical observer’s immersion itself comes to be narrated, and thus narratively objectified, in early modern urban literatures.

1. Narrating the Speed of the Urban Everyday

A mere glance at the broad range of early modern accounts of the city should be sufficient to convince us that the majority of urban genres are quite removed from rendering the immediacy of the urban everyday. In what literary and cultural contexts does this new urban temporality, so well developed in *The London Spy* and *The Spectator*, arise in English literatures? Whence does this focalized experientiality emerge? The answer: it emerged
amid the rapid growth of London and the experiential uncertainties these changes provoked.

London experienced profound and rapid growth throughout the seventeenth century. According to Jeremy Boulton, “The capital grew most quickly in the late sixteenth century, doubled in size again by the mid-seventeenth century and increased by over 40 per cent again by the end of our period.” While considered the sixth largest European city in 1550, by 1700, London exceeded even Paris, becoming “the biggest European city” and “containing some half a million people.” With such rapid growth of the city and its population, it is not surprising that the literature of the time begins to respond to London’s shifting physical and social environment. Literary and cultural theorists Lawrence Manley and Cynthia Wall both retrace early modern developments in London and their attendant impacts on urban experiences and literary innovations. Both authors are eager to locate an experiential dimension in the early urban literatures that map London’s changing spaces, yet, regarding the literature of the seventeenth century, they arrive at very different conclusions about the texts in which urban experientiality is said to emerge. According to Manley, John Stow’s highly influential Survey of London, published in 1598, takes the reader from one city ward to the next, as if moving the descriptions along the path blazed by a perambulator, thus introducing “a historically situated observer into the landscape,” one who takes notice of urban changes over time. As such, “his perambulation introduced

---

3Ibid.
4“Stow’s Survey turned on the idea of revisiting sites to find them changed, of remarking how once ‘sweete and fresh waters’ were ‘since decayed,’ and how the now squalid suburbs were ‘pestered with small tenements and homely cottages, having inhabitants, English and strangers, more in number than some cities in England’” Literature and Culture in Early Modern London (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 162. See Stow’s A Survey of London (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971).
an entirely different measure of urban temporality – the life-span of the observer,” which violate[d] the rubric of personification, where the metaphoric scale of time was the millennial life-span of the city” (162 - 63). However, for Wall, Stow’s attention to change in the city “is archival rather than experiential, ” suggesting an absence of lived immediacy in the very passages that Manley praises: “When he appears in the first person, it is through his memories rather than as a physical presence in the streets.”5 Temporality is the key to Wall’s critique; while Manley observes in Stow an attention to change in the city, appreciable over a human lifetime, for Wall this temporality is not yet fast enough to indicate the lived experience of the urban everyday: “The very slowness of the change” in Stow’s text “emphasizes what remains the same” (Wall 99).

Most important to this study, Stow’s descriptions are not narrative in nature. They are indeed empirical – based upon the compiled records of facts and observations – but, if they suggest Stow as an observer, it is not as a narratively focalized observer or as a “physical presence in the streets.” Instead, the Survey presents static descriptions of these streets, organized systematically according to the city wards, with very occasional authorial reminiscences upon change over time. This presentation lends itself to a spatial sense of London as a known quantity. For Wall, only in post-Fire depictions of London – “motion-based tours and journeys of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” especially those by Defoe – can readers find the lived, uncertain movements that constitute modern urban everydayness.6 Wall’s emphasis on the proliferation of experientiality in post-Fire texts, however, leads her to overlook a set of pre-Fire urban literatures that narrate the focalized

6 Ibid 102.
experience of London’s uncertainties at the turn of the seventeenth century. Specifically, the “coney-catching” pamphlets and popular London satires produced by Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe and Thomas Dekker manage to foreground the unknowability of the urban environment quite poignantly. Unlike topographical surveys of the same era, such satires begin to innovate a narrative premise of empirical exploration when enumerating the novelties of the city and its uncharted spaces. By examining this pamphlet literature more closely, and its narrative deployment of empirical observers, it will be possible to better appreciate the complex presentation of perceptual attention necessary for narrating an urban everydayness.

1-1. Iterative Frequency and the Watchman’s Habituation

Much of the population growth in London at the turn of the seventeenth century was among those in the “middle station,” or at least not among those in the “poorest social groups” in England.7 The readership for this new approach to city representation was hardly aristocratic, targeting instead a broad cross-section of “Gentleman, Lawyers, Merchants, Citizens, Farmers, Masters of Households, and all sortes of Seruants.”8 It is with such an audience in mind that the moralizing pamphlets forged a new language for “mapping” the changing London, one focused not just on mapping the physical streets, but, more importantly, on what might be encountered in those streets. As early as the turn of the seventeenth century, London’s streets begin to be rendered as unwieldy, foreboding, shadowy, and pregnant with a “broode of mischiefe which is ingendered in the wombe of

7Boulton 329.
8Thomas Dekker. The Belman of London: Bringing to Light the Most Notorious Villanies that are Now Practiced in the Kingdom (London: Nathaniell Butter, 1608).
darknesse. As should be evident, this is a morally inflected language that, all the same, employs epistemic terms of uncertainty and, also, the promised discovery of knowledge. This is not the official state view of London as a given and known quantity, but a view of London presented to those drawn in to the city’s financial, mercantile, and employment opportunities, but also vulnerable to mercenary agents of exploitation, theft, or corruption.

What these early modern pamphlets offer, then, is a peculiar orientation toward what is rendered simultaneously as a land of increasing opportunities, and a dangerously uncharted urban environment. In Wall’s terms, they might be said to offer “new generic strategies for a cultural and textual remapping (if not a containing) of estranging modern space.” These texts clearly respond to the modern reality of social estrangement by mapping new ways of encountering the city.

Specifically, early modern pamphleteering offers a rhetorical mode of inquiry and observation, of discovery and exposure, that is starkly and narratively pedestrian as it is empirical, and geared toward “common” encounters on the street. The application of empirical procedures and tropes to the features of the city is key, and follows a larger cultural trend in which determinations of “fact” and factuality are incorporated into new domains. As Barbara Shapiro demonstrates in A Culture of Fact, the determinations of factuality, hitherto limited to legal proceedings, in the early modern period begin to be applied to an increasing number of domains, such as history writing, travel writing, natural history writing, and various burgeoning forms of journalism. According to Shapiro, what

---

9Ibid. Belman’s Epistle.
10Wall 96.
is common to all of these new applications is the evidentiary weight given to eye-witness testimony, in detailing the perceived facts on the ground. As Sir Francis Bacon proclaimed of his own anti-scholastic enterprise, “I admit nothing but on the faith of eyes, or at least of careful and severe examination.” Accordingly, first-person observer narration becomes a standard form of address and authentication in numerous empirical writings. However, it is when such forms of first-person observer narration are applied to the urban environments that readers are given a focalized sense of the observer’s immediate interfacing.

In these pamphlets, aimed at identifying and satirizing various urban criminal types, the most common, prominent, and conventional representative of perceptual attention to the urban everyday is the city watchman, who stands “to awaken your eies, to looke back after certaine Grand and common abuses, that daily walke by you, keeping aloofe (in corners) out of the reach of the Law.” The watchman stands as a figure of the voyeuristic observer who has seen into the dark secrets of the city that would otherwise remain hidden from common view—the ways of the criminals, thieves, sharpers, whores, sodomites. In this sense the watchman not only offers his eye-witness experience, but promises to “awaken your eies” too, to empower readers with experience of the secrets lurking around them. The orientation of discovery, grounded by the watchman figure, introduces a sense of estranged, impersonal intimacy with such secrets that is as modern as it is urban. The London underground that Greene, Lodge, Dekker, Nashe expose is denounced as morally vicious, and as such, the satirists cultivate a sense of detachment

---


from the crimes that they discover. Thus the figure of the watchmen, historically an interested citizen, is posited on the periphery of, and not a part of, the urban crimes encountered.

How does the figure of the watchman, and the perceptual attention this figure organizes, orient readers to urban everydayness? The answer is: iteratively, or by narrating separate instances of perception as a composite perceptual act. While the majority of urban satires in this period foreground “discovery” by proffering systematized taxonomies of urban types likely to be encountered in London, the reliance upon the figure of the watchman and the rhetoric of discovery does lead to passages that foreground perceptual acts of seeing. However, in such passages the perceptual act is not singled out as exceptional, but presented iteratively as an accumulation of repeated – and thus everyday – discoveries. The following passage of Thomas Nashe’s *Christs Tears over Ierusalem*, which makes the devil into a London watchman, illustrates this point:

If God [...] shold aske our watch-man the deuill, Custos, quid de nocte? Watchman, what seest thou? what seest thou in London by night? he would answer, I see a number of whores making men drunke, to cosen them of theyr money [...] I see them rewelling, dauncing, and banquetting till midnight [...] I see theft, murder, and conspiracie, following their busines verie closelie.

---

14 Manley, assessing the cultural significance of these early satirical pamphlets, suggests that, in assuming the role as satirists of the emerging urban everyday, the authors were staking out a unique social position of moral outsidemess, separate from the patrons who supported them and the subcultures they satirized: “In order to negotiate this tricky urban world where high and low do merge, the writer is forced to become a social renegade. His ability to read this landscape comes neither from the patrimonial donor-culture that subjects him to urban temptations nor from the tempter culture which would devour him. It comes rather from his marginal status as a victim-participant [...] from his outlaw absorption in the urban scene” (Manley 318). In this passage, Manley confuses the authors with the textual figures they produced, but it is worth recognizing that this distanced mode of “outlaw absorption,” which organizes the reader’s moral condemnation in the act of each discovery, is part of each pamphlet’s own rhetorical maneuvering.

In this selection, most of which is presented as direct speech, readers are referred to the visual perceptions of the devil, who penetrates into the obscurity to discover London’s nocturnal activities. The litany of “I see”s does seem to posit a series of perceptual acts, but the generalized aggregates (e.g. “a number of whores,” “men”) and abstractions (e.g. “theft, murder, and conspiracie”) he describes suggest a composite of many perceptions over time or in many places at once. Despite the recourse to perceptual language, the specificity of deictic time or space is not available here. In Narrative Discourse, Gérard Genette distinguishes between various types of narrative temporalities called frequency and, according to these distinctions, it is the iterative frequency that is operative when “a single narrative utterance takes upon itself several occurrences together of the same event,” such as is clearly the case in the passage by Nashe above. This iterative frequency can be contrasted with singulative frequency, “where the singularness of the narrative statement corresponds to the singularness of the narrated event”16; with regard to the present discussion, the narration of a perceptual event in singulative frequency stands for just one perceptual event. Such a singular perceptual event is not noteworthy for Nashe’s devil watchmen; what is noteworthy are the patterns of repeated perceptions.

Iteration, as expressed in the iterative frequency of Nashe’s text, is in fact key for the constitution of the urban everyday, for even when novel or surprising, the everyday is the encounter or experience that repeats. In Henri Lefebvre’s words, the everyday “is the invariable constant of the variations it envelops”17, and this phrasing helps illustrate how focalization itself might be seen as a cultural tool for rendering the city, with its expansion

---

and perpetual movements, as comprehensible. It is thus not surprising that the iterative aspect would continue to be developed as an important tool in urban focalizations, such as in Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year* or Gay’s *Trivia*, which emphasize the regularity, even predictability, of encountering the seemingly exceptional.\(^\text{18}\) Seen in this light, even the satirical taxonomies of urban types, although systematically “well ordered” in early modern pamphlets, still orient us toward the perception of the everyday, precisely as personas and experiences to be regularly encountered in the shifting spaces of London.

Yet this feature of established regularity also operates in some tension with the orientation of discovery that distinguishes the observer from what he observes. Iterative exposure creates experience, which suggests, narratively, a lack of deictic specificity and, morally, a sense of overexposed familiarity. Each of these aspects is anticipated in Nashe’s text by the interchangeability of the figure of watch-man with that of the devil, for this is a figure capable of penetrating into the darkness to see with authoritative regularity the vices flourishing there.\(^\text{19}\) This degree of everyday familiarity suggests that the watchman lacks the narrative motivation for narrating singulative acts of discovery, having already become too “experienced.”

---

\(^\text{18}\) See Daniel Defoe. *A Journal of the Plague Year* (London: Penguin Group, 2003). In Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year*, the narrator H.F. resorts to the iterative aspect to emphasize the everydayness of the horror witnessed, as in the passages “such loud and lamentable Cries were to be heard as we walk’d along the Streets” (74), and “these were only the dismal Objects which represented themselves to me as I look’d thro’ my Chamber Window” (100). In his poem *Trivia*, John Gay provides advice to the urban pedestrian as a mock-georgic, assuming the predictability of urban volatility in so doing. See *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (London: Bernard Lintot, 1716).

\(^\text{19}\) Later in the century John Legg will expose the corruption of such watchmen: “Watchmen taking Fees from House-Breakers, for Liberty to commit Burglaries within their Beats, and at the same Time promise to give them Notice, if there is any Danger of their being taken,—or even disturbed in their Villainies.” See Thomas Legg, *Low-life; Or One Half of the World Knows Not How the Other Half Live*. London: T. Legg, 1752) 2.
1-2. Singulative Frequency and the Naïve’s Inexperience

The figure of the roaming watchman is intended to introduce a clear moral distance from the behaviors being satirized. And yet, paradoxically, his regular physical proximity potentially implicate him as overly exposed to the urban environment.20 There is, then, an underlying theory of perceptual exposure in this narratological distinction between iterative and singulative narration. Already, even in these nascent focalizations, the bodily proximity of the observer to regularized urban excess suggests a likelihood of perceptual habituation, even moral corruption. In theorizing a psychology of stimulation, Walter Benjamin, echoing Simmel, notes that, “The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience.”21 Benjamin describes a sort of perceptual numbness that touches on a key tension in the narrative effort to attend to the urban everyday: the iterative regularity of noticeable events makes, over time, such events feel less noteworthy.

In light of the complexities involved in constituting the noteworthy when narrating the urban everyday, it is perhaps not surprising that many urban satires move between two figures: the inexperienced naïve alongside the experienced watchman. In order to isolate the moment of perceptual encounter as a singulative event, certain pamphlets introduce a naïve visitor with a relative dearth of urban experience, thereby introducing a new set of terms in relation to the watchman’s habituation: outsider vs. insider experience. Thus, in

---

20 According to Maurice Blanchot, the impersonality of the city streets derealizes “the man in the street” as a moral subject. For the very reason that has “seen everything,” his is thus “witness to nothing [...] not through cowardice, but because he takes it all lightly and because he is not really there.” See Maurice Blanchot. “Everyday Speech.” Trans. Susan Hanson. Yale French Studies, No. 73, Everyday Life (1987), 12-20.

one of the earliest examples of focalized interfacing, Thomas Dekker situates the reader with the perceptions of a naïve countryman, as he first encounters the watchman-figure of the city Bellman:

the Moone had clymed up to the very top of Midnight, before I had entrance into the gates of the Cittie, which made me make the more hast to my lodging. But in my passage I first heard (in some good distance before me) the sound of a bell, and then a mans voice, both whose tunes seemed at that dead houre of the night verie dolefull: On I hastened to know what noyse it should be and in the end found it to be the Belman of London22

Clearly, it is the narrator, and not the Bellman, who serves as the experciencer in this passage. On entering the city, walking through the gate under the light of the moon, this reflector is driven by fear to discover the source of the “doleful” sounds, and eventually finds the authoritative figure of the Bellman. The above passage is revealed as merely a fleeting framing narrative, as the narrator’s subsequent conversation with the Bellman leads to the enumeration of vices observable in the city. Readers are to understand that the narrator, with the subsequent regularity of his “owne observation and experience,” becomes as experienced and knowledgeable as the Bellman,23 yet, importantly, his focalized interfacing as a reflector occurs only without such previous experience. His initial naivete appears to serve as the condition for isolating individual perceptual events as noteworthy enough for singulative narration, as the encounter of the outsider with insider everydayness.

This differential between naïve experience and habituated experience – the difference between the perceptual experiences of countryfolk visiting the city and those of habituated citizens – becomes central to early understandings of the city and thus to

---

22 *The Belman of London* 20.
23 "I learnt much by the Bell-mans intelligence, but more afterwards by my owne observation and experience” (20).
subsequent focalizations of experience. At first glance, this dynamic merely seems to be a redeployment of well-worn pastoral oppositions between the country and the city, though it is more complex than this simple opposition. Through such pastoral dialectics between the bucolic rural life and hectic urban life, the country’s calendar—that of the farming seasons, its pace slow and predictable—becomes opposed, experientially, to the temporality of the city, whose time is the clock-time that runs business affairs, and whose calendar is that of the court and parliament, and of fashionable entertainments. This urban sense of time is easily satirized, as Thomas Brown does in *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London*, published in 1700, when his narrator informs the naïve experiencer, an Indian prince, about the London citizens that nearly trampled him: “They are equally uncapable both of Attention and Patience, and tho’ nothing is more quick, than the Effects of Hearing and Seeing; yet they don’t allow themselves time either to Hear or See; but like Moles, work in the Dark, and Undermine one another.”

What is profound in such urban satires is that distinct temporalities are understood as having distinct impacts on perceptual experience—in Brown’s example, the hurried temporality of urban life becomes expressed as a habit of inattention in London citizenry. Brown seems to be at a loss for explaining how these citizens can be so hurried as to not reflectively perceive what is in front of them—“nothing is more quick, than the Effects of Hearing and Seeing”—and yet readers are led to assume that London hurries its citizenry on beyond the capacity of their own senses. There is an easy moralism in such a satire—the city is understood to encourage a distortion of a default or natural perception. For this reason, in the comparison between environments, temporalities, and the types of

---

temperaments produced by them, the city is almost uniformly condemned as monstrous and excessive.\textsuperscript{25}

Despite this privileging, these distinct temporalities coexist for the perceiving bodies moving from one environment to the other. Thus this particular opposition, based as it is in perception, is not merely a static dichotomy, but presumes a movement between its terms; it presupposes not only the movement of bodies from one environment to a radically different one, but also, with regard to any given individual, a possible adaptability in perception. It suggests a complex account of perception insofar as it foregrounds the problem of perceptual attention—the what is noticeable for whom, and what constitutes noticeability. Echoing Thomas Browne’s emphasis on attention and inattention above, Thomas Reid will observe in his functionalist analysis of perception, “The noise and tumult of a great trading city, is not heard by them who have lived in it all their days; but it stuns those strangers who have lived in the peaceful retirement of the country.”\textsuperscript{26} For Reid this differential illustrates a broader theoretical point about the degree of engagement involved in perception, which he advances against the traditional assumption that perception is purely passive. In Reid’s view, the citizens’ inattention to “noise and tumult” that “stuns” others is not a deficiency in perceiving; rather, it is because of their habituation to noise that they are more readily able to direct their attention elsewhere, or to become caught up

\textsuperscript{25}Addison’s famous remarks in \textit{The Spectator} come to mind as a notable exception: “I shall set out for London to Morrow, having found by Experience that the Country is not a Place for a Person of my Temper, who does not love Jollity, and what they call Good-Neighbourhood […] I shall therefore retire into the Town, if I may make use of that Phrase, and get into the Crowd again as fast as I can, in order to be alone. I can there raise what Speculations I please upon others without being observed myself, and at the same time enjoy all the Advantages of Company with all the Privileges of Solitude.” See Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. \textit{The Spectator}. 21. Later in this chapter, I will discuss \textit{The Spectator}’s sanitization of the city’s image.

\textsuperscript{26}Thomas Reid. \textit{An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense} (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, and Co., 1869) 59.
in something else. This in turn becomes a general proposition: “in proportion as the attention is more or less turned to a sensation, or diverted from it, that sensation is more or less perceived and remembered.” In such a model of perception, pre-reflective inattention becomes a requisite feature of everyday perception.

By linking attention and inattention to degrees of habituation, texts which foreground naïve experiencing suggest, even if only implicitly, that prolonged exposure to stimulation necessarily changes the character of such experience. This means that, although a country traveler may find the city jarring upon the first visit, this same traveler may, in time, also become as habituated to the city as the citizens. In doing so, he would thus become accustomed to a very different sense of everydayness: urban everydayness. Like Moll Flanders who finds herself relocated to the dismal confines of Newgate prison, in which “the continual conversing with such a crew of hell-hounds as I was with had the same common operation upon me, as upon other people [...] I became as naturally pleas’d and easie with the place, as if indeed I had been born there,” such texts suggest a universal adaptability of human attention to the everyday stimulations of seemingly volatile environments. Because the rapidly modernizing London is for so many the pinnacle of overstimulation in every sense of the word, the fact that such adaptability persists even in such a volatile environment becomes, for the focalized visitor, noticeable in itself. For

---

27 Ibid. Reid’s model of perceptual stimulation, in which inattention becomes a general feature of perception and the everyday, suggests, unlike Brown’s and Simmel’s, reciprocity in the differential, i.e. rural noise, unnoticed by countryfolk, capturing the attention of urban visitors.

28 For the French philosophers of the everyday, the everyday emerges as an institutional and cultural construct most poignantly in the twentieth-century, and so is a necessarily modern phenomenon, connected to flows of capital and to the rise of consumerism. The connection to the rise of modern cities, however, is also directly acknowledged, particularly with relation to the walking of the street: “everydayness...belongs first of all to the dense presence of great urban centers. We need these admirable deserts that are the world’s cities for the experience of the everyday to begin to overtake us” (Blanchot 17). Blanchot builds from the analysis of Lefebvre, who raises explicitly the correlation between hurry, inattention, and the constitution of the everyday, as first raised by Thomas Brown: “Like the everyday, the street is constantly
many a naïve focalizor at the turn of the eighteenth-century, the noticeability of the
differential when visiting London gives unique form to a sense of modern alienation from
the urban, not only toward the physical environment, but also toward the everyday people
and culture encountered there.

In this sense, the drama of the naïve traveler overwhelmed by the city mobilizes a
sense of alienation that reaches far beyond mere sensory stimulation, and toward a much
broader psychology of urban detachment. If it is unsurprising that satires distinguish naïve
from habituated experience, to dramatize this alienation, it is also unsurprising that the
naïve figure is so often paired up with the more experienced, cynical figure – the citizen
guide or watchman, critical of the urban everyday as he is experienced in it – to better
mobilize urban alienation as a critical attitude. While the watchman’s experience, and the
knowledge it implies, is epistemologically privileged over naïve experiencing, such naïve
perceptions are morally privileged over habituated experience, and this counterbalance
allows satirists to attack from both angles, employing as their weapons insider information
as well as an outsider aesthetics of the naïve.

This dynamic introduces into the empirical scene of observation a peculiar,
undecidable shifting between narrative salience and narrative peripherality to the observed
scene. The ongoing commentary between the naïve and the habituated establishes a sense
of detachment from the observed scene, as the observers discuss, from a remove, what they
are observing or have just observed. However, what the commentary so often discusses and
processes is the very immersiveness of the naïve’s perceptual experiences that threaten to

changing and always repeats itself. In the unceasing shifts of times of day, people, objects and light, it
repeats itself tirelessly [...] If you hurry you will not see the spectacle, even if you are part of it” (Lefebvre
310).
obtrude upon the empirical distance — indeed — upon the observer himself. More than any other such text, Edward Ward’s *The London Spy* mobilizes the urban differential between naïve perception and habituated experience to reveal, and play with, the precarious conditions of the empirical observer. In doing so, *The London Spy* foregrounds and problematizes the embodiment and peripherality at the heart of empirical observation. The description of urban everydayness thus becomes, in Ward’s satirical hands, a means to exposing and collapsing the empirical project. In the rest of the chapter, I shall consider just how *The London Spy* accomplishes this playful modulation and objectification of empirical distance, while considering it alongside *The Spectator’s* own unique approach to objectifying empirical distance, especially as each of these texts set into motion John Locke’s theory of passive perception in divergent yet complementary ways.

2. Locke’s Naïve Ideas of Passivity

In the intervening years that separate *The Belman of London* from *The London Spy* and *The Spectator*, John Locke published his massive and widely read *Essay* in 1689. Following upon the rise of the empirical method, the Royal Society, and, as Barbara Shapiro has dubbed it, a growing “culture of fact,” Locke’s *Essay* radically reframes the world in the terms of empiricism. That is, Locke —building from the empirical method’s emphasis on observational experience, analysis, and record— posits experience as the sole means to knowledge about the world. The most radical ramification of this assumption is Locke’s theory of mind as tabula rasa, the blank slate upon which all ideas about the world are, via experience, impressed. For Locke, complex ideas are built from simple ideas, like pain and pleasure, and simple ideas do not pre-exist in the mind in Locke’s account; they
are received by perceivers when various objects “obtrude” upon their senses. Herein lies the fulcrum of Locke’s theory of ideas and its assumption of passive perception, insofar as “the Objects of our Senses [...] obtrude their particular Ideas upon our minds, whether we will or no.” For Locke, this largely occurs in childhood, as the stimulating influx moves from external obtrusion to internal ideas (229-30).

In a sense, Locke begins with the special case of empirical observation, and extends it as a metaphor for all of human knowledge about the world. What becomes obscured in Locke’s metaphorical extrapolation is the physical situation of the empirical observer in relation to what is being observed, which is necessarily both proximate and peripheral. This physical situation has significant narrative implications. Peter Dear, discussing Sir Robert Boyle’s empirical experiments, points to the greater degree of observer involvement in experimental documentations during this period, due to the Royal Society’s stringent authenticating procedures. According to Dear, these changes shift factual reportage toward first-person narrative representations of singulative experiences: “Boyle’s report conveys the impression of an actual, discrete event and of the observer’s central role in it, not only by his careful recounting of the facts, but also by his use of the first person, active voice.”

Dear situates these innovations with respect to the changing understanding of the word experience, which, through such procedures, becomes “an event of which the observer was a part.” As Dear’s account suggests, the evolving empirical standard of objectivity begins

---

29 Essay 118.
30 See Peter Dear. “Rhetoric and Authority in the Early Royal Society,” in Rhetoric and the Early Royal Society: A Sourcebook, eds. Tina Skouen and Ryan Stark (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015) 53-76. According to Dear this “form of presentation is overwhelmingly the rule in the writings of the Fellows, regardless of the subject matter” (63).
31 Ibid.
to require degrees of both peripherality and proximity, both detachment and involvement, in both experiment and narration of the experiment.

It seems clear that the observer’s situation in the empirical scene of observation is in fact a special case of construal, as discussed by cognitive linguist Ronald Langacker. In his reading of such scenes of construal, Langacker assesses “what role (if any) the conceptualizer himself plays within the conceptualization” to determine whether the conceptualizer is “salient” in such a conceptualization.32 For Langacker, there are three possible configurations of the conceptualizer’s salience in any conceptualization. First, there are conceptualizations in which the conceptualizer is not salient at all: this configuration accords with the empirical observer’s ideal of objective detachment in conveying information, insofar as the conceptualizer “is not himself in any way a participant of the scene.” In the other two configurations, the conceptualizer is in some degree salient — and thus narratively objectified. When minimally salient, the conceptualizer “remains offstage, outside the objective scene, serving only as a point of reference.” This configuration accords with the empirical observer’s authenticating proximity. When maximally salient, the conceptualizer is “[n]ot just a reference point,” but “is included within the objective scene as a major participant in the relationship of central concern” (124). The difference, and fluctuations back and forth, between these last two configurations of salience will play a critical role in my analysis of the empirical scene of observation in The London Spy and The Spectator.

What Dear’s analysis of Boyle’s empirical writing makes clear is that the situation of the empirical observer shifts from non-salient to salient and narratively objectified, insofar as the observer’s presence begins to serve as an authenticating point of reference. It is precisely this concern with the observer’s situation – a narrative relation in the scene of construal – that Locke’s empiricist theory of perception obscures. The empirical observer, recording the progress of the experiment on the periphery, becomes the disembodied perceiver, passively receiving recorded perceptions as internal ideas.

And yet, the issue of everydayness presents interesting complexities for Locke’s passive theory of perception. As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, Locke does allow for some under-theorized nuances in his theory, particularly with regard to habituated perceptions. The image of passive perception to which Locke so compellingly refers is not one of everyday perception, but of the infant newborn to the world: “Children, when they come first into it, are surrounded with a world of new things, which, by a constant solicitation of their senses, draw the mind constantly to them” (2.1, 107-8). With this image, Locke attempts to illustrate the tabula rasa being impressed by new experiences. The relative immobility of an infant, and its dependence upon circumstance, gives great metaphorical force to the presumption of perceptual passivity. Whether the infant will or no, the world impresses itself and thus furnishes the mind with ideas. Implicitly, it is the child’s inability to willfully direct its attentions that makes it the template of passive perception. And yet, habitual experiences often result in “actions in us, which often escape our observation” because they are so habituated and therefore unremarkable, even unseeable (as Locke’s example of the eyelid’s blink suggests).
Attention is never sufficiently theorized in the Essay, but reflective “noticing” enters in such discussions of naïve versus habituated perception. Locke equates attention with both conscious awareness and memory-making, and so posits a hard line between what is attended to and what is not: “whatever alterations are made in the Body; if they are not taken notice of within, there is no Perception,” for “if he does not reflect, all the Words in the World, cannot make him have any notion of it” (2.9, 143).33 It is from this interplay between perceptual obtrusion and perceptual habituation that David Hume, building on Locke’s empiricism, erects his much more rigorous theory of probability, also passively accumulated. Yet it is from this interplay, also, that Thomas Reid proclaims the veritable activity of perceptual attention, as an active selection and avoidance of perceptual objects.34 Locke himself doesn’t explore very thoroughly the perceptual blind-spots of inattention – in which the bare fact that “we are at all in the dark” remains unreflectively perceived – but it is worth noticing that he does notice them.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will analyze, first in The London Spy and then in The Spectator, the unique ways that Locke’s theory of passive perception becomes actively embodied in narratives of urban observation. As descendents of both the urban observer in Thomas Dekker’s Belman of London and the passive perceiver in Locke’s Essay, these texts bring out the scene of empirical observation, and the observer’s shifting narrative salience, that Locke’s theory of perception so effectively obscures. With such reflectoral observers attempting to enact the Lockean premise of passive perception, these

---

33In restating this scenario of inattention, Locke suggests, by referring to self-observation, a subtle awareness of the temporal shifts of attention and self-awareness: “How often may a Man observe in himself, that whilst his Mind is intently employ’d in the contemplation of some Objects; and curiously surveying some Ideas that are there, it takes no notice of impressions of surrounding Bodies, made upon the Organ of Hearing, with the same alteration, that uses to be for the producing the Idea of a Sound?” (2.9, 144).
narratives reveal the limits of this premise, lending literary attention to Locke’s philosophical blind-spots as well as to the perceptual blind-spots of inattention that structure everyday urban attentions, both naïve and habituated.

3. Everydayness Obtruding in The London Spy

The sheer amount of information that The London Spy, published in installments between 1698 and 1700, renders noticeable about London of its day – its spaces, its ways, its types, and, especially, the experiences of interacting with all of these – is noteworthy. In the opening pages, the Spy articulates his purpose “to expose the Vanities and Vices of the Town, as they should, by any Accident, occur to my Knowledge,”35 and thus announces the empirical premise of the first-person observer. While in his Satyrical Reflections on Clubs Ward opts for a systematized satire of urban types, the first-person observer is sustained throughout The London Spy as the default tool for narrating urban encounter in an impressively wide variety of permutations. This default largely operates as a framing mechanism, serving to introduce large passages of direct speech between the Spy, his Friend, and various interlocutors, and also to weave together various descriptions of sites and events encountered.

As is clear from the name of the titular reflector, the importance of eye-witness observation is central to Ward’s satirical project of exposing vices, and thus informs The London Spy’s unique narrative form, insofar as the Spy delivers information on specific vices as an occasional encounter, “as they should, by any Accident, occur to my Knowledge.” The London Spy’s empirical form, though parodic, resembles the eye-witness

35 Ward 2.
travel writing of the early modern era described by Barbara Shapiro: “in which the narrator proceeded chronologically, often beginning with the day his ship sailed. [...] Such first-person reports tended to exhibit clear beginnings, middles, and ends, the return of the voyager typically marking the end of the work.”

It is thus possible to understand the Spy’s first-person travels in the city as a sort of navigation, and the focalized embodiment that results, as deriving, at least in part, from this parodic premise of navigation, in which the vessel and exploratory party are replaced by the ambulatory body of the urban observer.

Although the visiting Spy is accompanied by his citizen Friend, who plays habituated foil to the Spy’s inexperience, the Spy himself is no simple naïf. While this text does accord with the tradition established in earlier texts, in which the visitor’s experiences are accompanied by the explanations of a guide, like a Dante walking with his Virgil through an urban Inferno, Ward’s Spy is composed and distant as much as he is naïve and overwhelmed. In part this distanced composure is an effect of the retrospective narration, filled as it is with similes both hyperbolic and deflating (“we came to a frightful Grate, more terrible than the Scene of Hell in Circe, that made a more terrible ratling in our Ears, than the Tongue of a Scold”), which renders every urban disturbance as only mock-heroically hostile. Yet, importantly, it is also an effect of the reflector Spy’s empirical situation with respect to what he observes, for this naïf maintains a composed distance throughout much of his perceptual reports.

This balance between naïve proximity and empirical distance is what enables the Spy to give such a rich and relentlessly thorough narrative form to Locke’s theory of

---

36 Shapiro 70. Shapiro contrasts this first-person voyage writing with the “descriptive-chorographic” travelogue, the systematized travel literatures parodied by Ward in *A Trip to Jamaica* (1698) and *A Trip to New England* (1699).

37 Ward 82.
perception. Importantly, the balance is managed through the premise of passivity. Whether or not the Spy seems detached or composed in any given scene, what remains constant is the presentation of his perceptions as a passive subjection to his environment. To construct this premise of passivity, Ward only rarely constitutes his reflector’s focalized attention as an internally willed noticing of interesting objects; rather, the Spy’s focalized attention is most often constituted instead from the outside by a constant barrage of noxious urban stimulations that “obtrude” upon him, whether he wills or no. As such, the Spy is aligned with the unpracticed infant in Locke’s model of pure, rather than habituated, perception. This is so thoroughly carried out by Ward that nearly every other paragraph in The London Spy announces such an obtrusion from the outside, which focalizes the Spy’s (and, at times, even his friend’s) attentions. Here are just a few choice examples:

The Streets were all adorn’d with dazzling Lights, whose bright Reflections so glitter’d in my Eyes, that I could see nothing but themselves […] (1.2, 26)

We had not walk’d the usual distance between a Church and an Ale house, but some Oderiferous Civit-box perfum’d the Air, and saluted our Nostrils with so refreshing a Nosegay, that I thought the whole City (Edenburgh like) had been overflow’d with an Inundation of Sirreverence. (1.2, 26)

My Ears on both sides were so baited with Fine Linnen, Sir, Gloves and Ribbons, Sir, that I had a Milliner’s and a Semstress’s Shop in my head for a Week together. (1.3, 73)

The Spy’s attention, in such examples, is not depicted as wandering willfully in curiosity or desire to the objects perceived. Instead, the objects and sensations are presented as so noxious or aggravating that they arrest all attention, obtruding as “Inundations” that crowd out other perceptions. In this narrative elaboration, passivity is not constituted by the physical immobility and dependence of the infant, but derives from the enthrallment of the relatively inexperienced Spy to the hyper-stimulations of his environment. As such, this
Spy is, as will be analyzed in more detail, very much embodied, even actively embodied, despite such apparent subjection to his environment.

Concerning this embodiment, the broad range of sensory experiences described in the above examples is noteworthy, as each objectifies and embodies the observer interfacing with his environment in a unique way, whether through visual, olfactory, auditory, or tactile obtrusions. These reports on sensory experiences connect the Spy to his immediate environment in ways that detached empirical observers are rarely depicted. Christopher Huck, comparing The London Spy’s objectifications to the detached descriptions in Daniel Defoe’s Tour thro’ the whole island of Great Britain, attempts to answer the question: “How can the two descriptions be so different, when the perceived object [London around 1700] is basically the same?” As a response, he elaborates upon a determinative aspect of focalization, which is the focalizor’s perceptual stance. According to Huck, the focalizor’s perceptual stance implicitly “predetermines” within the focalized passage “the selection of as well as the relation to the objects described.” 38 This predetermination encompasses, for example, the kinds of sensory information available in observer descriptions, for such information determines what is described – whether the sound of mongers peddling wares, the smell of feces, or shock of “dazzling Lights” – which in turn helps determine the relation of the observed to the observer.

There is a sense in which perceptual stance describes an existential category. Although Huck does not discuss it in these terms, perceptual stance seems, in phenomenological terms, akin to the Heideggerian notion of attunement, insofar as it

predetermines the character of experience in interfacing and, as a result, the ways of interacting available in such an attitude, whether looking at “what is merely objectively present,” more involved interactions motivated by Care or Fear, or even the fact of “not-perceiving.”39 For Heidegger, although attunement determines, depending on the mood, how and what aspects of the environment, and consciousness, are disclosed, it does not fully disclose itself or the fact of its predeterminations. It thus operates outside of, or on the periphery of, conscious experience.

At the same time, perceptual stance, as a narratological category, is directly relevant to the previous discussion of scenes of construal as outlined by Langacker. Following Huck’s contrast of Ward and Defoe, there are kinds and degrees of observer objectification, so that a text like Defoe’s Tour, which objectifies the observer merely as an authenticating presence, suggests its observer is much less narratively salient than Ward’s Spy in the passages above. The result of the Tour’s purely visual perceptual stance is a “uninvolved stance,” producing in its minimally salient objectification “a narrator curiously situated at the same time in and out of the world he describes.”40 Why does visual information generally objectify the observer as uninvolved, while Ward’s olfactory reports directly involve the Spy-observer? It is because the observer’s embodied situation, with regard to the observed scene, is objectified in different ways by different senses. When a narrative

---

39 See Heidegger. Being and Time 128-30. Even for seemingly objective observations, “when we look theoretically at what is merely objectively present,” such disclosure is premised upon a meditatively attuned engagement of “a tranquil staying” (130). Heidegger also clarifies that “attunement is far removed from anything like finding a psychical condition”—one present and transparent to consciousness—since “‘Mere mood’ discloses the there more primordially, but it also closes it off more stubbornly than any not-perceiving” (128).

40 Huck 203. Similarly, Stanzel describes the first-person observer-narrator as “sharing the same physical world as those in the narrative center—its place and time—but still ‘outside’ of the narrative world,” and, given this peripherality and minimal salience, makes this narrator emblematic of external perspective (Stanzel 49).
objectifies the observer, otherwise peripheral elements called the deictic “ground,” or any information concerning the event of the perception (or construal) itself, become salient. This ground includes references to time, place, and vantage, as well as experiential information.\(^{41}\) When visual information objectifies an empirical observer, the ground that is objectified does indeed pertain to the event of perception, yet a sense of detachment is easily maintained as objectified ground elements are limited to coordinates of time and space, which constitute the observer’s authenticating presence. Even Ward’s *Spy* maintains this kind of distance, for example, in observations framed by locomotion: “after we crowded a little way amongst this Miscellaneous Multitude, we came to a Pippin-Monger’s Stall, surmounted with a Chymist’s Shop, where Drops, Elixirs, Cordials, and Balsams had justly the prehemence of Apples, Chestnuts, Pears, and Oranges.”\(^{42}\) As this sentence progresses, once readers arrive at “the Stall,” they have already transitioned to a more detached, objective account of what is observed. According to Langacker, this easy transition to outward descriptions, which do not objectify the observer, derives from the embodied fact that “the major sense organs are part of the observer’s body and directed outward. They have a limited zone of coverage (e.g. the visual field), and within this zone certain regions can be perceived with greater acuity than others” (Langacker 120-21). The result of this outward focus is a seeming detachment, as the observer remains non-salient or minimally salient. Yet, following Huck, this detachment impacts both the kind of information conveyed, as well as the relation to what is described, such that “a multi-

---

\(^{41}\) Langacker discusses ground with respect to the subject of construal: “Among the elements of the ground, the speaker can be regarded as central, and reference to the ground can often be interpreted as reference primarily to the speaker. A deictic expression can now be defined as one that includes the ground—or some facet of the ground—in its scope of predication (i.e. its base)” (Langacker 113).

\(^{42}\) Ward 69.
faceted ‘thing’ is turned into a purely visual semiotic sign—sound, smell, taste, touch; nothing of this can be reproduced [...] Finally, objects can be looked at without having the chance of looking back; perception is bereft of any reciprocity” (Huck 212). The empirical observer’s deictics are provided only as authenticating coordinates, and as such, they do not divulge experiential dimensions, nor do they relate the observed to the observer, because he remains peripheral.

It is clear that the Spy’s observations are just as often premised upon a much more varied, involved, and affect-laden perceptual stance, corresponding to the degree he is inundated by, and not merely exploring, his environment. Yet, as I have suggested, Ward’s relation to empirical detachment is a complex one. Building his argument upon the contrast between Ward and Defoe, Huck presents Ward’s approach as diametrically opposed – where Defoe is distanced, Ward is intimate; where Defoe is uninvolved, Ward is in the thick of London’s stimulations; where Defoe is visual, Ward is haptic, auditory, olfactory. The Spy’s perceptual stance does of course include all of these things, yet the complexity of Ward’s achievement is diminished insofar as the Spy is cast as the anti-empirical foil to Defoe’s observer. In passages like those introduced above, in which noxious sights, sounds, and smells obtrude upon the Spy’s sensorium in an unavoidable assault, Huck’s characterization of the perceptual stance feels most accurate. However, as is evident in the above passage detailing the Pippin-Monger’s Stall, Ward modulates his narration of perceptual obtrusion differently throughout the various scenarios depicted in the work. Consider the following passage of olfactory inundation:

we went into a Convenient House to Smoke a Pipe, and over-look the Follies of the Innumerable Throng, whose impatient Desires of seeing Merry Andrew’s Grimaces, had led them Ankle-deep into Filth and Nastiness [...] Sweating and Melting with the heat of their own Bodies; the unwholsome Fumes of whose uncleanly Hides, mix’d
with the Odoriferous Effluvia’s that arose from the Singeing of Pigs, and burnt Crackling of over-Roasted Pork, came so warm to our Nostrils, that had it not been for the use of the fragrant Weed, Tobacco, we had been in danger of being Suffocated. (1.10, 237).

By the end of this detailed report, the Spy and his friend become indisputably objectified in their palpable disgust. What is especially interesting is that, although this olfactory assault, by the end, collapses narrative distance between the observers and the observed, the passage begins with considerable spatial and thus narrative remove, as the Spy and his friend are situated apart from the what they witness, observing and judging, visually, the crowd’s situation “Ankle-deep into Filth” from the distance of a Convenient House. The smell proves so considerable by the sentence’s end that it nonetheless “came so warm” to the Convenient House and collapses this spatial distance as another perceptual inundation.

In other moments, the narrative arrival of the inundation is much more difficult to pinpoint. For example, in his progress approaching the Royal Exchange, the Spy reports the following:

The Pillars at the entrance of the Front Porticum, were adorn’d with sundry Memorandums of Old Age and Infirmity, under which stood here and there a Jack in the Box, like a Parson in a Pulpit, selling Cures for your Corns, Glass-Eyes for the Blind, Ivory Teeth for Broken Mouths, and Spectacles for the weak Sighted; the Passage to the Gate being lin’d with Hawkers, Gardeners, Man-drake sellers, and Porters. (67-68)

The passage begins and ends as a seemingly objective description coordinated with deictics (“under which stood here and there”), it remains in the visual-mode, and there never arrives a moment of narrative assault, in which the objects inundate so much that the Spy’s body itself becomes narratively salient. At the same time, while no singular moment of inundation arrives, the list of items, which piles on item after item of unsavory objects, still suggests an inundation of sorts. As the list of “Cures for your Corns,” “Glass-Eyes for the
Blind,” “Ivory Teeth for Broken Mouths” grows, it seems to take on a volatile life of its own, from the very accumulation of affect-laden phrasings. In this passage, the Spy never reflects directly on his own experience as he interfaces with such objects, yet he doesn’t have to. By crowding together these mundane objects phrased with derision in an otherwise matter-of-fact report, Ward creates the sense that it is not the Spy’s idiosyncratic attention which chooses to foreground such oddities, but that, rather, their very presence is so forcefully noxious that they draw attention by the pain they implicitly produce for the peripheral observer.

It is possible to understand the sentence as providing both (detached) visual information and (indirect) experiential information, and as such, it assumes a perceptual stance distinct from narrative moments of perceptual assault. Like the passage at the Convenient House, Ward plays with the distance established by the empirical scene of observation, threatening to collapse this distance through the addition of experiential disgust or derision. In the Convenient House passage, he eventually does collapse this distance, through the addition of an olfactory event. In the above Royal Exchange scene, this collapse never arrives; the passage remains visual and so a sense of narrative detachment is maintained, even as affective charge persists. Indeed, affect in such constructions is not a property attributable to the observer, but rather, seemingly inherent in the objects themselves. In playing with the concept of inundation in this way, Ward uses the premise of urban noxiousness to push the limits of the broader cultural question, “what counts as noticeable and noteworthy?” His response is exhaustive, his focalized sentences laden with direct objects of various types and orders, all rhetorically charged with negative affect. As a result, this obtrusive offensiveness is not restricted to exceptional passages,
whether of exceptional moments or exceptional places; rather, it is a hallmark of the urban everyday. Indeed, the very mundaneness of the urban everyday becomes noxious in Ward’s text, so that, no matter where the Spy happens to be or what he may be doing, the urban everyday forcefully obtrudes upon his experience.

Discovering obtrusiveness in all manner of situations, Ward very frequently provides revealing accounts of mundane spaces and aspects of city-life. His satirical permissiveness allows him to populate his chapters gleefully with “matter of fact” satires of the overlooked detritus of the urban everyday. This feature of Ward moves The London Spy’s observations, empirical or otherwise, beyond questions of factuality, toward an aesthetic of everyday interfacing in the world—interfacing as everydayness—in which banality is itself grotesque. In the quote below—which describes among other things the graffiti on the ceiling of the Spy’s temporary lodgings—the very fact that the Spy pauses, mid-descent, to observe the apparent details is intriguing:

we descended from our Snoaring-Kennel […] Its Walls being adorn’d with as many unsavory Finger-dabs as an Inns of Court Bog-House. The Cieling Beautified, like a Soldiers Garret, or Counter Chamber, with Smutty Names and Bawdy Shadows, Sketch’d by some unskilful Hands, with Candle-flame and Charcole (49)

The notice drawn to the “unsavory Finger-dabs” and the graffiti seems itself noteworthy. Certainly, the Spy means to draw attention to the salaciousness of the graffiti, and the filthiness of the fingerprints (the Spy implies the “dabs” are made of feces); these qualities forcefully obtrude upon his, and thus the reader’s, attention. And yet, they are also mere marks on a random wall, markings on an everyday ceiling. The Spy never returns to this particular inn, and these marks are not given special symbolic significance other than this passing moment of notice, of obtrusion. This passage indicates the degree of everyday triviality that can rise to the level of obtrusion in drawing the ‘notice.'
With such regularity of obtrusion, the Spy’s empirical distance is constantly threatened, at times momentarily collapsed, then restored only to be threatened again. The city presents an environment that, in this conceit, invites constant assault and stimulation. This is what constitutes a sense of phenomenology, the narration of attention to successive perceptions of everyday experience. Thus, the Spy’s attention to the offensiveness of everyday trivialities is part of a larger narrative machine. At the other end of Ward’s narrative procedure are those moments in which perceptual assault not only collapses narrative distance, but momentarily collapses the conditions of empirical observation. This presents yet another possible perceptual stance, in which incoming sensory information, even visual, is so volatile it becomes mere noise:

The Streets were all adorn’d with dazling Lights, whose bright Reflections so glitter’d in my Eyes, that I could see nothing but themselves […] My Ears were so Serenaded on every side […] that had I as many Eyes as Argos, and as many Ears as Fame, they still would have been all Confounded, for nothing could I see but Light, and nothing hear but Noise. (1.2, 26)

In this passage, visual information, which generally sustains the empirical observer’s detached authority, is here transformed into an inundation that not only demands all immediate attention, not only brings the body of the observer explicitly into narrative salience, but also overwhels the observer’s very capacity to observe: “for nothing could I see but Light, and nothing hear but Noise.” This is the most extreme perceptual stance presented – the non-observing perception of pure noise – and yet, the Spy is always quickly restored to his peripheral position as empirical observer, only to be threatened with overstimulations once more.

It is this wide range of perceptual stances, and the subtle shifts between them, that enables Ward to narrate London as the constant everydayness of perceptual obtrusion, in
all of its varying levels of inundation. And a key part of the satire, as in all stories that employ the naïve perceiver, is that the surrounding urban dwellers are able to tune out the noise of the everyday, even that which completely overwhelms the Spy’s capacity to function as observer. Thus the Spy’s friend, while always willing to satirize the city, is not surprised by it: “Prithee, says he, what’s the matter with thee? Thou look’st as if thou wert Gally’d.” The Spy responds with the petition, “Prithee let us make hast [...] or I shall be forc’d to make a Close stool-pan of my Breeches. At which my Friend laugh’d at me.” The Friend’s question, and his laughter, indicate that the event was experienced quite differently, and was, as such, perhaps not even noticeable as an event. This is one of the ways that such satires foreground the fact of noticing itself—it is a noticing of noticing and not noticing, made evident by the differential of experiences. What makes the Spy such a valuable cultural tool is his ability to notice, as noteworthy, what no one else notices. In Ward’s text, the noticing is forcefully embodied—it is not a matter of the Spy directing his curiosity to something, but the obtrusion of the environment upon his sensorium, such that he shall be “forc’d” to shit himself. The friend only laughs at this prospect, since his sensorium did not take such forceful notice of the obtrusion; indeed, to him, it was not registered as an obtrusion. In this model, the everyday is constant stimulation, every moment of every day, and perception is the constant attunement of attention to such stimulations.

With this unwieldy, yet well-tuned apparatus, Ward activates Locke’s account of passive perception—as obtrusion—into an embodied phenomenology of the urban everyday. And yet, Ward’s approach to the everyday, specifically his emphasis on the

43Ward 36.
grotesque, clearly provides a perverse spin on Lockean empiricism. This perversity brings out what is so often hidden in Locke’s Essay, which is the situational embodiment of the perceiver. The Spy’s satire upon London is unthinkable without the prominence of embodiment in this text, specifically, the foregrounding of the body as a source of narrative information, as well as cultural knowledge and meaning. In this light, one might read Ward’s satire alongside other parodies of empirical inquiries, such as Jonathan Swift’s Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of Spirit. In each of these exceptional satires, the parody of empiricism goes beyond ridiculing the culture of empiricism: its methods of experimentation, its rhetorical tropes, and its practitioners. Instead, the protocols of empirical observation and writing are mobilized to produce genuinely insightful, if grotesque, empirical observations. These observations, genuine in their application of empirical inquiry, in turn satirize the method as much as the object of observation. Yet Ward’s London Spy is not the only urban text to activate Locke’s account of passive perception. In The Spectator papers, specifically no. 454, alongside “The Pleasure of the Imagination” essays, Addison and Steele discover a parallel approach to embodiment, not in the obtrusion of objects upon the naive perceiver, but in the narrative peripherality of observation itself.

4. Peripheral Pleasures in The Spectator

The Spectator papers, penned in alternation by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, famously begin by introducing the character of Mr. Spectator as a taciturn observer of London life. Refining and elevating the periodical form into polite literature, Addison and

Steele both build upon and distance themselves from predecessors like Defoe’s *Review* and Ward’s *London Spy*. Much of the charm of *The Spectator* papers lie in the personality that Addison and Steele invest in the character of Mr. Spectator, which they develop in key moments as the project’s narrative frame. In practice, *The Spectator* is not unlike Steele’s previous essay project to which Addison contributed, for Mr. Spectator by and large operates as a narrator like *The Tatler*’s Isaac Bickerstaff – of various essays on a range of topical subjects – rather than a reflector-character involved in narrative scenes of observation. Yet Mr. Spectator is given a somewhat ghostly presence – a spectral spectator who is present but remains largely silent, unrecognized and thus unintegrated into the narrative: “I have passed my latter years in this city, where I am frequently seen in the most public places, though there are not above half-a-dozen of my select friends that know me.”

If Mr. Spectator provides intelligence about the world, it is because “I have neither time nor inclination to communicate the fulness of my heart in speech” (6). The authors thus psychologize the disconnect between observation and speech, making the papers themselves correspond to the interiorized thoughts of this wandering subject. Throughout the papers, there are rare instances of narrative focus given to Mr. Spectator’s experiences on the streets, and these moments provide a sort of groundwork for the character and the enterprise as a whole. It will be these passages I will examine, alongside Addison’s essays on “The Pleasures of the Imagination,” which elaborate upon Locke’s account of perception to create new aesthetic principles.

---

46 When speaking of one of Mr. Spectator’s “late rambles,” the word “speculations” is quickly substituted for “rambles,” a substitution which deftly conflates acts of wandering, observation, and thought (3, 16).
In those famous essays, Addison builds explicitly on the account of perception in Locke’s *Essay*, and the “spectrality” of passive perception plays an important role in Addison’s consequent aesthetics. According to Addison, all of the ideas of the Imagination, following Locke, originally derive from direct perception, and thus, “we cannot indeed have a single image in the fancy that did not make its first entrance through the sight.” Perception is described as a purely passive process of receiving images from the eye, and contrasted with the more active Imagination, which “has the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those Images which we have once received” (72-73). While this reception of images is indeed passive, at the same time, Addison emphasizes the projective nature of this passive perception (again building on Locke and Newton). Here is a lengthy but rich passage:

Things would make but a poor appearance to the eye, if we saw them only in their proper figures and motions: and what reason can we assign for their exciting in us many of those ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the objects themselves (for such are light and colours), were not it to add supernumerary ornaments to the universe, and make it more agreeable to the imagination? We are everywhere entertained with pleasing shows and apparitions [...] In short, our souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion.

According to this account, in the conveyance of ideas from mechanical stimulation to the Imagination, the mind adds “supernumerary ornaments” and thus modifies the nature of the world as it seems to the perceiver. Addison asks his readers to conceptualize perception as a kind of overlay on top of the “proper figures and motions” of the world – an overlay of delusions, ornaments, shows, apparitions. This is the seemingly spectral dimension of Addison’s account of perception, which is not merely passive but, somehow, ghostly,

---

48 “Spectator No. 413,” 83-84.
shadowy, insubstantial, and, yet, aesthetically pleasing for this very additive, unintegrated quality.

The easiest way to explain the spectrality at the heart of Addison’s account of perception is his investment in Locke’s theory of Ideas, which, in moving from matter to mind, implies the spectrality of the image—a subjective copy from a natural original now disconnected and decontextualized within the realm of the mind. However, building on this chapter’s concern with the scene of empirical observation, I will suggest another way of understanding the perceiver’s spectrality in Addison’s aesthetics, which is revealed when this spectral perceiver, as Mr. Spectator, is contextualized within London’s streets. For this contextualization, I will turn to Spectator no. 454, written by Richard Steele, in which Mr. Spectator narrates one of his restless rambles, or speculations, throughout the diverse neighborhoods of London. Central to understanding spectrality in this reading is not a metaphysics of visual imagery but, rather, the empirical observer’s conditions of peripherality.

With Spectator no. 454, Steele sets out to provide a narrative complement to the aesthetic theories set out in Addison’s “Pleasure of the Imagination,” while also building on Mr. Spectator’s speculations on trade provided in no. 69, which opens: “There is no place in the town which I so much love to frequent as the Royal Exchange.” In this earlier essay, Mr. Spectator ruminates on the “secret satisfaction” he experiences when looking upon “so rich an assembly of countrymen and foreigners consulting together” at the Exchange.49 Already in Mr. Spectator’s “secret satisfaction” at viewing this scene of trade readers may discover the hint of the spectrally “pleasing delusion” that is key to Addison’s

aesthetics. Like the additional profits accrued from investments of capital, Mr. Spectator’s pleasure in viewing the scene of trade exceeds the scene itself. It is no surprise then, that Mr. Spectator’s tour throughout London in no. 454 focuses almost entirely on scenes of commerce and trade, and ends with a visit to the Royal Exchange.

But how much more pleasant is this Royal Exchange than the one described by Ward’s Spy! While the London Spy “Jostled in amongst a parcel of Swarthy Buggerantoes, Preternatural Fornicators” and “squeez’d […] thro’ a Crowd of Bumfiring Italians,” Mr. Spectator boasts more innocuously that he is “jostled among a body of Armenians” and sometimes becomes “lost among a crowd of Jews.” Even more conspicuous is Mr. Spectator’s perception of noise at the Exchange. While Ward narrates consistently his Spy’s sensory overload at London’s excessive stimulations, Steele narrates a different attitude toward surrounding noise:

I went to one of the windows which opened to the area below, where all the several voices lost their distinction, and rose up in a confused humming; which created in me a reflection […] for I said to myself, with a kind of pun in thought, ‘What nonsense is all the hurry of this world to those who are above it?’

Steele endows Mr. Spectator with a composure that feels wholly distinct from the inundations experienced by the Spy yet, importantly, this composure is premised both upon the conditions of empirical observation and upon Locke’s account of passive perception. Yet while Ward activates Lockean perception through the naïve Spy’s inundation, Addison and Steele narrate Locke by staging perceptions as an embodiment of peripheral detachment. It is Mr. Spectator’s peripheral situation that Steele imbues with

50Ward 68.
51“Spectator no. 69,” 359.
supernumerary spectrality; it is the narratively peripheral body of the perceiver that is made to stand for the presumed insubstantiality of mind and passivity of perception. Situated “above” the hurry of the world he observes, Mr. Spectator remains unintegrated and detached from the scene of noise below, allowing room not only for reflection on this noise-turned-humming, but for embodied feelings of pleasure as well.

Importantly, Mr. Spectator is not depicted as a naïve perceiver who notices the urban everyday only through excessive stimulation; the urban everyday becomes noticeable to Mr. Spectator because of a differential in occupation, for, unlike everyone else who makes up the humming in the Exchange, he is without occupation. As Addison explains, the freedom from occupation allows a distance from one’s immediate circumstances, creating a differential not unlike the naïve perceiver entering the city for the first time: “A man of polite imagination is led into a great many pleasure that the vulgar are not capable of receiving [...] so that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind” (no. 411: 74-75). In this telling, it is the gentleman observer’s relative freedom from immersive occupation that helps constitute his reflective elevation above the immersive scenes that he observes. This leisured, relational peripherality to the narratives of immersion becomes constitutional to the character of Mr. Spectator: “I live in the world rather as a spectator of mankind, than as one of the species” (no. 1: 5). His embodied observation and experience is transformed, through his leisure, into a permanent condition of peripherality.53

---

53 This is, for Thomas A. King, the most insidious ideological operation performed by Addison and Steele, who argues in *The Gendering of Men* that “The Spectator constituted its subjects as the possessors of an inner space of pure subjectivity that could be suffused across social spaces and encounters with others without being mapped in turn by the historicity of those encounters” (208). However, I would add that by staging this
Because his notice is composed and detached, unlike the notice of the inundated naïve, the affective charge of this leisureed peripherality is quite different. Indeed, Addison describes looking upon the world—in language evocative of spectrality—“as it were, in another light,” discovering supernumerary “charms that conceal themselves” from others. It is no accident, then, that Mr. Spectator in his rambles throughout London finds such agreeable pleasure wherever he goes. Thus, as he begins his day, he finds “it was the most pleasing scene imaginable to see the cheerfulness with which those industrious people plied their way to a certain sale of their goods” (277) and then, only a moment later, “I could not believe any place more entertaining than Covent Garden” (278-79). This pleasure in surveying the preoccupations of others finds its apotheosis in Mr. Spectator’s approach to the Royal Exchange:

As I drove along, it was a pleasing Reflection to see the World so prettily chequered since I left Richmond, and the Scene still filling with Children of a new Hour. This Satisfaction increased as I moved towards the City, and gay Signs, well disposed Streets, magnificent public Structures, and wealthy Shops, adorned with contented Faces, made the Joy still rising till we came into the Centre of the City, and Centre of the World of Trade, the Exchange of London. The list of urban sites enumerated in this passage evokes Ward’s lists at the Royal Exchange, yet the affective charge is completely different. Despite this difference in affect, however, the perceptual stance is the same. The Spy’s perceptual stance at the Royal Exchange remained largely in the visual mode, maintained a sense of empirical detachment, and indirectly suggested the affective charge of the observed object. This is largely how Steele’s passage above operates, with a shift only in the observer’s response

---

narrative peripherality. Addison and Steele also provide the means to understanding Mr Spectator’s embodied imbrication in the historicity of those encounters. See The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: Volume 1, The English Phallus (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

54 Steele. pp. 281-82.
from disgust to admiring pleasure. In each of these passages, the experientiality of the narrator objectifies himself as observer, but remains narratively uninvolved in the scene that prompts his experience. While Ward’s Spy experiences disgust after shock after fright, Mr. Spectator finds in the streets of London only additive and ever-increasing pleasures.

To some extent, this can be understood merely as the effect of Addison and Steele’s ideologically-motivated selections and omissions, which seek to elevate London’s mercantile trade and commerce in an aesthetics of accruing pleasure. Bernard Mandeville, in his *Fable of the Bees*, paints a very different picture in order to illustrate a different economic and moral paradigm, which depends on a conceptual differential between micro- and macro-levels. Thus, despite celebrating the wealth created by the trade of the city, Mandeville still insists that “every moment must produce new filth,” making it “impossible London should be more cleanly before it is less flourishing.”55 Mandeville revels in this discrepancy between micro- and macro-levels, yet Mr. Spectator’s account completely avoids it, by depicting the scene of trade as both salutary and pleasurable. If objectification of the observer reveals the observer’s deictic ground, Steele avoids revealing the literal ground upon which Mr. Spectator walks, choosing to narrate a carriage-ride to the Exchange rather than a walk, for, as both Ward and Mandeville suggest, this ground would be less pleasing than *The Spectator* might have readers believe.

Yet this pervasiveness of pleasure, although ideologically motivated in this instance, is also an essential concept in Addisonian aesthetics, and as such is central to Mr. Spectator’s peripherality. Pleasure is a mediating term that connects bodies in the world to

---

their experiencing minds,⁵⁶ and is the principal aesthetic response that interests Addison. Pleasure is a feeling felt by bodies, but, for Addison, the mediating distance of aesthetics can transform sensations of disgust or fright into new forms of pleasure; thus, “[t]here may, indeed, be something so terrible or offensive, that the horror or loathsomeness of an object may overbear the pleasure which results from its greatness, novelty, or beauty” – Addison’s key aesthetic enticements – “but still there will be such a mixture of delight in the very disgust it gives us, as any these three qualifications are most conspicuous and prevailing” (no. 412: 76). With this aesthetic mediation, the detached observer can transform the immediate grip of an experience of disgust into new pleasure. That is, aesthetics allows perceivers a mediating distance from their own immediate experiences, or the ability to experience pleasure at the narrative periphery of their own experiences.

It is worth noting that Mr. Spectator’s ramble through London, despite its conspicuous omissions of filth, is a rare early instance of pleasure taken in the urban everyday. The phenomenological models of experience implied by perceptual obtrusion depend on constant sensory and bodily assault, with the observer’s attention being demanded rather than given. Mr. Spectator’s ramble suggests a different kind of embodied perception in the city, one premised on pleasure and the desire to experience still more pleasure. Indeed, the city, while not beautiful, becomes the site of Addison’s aesthetic category of the novel. Describing the captivating enticement of perceived novelty, Addison situates the observer comfortably amid a restless cavalcade of stimulations: “[w]e find our thoughts a little agitated and relieved at the sight of such objects as are ever in motion and sliding away from beneath the eye of the beholder” (412, 78). Novel stimulations,

⁵⁶ “the pleasures of the imagination, taken in their full extent, are not so gross as those of sense, nor so refined as those of the understanding” (“Spectator no. 411,” 73-74).
presented in Ward as a relentless assault, becomes in *The Spectator* a resource of perceptual pleasure. Satire and the grotesque, then, need not be essential elements to structuring perceptual attention to urban everydayness. The stimulating nature of the urban everyday remains consistent; it is the noticing attitude toward the urban everyday that may be adjusted. Implicitly, Addison’s aesthetics of distanced pleasure perhaps suggests that even the urban “filth” that Mandeville finds in the London streets might be experienced, aesthetically, as, in a sense, pleasurable. In this new aesthetics of perceptual experience, the immediate ground, with adequate distance, need not be only gross, if there is also pleasure intermixed.

5. Seer Unseen, Seer Seen

Ward’s Spy and Mr. Spectator, in different ways, then, both activate Locke’s model of passive perception by narrating empirical scenes of urban observation and its precarious conditions of embodied peripherality. Ward does so by constructing scenes of perceptual obstrusian that inundate the observer’s ideal detachment, while Addison and Steele studiously maintain this ideal detachment, discovering in it the aesthetic pleasure of an embodied peripherality that is removed from immersive immediacy. I would like to close the chapter by addressing the limits to these empirical models of perception, for this will highlight concerns explored in subsequent chapters. As Christopher Huck has written compellingly about the social dimensions of the London Spy’s perceptual stance, my attempt to trace the limits of this model will address Huck’s argument of socially-oriented perception.

Huck, when contrasting Ward’s focalizations of London with Defoe’s visually-dominant observations, arrives at the conclusion that Ward’s focalizations are much more
interactive. Responding to this quality, he argues that the principal quality of Ward’s writing, which sets his Spy’s perceptual stance apart from Defoe’s detached narrator, is that the Spy’s “mode of observation” is social:

Instead of being distanced, he is close. As a consequence, the Spy looks and is being looked at, he hears other people and is heard, he touches them and is touched. […] Ward’s narrator is all too aware of his own physical presence, aware of the effects his presence has on the observed objects and aware of the consequence such observations have on him.57

Huck then clarifies that it is the reflector’s established “mode of observation” which “determines whether co-presence, reciprocity and interaction, key elements of the social, are allowed for or not” in the observer’s experiences (213). For most of the points Huck raises in the above discussion, I can only offer my own analysis of Ward’s obtrusive model of perception as corroboration, since I would argue that it is this model of perceptual obtrusion which foregrounds this radical degree of “co-presence, reciprocity and interaction” with his environment, and the attendant shifts in mode and perspective, in Ward’s writing. Because Ward continually stages the compromise of the ideal conditions of empirical detachment, he does indeed expose his Spy to direct interaction with his environment, an exposure which Mr. Spectator studiously avoids.

At issue, however, is Huck’s use of the word “social” to characterize the Spy’s “mode of observation.” This may seem like a trivial point, but in fact it is not so trivial. Huck’s own investment in the term “social” is not made entirely clear; it seems to arise from his critique of detached vision-based observation in Defoe, which lacks perceptual interactivity as well as social interaction. Be that as it may, he does not theorize the implications of a “social” approach to focalization further than ascribing to it the

57Huck 213.
determination of “co-presence, reciprocity and interaction.” However, Huck’s characterization of the Spy’s perceptual stance as social leads him to ascribe a degree of self-consciousness to the Spy’s interactions that risks a misunderstanding of Ward’s perceptual model, and its limits as a model of social interaction. According to Huck, the Spy seems sensitively attuned to the perceiving minds of others; thus, “the Spy looks and is being looked at […] Ward’s narrator is all too aware of his own physical presence, aware of the effects his presence has on the observed objects and aware of the consequence such observations have on him.” Reading this account, one would assume that Ward’s Spy is not only perceptually embodied, through focalizations of encounter, but self-consciously embodied, as he attends performatively to others others who watch him. Yet, for all of the interactivity of the Spy’s perceptual model, and despite all of the social interaction included in *The London Spy*, it is important to appreciate how asocial Ward’s model of obtrusive perception is.

The strange fact is that Ward’s narrative is not especially attuned to the perceptions of others. This is not to say that Ward does not make reference to being seen or heard by others; in fact that happens frequently enough. Indeed, it is precisely in these moments that *The London Spy* feels curiously uninterested in narrating the focalized experientiality of such intersubjective interactions. Thus, when the Spy and his friend are arrested for staying out too late drinking, the moment of arrest is itself curiously underwhelming; in the passage, the Magistrate “commanded his Black-Guard to take us to the Poultry-Counter; who presently fell on, like so many Foot-Pads, first secur’d our Weapons, and then led us along by the Elbows in Triumph to the Rats-Castle, where we were forc’d to do Pennance till the next Morning.” While this is surely a critical moment of interaction in Ward’s text,
one where the Spy is singled out as more than a peripheral observer, readers are told only that the men “fell on, like so many Foot-Pads [...] and then led us along by the Elbows.”

Even stranger is the passage in which the Spy and friend walk into their prison cell, for the passage turns upon the vulnerability of being seen by the other prisoners, and yet, Ward does not dramatize the suspense: “some quitted their Play they were before engag’d in”—this is the moment of recognition as they enter. Strangely, Ward skips right to the fact of encirclement that follows—“and came hovering round us, like so many Canibals”—thus forgoing the opportunity to narrate the experience of fear and vulnerability at seeing the prisoners turn around as they enter and approach them. Instead, as a result of this interaction, readers learn that they “were forc’d to submit to the Doctrine of Nonresistance, and comply with their demands, which extended to the Sum of two Shillings each.”

Why does Ward seem to give up such an opportunity of social self-consciousness?

The answer is that the Spy is not attuned to the minds of others; he is attuned to forceful obtrusions in the environment. The above interactions of the arrest and the non-resistance might technically qualify as social interactions, because they involve other people, but what is most noteworthy is their correspondence to the perceptual model of obtrusive inundation, which characterizes the Spy’s interactive perceptions in general, whether or not the offending object is a fulsome smell, a glaring light, or an arresting magistrate. Indeed, people, just as much as smells and lights, are treated as offending objects in Ward’s model of perception. It is no wonder then that the main goal of the Spy in such moments is merely to escape, to alleviate the obtrusion which shifted the mode and perspective to an experiential assault and overload. They are offensive stimulations that

---

58 Ward 82.
59 Ibid 83.
threaten to collapse the conditions of empirical detachment. Modeled upon the ideal conditions of empirical observation, the Spy’s narrative situation moves from detachment to the collapse of such detachment, but always back again. The Spy-narrator objectifies his peripheral vulnerability, yet, importantly, this objectification occurs as an effect of narration; Ward reveals the Spy to his readers, but does not thematize the Spy’s objectification as a self-conscious attunement to the observing eyes of others. It should not surprise us that perception in *The London Spy* does not accommodate complex social interactions, self-consciousness, or mind reading, modeled as it is upon the obtrusions of Lockean pure perception. But what of *The Spectator*?

As has already been stated, Mr. Spectator is never inundated by his environment, and so is generally not exposed to direct narrative interactions in the way that Ward’s Spy is. However, interest and pleasure, not obtrusion, operate as Mr. Spectator’s motivations, and as such Mr. Spectator should easily admit more social interactions than the Spy. And indeed, despite the empirical condition of peripherality that Mr. Spectator attempts to consecrate as an existential condition, there are moments of interactive potential in *Spectator* no. 454. In the concourse of the Royal Exchange, Mr. Spectator stares from the periphery upon the female merchants selling their goods. As usual, although he expresses gratitude for the physical beauty of the women, he is content to look on from his peripheral situation, to present descriptions of primarily visual beauty as a spectacle received, and not as an incitement to action or interaction. However, his situation is not as peripheral or spectral as he might hope, for he admits to being seen in the act of observing: “I should longer have indulged myself, had not the dear creatures called to me to ask what I wanted” (282). This calling out to the Spectator indicates both an observation of his observation,
and a question directed at this observed observer. Even in this fleeting encounter, the Spectator has been objectified – not merely rhetorically, in the prose of report, in the self-narration of his experientiality, but thematically as well— the objectification of the observer by an observer. Like the Spy being arrested, this is a moment not only of narrative collapsing, but of being seen by others. And yet, it is not a moment that is cultivated or explored, but recognized as one to avoid. This is the extent of interaction allowed in this scene, a mere moment of being seen, for Mr. Spectator immediately leaves without responding. He withholds the expression of his wants – “only ‘To look at you’” – because such a declaration made to the women would invite more than looking, and, to preserve his peripherality, he must avoid all but looking. Like Ward’s Spy, Mr. Spectator must maintain his distance to maintain the conditions of empirical observation. As will be explored in more detail in Chapter Three, a truly social interaction promises the observer’s sustained narrative centrality. However, when empirical detachment is made the standard of perception, social interactions can only disrupt such perception.
Chapter 2. Picturing Noise: The Limits of Attention in Hogarth’s Prints

Nor can one well avoid taking notice here of that general Absurdity committed by many of the esteem’d great Masters in Painting; who in one and the same Company or Assembly of Person jointly employ’d, and united according to the History in one single or common Action, represent to us not only two or three, but several, and sometimes all, speaking at once: which must naturally have the same effect on the Eye, as such Conversation wou’d have upon the Ear, were we in reality to hear it.

Earl of Shaftesbury. *The Judgment of Hercules*¹

In the previous chapter, I examined how *The London Spy* and *The Spectator* papers focalized the perceptual attention of its first-person observer by a modulation of affective proximity and distance at the periphery. In this chapter, I will again attempt to analyze the collapsing of distance in the empirical scene of observation, but this time as this applies to the pictorial narratives staged in William Hogarth’s urban prints. While there can be no easy one-for-one translation of the narratological terms at issue, there are indeed fruitful parallels to be drawn between the experiments in first-person observer narratives and Hogarth’s own innovations upon vanishing-point perspective framing and the off-scene observer it implies. However, before I expound upon considerations of narratology, I will first consider Hogarth’s own contribution to aesthetic theory, which turns upon a new model of perceptual attention, one organized not by the environment’s inundation upon a passive observer, but by the viewer’s active and embodied engagement within the environment. With a new theorization of the delimiting mechanics of active interfacing, Hogarth’s model of perception moves beyond moments of sensory inundation toward everyday attentions and inattentions. Giving due appreciation to Hogarth’s theory of lines

will help bridge a conceptual gulf between eighteenth-century theories of aesthetics and eighteenth-century treatises on history painting.

1-1. The Ideas of Beauty

As explored in the last chapter, the history of focalized interfacing can be understood as a play upon empiricist modes of inquiry and observation, and it is worth examining William Hogarth’s contributions in relation to these terms. For example, with respect to his aesthetic philosophy, Hogarth situates direct observation as central to the appreciation of pictorial composition. In the Introduction to *The Analysis of Beauty*, Hogarth takes “bigotted” painters and connoisseurs to task insofar as they “totally neglect, or at least disregard the works of nature, merely because they do not tally with what their minds are so strongly prepossessed with.” In doing so, Hogarth introduces the notion that such prepossessions shape, even distort, how perception is conceived. In fact, he addresses head on the possibility of such distortions, or “the surprising alterations objects seemingly undergo through the prepossessions and prejudices contracted by the mind” in order to avoid perpetuating them in his own *Analysis* (4-5).

The skeptical posture assumed in the Introduction might lead us to align Hogarth’s harangue against “prepossession” with Locke’s empiricist stance against “innate ideas,” in which he highlights the formative influence of social education to “instill into the unwary, and, as yet, unprejudiced understanding, (for white paper receives any characters) those doctrines they would have them retain and profess.” Indeed, following the logic established in the Introduction, what *The Analysis* offers as an alternative to

---


3*Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1.3.22. 83-84.
“prepossession” and “prejudice” are the true ideas one should have about beauty. The complete title of Hogarth’s work is actually *The Analysis of Beauty, written with a view of fixing the fluctuating Ideas of Taste*. The Introduction suggests that there are indeed ideas in the world – reliable ideas concerning the true nature of beauty – that are available if one makes the proper study. In Hogarth’s own words, conceptions of beauty are corrupted in the minds of men when “little or no time has been given for perfecting the ideas they ought to have in their minds, of the objects themselves in nature” (4). “Nature” thus provides the normative point of origin for all ideas of beauty, and all other ideas about beauty, the “fallacies” and the “prejudices,” can only be impoverished distortions of this nature.

Hogarth is not as fastidious as other aesthetic philosophers in maintaining a clear distinction between internal and external, so it is difficult to determine precisely the relation of “the ideas they ought to have in their minds” to “the objects themselves in nature.” He may in fact concede with Francis Hutcheson that “by Absolute or Original Beauty, is not understood any Quality suppos’d to be in the Object, which should of itself be beautiful, without relation to any Mind which perceives it,”4 for the perceiving mind is indeed critical to Hogarth’s appreciation of beauty and its relation to “the objects themselves in nature,” as even the above quotes demonstrate. For Hutcheson, it is aesthetic feeling’s dependence upon such perceptions that determines it as a decidedly internal sense, since the feeling of beauty merely corresponds subjectively alongside certain perceptions. This internal correspondence of emotion is commonplace in aesthetic theories at this time. Archibald

4Francis Hutcheson. *An Inquiry Into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004) 1.17, 27. Hutcheson reveals his representational theory of perception as he expounds on the sense of beauty and its relation to the perceiving instance: “The Ideas of Beauty and Harmony being excited upon our Perception of some primary Quality, and having relation to Figure and Time, may indeed have a nearer resemblance to Objects, than these Sensations, which seem not so much any Pictures of Objects, as Modifications of the perceiving Mind; and yet were there no Mind with a Sense of Beauty to contemplate Objects, I see not how they could be call’d beautiful” (1.17, 27)
Alison describes it in associationist terms: “the constant connection we discover [...] between the material quality and the quality productive of Emotion, renders at last the one expressive to us of the other.”⁵ As Thomas Reid, Hogarth’s contemporary, was quick to notice: “it is become the fashion among modern philosophers, to resolve all our perceptions into mere feelings or sensations in the person that perceives, without anything corresponding to those feelings in the external object.”⁶ Reid’s assessment is not very far off, for as different as these writers are in many other respects, for the most part they all render perception as decidedly passive, and the exclusive emphasis in aesthetic philosophies on internal feeling is an indication of that. The strong form of the distinction between internal and external leads to skeptical theories of not only aesthetic feeling but of perception as well. As we have already seen, Addison’s “Pleasures of the Imagination” essays posits that the mediating ideas of the imagination are all that one knows of the world, and it is within this fundamental epistemological limitation that Addison locates the origin of aesthetic pleasure:

Things would make but a poor appearance to the eye, if we saw them only in their proper figures and motions: and what reason can we assign for their exciting in us many of those ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the objects themselves (for such are light and colours), were not it to add supernumerary ornaments to the universe, and make it more agreeable to the imagination? [...] In short, our souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion.⁷

For Addison, as for Hutcheson, perception is embodied insofar as ideas of the world are drawn from the bodily senses. Distinguished from purely rational thoughts, both Addison’s

---

imaginative ideas and Hutcheson's sensations of beauty are pleasurable because of their closer proximity to the mechanical stimulations of the body. Yet for Addison, the ideas are all the more delusional as a result of this proximity. With the phrase “pleasing delusion,” Addison elides gross ideation with sensual pleasure, and in doing so, suggests that ideas are both pleasurable and delusive precisely because they are proximate to the body.

It must be emphasized that this new aesthetic focus on feeling is itself a considerable conceptual development in modeling perception, one that foregrounds the immediacy of experiencing and the perceiver’s responsiveness to the environment. With such a model in mind, Richard Steele focalizes Mr. Spectator’s tour of London in Spectator no. 454 (discussed in the previous chapter), in which he experiences pleasure after pleasure “at my Eyes” when viewing each of the city’s sites. As I have argued, though, this is not a model for integrating the observer within the environment he observes. The focus on internalized feeling is characteristic of the representational models of mind and perception—common to Addison, Hutcheson, Alison, Edmund Burke, David Hume, all—and such models emphasize, following Locke, the passivity of perception. If knowledge about the world arrives only passively from the senses, then the clear focus for aesthetics must be the feelings of beauty, which arise as internalized responses to external stimuli. Curiously, this theoretical emphasis on the passively experiential coincides with a counter, perhaps complementary focus in treatises upon painterly praxis, which emphasize perspectival objectivity. The position of the observer in British history painting—expressed most eloquently by the Earl of Shaftesbury and then by Jonathan Richardson, as will be discussed in much greater detail in the second part of the chapter—is evacuated for a realist

---

8Steele 277.
sense of objectivity. Accordingly, in British aesthetic theory, the observer is understood only as a passive experiencer, ensuring that the action of observation is obscured in both the composition and the viewing of a pictorial work.

With the mention of Shaftesbury, it is worth considering Ronald Paulson’s highly influential thesis, which places Hogarth very convincingly in a heterodox line of aesthetics, inherited from Addison’s celebration of “the strange,” and counter to Shaftesbury’s gentlemanly and disinterested aesthetics of rational design. Shaftesbury’s version of internal sense is indeed the most extremely disembodied as it is neo-Platonic; thus he claims that “whatever in nature is beautiful or charming is only the faint shadow of that first beauty” of God’s rational mind. And it will be clear indeed that Hogarth’s urban prints playfully violate a number of Shaftesbury’s central rules for history painting. However, Addison himself, father of the aesthetically strange, while certainly less concerned with rational considerations of beauty, conceives of perceptual interfacing in many ways just as disconnected from the world as Shaftesbury’s or Hutcheson’s rationally-oriented theories, as a result of their shared presumption of the passivity in perception and aesthetic feeling.

Hogarth avoids any such commitment to an epistemological divide between internal and external domains precisely because he does not confine his account of perception to the passive experience of sense and feeling. Instead, he presumes in the aesthetic viewer a degree of responsive interactivity with the objects of the world, and

---

introduces this interactivity through his sustained preoccupation with the mechanics of attention. A century later, William James, addressing the relative neglect of the role of attention in eighteenth-century theories of perception, argues that “[a]ttention, implying a degree of reactive spontaneity, would seem to break through the circle of pure receptivity which constitutes ‘experience’” for Enlightenment writers, since, for many of these writers, “experience is supposed to be something simply given” rather than actively learned through ongoing interaction.\textsuperscript{11} Despite the new focus on the experiential dimensions of aesthetic feeling, to the degree that aesthetic theories still depended on a Lockean theory of ideas, which locates all intellectual and selective dynamism in the “higher faculties” rather than in the attentive process of perception, such aesthetics are doomed to overlook the “reactive spontaneity” of the observer’s act of viewing. James does not seem to have been aware of the works of Hogarth or of Thomas Reid, who provides a very similar critique of ideas and the passivity of perception that underpins them.\textsuperscript{12} If the Introduction of The Analysis aligns Hogarth with empiricism then, it might align him more specifically with Thomas Reid’s more unusual approach to empiricism. Reid, who claims “there is but one way to the knowledge of nature’s works; the way of observation and experiment,”\textsuperscript{13} uses observation and experiment to erect his own practical philosophy of “common sense” and in doing so

\textsuperscript{11}William James. The Principles of Psychology (H.Holt, 1890) 402.

\textsuperscript{12}See Thomas Reid. An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense. (Edinburgh: A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1764). As discussed in the previous chapter, Reid, like Hogarth, critiques the theory of ideas by foregrounding attention as an active dynamic in perception: “this undoubtedly is so far true, that we can not raise any sensation in our minds by willing it; and, on the other hand, it seems hardly possible to avoid having the sensation when the object is presented. Yet it seems likewise true, that in proportion as the attention is more or less turned to a sensation, or diverted from it, that sensation is more or less perceived and remembered […] Whether, therefore, there can be any sensation where the mind is purely passive, I will not say: but I think we are conscious of having given some attention to every sensation which we remember, though ever so recent […] Sensation, imagination, memory, and judgment, have, by the vulgar, in all ages, been considered as acts of the mind” (59-60).

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid 2.
directs his own skeptical ire toward the philosophical discourse of ideas circulating among the prominent epistemologists of the day.

Like the common sense philosophy of Reid, *The Analysis of Beauty* highlights the more practical dimensions of perception, and Hogarth achieves this by emphasizing a theoretical consideration of the human body and its movements of perceptual engagement. As will become evident, Hogarth renders the body thoughtful by paying close attention to the mechanics of attention, a practical form of perceptual thoughtfulness. *The Analysis* explores in detail the emotional power of such states of rapt attention, and the hold that certain forms can command over perceivers. This is what prevents Hogarth’s aesthetics from becoming a pure internalization of feeling, for he situates perception not only with bodies that sense and feel but with bodies that move to explore the world around them. As such, unlike those of his contemporaries, Hogarth’s aesthetic theory links aesthetic feeling to an account of mobile and mobilizing attention. In this sense, the “fixing” of “the fluctuating Ideas of Taste” to which Hogarth aspires in his title might be understood to be a formal abstraction of the “fluctuating” movements of attention so essential to aesthetic perception, for the ideas of beauty in his *Analysis* are not internal feelings, but the animating movements of lines, which trace the interfacing of attention in the world.

1-2. The Movements of Interest

It quickly becomes apparent that Hogarth’s suggestive phrase, “the ideas they ought to have in their minds, of the objects themselves in nature,” is fundamentally linked to the “variety of lines, which serve to raise the ideas of bodies in the mind,” especially the lines

---

of beauty and grace—lines which captivate by animating ocular attention. It is important to appreciate just how this revision of “ideas” as lines positions the perceiver actively at the interface. For the lines do not merely trace the presence of objects in nature, although they certainly do this. More importantly, each line also posits a movement: the movement of the eye’s attention. Central to this theory of lines are the physical mechanics of vision, especially the mechanics of the human eye. To better understand how the active movements of the eye figure into Hogarth’s aesthetics, it will help to consider a passage in which the author explains how imaginary lines might be said to emerge from the small, everyday movements required for visual perception. In this passage, Hogarth discusses a reader’s efforts to scan printed letters in a book. Referring to one of his own diagrams, “which represents the eye, at a common reading distance viewing a row of letters,” Hogarth dilates upon the temporality of reading:

Now as we read, a ray may be supposed to be drawn from the center of the eye to that letter it looks at first, and to move successively with it from letter to letter the whole length of the line: but if the eye stops at any particular letter, A, to observe it more than the rest, these other letters will grow more and more imperfect to the sight, the farther they are situated on either side of A, as is express’d in the figure: and when we endeavor to see all the letters in a line equally perfect at one view, as it were, this imaginary ray must course it to and fro with great celerity. Thus though the eye, strictly speaking, can only pay due attention to these letters in succession, yet the amazing ease and swiftness, with which it performs this task, enables us to see considerable spaces with sufficient satisfaction and at one sudden view.

The example of reading allows Hogarth to break down visual scansion into discretely recognizable moments, by focusing on the eye’s successive scansion of each alphabetical letter. The key insight of the passage is that visual attention is fundamentally structured by the physical limitations of the eye. Because of these structural limitations, it is impossible

---

16 Ibid.
for the eye to give equally focused attention to everything in its visual field. For example, “if the eye stops at any particular letter, A,” the result is that the other surrounding characters “will grow more and more imperfect to the sight,” since these letters are situated within the increasingly imprecise peripheral field. For this reason, it is simply not possible for the eye to give the same focused attention to all of the letters at a single instant. This is the temporality of visual attention, which, premised on ocular limits, is necessarily successive in its nature, however swift the succession.

Hogarth’s example of reading makes it clear that the imaginary lines of the eye are lines of attention as much as they are tracing lines in the world. For Hogarth, lines are not to be understood as mere spatializing striations, fixing objects in mathematical space; instead, the movement that lines signify are intimately bound up with the viewer’s interest in tracing such movement. In Tom Huhn’s apt if poetic words, “Line makes itself invisible for the sake of a pleasure beyond that of the seen object [...] a purpose beyond that of cognition or recognition.”\textsuperscript{17} With his foregrounding of attention, Hogarth aligns himself with the heterodox aesthetic tradition against Shaftesbury’s ideal of disinterested beauty, since ocular attention is organized by desire. Shaftesbury distinguishes the contemplative examination of forms from desirous interest in them when he claims that “never can the form be of real force where it is uncontemplated, unjudged of, unexamined and stands only as the accidental note or token of what appeases provoked sense and satisfies the brutish part,” arguing that interest in beautiful form is absent of reason, and thus true beauty.\textsuperscript{18} However, what Hogarth seeks to isolate with his aesthetic theory of lines is precisely the


\textsuperscript{18} “The Moralists” 3.1, 331.
forms that “provoke” brutish sense with “real force,” for this is what commands attention. According to Huhn, reason gets subsumed as an aspect of interested viewing, as “the very movement of thought” is depicted by Hogarth “according to his conception of the pleasures of sight.” Hogarth describes the “real force” of these attractions when he recounts two memories of following graceful movements with his eyes; first, a stick-and-ribbon ornament fluttering in the wind, then a seductive dance:

But the pleasure [the stick and ribbon ornament] gives the eye is still more lively when in motion. I never can forget my frequent strong attention to it, when I was very young, and that its beguiling movement gave me the same kind of sensation then, which I have since felt at seeing a country-dance; tho’ perhaps the latter might be somewhat more engaging, particularly when my eye eagerly pursued a favourite dancer, through all the windings of the figure, who then was bewitching to the sight, as the imaginary ray, we were speaking of, was dancing with her all the time.

In each instance, Hogarth describes how the motions before him transfix his attention. It is clear that the “imaginary ray” of the eye acts not as a mathematical coordinate, but is charged with the observer’s interactive investment in viewing. The sudden transition from the memory of the stick-with-ribbons to those of female dancers is intriguing, for it moves the fascination with movement into a more explicitly erotically charged desire. Hogarth does not shy away from such eroticism, since clearly such desire operates as a component of the interest that fixes attention. Yet it is the ocular transfixion in the childhood memory of the ribbon-stick that prompts the easy transition to eroticism, suggesting that such seemingly innocent visual fascinations are also compelled by something like sensuous desire.

Much of Hogarth’s *Analysis* involves speculating upon the nature of this desire, the desire of the eyes. As is emphasized all throughout *The Analysis*, “variety” serves as the

---

19 Huhn 76.
20 *Analysis* 27-8.
most essential term underpinning Hogarth’s notion of the force that eyes desire. Thus, speaking of the serpentine line in particular, he observes that this curving line, “by its waving and winding at the same time different ways, leads the eye,” like other beautifully curving lines, “in a pleasing manner along the continuity of its variety” (38-39). The fluttering ribbon ornament and the bewitching dancer lead Hogarth’s eye in just this fashion, producing a fluid variability of motion. Underpinning the aesthetic force of variety is a theory of perceptual habituation and unrest: “The ear is as much offended with one even continued note, as the eye is with being fix’d to a point, or to the view of a dead wall,”21 which, building upon Addison’s key aesthetic concept of novelty,22 theorizes a continued ocular desire to seek out variety. This was an aesthetic concept developed by a number of theorists after Addison. For Reid, the desire in this unrest is explicit: “The eye is not satiated with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; something is always wanted. Desire and hope never cease, but remain to spur us on to something yet to be acquired.”23 This baseline propensity toward seeking out variety is necessary for understanding the different features that capture attention in Hogarth’s Analysis. For if the eyes are restlessly moving about in search of variety, what will fix them, in Hogarth’s understanding, is not what will cease all such movement, but what can organize it in “composed variety.” The composition of such variety is important, “for variety uncomposed, and without design, is confusion

21 Ibid 26.
22 See Joseph Addison. “Spectator No. 412,” The Spectator: In Eight Volumes. 6 (London: John C. Nimmo, 1898): “We are quickly tired with looking […] where everything continues fixed and settled in the same place and posture, but find our thoughts a little agitated and relieved at the sight of such objects as are ever in motion” (78).
23 Reid, “Of Taste” 493.
and deformity” and will thus not properly organize the ocular movements of visual attention.

1-3. Ut Pictura Poesis

Although it may not appear immediately obvious, it is with the organization of ocular movements that Hogarth broaches theoretical parallels with narrative procedures like focalization, as I will show in a moment. To appreciate the respective ways that lines of beauty and grace organize the eye’s movements in Hogarth’s theory, it is important to keep in mind two features of visual perception: one, that “the eye, strictly speaking, can only pay due attention […] in succession,” and, two, that “the amazing ease and swiftness, with which it performs this task, enables us to see considerable spaces with sufficient satisfaction and at one sudden view.” There is thus a dynamic between the constitutive movements of successive attention and the overall experience of seeing “at one sudden view.” G.E. Lessing, in his famous Laocoön, breaks down the moments of visual engagement in a similar fashion:

what is the process by which we arrive at a distinct conception of any object in space? It is this; we first contemplate each separate part, then the combination of those parts,

---

24 Analysis 17. In some ways, Hogarth follows Hutcheson here, who argues that the beautiful is always a balance between Uniformity and Variety. Thus, in the following passage, although Variety is clearly animating Hutcheson’s enthusiasm, he maintains throughout that it is the Uniformity underpinning such Variety that produces delight: “And how amazing is the Unity of Mechanism, when we shall find an almost infinite diversity of Motions, all their Actions in walking, running, flying, swimming; all their serious Efforts for Self-preservation, all their freakish Contortions when they are gay and sportful, in all their various Limbs, perform’d by one simple Contrivance of a contracting Muscle, apply’d with inconceivable Diversities to answer all these Ends!” (Hutcheson 1.2.8, 32-33). The emphasis on Uniformity over Variety allows Hutcheson to skirt the foundational desire for variety, and to align aesthetic feeling with rational appreciation of design. For his own part, Hogarth also vacillates in his valorization of variety, emphasizing in some moments its essential relativity, and in others, the normative force of certain shapes which optimally maximize “composed variety.” In such moments he maintains that “strictly speaking, there is but one precise line, properly to be called the line of beauty” (Analysis 49). Not surprisingly, this move to fix the beautiful form and its “different degrees” of deviation leads Hogarth in certain passages to rank various forms according to his own culturally marked preferences, many of which follow predictable standards of national, racial, and socioeconomic identification.
and lastly, the whole together. Our senses perform these various operations with such amazing rapidity that they appear to us but as a single one; and this rapidity is indispensably necessary to enable us to form a conception of the whole, which in fact is nothing more than the result of our conceptions of the parts and of their combination.  

Again, what seems to be a “single operation” – contemplating the whole – turns out to be, outside of everyday awareness, a series of various ocular movements, performed with “amazing rapidity,” of contemplating “each separate part” and “the combination of those parts.” Movement between the parts enables our understanding of the whole, yet both Lessing and Hogarth suggest viewers may not be fully aware of our successive, or partialized interfacing.  

These successive, micro-movements of interest are precisely what the lines of beauty and grace organize into a transfixed attention. The line of beauty is the simpler of the two lines; “being composed of two curves contrasted,” it is as a subtle two-dimensional S-curve. All of its curvature is fully on display, and so its “whole” is eminently knowable and intelligible. The line of beauty also represents in *The Analysis* Hogarth’s naïve aspiration to normatively “fix” within a precise curve qualities like variety that are elsewhere acknowledged as highly relative. Its waving lines direct the movements of the eye pleasingly, but it presents no difficulty in moving from the parts to the “one sudden view” of the whole.

While the line of beauty captures the immediacy of the eye’s desirous attachment, Hogarth’s conception of the line of grace is more suggestive of narrativity. Its narrativity arises not from its immediate intelligibility, but from the modulation and deferment of

---


26 Thomas Reid also suggests that, in everyday vision, the variable “visual appearances” are being taken as signs for the “objects themselves”: “the visible appearances of objects […] no sooner appear than, quick as lightning, the thing signified succeeds, and engrosses all our regard” (*Inquiry* 4.3, 119).

27 *Analysis* 38-39.
intelligibility, which engages attention even more comprehensively. The deferment of full intelligibility is encapsulated by the serpentine line of grace, which occupies more dimensions than the line of beauty. Indeed, “by its twisting so many different ways,” the serpentine line, “may be said to enclose (though but a single line) varied contents; and, therefore, all its variety cannot be expressed on paper by one continued line without the assistance of the imagination.”28 Because it “dips out of sight” and thus “gives play to the imagination,” the serpentine line escapes knowability at “one sudden view;”29 and it is this very deferment of ready intelligibility, the deferment of the “whole,” which invites continued interest and organizes the successive movements of the eye as an engaged pursuit. Hogarth aligns this evasive aspect of the serpentine line with which he calls “intricacy,” a specialized form of variety which engages not just the eyes by the entire imaginative desire of the viewer. The evasions of intricacy engage the fundamental restlessness of desire, since the “active mind is ever bent to be employ’d.” In such an employment, “Every arising difficulty, that for a while attends and interrupts the pursuit, gives a sort of spring to the mind, enhances the pleasure, and makes what would else be toil and labour, become sport and recreation.”30 Thus, through intricate arrangement, the difficulties of obstruction and evasion are organized into something like suspenseful anticipation, and partialized movements continue meaningfully even without a comprehensive sense of the “whole.”

28Ibid.
29Ibid 40.
30Ibid 24. Alexander Gerard will borrow this understanding of difficulty and make it a centerpiece of his theory of aesthetic engagement. See An Essay on Taste (London: A. Millar, 1759): “Not only the performance of actions, but also the conception of most objects, to which we have not been accustomed, is attended with difficulty. On this account, when new objects are in themselves indifferent, the efforts, that are necessary for conceiving them, exalt and enliven the frame of the mind, make it receive a strong impression from them, and thus render them in some measure agreeable” (5).
By situating viewers amid the various “parts,” suspensefully and indefinitely, such intricate arrangement makes explicit what before went unnoticed in the line of beauty: the partialized and successive process of visual interfacing itself. From these movements of partiality and succession, one can extrapolate two distinct dimensions of narratological analysis of the pictorial plane. It should be said that our narratological analysis will not seek out the precise lines of beauty or grace in Hogarth’s prints, but instead will trace the narrative intricacy that suspends and disrupts the history painting’s realist formulation of the narrative instant. As it relates to succession, Hogarth’s theory of suspenseful engagement will inform our understanding of both the viewer and the focalizing frame of the implied observer in Hogarth’s prints. Within the narrative instant, one finds a swift succession of interpretive engagements that bring the scene into view for the viewer. In the passage from G.E. Lessing’s *Laocoön* quoted above, which details “the process by which we arrive at a distinct conception of any object in space” at length, Lessing offers this description of visual perception’s temporality as a contrast to the temporality of language, and thus the narrative arts. Lessing’s point is that, although perception can be broken down into successive stages and objects into parts successively perceived, it all occurs “with such amazing rapidity” that one seems to encounter objects in the world as if immediately and at one view. He contrasts the seeming immediacy of visual perception with the more protracted temporality of speech, and from this contrast arrives at his influential conclusion that bodies, as unified wholes, are the proper objects of the visual arts, and actions, as successive relations, are the proper objects of the narrative arts.31

---

31Lessing argues that readers and listeners of language are unable to connect the successive parts of described bodies rapidly enough, and thus efforts to convey bodies descriptively creates undue difficulty and strain: “To the eye, the parts contemplated remain constantly present, and may be recurred to over and over
What Hogarth’s scene of suspenseful fascination does, however, is to defer the appearance of this “whole,” as an intricate arrangement refers the eye indefinitely to various “parts.” The temporality of visual perception, its “amazing rapidity” in producing a whole, is in this way impeded, even slowed down, as the perceiver casts about indefinitely among the parts. While this does not necessarily push the visual composition into the temporality of language, it does sound suggestively like Lessing’s description of the interpretive difficulties presented by visual language: “what an effort, what an exertion would it require to revive their impressions all in the same order and with the same distinctness, and to think them over again with even moderate rapidity, so as to form a tolerable idea of the whole!” It is this very effort that Hogarth highlights as essential to the enticing variety of suspenseful engagement, which is itself interpretive difficulty, and Hogarth escalates this difficulty within his own urban prints by multiplying the objects and actions within a given instant. As such, this interpretive engagement involves the viewer not only physically, but, by evoking suspense, imaginatively as well. In Reid’s estimation, the engagement of such variety is necessarily “a relation which the thing has to the knowledge of the person.” The viewer’s perceptual understanding is thus not static, but drawn out within the process of continued and successive engagement. The temporality of succession, investigatory as well as ocular, refers to the focalizing suspense of the viewer’s interpretation, and so will inform my analysis of the implied observer in Hogarth’s urban “histories.”

again; on the contrary, when the ear is the channel of perception, the parts described are lost, if they are not preserved in memory” (Laocoön 166-67).
32Ibid.
33Reid. “Of Taste” 493.
As it relates to partiality, Hogarth’s theory of suspenseful engagement will also inform our analysis of the viewing within the fabula, regarding the focalization upon various reflectors depicted within the diegetic frame of urban “histories.” For, to the extent that such pictorial histories capture perceiving bodies only within one narrative instant of perceptual interfacing, the embodiments of interfacing presented are necessarily partialized, since they can only be engaged with particular objects, not every object, and can only be directed in a particular direction, not every direction. The partiality involved in perceptual engagement thus reveals the embodiment of the perceptual principle of selection, which in *The Analysis* is shown to be the selective interest of the viewer’s restless attention. Thomas Reid’s own theorization of attention helps draw out the features of this selection which Hogarth develops explicitly in his pictorial depictions of reflector-perceivers:

> When we look at an object, the circumjacent objects may be seen at the same time, although more obscurely and indistinctly: for the eye hath a considerable field of vision, which it takes in at once. But we attend only to the object we look at. The other objects which fall within the field of vision are not attended to; and therefore are as if they were not seen. If any of them draws our attention, it naturally draws the eyes at the same time; for, in the common course of life, the eyes always follow the attention.34

In this passage, Reid presents a slightly different emphasis than Hogarth and Lessing by highlighting, not only the necessary movements of the eye, but also the complex interplay between the eye’s focal points and peripheral fields of vision. For in Reid’s analysis, it is the “circumjacent” or peripheral field of vision which presents to the viewer “a considerable field of vision, which it takes in at once.” However, Reid suggests that objects in the peripheral fields of vision have a dual status as both seeable but not necessarily noticed, and this status enables at all times the perceptual principle of selection to distribute

---

34 Reid. *Inquiry* 6.13, 178.
attention accordingly. Thus, such an object in the periphery might draw the eye’s focus, bringing such objects into attention, but they also might not, for, to the extent that such objects are “not attended to,” although “within the field of vision,” they are for the viewer “as if they were not seen,” as features excluded from the instance of selection. In presenting attention in this way, Reid introduces into the selective field of vision distinct levels of perceptual awareness. As Reid remarks elsewhere, “it is one thing to have the sensation, and another to attend to it, and make it a distinct object of reflection.”

By depicting interested perceivers, Hogarth provides a striking image of perception as selectively responsive—engagement as, also, necessarily, disengagement. This understanding of perception, only implicit in the theorization of deeply interested viewers in The Analysis, is made fully explicit when depicting reflectors in the crowded streets of London. Importantly, this image is not an elevated depiction of humanity as ennobled by rational faculties, but rather a comedic depiction as selectively limited in the capacity to engage with the world—with other people, with the story constituted. The city affords Hogarth with the opportunity to play with crowds, not as passive witnesses of a history, but as so many reflectors rupturing the seams of the fabula, despite the unities of space and time they share. It is by crowding the fabula with distracted reflectors that Hogarth’s urban prints reveal the centrality of the implied observer in the periphery, and the experiential domain of that externalized position. The theorization of the transfixed viewer in The Analysis thus suggests a way to analyze not only the extradiegetic role of the peripheral observer whose implied perceptions frame Hogarth’s satirical urban histories, but also the role of the perceivers depicted in such histories, and, especially, the interaction between

\[35\text{Ibid 5.2, 64-5.}\]
these different layers of implied perception. Before assessing Hogarth’s innovations, though, I will first outline the narrative features of history painting in the eighteenth-century, to better analyze the precise ways that Hogarth’s urban prints play with these features.

2-1. The Tracing of the Instant

When Hogarth proclaims in that *Analysis of Beauty* “That the straight line, and the circular line, together with their different combinations [...] circumscribe all visible objects whatsoever,” he is not making a strong ontological claim about lines in the world “actually existing on the real forms themselves,” as mathematical outlines, but is creating a conceptual bridge between the linear trajectories of the viewer’s interest and the drawn lines representing objects in pictorial compositions.36 Within the realm of composition, every object is indeed circumscribed by such lines, and thus “all visible objects” within the frame might be said to anticipate the viewer’s potential interest. This is no mirroring of the world, but a focalizing medium. Mieke Bal, one of the few narratologists confident in narratology’s application to the pictorial arts, writes of line in just this way:

In narrative discourse, focalization is the direct content of the linguistic signifiers. In visual art, it would then be the direct content of visual signifiers like lines, dots, light and dark, and composition. In both cases, as in literary stories, focalization is already an interpretation, a subjectivized content. What we see before our mind’s eye, it has already been interpreted.37

Bal applies this broad interpretation of focalization to a range of visual compositions, not limited to realist representations. While the “subjectivized content” that Bal argues is

---

36 Ibid.
conveyed by lines and composition is arguably more aesthetic than narrative in nature, it is the aesthetic concern with the construction of experientiality that will prove fruitful for the present narratological analysis. For Hogarth’s comedic urban histories especially, the innovations of narrativity produced depend crucially upon the interdependence between formal elements of composition and the diegetic frame of the realist scene depicted.

This interdependence was itself not entirely untheorized in the eighteenth century. Before Hogarth’s *Analysis*, which places such critical emphasis on the movement of the eye around the composition, Jonathan Richardson, in *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*, published in 1725, discusses the underlying importance of composition in a picture, even without respect to content:

‘Tis what first of all presents it self to the Eye, and prejudices us in Favour Of, or with an Aversion To it; ‘tis This that directs us to the Ideas that are to be convey’d by the Painter, and in what Order, and the Eye is Delighted with the Harmony at the same time as the Understanding is Improv’d.”

Richardson stresses that an emotional as well as an intellectual response are provoked by the lines and shapes of the composition, responses operative even when the particular details cannot be distinguished. This is indeed the subjectivized-content to which Bal refers, the focalizing orientation of the pictorial plane that subsists whether there is representational content or not. Even at this stage of abstraction, following Hogarth, the lines should lead the eye around the various parts of the picture. Indeed, Richardson argues that the composition “directs us to the Ideas that are to be convey’d by the Painter, and in what Order,” even before the ideas are present, suggesting a proto-narrative syntax of focus and connection even before content is provided. Likewise, such compositional determinations are already evocative of aesthetic feelings of pleasure or aversion.

---

Richardson, although largely building upon the Earl of Shaftesbury’s *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules*, diverges from the Earl in this value paid to what first “presents it self to the Eye.” Shaftesbury, for whom the depiction of virtue is the most essential dimension of history painting, discusses composition only with regard to representation, and evinces suspicion of the “false Relish which is govern’d rather by what immediately strikes the Sense” since it is an appeal to the body rather than to “Thought and Reason.”

Composition at this stage is akin to the authorial principle of selection; it is the trace of the author’s focalizing. As such, although it has a viewer, it implies no peripheral observer nor posits a focalized reflector. Many narratologists are reluctant to apply the terms of narrativity to such pictorial abstractions. Some like Wendy Steiner have argued that such terms should be applied only to pictures in the realist tradition, such as history painting: “The key lies in realist interpretation: to read a painting narratively we must see the repeated shapes as people, their body postures as gestures, their background as a spatial environment, and the scene represented as a pregnant moment expandable into an entire temporal sequence.” Although Steiner is herself interested in an early-Renaissance tradition in which such realism does not exclude a “co-presence of temporally distinct moments,” the predominant tendency in Western compositions since has been to assume “that we are observing a scene through a frame from a fixed vantage point at one moment in time.” This is the traditional understanding that Shaftesbury advocates in *A Notion*,

39 Cooper. *Notion* 46.
42 Ibid 164, 158.
and it is the one most often taken up by Hogarth as well. Shaftesbury calls this “the Rule of Consistency,” which is the “setting in view such Passages or Events as have actually subsisted, or according to Nature might well subsist, or happen together in one and the same instant,” and he is very explicit in regulating the conditions of this rule of temporal specificity:

every Master in Painting, when he has made choice of the determinate Date or Point of Time, according to which he wou’d represent his History, is afterwards debar’d the taking advantage from any other Action than what is immediately present, and belonging to the single Instant he describes: for if he passes the present only for a moment, he may as well pass it for many years.

It is this highly determinate rendering of time as “the single Instant,” along with the determinate vantage established by vanishing-point perspective, that posits in history paintings not only focalized reflectors—those depicted figures taking part in the Action—but also the fixed vantage of an implied observer. It is the diegetic premise of specified place and time, organized by the ground-level orientation of the picture plane, which suggests the point-of-view of a peripheral observer, and establishes itself as a scene that is observable. Note that the role of the implied observer in traditional history paintings is akin to the observer of empirical reportage—perspective is peripherally situated, and on-the-ground perception is rendered as factual rather than experiential. Thus, the rendering of perspective, which formally indicates a subjective vantage of perception, becomes the means for objectivizing the action as history, sideling the very act of perception upon which it is premised.

The primary function of the implied observer in traditional history painting, then, is to frame the observable scene of action. And, as a history, the composition depicts a

---

43Cooper. Notion 10.
44Ibid 9.
scene of action in which “not only Men, but Manners, and human Passions are represented.” The introduction of human actors is of central importance to the understanding of traditional pictorial focalization, for the viewer is presented with more than mere objects composed together; as Steiner insists, “to read a painting narratively we must see the repeated shapes as people” and “their body postures as gestures.” At this level, one can begin to appreciate the interplay between the abstract focalizing features of the composition—the organized movements of the eye—and the representational elements of the fabula. According to Shaftesbury, “what is principal and chief, shou’d immediately shew itself, without leaving the Mind in any uncertainty.” Richardson makes the compositional force upon the viewer explicit: “the Principal Action [...] is what immediately takes the Eye, and declares it self to be the Subject of the Picture.” This foregrounding of principal action is literally that: the placement of figures prominently in the foreground of the perspectival plane, and generally close to the center. This helps to constitute human figures as reflector characters that pertain to the story; human figures placed far in the background of the picture plane are thus rendered less noticeable; in Shaftesbury’s words, “distant Figures, and the diminutive kind [...] may rather be consider’d as a sort of Landskip.”

Shaftesbury names this determinative procedure “Subordination,” and it is the central way that he addresses issues of composition, via the representational features of the fabula rather than their formal abstraction. The policy of subordination is a way of

---

47 Richardson 58.
48 Ibid 35. See Speidel: “A relatively simple visual technique to make sure that something is not perceived first is to make it small, to put it in the background and to avoid bright colors” (189).
organizing multiple objects constituting the composition, but especially multiple bodies, multiple actions, multiple reflectors. It is a pictorial adaptation of the Aristotelian Unity of Action, which dictates that, “Whatsoever appears in a historical Design, which is not essential to the Action, serves only to confound the Representation and perplex the Mind; more particularly, if these Episodick parts are so lively wrought, as to vie with the principal Subject, and contend for Precedency.”49 Again, Richardson translates this principle into a dynamic involving the viewer: “Whatever Under-Actions may be going on in the same instant with That [principal action], and which it may be proper to insert, to Illustrate, or Amplify the Composition, they must not divide the Picture, and the Attention of the Spectator.”50 It is clear that subordination serves a narrative function of focalizing the viewer’s attention, organizing ocular movement toward a localized form and action, which serve as a centering reference point for the “whole.” One can also see that this procedure reflects broader concerns of genre and social hierarchy as it singles out the virtuous dignity of the historical actor as worthy of such attention.51

How does subordination bear on the function of reflector characters? It will be best to turn to an example. I will refer to one of Hogarth’s early adaptions of history painting, Hudibras’ First Adventure (Figure 1), a plate from his series on Samuel Butler’s mock-heroic poem. As Liam Lenihan explains of these early forays, “prints were not subject to the rules laid down for history painting, and so Hogarth played with the dictates of this

49 Cooper. Notion 33-4.
50 Richardson 56-7.
51 Such subordination is naturalized for Hutcheson as a central feature of the beautiful in design: “This Beauty arising from Correspondence to Intention, would open to curious Observers a new Scene of Beauty in the Works of Nature, by considering how the Mechanism of the various Parts known to us, seems adapted to the Perfection of that Part, and yet in Subordination to the Good of some System or Whole” (1.4.7, 45).
‘higher genre.’”53 Yet while already adapting the high form of history painting to a comedic subject, Hogarth remains fairly faithful in this print to the conventions discussed by Shaftesbury and Richardson. Despite the presence of a crowd of figures in the picture plane, it is clear that the figure of Hudibras, high above all others atop his horse at the center-left, is the principal character of this history. Ralpho, the figure to his left, while also mounted on a steed, is placed at the very periphery of the composition; as a result, all of the mob’s ocular attention (which, compositionally, narrows into a pointed triangle) is pointed directly at Hudibras as he wields his pistol. In order to analyze how this particular instance of

subordination organizes characters as reflectors, attention must be paid to the bodily dispositions of each of the characters. “That the Face, and Air, as well as our Actions, indicate the Mind is indisputable,” argues Richardson, and he thus recommends paying attention to “the Set, or Motion of the Head, Eyes, or Mouth: to infer how a given character is engaged.” Shaftesbury maintains that history paintings should showcase “all sorts of judicious Representations of the human Passions” by the attitudes of the body and expressions of the face; to such displays of affect, I will also add displays of action and those of attention. Action, affect, and attention—these are the principal displays available to reflector characters.

By examining the “Hudibras” plate, it is possible to discern the relation of displays of action to those of attention. Any of the depicted characters, at least in the foreground, might be said to be displaying an action—for most members of the mob, threatening violence; for Ralpho, praying, etc.—but, as a result of all of the displays of ocular attention directed toward the figure of Hudibras, it is the hero’s action of wielding his pistol that is singled out as the principal action of the story. Indeed, when determining causal centrality, “Of special importance is body language, such as emotionally charged facial expressions or gestures, in particular when this has a visible effect on other characters.” The determination of which gestures matter most to the fabula thus depends upon the indications of “visible effects on other characters.” What read most clearly as a visible effect in this print, and thus as an indication of causal centrality, are the embodied positions of visual interest displayed by the mob, indicated by the turns of their heads, with the

54 Richardson 92, 101.
55 Cooper, Notion 35.
56 Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory 432.
bridges of their noses casting an imaginary line toward the direction of the object of interest:
Hudibras. As a result of this visible effect of Hudibras’s action, all of the other actions in
Hogarth’s plate (e.g. threatening, praying, etc.) become subordinated as “Under-Actions,”
to borrow Richardson’s term, to this principal action. Strangely, it is the uniform attention
of the mob to the action of Hudibras that subordinates the mob’s own actions to that to
which they attend. Attention becomes the currency of narrative subordination to such a
principal. Their attention as reflectors directs the viewer’s eyes toward what matters most
in this narrative moment, which is the threatening advance of Hudibras upon the bear-
baiters. The inverse corollary, that a principal action’s significance can only be recognized
as significant to the extent it is observed, is not here explicit; in this scenario, it is suggested
that the significance of the action itself is what commands attention. It is the act of
observing so readily, so uniformly, and so attentively that subordinates the observer to what
is observed. In this sense, then, one might construe not only the observing reflectors but,
also, the implied observer as subordinated as well, since Hudibras’s historical action is
given such commanding precedence as to render the peripheral position of observation
narratively invisible. This is the subordination proper to history painting.

2-2. The Crowding of the Instant

Subordination is the Shaftesburean rule that Hogarth plays with most in his
experiments with comedic urban histories. His tendency toward densely populated prints—
the attention given to mobs and to crowds—allows Hogarth to achieve profound
innovations with narrative “intricacy,” and the interpretive “difficulty” it creates in moving
from part to whole. By populating his histories in this way, Hogarth may well have been
responding, irreverently, to Shaftesbury, for in his essay the Earl warns directly that “The multiplication of the Subjects, tho subaltern, renders the Subordination more difficult to execute in the Ordonnance or Composition of a Work. And if the subordination be not perfect, the order (which makes the beauty) remains imperfect.” 57 Indeed, the multiplication of subjects becomes one of the most characteristic traits of many of Hogarth’s most famous plates. Even within the early print of Hudibras considered above, Hogarth crowds the composition with human figures, and the narrative effect is mixed. We have observed how Hogarth achieves a sense of narrative subordination through the “visible effects” of ocular attention, yet we can also appreciate the remarkable individuality that Hogarth gives to each of the foregrounded members of the mob. Not only is there a range of builds and postures making up this otherwise unified mob, but there is also a range of affects among its members, including surprise, laughter, fear, and bellicose anger. While ocular attention is almost uniformly directed toward the hero at the left, each member in the foreground serves also as a reflector of affect, making available an experiential dimension that is highly individualized to each reflector, despite their ocular subordination to Hudibras as principal.

We can compare this individuation to a very different depiction of crowd attention from the previous century: Wenceslaus Hollar’s *The True Maner of the Execution of Thomas Earle of Strafford*, printed in 1641 (Figure 2). In Hollar’s depiction, the bodily posture of each member of the crowd is almost identical, with attention turned away toward the execution preparations, located at the center-right. Hollar’s print is not organized as a

proper history painting, and so the scene of execution, as the narrative center, does not, without the help of the legend, strike the eye immediately because of the sheer numbers of figures included in the composition. However, it is the very uniformity of these figures’ dispositions in gazing toward the chopping block, from all surrounding angles, which allows the viewer to establish the narrative focus, unambiguously, at the center-right. Because each reflector in the crowd functions purely to orient attention to that principal action, there is little to no individuation given to reflectors with respect to posture and affect, save for the few individuals clamoring for a view in the far left. Hogarth’s print, by

---

contrast, constitutes a much smaller crowd, but while maintaining the subordination of ocular attention, introduces the “imperfections” of individuation, and achieves through the variation of forms a broad variation of diegetic experientiality in so doing.

When Hogarth individuates not only displays of affect but also displays of attention, the effect upon subordination is both compositionally and narratively profound. Unlike the mob in the *Hudibras* print, this individuation is decidedly urban in the way it organizes the disparate figures of a crowd within the fabula. We can see this difference, for instance, in the first plate in another print series, *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (Figure 3). Like the *Hudibras* print, this plate revolves around a central character, developed in subsequent plates, but presented here amid a great number of other figures. Unlike *Hudibras*, however, it is not immediately apparent in this instance which is the principal actor or action, for the plate is populated with various scenes of action which compete for attention, and the viewer is no longer provided with the directional cues of a uniform ocular attention. Based upon considerations of compositional foregrounding, with the linear convergence of the wall corners with the central lamp post providing a further focalizing prompt, we can infer that the action that should take narrative precedence is the skewering of the dog with the arrow. Indeed, this is the scene which involves the anti-hero of the series, Tom Nero, and the pointing graffiti artist reveals him as the boy skewering the dog. This is a curious introduction for the main character of a progress narrative, since the print makes it so difficult to single out Tom’s actions as particularly noteworthy. Tom’s face is obscured by the angle at which he is situated, his cruelty to the dog is assisted by the cruelty of two other boys helping him, and, perspectivally and affectively, the “Youth of gentler Heart” who attempts to prevent the cruelty is much more readily singled out as a noteworthy
protagonist. Even more significantly, Tom’s scene of cruelty is crowded by competing scenes close by; just above him two boys singe a bird’s eyeball with fire, to his right another

Figure 3. William Hogarth. *The First Stage of Cruelty* (1750)\(^\text{59}\)

boy pulls a rope tied to a bone tightly around a dog’s tail, and to his left a boy crouches with a rooster, preparing, with two boys diagonal from him, for a cockfight. These “Under-Actions” are not clearly subordinated to Tom’s action, and, as such, not only crowd Tom’s space compositionally, but they crowd the fabula diegetically, by introducing numerous isolated actions that vie for moral significance. One can see this plate as a unique take on the problem of iteration, which constitutes the urban everyday, and which is the driving force of all of Hogarth’s moralizing progresses. In this particular instance, however, Hogarth emphasizes the ‘typical’ nature of systemic social ills like animal cruelty, and only later in the print series individuates Tom’s history as narratively singular.

In Shaftesbury’s estimation, “the order (which makes the beauty)” is rendered “imperfect” in this print, for the variety of parts are not subservient to a principal, distracting attention from the center, and from each other. Yet Hogarth appears to be after a different aesthetic effect than Shaftesburean beauty in this and other urban prints, and exploits this decentralizing strategy to situate viewers amid a very different kind of vanishing-point perspective. Again, the animating term of Hogarth’s Analysis is not rational intelligibility, but the perceptual movements organized by variety, especially that of intricacy leading the eye suspensefully on a “chase.” What makes this print’s individuation especially distinct from the Hudibras print is not just the individuation of bodies and actions, which does allow for a greater degree of dynamic intricacy in composition, but also in the multiplication and dispersal of reflectoral sight-lines. Whereas the sight-lines in Hudibras all pointed to one figure, in The First Stage of Cruelty, ocular attention directs us instead toward multiple and distinct centers of action. In all there are seven separate scenes of cruelty depicted within the same vanishing-point frame, all
organized by at least one reflector attending to the action. Yet if the eyes of the viewer trace over any given scene of action, such as Tom’s skewering of the dog, they are all too easily lead toward the lines and forms of a completely different scene, since these forms, and the scenes they constitute, are made to overlap. Spatially and temporally, they occur in the same place and time, and yet the reflectoral attention which helps constitute them serves also to sever them from the actions to which they are proximate. The fabula, established by unities of time and space, is thus splintered into a number of insular if proximate diegetic centers. One can understand this splintering to accord with the property of “facticity” that John Bender has identified in Hogarth’s prints, which “acknowledges (even exploits) visual or textual ruptures in the densely specific realist fabric and requires us to look differently at objects.” Unlike Bender’s own examples of facticity, however, this splintering of the fabula is produced by a strict adherence to the realist vanishing-point perspective and the unified instant of time. In this way, Hogarth situate such ruptures as an aspect of the urban experience of crowds.

As a model of perception, the results of this splintering are very profound. The multiplication of diegetic centers introduces a dimension of perceptual engagement not explicitly available in traditional history paintings, which is the degree of non-engagement involved in such focused engagements. For within any of the scenes presented, the viewer is not only able to follow the ocular attention of the reflectors involved—for instance, the two boys in the center-right focus their ocular attention upon the small bird in hand—but is also able to refer to the proximate objects or actions to which these reflectors do not

---

attend—such as the violent skewering of the dog’s anus which is being staged in clear view in front of said boys. Importantly, a phrase like “in clear view” indicates not what these reflectors are understood to actually see, but rather, what Hogarth’s compositional placement of the figures within perspectival space suggests they could see, or would be able to see, if only they were not so intently preoccupied by their own act of cruelty. It is their embodied situation within a vanishing-point perspective frame populated with overlapping bodies and actions which encourages the narrative integration, according to realist protocols, of otherwise unrelated reflectors. It is thus possible to identify two kinds of interpretive movements that correspond with Lessing’s description of moving from part to whole: there are movements around the various figures that follow the directions of ocular attention, and these establish distinct diegetic centers that seem to de-centralize the fabula; however, the composition also encourages integrative movements that diverge from the established trajectories of reflectoral attention, and these reveal not only what is noticed by reflectors but also what is, surprisingly, ignored or unnoticed.

To the extent that Hogarth’s crowding encourages this interpretive integration, its attentions to inattention are suggestive of the idea of perceptual habituation to the urban everyday explored in The London Spy and earlier urban satires, insofar as it makes the fact of noticing – or, rather, not noticing – noticeable in itself. Hogarth’s intricate staging of not-noticing invites viewers to regard reflectoral perception in a very particular way, and by analyzing this staging more closely, one can better understand the critical role that the implied observer begins to play in Hogarth’s crowded compositions. Consider the various reflectors in Southwark Fair (Figure 4), all attending to one thing or another, but not to the
chaos around them. For example, the gentleman in the center foreground, holding his hat, is so interested in the beauty of the female drummer just before him, that he betrays no awareness of the stage crashing down above him, or the contentious brawl occurring just beside him. These events are both proximate and eminently seeable, and so it becomes noteworthy in itself that this man does not see them. To some degree, this seeming insensibility illustrates what is for William James a structural feature of attention, which “implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others.” In this very limited sense, Hogarth’s rendering of reflectoral attention parallels what Michael Fried has identified in key works of art as a state of absorption. Although Fried limits his

---

62 James 404.
analysis to French painting between 1750 and 1781, there are certainly many provocative parallels between the unselfconscious engagements that confront the viewer in Hogarth’s prints and the states of absorption that Fried traces in the paintings of Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin. According to Fried, certain key painters in this time begin exploring the significance of attention, or as he defines it, “the state or condition of rapt attention, of being completely occupied or engrossed or (as I prefer to say) absorbed in what he or she is doing, hearing, thinking, feeling.” For Fried, it is precisely the unselfconsciousness of this state of absorbed attention that elevates it to an aesthetic and philosophical ideal, one which he contrasts with the self-consciousness of theatricality—of performing to an observing audience. However, what allows Fried to elevate absorption in this way is the premise that such focused attention occurs in a state of presumed solitude and quietude, thus staging the reflector’s “aloneness relative to the beholder or at any rate their obliviousness of his presence.” This unselfconsciousness provides for Fried a powerful framework for understanding humane intelligence, one suggestive of deep interiority insofar as it embodies human thoughtfulness, and one which is disarmingly vulnerable insofar as it is, unlike the theatrical, private and intimate. Lisa Zunshine clarifies why witnessing this absorption feels so profound: “For what is the state of ‘absorption,’” she asks, “if not the carefully constructed moment when the observable body language provides the direct access to the person’s state of mind?” In Zunshine’s reading, the staging of absorption circumvents a central feature of human communication, which is the

64Ibid 103.
anticipation of audience in speech and action, and thus produces for the viewer an aesthetic sense of authenticity with regard to the reflector’s “observable body language.”

Given this aesthetic elevation of absorption, Hogarth’s own staging of unselfconscious attention becomes all the more interesting, precisely because it suggests reflectors not of deep interiority but of insensibility, even vacuousness. The difference arises because Hogarth showcases absorptive attention in staged conditions of crowding, rather than in quiet solitude. The same embodied indicators of attention—the inclining of the head, the turn of the neck, the direction of the eyes—result in a completely different aesthetic effect, because absorptive attention is demonstrated to occur within conditions so chaotic. The evident interest of the Southwark Fair man is thus registered, given his chaotic surroundings, not as a sign of an immersive reflectiveness, but of a one-track tunnel vision attributable to carnal lust. We can easily see this as the logical extension of the theory of interested engagement detailed in The Analysis, which postulates viewers selectively engaging with what most grabs their attention. Yet the Southwark Fair man is insensible not only of the competing actions all around him, but insensible also, like those in the paintings of absorption, to the fact that he displays this to others. The hyper-conditions of the crowd allow Hogarth to demonstrate a given reflector’s unresponsiveness to surrounding stimuli, but also a distracted obliviousness to this display of insensibility. The very unselfconsciousness of this man’s obliviousness does, then, produce a vulnerable sense of authenticity for the viewer, yet this sense of authenticity is not sentimentally ennobling as in cases of private absorption but, rather, comedically unflattering. This is because such vulnerable obliviousness is revealed not within the security of solitude but despite the presence of hundreds of potential observers. Thus, the same disposition of
absorptive attention shifts from noble to remarkably unremarkable when Hogarth frames it amid the crowded hubbub of an urban environment.

2-3. Picturing the Instant as Noise

It is this dispersal of obliviousness among multiple reflectors and actions in a given frame, however, that brings the peripheral position of the implied observer into narrative salience in Hogarth’s prints. Unlike the production of absorption, which, according to Fried, is achieved “only by negating the beholder’s presence,” Hogarth’s staging of urban distraction requires no such negation, since its obliviousness is framed as observably public. Indeed, what the position of the implied observer makes possible is the observation of what would otherwise, with respect to Hogarth’s oblivious reflectors, go unnoticed. In fact, it is even possible to understand the implied observer as experiencing what is not being experienced by such reflectors. Hogarth’s print The Enrag’d Musician (Figure 5) makes this counter-intuitive interpretive possibility strikingly clear. In this print, Hogarth once again presents a crowded street environment populated by multiple reflectors, each engaged in their own separate action, their respective lines of ocular attention distributed in a disunified and decentralizing manner. As in Hogarth’s other urban crowds, these characters are caught up in varying degrees of obliviousness, unresponsive to the many actions around them. For instance, a knife-grinder in the lower right corner is shown absorbed in the task of sharpening the cleaver before him. If he were shown in solitude, his obliviousness could be more readily construed as simply focused attention, but the proximity of the drumming child betrays his insensibility to the child’s presence, despite

66Fried 103.
the noise that the drum, and the other surrounding instruments and tools and voices, seem to be making around him. The scene depicts both a noisy environment of many competing actions and sounds, and also the seeming obliviousness of those reflectors making them. However, the picture also includes a very different kind of reflector, that of the titular musician leaning out of the window at the center-left. With the affect of anger on his face as he holds his hands to his ears, viewers are to understand that he can hear what the other

---

reflectors seem incapable of hearing: the very cacophony of noise to which their separate actions are contributing. What the inclusion of this reflector provides is not a traditional principal action—he doesn’t draw the attentions of the other reflectors and thus subordinate their actions into a meaningful unity—but rather, an experiential reference-point for all the noises that one infers are collectively overlapping, despite the insensibility of the noise makers. In previous prints, I observed that the viewer is prompted to integrate disparate diegetic scenes to notice what immersed reflectors could but do not notice. The musician gives license to move a step further, and to understand the process of integration—noticing what reflectors do not notice—as experiential: as discordantly overlapping noise. In this sense, the musician serves to make explicit the differential of perceptual experience that can be said to underlie all of Hogarth’s depictions of distracted crowds, as the peripheral perceiver encountering the neglected noise and spectacle of the urban everyday.

Funnily enough, both Shaftesbury and Richardson warn against hazarding such visual noise, which they claim results from violations of the rule of subordination. Thus, Shaftesbury warns against depicting “not only two or three, but several, and sometimes all” depicted characters as if “speaking at once.”68 Echoing Shaftesbury, Richardson warns that “there must not be many Little Parts of an Equal Strength, and detach’d from one another, which is as odious to the Eye as ‘tis to the Ear to hear many People talking to you at once.”69 And, indeed, in many of Hogarth’s prints, it is the intricate dispersal of narrative reflectors, his disregard for the rule of subordination, that produces this sense of noise. In Chorus of Singers (Figure 6), the viewer is faced with an interesting quandary. Despite the shared

---

68 Cooper, Notion 26.
69 Richardson 128.
action of singing common to all of the reflectors in this scene, the compositional dispersal of attention—indicated by the variously positioned heads and eyes—makes it fundamentally impossible to determine whether the singing is coordinated or uncoordinated. Do these singers pay close enough attention to harmonize with one another?

---

Or are they effectively oblivious to the chorus around them? Because the singers share the same action, it remains possible to unify their actions into a coordinated harmony. However, Hogarth’s penchant for individuating his crowds invites us to notice the possibility of blinkered insensibility in his reflectors. At the center-right of the composition, a cluster of men all in close proximity, all facing opposing directions, furrow their brows, clench their eyes shut, and grimace as they belt out a note, such that we can just as easily “hear” an uncoordinated discord emerge from such separate efforts at singing. While it is ultimately impossible to decide, it is enough to recognize that Hogarth’s composition produces the possibility of noisy discord by organizing the narrative noise of decentralized action and attention.

As *The Enrag’d Musician* and *Chorus of Singers* both attest, Hogarth encourages his viewers not only to observe what his reflectors may not notice, but to imaginatively trace the seeing, hearing, and feeling—that is, the experiencing of it as well. In such moments, Hogarth suggests, counterintuitively, that it is possible, even in pictorial narratives, to adjust the narratological category of *mode* for the narrator-observer to that of an *experiential reflector*. Viewers are to understand that the integrative analysis that attends to what reflectors can but do not notice is itself enabled and encouraged by the implied observer’s on-the-ground vantage that frames the fabula as a recorded instant. In traditional history paintings, this perceptual position is subordinated and obscured insofar as the centrality of principal action is understood to justify the framed organization of attention. However, as Hogarth multiplies and disperses actions and focal points, the non-subordination of the implied observer’s position becomes as conspicuous as that of the reflectors. Indeed, with no clear thread connecting the disparate diegetic centers other than
the perspectival frame that unites them, the implied observer re-emerges as central to establishing these centers as a coincidence of observable events in a singular moment. While the perspective is decidedly external to the fabula depicted, this externality becomes the grounds for experientiality itself; as with the enraged musician, it is the externality from the crowd that organizes the surrounding reflectors, experientially, as a noisy crowding. Hogarth suggests that his crowds of reflectors, oblivious as they are to what surrounds them, do not see themselves as a crowd, to the extent that they are absorbed in their own distinct action. The noise of Hogarth’s urban crowding thus reveals the strangeness of the urban everyday: the jarring spectacle perpetually produced by obliviousness.

Very much like the empirical observer in The London Spy, then, the implied observer of Hogarth’s urban prints becomes experientially involved in the hyper-stimulating environment observed. The position of the observer, traditionally premised upon detachment, becomes involved as part of the fabula, in the milieu of what is being observed. Observation becomes a form of involvement and experience, and this is perhaps not so surprising, given Hogarth’s theory of perceptual engagement. Yet what involves the implied observer is not simple beauty, but the raucously intermingling figures and actions which constitute the urban everyday. As William Gilpin so ungenerously observes: “The author of The Analysis of Beauty, it might be supposed, would have given us more instances of grace, than we find in the works of Hogarth; which shews strongly that theory and practice are not always united.”71 Because Gilpin assesses Hogarth’s Analysis only as a literal manual of beautiful lines rather than as an aesthetic modeling of perceptual

71 William Gilpin. An essay upon prints; containing remarks upon the principles of picturesque beauty, the different kinds of prints, and the characters of the most noted masters; Illustrated by Criticisms upon particular Pieces; To which are added, Some Cautions that may be useful in collecting Prints. (London: J. Robson, 1768) 172-73.
engagement, he overlooks how Hogarth, in playing to his strengths of comedic and satirical illustration, does indeed unite theory with practice, not only in displaying reflectors wholly involved in their separate pursuits, but also in framing the interpretive experience of their coincidence.

2-4. The Urban to the Everyday

It is clear that Hogarth’s pen traces less than flattering contours when guiding his viewers among the various embodiments of attention. The city environment enables Hogarth to feature a wide assortment of reflectors all with distinct objects of interest, and this allows him to give a recognizable face to such attention, face after face after face. As we have seen, Hogarth remains intrigued by a very specific kind of face: the face of unselfconscious distraction. In the theory of The Analysis of Beauty, attention appears to be, most simply, the animating pleasure of aesthetic engagement, even if this pleasure is revealed to be transfixion; in Hogarth’s satires, we have seen how this transfixion, in practice, is easily rendered as oblivious absorption, whether ruthless, grotesque, or simply comedic. Tom Nero, the numerous unnamed boys around him, the noise-makers outside of the musician’s window, the unselfconsciously expressive chorus singers, these are all perceivers who seem to engage with the world with only limited regard for what occurs around them. If The Analysis of Beauty offers a humanistic celebration of embodied perceptual engagement, Hogarth’s prints illustrate how this engagement involves the perceptual delimitations of the human animal. As a result, these characters stage a conspicuously deficient awareness of the entirety of the world around them; as such, they care not for how they are perceived and pay little attention to what they might be
perceiving. Of the pictures examined, only the singing milkmaid in *The Enrag’d Musician* escapes this censure of absentmindedness, for Hogarth allows her the rare privilege of catching the viewer’s eye, still singing despite the musician’s rage, but seemingly aware when the observer’s attention meets her gaze. For all of the other reflectors, their obliviousness is on full display. Yet as Charles Lamb observes, Hogarth’s concern with this obliviousness, more often than not, softens the bite of his satire: “there is scarce one of his pieces where vice is most strongly satirized, in which some figure is not introduced upon which the moral eye may rest satisfied; a face that indicates goodness, or perhaps mere good-humoredness and carelessness of mind (negation of evil) only, yet enough to give a relaxation to the frowning brow of satire.”

Ultimately, it is the implied observer for whom the display of obliviousness becomes an unflattering image. This image is important to consider, for it allows viewers to appreciate the interdependence between the two models of perceptual experience discussed in the beginning part of this chapter: the partial model of selectively responsive absorption, and the integrating model of interpretive suspense. Importantly, the interpretive process Hogarth organizes in his prints encourages a conceptual movement between these different models, and the different levels of awareness they imply. In *The London Spy*, Ward established an experimental movement between the detached position of peripheral observer and the narrative immersion of reflector within the narrative space-time observed. Hogarth’s urban prints establish a similar conceptual movement, between the blinkered immersion of the reflectors, and the peripheral encounter with that immersion. However, with Hogarth’s prints, one finds a decidedly more social encounter, as reflectors are

---

modeled not merely as obtrusive objects, but as minded actants whose postures reveal legible engagement, and non-engagement, with the world around them. In this narrative scenario, it is the very legibility of their embodied minds—as absorbed—that gives rise to the instance of obtrusion. What begins as a study of delimited attention in The Analysis becomes more socially complex in representation, as the embodied attentions of the various reflectors become organized meaningfully by the attention of the implied observer. The prints thus give a dynamic narrative form to the varying levels of awareness involved in everyday experience of the world.

The multiplicity of the absorbed face is thus critical, and this multiplicity is what makes these crowded histories seem particularly urban. If an artist were to follow Shaftesbury’s rules of subordination for history painting, then any given instance of absorption, no matter how seemingly insignificant the action, could be readily framed as a principal action; indeed, if this principal action were shown to be insignificant or ignoble, we could consider the history as a mock-heroic, but one which does not challenge the basic compositional structure of such history paintings, e.g. the pre-coital and post-coital seduction scenes in Hogarth’s Before and After series. As such, any given instance of absorption is not enough to reveal the face of distraction that interests Hogarth, for it is necessarily revealed relationally. It is only by depicting multiple and uncoordinated fields of attention that the ruptures between such fields begin to highlight the attentive limitations of any given reflector. It is the city, specifically the crowds of the city, which provides Hogarth with an environment in which he can experiment “realistically” with issues of competing narrative salience. The city affords an opportunity for crowding out narrative centrality, and for casting all reflectoral engagements as hopelessly narrow. Put another
way, it is the extreme conditions of the city which allows for a plausible modeling of the structural limits of human perpetual engagement. To the extent that Hogarth’s urban histories refuse to deliver on the narrative promise of significant action, we might still understand them as mock-heroic deflations of traditional history paintings, yet, all the same, the framing by which it achieves this deflation produces something existentially much more profound.

If the satirical distance is directed toward the urban noise that draws attention, at the same time, the depicted obliviousness to such noise reveals an embodied condition of immersion that constitutes everydayness. In composing the differential of naïveté vs. habituation via the framing of the implied observer, Hogarth makes conspicuous for viewers their present exclusion from an engaged immersion which characterizes, all the same, a default mode of being-in-the-world, one in which the viewer cannot be said to escape. For who can avoid absorption in the world? There thus emerges a sense of transitivity between the embodied (in)attentions of the reflectors and the embodied (in)attentions of the viewer, even as the latter is positioned as external to the scene of immersion. Given its insights into transitivity, it is helpful to refer Hogarth’s framing to the description of Angst in *Being and Time*, insofar as this is described as a disposition that “fetches Da-sein back out of its entangled absorption in the ‘world’” and, as a result, “Everyday familiarity collapses” and “the world is all that obtrudes itself in its worldliness.”73 It should be very clear that Hogarth’s framing of urban everydayness is much more satirically inflected than a Heideggerian mood, but by referring to Heidegger’s existential mood, we can better appreciate Hogarth’s framing of everyday obliviousness as

---

available to any observer whatsoever, and not only the naïve and unhabituated. The corollary of being “fetched out of entangled absorption” is that one must have been formerly caught up in oblivious immersiveness beforehand, one that now seems so obtrusively conspicuous in others. Indeed, if Hogarth’s theory of perceptual engagement corresponds with the entangled absorption in the everyday, then his urban compositions, like his *Analysis*, model a way of looking at this everyday entanglement, an entanglement that is revealed simultaneously as inescapable and momentarily conspicuous.

In addition, if entanglement is a condition of the modern everyday, whether decidedly urban or otherwise, this approach, then, might be applied to more than just urban environments proper. The external frame thus extends not only from reflector to viewer, but beyond the distracted crowds of the city streets, towards other crowds. Scanning the crowded hall depicted in *An Election Entertainment* (Figure 7), for example, we are presented with an environment as obtrusive and raucously noisy as the streets of London. Clusters of Whigs congregate, laughing, whispering, crying; an election agent hit by a brick topples from his chair; a man with a stool threatens the Tories outside; and the band plays on the background. The scope of satire runs the gamut, as the distracted states of seemingly innocent if rowdy revelry mix in the same space with more insidious distractions: theft, bribery, bigotry, and hooliganism. Indeed, part of the chaos of the print is in its crowding of the harmless alongside the harmful, and the silly and ridiculous among the despicable. The overall effect of this overlapping clutter and noise, again, appears all the more striking because so few of the reflectors seem aware of it. However, despite the similarities to the other prints we have considered, the premise of this crowded hall is also very different from
that of an encounter on a London street. If we are prompted to posit a reflector-observer in the periphery of this enclosed space, as the experiencer who notices what the reflectors do not, then the premise of observing is not as casual as walking down the street. The conditions of the observer’s position, estranged as it appears to be, do not seem as readily anonymous or impersonal as in a given street encounter, especially given that this is not a random assortment of citizens but one unified by political affiliation and the titular election. In most of Hogarth’s urban prints, the external perspective of the observer is premised upon

---

the anonymous impersonality of an urban perambulator. This external perspective organizes, as a reflector mode, an affective orientation toward the environment observed. When placed within increasingly enclosed, familiar, and intimate environments, however, this affective orientation becomes perhaps more readily explainable as a passing psychological attunement, such as Angst, rather than as an ongoing feature of urban estrangement. For such a conspicuously situated observer, then, we can more readily imagine them, in one moment or the next, being fetched back into the familiarity of the entangled absorption that they now observe.

The peripheral observer, understood to be part of the diegesis, is thus not immune to “falling prey,” in Heidegger’s words, to the everyday observed, and yet, one can extrapolate, neither is the peripheral viewer. This is the ultimate corollary of Hogarth’s universalization of selectively interested perceptual engagement. When surveying *The Laughing Audience* (Figure 8), for example, the viewer is presented with two competing scenes of interest—the unpictured performance, and the amorous engagements with the orange-women above—and those reflectors who attend to the one appear completely oblivious to the other. As in Hogarth’s other crowds, viewers are encouraged to notice not only what these reflectors do not notice, but the fact that the reflectors do not notice. There is only one seated audience member depicted who appears aware of both scenes. As the orange-woman moves behind him, the man seated at the top of the box frowns, as if frustrated that his focus on the performance is interrupted by this competing action above. Everyone else, however, is completely absorbed by the scene before them, and a number of the audience members laugh unselfconsciously. Encouraged to observe the different variations of absorptive engagement and obliviousness on display, and thus encouraged to
notice what the reflectors do not notice, the viewer seems to be placed in a privileged position. If the viewer finds the portrayal of laughter amusing, perhaps a laugh or smile might even play upon the his or her own mouth. Yet if readers of this chapter have learned

anything of Hogarth’s understanding of attention, it is that his viewers, by attending to the oblivious distractions of others, have become just as absorbed by attending to the intricate fabula—turning their backs to the world, craning their neck forward, eyes scanning to and fro. Perhaps in so doing they have become just as immersed in the diegesis, and so just as oblivious to the world around them. In this view, any permanency of positions “above” or “external” to such obliviousness is made to collapse, and Hogarth’s work moves from mere satire to a fascinating engagement with being-in-the-world.
Chapter 3. Divided Selves: Economies of Attention in Smith and Burney

Self-consciousness is the curse of the city and all that sophistication implies. It is the glimpse of oneself in a storefront window, the unbidden awareness of reactions on the faces of other people—the novelist’s world, not the poet’s.

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim At Tinker Creek*1

The previous chapter explored the ways in which the crowding of reflectoral action and perception in William Hogarth’s prints brings to the fore not just the observer’s perception but, specifically, a social perception. In this chapter, I will return to this issue of social perception, or the perception of meaningful action. Returning to the issue of mind reading, or theory of mind, I will look to the history of sentimental philosophy for working models of social perception, elaborating in particular upon Adam Smith’s theory of imaginative sympathy, detailed in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Building from Smith’s theoretical model of imaginatively displacing sympathetic perception, which constitutes an intersubjective network constituting a moral if internally-divided “self,” I will then turn to Frances Burney’s only first-person novel *Evelina* to consider how Burney employs the seeming-immediacy of the epistolary medium to fashion just such an intersubjective web of self-conscious interfacing, one which attends to the eyes of others to constitute the divided self in performance as well as situation.

1-1. Mindreading and the Spectator’s Perspectives

I concluded in Chapter One that neither *The London Spy* nor *The Spectator*, though fully populated with all types of Londoners and actions, put forward a robust account of social perception. What is unavailable in these texts is, however, implicitly at work in even

---

just one line of Horace Walpole’s focalized description of Isabella’s perceptions in *The Castle of Otranto*: “She advanced eagerly towards this chasm, when she discerned a human form standing close against the wall.” What distinguishes this sentence from any of the focalized perceptions found in *The London Spy* is Isabella’s discernment, among the shadowy forms of the underground vaults, of “human”-ness as a salient category for her perceptual attention. Although the Londoners encountered in Ward’s satire are understood to be human, their humanness—especially their intentionality as actants—is not singled out as worthy of particular attention as it is for Isabella. For by discovering a human form, rather than an object, within Isabella’s environment, Walpole suggests a horizon of possible interactions between two minds encountering one another. It is this aspect of perception—the perception of minds and intentional action—that this chapter will explore in more detail.

The emergence of the human form within a seemingly desolate environment becomes one of the hallmarks of gothic novels, helping to produce a sense of the uncanny. The environments and interiors in gothic fiction, long understood as evocative of psychological landscapes, become easily backgrounded as intentional actants come out from the woodwork. Consider the climactic scene in Ann Radcliffe’s *Sicilian Romance*, when Julia discovers a form or “figure” that turns out to be her mother imprisoned in a secret chamber:

The door opened, and she beheld in a small room, which received its feeble light from a window above, the pale and emaciated figure of a woman, seated, with half-closed eyes, in a kind of elbow-chair. On perceiving Julia, she started from her seat, and her countenance expressed a wild surprise. […] She seemed as if about to speak, when

---

fixing her eyes earnestly and steadily upon Julia, she stood for a moment in eager gaze, and suddenly exclaiming, ‘My daughter!’ fainted away.3

There is a clear shift in this passage as the figure, initially rendered almost as immobile furniture, is observed by Julia to perceive Julia in kind. Julia’s focalized experience transforms immediately from a survey into an encounter with another mind who not only noticeably reacts to her own perceptions, but who also telegraphs important information about her affective states (“her countenance expressed a wild surprise”) as well as her intentional states (“She seemed as if about to speak”). Importantly, the passage remains internally focalized upon Julia’s perceptions despite this shift toward the figure’s mindedness; thus, phrases like “expressed” and “seemed as if” convey this mindedness as being perceived externally by the observing Julia. The figure, then, once another feature of the surveyed environment, becomes all of the sudden a pivotal character, all through seemingly manifest indications of perception, affect, and intentionality—that is, of mind.

That minds are easily observed and understood in such a way is taken for granted by writers like Walpole and Radcliffe, and also by philosophers throughout the century. In Francis Hutcheson’s estimation, without this ability to recognize agents, perceivers could not distinguish between intentional actions and physical events, and thus would “receive, with equal Serenity and Composure, an Assault, a Buffet, an Affront from a Neighbour, a Cheat from a Partner, or Trustee, as we would an equal Damage from the Fall of a Beam, a Tile, or a Tempest.”4 According to Thomas Reid, what Julia perceives is a common sense “natural language” for understanding mind, or a natural facility for inferring the affective

---


and intentional states of others: “GOD has given to man a natural language, by which his social operations are expressed […] The signs in this natural language are looks, changes of the features, modulations of the voice, and gestures of the body. All men understand this language without instruction, and all men can use it in some degree.”

Philosophers and psychologists these days would refer to this capacity as “mindreading,” a term that describes, as Lisa Zunshine explains, “our ability to explain people’s behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires.” I of course introduced Zunshine’s alignment of embodied mindreading with Michael Fried’s aesthetic theory of absorption in the previous chapter. Indeed, as I examined in some detail, the realist painter’s depiction of diegetic action, perception, or emotion in reflectoral subjects assumes that gesture, spatial orientation, and facial expression are indicative of such action, perception, and affect, and so is indicative of mindreading. Simon Baron-Cohen, a psychologist who studies mindreading through research on autism, like Reid and Hutcheson emphasizes that this capacity to read the bodies of others is taken for granted in everyday experience of the world: “We are ‘mindreaders’ by nature, building interpretations of the mental events of others and feeling our constructions as sharply as the physical objects we touch.” While distinct from sensory input in this account, mindreading is as functionally foundational as sensory perceptions.

---


6 Lisa Zunshine. *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006) 6. Zunshine uses “mindreading” and “theory of mind” interchangeably; however, since “theory of mind” can easily be confused with a particular school of thought concerning mindreading (known as the theory-theory of mind), I will use the less controversial “mindreading.”

Reid insists that such an interpretive process is intuitively learned and does not depend upon a conscious, deliberative inference but rather on intuitively “natural” signs, arguing that “It is not by reasoning, that all mankind know, that an open countenance, and a placid eye, is a sign of amity; that a contracted brow, and a fierce look, is the sign of anger. It is not from reason that we learn to know the natural signs of consenting and refusing, of affirming and denying, of threatening and supplicating.” By insisting on a separation from deliberative reasoning, Reid universalizes the capacity for mindreading, and positions it, at least from a phenomenological viewpoint, as an existential condition of engaging with and perceiving the world—of being-in-the-world. As Heidegger later formulates this condition, “Being-in is being-with others.” Reid was not alone in grounding social engagement as a fundamental condition of experience, for the sentimental tradition in British moral philosophy was unified in its defense of dispositional social sentiments. Reacting to the Hobbesian and Mandevillian notions that social relations are born out of self-interest, moral philosophers like the Earl of Shaftesbury—and then Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Smith and Reid—argue for the existence of moral sense, which orients individuals toward “fellow-feeling.” The human animal becomes a distinctly social animal in these accounts, as a “herding principle and associating inclination” is postulated and elaborated upon to explain the disposition toward affiliation between human minds.

---

8Reid, *Essays* 5.6, 332.
Yet while all of these philosophical systems take social feeling and the reading of intentional and affective states as fundamental to experience, the mechanism of mindreading itself is largely under-theorized in these accounts. These writers, including Reid, take for granted that humans discern the intentions of others, and so do not elaborate upon the psychological and interpersonal identification necessary to facilitate such discernment. Instead, they concern themselves, more particularly, with moral judgments of actions. While mindreading is certainly presumed in such accounts of moral judgment, it is largely only implicit, even in Reid’s moral philosophy. How such rules are enacted in ongoing experience thus depends largely upon how a given philosopher theorizes the mechanisms of moral judgment.

John Locke, advancing a reason-based model of moral judgment, renders it as a kind of critically detached looking, arguing that, “Whether, I say, we take the Rule from the Fashion of the Country, or the Will of a Lawmaker, the Mind is easily able to observe the Relation any Action hath to it; and to judge, whether the Action agrees, or disagrees with the Rule.” To the extent that this account of observation provides a phenomenology of judgment, the observer’s perception is considered as a rational procedure of comparison. While this procedure involves interpretation—the determination of agreement or disagreement of the particular action with the general rule—Locke seems to be describing a purely cognitive procedure of the “Mind,” and so the perception-based verb “observe” transitions, implicitly, from the perception of ideas to the internalized cognitive judgment of such ideas. Hidden within this transition, there is an interesting suggestion of a split in attention, between the actions being perceived, and the rules to which observer’s compare

---

such actions. However, the allocation and limits of perceptual attention, like the mechanisms of mind-reading, largely go untheorized in the *Essay*. As will become evident later in the chapter, this split in attention becomes critical in the constitution of self-consciousness in both moral philosophy and in fictional modes of representation.

Contrary to Locke, moral sense theorists, such as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, and Reid, emphasize the experiential feelings of moral judgment rather than merely rational determinations, yet they discuss these moral feelings, by and large, with respect to a detached spectator. This tradition begins famously with Shaftesbury, who aligns moral judgments with the perceptions of an observing spectator:

> The case is the same in the mental or moral subjects as in the ordinary bodies or common subjects of sense. The shapes, motions, colours and proportions of these latter being presented to our eye, there necessarily results a beauty or deformity […] The mind, which is spectator or auditor of other minds, cannot be without its eye and ear so as to discern proportion, distinguish sound and scan each sentiment or thought which comes before it.¹²

That moral objects are, like sensory objects, “being presented to our eye” helps Shaftesbury stress the necessary immediacy of this moral judgment. Despite the emphasis on feelings, however, and the seeming activity of internal mechanisms (discernment, distinguishing and scanning), it casts the spectator as connected to the scene of observation by passive reception only. In this scenario of the spectator, common to the moral sense theorists of the period, the actions occurring in front of the spectator, which are “being presented to” the eye, are also understood to eclipse the spectator’s own ongoing interfacing—in Shaftesbury’s term discussed in the previous chapter, the spectator is assumed to be narratively *subordinated* to the principal action. What would seem to be the special

---

scenario of the spectator, viewing from a remove, thus becomes emblematic of a broader theory of perception and social engagement, providing a narrative framework to highlight the passive transfer of information into the mind.

David Hume, building on this scenario of subordinated spectatorship, produces his own elaborate account of moral feeling, and emphasizes an extreme dualism between external and internal domains. In Hume’s analysis, the mind-reading involved in moral judgment necessarily requires the spectator’s reference to external actions, yet, despite this interaction, Hume insists that these realms be understood as separate, for “The external performance has no merit. We must look within to find the moral quality. This we cannot do directly; and therefore fix our attention on actions, as on external signs.” In this approach, the mental and the moral are purely internalized into a separate and privileged domain, and the actions that one encounters in perception are integral yet diminished in importance. The scene of spectation is thus not merely one of observation subordinated to a principal action, because both observed and spectator are also sub-divided into external and internal domains. This separation of the internal from the external informs Hume’s influential formulation of sympathy as an emotional contagion of moral feeling, for it is theorized as the internalizing coordination of affective states based upon external signs: “When I see the effects of passion in the voice and gesture of any person, my mind immediately passes from these effects to their causes, and forms such a lively idea of the passion, as is presently converted into the passion itself.” In this reading, the very perception of an affective state reproduces that state of mind in the mind of the observer.

14Ibid 3.3.1, 576.
Certainly this conception of sympathy is suggestive of mindreading, for it indicates the spectator’s “lively idea” of an other’s affective state; however, it is characterized as immediate and remarkably passive.\(^\text{15}\)

Notice, however the passivity that Hume constructs in the narrative scene of sympathy. Not only are the observed and the spectator subject to a “passion,” which is the mentalistic state of affect, but the spectator’s mind so “immediately passes” from external sign to mentalistic signified, that this sudden passage converts the mind into the same “passion.” Thus, Hume suggests that there is a transitive property to the mental states of emotion, which spread, from principal to spectator, via the signs of external actions and indications: “A spectator of a tragedy passes thro’ a long train of grief, terror, indignation, and other affections, which the poet represents in the persons he introduces [...] they are all first present in the mind of one person, and afterwards appear in the mind of another.”\(^\text{16}\)

Narratively, then, the spectator’s mind is still subordinated to what it observes, so that the same succession of affect is reproduced from mind to mind.

Despite his pointed criticism of Hume’s epistemological framework, even Reid remains within the narrative limits of the scenario of the subordinated observer, insofar as he is content to restrict the scope of his moral analysis to “the agreeable or uneasy feelings, in the breast of the spectator or judge, which naturally accompany moral approbation and disapprobation.”\(^\text{17}\) The restricted focus on moral feelings thus seems to perpetuate the


\(^\text{16}\)Ibid 2.2.7, 369.

\(^\text{17}\)Reid. *Essays* 3.7, 183.
narrative subordination of the observer. This subordination is itself suggestive of skeptical premises of epistemology—the succession of perceptions and feelings in the theater of the mind—even when authors like Reid are at pains to distance themselves from such premises.

There is, however, a theory of moral sense that challenges the narrative remove of the spectator, and provides the groundwork for a dynamic and interactive account of social perception in so doing. Adam Smith, in The Theory of Moral Sentiments, published in 1759, casually recasts the spectator not merely as receiving information or feeling a moral sense, but engaging imaginatively in the process of observation. Thus, in accounting for an actual scene of spectatorship, Smith renders the spectators, still viewing from a safe physical distance, as nevertheless engaged in observation as an action: “The mob, when they are gazing at a dancer on the slack rope, naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation.” How does this rendering transform the spectator’s scene of presumed subordination? It is in positing a continued activity of observation—of responsive writhing and twisting—which indicates an ongoing experiential engagement of attention that, while clearly responsive to the principal action, is not reducible to it. Indeed, by sympathetically mimicking the actions of the tightrope-walker, the spectators in Smith’s scenario declare their observations as individualized acts of interfacing on their own, and not mere reproductions or passive transmissions of affect. I will spend some time discussing how Smith achieves this innovation, and its import for the modeling of mind interpretation and moral judgment.

Smith in many ways builds upon Hume’s theory of moral sense, but, in doing so, revises it extensively. His foundational move is to replace the moral sense philosophers’ restrictive emphasis upon moral feelings with a new theoretical emphasis on imaginative perspective-taking which, according to Smith, grounds all such moral feelings. This seemingly small change has profound theoretical impacts, however, on the conceptualization of social engagement. While the imagination plays an essential role in Hume’s own theory of sympathy, in the “lively idea” formed of observed passion, his commitment to a representationalist model of perception, as discussed above, leads him to couch imagination in the terms of passive transmission or reproduction. Imagination, in this model, becomes the vehicle for such transmission. Smith, however, reacts very particularly against Hume’s representationalist suggestion that the affective states of spectators are somehow reproductions of what they observe. In Smith’s analysis, the experience of feeling is not so permeable. Indeed, imagination for Smith provides only an approximation of the observed feeling, and so it necessarily divides sympathetic spectators from the experience of others as much as it connects them:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no ideas of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations […] It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy.19

It is easy to approach Smith’s innovation to the account of sympathy as essentially conservative, insofar as it places real limits to the emotional connection that such sympathy makes possible. For instance, David Marshall makes this case against Smith, arguing that

19Ibid 1.1.1.2, 9.
"The Theory of Moral Sentiments begins by supposing a sceptical [sic] epistemology that assumes sympathy but insists that neither sight nor the other senses will suffice to communicate to us the feelings and experience of another person." And, to be sure, Smith certainly does seek to establish such limits on sympathy. Whether or not one sees this move as essentially conservative, however, it is this foundational limit that de-subordinates the Smith's observing spectator. For to insist on the limits of sympathetic identification is also to insist on the narrative individuation of each person's experiences, even those of the spectator. If imagination draws only upon each individual's "own senses only," then each instance of imaginative sympathy is thus individuated not only from the observed object of sympathy, but also from every other instance of imaginative sympathy—from those other surrounding spectators engaged in the performance. What seems like a conservative limit on sympathy also might be said to ground the narrative significance of each instance of sympathetic engagement, which in turn allows for a more robust account of the varying degrees or kinds of experiential engagement.

Despite Smith's structural limitation of sympathy, his theory allows for a considerable degree of emotional "concord," as he calls it, between two or more persons, and this is enabled by imaginative perspective-taking. In the example of "our brother" "on the rack" above, for example, Smith posits that imagination enables a highly intimate interaction with the brother's experienced agonies:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.21

21 Theory 1.1.2, 9.
Smith claims that, through imaginative engagement, spectators can “enter as it were into” the brother’s body and thus “become in some measure the same person with him.” The sensations felt are still necessarily “weaker in degree,” but the claim seems to allow for an impressive scope of experience beyond one’s own immediate physical sensations. It is clear here that Smith’s conception of imagination, importantly, is not the “pleasing delusion” of internalized perceptions, following Joseph Addison,22 which contains the perceiver in a camera obscura, but rather is an outwardly projective empathetic engagement with the social environment. As will become evident, it suggests varying levels of possible engagement and attention to the emotions, actions, and narrative situations of others.

By insisting that all moral feeling is enabled only through imaginative engagements, Smith posits the projective act of perspective-taking as the principal mechanism of not just all moral judgments, but of all social interactions in general. In doing so, Smithian sympathy introduces a very sophisticated account of mindreading, one which not only responds to the emotional cues of others, but also to the broader context of those emotions. Alvin Goldman has argued that The Theory of Moral Sentiments thus provides an early account of simulational mindreading. In this simulation theory of mind-reading, because individuals are already equipped with their own “decision-making mechanism”—their mind—“they can,” and do, “run” their mechanism on the pretend input appropriate to the target’s initial position […] In other words, mindreaders use their own minds to ‘mirror’ or ‘mimic’ the minds of others.”23 To be clear, this mirroring or mimicking of mind-states differs from the mirroring of emotion in Hume’s account of sympathy. Humean sympathy,

23Goldman 20.
as a theory of emotional contagion, is what Goldman considers a theory of “low-level” simulative mindreading, an important aspect of interpersonal understanding used in “detecting emotions and pain in others,” yet characterized by Hume as purely passive, and by Goldman as a “fully automatic,” “relatively primitive” feature of mindreading.24 As an operation of mindreading, it occurs below the level of conscious experience. Smith’s account of sympathy does not ignore such emotional cues—which suggest the “natural language” postulated by Reid—yet such emotional cues alone are not sufficient for the operation of sympathetic perspective-taking, which, according to Smith, “does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it.”25 The “view of the passion” is still integral in this formulation, but only within the broader narrative context of “the situation which excites it.” Indeed, this feature is what distinguishes Smith’s model of mindreading as a theory of “high-level” simulative mindreading, in Goldman’s terms. Fellow simulationist Richard Gordon elaborates on the movement between low-level emotional contagion, or “facial empathy,” and high-level perspective-taking, pointing to the perceiver’s ability to integrate these cues within a broader interpretive framework: “Once we have the capacity to index our response in this fashion and to integrate it with other information about the same individual, facial empathy can assist us in interpreting, predicting, and explaining behavior.”26 Gordon describes how low-level emotional cues can be incorporated and integrated with “other information about the same individual” to enable a higher-level simulation of intentional states. It is in this mixture of emotional cues with broader situational contexts indexed to the observed party

24Ibid 43, 113, 132.
25Theory 1.1.1.10, 12.
26Gordon 168.
that Smith distinguishes his account of mindreading from the simplicity of “natural language” suggested by the other moral sense philosophers, for the mixture allows him to integrate such seemingly universal cues within broader and varying cultural contexts of interpretation. Smith’s development of mindreading thus touches on a phenomenological observation made more directly by Paul Ricoeur; in analyzing proto-narrative structures in everyday cultural practice, Ricoeur reminds his readers that cultural contexts often can serve as a matrix through which humans interpret seemingly self-evident gestures as intentional actions:

The same gesture of raising one’s arm, depending on the context, may be understood as a way of greeting someone, of hailing a taxi, or of voting. Before being submitted to interpretation, symbols are interpretants internally related to some action. In this way, symbolism confers an initial readability on action.27

Smith, highly attuned to such contextual cues in both the spectator as well as the observed, is also quick to naturalize the cultural norms of his day in his discussion of propriety, yet it is clear that he imagines all of the moral actors concerned in his examples as conversant in the highly contextualized codes of everyday conduct. Thus he paints a nuanced portrait of the “man who is made uneasy by every little disagreeable incident,” positing in the man, as well as those who judge him, a familiarity with a range of trivial contexts:

[This man] who is hurt if either the cook or the butler have failed in the least article of their duty, who feels every defect in the highest ceremonial of politeness, whether it be shewn to himself or to any other person, who takes it amiss that his intimate friend did not bid him good-morrow when they met in the forenoon, and that his brother hummed a tune all the time he himself was telling a story […] such a person, I say, though he should have some reason, will seldom meet with much sympathy.28

In presenting this long list of trivial grievances, Smith asks that readers understand this man as having imaginatively placed himself in the various enumerated situations in order

27 Ricoeur 58.
28 Theory 1.2.5.3, 42.
to identify the missed opportunities for pleasing which are available to the other persons involved—the cook, butler, intimate friend, and brother—whose conduct has so dissatisfied him. Indeed, readers are to understand his dissatisfaction as arising from his intuitive capacity to perform all of these imaginative engagements within these highly specific, everyday contexts. Not only this, but by the end of the paragraph, it is clear this man is being judged by numerous other individuals, who all imaginatively try on his various particular contexts (and perhaps also, in so doing, try on the man’s various instances of place-taking) in order to determine their relative lack of sympathy with his complaints. While such determinations might seem to come easily, casually, even naturally, the attention to situational particularity is all the more relevant to the analysis at hand.

To the extent that *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* situates spectators via the imagination, then, it attunes them, not merely to affective states and emotional cues, but, more complexly, to the narrative situations of others. And by insisting on this attunement to the situations of others, Smith also insists upon the situational specificity and narrative salience of each spectator, no matter how removed from a principal action. Indeed, while Smith’s theory maintains the role of the spectator, the effect of his key innovation is to challenge the formal distinction between spectator and actor, and to show, instead, how these roles constitute each other as everyday interrelations occupied by all moral agents. In the next section, I will explore more directly the narratological ramifications of Smith’s phenomenology of moral engagement, especially as it concerns the egocentrism of the spectator, and then turn to Frances Burney’s *Evelina* to see how the novel stages these theoretical movements, as a peripheral spectator confronting the interested attention of others.
1-2. The Splintered Stage of Spectator and Actor

In situating *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* within a long cultural history of the emergent domains of public and private, Michael McKeon highlights Smith’s distinctively projective and introjective account of the imagination, which all but ignores the imagination’s traditional role as a “mediator between the senses and the understanding” (as in Addison’s “Pleasures of the Imagination”) and instead employs the imagination to mediate “not substantively separate faculties but structurally separate selves” as the primary “means by which we overcome the distance between our own and others’ sense impressions.”\(^{29}\) In McKeon’s dialectical approach to cultural history, Smith’s very silence on faculty psychology can be understood as a new stage in its intellectual elaboration:

Smith can write a treatise on social relations that borrows freely but loosely from faculty psychology because the separation out of psychology (from the bodily) and of its component faculties (from each other) is sufficiently advanced to permit the abstraction of the imaginative faculty as a psychological microfunction that can be applied to the macroanalysis of many psychologies—that is, to understanding social sympathy.\(^{30}\)

It is worth appreciating just how Smith’s analysis of imagination not only builds upon but also significantly revises the premises of Addisonian faculty psychology. For by multiplying the imaginative faculty in the “macroanalysis of many psychologies,” Smith takes as his starting point the premise that these multiple imaginations, despite or because of their epistemological limitations, productively interact with one another to constitute a shared moral society. Such a move circumvents, perhaps even repudiates, the traditional skepticism of faculty psychology. Thus, Smith’s move toward a social psychology should be understood not only as a macro-application of individualized faculty psychology as


\(^{30}\)Ibid 379-80.
such, but also as a new approach of conceptualizing individual psychology as fundamentally intersubjective.31

To cast the individual as fundamentally interpersonal is to challenge Cartesian skepticism about one’s access to the minds of others. By attending to the field of social interactions, of course, Smith does not move beyond the realm of individual experience as such, but takes seriously any given individual’s practical investment in such interactions. From this view, Smith’s multiplication and integration of imaginative faculties, while theoretically innovative, attempts to describe an already existing field of practical interactions. As such, Smith grounds the theoretical importance of sympathetic perspective-taking, and its attendant analysis of the specifics of situation, upon an eminently practical account of moral accountability, one in which individual experience is coordinated with the moral judgment of others:

A moral being is an accountable being. Man is considered as a moral, because he is regarded as an accountable being. But an accountable being, as the word expresses, is a being that must give an account of its actions to some other, and that consequently must regulate them according to the good-liking of this other.32

Quite simply, the minds of others are no longer cast into doubt because the moral being in this paradigm is constitutionally invested in the judgments and opinions of those other minds, insofar as he or she is held accountable to them.

To be clear, to “give an account” of one’s actions surely includes conveying such an account in speech, and to be held “accountable” to others surely includes feedback

---

31This is a foundational move in phenomenological analysis, as Merleau-Ponty, following Husserl, explains: “For the ‘other’ to be more than an empty word, it is necessary that my existence should never be reduced to my bare awareness of existing, but that it should take in also the awareness that one may have of it [...] The Cogito must reveal me in a situation, and it is on this condition alone that transcendental subjectivity can, as Husserl put it, be an intersubjectivity.” See Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002) xiv. In this account of intersubjective awareness, Merleau-Ponty alights upon a similar terminology of self-“situation” that Smith develops in Theory of Moral Sentiments.

32Theory 3.1.[3], 111.
received via speech, but accountability is certainly not limited to speech in Smith’s understanding. What Smith instead suggests is that speech helps coordinate individual perspectives because it is itself premised upon a common mechanism of perspective-taking, of imaginative sharing. In his essay *Considerations concerning the first formation of languages*, he thus hypothesizes the origin of language as the coordination between “[t]wo savages” to “make their mutual wants intelligible” through shared construals.\(^3^3\)

Smith’s theory of sympathetic perspective-taking disposes individuals toward a moral coordination of worlds – counter to Mandeville’s suggestion that moral accountability is enforced upon subjects from above – through the imaginative investments of the moral self in observing others. By casting the individual as “a being that must give an account of its actions to some other,” Smith thus suggests society not merely as a plurality of discrete individuals, but as actively constituting self, world, even language, through a mutual investment in justifying, modifying, and regulating behavior.

Moral accountability is thus constituted by an ongoing investment in, and attention to, the observations and judgments of others. For Smith, this is made possible by the imaginative mechanism of introjection. The complement to the spectator’s projective split, the psychic split of introjection allows the moral actor to remain partially attuned to her situation as “object” in the sympathetic arrangement. In perhaps the most famous passage in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith described the self-alienating introjection of an impartial spectator’s gaze into everyday awareness: “I divide myself, as it were, into two

---

\(^{33}\)Adam Smith. *Considerations concerning the first formation of languages and the different genius of original and compounded languages*, in *The Works of Adam Smith, LL.D. & F.R.S. of London and Edinburgh: With An Account of His Life and Writings. In Five Volumes*, 5, ed. Dugald Stewart (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, et al., 1811) 3-48: “Two savages, who had never been taught to speak, but who had been bred up remote from the societies of men, would naturally begin to form that language by which they would endeavor to make their mutual wants intelligible” (3).
persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of."\textsuperscript{34} In this scenario, attention is divided between “the agent, the person whom I properly call myself” and the imagined “spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into,” and so exactly complements the projective split. Thus the actor, or the object of sympathy, absorbed in immediate experience, also directs attention away from this immediate situation imaginatively toward a viewing arrangement that objectifies. Self is technically attended to in each direction of attention, yet one is self as personal situation and the other is self as personal-situation-objectified.

Many critics have remarked that Smith was most likely influenced by Shaftesbury’s “Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author” in elaborating upon this objectivizing procedure, for Shaftesbury advocates a process of “self-dissection” by which an author “becomes two distinct persons.” Interestingly, however, Shaftesbury conceives this process as essentially private, introspective, and deliberative: “[h]e comes alone upon the stage, looks about him to see if anybody be near, then takes himself to task without sparing himself in the least.”\textsuperscript{35} While Smith also describes a procedure of internalization, it emerges in his account as a direct result of active and ongoing engagement with the gaze of others, rather than from a deliberative process. The looks and expressions of actual spectators thus provide for the actor the feedback that constitutes an imagined spectator:

Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before. It is placed in the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with, which always mark when they enter into, and when they disapprove of his sentiments; and it

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid 3.1.6, 113.
\textsuperscript{35}Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury. “Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author” Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times. ed. Lawrence Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 1.1, 72.
is here that he first views the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind.\textsuperscript{36}

The introjective split thus arises through an active interfacing with the reactions of others, as the actor learns to attend not only to his or her actions, but also to how these actions will be seen, interpreted, assessed and judged in the moment of their performance.\textsuperscript{37} Locke’s definition of the self as personal identity rested purely upon memory’s ability to connect mind, internally, over time: “as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that \textit{Person}.”\textsuperscript{38} However, Smith’s theory of sympathy positions the self as manifesting in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment encounters and attentive engagements with the judging eyes of others.

Although the internalization of observing judgments is necessary for Smithean introjection, this is, importantly, not a singular or discrete moment of intake, in which external becomes internal. If what Smith describes is the mechanism of ideology internalized, it necessarily involves interacting with others regularly every day, and continually internalizing their observations. The moral actor is thus not involved at every moment in a real scene of observation, but this scene of observation nonetheless forms a fundamental aspect of accountability, and thus serves as a critical part of everyday experience. In Chapter One, I pointed to rare scenes in both \textit{The London Spy} and \textit{The

\textsuperscript{36}Theory 3.1.3, 110.
\textsuperscript{37}The constant stream of behavioral feedback implicit in Smith’s depiction of society is perhaps more suggestive of the city than the stage, especially in his account of self-consciousness. Smith’s actors are constantly attuned to external feedback, but they can thus just as easily meet with avoidance, ridicule, or cruelty as sympathy, like the poor man who goes out into the streets: “the dissipated and the gay […] turn away their eyes from him, or if the extremity of his distress forces them to look at him, it is only to spurn so disagreeable an object from among them” (Ibid.1.3.2.2, 51). This sense of ongoing, unbidden feedback, of compelling, competing attentions to self and impersonal others, is thus not a private affair but necessarily public and, as such, seemingly relentless. While Smith theorizes a universal theory of human sentiments, it seems to be a theory that nonetheless takes for granted the impersonality of modern crowds and of modern publicness.
\textsuperscript{38}Locke 2.27, 335.
Spectator in which the observer is seen by an observing other, and thus becomes thematically objectified. For the most part, however, Ward and Steele avoided such scenes, which collapsed the peripherality of empirical distance. With the mechanism of introjection, Smith makes this thematic objectification of self an essential aspect of everyday experience, and thus permanently challenges the subordinating function of peripherality. If Mr. Spectator peripherally observes that he is observed peripherally, what happens to the periphery of either observer? The peripheral observer is incorporated into Smith’s construal as an on-scene presence, rather than as an off-stage non-entity. This enables a very particular kind of self-objectification, which Langacker calls displacement, one which assumes a “vantage point distinct from our actual one” in the perceptual scene. This self-objectification is not mere self-report, but renders the “SELF as an OTHER” – from the particular vantage of the observing other – to make the “perspective-shift explicit.” Unlike the mere objectification of the observer through deictic speech, this objectification occurs in the moment of encounter, through perspective-taking.

The central role that Smith gives to perspective-shifts thus draws the performing self away from the immersive experience of performing, and this manifests most practically

39 Langacker 127-29.
40 The movement between first-person and third-person might easily be seen to correspond in literary history with the developing technology of narration, specifically the emergence of focalization. Many literary critics have pointed to this dynamic with regard to free indirect discourse in particular. Following upon Ian Watt’s famous thesis, David Lodge writes that “It was not possible to combine the realism of assessment that belongs to third-person narration with the realism of presentation that comes from first-person narration until novelists discovered free indirect style,” and thus suggests that the representation of mind in fiction finds its apotheosis in the third-person novel of free indirect discourse. I do not in any way mean to challenge the importance of free indirect discourse for representing minds, but only want to suggest that, by looking exclusively to free indirect style, that such readings (following Daniel Punday) treat “voices as objects to be studied— they form a ‘field’ or a ‘cloud’ in which we pick out individual elements to understand the character,” and in doing so, they cast fictional minds primarily as internalized voices. But what might it look like if a novel took seriously Smith’s suggestion that self-consciousness is not located as a voice within, but, as a split attention between persons? See David Lodge. Consciousness & the Novel: Connected Essays (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) 45; and Daniel Punday. Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology (New York: Palgrave, 2003) 172.
in the displacement required of attention at any given moment. Through projection and introjection, both spectator and object of sympathy are engaged in the sympathetic scene, engaged not only in the experience that draws sympathy, but engaged also in the viewing relationship that organizes sympathy. According to Smith, this leads to an emergent “concord” between the two formally distinct positions. Each role, both spectator and person concerned, is thus constituted by a split between personal situation and imaginative identification with the other role:

as nature teaches the spectators to assume the circumstances of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators. As they are constantly considering what they themselves would feel, if they were actually the sufferers, so he is as constantly led to imagine in what manner he would be affected if he was only one of the spectators of his own situation.41

Importantly, this imaginative split within each of the asymmetrical roles is made possible by the ubiquity of both roles in the lives of those who occupy them. No one person occupies just one of the roles; instead, Smith’s theory posits that all individuals constantly occupy each of the roles transitively at different moments. As a result, in any given sympathetic scene, both roles are in fact constituted by similar if asymmetrical movements between personal experience and identification with the other. Neither spectator nor the person principally concerned would seem to be able to become fully absorbed in either the experience principally concerned or the act of viewing it, for both are dually attuned to the viewing situation as well as its provoking circumstance.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will look to Frances Burney’s early writing, especially her novel Evelina, as an example of narratives modeling Smithian self-consciousness as a conflicted distribution of attention at the interface. Burney, celebrated

41Smith. Theory of Moral Sentiments 1.1.4.8, 22.
as an innovator of free indirect discourse, is also a key innovator of focalized embodiments through staged scenes of mutual observation. By analyzing and appreciating the distribution of attention in Burney’s first-person novel, I hope to arrive at a better understanding of focalized embodiments as they occur in her later third-person novels, such as *Cecilia* and *Camilla*. In so doing I will attempt to situate *Evelina* within the broad trajectory of first-person observer narrations that have constituted this study thus far.

### 2-1. Performance Anxiety and Displacement

On July 3rd, 1771, Frances Burney performed in an informal production of Colley Cibber’s *Careless Husband*, staged at the house of Samuel Crisp. Burney recounts the experience in her journal, in which she adopts the same confessional first-person narration that she sustains in her epistolary novel *Evelina*. In both her novel and in her journal entry, Burney uses this narrative mode to paint a portrait of pained anxiety:

> Unfortunately for me, I was to appear first, and alone. I was pushed on; they clapped violently. I was fool enough to run off quite overset, and unable to speak. I was really in an [agony] of fear and shame! And when at last Allen and Barsanti persuaded me to go on again, the former in the lively warmth of her temper called to the audience not to clap again; for it was very impertinent. I had lost all power of speaking steadily, and almost of being understood; and as to action, I had not the presence of mind to attempt it.\(^{42}\)

The entry reads like a performance-anxiety dream. What seems especially pertinent in Burney’s account of theatrical performance is that the reporting observer is, in Langacker’s terms, included “on-stage.” While it is of course not strange that Burney the actor should be placed on stage, it is much more notable that an actor, performing a part, should function as an observer and thus as both the subject and the object of the construal. This means that

Burney, while attempting to speak her lines, is also, simultaneously, observing not only the audience’s reactions but also her own performance, which allows her to present them in the above construal. In doing so, she evinces the split of attention that Smith attributes to the self-analyzing actor. This divide in her attention is registered most saliently by the compromise in her capacity to speak “steadily” or perform any of the rehearsed actions. Indeed, this is what makes it read like an anxiety dream: for the more she seems to observe herself perform, the less she seems capable of performing. In her own words, she “had not the presence of mind” to acquit herself gracefully.

This phrase—“presence of mind”—is one that comes up numerous times in Burney’s first publication, Evelina, an epistolary novel that is much more akin to Burney’s own journal. In what turns out to be a pivotal early scene that sets up the rest of the novel, the young Evelina is introduced to her first fashionable assembly in London but, flustered, confesses “I had not the presence of mind to say a single word” to the young nobleman with whom she dances.43 A moment later, she says of her dancing partner, Lord Orville, “These people in high life have too much presence of mind, I believe, to seem disconcerted, or out of humour, however they may feel.”44 Evelina thus sets up early on a key motif in the novel, one which reflects her own faltering performance on stage: the capacity, or incapacity, to commit fully to the narrative present. It turns out that what makes “presence of mind” so challenging for Evelina is “presence” itself—but specifically, the co-presence of others. This imposing sense of the word (e.g. “Lord Orville's presence”45) is found all throughout Evelina’s letters, and suggests her hyper-active attunement to the shifting

44 Ibid.
power dynamics introduced by observing eyes. In this sense, Evelina’s dividedness remains grounded in real-world interpersonal interactions.

Burney makes explicit what was implicit in Smith’s theory of sympathy, which is that attention is not infinite, but operates within a limited, embodied economy. In Chapter Two, I discussed attention primarily through the principle of selection, in which attention’s focus, especially in visual attention, is given successively in time, and so its embodied limitations have appeared primarily as structural, following from the structure and placement of the eye, of the head, etc. Yet even in The London Spy and in Hogarth’s prints, a different kind of limit was presented, as reflectors were beset by competing stimulations; in such instances, these reflectors either lost all capacity to process or filtered out the competing noise. Evelina provides a more complex account of attention, as the heroine remains responsive to the fact that she is not always fully responsive to the demands of the present: “In truth, I had no power to attend to him, for all my thoughts were occupied in re-tracing the transactions of the two former balls at which I had been present.”46 In such moments, Evelina addresses attention as a limited power of processing in the present. While attention does not receive such a theorization elsewhere in the eighteenth century, Evelina’s account corresponds with more recent studies of attention, such as those by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who argues that the mind “cannot notice or hold in focus more information than can be processed simultaneously. Retrieving information from memory storage and bringing it into the focus of awareness, comparing information, evaluating, deciding—all make demands on the mind’s limited processing capacity.”47

46 Ibid 2.19, 225.
Evelina herself is perhaps attuned to attention in this way as a result of her constant processing of the attentions of others, for this processing reveals that her own inattentions are just as apparent as her attentions. Thus, when Evelina remains preoccupied with Lord Orville, his would-be competitor Sir Clement Willoughby remarks upon her evident distraction: “I fancy I looked rather uneasy, for he took notice of my inattention, saying, in his free way, ‘Whence that anxiety? – Why are those lovely eyes perpetually averted?’” 48 It seems apparent to mindreaders then, that if attention is not engaged with what is immediately present, then it must be engaged elsewhere, indicating for a mindreader like Willoughby, and thus indirectly for a mindreader like Evelina, a rerouting of the mind’s processing to another object.

However, what most often divides Evelina’s attention is not mere distraction, or a competition between possible objects of attention, but instead, a conflict between inputs concerning self. Like little Frances Burney upon the theatrical stage, Evelina directs her considerable powers of observation to her own floundering performance. It is worth considering how Burney conveys this sense of divided attention, given that the narrative is recounted in first-person narration. As Monica Fludernik reminds us, “In the homodiegetic realm, the deictic center of the protagonist’s SELF has been identified as the experientiality of the so-called experiencing self of the first-person narrator.” 49 which suggests that the competing inputs of Evelina’s self should both align with Evelina-reflector’s experiences, rather than Evelina-teller’s reportage. However, Burney in fact exploits the constitutive distance between teller and reflector—what Fludernik describes as “the separation of the

48 Evelina 1.13, 46.
distanced evaluative perspective and of the quasi-immediate immersion within the first-person protagonist’s past experience— in order to convey a diegetic experience of self-consciousness. Thus, when Evelina is first introduced to Lord Orville, Burney exaggerates this separation between “distanced evaluative perspective” and “quasi-immediate immersion” to combine, for her reflector, as a sense of detached self-observation alongside impulsive immediacy. Evelina recounts of the introduction that a “gentleman,” who she discerningly observes is “gaily but not foppishly dressed, and indeed extremely handsome, with an air of mixed politeness and gallantry, desired to know if I was engaged, or would honour him with my hand,” and concludes with this analysis both astute and self-deprecating: “So he was pleased to say, though I am sure I know not what honour he could receive from me.” While this depiction is necessarily conveyed via Evelina the teller, it also posits that Evelina the reflector is making such appraisals in the narrative moment, and her eloquence in formulating her observations convinces the reader of her discernment and intelligence.

The very assurance and penetration of Evelina’s observations produce, by contrast to her reflector self, a strong sense of irony, for, in the quasi-immediacy of the narrative present, Evelina-the-reflector loses all poise and assurance: “I was seized with such a panic, that I could hardly speak a word, and nothing but the shame of so soon changing my mind prevented my returning to my seat, and declining to dance at all.” The language of “seizure” suggests immediacy, the sudden subjection to emotion. Evelina, as a letter-writer, is eloquent, yet as a reflector in an exaggerated emotional state, she loses her capacity to

50 Ibid.
51 Evelina 1.11, 31.
52 Ibid.
speak. As in *The London Spy* and the gothic narratives that followed, the charge of affect, when tinged with fear, brings readers closer to the narrative present, for it places them suspensefully amid a horizon of uncertainty. Interestingly, in such moments, Evelina’s own actions occur as if impulsively, seemingly detached from her own deliberative volition: “I said no, before I knew I had answered at all” or “I bowed, almost involuntarily.” While it is a commonplace in novels of sensibility that the body manifests the visible markers of impulsive emotions, Evelina seems to narrate her own self as the observer that witnesses the actions of her sensible body. Phrases like “before I knew I had” and “almost involuntarily” introduce a temporal split in the reflector’s experiencing; still situated within the same diegetic point in time, Evelina’s action becomes subdivided into two interfaces: acting in the moment, and the self-analysis of acting in the moment. While the former seems schematically aligned with the immediacy of the reflector-mode, as more immediate, and the latter borrows the detached composure of the teller-mode, as more composed, both are produced within the teller-reflecter dynamic, with both terms re-producing the interplay between “immediate immersion” and “detached evaluative perspective” within the same narrative instant of action.

For similar reasons, it would be a mistake to categorize *impulsive* as pure feeling and *evaluative* as pure thought, for Burney’s language suggests no such clear distinction between the impulse and the evaluation of the impulse. Even amid the seemingly uncontrollable panic which “seized” her, Evelina evinces a thought process—specifically, a conflicted analysis between the immediate pain of self-consciousness and the foreseeable pain of self-consciousness. In acknowledging that “nothing but the shame of so soon changing my mind prevented my returning to my seat,” Evelina reveals the impasse her
reflector confronts: she can evade the shame of performing before so many strangers, or she can avoid the shame that would attend such an evasion. Evelina can thus assess how she feels as she approaches the dance floor (terror and embarrassment), but she is also able to project, in the same moment, how it would feel in the imagined moment of evading Orville once again (further embarrassment). While one mode is arguably more immediate than the other, in each instance, it is Evelina's attunement to the attention of others that produces the discomfort, suggesting that her self-consciousness operates even in her seemingly impulsive or involuntary responses. 53

In experimenting with first-person narration in this fashion, Burney suggests a metacognitive awareness for her reflector that attends and augments experience in the narrative moment of such experience. These are the delineations of an embodied economy of attention that Burney posits in her journalistic and epistolary narratives. In many ways, Burney merely adapts commonplace wisdom concerning reason's or reflection's role in modifying or restraining the impulses of the passions. In all of Burney's fictions, this possibility for modification is situated within an embodied economy that hinges upon the reflector's situational withdrawal or arousal; thus, readers find Cecilia at the end of most chapters in the reverie of free indirect processing—“Left at length by herself, she revolved in her mind the adventure of the evening” 54—while they find Camilla revealing her affectionate heart by her sudden awakening to Edgar's danger: “Roused at once from her

53Interestingly, Silvan Tomkins discusses the affect of shame as specifically constituted by such a split of self, for “the phenomenological distinction between the subject and object of shame is lost. Why is shame so close to the experienced self? It is because the self lives in the face, and within the face the self burns brightest in the eyes. Shame turns the attention of the self and other away from other objects to this most visible residence of self, increases its visibility, and thereby generates the torment of self-consciousness.” See Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader, eds. Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) 136.

54Frances Burney. Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress, eds. Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1999) 3.6.5, 476.
sullen calm to the most agonizing sensibility, every thing and every body, herself most of all, were forgotten in the sight of his danger.\textsuperscript{55} Readers find this same economy at work in Evelina, but the epistolary mode allows Burney to recast seemingly situational states of mind as co-present aspects of mind. And in so doing, Burney casts reflectiveness not merely as a restraint upon emotion, but, in many passages, as its intensifying symptom. Thus when Lord Orville attempts to engage his silent partner in conversation, it is her perceptive penetration into his motives—concerning his probable interpretations of her silence—that intensify her embarrassed reticence: “It now struck me that he was resolved to try whether or not I was capable of talking upon any subject. This put so great a restraint upon my thoughts, that I was unable to go further than a monosyllable.”\textsuperscript{56} While Evelina’s evaluative ability is temporally divided from the quasi-immediacy of impulse, it is not to be understood as wholly counter to or separate from the affective state driving such impulsivity, for “thoughts” are very often what drive her passions: “I was frightened at the thoughts of dancing before so many people,” she remarks, and moments later: “how will he be provoked, thought I, when he finds what a simple rustic he has honoured with his choice!”\textsuperscript{57} Thoughts themselves are cast as just as passionate and inhibitory; indeed, they are part of Evelina’s self-conscious attunement to others which splinters her experience of the present.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Evelina} 1.11, 34.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid 31-32.
\textsuperscript{58}Jonathan Kramnick, discussing the influence of Lucretian materialism on the Earl of Rochester’s \textit{Imperfect Enjoyment}, identifies a similarly disruptive, inhibitory conception of thought, in which “the mental “ is rendered as “an interruption along an otherwise smoothly running chain” of bodily engagements. Neither Rochester nor Kramnick explore this “thought” explicitly as self-consciousness, though such a reading is of course available. See Kramnick. \textit{Actions and Objects: from Hobbes to Richardson} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) 113.
Implicit in all of these thoughts and feelings is Evelina’s predominating concern with how she is being perceived by the strangers she encounters at the assembly, and most commonly, though not exclusively, by Lord Orville. Evelina provides numerous reports evincing imaginative displacement—again, Langacker’s term for rendering “SELF as an OTHER.” She thus approximates an external perspective of her reflector self via another person’s vantage, frequently attuning to, especially in the opening letters, what others see expressed in her face: “He appeared to be surprised at my terror, which I believe was but too apparent”; “I suppose he perceived my uneasiness”; “I suppose my consciousness betrayed my artifice, for he looked at me as if incredulous.”59 The faces and reactions of others in such instances become conduits for gauging the externalized performance of the self. Critics like Janet Todd have discussed sentimental novels as instilling “a kind of pedagogy of seeing and of the physical reaction that this seeing should produce,” emphasizing affect as a performative form of communication.60 Evelina seems astutely attuned to such protocols, but less so in the faces of others; or rather, she attends to the faces of others to construe her own face’s manifestations of such signs. In this way, the act of blushing becomes less an experiential event (e.g. my face felt flushed) than an externalized event imaginatively envisioned—“I am sure I coloured”—or its experientiality is inflected with an externalized concern with visibility—“I felt myself change colour.”61 As a result of this displacement, Evelina continues to present herself as divided from her own experiences, or as having access to such experiences only by continuously introjecting the vantage of a watchful other.

59 *Evelina* 1.11, 31, 33; 1.13, 42.
61 *Evelina* 1.11, 31; 1.18, 73. At a later point in the novel, the rise and fall of Evelina’s color becomes verbally displaced, in the moment it occurs, as subject of discussion by a whole party. See 1.20.
In a sense, one might understand Evelina’s status as watchful, inexperienced débutante as a reworking of the differential between naïve and habituated experiences explored in Chapter One. At least in the first chapters of the novel, Evelina is not inundated by a hyper-stimulating environment, but rather is overwhelmed because underpracticed. At one point, Evelina proclaims in her own defense, “I am new to the world, and unused to acting for myself—my intentions are never willfully blameable, yet I err perpetually!”

In this interpretive frame, Evelina’s embarrassing errors follow directly from her lack of practical experience – she is “unused to acting” and, in such instances, when she does act, she finds she is horrified at her fearful, ungraceful performance, her lack of “presence of mind.” Later on I will discuss a different interpretive frame for Evelina’s naïveté, one more spatial and situation-based than performative. In the early scenes of the novel, however, readers see her formative attempts at putting theory into practice, or moving from observation to action. Burney suggests that her heroine has been tutored by observation, indicated in the novel by Evelina’s enthusiastic attendance at a performance of Benjamin Hoadley’s *The Suspicious Husband*, starring David Garrick. In describing the performance, Evelina sets up the terms of “on-stage” self-presentation at issue in the rest of the novel, for Garrick introduces the “presence” of performance that Evelina finds she is so often lacking: “Such ease! such vivacity in his manner! such grace in his motions! such fire and meaning in his eyes! – I could hardly believe he had studied a written part, for every word seemed to be uttered from the impulse of the moment.” The most revealing moment of Evelina’s spectatorship, however, is when she declares her enthusiastic desire to leap from her seat as a spectator to the stage of the performers: “when he danced – O, how I envied

---

Clarinda! I almost wished to have jumped on the stage and joined them." Burney thus sets up a subtle irony, for it is only in the next letter that Evelina is presented with the opportunity to join on the "stage" of dancing at a private assembly, whereupon she is introduced to Lord Orville, whose "presence" is rendered as commanding as Garrick's: "his air, and address were open and noble; his manners gentle, attentive, and infinitely engaging; his person is all elegance, and his countenance the most animated and expressive I have ever seen." It is in the practical execution of dancing before so many strangers—articulated as a desire only the day before—that Evelina becomes self-consciously split off from her experience, as she becomes fixated on the external image of performing.

Sitting in the audience off-stage, Evelina projects herself imaginatively onstage with the performers. She thus enacts Smith's scene of spectatorship, but within the special confines of theatrical spectatorship. She is enthralled with the performance, yet continues to remain aware of her self, of her sympathetic body while watching ("I almost wished to have jumped on the stage") and her experience remains peripheral to the action on stage. What changes in the following scene at the ball, is that Evelina encounters Smith's sympathetic scene, but outside of the special confines of theatrical spectatorship, in which the spectator is free to remain narratively peripheral. In Smith's everyday formulation, mutual observation, and thus objectification, forms an essential aspect of interaction. Approaching the dance, the heroine encounters not only the observing eyes of Orville, but the observing eyes of all who watch them interact.

What begins as a fanciful desire is thus rendered as detached and dreamlike when actualized, as Evelina remains a spectatorial observer to her own performance. Despite the

---

64Ibid 1.11, 31.
Preface’s claims concerning “sober Probability,”65 Burney’s first novel thus suggests that reality can have the feel of the virtual, as the spectatorial viewing situation persists within the actantial situation. In framing the realism-effect of her novel in this way, Burney develops The Theory of Moral Sentiments’s premise that spectatorial judgments precede the application of such judgments to self, and thus, in some way, the very formation of self.66 Yet Burney suggests what is only implicit in Smith’s proliferation of imaginative engagement: that such formative introjection can de-realize the self’s interfacing with the real. It is by playing with Smith’s terms as a developmental narrative—the moral progress from spectator to actor—that Burney fashions a heroine somehow fully developed, as spectator, yet also under-practiced, as actor. Evelina arrives in London as the consummate spectator, fully equipped to judge of all she meets—“I have hardly time to breathe – only just this, the houses and streets are not quite so superb as I expected. However, I have seen nothing yet, so I ought not to judge”—yet Rev. Villars must advise her to “learn not only to judge but to act for yourself.”67 Judgment is spectatorial, yet one’s emergence as a moral actor is founded upon the introjection of such judgment when acting. In Smith’s paradigm, the impartial spectator serves as a check on the actor’s actions, yet the actor remains seemingly within the narrative role of actor. Burney uses epistolary immediacy to place Evelina the actor within the spectator’s narrative role of detached self-observation. In

65Ibid Preface 10. With her famous appeal to “sober Probability” Burney formulates her own approach to novelistic realism, and to contrast this with “the fantastic regions of Romance, where Fiction is coloured by all the gay tints of luxurious Imagination” and “where Reason is an outcast.” In her own account, imagination is not to be supplanted by reason, but becomes a central part of the realist effect of disappointment, and persists in the practical engagement of self-conscious mindreading.

66See Smith. Treatise, in which judgment of others precedes the internalization of such judgment: “Our first ideas of personal beauty and deformity, are drawn from the shape and appearance of others, not from our own.” (3.1.4, 111); "In the same manner our first moral criticisms are exercised upon the characters and conduct of other people [...] But we soon learn, that other people are equally frank with regard to our own” (3.1.5, 112).

67Evelina 1.10, 27; 2.8, 166.
mixing the narrative role of actor with that of the spectator, Burney plays with Evelina’s sense of her own narrative salience, separating out its experiential dimension from its factual dimension. The factual self is seemingly placed at a remove from the experiential self, to the extent that the experiential self is aligned with the detached position of the spectator. In this way, the factuality of self, and thus its moral weight, is experienced, somewhat horrifically, from a virtual remove.

This experiential distortion of narrative factuality is an essential feature of Burney’s realism in *Evelina*. Like other realist authors, Burney deflates idealistic expectations through mock-heroic irony, yet in *Evelina*, irony’s detachment becomes a psychological condition—being-in-the-world as being not fully present for the cruel facts of self. While Burney invokes “sober Probability” to augment the “gay tints of luxurious Imagination,” she does not displace imagination as such, but employs Smithian imagination as a vehicle of self-imaging, self-judgment, and self-detachment. It is thus marshaled as a mechanism of ego-deflation. *Evelina* suggests that the feeling of derealization is a facet of the real, as well an indicator of realism, insofar as it registers the acute pains to the ego due to ongoing performative failures. This is registered by imaginatively occupying the spectator’s external position of judgment rather than the actor’s internal position of narrative salience. Yet even as the imagination separates Evelina from the factuality of her immediate experience, that does not mean one should understand it as counter to the factual in general, for it attunes her to the perceptions others may have of her. There is a factuality in this appearance and in the judgments of others that Burney, and Evelina, takes very seriously. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this dimension of embodiment is a fact taken for granted in everyday experience: “To have a body is to be looked at [...] it is to be visible,”
and it is this factual visibility to which Evelina is so attuned. Evelina’s “corporeal schema” is the interface, “the hinge of the for itself and the for the other,” which requires frequent attention insofar as it receives frequent attention from others. However, for Merleau-Ponty—discussing the example of “a woman in the street feeling that they are looking at her breast”—the everyday attention a person pays to this dimension of their embodiment is largely unconscious: “To be sure, if a woman of good faith who closes her coat (or the contrary), were questioned, she would not know what she has just done. She would not know it in the language of conventional thought, but she would know it as one knows the repressed.” In Merleau-Ponty’s conception, the repressed is what is manifest in the everyday of interfacing; it is that everyday attunement and adjustment to the social environment so customary it both “is and is not perceived.” Self-consciousness attention to embodiment is thus low-level in this schema, barely perceived, and yet, curiously, the language here resonates with Burney’s interest in depicting partial “presence.” For Merleau-Ponty, there is something impersonal about such everyday being-in-the-world, which splits us off from being fully present: “I must be there in order to perceive—But in what sense? As one”—or as an impersonal perceiver. The repressed, in this view, is a factical aspect of intersubjective experience, even if it is not consciously perceived as such.

What is unconsciously perceived in Merleau-Ponty’s conception is what Evelina most attends to, yet both evoke a partitioning of attention and presence. In fact, it is possible to see Burney’s Evelina as presenting an inversion of the perceptual experience that Merleau-Ponty describes as everyday repression: Evelina, new to London society, seems

69 Ibid 190.
to repress the “for itself” of the body as she attends so acutely to the “for the other.” What would in everyday perception be attended to as only a low-level consideration—the interfacing of one’s body on visible display to others—is given the greater part of Evelina’s conscious attention, and, in turn, the embodied performance of her actions seems not always directly accessible to her conscious experience. Kieron O’Connor, a clinical psychologist, describes a strikingly similar portrait of derealization, emphasizing, like *Evelina*, the interplay between thoughtfulness, self-scrutiny, and the experience of disembodiment:

a client begins to experience derealization after a period of intense self-questioning. She asks: ‘Do I appear strange?; are people looking at me?’; ‘Am I talking properly?’ She feels the intense need to continuously observe and monitor herself. Ironically, it is this hyperfocus on reality that is inducing derealization. She begins to see herself as acting strangely and oddly, and acts ‘as if’ she is divorced from her body.70

Again, what seems noteworthy for this discussion of intersubjective interfacing is the role of imaginative displacement as a “hyperfocus on reality” that is “inducing derealization.” This is the seeming contradiction of Evelina’s predicament: the more she attends to her predicament as if objectively, the more she seems subject to it and less equipped to address it. What for O’Connor is clearly a dissociative pathology is framed by Burney as a developmental stage of embodied perceptual adjustment, whether of the naïve to the city, or of the youthful observer to the adult socialite. The novel suggests how the experiential dimension of “everydayness” thus becomes radically transformed for different perceivers, according to the differential of perceptual experience, as conscious attention is paid in greater or lesser amounts to these respective dimensions of the performing self.

What does it mean to turn to O’Connor’s clinical studies, or to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological account of everyday repression, to analyze Burney’s narrative techniques? I suggest only that these writers, like Burney, assume that the self functions as a center of narrative salience that is both experientially and factually grounded, but the grounding of which is constructed relationally within an immediate social environment. This is the fragile crux that undergirds the movement between Smith’s spectator and actor positions, and it is this fragile web that Burney explores as a vehicle for novelizing history in her experiments with the epistolary/journal form. By framing the heroine’s introduction to London—and thus to its principal characters—as a close study of self-conscious visibility, Burney cleverly builds from a phenomenology of performance in the first letters to a broader novelistic concern with character in later letters, through a subsequent phenomenology of situatedness. In this way, the novel eventually moves from attending to embodied performance, to a broader attention to the situations framing such performances. In structuring her novel in this manner, Burney grounds the complexities of character, of personal identity, in distilled scenes of intersubjective interfacing. I will examine this narrative distillation in more detail in the following section.

2-2. Situating Self, Spatializing Desire

Since Evelina appears to absent herself from her very first interactions before London society—retreating, if not physically then mentally, like little Frances Burney upon the theatrical stage—it is easy to interpret all of the subsequent scenes in which the heroine-reflector absents herself from the narrative present as a consistent repetition of the discomposure experienced at the private assemblies. However, there is a subtle difference
in Burney’s subsequent portrayals of embodied absence of mind. In the same passage in which Evelina blames her tendency to “err perpetually” on her lack of practice “acting for myself,” she also provides a slightly different interpretive frame for her naïve errors, one which in fact better characterizes the subsequent passages of embodied absences found in later letters: “unused to the situations in which I find myself,” Evelina explains, “and embarrassed by the slightest difficulties, I seldom, till too late, discover how I ought to act.” At first glance the statements seem to make the same claim: that her errors in acting are based on a naïve lack of experience. In this second formulation of inexperience, however, there is a switch in emphasis from “acting for myself” to being “unused to the situations in which I find myself”—a switch, then, from inexperience with a given social performance to inexperience with a given social situatedness. It may not have been Burney’s purpose to distinguish so finely between these two statements, but the distinction is certainly born out in the rest of the novel, as Evelina’s embarrassments concerning her own performative blunders are increasingly replaced by embarrassments concerning her involvement in seemingly compromising situations.

In fact, both kinds of embarrassments can be identified early on, at the very first assembly that Evelina attends in London, in the very same scene. In this scene, Evelina, sitting in embarrassed silence with the gregarious Lord Orville, is approached by the foppish Mr. Lovel, whom she has impolitely, if unknowingly, insulted by declining to dance before accepting Orville’s invitation only moments later. Lovel requests her attention as Orville looks on, and Evelina, once again, finds herself acting quite impulsively: “I interrupted him – I blush for my folly, – with laughing; yet I could not help it,” and this is

---

71Evelina 3.5, 301.
followed by an acute sense of self-consciousness: “I had much better have cried then; Lord Orville actually stared at me; the beau, I know not his name, looked quite enraged.”

This is clearly a scene of impulsive performance, in which Evelina is embarrassed by her inability to act more politely in front of such polite company. Just after Lovel makes his address, however—but a moment before Evelina laughs—there is a different scene of embarrassment, which is the cause of the nervous laughter: “when I looked around at Lord Orville, I saw such extreme surprise in his face, – the cause of which appeared so absurd,” that Evelina cannot help but to laugh.

In this scene, Evelina is not yet embarrassed with how she is acting or performing, but her glance at the watchful Orville and her subsequent laugh suggest that she is still self-conscious. The explanation for this self-consciousness lies in Evelina’s act of mindreading: seeing surprise in Orville’s face upon Lovel’s address, she surmises a “cause” for this surprise, which she feels is laughably “absurd.” What Evelina surmises in this instant is Orville’s jealousy at observing Lovel’s address, and so her laughter is a self-conscious reaction to Orville’s own reaction. Again, it is not her performance that gives rise to self-consciousness; it arises, in this instance, because the situation in which she finds herself leads an observing other to make surmises about her involvement, surmises which cause her discomfort.

This is a different kind of self-consciousness. Essential to its structure is the introduction of a peripheral observer to Evelina’s situation. Whereas in the scene of embarrassing performance, the displaced perspective of the other was internal to the situation, in the scene of embarrassing situation, the displacement of the other is necessarily external and peripheral to the immediate scene that involves the heroine. As such, the

---

72 Ibid 1.11, 34.
73 Ibid.
imaginative identification with an external viewpoint presents a sudden tableaux of self, within an unexpected situation, rather than an account of ongoing actions. This shift is very significant, for it allows the novel to present Evelina’s hyperconscious estrangement from self in a completely different manner, based not on present performances but on the situatedness of this performing self within the world. In Evelina’s initial interactions, she is certainly engaged in narrative situations—concerning dancing and navigating the rules of assembly—and she is self-conscious in those situations, yet she is not self-conscious of those situations, nor embarrassed to publicize her involvement in such fashionable spaces, in such fashionable enterprises, or with such fashionable people. In later passages, however, Evelina’s self-consciousness is directed precisely toward her reflectoral involvement in less fashionable spaces, in less fashionable enterprises, and with less fashionable associates—that is, toward her undesired but immediate narrative situation. The tableaux of self that emerges is thus the imagined perspective external to the immediate situation. The result is that Evelina is narratively and phenomenologically involved in two competing scenes: the immediate scene being witnessed, and the scene of witnessing itself. The self is again divided, but not between the potential action and its instantiation, but by co-present instantiations of self.

What Burney achieves in this shift to a situation-based self-consciousness is as masterfully ideological as it is adeptly philosophical. William Galperin has remarked that readers of Evelina suspect from very early on that the heroine “deserves” courtship from an aristocrat like Lord Orville, and that the novel’s endowment of “powers of observation and facility with language” to Evelina-the-teller help the reader justify “marital and social expectations” for Evelina-the-reflector that at the novel’s outset are conveniently “deemed
fanciful.’’\textsuperscript{74} For Galperin, this reflects Burney’s fundamentally conservative social agenda, which combines aristocratic with bourgeois ideology to consolidate a new status quo of social hierarchy. In part, Burney achieves this difficult task of organizing readerly affections and expectations by subtly re-framing Evelina’s self-consciousness as situation-based rather than performance-based, and thus by transitioning from a phenomenology of social performance to a phenomenology of character. As a result of this re-framing, Evelina’s actions are continuously referred back to the beginning of the novel, to her debut into the upper echelons of London society. Although Evelina enters the London assemblies as a complete novice, and is a stranger to all whom she meets there, these introductions quickly prove to be the frame through which both Evelina and the readers interpret all subsequent situations that construct her self. This is because it is at these assemblies that Evelina establishes acquaintanceship with both Lord Orville and Sir Clement Willoughby, and, importantly, it is these two characters who principally serve as the external observers of Evelina’s subsequent situatedness. It is thus principally through reference to the observing eyes of these two aristocratic gentlemen, met upon entering London, that Evelina experiences embarrassment at her subsequent involvement in certain spaces, enterprises, and associations elsewhere in the novel. Yet by referring continually to the external gaze of these two observers, Burney constructs an elaborate technology of narrative self, one which links the performativity of self to the movement between situations which enable such performances.

To the extent that attention to the external gaze of Orville or Willoughby pulls Evelina out of “entangled absorption in the ‘world,’” one might again see parallels with

Martin Heidegger’s attunement of *Angst*, suggesting that self-consciousness might, in such instances, “uncannily” alienate from situatedness in the world.\(^75\) However, while there are parallels to be drawn, it is important to recognize that what pulls Evelina out of absorption in one given situation is imaginative identification with another competing situation, the viewing situation of the external observer. Importantly, the external viewer is not an impartial spectator, but, rather, a partial spectator—an interested suitor with a working knowledge of Evelina’s character. What Orville or Willoughby introduce into the immediate situation that involves Evelina, then, is not simply a contrasting external perspective, but, for Evelina, a competing image of her self—the haunting of the past into the present. Thus, recounting when Willoughby escorts her to her new, coarsely middle-class companions, she expresses to Villars the pain she feels at the prospect of past meeting with present: “I must own to you honestly, my dear Sir, that an involuntary repugnance seized me at presenting such a set to Sir Clement, – he who had been used to see me in parties so different!”\(^76\) In the passage below, Evelina refers all of her perceptions of her unwanted companions to Sir Clement’s external perspective on the situation, and his surmises about Evelina’s character that this situation inevitably prompts:

> My pace slackened as I approached them, – but they presently perceived me […] Just as Madame Duval, with her usual *Ma foi*, was beginning to reply, the attention of Sir Clement was wholly drawn from her, by the appearance of Mr. Smith, who, coming suddenly behind me, and freely putting his hands on my shoulders, cried, ‘O ho, my little runaway, have I found you at last?’ […] Perhaps I was too proud; – but I could not endure that Sir Clement, whose eyes followed him with looks of the most surprised curiosity, should witness his unwelcome familiarity. Upon my removal he came up to me, and, in a low voice, said, ‘You are not, then, with the Mirvans?’\(^77\)

\(^76\)*Evelina* 2.15, 200-1.
\(^77\)Ibid 201-2.
Evelina’s language emphasizes the fact of Willoughby’s constant presence as an attentive observer, even as he ingratiates himself strategically, and narratively, into the party. Evelina’s constant referral to the external perspective of Sir Clement Willoughby, in this passage, gives considerable weight not to a “true self” represented by the past but to a particular image of herself in a particular situation—“with the Mirvans”—an image conceived only at the novel’s beginning. Evelina’s debut was not particularly well polished, but it included her among the fashionable party of Lady Mirvan in a higher echelon of London society; it is this image of her self that is painfully mortified by the new situations in which she finds herself involved with the middling Branghtons, Mr. Smith, and especially her abrasive grandmother, Madame Duval. Such an embarrassment turns upon a mock-heroic deflation of ego, but the deflation refers not only to a normative ideal, but to an already established “ideal” of character. It is Evelina’s, and Evelina’s, investment in the eyes of both Willoughby and Orville—the eyes that pursued her at her debut—that thus alienates her, phenomenologically, from all of the various and many subsequent self-situations in which she finds herself.

Interfacing in Evelina thus occurs, self-consciously, between eyes. As in the passage of Willoughby’s observations above, the externalization of Evelina’s situation is achieved by an acute attention in tracking the eyes of others. This scrupulous attention to the language of eyes makes Evelina one of the first novels to address the fine art of cruising. Captain Mirvan, satirizing Orville’s politeness on the subject, reveals the interestedness operative in the attention to eyes: “‘Aye, Aye,’ cried the Captain, ‘you may talk what you will of your eye here, and your eye there, and, for the matter of that, to be sure you have two, — but we all know they both squint one way’” (23). Just after the first assemblies,
however, it is Evelina who pays most attention to attention: “The very first person I saw was Lord Orville. I felt so confused! – but he did not see me.” Following her first embarrassments, Evelina maintains a low profile, socially as well as narratively, for she assumes the role of peripheral observer, transcribing the idiosyncracies and absurdities of her party, and making little mention of her own presence. Yet, as an observer, her attentions are, within the narrative, still visible. Indeed, one of the abusive women harassing Evelina in Marylebone remarks, when they pass Orville, “you have a monstrous good stare, for a little county Miss” (2.21, 235). The woman thus offers up an external perspective on Evelina’s own external viewing situation, and highlights the interest it demonstrates. Orville’s own attentions are at first more polite, more accidental: “whenever he chanced to meet my eyes, he condescended to bow” (1.12, 39); “I saw that in a careless manner, his eyes surveyed the party” (235). Only when Orville begins to respond in kind does Evelina avert her own eyes: “unhappily I caught his eye; – both mine immediately were bent to the ground” (236); “How Lord Orville looked I know not, for I avoided meeting his eyes” (1.16, 58). Orville is subsequently also deflective, aware that his observations are also observed: “he looked back, but hastily withdrew his eyes, upon finding I observed him” (3.5, 303); “whenever I raised my eyes, his, I perceived, were directed towards me, though instantly, upon meeting mine, he looked another way” (3.11, 332). Evelina is just as attuned to the eyes of Sir Clement Willoughby, albeit with more wariness and suspicion of his motives: “his eyes perpetually cast towards the five-shilling gallery, where I suppose he concluded that we were seated” (1.21, 94); “his eyes, I saw, were very busily employed in viewing the place, and the situation of the house” (2.15, 207). But such concern with eyes

78 *Evelina* 1.12.
nearly always introduces a self-conscious splitting regarding Evelina’s situatedness, as she attends to the eyes that speculate on her immediate involvements: “Lord Orville’s eyes, with an expression of anxiety that distressed me, turned from him to me, and me to him, every word I spoke” (3.9, 317). It is this ocular query, the movement from Evelina to the questionable new acquaintance, that invokes Evelina’s past character in each present situation.

There is a sense in which each instance of eye-report listed above serves the same narrative function: it represents the divergence of Evelina’s focalized awareness away from her immediate situation toward the external viewing situation of either Orville or Willoughby. This is consistent all throughout, and so reflects a recursive dynamic of the novel: no matter what new or unsuspected situation Evelina finds herself in, these reports act as a check, referring each subsequent tableaux of self to the character she began establishing at the first assemblies. As a result, each visibly compromising situation is registered, self-consciously, as an undesired deviation—as possible selves disavowed. Evelina minimally engages with her immediate circumstances, and fearfully re-directs her attention, as an indication of her good sense, toward an external other who is there to judge her self’s continuity. Yet, with regard to the eye interactions between Evelina and Orville, readers can also clearly trace a development that brings Orville’s eyes with increasing interest upon the heroine’s situatedness, and, most importantly, the heroine’s affective response to this external interest. Evelina’s eyes in this sense are not merely pining for escape from the immediate present. As the novel progresses, the felt attention of Orville’s eyes upon her creates a profound response of its own: “I saw that Lord Orville had his eyes fixed upon us, with a gravity of attention that made me uneasy” (1.23, 113); “meeting the
eyes of Lord Orville, which were earnestly fixed on me, my confusion redoubled, and I
knew not which way to look” (3.5, 301). It is not that Evelina is unused to receiving
attention. Despite her attempts to render herself a peripheral observer in her outings in
London, she is not Mr. Spectator, and as a young lady, she does not find the anonymity
celebrated by Addison and Steele in the London crowds. Instead she often attracts
unwanted notice, through narrative incidence which involves her as a participant, such as
in her distress at Marylebone: “Every other moment I was spoken to by some bold and
unfeeling man” (2.21, 234). It is clear that, as Captain Mirvan suggests, attention of men
to women indicate an interestedness. So what does this say about Evelina’s own ocular
attentions? As shall be evident, Evelina’s own assessments of Orville and Willoughby, and
of their respective observations, turn upon their ability, or inability, to grant her, in their
assessment of her character, the benefit of the doubt in seemingly compromising situations,
and thus an appreciable degree of autonomy in directing her eyes and navigating herself
through physical space and social situations.

The development of Evelina turns upon a language of the eyes between the sexes,
and as such, the dynamics of this language, like nearly all aspects of embodiment, are
heavily gendered, especially in the century in which Burney is writing. Even as the novel
develops an unofficial theory of the performing and situated self premised on the ocular
interest of others, its attention to eyes is decidedly gendered, as Evelina’s behaviors, ocular
and otherwise, are subject to determinations of what is proper for a lady. For this reason,
Burney may well not have created the same conceptual edifice of self-conscious interfacing
in her debut novel, had her protagonist been a male suitor, despite its seemingly universal
applicability. Bernard Mandeville, in Fable of the Bees, suggests that, while shame and
self-consciousness are universal, due to the gendered expectation of sexual modesty, women are particularly made subject to such experiences. Although he does not theorize it explicitly, Mandeville’s analysis depends just as much upon mindreading as the moral sense theorists. This is no more evident than in his exploration of the affect of shame, for which Mandeville refers again and again to the social construction of gendered difference. In the following passage, Mandeville applies his analysis to customs regarding staring, and the interactions between differently gendered eyes:

But too closely to pursue a Woman, and fasten upon her with one’s Eyes, is counted very unmannerly; the Reason is plain, it makes her uneasy, and, if she be not sufficiently fortify’d by Art and Dissimulation, often throws her into visible Disorders. As the Eyes are the Windows of the Soul, so this staring Impudence flings a raw, unexperienced Woman into panic Fears, that she may be seen through; and that the Man will discover, or has already betray’d, what passes within her: It keeps her on a perpetual Rack, that commands her to reveal her secret Wishes, and seems design’d to extort from her the grand Truth, which Modesty bids her with all her Faculties to deny.79

In the above, Mandeville posits a universal truth about eyes—that they are, as “the Windows of the Soul,” indicators of affective and intentional states, such as desire, whether one is male or female. Female shyness, shame, and embarrassment, however, also operate in concert with cultural education. The “raw, unexperienced Woman” is not to be understood as unexperienced in the cultural expectations of female modesty. On the contrary, her “panic Fears” arise precisely because of her self-conscious attunement to such cultural expectations of performance, even as her inexperience prevents her from fortifying herself “by Art and Dissimulation,” or studied, polite coquetry. Similar to the woman buttoning up her coat in Merleau-Ponty, the passage posits women as particularly exposed, visible, objectified; here, however, her body is not merely objectified, but

scrutinized for a betrayal of desire. What she fears is what Evelina, also, implicitly fears yet, with Orville at least, simultaneously courts, which is a transparency of affect and intention—“that she may be seen through.”

The eyes thus provide the route to Evelina’s desire yet, as the first-person narrator, Evelina’s eyes are most often reflected, self-consciously, through the attentive eyes of another. One can understand her eyes, implicitly, as lending focus to what she as a reflector observes, yet often it is as a detached and peripheral observer, seemingly disinterested, and disengaged from her situation. It is generally only with reference to the eyes of others that Evelina reveals, through self-conscious displacement, the movements of her own eyes: “not a moment, did I dare meet the eyes of Lord Orville! All consciousness myself, I dreaded his penetration, and directed mine every way – but towards his” (3.14, 348). As flustered as she may be, Evelina’s attention to her own eyes thus suggests a self-conscious guardedness, the attempt to conceal, in Mandeville’s terms, “her secret Wishes.” Evelina, the country debutante, is the “unexperienced” girl, thrown “into visible Disorders” by the attentions of others, who nonetheless still exerts “all her Faculties” to evade detection. In fact, in the beginning of the book, as was discussed Evelina’s affective agitations were not opposed to her self-conscious reserve because, indeed, these went hand in hand.

However, in later scenes that reveal Evelina’s situatedness, affective agitation is more revealing, as it becomes separable, in narrative time, from self-conscious reserve and the referral to the viewpoints of external observers. In these later scenes, the London nightlife, especially in the pleasure gardens, is shown to be as volatile and overwhelming as the early satires depicted it, agitating Burney’s heroine into outbursts of fearful passion. It is only after such an outburst, during which self-conscious inhibitions are temporarily
suspended, that Evelina returns to a sense of self-conscious reserve and watchfulness. This uncoupling of passionate agitation from self-conscious watchfulness produces for Evelina something quite rare in this novel: forward-directed motion and unselfconscious action. Thus, readers find Evelina assaulted by a group of men in the notorious dark walks of Vauxhall: “Terrified to death, I struggled with such vehemence to disengage myself from him […] and with a swiftness which fear only could have given me, I flew rather than ran up the walk, hoping to secure my safety by returning to the lights and company we had so foolishly left.” In this instance, Evelina sees the light ahead of her, and runs towards it. She is detained by more men when Willoughby intervenes, and it is only when she is safe from further harassment that she becomes “[a]shamed of my situation, and extremely mortified to be thus recognized by him” in the dark walks.80 Similarly, after escaping a stray firework at Marylebone, Evelina loses her party, when an officer, “with great violence,” seizes her hand: “I screamed aloud with fear; and forcibly snatching it away, I ran hastily up to two ladies,” from whom she asks protection. Again, she runs away from the officer but toward the ladies. Safe enough to realize her chosen companions are prostitutes, Evelina then returns to self-consciousness of her situation: “And this was our situation, – for we had not taken three steps, when, – O sir, – we again met Lord Orville! – but not again did he pass quietly by us: – unhappily I caught his eye.”81 Each time, there is a forward-directed impulsiveness driven by fear, and then, only after the obnoxious stimulus of physical assault is removed, does Evelina become conscious of the compromising situation into which her fear has driven her. There first is a passionate looking – a looking to get away – followed by a shameful looking – the seeing of self-situatedness. In this way, Evelina’s

80 *Evelina* 2.15, 198.
81 Ibid 2.21, 234-35.
passion is both acknowledged and undermined, expressed and disavowed. Yet it is important that Burney shows her heroine navigating her spatial self-situation autonomously.

In one chapter of his fantastic *Narrative Bodies*, Daniel Punday discusses the role of space in narrative, and maintains that “the meaning of a narrative space is important far more because of the kinds of movements that it opens up than because of the atmosphere or symbolism that it enables.”

Punday highlights the ways that narrative space—its accessibility or non-accessibility—structures the movements and perceptions of bodies, thus circumscribing what is knowable and attainable in the narrative. In this circumscription, Punday understands space to also structure desire. One of the ways space is made inaccessible is by social convention, and it in this context that Punday discusses *Evelina*: “Much of the effectiveness of Fanny Burney’s *Evelina*, for example, depends on her very sensitive understanding of the way in which convention can exert nearly physical limitations upon women.”

Referring to the scene in which Evelina attempts to jump out of Sir Clement Willoughby’s carriage, when she learns he does not mean to drop her promptly at her residence, Punday demonstrates that the gendered prescriptions of polite society severely restrict Evelina’s actions and movements to free herself at such a moment. To be sure, as the passage from Mandeville suggests, even Evelina’s frantic attempt to flee, while prompted by genuinely experienced fear, is itself informed by such prescriptions, for the coach ride and its delay might become the subject of talk by observing others. Thus her impulsive response, as well as her restraint of her impulse, are born of such considerations.

---

83 Ibid 136.
For Punday, Evelina’s relation to space is thus one of considerable restriction, a restriction neither entirely self-made nor externally fixed, but one that closes down accessibility to space and action all the same—"conventional rules that she experiences very much as physical restraints."\(^84\) This restriction is seen even more explicitly in Vauxhall and Marylebone gardens, where certain spaces, like the dark walks, while not prohibited to women, are socially circumscribed as unsafe to women, whether to their person or their character. Evelina’s movement through them, while she explores what was before unexplored, is rendered as an inundation, and the forward motion that they prompt, is only the desire to escape. Such is the account of embodied, desirous looking and movement in Evelina; for a novel that provides such exquisitely detailed accounts of experientially embodied engagements, much of it is for this reason rendered, if ingeniously, as a desire for escape, a looking away, and a self-conscious absenting of self.

However, I would like to close the chapter by identifying the truly pivotal moment of embodied looking and movement in Evelina, for this is the scene of autonomous self-direction that later determines Orville as the external evaluator who, unlike Willoughby, permits such autonomy. This scene also explores the obvious corollary to Evelina’s conscious selfhood: the absence of self-consciousness. Like Smith, Burney’s account of self-seeing emphasizes practical engagements with the judging eyes of others. According to Smith, this involves imaginative introjection of the perspectives of others, and so could easily extend into moments of private solitude. Burney, however, in the scene of intervention with Macartney, offers her heroine a rare and exquisite moment of reprieve from the eyes of others, introjected or otherwise. Curiously, but importantly, this is a

\(^{84}\text{Ibid 137.}\)
moment that involves neither of the principal suitors of Evelina, Orville or Willoughby, though it does involve an unknown gentleman—the impoverished poet Macartney, boarder of the Branghtons. Macartney is later revealed to be Evelina’s half-brother but, importantly, that extenuating revelation has not yet been made. Also of import is the space in which this scene takes place; unlike the scenes of situatedness set in the crowded gardens or streets, the scene in question takes place within an interior, but on the boundary between public and private: a modern stairwell. Quite different from the crowded and volatile gardens, there is still a critical degree of impersonality structured into this private/public thoroughfare, necessary for bringing Evelina into contact with new horizons of interaction. Evelina-teller introduces Evelina-reflector in a rare moment of solitude at the Branghtons’ residence: “I went into the room where we had dined the day before; and, by a wonderful chance, I happened to seat myself, that I had a view of the stairs, and yet could not be seen from them.” Evelina thus sets the stage in which she, as unseen peripheral viewer, will perceive the unsuspecting Macartney as he climbs the stairs to his own private room:

I saw, passing by the door, with a look perturbed and affrighted, the same young man I mentioned in my last letter. Not heeding, as I suppose, how he went, in turning the corner of the stairs, which are narrow and winding, his foot slipped and he fell; but almost instantly rising, I plainly perceived the end of a pistol, which started from his pocket by hitting against the stairs.

Evelina’s deft skill in mindreading renders Macartney almost as a reflector in this passage, yet only briefly, for it is her own perception of the pistol that takes precedence. This image of the stairwell becomes established as, primarily, the view of the sympathizing spectator, one contemplating movement from spectatorship to action.

---

85 *Evelina* 2.12, 182.
86 Ibid 182-83.
Evelina infers only one explanation upon seeing the exposed pistol: “that he was, at that very moment, meditating suicide!” upon which she grows “almost stiff with horror; till recollecting that it was yet possible to prevent the fatal deed, all my faculties seemed to return, with the hope of saving him.” This revolution occurs in a moment, for Macartney, still moving up the stairs, “moved on slowly, yet I soon lost sight of him.” In perhaps the only subtly self-conscious indication of the possible impropriety involved in her intervention, Evelina declares that her first impulse was to “fly to Mr. Branghton,” but, importantly, determines that there is no time for such an appeal. This is the decisive moment, then, perhaps the only one in the novel, in which Evelina becomes, unambiguously, an actant. The scene of the stairwell stands before her, the actions upon it having just conjured up scenes of possible horror, but ones which she subsequently imagines she might prevent. With the stairwell still before her, she transitions into passionate, affect-driven, forward-directed motion: “guided by the impulse of my apprehensions, as well as I was able I followed him up stairs, stepping very softly, and obliged to support myself by the banisters.”

So begins Evelina’s focalized passage up to the unknown of Macartney’s private room.

Punday argues that “[p]erceptual access,” like Evelina’s view of the stairwell, or her subsequent view of Macartney’s room while in the stairwell—“is a principle means of establishing and shaping desire,” for it focalizes for the reader and the character the direction of willful movement. It is only in this sense that I read desire in Evelina’s ascent up the stairs. To read more than that is to over-read, and it is to ignore the pathos of Macartney’s dark intentions with the pistols. And yet, while it is a mistake to over-read

---

87 Ibid 183.
88 Punday 132.
Evelina’s desire in following Macartney into his room, it is not a mistake to identify Macartney’s room as a space generally restricted by social convention in its access to wandering unmarried women. What is remarkable is that Evelina, who generally experiences “conventional rules,” in Punday’s words, “very much as physical restraints,” does not feel restraint in this instance, nor provide any indication that her ascent into Macartney’s room might raise eyebrows if casually viewed by an impartial spectator, let alone an interested spectator like Orville. But in this instance, readers are given not only no referral to the onlooking eyes of others, but no consciousness on Evelina’s part that would indicate she is in this moment at all thinking of such a possibility as self-observation. While in every other embodied instant Evelina is shown to be ever casting out of her own experience and situation to determine her self-presentation, she is here curiously present, with full “presence of mind.” This absence of self-consciousness becomes a necessary asset later in the novel, when Evelina finds she must account for her inexplicable intimacy and correspondence with Macartney to Orville, who becomes understandably suspicious of the nature of their interactions. Because Evelina lacks self-consciousness in the moment of the intervention, the reader and, later, Orville, have no difficulty in attributing her entry into Macartney’s room to purely benevolent motives. As a result, Evelina’s tender sensibility, her passions, the warmth of her heart, are affirmed, but so is her active desire. In the process, though, Burney makes possible in her novel an immersive, unselfconscious absorption in action—an account of desirous looking-forward.

Although this absorption does not split Evelina’s attention, introducing an ironic detachment between impulsive action and detached self-evaluation, perhaps one can understand a different split organizing the scene. Mark Currie, adapting Heidegger’s
phenomenological concept of future-orientation, or “Being-coming-towards-itself,” to narrative constructions of time, explains that for Heidegger this future orientation “creates a split in the self and produces a temporal distance between the reflective consciousness and the consciousness reflected on,” in much the same way that this chapter has framed self-consciousness operating in Burney’s fiction. However, for Currie, following Heidegger, this is “a distance which decreases as Dasein tries to catch up with, or actualise, its own projections.”89 While the self-conscious split in Evelina most often serves to present interfacing and situatedness as a passive, dreamlike detachment, the self-split of future-orientation describes a more active, practical split: a projective self being actualized. Projection thus becomes a feature of the actor, rather than for the spectator, as in Smith’s theory. Arguably, Burney suggests this self-projection in the moment that Evelina sits frozen in contemplation of what to do. Upon “recollecting that it was yet possible to prevent the fatal deed,” again, Evelina considers and then decides against going to Mr. Branghton, for she “feared, that an instant of time lost might for ever be rued.” It is in this moment, in this unmarked transition, following a semi-colon, between the determination against Mr. Branghton, and the subsequent description of her physical movements as she “followed him up stairs,” that Burney very subtly suggests an imagined projection of Evelina—as the only logical alternative to Mr. Branghton ascending to Macartney’s room—as walking up the stairs to the room herself, even as she begins this very ascent just after, in the remainder of the sentence, following her resolve, and bringing the reader along with her.

It is in this passage only that Evelina’s looking escapes the referral to self-conscious containment; as such, it exists outside of the matrix of self-conscious character-constitution.

---

at the interface. The absence of any appeal to Villars while describing her pursuit of Macartney creates a curious effect of a transcription devoid of audience, an effect compounded by the heightened sense of directed focus in the scene. If there is no consciousness of Orville, or Mr. Branghton, at such a moment, there is neither consciousness for an interlocutor like Villars. This particular scene of construal then, lacking as it is of the self-consciousness which permeates the entire novel, while still presented in epistolary form, suggests the separability of reflectoral experience from its narration. The attitude of future-orientation organizes Evelina- reflector, unobserved, as a narratively salient actant in a way very much like her third-person reflectors in *Cecilia*, *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*. Because *Evelina* is principally concerned with self-consciousness as an interpersonal interplay, one that both constitutes and stymies self-performance and self situatedness, the novel makes thinkable a sense of unselfconscious performance and situatedness, one separable from the self-consciously composing voice which narrates it. Yet, given Burney’s ongoing concern with self-consciousness, her novel necessarily leaves un-theorized the narrative salience of the peripheral observer who remains alone, unobserved, and inactive at the interface. It is only in the next and final chapter, in which I track the narrative experiments with embodied focalization into the Romantic era, especially in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, that one can discover the peripheral observer existing at the interface at the very boundaries of interpersonal comprehensibility.
Chapter 4. Perpetual Estrangement: Truth and World-Sharing in *Persuasion*

Truth depends upon deixis, but deixis is only made possible by the interaction between at least two subjects and the world.  

Tim Milnes, *The Truth about Romanticism*¹

Among the many achievements credited to Jane Austen’s novels, depictions of embodiment are rarely counted among them. Austen is renowned as a master of nuanced characters, of witty banter, of free indirect transcriptions of consciousness, but is generally not acknowledged as a novelist of the body. As it happens, bodies figure occasionally in Austen’s novel’s—one thinks of Elizabeth Bennett’s muddy boots, Harriet Smith’s sore throat, Louisa Musgrove’s injured head—but, for the most part, only rarely or indirectly. Nonetheless, this chapter will position Austen’s last novel, *Persuasion*, in the direct lineage of literary phenomenologies explored in this study, and thus as a narrative modeling of peripherally embodied perceptions. Critics such as John Wiltshire, in *Jane Austen and the Body*, and Alan Richardson, in *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, have already discovered insightful and overlooked embodiments in Austen’s work, but are largely interested in the physicality and materiality of the body as site of illness or injury. For this final chapter, I hope to provide a more experiential, even existential, approach to embodiment in Austen, by focusing on Anne Elliot’s peripherality in *Persuasion*. As will become evident, the depiction of aloneness in *Persuasion* turns importantly upon the unique ways that third-person authorial narration can model not only mind, but also its seeming isolation. Reading against the specter of Romantic solipsism and drawing upon

the influence of pre-Romantic pragmatists, I will interpret Austen’s representation of mind in light of pragmatic theories of communicative world-sharing.

1. **Subordination and Splitting at the Periphery**

In *Persuasion*, Austen’s final and arguably most melancholic novel, evokes a profound sense of existential separation, and does so by exploiting the subordinated position of the peripheral observer. As in the previous chapters, narrative subordination plays a critical role in establishing the external perspective of the peripherally situated observer, and it is *Persuasion*’s subtle subordination of Anne that positions her in this lineage as a rare example of a “peripheral” protagonist in authorial narrative. In the previous chapters, I have examined this peripherality with respect to first-person narratives, which situate readers from a point-of-view that is “outside the story or its centre of action, in a narrator who does not belong to the world of the characters or who is merely a subordinate figure, perhaps a first-person narrator in the role of observer.” Although Anne Elliott is not presented as *Persuasion*’s narrator, she is, fascinatingly, a protagonist “who does not belong to the world of the characters” and who, for much of the novel, “is merely a subordinate figure [...] in the role of observer.”

It is this narrative splitting and subordination of “world” that Austen carefully stages in *Persuasion* yet, even in her earlier novels, it is possible to see Austen experimenting with narrative peripherality. One can find the beginnings of reflectoral aloneness in *Northanger Abbey*, wherein Catherine Moreland’s Gothic suspicions prevent her from communicating her primary experiences—focalized investigations of the titular

---

abbey—to the other characters in the Tilney household. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen toys with the idea of the peripheralized protagonist in Fanny Price, for in the beginning of the novel Fanny “alone was sad and insignificant; she had no share in any thing; she might go or stay; she might be in the midst of their noise, or retreat from it to the solitude of the East room, without being seen or missed.” Save for one critical scene of neglect at the Sotherton estate, however, Fanny’s peripherality does not manifest as a subordinated splitting from a co-present narrative. In *Emma*, readers find Austen meditating on peripheralized speech and perceptions in the unlikely character of Miss Bates, the unmarried vicar’s daughter fallen into diminished circumstances. Miss Bates’ incessant and excessively observational reportage of her thoughts and primary experiences, especially as she is navigating space and time—“Well, here we are at the passage. Two steps, Jane, take care of the two steps. Oh! no, there is but one. Well, I was persuaded there were two. How very odd! I was convinced there were two, and there is but one”—evokes the focalized shades of consciousness of a reflector, for Miss Bates narrates in the moment that she experiences. Despite the fact that this peripheral character is said to display “no intellectual superiority,” her tendency toward garrulous self-narration posits her undecidably between undiscriminating unselfconsciousness and highly observant, profoundly sensitive

---

3In this sense, Frances Burney also experiments with such Gothic splitting in her focalized representation of Cecilia’s fit of madness, a seemingly “pure” rendering of non-reflective consciousness: “she forced herself along by her own vehement rapidity, not hearing what was said, nor heeding what was thought. Delvile, bleeding by the arm of Belfield, was the image before her eyes, and took such full possession of her senses, that still, as she ran on, she fancied it in view. She scarce touched the ground; she scarce felt her own motion; she seemed as if endued with supernatural speed, gliding from place to place, from street to street; with no consciousness of any plan, and following no other direction than that of darting forward where-ever there was most room, and turning back when she met with any obstruction.” See *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, eds. Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1999) 897.


6Ibid 18.
attunement, the latter of which makes Emma’s insult at Donwell Abbey all the more mortifying. Yet, despite these various experiments, it is only in *Persuasion* that Austen fashions a peripheral observer as protagonist, and one that is fully subordinated to the surrounding world.

In positioning *Persuasion* as an heir to the peripheral observer narratives examined in this study, and thus to the philosophical concerns of modeling embodied perceptual interfacing, one might wonder what has happened to the urban element which seems to have informed the analysis of shifts in internal/external perspective thus far. It might be said that *Persuasion*, even more than *Northanger Abbey*, is Austen’s most urban novel, with a significant portion set not only in Bath, but in the streets of Bath. With respect to Anne’s subordination, however, which establishes her as a peripheral observer external to the world around her, *Persuasion’s* urban character is decidedly more difficult to assess. The characteristic shifts from external to internal perspective, which help structure Anne’s interfacing with the world, are not depicted as being provoked by a volatile urban environment, as they were in the previous texts examined; instead, Austen situates this seemingly urban *structure of feeling*, to borrow Raymond Williams’ term, within a decidedly non-urban realm: the rural and domestic realm of the country estate. The observer’s peripherality—hitherto structured as a differential between naïve and habituated experiences in the city—in *Persuasion* becomes, for Anne, an existential condition of everyday country life. Indeed, everydayness, “the invariable constant of the variations it envelops,” to return to Lefebvre’s definition, now infiltrates far beyond the merely urban. Austen continues the trend of further universalizing this urban motif, and in doing so,

---

deploys narrative peripherality to introduce a profound sense of alienation in the everyday experience of the country home. Indeed, rather than follow an outsider observer as they encounter a seemingly alien environment, Austen cleverly reverses the process: she first situates her readers amid the domestic hubbub of a family conversation—regarding Sir Walter Elliot’s reluctant decision to rent Kellynch Hall in order to “retrench”\(^8\)—in a scene seemingly focalizing upon no one in particular, only to reveal, ever so subtly, that the scene has been focalized upon a peripheral observer all along.

This is the first moment in which Austen aligns the reader with Anne’s peripheral attentions. During these opening conversations, in which Sir Walter’s arrogant speeches dominate, Anne speaks, always with a pause, only three times, and she is in no way introduced as the protagonist. Anne’s few contributions are treated identically to those by family friend and lawyer Mr. Shepherd, each offering cautiously sensible considerations to Sir Walter’s often offensive pronouncements concerning the future renters. Their caution is indicated by a pause: “After a short pause, Mr. Shepherd presumed to say” and “Anne, after the little pause which followed, added—.”\(^9\) Yet it is with just a slight, barely perceptible modification to this pause that Austen aligns the entire scene, as if retroactively, and suspensefully, from a very particular perspective. It begins, towards the conclusion of the chapter, with Mr. Shepherd forgetting a surname that, the readers will later learn, has great emotional weight for one of the present characters:

‘Penelope, my dear, can you help me to the name of the gentleman who lived at Monkford—Mrs. Croft’s brother?’ […]

After waiting another moment—

‘You mean Mr. Wentworth, I suppose,’ said Anne.

Mr. Shepherd was all gratitude.\(^{10}\)

---


\(^{9}\)Ibid 1.3, 20, 22.

\(^{10}\)Ibid 23-24.
Seemingly externally focalized, the scene is here revealed to be internally focalized after all. If the former pauses had indicated measurable lulls in the conversation, this pause of “waiting another moment” is so thoroughly internally focalized from Anne’s point-of-view that she need not even be designated as its subject until after the quotation. With such a pregnant pause, the reader is suddenly placed with Anne’s hitherto silent attentions, her evident interest, her unexplained hesitation, and the emotions underlying all these, and all interpretation of the foregoing conversation is transformed; readers retrospectively infer that Anne has been a “most attentive listener to the whole” even before Austen states this explicitly by the chapter’s end, when she steps outside “to seek the comfort of cool air for her flushed cheeks.” The scene thus subtly zeroes in upon the quiet observations of the peripheral observer, revealing, not urban riot but, instead, a pained experientiality suffused within the fractures of a small family tribe, unrecognized and unarticulated.

Over the course of the novel, Anne reflects upon the difficult fact that “every little social commonwealth should dictate its own matters of discourse,” and throughout the novel discovers she is excluded from such dictates, especially within the households of her own family. The effect of the introductory scene, which establishes Anne as protagonist, is to show how Anne’s sensitively perceiving mind exists within such a world of exclusion, as present but only peripherally so, as subordinated. Austen could easily have rendered

---

11 Langacker illustrates how such deictic constructions become more thoroughly subjective when omitting such overtly objective indications of the ground element: “The association between formality and objectivity is readily apparent. As the formality of an occasion increases, less can be taken for granted as common ground […] An entity is objective to the extent that it is put on stage in this manner and functions as an object of viewing attention—this is true of a ground element like any other. It is therefore plausible to interpret the greater informality of an expression that leaves a ground element implicit as being indicative of this element being construed more subjectively than in cases of explicit mention.” See Langacker 138.

12 Persuasion 1.3, 25.

13 Ibid 1.6, 41.
Anne’s thoughts in free indirect discourse during this conversation, as she does in the following chapter, yet this interweaving of Anne’s articulated experiences with the very environment that excludes them would not have sufficiently conveyed the predicament of her exclusion.

It is largely in her abiding silence, in her quiet attention, that Anne’s peripheralized interests in the conversation are introduced to the reader as narratively subordinated, for not only are they deeply felt, but also completely unnoticed, suggesting a splitting of narrative salience from an excluded periphery. In the absence of sympathetic listeners, Anne’s silence is made to speak volumes. As F. K. Stanzel explains, more than anything, it is implied silence, not apparent speech, that most powerfully conveys the reflector as an experiencing mind:

Being silent is not a problem for a reflector-character. On the contrary, the silence of a reflector-character can even be seen as an existential intensification of his experience. Reflector-characters frequently communicate most when they silently abandon themselves either to their perceptions of the outside world or the reflections which these perceptions evoke.\textsuperscript{14}

The unspoken dimension of Anne’s experientiality is thus made to stand in stark contrast with the haughty discourse of her father’s “little social commonwealth,” and, unnoticed by any, to splinter the scene of domestic business, carving out a separate narrative dimension. Anne’s silence is thus an indication of her narrative peripheralization, yet one that is intensified by the way Austen narrates Anne’s experiences. As I hope to suggest in the next section, Austen exploits the effects of third person narration to convey not only silence, but an existential condition of isolation. It is possible to appreciate Austen’s achievements only by comparing the authorial narration of Anne’s experiences alongside the first-person

\textsuperscript{14}Stanzel 150.
narration of like reflectors, to understand what reflectors like Anne inherit from first-person narration, and what, if anything, is altered.

2. The Silence of Pre-Reflective Speech

Anne Elliot’s reticence as a character makes her an exceptional reflector, for it is in the relative absence of communication with other characters that Anne so often can, following Stanzel, “silently abandon” herself to her “perceptions of the outside world or the reflections which these perceptions evoke.” Thus, for instance, in this brief passage from Persuasion, Anne discovers, looking out the window, that star-crossed lover Captain Wentworth has arrived in Bath: “For a few minutes she saw nothing before her: it was all confusion. She was lost, and when she had scolded back her senses, she found the others still waiting for the carriage.”\(^{15}\) In such a passage, readers follow Anne’s shifting experience in this dramatic moment, yet it is, importantly, a moment that goes uncommunicated and remains unnoticed by her friends still waiting for the carriage.

Despite the fact that Anne does not communicate this experience to anyone in the novel, however, it is important to recognize in Austen’s presentation a parallel structure found in first-person narration. Indeed, because reflector-mode narration is found in first-person accounts as well as third-person accounts (which the preceding chapters have detailed at length), it is clear that both are capable of describing reflectors silently abandoning themselves to their immediate experiences. The above passage of Persuasion is thus easily compared to an analogous passage in Evelina, in which the heroine is startled by a stray firework in “Marybone Gardens”: “For a moment or two I neither knew nor

\(^{15}\) Persuasion 2.7, 165.
considered whither I had run; but my recollection was soon awakened by a stranger’s addressing me [...] I started; and then, to my great terror, perceived that I had outrun all my companions, and saw not one human being I knew!"16 In this passage, there is the same depiction of a reflector’s confusion followed by a succeeding description of paranoid perception. In the moment that is narrated, Evelina, though spoken to, does not speak to anyone in the gardens, as the passage limits its focus to reflectoral perceptions and affective responses. Importantly, however, this scene is clearly narrated in the first-person, and is presented as a passage in Evelina’s letter to her caretaker Rev. Villars. Burney’s passage, then, is presented as self-report, a communication of narrator-Evelina through which she shares her experiences in the gardens. As epistolary self-report, this formulation would not seem to share the same relation to silence as conveyed by Austen’s rendering of a similar moment.

In theorizing the relation between perception and voice, some have attempted to treat autobiographical narration, such as Evelina’s, as one more extension of perceiving consciousness. Such a move is critical to Garry Hagberg’s philosophical exploration of autobiography in Describing Ourselves: Wittgenstein and Autobiographical Consciousness. Hagberg’s study employs Wittgenstein’s famous critique of isolated minds to situate autobiographical statements about mind, as speech acts, within the respective contexts of their everyday enunciation. This leads Hagberg to contextualize statements made by the autobiographical teller in the same manner as statements stated within the diegesis since, “indeed, an autobiographer [...] is engaged in the action of self-

---

narration; there is no ‘perch’ above life’s analogy to the dramatic stage upon which to sit.”

Evelina’s letter to Villars, in such a view, is rendered as an everyday mode of confession akin to the utterances made elsewhere in the novel. In some sense, by maintaining that there is no outside “perch,” Hagberg is merely insisting that this is a theory of universal applicability; the effect of Hagberg’s move, in this sense, is akin to Adam Smith’s theory of sympathy, which collapses the theatrical scene of spectatorship by implicating all possible minds within situated contexts of intersubjective interaction and awareness. The only problem, however, is that Hagberg identifies authorial narration as qualitatively distinct from autobiographical narration, and so posits it as external to his theoretical apparatus, insofar as it operates “metaphysically” outside of diegesis.

Unlike Hagberg, who evaluates autobiographical writing in terms of everyday speech-acts, Monica Fludernik considers “all language representation” – including Burney’s fictional letters as well as autobiography – as “sheer invention” that “projects an illusion of veracity in accordance with familiar schemas of utterance and expression.” The illusion considered in the present study has been the focalization, and thus objectification, of reflectors through the mediacy of the narrator’s “voice,” especially as this shifts between external and internal perspectives. Given the correspondence between its presentation in first-person and third-person narrations, this illusionistic technique mostly likely builds upon self-objectifying dynamics available in everyday speech. Indeed, Fludernik, referring her analysis of written narrative to the cognitive parameters found in oral storytelling, argues that this dimension of objectification in the teller/reflectors dynamic

---


18 Ibid 3.
can be understood as illustrating the central importance of "recollective experience" to all narrative: "It is only within a recollective experience that narrative as such can properly develop. Narrative reconstitutes the primary experience, reproducing it and, at the same time, enabling an objective perception of the experience in its inception, development and conclusion." Importantly, the narratives that readers attend to are not the "primary experiences" themselves, even as "recollective experience" can be understood as part of such everyday experience. Fludernik aligns "recollective experience" with Ricoeur’s mimesis I, or the everyday practice of discourse and, following Ricoeur, positions this as the "indispensable precondition" for the "narrative plotting or narrative configuration" of mimesis II. It is this distinction that is missing from Hagberg’s own attempts to situate autobiographical writing among everyday speech-acts, yet it is an important one. As the middle term between everyday experience and narrative configuration, recollection is thus an everyday action at the same time that it is a mediation—it is an event of mediating, one which objectifies experience in language.

The reflector-mode thus serves to objectify self-experience in recollection, which remains quite obvious in autobiographical or epistolary modes such as Burney’s. Evelina’s "I," who "started" and "perceived," refers to the primary experience of a reflector, even as it also indicates the narrating mediacy of the autobiographical voice. One can appreciate this mediacy and even view it as externalizing, insofar as it enables an "objective perception" (to use Fludernik’s phrase) of this perceptual scene. Ann Banfield provides a critical insight on this objectifying aspect of recollection, insofar as she sees it as an

---


20 Ibid.
indication of the crucial role that communication plays for perceiving minds. For, according to Banfield, “it is the subject’s being asked what he is doing which forces consciousness to become reflective. A request for linguistic information is the catalyst, for to speak of something always implies reflective consciousness of it.” 21 In this understanding, reflective consciousness is co-constituted with communicative accountability, an idea which resonates with what was suggested in Smith’s Treatise and discussed in the previous chapter. It is thus Evelina’s fictional injunction to keep Villars informed that provides the premise for the novel’s narrative configuration of “primary” reflector experience.

That there is no such fictional injunction in Austen’s authorial formulations of Anne’s primary experiences makes the idea of recollection in the third-person, at first glance, seem implausible. However, as Banfield observes, the injunction to communicate reveals a deeper complexity concerning perceptual awareness, and it is this complexity which is reflected in each instance of reflector-mode narration, whether first-person or third-person. According to Banfield: “the very fact that the subject can answer when so questioned is evidence that a consciousness of the act [...] did previously exist [...] The question demands an act of memory, and memory verifies the existence of a previous conscious state making memory possible,” revealing a conscious state separable from reflective consciousness. 22 As Banfield makes clear, a reflector posits a mind engaged in a narrative world, acting or experiencing accordingly, and so indicates a full range of experience with varying levels of awareness distinguishable from the teller’s more

---

22 Ibid.
reflective consciousness. The quasi-immediacy of the reflector-mode is enabled as a contrast to the reflective perspicuity of the teller-mode, and thus implies shades of pre-reflective consciousness as a result of this contrast. This movement from pre-reflective consciousness to reflective awareness is often operative even within the reflector-mode itself. In the example from *Evelina*, the heroine recounts that, upon being startled, she first “started” in surprise, and this is followed by the phrase “and then [...] I perceived”, suggesting she was not aware of her surroundings or circumstance during her experience of being startled. Indeed, this particular passage depicts, within the reflectoral scene, a shift from distraction to a greater consciousness of self and place. In the previous chapter I explored Evelina’s lack of “presence of mind” as a key feature of Burney’s novel; it is now clear that this reflectoral description of non-presence builds upon the levels of pre-reflective consciousness implied by all reflector-mode narration.

With this critical aspect of the teller/reflecter dynamic, Austen’s authorial narration might be said to be recollective, even without the injunction to such a recollection. Consider again the description of Anne Elliot as a reflector: “when she had scolded back her senses, she found the others still waiting for the carriage.” Because it is presented in third person, there is no sense of an injunction to recollect or to communicate, and thus there seems to be no recollecting subject like Evelina’s “I.” And yet there is depicted a recollection of “her senses”; as in the example from *Evelina*, Austen presents a reflector not only immersed in the world, but engaged at different levels of awareness at different moments. Anne moves from bewilderment to a greater sense of self-situation just like Evelina, and thus betrays the same structure of conscious awareness in so doing. This moment of reflectoral recollection, like Evelina’s startled perception, could just as easily
be recollected verbally by Anne-as-teller: “when I had scolded back my senses, I found the others still waiting for the carriage.” If questioned, one could imagine Anne presumably recalling not only the others waiting for the carriage, but also her state of bewilderment that preceded this perception. But, importantly, such questions do not arise and Anne is left to the silence of her experiences. To illustrate this even further, Austen provides a rare moment of questioning earlier in the novel, when Anne’s self-absorbed sister Mary asks incredulously what prevented Anne from attending earlier—“Dear me! What can you possibly have to do?”—to which Anne responds: “A great many things, I assure you. More than I can recollect in a moment: but I can tell you some.” And in an equally rare moment of self-narration, Anne then recollects her primary experiences in all of their lonesome banality. She begins, “I have had all my own little concerns to arrange—books and music to divide, and all my trunks to repack,” and the list continues on to fill a whole paragraph, its very density in stark contrast to the implied singularity of this moment of questioning and Mary’s apparent lack of interest in Anne’s preoccupations. It is a moment that reveals Anne as having a lot to reveal in the way of unspoken primary experience, yet without the sufficient prompts to recollect and reveal it.

That such questioning does not need to occur as a premise of the reflector-mode is what separates reflectors in third-person from those of first-person narration in general. Authorial narratives are divested of the moment of recollection that aligns the primary experiences of the reflector with the recollecting voice of the teller. As Banfield observes, “if the speaking subject cannot speak his non-reflective knowledge, this does not mean that language cannot represent it.” There is thus a “metaphysical” separation of the reflector

---

23 Persuasion 1.5, 37.  
24 Banfield 199.
from integrative communication and, more than anything, the teller’s audience, and it is this separation that Austen exploits so effectively in *Persuasion*. With regard to the reflector’s primary experiences, one can appreciate, at least structurally, a sense of the unrecuperated, of the excluded, of the external, of the peripheral—to return the discussion to where it began—in all third-person reflector-mode narration. Although Stanzel’s speculates that the external perspective derives, for authorial reflectors, from the otherness of the authorial voice, it is more precise to say that the otherness of the third-person voice marks the communicative isolation of the reflector. This, at least, is the potential in authorial narration that Austen adeptly exploits in *Persuasion* to create Anne’s condition of “perpetual estrangement.”

When examining isolation in *Persuasion*, then, it is not only the scenes of physical isolation that must be examined, which plenty of authorial novels provide, but the sense of existential separation that persists even despite the proximate presence of others. Like Mr. Spectator before her, Anne is shown seeking out the “solitude and silence which only numbers could give.” The solitude of Anne’s experiences, I will argue, is existentially social and embodied. However, in order to understand this, it is necessary to first confront the specter of solipsism that Anne’s isolated mind presents, for the image of the radically isolated mind is so often understood as an image of the Romantic era.

---

25 “A reader can orient his image of the narrated events either according to an imaginary vantage point at the scene of the events”—from the reflector’s vantage—“or from the voice of the authorial narrator which is still audible here. In the first case he imagines the fictional events from an internal perspective, in the second case from an external perspective” (Stanzel 112).
26 *Persuasion* 1.8, 60.
27 Ibid 1.10, 83.
3. Truths Spoken and Unspoken

Banfield insists that readers understand the separability of pre-reflective consciousness and recollective reflection as a function of language itself, since language contains—"as part of what language knows"—"the very distinction that philosophy seeks to make explicit between reflection [...] and the other conscious states which underlie it and may never be reflected upon but are the minimal required for a subject to be conscious as opposed to unconscious."28 In this view, it is linguistic reflection itself which makes this aspect of experience thinkable and thus, perhaps counterintuitively, separable from such linguistic reflection. Yet as reflectors become explicitly separated from the injunction to communicate, and thus from the articulations of recollection, one finds omniscient narrative moving from "narrative in its quasi-objective function of the generally perceivable"—which "borders on representations of reflective consciousness"—to "the representation of deep-level consciousness" made possible by omniscient narration.29 While omniscient narration mimics autobiographical narration in the recollection of pre-reflective primary experiences, its "verbal independence from self-articulation" also allows such narration to "effectively articulate a psychic life that remains unverbalized, penumbral, or obscure."30 In other words, if novels are understood to model an approach to history, such a history suggests a recording of unrecorded as well as recorded experiences, or a plentitude of unspoken primary experience.

---

28Banfield 210.
29Fludernik. *Fictions of Language* 431.
As it happens, Austen’s Romantic contemporary Samuel Taylor Coleridge dreams up just such a vision of history—a complete history of everything a person has experienced, whether recollected or unrecollected—as he contemplates the intellectual capacities of the embodied mind. Recounting in his *Biographia Literaria* the strange history of a “young woman of four or five and twenty,” roughly Anne’s age, who, when “seized with a nervous fever,” began speaking, though illiterate, fluent Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, Coleridge reveals that the women had years before lodged with a pastor who would regularly read aloud from Latin, Greek, and Hebrew texts, suggesting that the woman’s delirious mind unearthed the memories of these readings in their entirety. Coleridge advances this case to prove of the mind that “reliqués of sensation may exist for an indefinite time in a latent state,” and then waxes poetic in a vision of the mind itself as an exhaustively complete book of experiences:

And this, this, perchance, is the dread book of judgment, in the mysterious hieroglyphics of which every idle word is recorded! Yea, in the very nature of a living spirit, it may be more possible that heaven and earth should pass away, than that a single act, a single thought, should be loosened or lost from that living chain of causes, with all the links of which, conscious or unconscious, the free-will, our only absolute Self, is coextensive and co-present.\(^{31}\)

Reckoning with both “conscious and unconscious” experience, Coleridge seems to be addressing the very low-level aspects of embodied mind he later sidelines as “ordinary memory” in his famous philosophical celebration of Imagination.\(^{32}\) The book metaphor, as well as the example of the delirious recitations, work to cast such primary experiences, whether “act” or “thought,” in the linguistic terms of recollection, even when unrecollected. It is as if pre-reflective experiences were already compiled exhaustively, sentence by sentence by


\(^{32}\)Ibid 13, 313.
reflector-mode sentence, within a shadowy tome supplementing the slight volume of recollected experience. Coleridge fantasizes about unearthing the records of such a tome—“if the intelligent faculty should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and apportioned organization, – the body celestial instead of the body terrestrial, – to bring before every human soul the collective experience of its whole past existence.”

In addressing the issue in this way, Coleridge seems to objectify the perceiving body in the terms of materialism (“it would require only a different and apportioned organization”) and then subjectify it with those of idealism (“the body celestial”) in an uneven effort to excavate as empirically certain the existence of this shadowy domain of experience known indirectly from reflective consciousness.

However, the assertion that such a shadowy infinitude of experience exists, whether in Coleridge or in Austen, is in danger of producing what Wittgenstein considers a particularly perplexing image of thought: the spatializing image that a “man’s thinking goes on within his consciousness in a seclusion in comparison with which any physical seclusion is an exhibition to public view.” This is the solipsist image of thought as occurring in the interiorized isolation of the mind, or, rendered in the language of William Blake: “In chains of the mind locked up, / Like fetters of ice shrinking together, / Disorganiz’d, rent from Eternity.” For Blake as well as for Wittgenstein, this spatializing image of interiorized mind circulates a pernicious conception of mind as fundamentally separable from communication and from world.

33 Ibid.
Given the widespread critical focus on Austen’s development of free indirect discourse, through which mind is conveyed primarily as an internal voice, it would not be difficult to situate Austen’s portrait of the insular Anne as another instance of this interiorized image of mind. Yet this image stands at odds with the models of embodied perception traced in this study, suggestive as it is of a fundamental dualism between mind and world. Insofar as the radically isolated individual is a trope of Romanticism, so the image of the mind itself as isolated can seem to be a particularly Romantic image. However, this chapter will seek to re-situate the isolated mind amid everyday contexts of language and world-sharing, in part by seeking to situate the Romantic philosophy of mind, via Coleridge as well as Austen, in such practical contexts. The Romantic mind, insofar as it is premised on subjective idealism and transcendental ideals, might seem at odds with the models of perception in this study. In the commonplace words of Andrew Bennett, “Romanticism is the attempt, through the instrument of language to go beyond the body, the bodily organs, the senses, and the acknowledgement that such a transcendental move is founded in language and the body.”\(^{36}\) While there is some truth in this assessment, insofar as such transcendental moves are indeed founded in language and the body, the difficulties introduced by Romantic writings on mind prove to be one of emphasis. Alan Richardson has provided an attempt to reform this standard view of the Romantic mind by “embodying” the mind in the works of Romantics like Coleridge as well as Austen, yet Richardson’s concern with embodiment is primarily materialist rather than phenomenological. While his readings of Austen’s *Persuasion* in particular have real merit,

which I will consider later on, his theoretical investment in the history of brain science offers no direct solution to Romantic solipsism. In the present study, I will rely instead on the criticism of Tim Milnes and Stanley Cavell, who both suggest the history not of a materialist Romanticism, but instead of a pragmatically embodied Romanticism. It is thus through the influence of British pragmatism, by way of Thomas Reid and John Horne Tooke, that I hope to re-situate the isolated Romantic mind at the interface of world, body, and communication.

In his elaboration upon the “absolute Self” premised on free-will, Coleridge provides another image of an isolated mind, this time as a counter-image to the freedom of the poetic spirit. What is most interesting in this image is the extent to which it does and does not parallel Anne Elliot’s predicament, and also the diagnosis that Coleridge provides for this predicament. It is a portrait of madness:

Where the spirit of a man is not filled with the consciousness of freedom (were it only from its restlessness, as of one still struggling in bondage) all spiritual intercourse is interrupted, not only with others, but even with himself. No wonder then, that he remains incomprehensible to himself as well as to others. No wonder, that, in the fearful desert of his consciousness, he wears himself out with empty words, to which no friendly echo answers, either from his own heart, or the heart of a fellow being; or bewilders himself in the pursuit of notional phantoms, the mere refractions from unseen and distant truths through the distorting medium of his own unenlivened and stagnant understanding!

This portrait is necessary for understanding Coleridge’s conception of the “absolute Self,” for the man in this portrait is disconnected from consciousness of this absolute, and it is

37 Alan Richardson. British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). I will consider Richardson’s readings of Persuasion later in the chapter. His analysis of Austen is largely an assessment of the pre-reflective dimensions of experience that are recognized in Anne’s reflections on her experience: “Austen’s famously innovative style [...] speaks as much to a new psychological appreciation of unconscious mental life and embodied cognition as to a new esthetic mode for representing the flux of conscious experience” (94). However, from this phenomenological premise Richardson draws limited conclusions regarding Persuasion’s underlying theory of brain science (94).

38 Biographia 12, 286.
from this disconnection that his existential isolation springs. Does this nightmarish condition in any way parallel Anne Elliot’s psychological predicament? In many ways, only half of the portrait fits. There is a sense that the man’s very experience of worldliness is undercut by his spiritual disconnection, and this accords with the passages of derealization I will later consider in *Persuasion*. However, the condition of the man cut off from the absolute Self depends upon a double disconnection, for “all spiritual intercourse is interrupted, not only with others, but even with himself.” The interruption of “spiritual intercourse” is a phrase that seems to capture Anne’s isolation and exclusion beautifully, and yet only if one considers her disconnection from others. Yet, again and again, Coleridge returns to the man’s double movement of disconnection, which includes self-estrangement as well as estrangement from others, as in his “empty words, to which no friendly echo answers, either from his own heart, or the heart of a fellow being.” Indeed, one gets the sense that these are all inextricably related; that the meaningful connection to words is a spiritual connection to self—to one’s heart—as much as it is also a spiritual connection to others, and that all of these are encompassed in a connection to the absolute Self. Anne’s experiences are isolated—they seem severed from her lifeworld: “Anne’s shudderings were to herself, alone”39—yet, at the same time, they are not presented as “notional phantoms” of an “unenlivened and stagnant understanding.” Such experiences remain, importantly, intelligible to herself and to the reader. Although Austen does not explicitly theorize this, there subsists in Anne’s pain, despite its isolated privacy, an articulateness that connects her to the world.

39 *Persuasion* 1.8, 62.
The above passage of the *Biographia* is helpful to compare to Anne’s situation in part because, despite his elevated language, Coleridge is attempting to consider a range of everyday dispositions towards the transcendental ideal of absolute Self. Tracing the structures of intersubjective connection that are presumed in works like the above passage of Coleridge, Tim Milnes in his book *The Truth about Romanticism* attempts to demonstrate the influence of commonsense and pragmatic philosophy on Romantic writing. For Milnes, British empiricists like Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart inaugurate a counter-tradition, opposed to the mentalism and representationalism of British epistemology, and, along with the subsequent influence of John Horne Tooke and Jeremy Bentham, initiate “a concern with how beliefs are justified within a community of norms embedded in the communicative practices of a lifeworld.” Beginning with Reid’s critique of Lockean epistemology and the Theory of Ideas, this counter-tradition emphasizes the formalist, system-based dimensions of truth and world-sharing. For Milnes, Romantics like Coleridge often tend to emphasize, due to the influence of German idealists like Schelling, the “absoluteness of these norms,” yet he insists that they also retain consideration for “nonideal, pragmatic relations of interdependence that are seen to exist between truth, communication, and the self: respectively, between objectivity, intersubjectivity, and subjectivity.”

In analyzing a line from Coleridge’s notebooks that echoes the above passage of the *Biographia*, in which Coleridge claims that “Truth is implied in Words among the first men,” Milnes unpacks the influence of Tooke in particular:

The Tookeian thought that Coleridge probes here runs something like this: if truth does have a close relationship with meaning, is it possible that in the human, public sphere, what binds the two together is communication, the reciprocal act of friendly, trusting conversation required for mutual understanding? In other words, if truth is implied in

---

the word-act itself, perhaps truth is just what enables and sustains communication, part of what Habermas calls the ‘unanalysable holistic background’ of everyday discourse in the lifeworld.\textsuperscript{41}

This reading, while still implicitly premised upon the mutual recognition of absolute Self, provides an account of everyday communication, and the affective conditions that make such communication possible. Truth thus describes the affective condition for “spiritual intercourse” between hearts that Coleridge describes above, which he elsewhere, following Schelling, portrays as “the freedom” that such hearts “possess in common, as the common ethereal element of their being, the tremulous reciprocations of which propagate themselves even to the inmost of the soul,” thus providing the “medium, by which spirits understand each other.”\textsuperscript{42} Despite the florid language, Milnes reminds us that such an account renders truth “not as the goal of communication, but as its fundamental presupposition,” a rendering which “cuts against the grain of a culture increasingly inclined to intensify rather than disperse the field of subjectivity.”\textsuperscript{43}

While Milnes sees the influence of Tooke in this sentiment, such an account of truth arguably betrays the more profound influence of Thomas Reid, who reveals the role that desire plays in such communicative world-sharing. Like Tooke, Reid paves the way for the Romantic concern with, as Percy Shelley describes it, “the good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception, and secondly between perception and expression”\textsuperscript{44}—that is, the moral coordination between world, perception, and communication. Reid’s understanding of this coordination begins with the human pre-
disposition toward mindreading—the “natural language” of human behavior—from which he derives two principles necessary to constitute “a kind of prescience of human actions [...] without which it would be incapable of language”: the complementary principles of veracity and credulity. Reid argues that the truth of correspondence is premised upon a more foundational truth of mutual trust and good-faith honesty, for “[i]f there were not a principle of veracity in the human mind, men’s words would not be signs of their thoughts.”

Reid describes an existential disposition toward social attunement, and thus, as in the discussion of Coleridge above, explores the affective dimensions of world-sharing. However, Reid’s language announces a passion that underlies the “spiritual intercourse” that weaves together the world of individuals through communicative sharing: “I find that truth is always at the door of my lips, and goes forth spontaneously, if not held back.”

To this passionate drive to human connection, Reid connects a credulity toward the world as we experience it—“by which we believe and expect the continuance of the course of nature, and the continuance of those connections which we have observed in time past”—and, in doing so, he likens our perceptions of the world, as “natural signs,” to trust in the veracity of God. This last is important, for it not only integrates communication with perception and world, but also provides the means for appreciating the potential for world-splitting, or the proliferation of multiple worlds. Such splitting is not fully comprehensible in Coleridge’s example of the unfree man, for this man exhibits disconnection only as an on-off switch, insofar as the disconnection from self is a disconnection from others and from both the words and world to be shared between them.

---

46 Ibid 263.
Once severed, he is severed from all meaningfulness of either world or world. Yet in Reid’s depiction, there is another valve, or circuit-breaker, at play—that which selectively “holds back” the communicative divulgence that wants to rush “forth spontaneously.” This capacity for affective modulation suggests a degree of agency and desire hitherto unacknowledged in this discussion of world-sharing. For the world may well be what is the case, and human hearts may well be disposed to align together in a shared truth about the world, yet the very possibility of selectively withholding such alignment—of holding back—suggests also the possibility of a world that is differently the case. It is thus this valve of selective withholding which allows us to appreciate the full complexity of Anne Elliot’s isolation, especially the articulateness of her private pain.

It is easy to appreciate the interpersonal and practical dimensions of neglect that foster Anne’s isolation from her immediate lifeworld, insofar as her family refuses to acknowledge “the value of an Anne Elliot”\(^\text{48}\)—“She was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;—she was only Anne.”\(^\text{49}\)

Within this world, Anne as a speaker-perceiver is not fully recognized, and her experience of the world, unintegrated, thus becomes subordinated to the concerns of her father and sister. While the neglect of Sir Walter and Elizabeth is particularly pointed, Austen also portrays this neglect as part of the everydayness of domestic life, revealing it as a narrowness common to all domestic circles; thus, when Anne relocates to Uppercross, she realizes that “she must now submit to feel that another lesson, in the art of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle, was become necessary for her.”\(^\text{50}\)

\(^{48}\)Persuasion 2.1, 116.
\(^{49}\)Ibid 1.1, 7.
\(^{50}\)Ibid 1.6, 40.
from estate to estate, from being “nobody” to knowing her own “nothingness.” Again, it is easy to appreciate how such neglect subordinates Anne’s experience, her pleasures as well as her pains, to other concerns. It is not as obvious, however, that Anne’s divulgence of her pains and pleasures is withheld as much as it is unsolicited. Consider Anne’s performance at the piano while at Uppercross:

She knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation: excepting one short period of her life, she had never, since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste. In music she had been always used to feel alone in the world.51

The quote continues to underscore the neglect that proves to be the rule in Anne’s world: the absence of recognition, of an interlocutor, of an audience, of “being listened to.” As a result of this absence of attention and its subordination of Anne’s experience, it is possible to understand this experience at the piano as isolated or severed from the collective world around her. And yet, in addition to being these things, the passage makes clear that, while the “sensation” of “giving pleasure only to herself” is itself painful, Anne still persists in the indulgence of such self-pleasure. Unlike the unfree man, Anne’s isolation suggests an unshared world, not the absence of world.

While Anne does not choose her solitude, Austen suggests that the unintegrated privacy of her pain insists upon its own separateness of world: “though her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she sat at the instrument, she was extremely glad to be employed, and desired nothing in return but to be unobserved.”52 It is the fact that Anne remains unobserved, without audience, that confirms her existential isolation and the non-integration of her sadness. The privacy of the mind thus becomes a function of strategic

51 Ibid 1.6, 44.
52 Ibid 1.8, 66.
social and spatial relations—remaining “unobserved”—rather than an interiorized metaphysical dimension of mentality. In critiquing this image of private mentality, Wittgenstein asks “If there were people who always read the silent internal discourse of others—say by observing the larynx—would they too be inclined to use the picture of complete seclusion?,” which poses a related question concerning Austen’s reflector-mode narration: if it is possible to conceive an audience for Anne’s “private” experiences at the piano, is it correct to say that such experiences are essentially “private” or “internal”?

This question bears on the readers’ understanding of world in *Persuasion*, for it suggests they understand world-splitting more pragmatically as an effect of the organization of intersubjective attention. In this scene and in others, it is Anne’s family who fails to adequately attend to Anne and yet, importantly, it is also Anne who polices her own observability. Even if Anne were only mourning the pain of the present neglect, such policing would constitute a selective splitting of narrative threads and would indicate a selective withholding and a retention. This is the seemingly separate world of experientiality created by Anne’s undivulged suffering. Anne’s feelings are characterized throughout as uncommonly retentive—“she found, that to retentive feelings eight years may be little more than nothing […] These were words which could not but dwell with her” —and while such retentiveness evokes a complex depth of emotional feeling, it also serves as the crux of her peripherality as protagonist. This separation is only compounded by her selective policing; this is what maintains the subordination of her experiences, yet Anne remains disposed to such selective filtering: “Anne avoided a direct reply, but it was just the circumstance which she considered as not merely unnecessary to be communicated,

---

53 Wittgenstein 224e.
54 *Persuasion* 1.7, 56, 57.
but as what ought to be suppressed." Her acute retention and withholding thus becomes an indication of her continued non-integration.

As it happens, it is the special conditions of withholding and divulgence in communicative exchange that gives rise to the image of the interiorized mind, the object of Wittgenstein’s critique, insofar as these specifically epistemological terms become the template for picturing mind in any circumstance. For Wittgenstein, the misunderstanding begins in language, specifically in the language of mindreading and inferred intentions. As Hagberg points out, “in some suitably particularized circumstances we can and do ask what is going on behind the public display.” When we infer the mental states corresponding to such a display, their undivulged character prompts them to be pictured, metaphorically, as hidden or revealed. This perceptual metaphor then becomes extended far beyond the special conditions of this epistemological interaction, giving rise to the picture of a permanent hidden interior as repository for all thoughts and feelings. In doing so, we model “all person-perception [...] on guessing, or collecting outward evidence for, the hidden interior”; however, while “[t]he human experience of sensing that someone is holding something back can put such sentences to work; such a sense is hardly, as Wittgenstein is observing, the key to the universal nature of all human interaction.” Upon cursory consideration, one might think that Austen’s use of reflector-mode narration in Persuasion furthers the idea of thought existing separately from the world, but in fact Austen’s depiction of mind, however seemingly individualizing and isolated, is much more

---

55 Ibid 1.12, 99.  
56 Hagberg 41.  
57 Ibid. This leads Wittgenstein to conclude that “It is correct to say ‘I know what you are thinking,’ and wrong to say ‘I know what I am thinking’”, insofar as the latter formulation nonsensically overextends the epistemological conditions of the former. See Philosophical Investigations 222e.
complexly intersubjective than such an image. Indeed, the pragmatic fact of withholding, and its affective ramifications, is not only shown to serve as the interpersonal foundation of Anne’s isolation and the splitting of narrative worlds, but, as such, also contains within it the grammar for further practical interactions.

Anne’s withheld divulgence is not merely an absence or a failure; it must also be understood as a positive, willful action. Although Anne is indisputably neglected by her family, her persistent pain in this neglect itself indicates her continued desire to experience the world beyond the present conditions of such neglect. Anne persists in holding on to her pain, past and present; she continues to play at the piano, to give pleasure only to herself, yet she also continues to play with an ear for “just appreciation or real taste.” Not unlike Anne’s suffering which persists unnoticed, the notes she plays are for a discriminating audience, despite the continued absence of such an audience. While “no friendly echo answers” from “the heart of a fellow being,” Anne’s pleasure echoes the notes she plays. The very fact that her “private” experiences invite a virtual audience indicate Anne’s desire for a different configuration of world and attention, and it is her quiet investment in this alternative that maintains her continued subordination. Following Reid, one can see this tendency to retain and withhold in *Persuasion* as indicative of Anne’s persistent desire for a mutually shared truth rushing “forth spontaneously.” In withholding for an audience in this way, Anne’s isolated, pre-reflective experience, especially as represented in Austen’s reflector-mode prose, constitutes a sort of communicative public, or at least the future possibility of audience. Austen’s presentation of the withholding mind is akin, then, not to an isolated interior, but, perhaps more strangely, to the “long-term view of the process of writing” that Andrew Franta discusses as a feature of poetic address in Romantic poetry,
which “claims for poetic form itself the privilege of a future perspective on the present.”

In this view, Anne’s experiential splitting of world through withholding becomes a kind of address, actualizing its audience only in an uncertain future. This in fact is how Austen structures the teleological development of the novel, by structuring a desire unsatisfied, in pleasure as well as pain, into Anne’s unendurable peripherality.

There is, then, a sense of hope structured into the very comprehensibility of Anne’s private pain. Indeed, this is the means by which Austen’s “putatively most isolated heroine,” according to Christopher Nagle, “generates the most broadly influential effects of feeling community.” In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore in detail how this teleological development of hope prompts, narratologically, Anne’s interfacing embodiment, as she is re-situated from isolated peripherality to a more integrated centrality. Through the work of Stanley Cavell in *The Claim of Reason*, one can understand this embodiment as an essential enactment of Anne’s desire to be “acknowledged,” or have her “existence confirmed, i.e., the existence of my sufferings and of my deeds.” Cavell, wrestling with the philosophical predicament of solipsism, again through Wittgenstein, and considering such extremes of isolation that prompt suicidal thoughts, suggests how withheld divulgence expresses a desire to be witnessed as vulnerable in the shared moment of communication:

To let yourself matter is to acknowledge not merely how it is with you, and hence to acknowledge that you want the other to care, at least to care to know. It is equally to acknowledge that your expressions in fact express you, that they are yours, that you are in them. This means allowing yourself to be comprehended, something you can always

---


deny. Not to deny it is, I would like to say, to acknowledge your body, and the body of your expressions, to be yours, you on earth, all there will ever be of you.\textsuperscript{60}

In many ways, the above scene of vulnerable disclosure provides a parallel to Coleridge’s idealistic image of “spiritual intercourse,” yet what is occluded by Coleridge—the materiality of language, an exchange of expressions, the embodied fragility of a shared present—for Cavell becomes central to such an exchange. One can observe in this moment of disclosure the release from withholding, as the Reidian principle of veracity affectively aligns the interlocutors. While Coleridge emphasizes the sense of intersubjective recognition experienced in such a moment, Cavell reveals how the very fragility of one’s witnessed body and words help constitute such recognition as the everyday coordinates of world shared by the interlocutors. In this way, if withholding and policing enable Anne to maintain separate narrative worlds, her vulnerable, desiring body becomes the site for world coordination and integration.

4. Present Absence, Absent Presence

This is the complex account of mind that Austen explores in her narratological experiments with peripheral subordination in \textit{Persuasion}, an account neatly condensed by Milnes in the quote which serves as the epigraph for this chapter: “Truth depends upon deixis, but deixis is only made possible by the interaction between at least two subjects and the world.” Milnes, approaching truth pragmatically, addresses the bare minimum of interlocutors in communicative exchange, since linguistically only two subjects are required for this deictic speech act: to deictically point and to corroborate such world-

pointing. In a profound sense, *Persuasion* pushes this linguistic fact to its limits. While the novel ends with the romantic union of Anne Elliot with Captain Wentworth, and the marriage of their narrative worlds, for much of the novel, Austen hypothesizes Anne’s unspoken deictic speech-act as operating without Wentworth’s corroboration, suggesting that the speech act need not, in theory, require the co-presence of another. It is not that Austen challenges the intersubjectivity of deixis by isolating her protagonist in this way, but, instead, delineates the anatomy of this intersubjectivity. In doing so, she reveals, like Adam Smith in *Treatise of Moral Sentiments*, the intersubjective configuration of deictic sharing already encoded within the individual’s speech-acts. This reduction to the individual’s withheld speech-act allows Austen to examine Anne’s articulable experiences as a sort of grammatical unit of the tissue of world-narrative, and thus as separable from, yet perhaps also constitutive of, history itself.

A history of the individual is of course easily taken for granted, in written as in everyday life, insofar as first-person narration, with autobiographical teller/reflect or modes, formulates the intelligibility of history through the individual’s experiential report of it. Operating within the special mediacy of authorial narration, however, which provides no implicit theory of how pre-reflective experience is translated into recollection or written record, we can understand Austen foregrounding individual experientiality in order to theorize, and to problematize in so doing, the “translation” of such experience to the cultural production of history, via the shared lifeworld. For in isolating Anne’s experiences of world, subordinating them to dominant surrounding concerns, Austen asks us to consider the very real possibility that Anne’s experiences, as subordinated narrative threads, might never become integrated within a shared narrative world. This assessment of narrative
world splitting and subordination in *Persuasion* in many ways accords with William Galperin’s reevaluation of Austen’s novels as so many histories of “missed opportunities.” Galperin interprets Austen in all of her novels as critically sensitive to the probabilistic telos of realist historiography, and in particular to the foreclosure of historical complexity and divergence that this telos necessarily enacts by the end of each novel. According to this reading, as the narrative follows a given possibility or desirous thread toward “fulfillment in and over time,” this trajectory necessarily displaces and forecloses other possibilities and trajectories available earlier in the story, and in this way, “it is plot, after all, with its temporal momentum forward, that,” retrospectively, “creates the missed opportunity.” As it happens, many of the missed opportunities that Galperin highlights turn upon scenes of narrative world splitting or integration, such as Fanny’s desertion at Sotherton or Anne Elliot’s rejection of Wentworth’s proposal. Indeed, the peripheralized, subordinated experience necessarily presents a missed opportunity, as it hinges on the co-occurrence of a parallel trajectory of narrative, such as when Anne, early on in the novel, absents herself from the outings preoccupying everyone around her, outings which would bring her into contact with Wentworth: “these things should have been seen by Anne; but

---

61 William Galperin. “‘Describing What Never Happened’: Jane Austen and the History of Missed Opportunities” *ELH* 73.2 (Summer 2006) 355-382. In many ways, Galperin’s analysis provides an attempt to re-assess the aesthetic and philosophical influence of the eighteenth century upon Austen’s realism, historicizing her work as a critical elaboration upon the realist protocols of the previous century: “Despite their frequent disaffection with things as they are, Austen’s narratives, with their remarkable attention to the vagaries of quotidian life, appear generally wedded to a probabilistic (as against a romantic or visionary) orientation in which any real apart from what has already happened is generally out of bounds. I am arguing, however, that this sense of the past is less an endorsement of precedent, or a subscription to the empirical logic of probability, than an orientation that inclines toward romanticism in the way the past, as an index of what was also possible, operates alternately if all too briefly as a site of opportunity” (363).

62 Ibid 357.
she had staid at home." Although the narrative remains focalized upon Anne in such instances, she remains preoccupied with considering what she might have missed.

In Galperin’s view, Anne’s eventual reunion with Wentworth, which might be said to redress the missed opportunity of his first proposal, in fact can only, as the forward advancement of plot, close down the complexity of her situation and of her original refusal. The most conspicuous missed opportunity in _Persuasion_ reveals the sexual dimension at stake in Anne’s withheld divulgence: that Anne never establishes communicative intimacy or divulgence with her esteemed friend Lady Russell. As the friend who counsels Anne to decline Wentworth’s proposal, Lady Russell is never, in the span of the novel, made the confidante of Anne’s brooding or suffering; indeed, in a key scene of focalized mindreading, as Anne speculates on her friend’s reaction to seeing Wentworth approach in the streets, such speculations, which seem to establish an imaginative sympathy between perceiving minds, become proof only of the distance between the two women when Lady Russell professes to be attending only to window curtains. Anne remains isolated in her thoughts by the end of the encounter, where she “sighed, and blushed, and smiled, in pity and disdain, either at her friend or herself” for the missed opportunity of world sharing. What is missed here is a sense of divulgence among women, an opportunity curiously foreclosed in _Persuasion_, save for the divulgence that Mrs. Smith makes to Anne regarding Mr. Elliot’s ulterior motives. Yet this foreclosure highlights the degree to which Austen aligns the teleology of Anne’s communicative integration with romantic desire, an alignment which allows _Persuasion_ to boldly experiment with the reflectoral affect of interfacing, moving the experience of Wentworth’s interactions from abrasive inundation,

---

63 _Persuasion_ 1.9, 72.
64 Ibid 2.7, 168-69.
standard to the form, to a decidedly erotic frisson of pleasure. Following upon Evelina, Austen brings erotic desire to the surface of reflectoral interfacing, and it goes without saying that this alignment of desire with communicative integration serves the comedic plot’s ideological trajectory toward marriage. Indeed, it will become apparent that the focus upon romantic possibility at the exclusion of all others in fact makes Anne’s predicament appear all the more desperate, even as it allows Austen to innovate new ways of writing desirous pleasure into the narrative present.

Burney’s experiments with focalizing self-consciousness in the narrative present can serve as a touchstone for the scenes of interfacing in Persuasion for, as in Evelina, the reflector’s presence of mind in scenes of social engagement remains at issue. Yet while Evelina anxiously dispersed her attention to the perspectives of others, Anne is presented as not fully present for quite a different reason, which has served as the focus of this chapter: her radical isolation and subordination. Both Evelina and Anne can be characterized as overly thoughtful, or reflective, in their interactions, yet, while Evelina’s reflectiveness diverts her attention from her actions and inhibits her performance, it does so by diverting her attention to the externalizing view of others, and so functions as a kind of world sharing. This corresponds with the novel’s confessional form, as Evelina’s self-conscious embarrassment in the moment of interfacing is also what is recollected through self-report. Anne, however, remains cut off from the others around her, most especially in her reflectiveness. In the first volume of the novel especially, her thoughts are shown to take her away from the present moment—not to an external view of herself, but to a detached reverie: “These were some of the thoughts which occupied Anne, while her fingers were mechanically at work, proceeding for half an hour together, equally without
error, and without consciousness.” 65 This detachment correlates with the formal detachment of Austen’s third-person narration, and its lack of a recollective injunction.

The above passage does not attempt to convey Anne’s absence of mind experientially, for it is only by focalizing a shift between Anne’s externally-situated, subordinated perspective and an internally-situated, interactive perspective, or vice versa, that Austen can register this absence as experiential. Indeed, when Anne, like Evelina, shifts from pre-reflective consciousness to a more reflective awareness, she, unlike Evelina, shifts from interactivity back to the isolated detachment of her thoughts. The effect is to emphasize the elusiveness of the experienced present of interfacing as already in the immediate past, as the reflective consciousness processes it analeptically. Consider the passage in which Wentworth is first re-introduced to Anne after eight years apart:

a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would be soon over. And it was soon over. [...] Her eye half met Captain Wentworth’s, a bow, a curtsey passed; she heard his voice—he talked to Mary, said all that was right; said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing: the room seemed full—full of persons and voices—but a few minutes ended it. [...] the room was cleared and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could. ‘It is over! it is over!’ she repeated to herself again, and again, in nervous gratitude, ‘The worst is over!’ (1.7, 56)

While this passage clearly focalizes Anne’s experience of the impromptu reunion, providing perceptual details such as the meeting of their eyes, the hearing of his voice, the sense of the room as “full of persons and voices,” what seems unclear is whether this is presented as a memory or a perception. Readers begin the passage with the focalized thought that the reunion “would be soon over,” which is followed immediately by the declarative report “And it was soon over,” a line which echoes Anne’s direct speech when she is again alone at the end of the passage, suggesting the line could be indirect speech.

65 Ibid 1.8, 67.
As such, Anne’s experience of the reunion is made to end even before it begins, and the focalization that follows registers as Anne’s reflectoral recollection as she sits finishing her breakfast. In this way, Anne’s pre-reflective interfacing is presented as a gap in the narrative present, retroactively filled in and recuperated by her ruminating reflectiveness.

In this first instance especially, this reflectoral detachment from the immediate present underscores Anne’s isolation, and resonates with the melancholic sense of foreclosed opportunity that permeates the novel: the marriage suit declined, the bloom faded, the hope of communicative connection foregone. This scene of active interfacing—in previous texts the result of an overstimulating perceptual environment—serves to indicate how unused to close scrutiny the subordinated Anne has become, not to mention how distant from pleasure or desire in such interactions with a former suitor. No longer external to a physically overstimulating environment, the reflector in Austen has become external to the stimulations of direct social engagement. At least in this scene, the dynamic corresponds to John Wiltshire’s thesis concerning the appearance of the body in Austen’s texts, that “if the healthy body is largely passive, unconscious of itself, then the unhealthy body, as a site of anxious self-concentration, is the source of events, of narrative energies,” for this reunion scene is presented as one of embodied interfacing only as a result of Anne’s habituation to non-engagement. The painfulness of such embodied interfacing becomes even more pronounced when Anne feels her person, so long neglected from notice, once more become an object of Wentworth’s scrutiny: “Once she felt that he was looking at herself—observing her altered features, perhaps, trying to trace in them the

---

ruins of the face which had once charmed him.”⁶⁷ The body in this instance is painfully objectified as present, yet even its presentness remains wedded to the past, an indication only of what once was and no longer is. Unlike Evelina, Anne, though conscious in this moment of being observed, does not betray a self-consciousness invested in desire, and thus in any sense of futurity. This is an account of self-experience as almost wholly detached and dissociated from the present moment of interaction. This is the existentially peripheralized reflector.

If the truth-function of deixis is “only made possible by the interaction between at least two subjects and the world,” one could say that Anne, as peripheral and subordinated observer, does not yet share such a communicative world with another, at least in a way that makes the deixis of “here” or “now” vitally meaningful. Yet the above scenes of interfacing do shift the plot toward such a world-sharing, as the visibility of Anne’s person becomes the nexus of the “world” that is shared, an experiential reference point for attention, concern, and speculation. This development is furthered in the critical scenes of interfacing that follow, such as when Wentworth rescues Anne from little Walter, and when he politely assists her into the carriage. In the scene with little Walter especially, Wentworth’s intervention into Anne’s immediate plight under the weight of the clinging child—who “began to fasten himself upon her, as she knelt, in such a way that […] she could not shake him off”—has a profound impact upon the very tell-ability of Anne’s desperation:

In another moment, however, she found herself in a state of being released from him; some one was taking him from her, though he had bent down her head so much, that his little sturdy hands were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away, before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it.⁶⁸

---

⁶⁷*Persuasion* 1.8, 67.
⁶⁸Ibid 1.9, 74.
What feels so profound in this passage is the offhand way that the details concerning the
degree of bodily contortion from which Anne’s body is suffering—“he had bent down her
head so much” and “his little sturdy hands were unfastened from around her neck”—are
slowly and casually communicated to the reader, not in the passage describing Anne’s
frustrated attempts to free herself, but only as Wentworth attends to Anne’s body to address
the situation. One might ask, if no one were there to rescue Anne, would this scene and its
details of bodily discomfort have ever been communicated? Beyond mere authorial
selection, what makes these details emerge in the logic of this particular scene is the
intersubjectivity of the incident’s eventness: Wentworth sees Anne’s bodily plight, the very
details that are in question, and acknowledges it as an object of concern requiring
intervention. Such a passage makes quietly clear that Anne’s experiences are easily
overlooked or uncommunicated. The boy compresses Anne’s body, bending down her head
and neck, and makes physically literal Anne’s everyday subordination and neglect. It is the
evident discomfort of this small moment that catches Wentworth’s notice, and the concern
that he expresses in his assistance is the first indication to Anne that he sees her as worthy
of such concern, suggesting they might still inhabit the same world—not only the same
physical world, but moral world and thus narrative world—after all.

Anne’s highly focalized experience in the embodied moment of assistance is
marked as an experience of “release,” as Anne finds “herself in a state of being released.”
This locution, suspended as it is in the middle of an action, feels rare in a novel
characterized by foreclosure. The dimness and uncertainty of Anne’s initial observations
indicate a rare moment of bewilderment and a more protracted transition from pre-
reflective to reflective consciousness. This moment of release accrues even more
significance as Anne, in time, discovers just who it was that released her. Anne feels at first only the immediate situation, that of being released from the child by the intervention of another; she can seemingly feel the other’s hands upon her neck as the boy’s “sturdy hands were unfastened” from around it, and the presence of Charles Hayter in the room makes plausible the indeterminacy of the assisting agent. It is in this experiential middle state that readers, moving forward in the sentence, encounter the full physical details of Anne’s predicament, and then finally arrive, with Anne, at her reflective inference that discovers Wentworth as deliverer. With this movement forward, however, the sentence demands that readers, like Anne, retrace our progress along the sentence, taking Wentworth’s name with us, and integrating it, in the description of experiential release, as the agent of such release. Even though the moment of intimate touch has already passed in this subsequent moment of discovery, the requisite integration of that touch with Wentworth’s name moves the reader, with Anne, back to that tactile moment, so that it lingers imaginatively. It is through such a recursive movement, mimicking the movement of Anne’s transition into a greater degree of reflective awareness, that Austen mixes the possibility of imaginative pleasure into this scene of otherwise painful stimulations, of fraught tension and release.

For, like the urban focalizations that preceded, the quasi-immediacy of Anne’s focalized experience of interfacing in such moments is registered as an inundation, or a painful overstimulation. Unused to the attentions that would make her narratively central, Anne initially withdraws from such attentions, for the re-awakening of such opportunities missed is too much to bear; thus Anne’s reaction to Wentworth’s intervention is one primarily of pain: “His kindness in stepping forward to her relief—the manner—the silence in which it had passed— [...] produced such a confusion of varying, but very painful
agitation, as she could not recover from." This demonstration of intervening concern, however, is recapitulated at the end of the long walk to Winthrop, during which Wentworth, assessing Anne’s fatigue, assists her into the offered carriage.

Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage. Yes; he had done it. She was in the carriage, and felt that he had placed her there, that his will and his hands had done it, that she owed it to his perception of her fatigue, and his resolution to give her rest. She was very much affected by the view of his disposition towards her, which all these things made apparent.

Once again, Anne’s reflections in the immediate aftermath of the event rehearse the details of their interaction that transpired in the gap of pre-reflective immersion: here, as before, the touch of his hands upon her person, and the compassionate concern that such intervening touch might express. In this recapitulation, however, neither Wentworth’s touch nor his scrutiny of her situation are experienced as quite so painful; in this instance, her feelings are equally counterbalanced, so that Anne “could not contemplate” his actions “without emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain, that she knew not which prevailed.” With increasing frequency, such stimulations, initially registered as painful, begin to usher in a stimulative pleasure, and a pleasure not only within her own private world, but pleasure in a potentially integrating world, of which her own body is become the site of convergence. Although all such softening moments with Wentworth remain unspoken, this is how Austen, following upon the tradition of sensibility and Thomas Reid’s natural language, makes the body speak.

---

69 Ibid 74-5.
70 Ibid 1.10, 84.
71 Ibid.
5. Sociability, Sense, and Surrounding Noise

Given this correspondence between body and world as the site of integration, it is perhaps not surprising that the actual social world in which all of these early developments take place, Uppercross, is at one point described in terms that may well describe Anne’s body at the same juncture in the novel: “It stood the record of many sensations of pain, once severe, but now softened; and of some instances of relenting feeling, some breathings of friendship and reconciliation” and, even more suggestively: “A few months hence and the room now so deserted, occupied but by her silent, pensive self, might be filled again with all that was happy and gay, all that was glowing and bright in prosperous love.”72 This distancing objectification of the body-as-estate works, not because of a dualist presumption of a soul within a material body, but because of the mediating distance between Anne’s retrospective reflections and her immediately embodied, pre-reflective world-sharing interactions with Wentworth. This composing reflectiveness will always bring Anne outside of the shared moment, even as it helps constitute the intersubjective terms of world-coordination. Thus, even as Anne moves toward “all that was happy and gay” in the latter section of the novel, and thus toward more frequent interactions and an integration of narrative world, her reflections remain at a mediating distance from such immersive interactions. It is this mediated relationship in Persuasion that Richardson sees as “the acknowledgment of a fundamental split between a superintending conscious self and a potentially unruly, desiring, unconscious other,” a split which he marshals as evidence of Austen’s interest in Romantic-era brain science.73 Yet, as Nagle demonstrates more convincingly, such an investment in the experientiality of embodiment can be traced to an

72 Ibid 2.1, 115.
73 Richardson 102-3.
earlier source—“the most systematic elaboration of the body’s language that Austen’s
 generation had been taught to read so clearly: the tradition of Sensibility”—especially as
Anne’s experientiality shifts from private suffering to a more sociable erôtics of stimulating
pleasure. While Louisa’s head injury poses questions about the material body itself,
Anne’s “fundamental split” between reflective and pre-reflective conscious is, unlike that
head injury, experiential; to the extent that it refers to unconscious aspects of embodiment,
these are pertinent not as a theory of the material brain, but as a structuring feature of
everyday phenomenological experience.

For Anne, this is the experience of desire, one which prompts her to seek out the
stimulations of interaction more and more. Through the compulsion of Anne’s desire, such
stimulations, no longer simply painful, are sought out as stimulating pleasures, despite the
conflict of her reflective consciousness:

She now felt a great inclination to go to the outer door; she wanted to see if it rained. Why was she to suspect herself of another motive? Captain Wentworth must be out of
sight. She left her seat, she would go; one half of her should not be always so much
wiser than the other half, or always suspecting the other of being worse than it was. She
would see if it rained.75

Austen’s free indirect language distinctly divides Anne’s consciousness into two halves,
interacting both suspiciously and cooperatively. One gets the sense that the verbalizing,
reflective consciousness in this instance is following upon the pre-reflective “inclination”
to gain perspective from the window, rationalizing the desired movement toward a more
hopeful—or future-oriented—prospect. This is a rare moment where Anne’s reflections,
by rationalizing her impulses, are shown to be driving her toward the prospect of future
interactions. Anne in this instance no longer shies from presenting herself, as visible, in

74 Nagle 102.
75 *Persuasion* 2.7, 165.
social interfacing, and here even seeks it out, an indication of how integrated her sense of “body” has become to the social stimulations of a shared narrative world.

In this scene and in subsequent scenes, the object of Anne’s desire seems clear: it is hope for future interaction with Wentworth, and so coincides with the desire for communicative divulgence and world sharing, and with the novel’s comedic trajectory toward marriage. Previously, however, Anne has opened herself up to interactions with both Captain Benwick and her cousin Mr. Elliot, and focuses solely upon Wentworth only when she knows he remains unattached to Louisa. This suggests that Anne’s increasing movement toward communicative interfacing is more broadly dispersed than the romantic trajectory toward Wentworth would have us believe, as is made evident by the famous cruising scene on the Cobb, wherein Anne revels in Wentworth’s admiration of her person as it is triangulated through the admiration of Mr. Elliot.\(^76\) This is, of course, not to discount the critical influence of Wentworth’s intimate attentions in assisting Anne’s development toward increased interaction; it is just to notice that this change is effected well before Wentworth divulges his own affections. Indeed, despite the importance of communicative divulgence, such dispersal coincides with two interrelated theories of bodily health that circulate throughout the novel, the first of which is captured in Lady Russell’s reflections on Anne’s isolation: “Anne had been too little from home, too little seen. Her spirits were not high. A larger society would improve them.”\(^77\) This is a theory of affective engagement, which depends on social engagements to stimulate the body and its spirits into vitality and health. The theory provides an emphasis on the animating investment in being “seen” by others. It is complemented by Anne’s own theory of her isolation, which is premised upon

\(^76\)Ibid 1.12, 97.
\(^77\)Ibid 1.2, 15.
physical rather than affective engagement, or lack thereof. Contrasting the plight of women in general with the relative freedoms of men, Anne addresses her own situation of isolation:

“We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately, and continual occupation and change soon weaken impressions.” 78 Here, instead of affective engagement, Anne emphasizes the physical demands of labor as bringing one out of the isolation of suffering. Both theories depend on an engagement with the world to draw one out of the indolence of the home and into the stimulations of active interfacing, whether physical or social. Neither theory mentions communicative coordination and integration through divulgence.

What remains under-explored in *Persuasion* as a result of this late dispersal of Anne’s social engagement is its relation to the act of divulgence so desired by Anne—more specifically, whether such scenes of interfacing serve to prepare for such a divulgence, or whether they, as constitutive of world-sharing, stand in for this divulgence itself. If Anne’s social body, so engaged, becomes more and more vitally integrated without the explicit coordination of words, is such an explicit coordination in fact necessary? Wentworth’s letter at the end of the novel, which functions as the explicit divulgence of his own private feelings toward Anne, results in the near-immediate union of their worlds through marriage, yet it remains unclear whether this explicit moment of written confession builds upon, is necessitated by, or overwrites less explicit moments of embodied communication and integration. As it happens, the explicit divulgence through the proposal of marriage gives us license to imagine a corresponding sexual divulgence on the wedding night—the

78 Ibid 2.11, 218.
intimate giving of one’s body to the other—and so makes concrete the erotic desire for communicative sharing, but, perhaps more importantly, it also allows Anne to maintain the integrity of her previously withheld suffering and experience, which would otherwise be displaced by the introduction of novel social engagements. It is in this sense that Anne’s trajectory toward social re-integration is contrasted with the self-satisfied pleasure that Sir Walter Eliot takes in the social engagements in Bath. Sir Walter signals the nightmarish suspicion that there might be no core self beyond the image presented to others, as is symbolized by the overwhelming “number of looking-glasses” in his bedroom; “oh Lord!” remarks Admiral Croft, “there was no getting away from oneself.” Through Austen’s strategic plotting, it is Anne’s ability to neglect this image, to hold on the painful past of opportunities obscured in her father’s dominating superficialities, that allows her to simultaneously challenge her father’s undiscriminating dependence upon social recognition of rank, and yet also to return to such opportunities, eventually re-establishing her own investment in social image.

Because this distinction from Sir Walter remains essential, however, Anne’s world integration feels, until the very end, susceptible to disappointment, and even at the very end, never feels complete. Even when Anne is experiencing the pleasure of communicative interfacing with Wentworth, then, there remains the reminder of her persistently externalized experience, indicated by her experiential shifts between sensical speech and ambient noise. Readers are first apprised of Anne’s sensitivity to the ambient noise of the city when she and Lady Russell first arrive in Bath, in a passage that hearkens back to the differential of perceptual experience discussed in previous chapters:

79Ibid 2.1, 119.
Everybody has their taste in noises as well as in other matters; and sounds are quite innoxious, or most distressing, by their sort rather than their quantity. When Lady Russell, not long afterwards, was entering Bath on a wet afternoon, and driving through the long course of streets from the Old Bridge to Camden Place, amidst the dash of other carriages, the heavy rumble of carts and drays, the bawling of newsmen, muffin-men, and milk-men, and the ceaseless clink of pattens, she made no complaint. No, these were noises which belonged to the winter pleasures [...] Anne did not share these feelings.\textsuperscript{80}

Anne’s attention to the urban noises in the above passage only serves to position her present experience as external to Lady Russell’s, again serving to indicate the impossibility of their world sharing. To pay attention to such ambient noise is to shift attention away from present company, and divide the narrative moment. Interestingly, this attention to background noise persists even as Anne joyously attends to Wentworth as he opens up to her:

Anne who, in spite of the agitated voice in which the latter part had been uttered, and in spite of all the various noises of the room, the almost ceaseless slam of the door, and ceaseless buzz of persons walking through, had distinguished every word, was struck, gratified, confused, and beginning to breathe very quick, and feel an hundred things in a moment.\textsuperscript{81}

The thrust of this protracted sentence is that Anne does indeed distinguish “every word,” and it thus expresses a celebration of that communication, and yet the sentence also forces us to confront the fact that such an act of distinguishing is necessary, due to all of the competing noises that also form part of Anne’s perceptual experience and receive her attention. Just as in the passage with Lady Russell, the attention to the surrounding noises, even the attention to the quality of Wentworth’s “agitated voice,” position Anne’s experience as, at least partially, external to the internal moment of communication. This remains a joyful moment, but the joy, like the suffering, is characterized by the mediating play between Anne’s reflective detachment and her pre-reflective immersion.

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid 2.2, 126-7.
\textsuperscript{81}Ibid 2.8, 173.
In like circumstances, Austen describes Anne’s reception of such a moment of speech as “still hearing the sounds he had uttered” and, in the critical scene of the letter, when Wentworth shoots Anne a penetrating look, “Anne heard nothing distinctly; “it was only a buzz of words in her ear, her mind was in confusion.” By repeatedly returning to the material sounds of the speech-act, Austen generates a sense of embodied pleasure in Anne’s emotional reception to such communications from Wentworth, focusing on the disorienting musicality of such speech acts for which she has been waiting for so long. At the same time, however, Austen also situates Anne’s experience as partially outside of the moment of world integration, and the specter of Anne’s externalized position persists until the very end. As should be evident, this specter of Anne’s isolation must persist, if only by the persistence of her reflections which detach her from her immersion. It is only through such perceptual detachment that Austen finds a seeming solution to the philosophy of Sir Walter’s vanity, which requires no such fixed standard to find value in the relationally established social self. In the end, this is the reason that perceptual sound trumps sense in *Persuasion*, even as shared sense is at last given its due, for only in the externality of sound can the multiplicity of competing senses, and communicative worlds, come into focus.

---

82 Ibid 2.10, 211; 2.11, 217.
Coda: A Brief History of Cruising

The hidden secret of this project, which traces the embodiment of perceptual experience through the focalization of urban observers, is that it began as a history of sexuality in eighteenth-century London. I entered graduate school with the intention of researching and writing about the hidden world of sexual subcultures hinted at in court transcripts and in various urban literatures, such as this passing mention in The Tatler:

Some of them I have heard calling to one another, as I have sat at White's and St. James’s, by the names of Betty, Nelly, and so forth. You see them accost each other with effeminate airs; they have their signs and tokens like freemasons; they rail at womenkind.¹

Ned Ward likewise purports to describe the private meetings of these Mollies, and the main purpose of their associations: “At a certain Tavern in the City […] they have settled a constant Meeting every Evening in the Week, that they may have the better Opportunity of drawing unwary Youth into the like Corruption.”² Ward concludes that this club was subsequently raided and closed down: “they continu’d their odious Society for some Years, till their Sodomitical Practices were happily discover’d by the cunning Management of some of the Under-Agents to the Reforming Society” (288). Ward, interested as he was in exposing London’s unseemliness, seemed particularly attuned to the habits and haunts of sexual subculture. Indeed, my interest in The London Spy’s and The Spectator’s rambles through the Royal Exchange began with the Ward’s descriptions of his Spy being “Jostled in amongst a parcel of swarthy Buggarantoes, Preternatural Fornicators” and “Bumfirk’ing Italians,” along with Mr. Spectator’s own account of being “jostled” among different

groups of congregating men. The streets of London, the shadows of London, the private inns of London: these were the spaces, such texts seemed to indicate, of a new sexual subculture of men congregating, and, important to my interests, cruising.

The vogue for histories of sexuality, however, was already passing, and of these scant references to the mollies, I was convinced I could say little more than had already been said. It being no longer feasible to unearth the historical details of London cruising, per se, I began to focus on unearthing a particular structure of feeling that seemed to emerge in the anonymity of urban spaces. What continued to intrigue me was the history of the restless ramble in the streets. There was something – inexplicable at the time but raptly fascinating – in Mr. Spectator’s jaunts through the Royal Exchange that seduced me, titillated me. The flirtation with urban anonymity, the celebration of crowds, of mixing among men gathered upon the Exchange, but, especially, the narration of his otherwise “anonymous” rambles, the divulgence of hidden interactions, the display to readers of embodiments on the street. As I struggled to formulate precisely what I was proposing to study—and the textual quality to which I found myself responding—I became more interested in the study of queer affects, queer embodiment, and queer phenomenology, and phenomenology in general.

At the same time, I became more and more perplexed and intrigued by the easy omission of bodies in writing. After months of reading for my qualifying examination, I became attuned to how much reading and writing demanded that my own body, and its demands, be tuned out or neglected. Within literature, bodies as objects seemed to abound when authors wanted them to, and they certainly figure prominently in the eighteenth

---

3 Of particular interest to me were Henning Bech’s *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* and Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. 
century, whether in the grotesques of Swift or the pornography of Cleland. But, nonetheless, I became aware of language’s talent for disembodying, not only by shifting focus away from the listener’s or reader’s immediate circumstances, but by remaining safely in the grammar of names and objects, actions, speeches and events, rather than the conflicting shades of awareness involved in everyday embodiment. Phenomenology, the philosophical tradition of studying experiential embodiment in the world, is itself only formalized in the twentieth century, and so the language that explicitly embodies everyday experience has its own history, and it seemed to be a fairly recent one. In literature, the electric charge I received as a reader of Mr. Spectator in part had to do with the rare narrative glimpses of his embodied movements, and it was this, in part, which felt so rare. Queer or not, I became intrigued with tracing this history, and narrative’s relation to it.

Studies in phenomenology soon led to a deeper reading of narratology, and I quickly latched onto the narratological term of focalization, describing as it did the narrative embodiments most interesting to me. Focalization, the narrowing of narrative information to correspond with a reflector’s mind, became necessary for understanding narrative embodiment, yet it is also an overly broad term. Most narratological studies even to this day remain content to consider as examples of focalization only passages of free indirect discourse, which convey, idiomatically, the reflector’s speech or thoughts, rather than the reflector’s perceptual experiences. As it happened, even this somewhat rarefied form of narration—focalizations of a reflector’s perceptual experiences—proved to be too general for my own particular interests. In fact, such focalized passages became quite popular in the eighteenth century with the explosion of sentimental and Gothic novels.
Thus, a highly influential scene of focalization from Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* foregrounds embodied perceptions in the narrative present:

she felt for the door, and, having found it, entered trembling into the vault from whence she had heard the sigh and steps. It gave her a kind of momentary joy to perceive an imperfect ray of clouded moonshine gleam from the roof of the vault, which seemed to be fallen in, and from whence hung a fragment of earth or building, she could not distinguish which, that appeared to have been crushed inwards. She advanced eagerly towards this chasm [...]4

This explosion of focalized perception was certainly intriguing to me – could early urban literatures have influenced these novelistic experiments in perceptual exploration? – but there was something missing from these Gothic embodiments. It took me some time to figure out what it was. Coming across the cognitive linguistic work of Ronald Langacker, I was eventually able to isolate the key aspect that had eluded me, the aspect that Walpole’s focalizations lacked, which was: the periphery. The periphery—necessary for the empirical observer’s distanced yet proximate relation to the scene of observation—is nowhere available in most third person focalizations like those found in sentimental and Gothic novels. Yet, it became apparent, my dissertation was to be about the historical and narrative transformation in the eighteenth century of empirical observations into perceptions. This story of transformation could only be told with due emphasis given to the reflexive peripherality of the reflector, a peripherality which begins with the urban observer.

The periphery, in a sense, brought my project back toward, not just phenomenology, but queer phenomenology. I don’t mean to say that this is an overtly queer project. None of the texts I’ve studied are especially queer texts – indeed, they are all of them quite heterosexual – and I refrain from explicitly theorizing queerness as it pertains to these texts.

---

However, according to Sara Ahmed, a queer approach to phenomenology is “one that faces the back, which looks ‘behind’ phenomenology, which hesitates at the sight of the philosopher’s back.” In approaching phenomenology from the periphery, I was forced to consider not just the reflector’s attentions but also inattentions, not just reflective recollections but pre-reflective immersiveness as well, not just the objective scene but the surrounding situation, the deictic ground, the everyday, and the overlooked. It led to an analysis not just of narrative embodiment, but the narrative embodiment of states of disembodiment, whether through distraction, shame, or even pleasure. As the borderline of diegetic salience, the periphery operates as a force of division for the observer in all of the texts I’ve analyzed, organizing divided attentions, divided sympathies, divided worlds. It is this periphery which kept Mr. Spectator pleasurably proximate to his speculations, which was constantly encroached upon by the London Spy’s overstimulations, which united the crowded actions in Hogarth’s drawings as noise, which formed the uncomfortable overlap of Evelina’s social circles, and which situated Anne Elliot’s dejection as well as pleasure outside of a shared lifeworld.

Incidentally, it is also the periphery which introduces pivotal scenes of cruising into each of the chapters—whether Mr. Spectator’s interaction with the women at the Royal Exchange, Hogarth’s depiction of the singing milkmaid in The Enrag’d Musician, Evelina’s attention to Orville’s eyes, her charged ascent upon the stairs, Anne Elliot’s passing by her cousin on the Lyme pier. This is because cruising, I now understand, introduces a unique narrative moment that thematizes the objectification of the observer—the electric event of the observer observing that she has been observed. It is thus the

---

crossing of intersecting narratives, the meeting of perceptual worlds. It is the momentary, suspenseful flickering of the periphery. And it is this flickering which forms the objective-subjective core of focalization.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Cooper, Anthony Ashley, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury. A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules. A. Baldwin, 1713.


Dekker, Thomas. The Belman of London: Bringing to Light the Most Notorious Villanies that are Now Practiced in the Kingdom. Nathaniell Butter, 1608.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gay, John. Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London. Bernard Lintot, 1716.
Gilpin, William. An essay upon prints; containing remarks upon the principles of picturesque beauty, the different kinds of prints, and the characters of the most noted masters; Illustrated by Criticisms upon particular Pieces; To which are added, Some Cautions that may be useful in collecting Prints. J. Robson, 1768.
---. An Election Entertainment. 1755, etching, British Museum, London.
---. The Enrag’d Musician. 1741, etching, British Museum, London.
---. The First Stage of Cruelty. 1750, etching, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIBLIOGRAPHY


