



NUI MAYNOOTH
Bliaszall na hÉireann Mú Ruid

Patriots and Fribbles: Effeminacy and Politics in the Literature of the Seven Years' War and its Aftermath, 1756-1774

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A major thesis presented as full requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

School of English, Media and Theatre Studies,
Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies & Philosophy

31st October 2012

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank Dr Conrad Brunström, my supervisor, for his invaluable guidance, intellectual generosity, and continuing interest in this project.

I would like to thank my family for their help and support. Special thanks to my mother, Cynthia, for her unfailing support, encouragement, and understanding. Warm thanks also to my partner John for helping me through the last year.

I wish to thank the staff of the Russell library, St. Patrick's College Maynooth and the staff of John Paul II library, NUI Maynooth; in particular I acknowledge Penny Woods's indispensable assistance. Thanks also to the staff in the Special Collections and Archives, Sydney Jones Library, The University of Liverpool.

The friendship of fellow postgraduate students has been invaluable. In particular I would like to thank Alan Carmody, Dr Siobhan O'Donnell, Theresa Harney, Dr Margaret O'Neill, Dr Ciara Gallagher, Dr Deirdre Quinn, Bridget English, Dr Bernadette Trehy, Dr Sonia Howell, Marie-Therese Ryan, Sarah Byrne, Claire Brophy and Jessica Peart. Special thanks also to my friends and colleagues: Laura McNamee, Dr Trevor Herbert, June Robbins, Caroline Pedley, Dr Haydn Gurmin, Dr Sharon Webb and Irene Kyffin.

I am grateful to Professor Christopher Morash, Head of School, and the lecturers in the School of English, Media and Theatre Studies, NUI Maynooth, for their advice and guidance. I would like to give special thanks to Professor Joe Cleary, Dr Emer Nolan, Dr Michael Cronin, Dr Stephen O'Neill, Dr Moynagh Sullivan, Dr Oona Frawley, Dr Shelley Troupe, Dr Kylie Jarrett, Dr Sinead Kennedy and Dr Íde Corley. Thanks also to Professor Margaret Kelleher. Warm thanks to Amanda Bent for her encouragement and support.

I gratefully acknowledge a Postgraduate Scholarship from the Irish Research Council from 2009-2012. I am also grateful for the Hume Scholarship received from 2008-2009. I wish to thank An Foras Feasa for the provision of a research space. Thanks to Dr Katherine O'Donnell, School of Social Justice, University College Dublin for her guidance, encouragement and intellectual friendship.

Abstract

This thesis examines British cultural anxieties surrounding effeminacy and foreignness in the literature of the Seven Years' War and its aftermath, c. 1756-1772. Primarily, it is concerned with assessing how anxiety regarding effeminacy presents as a discourse of crisis within a diverse set of discrete, though densely worked debates, surrounding authorial independence, freedom of the press, the electorate's right to free elections, and the aesthetic experience of the sublime. All of these debates shape emergent formulations of patriotism at mid-century. Chapter One considers how the conflation of xenophobia and effeminophobia operates as a rhetorical device in the poetry of the satirist Charles Churchill (1731-1764). Reading Churchill's anti-Ossian poetry, I argue that the portrayal of the Highlander as heterosexually effeminate enables the articulation of patriotism as heteroerotic balance. Building on this, Chapter Two analyses the sexual and political controversies that mark the early career of the radical Whig politician John Wilkes (1725-1795).

Taking one key narrative of Wilkite opposition, namely, the resistance in *The North Briton* to the excise on cider, Chapter Three shows how the defence of a gentleman's property provokes debates about the nature of privacy and publicity that enfold into the fraught discourse on effeminacy. The second part of this chapter considers the successes and failures of two political essay-sheets, *The Test* and *The Auditor*, which were written by Arthur Murphy during the opening and closing stages of the Seven Years' War. The final chapter reads the early political writings of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) in the context of the fractious debates engendered by Wilkes's attempts at re-entry to political life in the late 1760s. I argue that Burke's understanding of the sublime offers an aesthetic response to effeminophobic and xenophobic anxieties, which has consequences for the longer history of British imperialism.

Introduction

Effeminacy and Politics in the Wilkite 1760s

Literary, Historical and Theoretical contexts

(I.i) Effeminacy: Literary and Theoretical Contexts

There are a particular Gang of Sodomitical Wretches in this Town, who call themselves the *Mollies*, and are so far degenerated from all masculine Department, or manly Excercises, that they rather fancy themselves Women, imitating all the little vanities that Custom has reconcil'd to the Female Sex, affecting to Speak, Walk, Tattle, Curtsy, Cry, Scold, and to mimick all Manner of Effeminacy, that ever has fallen within their several observations; not ommitting the Indecencies of lewd Women, that they may tempt one another by such immodest Freedoms to commit those odious Bestialities, that ought for ever to be without a Name.¹

The seventh edition of Edward Ward's *A Compleat and Humorous Account of All the Remarkable Clubs and Societies in the Cities of London and Westminster* was posthumously published in 1756. This popular text had initially been published in 1709 as *The Secret History of Clubs*. In the first edition, Ward documented the nascent culture that emerged in London in the early decades of the eighteenth century. With the obvious exception of "The Market Women's Club", which consists of drunken "Female Tatlers",² he describes London club life as androcentric in organisation. The fact that *The Secret History* still provoked fascination almost fifty years after its initial publication reveals, perhaps, an enduring curiosity with the homosocial potential of metropolitan life. In documenting this culture, Ward promotes as much as he denounces, with his exposition of club life showcasing the pleasures as well as the moral hazards of urban clubbability. Yet, at times, the presentation of club life is deployed within a vocabulary of disgust and moral panic, with the description of the effeminate Mollies providing one such instance.

The first scholarly analysis of eighteenth-century effeminacy is to be found in early Gay Studies-based historical writings published in the aftermath of the Gay Liberation movement of the 1970s. This analysis provided the persecuted Molly as a historical figure for a movement that sought to redress the discrimination experienced by modern gay men. Unsurprisingly, Ward's text provides the primary literary source for

¹ Edward Ward, *The secret history of clubs: particularly the Kit-Cat, Beef-Stake, Vertuosos, Quacks, Knights of the Golden-Fleece, Florists, Beaus, &c. with their original* (London: printed, and sold by the booksellers, 1709), p. 297.

² Ward, *A compleat and humorous account of all the remarkable clubs and societies in the cities of London and Westminster, From the R-I-S-y down to the Lumber-Troop, &c. Their Original with Characters of the most noted Members, containing great Variety of entertaining Discourses, Frolicks, and Adventures of the principal Managers and Members, a Work of great Use and Curiosity. Compil'd from the original Papers of a Gentleman who frequented those Places upwards of Twenty Years.* (London : printed for J. Wren, at the Bible and Crown, in Salisbury-Court, Fleet-Street, 1756), p. 282.

much of this work. Writing about effeminacy in any historical context requires the de-familiarisation of our contemporary understanding of passive effeminacy as typified by the cultural stereotype of the camp gay man. Analysing literary representations of effeminacy, such as those found in Ward's *The Secret History*, requires the reconsideration not only of eighteenth-century effeminacy but also of the historicity of desire, gender, publicity and privacy. Curiously, although the implicit logic of Ward's argument foregrounds the effeminising potential of all sociality outside of the parameters of marriage and the family, commentators have consistently focused on the Molly house as signifying the most effeminate club. Ward describes how the "Sodomitical Wretches" mimic women and the conventions of heterosocial society; acting out marriage ceremonies and feigning the act of giving birth. Moreover, their type of effeminate excess is most problematic for its almost sublime refusal of description: "those odious Bestialities, that ought for ever to be without a Name".³ Ward's depiction of the Molly club is important for its explicit conflation of effeminacy with the sodomitical. As a moral failing, effeminacy had long been associated with "unmanly weakness, softness, delicacy and self-indulgence".⁴ As Anthony Fletcher argues, the exclusive association of effeminacy with homoeroticism only occurred when sodomitical vice began to be understood in gendered terms.⁵

Interestingly, an account of the erotic pleasure of the Molly club is beyond the boundary of Ward's vast descriptive faculty. However, we might also say that Ward's phobic account of the Molly club is homophobic precisely because no other vocabulary is available in which to discuss the sodomitical in this period. Rictor Norton's *Mother Clap's Molly House: the Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830* (1992) deploys Ward's *The Secret History of Clubs* as a primary source for his reading of the formation of gay subjects within the atmosphere of moral panic that existed between 1700 and 1770. As Stephen H. Gregg argues, what made the discourse of panic virtually unique in this period was the new conflation of older biblical tropes of the nation with anxieties surrounding effeminacy and maleness.⁶ According to Norton, the oppressive culture of moral reform engendered by the early-eighteenth-century Society for the Reformation of Manners stimulated the growth of a metropolitan "gay" subculture, which "coalesced

³ Ward, *A compleat*, p. 297.

⁴ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 87.

⁵ Fletcher, p. 95.

⁶ Stephen H. Gregg, "'A Truly Christian Hero': Religion, Effeminacy, and Nation in the Writings of the Societies for Reformation of Manners", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25 (Winter 2001), p. 17.

under the pressures of this reforming environment”.⁷ Bringing sociological theories of “urban interactionism” to bear on Ward’s proto-sociological survey of London’s clubs, Tanya Cassidy demonstrates how an attempt to co-deploy essentialist and constructionist approaches troubles Norton’s study. Moreover, an implicit difficulty with Norton’s argument is its use of Molly culture as a primary source for the recuperation of a minority, proto-gay, eighteenth-century identity.⁸

Norton’s study marks a founding contribution to the identities camp in the “acts versus identities” debate in gay historiography. Cameron McFarlane is far less sympathetic to Norton’s anachronistic adjectival and nounal deployments of the word “gay” within an eighteenth-century context. He maintains that because Ward’s view of the Mollies is a phobic one, Norton’s recuperation of a gay eighteenth-century identity also recuperates and, indeed, naturalises the homophobia that engendered it.⁹ However, we might also say that any presentation of homosexuality as an identity cannot be separated from its phobic construction. In McFarlane’s view, Norton ignores the “complexities of representation” that demand attention when analysing eighteenth-century literary representations of the effeminate and the sodomitical.¹⁰ The discussion of effeminacy and politics in the literature of the mid-eighteenth-century requires the determining of what sodomy and effeminacy actually signify in such a context. However, as McFarlane admits, the negative appellation of the sodomite during this period did in fact constitute an identity position, in so far as people were identified as such.¹¹

Yet any recognition of identity must avoid committing itself to a view that would, however unwittingly, position the eighteenth-century sodomite as denoting a proto-homosexual type. Identification, in McFarlane’s view, is therefore social rather than distinctly personal. The discourse of sodomy, he argues, may have been connected to a particular social type, but its discursivity was not limited to the structuring of this social position.¹² The effeminate sodomite’s identity did not reach definitional closure at the level of same-sex sexual acts, but was ideologically loaded, enfolding a range of

⁷ Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap’s Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1992), p. 52.

⁸ Tanya Cassidy, “People, Place and Performance: Theoretically Revisiting Mother Clap’s Molly House”, in *Queer People: Negotiations and Expressions of Homosexuality, 1700-1800*, Chris Mounsey and Caroline Gonda, eds. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), p. 100.

⁹ Cameron McFarlane, *The Sodomite in Fiction and Satire, 1660-1750* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 19.

¹⁰ McFarlane, p. 19.

¹¹ McFarlane, p. 20.

¹² McFarlane, p. 20.

negatively defined positions such as the Papist, the foreigner and the anarchist.¹³ As we shall see, effeminophobic critique is rarely exclusively about homoeroticism, but is instead a strategically capacious category. Effeminacy figures as a discourse of crisis, which surfaces in the civic writing and political satire of the 1760s in the xenophobic antagonism toward foreign peoples and their cultures. John Brown's pamphlets, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of The Times* (1757) and *Thoughts on Civil Liberty, on Licentiousness and Faction* (1765), narrate this crisis in its most alarmist timbre. In *An Estimate*, Brown predicts imminent cultural collapse, basing this diagnosis on what he perceives to be the blurring of gendered distinctions. Not only have men "sunk into *Effeminacy*", but women have also "advanced into Boldness", leaving "their peculiar and characteristic Manners ... confounded and lost".¹⁴ Such gender confusion causes particular anxiety in the military context of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). Due to the perceived effeminacy of both men and women, it was feared that Britain's patriotic spirit of national defence had been sapped, as "Effeminate minds cannot contain *public spirit* or *Love of our Country*".¹⁵ Brown's later *Thoughts on Civil Liberty* continues in this paranoid vein by suggesting that Britain should adopt a Spartan insularity, thus allowing for an uncorrupted nationalism to flourish.¹⁶

For Brown, effeminacy is a social rather than a sexual failing. Readings of Ward have consistently overlooked how *The Secret History of Clubs* presents all sociality as potentially effeminising. For example, Alan Bray's *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (1982) offers an analysis of the Molly subculture during the early decades of the eighteenth century. While aiming to de-familiarise an essentialised homosexual identity in his historical reading, as McFarlane argues, Bray in fact redeploys an essentialist view of the gay historical subject.¹⁷ In *Homosexuality*, Bray suggests that the queer spaces of the Molly-clubs, together with "several public places where it was possible to make casual homosexual contacts", formed "a coherent social milieu".¹⁸ What I find useful about Bray is his convincing argument that homosexuality in Renaissance England was satirised and yet beyond that satirisation it was so real. In

¹³ McFarlane, p. 20.

¹⁴ John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of The Times* (Dublin: G. Faulkner, J. Hoey, and J. Exshaw Booksellers, 1757), p. 34.

¹⁵ Brown, *An Estimate*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁶ Brown, *Thoughts on Civil Liberty, on Licentiousness and Faction* (Dublin: A. Leathey, J. Exshaw, W. Watson, S. Watson, Booksellers M.DCC.LXV, 1765), p. 45.

¹⁷ McFarlane, p. 11.

¹⁸ Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982), p. 85.

Bray's analysis, the coherence of this milieu becomes apparent when juxtaposed with earlier models of same-sex arrangement, with the Molly houses being in "sharp contrast to the socially amorphous forms homosexuality had taken a century earlier; Elizabethan or Jacobean England had no parallel to the separate world it represented".¹⁹ The Molly club, according to Bray, operated as an autonomous space, entirely free from class significations.²⁰ Moreover, he argues that Molly subculture was further defined by its "own distinctive conventions: ways of dressing, of talking, distinctive gestures and distinctive acts with an understood meaning, its own jargon".²¹ We can see that a significant aporia emerges in Bray's reading between homosexual acts constituting identity on the one hand, and being "socially diffused" on the other, with their condemnation rarely having any significance outside of a closed system of symbol and myth.²² This tension is a chartable historical occurrence for Bray. The eighteenth century witnesses a shift in the usage and range of the noun "sodomy". In short, sodomy shifts from designating the potentiality of all people to commit sin as a facet of human nature, to a particular vice displaced onto a recognisable minority of effeminate sodomites.²³

Although he posits this semantic shift in his discussion of Molly subculture in the final chapter, Bray is unable to suggest any coherent reason for it, and can only offer synchronic societal change as an explanation for this new subculture. The inability to fully account for the figure of the Molly prompts Bray to advise that a "linear history of homosexuality" cannot be formulated, meaning that any conjecture on where the eighteenth-century Molly might be historically placed is redundant.²⁴ Revisiting both Norton's and Bray's early, gay historical writing here is useful for the way in which it underscores the problems that arise when we attempt to affirm anything about the effeminate or sodomitical subject of the past. As Bray's more thorough analysis shows, the recognition of the impossibility of any linear or developmental gay history does not prevent some historians from focusing in on the queerness of those anachronistic traces of homoerotic desire in terms of identity. Given the sheer polemical force of Michel Foucault's analysis of the historical discourses of sodomy, it is unsurprising that much of the work of earlier gay historians focused on complicating and extending this interpretive pattern. In the following famous passage, taken from *The Will to Knowledge*:

¹⁹ Bray, p. 86.

²⁰ Bray, p. 86.

²¹ Bray, p. 86.

²² Bray, p. 92.

²³ Bray, p. 103.

²⁴ Bray, p. 103.

The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1 (1976), Foucault historically locates the emergence of the category of the “homosexual” in the West in the decade of the 1870s:

As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less a habitual sin than as a singular nature ... Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.²⁵

Advancing a debate that is now axiomatic in the field of the history of sexuality, Foucault argues that the contemporary notion of homosexuality is the product of a number of nineteenth-century institutional and discursive constructions such as psychology, sexology, education, law and medicine, as opposed to the Early Modern condition of a single discursive domain of the juridical. From the sodomitical, a category that figured a range of sexual and social transgressions, emerged the homosexual as a species. Indeed, Foucault’s argument is a foundational one for queer historical enquiry. Importantly, the Foucauldian project demonstrated the cultural and historical contingency of all sexual identity. In another sense, it unwittingly engendered an unproductive analytical preoccupation with the modelling of all pre-nineteenth-century sexualities; with such work invested in tracing how one sexual framework supervenes the existing sexual regime.

David Halperin has extended Foucault’s analysis by mapping the development of modern homosexuality backward, offering an analytic strategy that is “designed to rehabilitate a modified constructionist approach to the history of sexuality by readily acknowledging the existence of transhistorical continuities, reintegrating them into the frame of the analysis, and reinterpreting their significance within a genealogical understanding of the emergence of (homo) sexuality itself”.²⁶ For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Halperin’s historical work typifies the sort of queer history that unwittingly

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Will To Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Robert Hurley, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 43.

²⁶ David M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 106. See also: David M. Halperin, “Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality”, *Representations*, No. 63. (Summer, 1998), pp. 93-120.

“underwrite[s] the notion that ‘homosexuality as we conceive of it today’ itself comprises a coherent definitional field rather than a space of overlapping, contradictory, and conflictual definitional forces”.²⁷ For all their care and attention, such projects, as Sedgwick tells us, “risk reinforcing a dangerous consensus of knowingness” about contemporary sexualities.²⁸ If Halperin’s developmental model can be considered arboreal, Sedgwick’s historical approach conversely recognises an “unrationalized coexistence of different models during the times they do coexist”.²⁹ Sedgwick’s view enables a reading of desire that does not give leverage to one particular identity but which acknowledges both repetitions and ruptures. In this way, Sedgwick is interested in how issues of modern homo/hetero definition are organised, not by the super-session of one model and the consequent withering away of another, but instead by relations enabled through the radical and irreducible incoherence of all sexuality. In the lengthy introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick cautions against the dangers of endorsing a historicist “Great Paradigm shift” narrative, which subtly reinforces the perception that contemporary homo/hetero subject positions are knowable and privileged.³⁰

In the introductory section “In Defense of Historicism” of *How To Do The History of Homosexuality* (2002), Halperin argues that Sedgwick’s reading obscures the historical problem of articulating the disjointedness between pre-modern and modern sexual regimes; with this problem being somehow subsumed and therefore lost within the present crisis of homo/hetero definition.³¹ Having underscored this irony, Halperin then attempts to resuscitate a revised form of historicist critical endeavour. Abandoning his earlier intervening and supervening model, he reads the present incoherence in the regime of sexuality as the effect of “a long process of historical overlay and accretion”.³² In doing so, Halperin claims to provide Sedgwick’s reading with the historical grounding necessary to make it effective, thus refracting his own historicism back through Sedgwick’s original critique of historicism. Both Carla Freccero and Madhavi Menon separately address the fact that Halperin’s desire to historicise Sedgwick’s critique fails, as it ultimately privileges known, contemporary homosexuality, while

²⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* 2nd edn. ([1990] Berkely: University of California Press, 2008), p. 45.

²⁸ Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, p. 45.

²⁹ Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, p. 47.

³⁰ Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, pp. 47-48.

³¹ Halperin, *How to Do*, p. 11.

³² Halperin, *How to Do*, p. 12.

maintaining the difference of the past.³³ In the introduction to *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory In Shakespearean Literature and Film* (2008), Menon argues that the project of gay and lesbian historiography, which has done so much to denaturalise conceptions of sexuality, is nevertheless bound to heterotemporality, a historicism that deploys difference as history.³⁴ This form of compulsory heterohistory embraces difference as the template for expressing the past in relation to the present, while also fixing sexuality as a history of difference between the past and present.

In response, Menon offers the framework of homohistory, as a way of enacting historical readings that posit resistance to sexuality as historical difference. Attending to desire as opposed to sexuality, Menon aims to disrupt the hetero logic of historicism through an unhistoricism that considers “neither past nor present ... [as] capable of a full and mutually exclusive definition”.³⁵ A turn to desire rather than sexuality provides a way of reading the politics and historicity of effeminacy. A focus on desire obviates the issue of an anachronistic imposition of gay identity on the past, as desire itself is always preceding and exceeding current identity positions, passing through them, in a continuous state of becoming. The theoretical framework for this project is one that de-privileges the absolute difference between the past and the present that animates historicist enquiry. While asserting this, my reading of effeminacy does not fully embrace the anachronism disavowed in more linear histories. In what follows, effeminacy is read, not as the trace of sexual identity, but rather as a discourse of excess surrounding what are, nonetheless, intensely gendered organisations of desire. Rather than anachronistically theorise effeminacy as denoting a proto-sexual identity, this thesis traces it as a discourse which enfolds both homoerotic and heteroerotic desires. Thus, I read effeminacy as denoting a cultural crisis that is continuous with, but not identical to, Sedgwick’s charted crisis of homo/heterosexual definition.

While acknowledging the impossibility of any exclusive definition, my analysis attends to the very historicity of constructions of desire. Reading desire as continuous across historical periods should not cancel out our awareness of its historical patterning. Importantly, gender features as a key narrative strand in this historical and deeply political narrative of desire. Charges of effeminacy, in any context, are readily bound up

³³ Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 39; Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2008), p. 16.

³⁴ Menon, *Unhistorical*, p. 1. See also: Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, “Queering History”, *PMLA*, Vol. 120, No. 5 (Oct., 2005), pp. 1608-1617.

³⁵ Menon, *Unhistorical*, p. 3.

with an attempt at de-legitimation and the consolidation of power. As Joan Scott argues, “gender is a primary field within which, or by means of which power is articulated”.³⁶ Although Scott’s claim seems like a useful starting point for tracking the relationship between effeminacy and political assertion, her conception of gender as “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes” becomes troubled when applied to other historical and cultural contexts.³⁷ The modern regime of desire—the heteroerotic and homoerotic—emerges in the long eighteenth-century period as a consequence of an epistemic shift in conceptions of the body. In *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1990), Thomas Laqueur surveys the debates surrounding the sexed body that characterised eighteenth-century medical and cultural literatures, identifying a tension between a one-sex and two-sex model. Sexed bodies are not derived from some anterior biological nature, but rather are historically specific and contingent:

Thus the old model, in which men and women were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their vital heat, along an axis whose telos was male, gave way by the late eighteenth-century to a new model of radical dimorphism, of biological divergence. An anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of women to man.³⁸

Laqueur’s archival work on elite medical texts reveals a shift, during the eighteenth century, from a one-sex Galenic body that was different in degree, to a two-sex model of incommensurable biological difference between the sexes. While Judith Butler has argued that “all gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies”, with stable genders continually subject to discursive re-inscription, Laqueur’s analysis provides some historical grounding for Butler’s presentist understanding of gender as a continuous repetition without a past.³⁹ Specifically, it is through the shift between a one-sex and two-sex gender model that the modern performative fantasy of gendered difference is embodied.

Though *Making Sex* has provoked controversial debates among historians of gender and sexuality, Karen Harvey notes that Laqueur’s reading of the emergence of sexual difference as based on the physical rather than the cultural in the eighteenth

³⁶ Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), p. 1069.

³⁷ Scott, p. 1067.

³⁸ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 6.

³⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 49.

century, resonates with the coeval re-conception of race as biologically rather than geographically fixed.⁴⁰ The somatic then, in both accounts, comes to signify the very difference that cultural meaning can no longer secure. Historical work on masculinity has shown how gender formation in any period is tied to questions of publicity and privacy. Foucault's account of the mid-eighteenth-century bourgeois construction of a "'class' body with its health, hygiene, descent, and race", instances another manifestation of how desire was embodied in order to affirm cultural and class differences.⁴¹ More recently, Thomas A. King has built on Foucault's account of this historical discontinuity between a "*deployment of alliance*" and the "*deployment of 'sexuality'*", to specify how this transfer involved a shift away from relations of pederasty (which signal the erotic enactment of early modern subjection), toward a modern economy of heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual subjectivities.⁴² Arguing against Randolph Trumbach's historical view of a shift from universal bisexuality to a modern regime of hetero and homo sexual identities, King posits a transition from *ars erotica* sutured to patriarchy, in which women, servants, and many men were property (erotic and otherwise) of other men and some women, to an erotic economy announced by ideals of egalitarianism, domesticity, and companionship.⁴³

Importantly, this development is not located in the individual embodiment or subjectivities of men or women, but in the new private social practices and agencies that produced it. As King argues:

Within a newly privatized society, an ideology of desire represented the manly subject as autonomous of any occupation or negotiation of particular social places. The male subject of desire would locate his freedom in the pleasurable and subjective experience of his own sensations. This erasure of positioning, mobility, and mimesis constitutes the myth of modern male phallic equivalency ... This virtual space of discourse opposing subjection and theoretically writing private men in their social and economic interests enabled the emergence of a new concept of manliness as that inner space of self-possession and autonomy, preceding, and extending across, propertied men's interactions with each other as they unfolded in time. Increasingly, an

⁴⁰ Laqueur's model has been critiqued as "an overly schematic approach, which underplays the variety of medical understandings of gender available to pre-modern Europeans. There also exists a large literature on popular health texts which clearly demonstrates that new assumptions and divisions were only slowly adopted by the broader population". See Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen, "Introduction" in *English Masculinities 1660-1800*, Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen, eds. (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 8-9; Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 78-79.

⁴¹ Foucault, *The Will*, pp. 126-127.

⁴² Foucault, *The Will*, p. 106.

⁴³ Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution Volume One: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

innate masculinity vested the natural group of men as private subjects with common rights, obligations, and interests linked to their alleged equivalency within the public domain.⁴⁴

King's analysis of privacy demonstrates how a re-conception of notions of the private came to bear on Jürgen Habermas's much debated historical narrative of the emergence of an authentic "public sphere"; which he reads as a "political consciousness developed in ... civil society which, in opposition to absolute sovereignty, articulated the concept of and demand for general and abstract laws and which ultimately came to assert itself (i.e., public opinion) as the only legitimate source of this law".⁴⁵ More than property and the exercising of opinion, King argues that the functioning of the public sphere of propertied men cohered through the displacement of the system of pederastic subjection, which was bound up with the court and the spectacle of the monarch, onto the sodomitical body. This class body and its public narrative of gender complementarity and conjugal intimacy required that the sodomite be specified as a "woman-hater" and as "the other and margin of privacy".⁴⁶ In contrast to Bray's and Norton's readings of Molly trial records and satires as offering a social history for homosexual identity, King views this material as describing practices that inherently lack identity: "promiscuity, prostitution, masquerade, expenditure without capitalization, and repetition without an ethics of consolidation".⁴⁷ In this way, effeminacy became linked to the sodomite, with the sodomitical registered as incommensurable with privacy.

The authenticity of what Habermas historicises as the public-sphere necessitates the incommensurability of the sodomitical with the private. Yet, as Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen argue, the mid-century image of the newly non-effeminate heterosexual man jarred against an older, pre-modern view that connected an excess of heterosexual activity with effeminacy.⁴⁸ A closer reading of Edward Ward's exposition of clubbability reveals a more capaciously understood effeminacy to be the source of all social anxiety. Whether conceived of in hetero or homo terms, effeminacy in this period designates an unproductive and excessive desire. Men who enlist as members of the

⁴⁴ King notes that the "establishment of an oppositional public sphere in England in the seventeenth century did not just privilege men or equate them with the position of public speaker. Among the educated and propertied, it *made men*". See Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1660–1750 Vol. 1: The English Phallus* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 36; 117.

⁴⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Thomas Burger, with Frederick Lawrence, trans. (Tyne and Wear: Athenæum Press, 2002), p. 54.

⁴⁶ King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: Volume 2 Queer Articulations* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. 169.

⁴⁷ King, *Queer Articulations*, pp. 146-147.

⁴⁸ Hitchcock and Cohen, p. 5.

“Mock-Heroes club” are just as emasculated as those womanly men who form the “Mollies Club”:

Though the Promotion of Trade, and the Benefits that arise from Conversation, are the Specious Pretences that every Tippling-Club, or Society are apt to assign as a reasonable Plea for their unprofitable Meetings; yet most considerate Men have found by Experience, that the general End thereof, is a promiscuous Encouragement of Vice, Faction, and Folly, at the unnecessary Expence of that Time and Money, which might be better employed in their own Business, or spent with much more Comfort in their several families.⁴⁹

Clubbability represents an excessive form of sociality. Men’s occupation of consumerist space impoverishes the more productive public commercial domain and the private heterosocial life of marriage and the family. The anxiety animating Ward’s description centres on the fact that the very economy of homosocial space is exterior to the heterosocial. When men assemble together as Mollies, Beaus, Mock-Heroes, Thieves or Bird Fanciers, they abandon their “several families” and the private space that anchors the production of heteronormativity⁵⁰ and its embodied gender difference. Though men adopt the “specious pretence” of sober political and economic discussions as the basis of their social engagement, Ward’s account underscores the unproductive, even excessive, nature of their “unprofitable Meetings”.⁵¹ What we find then in Ward is a potentially anti-democratic articulation of homosociality as inherently effeminising. In many significant ways, the patriotic literature of the 1760s addresses this crisis in homosocial organisation. Wilkite political discourse was deeply xeno-effeminophobic, and its contribution to the coeval, intensely imbricated emergence of heteronormativity and the public sphere in the eighteenth century was to make the sexual, indeed the heterosexual, private as opposed to public or political.

⁴⁹ Ward, *A compleat*, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner define heteronormativity as “institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is organized as a sexuality—but also privileged”, see: Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Intimacy (Winter, 1998), p. 547.

⁵¹ Ward, *A compleat*, p. 14.

(I.ii) Wilkite Politics during the Seven Years' War and its Aftermath

While this thesis is not a study of John Wilkes (1725-1797), the bulk of the material under discussion is connected to the political and sexual controversies that he provoked in the 1760s. In literary-historical criticism, Wilkes is most often read as a radical libertine politician who, having provoked political discontent in the early 1760s, returned after a four year period of exile in France and Italy (1764-1768), and generated a more significant controversy in the 1768-1769 Middlesex election. Widespread dissension arose when parliament refused to legitimate his successful election on the basis of the earlier charges that he had been convicted of in absentia in 1764.⁵² Following a two-year period of imprisonment, Wilkes was released in 1770. His political incapacitation engendered fractious debates about the legislative power of parliament and the right of the electorate to choose their representative. Post-1770, Wilkes was a significantly less vexatious political figure, becoming part of the respectable City establishment, holding positions first as a City alderman (1770) and later as London's Lord Mayor (1772). Though politically radical, by mid-century standards, Wilkes actually played the political field of preferment like any other aspiring non-elite politician. Wilkes sought out establishment sinecures in the 1760s, only to be continually refused.⁵³ He emerged on the political scene just at the time when Whig ministers and would-be patrons, Newcastle and Pitt, were being edged out of the administration.

Upon his accession to the throne in 1760, George III allowed his favourite and former childhood tutor, the Scottish Earl of Bute, to form an administration, replacing the Whig oligarchy and consequently reversing Britain's agenda from one of war and territorial accumulation to peace and the consolidation of colonial gains. As Robert D.

⁵² Arthur Cash, *John Wilkes: The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 225.

⁵³ Wilkes continually sought political sinecures for his efforts on behalf of the Temple-Pitt faction. In many ways, his entire political career was about securing some form of sinecure. Even after his expulsion from parliament and outlawry, he returned from exile in 1766 to broker a deal with the Rockingham party for his re-entry into political life. The correspondence, in July 1766 between Wilkes and Edmund Burke, the newly appointed secretary to the Marquis of Rockingham, conveys the sense that Wilkes was being managed. Burke regrets the delay in answering Wilkes's "polite and obliging letter" before burlesquing a familiar Wilkite jingoistic botanical imagery to inform Wilkes that he was really to blame for his own isolation: "We would all choose the home field for you, though our English Roses bear thorns not a few, and though the down of the Scotch Thistle is covered with a sufficiency of Prickles, which you have turned and sharpened against yourself". See Edmund Burke, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke: Volume I April 1744-June 1768*, Thomas W. Copeland, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 259.

Spector notes, Wilkes advanced a politics that viewed: “the king’s authority as limited by parliamentary and public opinion, his choice of ministers a legitimate concern of both groups, and the national interest — that of the “people” — largely composed of the City of London and its commercial interests”.⁵⁴ In pointed contrast, the pro-ministerial essay-sheets, *The Auditor* and *The Briton*, stressed the Tory view of the importance of the King’s prerogative, viewing all criticism of his ministers as a self-interested, factional subversion of the broader national interests.⁵⁵ The conflation of the personal with political grievances in *The North Briton* (1762-1763) facilitated Wilkes’s self-fashioning as a manly defender of English liberties. In particular, in arguing against his expulsion from the House of Commons, Wilkes strategically conflated the personal with more widespread and embedded local political concerns, thus amplifying his own legal difficulties to a frequency that would resonate on a national level. As John Brewer notes, the issues raised by Wilkes, when treated separately, seem trivial, yet when taken together, they “constituted a frontal assault on the politics of oligarchy, and thereby threatened the political *status quo*”.⁵⁶

Wilkes’s anti-ministerial *The North Briton*, a pro-Pittite and Temple essay-sheet, became the most popular public vehicle for debating the settlement of the Seven Years’ War. Though the war initially began in 1756, the international conflict that preceded it, the War of the Austrian Succession 1740-1748, had set the terms of engagement.⁵⁷ Britain, allied with Prussia and Portugal, combatted France, Austria and Spain through multiple campaigns in “both hemispheres and on every continent and ocean”.⁵⁸ As Tom Pocock argues, the Seven Years’ War laid the foundations of the British Empire. When Bute’s Peace Party brought the war to a close in 1763, the entire eastern seaboard of North America was British, India was dominated and the Caribbean islands were no longer under threat from the French.⁵⁹ Yet, the conflict had not begun smoothly for Britain. William Pitt’s rise to power in Newcastle’s government had enabled Britain to recover from a series of embarrassing losses at the start of the Seven Years’ War. Though it was an unprecedentedly expensive war, Pitt’s strategies had led

⁵⁴ Robert D. Spector, *Political Controversy: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Propaganda* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 129.

⁵⁵ Spector, *Political*, p. 129.

⁵⁶ John Brewer, *Party ideology and popular politics at the accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 164.

⁵⁷ Tom Pocock, *Battle for Empire: The Very First World War 1756-63* (London: Michael O’Mara Books Limited, 1998), p. 13.

⁵⁸ Pocock, p. 13.

⁵⁹ Pocock, p. 13.

to massive recuperations and gains, such as the restoration of Minorca to the British and the conquering of French Canada. The *annus mirabilis* of 1759 had affirmed Britain's successes and forcefully demonstrated "the triumph both of mercantile interests in the City and of an ideology of aggressive commercial expansion".⁶⁰ It is from this ideology of commercial expansion that the Wilkite opposition would draw its energies. While the Wilkite controversies of the 1760s certainly occupied the respective Grenville and Rockingham administrations in various degrees, such radicalism must be confronted with the fact of Wilkes's later integration into parliamentary and civic political life. While the fervour of the Wilkite assault on the Bute ministry later relaxed into the relative mundaneness of municipal life post-1770, the legal and sexual controversies that led to Wilkes's expulsion from parliament, and his public responses to them, mark a crucial node in the formation of bourgeois white masculinity in Western modernity.

In what follows, I examine the rhetorical construction of masculinity throughout the Wilkite controversies in the 1760s. This discursive formation of a particular model of English masculine citizenship was decisively connected with the expansion of the print media, British imperial politics and continuous debates about religious and sexual toleration. In making such a claim, I do not mean to suggest that Wilkes, a figure known for his opportunistic and inconsistent politicking, was actively or consciously promoting a self-defined model of masculinity. As George E. Haggerty notes: "Masculinity is not one thing in the eighteenth century, any more than it is one thing in the twentieth".⁶¹ While acknowledging this, I demonstrate that the gendered politics advanced by the Wilkites contributed to the re-conception of heteronormativity in the period. Within the unique conflation of personal and communal grievances that occurred during the Wilkite controversies, Wilkes came to embody debates that prompted consideration of the limits of both the public and private spheres. Debates about the freedom of the press, sparked by the administration's arrest of the printers of William Beckford's *The Monitor: or the British Freeholder*, gave rise to spirited defences of the public's right to access printed oppositional discourse. Such debates provided a focus for the articulation of a more expansive and inclusive public-political sphere. As we will see, the controversy surrounding *An Essay on Woman* worked to define the parameters of a private sphere in the eighteenth century based on a man's

⁶⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), p. 169.

⁶¹ George E. Haggerty, *Men In Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 5.

right to religious and (hetero) sexual toleration in private. I argue that the production of a democratic public-political sphere through the Wilkite controversies of the mid-century also engendered modern heteronormativity. Moreover, the heteronormative should not be read as the politicisation of heterosexuality, but as the recuperation of the heterosexual from the political.

The Wilkite controversies of the early 1760s allowed certain ideological work to be advanced under the capacious sign of English liberty. These controversies can be viewed as one set of new “media events”, which involved “cases whose public discussion was so intense that it took on a momentum of its own”.⁶² As Aileen Douglas reminds us, eighteenth-century gentlemen were invested in a “social code” in which the legal system provided “adequate safeguards and protection for those who live under it”.⁶³ Specifically, in response to his arrest by the King’s messengers on the basis of a general warrant, Wilkes’s defence of *The North Briton*, No. 45 and *An Essay on Woman* sought to reaffirm the illegality of such warrants, presenting his arrest and the seizure of his property as a perversion of English liberty. Indeed, Wilkes was well placed to advance the interests of City merchants and middle and lower urban classes. Born into a relatively prosperous lower middle-class family in Clerkenwell in the City of London, his Anglican father, Israel, was a distiller and his Presbyterian mother, Sarah, was a tanner’s daughter from Bermondsey. Wilkes was thus decidedly outside of the dominant aristocratic-political networks of exchange and preferment.⁶⁴ After receiving a thorough grounding in Latin and Greek at John Worsley’s Hertford School, Wilkes was then put under Matthew Leeson’s tutorship, initially at Oxfordshire, then at Aylesbury, in the house of a wealthy widow, Mary Mead, a close friend of Sarah Wilkes, and mother to Wilkes’s future wife, also named Mary Mead.⁶⁵ In 1741, Wilkes enrolled at the University of Leiden, travelling there with Leeson. Leiden was typically a site for the flourishing of Dissenter politics and more generally served as a centre for those seeking an English Whig education.⁶⁶ If Boswell’s record of Wilkes’s personal account of his

⁶² In speculating on how the rise of popular journalism in the eighteenth century may have challenged the supposed objectivity of moral judgments, Faramerz Dabhoiwala emphasises how sexual and political scandals were, by the mid eighteenth-century, circulated and sustained through burgeoning print networks in an unprecedented form. See: Faramerz Dabhoiwala. *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), p. 321.

⁶³ Aileen Douglas, *Uneasy Sensations: Smollett and The Body* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 119.

⁶⁴ Peter D. G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: A Friend to Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 1.

⁶⁵ Thomas, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Thomas, p. 3.

time at Leiden is accurate, then it would seem that he not only acquired proficiency in French and refined his gentlemanly manners, he also embarked on what would be an energetic and impressively sustained, albeit initially closeted, libertine lifestyle.⁶⁷ Finding difficulty with Leeson's conversion to the Arian creed, Wilkes found a replacement mentor in the figure of the Scottish philosopher Andrew Baxter.⁶⁸

Given the overt centrality of a virulent anti-Scottishness within Wilkite politics, it is ironic to note how many of Wilkes's intimate friends at Leiden were Scottish. The fact that both Edinburgh and Leiden were world centres for the study of medicine in the eighteenth century goes some way in explaining the high Scottish concentration of Wilkes's social circle. Yet, such irony extends well into his later life, in the close friendship he shared with Boswell, particularly when in exile in Italy in 1764. Even while advancing a political agenda that was virulently anti-Scottish, Wilkes did not demonstrate any personal reservations about befriending Scots. While highlighting the irony of Wilkes's Scottish friendships may seem like a superficial point to make, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge how such conviviality indicates his ability to distinguish what was a rigidly xeno-effeminophobic political positioning from his more sociable endeavours within the metropolitan polite social sphere. Wilkes could both drive his public politics with a sociability that aligned political subjects through xenophobia and effeminophobia, while also commanding a respectable (though widely critiqued), manly and private social politeness. Such detachment facilitated a social exchange that remained fluid and free from the intrusive influence of exclusionary forms of political ideology.⁶⁹ For Wilkes, the bonds of male friendship could be politically or apolitically tied, and often transgressed declared partisan lines.

Throughout the 1760s and well into the early 1770s, Wilkes came to personify the arrogance of an English chauvinism that, in its overt and vituperative anti-Scottishness, provided for the celebration of Englishness and an affirmation of English rights.⁷⁰ As Linda Colley notes, Wilkes and his political followers — the Wilkites —

⁶⁷ Some twenty years after his time at Leiden, Wilkes boasted to James Boswell that he was “always among women at Leyden. ‘My father gave me as much money as I pleased. Three or four whores; drunk every night. Sore head in the morning, then read. I’m capable to sit thirty hours over a table to study’” qtd. in Thomas, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Thomas, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Such a distinction becomes more apparent in Wilkes's friendship with the Chevalier d'Eon. See Anna Clarke, “The Chevalier d'Eon and Wilkes: Masculinity and Politics in the Eighteenth Century”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Fall, 1998), pp. 19-48.

⁷⁰ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837*, 2nd edn. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 106.

supported a decidedly Whig version of English history.⁷¹ Commentators such as Colley, Kathleen Wilson and Carol Watts freely deploy the terms Wilkite or Wilkesite to describe those active in, or supportive of, Wilkes's propagandist and electoral struggles during the 1760s. While this study makes use of the term Wilkite, it should be noted from the outset that the controversies provoked by Wilkes were of such a diverse and opportunistic nature that it would be erroneous to read the 'ite' suffix as denoting any form of coherent ideology. Wilkites or Wilkesites were not a coherent social or economic grouping, and contained men, and indeed women, from all stations of British life. George Rudé, in charting the geographical and social boundaries of "Wilkism and of the 'Wilkes and Liberty' movement" identifies the merchant classes as providing the most sustained support, while emphasising the overall diversity of participants.⁷² While Wilkite should not be understood as describing any ideological, social or geographical consistency in terms of professed support of Wilkes, for the purposes of this thesis, Wilkite as both a noun and an adjective, usefully describes the persistent and often overt nature of a particular model of political subjectivity, which was given coherence within this discourse. In this way, my use of the term "Wilkite" should be taken to mean the sort of political arguments generated by Wilkes and his supporters, which cohered around the emergent conceptions of heteroeroticism and its concomitant envisioning of gender complementarity.

Wilkites also held a common view of historical process as being Whig and progressive. Such an interpretive historical focus proved attractive to Whigs (many of whom were dissenters) as the accession of George III brought about a shift in Hanoverian attitudes, made manifest in the new monarch's overt enthusiasm for the Established Church and his relaxation of proscriptions against the admittance of Tories to high government office.⁷³ As Colley notes:

Wilkes's own collisions with the authorities, like the widening rift with the American colonies, merely confirmed that the country's 'glorious

⁷¹ Colley notes that Wilkes wrote a history entitled *The History of England from the Revolution to the Accession of the Brunswick Line* (1768), which was a conventional Whig celebration of 1688. However, Wilkes never completed this project, which he undertook along with a posthumous edited edition of Charles Churchill's corpus (also uncompleted) while in exile in Europe (mainly France and Italy) during 1763-1768. For Colley's comments on Wilkes's history see Colley, *Britons*, p. 111.

⁷² George Rudé, in addressing assumptions that Wilkes's support base was mostly derived from London's working-class population, states: "It was, in fact, one of the most significant of Wilkes's achievements that he was able to tap the loyalties and political energies of such varying and distinctive social groups as City merchants, the 'middling' and lesser freeholders of Middlesex, and the small craftsmen, petty traders and wage-earners of the capital". See George Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763-1774* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp.183-184.

⁷³ Colley, *Britons*, p. 110.

inheritance', the achievements of the Protestant Succession, the Revolution of 1688, the Civil War, even the Saxon struggle against the Norman Yoke, had been laid open to attack.⁷⁴

Within such an uncertain climate, Wilkes espoused the shibboleth of liberty, while his followers represented his personal difficulties as another, yet arguably crucial, point within the Whig historical narrative. The Wilkite movement was part of “the Englishman’s centuries-old struggle for liberty, another vital stage in his distinctive pilgrimage towards habeas corpus, trial by jury, freedom of election and the liberty of the press”.⁷⁵ In conflating Englishness with liberty, Wilkites could claim that men of “movable property”, whether conformist or not, were just as equally entitled as the landed and patrician classes to be active citizens in the national work of empire building. In Colley’s view, Wilkes, and the movement that surrounded him, administered “comfort to a people in flux”.⁷⁶

In reading the political literature of the Wilkite 1760s, I am interested in assessing the ways in which effeminophobic exclusions become central to the overall coherency of the political debate. Responding to Colley’s reading of Wilkes, I illuminate how a xeno-effeminophobic attitude was a crucial part of such ‘comfort’. If the Wilkite 1760s instanced a decade of crisis, this thesis demonstrates how both Wilkite and anti-Wilkite alike conceived of this crisis within a culturally and historically specific effeminophobic register. The mid-century figures of the sodomite and the effeminate man are visible instances of the discursive surfacing of this crisis, as are related concerns over the regulation of heterosexual sex and onanism. To date, John Wilkes has been of some interest to gay and lesbian scholars. In particular, descriptions of the sort of male relationships that Wilkes formed during his time at Leiden (1744-1746) have been the focus of some controversial scholarly enquiry. One pioneering article that has provoked considerable debate is George Rousseau’s “‘In the house of Madame Vander Tasse’: a homosocial university club” (1989). Rousseau identified Wilkes as part of a homosocial club operative during the years 1743-1747, whose members included Andrew Baxter, Baron d’Holbach, Mark Akenside, Jeremiah Dyson, William Dowdeswell, and Charles Townshend.⁷⁷ Although membership of the club fluctuated, Rousseau contends that members “were sufficiently bound, in different combinations, to validate using the term

⁷⁴ Colley, *Britons*, p. 110.

⁷⁵ Colley, *Britons*, p. 111.

⁷⁶ Colley, *Britons*, p. 117.

⁷⁷ G. S. Rousseau, *Perilous Enlightenment: Pre- and Post-Modern Discourses* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 113.

club for their group”.⁷⁸ He prefaces his profiling of certain members of the club (Baxter, Wilkes, d’Holbach, Mark Akenside and Jeremiah Dyson) with the caveat that the task of deciphering the various sexual practices of the club’s members would be a frustrated enterprise, as extant evidence, such as members’ correspondences, left much uncertain. Nevertheless, while members of the club are not “exclusively homosexual” in Rousseau’s view, he maintains that the club was “unusually homosocial, even considering the conventions of the day”.⁷⁹

In this interpretation, Andrew Baxter is figured as a tutor who conceals pederastic desire toward his students, as the vocation “offered a guarantee of a secure living and could even become a perpetual sinecure for the fortunate; it was especially attractive to homosexual tutors who naturally found work with young men ideally suited to their temperaments”.⁸⁰ Somewhat problematically, Rousseau suggests that by the 1740s Holland was equated with libertine toleration and acceptance, even though he admits that some two hundred sodomites were executed there during a purge in 1730-1732.⁸¹ The discussion of Baxter moves on to a speculative examination of his pederastic love for the young student, John Wilkes, which Rousseau imaginatively reconstructs from readings of their correspondence. In response to this, Arthur H. Cash argues that while Baxter’s correspondence with Wilkes may reveal Baxter’s “homosexual attraction” for Wilkes, the conclusion that Rousseau arrives at from his reading of the Baxter-Wilkes relationship — one which suggests Wilkes’s bisexuality and imagines the presence of a wider homosocial/homosexual international network of students — is insupportable.⁸² In fact, Cash attempts to show, with immense empirical exactness, that a great deal of Rousseau’s analysis of the extant Baxter-Wilkes correspondence is unfounded. Revisiting the passages, quoted (and sometimes allegedly misquoted) by Rousseau, Cash re-opens the interpretive possibilities for what Rousseau forecloses as the Baxter-Wilkes “love letter”.⁸³

Wilkes’s correspondence with the Baron d’Holbach, provides another archive of friendship, which is examined by Rousseau, who concludes that:

⁷⁸ Rousseau, p. 113.

⁷⁹ Rousseau, p. 113.

⁸⁰ Rousseau, p. 114.

⁸¹ Rousseau, p. 115.

⁸² Arthur H. Cash, “Wilkes, Baxter, And D’Holbach At Leiden and Utrecht: An Answer To G. S. Rousseau”, *The Age of Johnson* Volume 7 (1996), p. 404.

⁸³ Cash, “Wilkes”, p. 406.

The club was indeed homosocial and bisexual: Baxter was in love with Wilkes; Akenside and Dyson were possibly engaged in a physical relation; d'Holbach's pinings – 'those sincere Kisses' – would seem to represent more than fleshless Platonic memories. Still, it cannot be proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the members were fundamentally homosexual, with the exception of Akenside and Dyson.⁸⁴

While Cash critiques Rousseau's homoerotic framing of the Baxter-Wilkes-d'Holbach triumvirate on grounds of his textual analysis, Robin Dix, also claiming Rousseau's archival research to be weak, questions the veracity of his concluding assertion that Akenside and Dyson were fundamentally homosexual.⁸⁵ Both Cash and Dix conclude their articles with rather laboured statements, with Cash accusing Rousseau of configuring "homosexuality as deleterious, even dangerous" and of suggesting that:

Homosexual men must be libertines; when separated from the person they truly love, they will have affairs with their intimate companions; they will threaten the morals of their students. He [Rousseau] seems to have no notion that there are homosexual men who lead quiet, moral lives, homosexual friends that do not make passes at every man in their circle, responsible homosexual teachers who are protective of boys in their charge. In short, the article is biased by its author's homophobia.⁸⁶

While both Cash and Dix, in their assessment of Rousseau's analysis of mid-century homosociality, rightly place emphasis on the need for scholars to conduct rigorous and balanced empirical readings, Cash's accusatorial reading of Rousseau's Gay-studies based analysis as "homophobic" betrays a key theoretical blind-spot, one afflicting all three articles in varying degrees. If, as Cash claims, Rousseau seems to have no comprehension of 'homosexual men who lead quiet, moral lives' or, at any rate, like Cash does not seem to be able to find evidence of such men in his exegesis of the correspondence records of eighteenth-century clubs, then this is hardly due to the author's predisposed 'homophobia', and more to do with the fact that the sort of homonormativity that Cash wishes Rousseau to comfortably retrieve is in fact a post-1970s construction within Western society, having its origin in the post-Stonewall Gay and Lesbian Rights movement. Indeed, Cash's accusation of Rousseau's analysis as

⁸⁴ Rousseau, p. 130.

⁸⁵ Dix takes issue with Rousseau's claim that Akenside and Dyson lived together while in Holland. In assessing Rousseau's source for Akenside and Dyson's cohabitation, he finds that the documents referred to "offer no supporting evidence for what is claimed". Having claimed to have identified poor empirical research in Rousseau's analysis, Dix calls for interpretations that are based on "painstaking research, the findings from which are, as far as possible, described without bias or the omission of inconvenient complexities, we can discuss or challenge the probability of their conclusions in the spirit of a shared pursuit of truth". See Robin Dix, "The Pleasures of Speculation: Scholarly methodology in eighteenth-century literary studies", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 23 No. 1 (Spring, 2000), p. 96; p. 100.

⁸⁶ Cash, "Wilkes", p. 422.

‘homophobic’ is, perhaps, best described as an instance of his own homonormative homophobia.

As is the case with all textual analysis, Cash’s reading is conditioned by a societal vision, one that cannot view homosexuality as exceeding, or indeed, preceding a conservative 1960s gay homophile identity. Whatever Rousseau’s analysis may amount to, it is hardly surprising that it falls short of Cash’s expectations. Both Cash and Dix read Rousseau within the homophobic protocols of dominant historicism, or what Menon describes as “heterotemporality”, which, in its embrace of the sign of difference as the past, suggests that the traces and gestures of intimacies that Rousseau finds, are not readably homosexual enough in contemporary terms.⁸⁷ Moreover, an issue with the assumptions in all three papers involves insensitivity to the way in which forms of homosociality and expressions of homosexuality as culturally and temporally specific. While Rousseau acknowledges some sense of the “conventions” of male groupings in his reading, all three authors approach the term ‘homosexual’ as if “sexuality” were a static and historically deracinated construct.

In deploying the category of the homosexual in such a way, all three authors unwillingly and unknowingly risk “reinforcing a dangerous consensus of knowingness about the genuinely *unknown*, more than vestigially contradictory structurings of contemporary experience”.⁸⁸ While it would be unfair to criticise Cash and Dix for not taking account of queer historiographical issues and debates of which they were most likely unaware, it is, however, important to note that both authors address Rousseau’s article from the viewpoint of a dominant historicism that treats homosexuality as either static and unchanging, or simply non-existent. Of particular interest here is the way in which homosociality is presented in ahistorical terms in all three articles. This section’s analysis of early Wilkite literature examines homosociality not as a static or deracinated construct, but as a changing relational and affective structure. As Sedgwick has shown, the entire organisation of male homosocial relations is, and continues to be, subject to historical change:

Thus, at least since the eighteenth century in England and America, the continuum of male homosocial bonds has been brutally structured by a secularized and psychologized homophobia, which has excluded certain shiftingly and more or less arbitrarily defined segments of the continuum from participating in the overarching male entitlement---in the complex web of male power over the production, reproduction, and exchange of goods,

⁸⁷ See Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, p. 45.

persons, and meanings. I [Sedgwick] argue that the historically shifting, and precisely the arbitrary and self-contradictory, nature of the way *homosexuality* (along with its predecessor terms) has been defined in relation to the rest of the male homosocial spectrum has been an exceedingly potent and embattled locus of power over the entire range of male bonds, and perhaps especially over those that define themselves, not *as* homosexual, but *as against* the homosexual.⁸⁹

Rather than simply characterise Wilkes's conflation of sociability and political endeavour as homosocial, or as being premised on affective elements of the homosocial, I argue that the paranoid masculinism of Wilkite politicking not only exemplified, but also constituted a shift in the configuration of structures of male homosociality at a crucial juncture in the conjoined ideologies of empire building and nation formation in mid-eighteenth-century England. In reading the literature of the Wilkite controversies, this thesis charts the historical enactment of a form of homosociality and, moreover, analyses how this enactment was conditioned by coeval developments, such as British colonialism and its expanding capitalist markets.

Treating Wilkes's brand of homosociality in the sense in that Sedgwick recommends, not as a static affective relational pattern, but rather as exemplifying and enacting a shift in the homosocial continuum that is itself contingent and changing, necessitates a rethinking of much of the historical analysis on the Wilkite 1760s. A common theme in this work has been to read Wilkes's 'libertinism', however ill defined, as amounting to a political posture. A key, and highly political, development in the long eighteenth century involved the emerging discreteness of men's public and private characters.⁹⁰ While evidence of libertine behaviour was routinely used to discredit Wilkes, most explicitly in his House of Lords prosecution as author of *An Essay on Woman* (although it occurred with equal frequency in the later electoral disputes), Wilkes maintained throughout this legal prosecution that male heterosexual expression, whether designated libertine or not, was to be freely enjoyed within the confines of an intensely private domain. While not everything to do with Wilkes is political, almost everything in Wilkes's controversies in the 1760s involves the chafing intersection of the public and the private. Central to Wilkite literature is a debate that gave rise to the modern form of heteronormativity, namely the argument about what is and is not political: where does individual male autonomy begin and end?

⁸⁹ Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, p. 185.

⁹⁰ Dabhoiwala, p. 109.

In his defence of the privacy of the heteroerotic throughout *The North Briton* and *An Essay on Woman* controversies, Wilkes both exemplified and participated in what Dabhoiwala has cogently identified as the first Western sexual revolution. This revolution witnessed the social boundaries of male sexual license increase in inverse proportion to the restriction of female chastity. In this light, men were viewed as naturally and forgivably more rapacious than their supposedly inherently virtuous and asexual female counterparts.⁹¹ In his survey of the shift toward a modern sexual and gender regime between 1600-1800, Dabhoiwala places a considerable importance on the middle decades of the eighteenth century:

By the middle of the eighteenth century there had become firmly established a new balance of presumptions about sex, seduction, and the natural, inevitable unchastity of men. This set of ideas was shared by men and women of widely differing backgrounds. It was especially flaunted by advocates of sexual freedom. Everywhere one looks, especially in the private writings and conversations of the period, there can be found the chillingly ruthless, misogynistic celebration of gentlemanly sexual conquest — not merely for sensual enjoyment, but as the exercise of power over one's inferiors.⁹²

Though only mentioned briefly, the literary narrative of Wilkes's political reception and contestation in the early 1760s exemplifies much of the transformative energies that Dabhoiwala positions as shaping eighteenth-century gender and sexual dynamics.⁹³

One of the central arguments advanced by Dabhoiwala in *The Origins of Sex* is that men increasingly benefited from an asymmetrical Enlightenment expansion of sexual freedom. A central ideological strand of this expansion involved the gradual working out of a privileged and routine connection between heteroeroticism and privacy. Dabhoiwala shows how the post-seventeenth-century move toward religious toleration, freedom of conscience, and an individual form of liberty gets refracted back through the prism of middle-class sexual mores, becoming rhetorically redeployed to articulate male sexual liberty in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. He argues that the legacy of the Enlightenment sexual revolution has been to embed a gendered double bind that sees the naturalisation of male sexual appetite, even in its rapacious form, and its corollary in the increasing cultural enforcement of female chastity. Rather than read Wilkes as a domesticated libertine, this thesis considers the Wilkite cult of masculinity

⁹¹ Dabhoiwala, p. 143.

⁹² Dabhoiwala, p. 178.

⁹³ In discussing discourses of sexual freedom in the long eighteenth-century, Dabhoiwala references the following lines from Wilkes's *Essay*: "life can little more supply / than just a few good fucks, and then we die". See Dabhoiwala, p. 117.

in terms of this double bind. Instead of viewing Wilkes as identifying with a Restoration libertinism, long outmoded, I argue that the Wilkite movement not only channelled and celebrated the new Enlightenment freedoms given to male heterosexuality, but contributed to this revolution by modelling male heterosexuality as denoting the very mark of political legitimacy.

(I.iii) Methodology

This thesis examines the discursive centrality of xeno-effeminophobia within poetic, political, civic, and aesthetic writings of the Seven Years' War and its aftermath, 1756-1772. Primarily, it is concerned with assessing how anxieties concerning effeminacy surfaced as a discourse of crisis within a diverse set of debates about authorial independence, national identity, the right to free elections, and the experience of the sublime. I demonstrate how these debates shaped emergent formulations of masculinity and heteronormativity at mid-century. The methodological approach undertaken in this project can be divided into three areas: primary textual analysis, theoretical frameworks, and historical research. The poetic and prose texts discussed in the first three chapters can be grouped under the genre of political satire. In the final chapter, I consider how aesthetic writing influences later political theorisations of party doctrine. I have designated the primary body of texts under analysis as 'Wilkite literature', which in the main refers to the anti-ministerial journalism and poetry of John Wilkes and Charles Churchill (1731-1764). While the following chapters are divided into textual discussions of poetry, political pamphlets and writing on aesthetics, overall my reading avoids stringently asserting the coherence of genre.

The theoretical and analytical investigations conducted throughout this project are Queer and Feminist. My reading of effeminacy in the Wilkite literature of the mid-eighteenth-century is indebted to a New Historicist and Cultural Materialist agenda. In my reading, I respond to the cultural materialist impetus to "read the canon against the grain ... to deepen and widen the faultlines in its legitimation of the status quo", by demonstrating how the legitimation of the eighteenth-century white, male, and bourgeois heterosexual was affirmed, not through a dominant canonical set of texts, but from the margins of oppositional and ephemeral satire.⁹⁴ A significant challenge of this thesis involved balancing theoretical reading with traditionally defined literary and historical approaches. In their introduction to *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature* (1987), Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown call attention to "the resistance to contemporary theory that has largely characterized the study of eighteenth-

⁹⁴ Kiernan Ryan, "Introduction", in *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: A Reader*, Kiernan Ryan, ed. (London: Arnold, 1996), p. xv.

century English literature”.⁹⁵ They argue that the dominant tendency in eighteenth-century studies is to reject the influence of theoretically informed readings of the literature of the period; with some eighteenth-century scholars manipulating the very term “theory” in an effort “to marshal an omnibus defense of eighteenth-century literary studies, traditionally defined”.⁹⁶ Indeed, Nussbaum and Brown are writing on the cusp of the proliferation of literary theories in the early 1990s. However, their unease over the casual dismissal of theoretical interventions in the discipline is relevant in the context of eighteenth-century studies today. As Chris Mounsey notes, the trend in recent years has witnessed “a growing dissatisfaction with theoretical analysis, and interest has shifted from theory to the subject matter itself”.⁹⁷ This broad shift from theory to subject matter arises at a time when the new field of digital humanities is reshaping the way we access and analyse texts.

Crucially, the critical turn from theory to text risks exciting the triumphalism of the old antagonism toward theory in eighteenth-century-studies. While appreciating the need for rigorous archival scholarship, this archival return could easily be deployed as legitimation for the dismissal of all theoretically motivated eighteenth-century research questions. Thus, an ambition of this research centred on striking a balance between a queer theoretical approach and the richness and, indeed, pleasure of the archive. In reading eighteenth-century xeno-effeminophobic texts through a queer-feminist lens, I advance a theoretical reading which unfolds from within the literary analysis, as opposed to being imposed upon the subject matter. In utilising queer theory to read eighteenth-century literature, I also simultaneously deploy the archive to historicise theory. Notably, this thesis has been researched and written during what might be classed as the liminal space between two forms of queer theory: the queer theory of the past, and the post-queer that is yet to emerge. In exploring the historicity of desire by returning queer studies to the fold of history and theory together, this thesis offers a counter to the emerging ‘new unhistoricism’ in queer early modern and eighteenth-century studies.

The first chapter considers how the conflation of xenophobia and effeminophobia operates as a rhetorical device in Charles Churchill’s poetry. Reading

⁹⁵ Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown, “Revising Critical Practices: An Introductory Essay”, in Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (Ed.) *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 1.

⁹⁶ Nussbaum and Brown, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Chris Mounsey, “Gender, Sexuality and Ethnicity”, in *The Eighteenth-Century Literature Handbook*, Gary Day and Bridget Keegan, eds. (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 169.

Churchill's anti-Ossian poetry, I argue that the portrayal of the Highlander as heterosexually effeminate in *The Prophecy of Famine: A Scot's Pastoral* (1763) enables the articulation of patriotism as heteroerotic balance. Through this xeno-effeminophobic representation, the Celtic periphery is mapped out as a backward and unproductive fringe that is crucially non-valuable in the context of a mid-century British imperial ideology. More broadly, I argue that Churchill's satiric poetry and prose attacked his political opponents in a manner that sought reconsideration, not only of contemporary political structures, but also of patronage as a mode of literary production. In both his poetry and his personal life, Churchill defends heterosexual pleasure as the only positive and patriotic value within a thoroughly corrupt society.

The second chapter focuses on the sexual and political controversies that mark the early career of John Wilkes. Whereas modern historical readings tend to view Wilkes as a libertine politician for whom sexuality was conflated with his politics, this thesis demonstrates that for Wilkes, heterosexuality — as a gendered structuring of desire — was to be defended from the intrusion of the political. Attention to the *Essay on Woman* scandal reveals how heteroeroticism is oriented, in Wilkite politics, around pleasure as opposed to procreation; a positioning which pro-ministerial writers such as Tobias Smollett attempted to critique in *The Briton* (1762-1763) by drawing on prevalent anxieties regarding depopulation and luxury.

Chapter Three places the anti-ministerial essay sheet *The North Briton* (1762-1763) in dialogue with the pro-ministerial *The Auditor* (1762-1763), written by Arthur Murphy (1727-1805). While Wilkes's *The North Briton* defended popular political participation and the freedom of the press under the banner of English liberty, Murphy's tenacious denigration of 'opinion' is interesting and important for its marked opposition to the expansion of print culture and the public sphere. Taking one key narrative of Wilkite opposition, namely the resistance to the excise on cider, the first part of this chapter shows how the defence of a gentleman's property engenders debates about the nature of privacy and publicity that unfolds into the fraught discourse on effeminacy present in the 1760s. The second part of this chapter considers the successes and failures of two political essay-sheets, *The Test* and *The Auditor*, which were written by Arthur Murphy during the opening and closing stages of the Seven Years' War.

The final chapter reads the early political career of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) in the context of the fractious debates engendered by Wilkes's attempts to re-enter political life in the late 1760s. Beginning with an analysis of Burke's *A Philosophical*

Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757), this chapter argues for the Burkean sublime as an aesthetic response to effeminophobic and xenophobic anxieties within the broad set of British imperialist discourses in the late 1750s. Finally, analysing the dissonance between Wilkes's and Burke's conception of political representation evinces the way Burke's theorising of political arrangement carries forward from his earlier aesthetic writing an important understanding of "excess" or power, which provided a much needed gloss on the effeminophobic extremism of the Wilkite debate.

CHAPTER I

Verse Satire

Fribbles, Ghosts & Patriots

(1.1) Preface

He started up a Fop, and, fond of show,
Look'd like another HERCULES, turn'd *Beau*.
(Charles Churchill, *Independence*, 173-174)

Characterising his authorial self as a foppish Hercules counts as just one instance of Charles Churchill's queer re-appropriation of the effeminophobic criticism that was levelled at his creative and financial independence. An ambient xenophobia, along with a steady effeminophobia, exercised shaping influences on Churchill more, perhaps, than on any other eighteenth-century satirist. Churchill was born in 1731 in Vine Street, Westminster, where his father, Charles Churchill, was curate and lecturer at St. John the Evangelist church.¹ In 1741, he enrolled at the prestigious Westminster school, being designated Captain of King's Scholars in 1745. In 1748, he briefly enrolled at St. John's College, Cambridge, though after a clandestine marriage to Martha Scott in 1749, his father convinced him to move to Sunderland and prepare for the priesthood. Churchill's time at Westminster would have a lasting effect on his poetics. Notably, much of his work rejected those forms and conventions that he was required to produce as a schoolboy.

Aaron Santesso, in reviewing a roll call of poets from Dryden to Cowper who were educated at Westminster, notes how the exacting and rigorous pressures of the school environment generated mischievous schoolboy poets, whose prankish *ex-tempore* style was cultivated by the institution as part of its dual image as a place for regulated education and playful wit.² Santesso argues that the Westminster poets' formal playfulness was sanctioned and far less anti-authoritarian than it might seem.³ Therefore, from his earliest writing, Churchill was aware that even playful poetry was written within systems of patronage and authority. As a non-elite student in a predominantly aristocratic school, Churchill must also have encountered the valuing of privilege over merit. As such, his poetic formal style of heroic-couplet and his anti-authoritarian impulse might be

¹ Rev. Charles Churchill was also vicar of Rainham in Essex. See Raymond J. Smith, *Charles Churchill* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 11.

² Aaron Santesso, "'Playful' Poetry and the Public School", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (Winter, 2008), p. 60.

³ Santesso notes how the minor 'schoolboy' forms of anagrams, acrostics and shaped verse were part of the curriculum of training at Westminster and offered an important route into systems of patronage. See Santesso, p. 63.

read as a continuation of the mischievous Westminster schoolboy poetics; playful and antagonistic in its rejection of the uniformity and apolitical emptiness of set-genres such as the Ode, while firmly anti-aristocratic in its privileging of demonstrated ability over the entitlements of birth.⁴

Churchill was ordained a deacon in 1754, and then a priest in 1756. His clerical career ran parallel with his more worldly and libertine enjoyment of London's social life in the late 1750s. At this time, England was fast recuperating from a series of embarrassing military setbacks during the early part of the Seven Years' War, and the capital was a hub of commercial and cultural activity. In these years before his literary fame, Churchill played with the seemingly opposed identities of rake and cleric, overstepping the mark and showcasing his exploits where others strenuously sought to conceal them. Churchill's abandonment of his clerical position for a supposedly 'libertine' lifestyle provided the basis for much of the satire directed against him. In *The Author* (1763), he justifies the throwing off of his clerical bands as a formative stage in his winning of "independence":

Bred to the Church, and for the gown decreed,
'Ere it was known that I should learn to read;
Tho' that was nothing, for my Friends, who knew
What mighty Dullness of itself could do,
Never design'd me for a working Priest,
But hop'd, I should have been a DEAN at least;
Condemn'd (like many more, and worthier me,
To whom I pledge the service of my pen),
Condemn'd (whilst proud, and pamper'd Sons of Lawn,
Cramm'd to the throat, in lazy plenty yawn)
In pomp of *rev'rend begg'ry* to appear,
To pray, and starve on forty pounds a year;
My Friends, who never felt the galling load,
Lament that I forsook the Packhorse road,
Whilst Virtue to my conduct witness bears
In throwing off that gown, which FRANCIS wears. (341-356)

⁴ Thomas Gray's *Ode on the Spring* (1748), *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* (1747) and *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes* (1748) are examples.

The “galling load” of the clergy is just another form of patronage that inhibits true independence, with the refrain “condemn’d” revealing the Anglican Church to be another nepotistic hierarchy. Much of Churchill’s poetry offers a biographical account of his rise to the economic and creative autonomy conferred on the satirist through his assuming a public role.

In 1760, Churchill narrowly avoided debtors’ prison when the father of his Westminster friend, Robert Lloyd, intervened and cleared his debts.⁵ In 1761 he formally separated from his wife and published *The Rosciad*, an extensive critique of the leading acting personalities of the London stage. As Thomas Lockwood notes, Churchill’s role in the poem was that of the “honest critic”, judging the acting talents of the day by fair trial, and in the process demonstrating how both acting and criticism should be conducted.⁶ The poem cemented Churchill’s literary stardom and for the short three-year period that he prolifically published, he was extremely popular and widely read. In 1762 he began co-editing, with John Wilkes, the anti-ministerial essay-sheet *The North Briton* (1762-1763). In both prose and poetry, Churchill contributed most to the early Wilkite literature that critiqued the Peace administration during the close of the Seven Years’ War. With the publication of *The Ghost*, III, his poetry was shaped by the politics of the Wilkite movement.

Churchill’s poetry has generally been read in relation to this Wilkite body of literature and is often subsumed into it. While clearly marking a contribution to Wilkite satire and politics, Churchill, I argue, also deserves to be read in his own right, as a poet and as a political figure. Admittedly, this is a difficult position to assert as so much of what Churchill wrote goes unaccredited.⁷ While it may very well be the case that Churchill sole-authored nine issues, his poetry and polemical writing, such as *The Wandsworth Epistle*, provided a significant platform for the articulation of what, beginning as anti-ministerial critique, developed into Wilkite politics. His poetry from *The Ghost* to *Independence* attacked Wilkes’s detractors, engaging themes of patriotism and

⁵ Smith, p. 16.

⁶ Thomas Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire: Charles Churchill and Satirical Poetry, 1750-1800* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1979), p. 132.

⁷ Neil Schaeffer has limited Churchill’s sole authorship of *The North Briton* to nine editions (namely numbers 7, 8, 10, 18, 21, 22, 26, 27 and 42). See Neil Schaeffer, “Charles Churchill’s Political Journalism”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Spring, 1976), p. 410.

authorial and political control which served to promote Wilkites as the true bearers and securers of English liberty.

Yet the Wilkite articulation of masculinity, laden with the jingoistic sentiment that we encounter in Churchill's poetry, is particularly focused on expressing the autonomy of the male self. Without arguing that Churchill should not be read in relation to Wilkes, I nevertheless wish to acknowledge the differences between Wilkes, a political figure on his way to political preferment, and Churchill, a clergyman turned man-about-town poet who rejected all forms of patronage and who remained deeply suspicious of the asymmetrical power arrangements arising from such relations. Churchill's involvement with Wilkes has contributed to the lack of critical attention paid to his work. Moreover, his untimely death in 1764 while visiting Wilkes in exile shortened what would surely have been a prolific career in the 1760s and beyond. Coming at an awkward junction on the literary road between the Neo-Classical and Romantic luminaries of Pope and Byron, Churchill has been critically neglected in literary scholarship and is generally viewed as being too much of his time, producing work that is too topical to warrant the attention reserved for a somehow more universal and transcendent Pope or Byron. As recorded by James Boswell, Samuel Johnson famously proclaimed that Churchill's poetry "had a temporary currency, only from its audacity of abuse, and being filled with living names ... it [will] sink into oblivion".⁸ While Churchill's short three-year career is clearly overshadowed by Pope's longevity, reasons of topicality or career brevity do not fully account for the sheer neglect of an immensely popular poet who, in Byron's pithy phrase, "Blazed / The comet for a season".⁹

Adam Rounce argues that Churchill was "stylistically a man out of his time", writing rough verse that did not conform to mid-century artistic tastes.¹⁰ Paradoxically, his poetry engaged closely with the politics of the day, but did so

⁸ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson Vol. I*, Roger Ingpen, ed. (Bath: Bayntun, 1925), p. 255.

⁹ Adam Rounce notes that, like Oliver Goldsmith's criticism of "Edmund Burke in *Retaliation* 'Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind, / And to party gave up what was meant for mankind'. Churchill is repeatedly described as being artistically ruined by his friendship with John Wilkes and the resultant political themes and biases of his poetry". Part of the work of this thesis will be to show how both Churchill and Burke each work out their approach to party and politics within an intensely effeminophobic register. See Adam Rounce, "Charles Churchill's anti-enlightenment", *History of European Ideas* 31 (2005), p. 230; p. 227.

¹⁰ Rounce, "Churchill", p. 228.

in a poetic form that lagged behind. Addressing this paradox, Rounce reads Churchill as an “anti-Enlightenment” figure whose poems attest to the “consistent mockery he applied to all forms of progress”.¹¹ Building on this point, Rounce sees Churchill’s historical neglect as stemming from his incommensurability with a retrospective Enlightenment view of eighteenth-century poetry as tied to, and productive of, the very ideas that Churchill wished to challenge. However, Churchill’s non-canonical status, as Rounce sees it, ironically resonates with those exclusionary impulses at the core of his own poetic projects. While in agreement about Churchill’s consistent mockery of hierarchy and tradition, I hesitate to position him as a poet persistently resistant to progressiveness and linear time. Moreover, discussing *The Conference* (1764), Rounce notes how Churchill’s belief in the underlining selfishness of all human actions best illustrates his anti-Enlightenment animus.¹² In this way, Churchill’s preoccupation with “SELF” provides his most significant anti-Enlightenment critique. Although Churchill’s poetry is not selfless, Rounce’s argument wears thin against a closer reading of *The Conference*. Admittedly, even the most cursory reader of Churchill’s poetry would assess it as self-involved, self-conceited and self-absorbed. Yet, Churchill was vocal about his self-preoccupied writing, that “darling, luscious theme”, and was even bored by it, announcing in *The Candidate* (1764): “Enough of Self” (117). If self is “ALL in ALL”, as Rounce sees it, we must also recognise that Churchill, in perhaps a truly anti-Enlightenment turn, rejects or undermines the socially normative terms of his self-construction.

More significant is Rounce’s proposition that such selfishness provides the “Hobbesian” basis for Churchill’s persistent anti-Enlightenment vision.¹³ Considerations of the overwhelming theme of the self should acknowledge how Churchill’s formulation of selfhood is premised on sociable expansion rather than solipsistic anti-social contraction. For Churchill, selfhood is independent only within the context of broader affective and relational patriotic ties. The individual in *Independence* (1764), as we will see, is not isolated but in fact gains

¹¹ Rounce, “Churchill”, p. 229.

¹² Rounce suggests that the line “The ruling Tyrant, SELF is ALL and ALL.” undercuts the Popean harmonious conflation of self-love and social love in *An Essay on Man*. See Rounce, “Churchill” p. 229.

¹³ Rounce, “Churchill”, p. 230.

definition and purpose through a shared, albeit deeply xeno-effeminophobic imagining of community. To this end, *The Farewell* (1764) distinguishes the poet's own authentic patriotic feeling from the selfish "abuse of pow'r" perpetrated by Robert Clive and the East India Company under the banner of patriotic duty (480). In calling for the removal of charters that granted the Company its monopoly of power in India, *The Farewell* also refutes attempts at undermining the poet's patriotic discourse by rendering it selfish. Considered in this way, we can see that Churchill forcefully rejects the selfishness that Rounce presents as being central to in his work:

Is Patriotism 'wild untemper'd zeal' a vice or virtue?
Which draws us off from, and dissolves the force
Of private ties, nay, stops us in our course
To that grand object of the human soul,
That nobler Love which comprehends the whole. (247-250)

A zealous patriot can never be self-centred, as his fervent patriotism dissolves the very subjective autonomy that truly selfish motivation both requires and sustains. Churchill's social vision is proto-Burkean in its focus on the local, or what Burke would later term "the subdivision ... the little platoon" which "is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections".¹⁴ While the "grand love of the world" is a "barren speculation at best", Churchill maintains, "The Love we bear our Country, is a root" (269-270; 275). Self-love or selfishness is the first step in a Trueborn Englishman's patriotic career:

That spring of Love, which in human mind,
Founded on self, flows narrow and confin'd,
Enlarges as it rolls, and comprehends
The social Charities of blood, and friends,
Till smaller streams included, not o'erpast,
It rises to our Country's love at last,
And He, with lib'ral and enlarged mind,
Who loves his Country, cannot hate mankind. (293-300)

¹⁴ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the proceedings in certain societies in London relative to that event. In a letter intended to have been sent to a gentleman in Paris* (London: printed for J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, M.DCC.XC., 1790), p. 68.

While acknowledging that “mankind” should be taken to signify Southern Briton or English, the “mankind” conjured in Churchill’s patriotic verse reinforces Alexander Pope’s notion that self-love and the social are one and the same. Undoubtedly, the positions that Churchill adopts cannot be broadly characterised as consistent, and suffer from the contradictions which inevitably surface when writing for political expediency. Yet Rounce’s claim that anti-Enlightenment tendencies provide the “rationale behind all of his works” neglects and, indeed, obscures an acknowledgement of the very selflessness of the poet’s envisioning of patriotism.

Rounce’s idea that Churchill’s anti-Enlightenment antagonism is the dominant reason for critical neglect is provocative, but largely based on the misinterpretation of *The Conference*, a poem that deploys the trope of a dialogue between a Bard (usually Churchill) and a Lord. In *The Conference*, it is the “stupid” Lord who attacks the Bard’s rejection of patronage and independence by cynically pointing to the inherent selfishness of all human action (8). Importantly, this dismissal comes after the Bard’s proud narration of his own hard won “independence”:

Since, by good fortune into notice rais’d,
And for some little merit largely prais’d,
Indulg’d in swerving from Prudential rules,
Hated by Rogues, and not belov’d by Fools,
Plac’d above want, shall abject thirst of wealth
So fiercely war ’gainst my Soul’s dearest health,
That, as a boon, I should base shackles crave,
And, born to Freedom, make myself a slave;
That I should in the train of those appear,
Whom Honour cannot love, nor Manhood fear?

That I no longer skulk from street to street,
Afraid lest Duns assail, and Bailiffs meet;
That I from place to place this carcass bear,
Walk forth at large, and wander free as air;
That I no longer dread the awkward friend,
Whose very obligations must offend,
Nor, all too froward, with impatience burn
At suff’ring favours which I can’t return;
That, from dependance and from pride secure,
I am not plac’d so high to scorn the poor,
Nor yet so low, that I my Lord should fear,
Or hesitate to give him sneer for sneer;
That, whilst sage Prudence my pursuits confirms,
I can enjoy the world on equal terms;
That, kind to others, to myself most true,
Feeling no want, I comfort those who do,

And with the will have pow'r to aid distress;
These, and what other blessings I possess,
From the indulgence of the PUBLIC rise;
All that I have, They gave; Just Mem'ry bears
The grateful stamp, and what I am is theirs. (*The Conference*, 119-152)

An urban public of readers and admirers have provided the poet with the freedom to enjoy an economic, artistic, and heavily masculinised independence that is wholly incompatible with traditional patronage. In this context, the Lord's proclamation of the "Self" being "All in all" is revealed as merely empty rhetoric. Rounce's focus on the isolation of the self as an anti-Enlightenment position obscures Churchill's figuring of patriotic belonging as selfless: "Be as One Man — CONCORD success ensures —" (*Independence*, 593). The theme of independence, so central to Churchill's politics, emerges from the Enlightenment ideals of liberty and equality among men. In his reading, Rounce overlooks the community as a patriotic and, indeed, literary space of intellectual exchange in the poet's work. He sees Churchill as being critical of linear time and progress; his reading must be confronted by the fact that the Whig fetish for historical linearity provided Churchill with an effective standpoint from which to critique the authenticity of literary productions such as James MacPherson's *Fragments* (1760). If, as Rounce suggests, Churchill mocked rational discourse, we might say that his privileged mode of apprehension, while firmly remaining rational, was experienced through the body instead of being filtered through the mind.

Commentators on Churchill have consistently noted how the body, in particular the poet's own mass, literally and figuratively weighs in on the poems. Raymond J. Smith notes how "Churchill's energy was in direct proportion to his size", while Conrad Brunström views "Churchill's proud physicality [as] part of a rhetorical moment that celebrates blunt Englishness".¹⁵ Churchill's ursine bodily characteristics were a source of pride, and moreover, a confirmation of his own embodied substantiality. As a result of his vituperative mocking of the artist in *An Epistle to William Hogarth* (1763), Hogarth would be prompted into caricaturing the ursine Churchill as a bear in tattered clerical dress in "The

¹⁵ Smith, p. 14; Conrad Brunström, "Be Male And Female Still': An ABC of Hyperbolic Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century", in *Presenting Gender: Changing Sex in Early Modern Culture*, Chris Mounsey, ed. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), p. 44.

Bruiser, C. Churchill (once Reverend!) in the character of a Russian Hercules”, published 1st August 1763.¹⁶ Churchill merely responded in his poem *Independence* by announcing the aged (though at that time still very much alive) Hogarth’s death and recuperating the image of tattered clerical bands with pride (177-178; 167-168). Whereas Rounce sees Churchill’s pronouncement of the self as “ALL in ALL” in squarely isolationist terms, I read the poet’s more general preoccupation with the self as characteristic of his haptic mode of writing.

Haptic, in this context, signifies a corporally grounded form of writing that takes account of the body as material limit, and which conflates the *jouissance* of physiological and intellectual exertions. Haptic writing leads to an intensely erotic and eroticising view of textuality, both poetical and political, with artistic creativity and libidinous energy registering as interchangeable forms of authorial experience. Literary critics have long noted this eroticism in Churchill’s work. Morris Golden has importantly identified “an unusual and recurrent emphasis on the contrast between greatness and mediocrity” throughout Churchill’s poetry.¹⁷ Moreover, Golden notes how the emphasis on greatness involves Churchill’s own inadvertent and often intentional self-identification with it.¹⁸ Importantly, Golden terms this alignment of imagery, theme and structure with the greatness as the “superiority cluster”.¹⁹ Furthermore, he emphasises that the secondary image or ‘idea cluster’, which actually functions to subvert the first, involves a complex association of ideas of “nothingness, sterility, uselessness, mechanicalism, and ambiguity”.²⁰ Golden suggests that these two ubiquitous sets of distinct imagery, when read together, not only represent but also constitute the personality informing the poems.²¹ As well as identifying the superiority and the inferiority clusters operative throughout Churchill’s poetry, Golden foregrounds the overlap between Churchill’s (hetero) sexual and poetic expression. Specifically, he points out how the poet describes all forms of restraint and regularity as bound up with sterility and evanescence, a

¹⁶ Charles Churchill, *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, Douglas Grant, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 518-19.

¹⁷ Morris Golden, “Sterility and Eminence in the Poetry of Charles Churchill”, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 66 (1967), p. 334.

¹⁸ Golden, p. 334.

¹⁹ Golden, p. 334.

²⁰ Golden, p. 334.

²¹ Golden, p. 334.

recurring condition that is depicted as thoroughly abject.²² In contrast to this, creativity is constructed as signifying the deification of one's impulses, an attitude Golden views as being aggressively connected to heterosexual intercourse.²³ Brunström notes the sexual import of Golden's formalist analysis, stating that "Impulsiveness is the stuff of freedom and *heterosexual* sex is the paradigmatic happy impulse".²⁴

This erotic patterning of rhetoric is evident both formally and, of course, more obviously in light of the sexual content of the poems. In formal terms, Churchill presents a normative gendered binary, albeit one that is always precariously troubled. Aside from metrical and sound effects, his versification seeks to create a conceptual and syntactical balance within the line or couplet — with thought and syntax inextricably linked.²⁵ Usually, the balanced line consists of two adjective-noun phrases separated by a conjunction or preposition; four-stress, with the middle (third) accent suppressed, creating balance on both sides.²⁶ As Wallace Cable Brown notes, variations of this line can and do appear, with the stressed word or phrase frequently assuming the place of the suppressed accent, separating the balanced adjective-noun combinations.²⁷ Often the balance involves a contrast in thought, with syntactic parallels offering diametrically opposed meanings.²⁸ When the balance is achieved between two unequal parts, the word or phrase that makes these parts unequal is emphasised, and the reader naturally displaces this imbalance as external to the balanced line system.²⁹

The formal technique of Churchill's line, with its balanced regularities and unequal irregularities, reproduces syntactically and conceptually the sort of biological incommensurability which Thomas Laqueur charts as central to discursive gender formation in the eighteenth-century. Yet, ironically, while constituting a process of normative gendering, there is also something decidedly queer about Churchill's formal poetic deviations: his rejection of the "tyranny"

²² Golden, p. 345.

²³ Golden, p. 345.

²⁴ Brunström, "Be Male And Female Still", p. 44.

²⁵ Wallace Cable Brown, "Charles Churchill: A Revaluation", *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (July, 1943), p. 418.

²⁶ W. C. Brown, "Charles Churchill: A Revaluation", p. 418.

²⁷ W. C. Brown, "Charles Churchill: A Revaluation", pp. 418-419.

²⁸ W. C. Brown, "Charles Churchill: A Revaluation", p. 419.

²⁹ W. C. Brown, "Charles Churchill: A Revaluation", p. 420.

of end-stopped lines and his anxiety over the closed couplet.³⁰ Queer, in this instance, signifies an impulse toward imbalance within the formal discipline of the line. While the economy of the line remains balanced or normatively gendered, his couplets, particularly his octosyllabic couplets, appear so unconstrained that they can read almost like blank verse.³¹ While the lines are balanced, this loose couplet form, verging on free verse, threatens to submerge the gendered unit in a broader formlessness.

Acknowledging this, I argue that Churchill's poetic discipline advances a class and gender politics through its adoption of two formal and thematic aims: a disruption of perceived hierarchies and concomitant stabilising of incommensurability between opposing ends. A thematic example of such gendered construction emerges with Churchill's self-portraiture in *Independence* as the Bard who, unlike the Lord, "Nature built on quite a different plan" (148). The portrait equates authentic male embodiment with political power, citing the effeminate aristocratic body as the carrier of a "residual pederasty".³² The bard is articulated as the source of an authentic masculinity and an exclusive English patriotism, with both authentic male embodiment and patriotic feeling being registered as synonymous. Yet, just as the balance of the gendered line is often threatened by an overwhelming formlessness, Churchill's self-portrait as an independent bard is similarly troubled by his simultaneous depiction of "This melting mass of flesh She may controul / With iron ribs, She cannot chain my Soul. / No — to the last resolv'd her worst to bear, / I'm still at large, and *Independent* there" (531-34). The attack on traditional hierarchies and the incommensurability of the Bard and the Lord demarcates a difference that is later figuratively melted. While there is an essence, a "soul" beyond such dissolve, the focus here is on the "melting mass", the infirmity of, following biographical reading, Churchill's own degenerating syphilitic body. Creativity and pleasure, both literary and sexual, are conflated in Churchill's poetry, whereas thematically and formally balance is always precarious, while content and its expression is never straightforward.

³⁰ Joseph M. Beatty, Jr., "Charles Churchill's Treatment of the Couplet", *PMLA*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (1919), p. 63.

³¹ Beatty, p. 69.

³² Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1660-1750 Volume 2: Queer Articulations* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. xi.

A reader's expectation of satiric form underwent significant change in the "interregnum" period between Pope's death and Churchill's emergence. Marking this change, Vincent Carretta argues that a high level of personalised abuse had by the 1760s become much more acceptable and to some degree expected in poetry and prose satire.³³ Carretta's view of Churchill as being more abusive than Pope requires some careful consideration. As difficult a task as registering levels of abuse across periods and authors is in eighteenth-century satire, we might say that anything Churchill wrote was just as (but not more) abusive than anything Pope published. While Pope may well be the more abusive writer, what makes Churchill different is the way in which his satire speaks directly to its target, making much less of an effort to disguise the target in question, and, unlike Pope, demonstrating considerably less interest in the architecture of the mock-heroic. Put simply, Pope's employment of allusive architecture to nominally disguise his targets does not make his abuse any less harsh than Churchill's more direct invective. Whether reading *The Dunciad* or *The Rosciad*, those mocked in both poems identified the passages that slighted them. What is important, however, is Churchill's rejection of the concealment afforded by mock-heroic form that is abandoned with the publishing of names. Rather than hide behind the weight of classical tradition, Churchill's directness speaks to the newfound importance of public opinion. As such, public satire, or what we might call satire written for the public rather than the patron, requires democratic explicitness in order to achieve its didactic aims. The type of polemical writing exemplified by Churchill's verse satire requires immediate recognition and cannot afford the more allusive, scholarly form of recognition common in privileged elite discourse.

Notably, the 1760s also witnessed a revival of the earlier Walpolean scatological visual satire of the 1720s.³⁴ Political satire in the Seven Years' War period frequently featured politicians defecating, an image that often centralised the bawdy visual of the male buttocks being penetrated.³⁵ As a result, perhaps, of this deep imbrication between a personal invective and a more abstract

³³ Vincent Carretta, *The Snarling Muse: Verbal and Visual Political Satire from Pope to Churchill* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1983), p. 229.

³⁴ Carretta notes how earlier pieces such as William Hogarth's *The Punishment Inflicted on Lemuel Gulliver* (1726) got reworked as *The Political Clyster* (1757), a contemporary scatological critiques of the Newcastle administration. See Carretta, *The Snarling Muse*, p. 208.

³⁵ Carretta, *The Snarling Muse*, p. 208.

scatological satire, Churchill's poetry refigures the sodomitical as equivalent to embodied homoerotic desire. Where sodomy as unnatural lust could be taken to mean a whole range of irregular practices such as masturbation or sex out of wedlock, Churchill's *The Times*, as we shall see, critiques sodomitical desire as a way of underscoring the ideological dangers that present when legitimising heterosexuality on the basis of its procreative function. Curiously, while Churchill's brand of personalised satire "licentiously print[s] ... names ... full length", those ridiculed in sodomitical or effeminophobic terms remain nameless.³⁶ Churchill's poetry, and Wilkite satire more generally, deploys sodomitical satire as a potent form of political critique and cultural delegitimation, which, in turn, privileges heteroerotic pleasure as the only positive political standard. Curiously, in satire that is intensely personal, the sodomite and the fribble come to signify a loss of the personal.

As Morris Golden puts it, Churchill's satiric representation of Thady Fitzpatrick as a fribble in *The Rosciad* (1761) describes "a highly elaborate type of nonexistence".³⁷ This chapter traces how Churchill's xeno-effeminophobic satire, while highly personalised, effectively delegitimised individuals and entire populations as 'nameless' along interrelated lines of class, race and sexual desire. The success of effeminophobic and sodomophobic satire has historically hinged on the reader's ability to join the phobic dots between the sodomitical figures, often culturally and historically removed from the contemporary satiric subjects. Writing in the advertisement to *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope outlines how the poem will offer satirical portraits that allude to certain figures without any direct identification. As Pope writes, "a Nameless Character can never be found out, but by its *Truth* and *Likeness*".³⁸ Whatever the precise, or imprecise connections a reader is supposed to make, in using Sporus to figure Lord Hervey in *Arbuthnot*, Pope, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, presupposed "his

³⁶ Arthur Murphy, *The Auditor*, Thursday, October 14, 1762, in *The Political Controversy; or. Weekly magazine of ministerial and anti-ministerial essays; consisting of the Monitor, Briton, North Briton, Auditor, and the Patriot, [and others] entire; (with select pieces from the news papers)... With annotations. anecdotes and remarks*. Vol. II, John Cæsar Wilkes, ed. (London: Printed for S. Williams, 1762), p. 6.

³⁷ Golden, p. 334.

³⁸ Herbert Davis (ed.) *Alexander Pope: Complete Poetical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 328.

audience's knowledge that such a role and culture exist".³⁹ The very namelessness of such satire in both Pope and Churchill curiously allows for an articulation of the homoerotic as a site of non-identification. The sodomitical as nothingness, to use Golden's phrase, conversely provides for Churchill's own poetic self-fashioning.

Both Carolyn D. Williams and Howard D. Weinbrot have argued that the passage on Sporus in *Arbuthnot* recalls and rejects negative characteristics of the classical figure as a means of masculinising Pope's own poetic identity.⁴⁰ Williams, quoting D. H. Griffin, has noted how this attack on Hervey resonates with what were often aggressively effeminophobic literary attacks on the poet.⁴¹ In disparaging Hervey as Sporus,⁴² Pope cultivates a masculinised and heteronormative poetic identity, one that functions to distract both he and his readership from his own effeminate and four foot six inch physique.⁴³ Commentators have noticed how Pope's own sense of masculinity was in various ways compromised: by his deformed body; by his initial financial difficulties; and, more persistently, by his Catholicism. Alan Bray has identified a connection between cultural and political anxieties surrounding sodomy and popery in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, while Kristina Straub argues that Pope's religious beliefs aligned him with "suspect forms of male sexuality not within the pale of dominant heterosexuality".⁴⁴ Pope's poetic identity clearly was self-fashioned to combat the criticisms of his literary detractors and cultural prejudices more generally. Laura J. Rosenthal's reading of Pope's literary clashes with Colly Cibber suggests how the poet's mastery of print, his literary fame, as well as his eventual independent, patronless authorial status, allowed for

³⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 173.

⁴⁰ Carolyn D. Williams, *Pope, Homer, and Manliness: Some Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Classical Learning* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 82; H. D. Weinbrot, *Alexander Pope and the Tradition of Formal Verse Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 261.

⁴¹ Williams, p. 82.

⁴² In *Arbuthnot*, Pope satirises Hervey through his symbolic recruitment of Sporus, Nero's catamite. Importantly the figure of Sporus conjoins Hervey's personal degeneracy with the threat of broader political corruption. The effeminate and sodomitical Sporus symbolises anxieties regarding latent or potential national enervation. As Carolyn D. Williams notes, while the critique of Hervey as Sporus centres on effeminacy, without making any specific reference to Hervey's relationship with Stephen Fox (1704-1776), Pope's decision to shift from presenting Hervey as 'Paris' to Hervey as Sporus in later editions of *Arbuthnot* is indicative of the sort of judgment he wished readers to form. See Williams, pp. 80-81.

⁴³ Williams, p. 61.

⁴⁴ Bray, pp. 19-21; Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, p. 76.

self-constructions of a grandiose male textual persona.⁴⁵ Yet, as Helen Deutsch notes, displacement was not always successful within contemporary criticism where the poet's "indelibly marked body" functioned as his work's "distinguishing mark".⁴⁶ In fact, it is significant that the very genre most associated with Pope, the mock epic, ridicules a classically sublime heroic aesthetic as a way of diffusing the masculine pressures inherent in the idealism of the epic proper.

Citing the frequency of "narrowly personal interests" as subject matter in Pope and Churchill, Edward H. Weatherly has charted the considerable influence of Pope on Churchill.⁴⁷ Comparing Pope's passage of self-portraiture in *Arbuthnot* (334-339) with Churchill's similar self-construction in *Night* (179-194), Weatherly identifies how both poets fashion their poetic identities as being independent, courageous, sincere and manly, identities that are starkly in opposition to the practices and figures of a degenerate courtly society. Weatherly also notes that both Pope and Churchill candidly discuss their "physical deformities": Pope's statement in *Arbuthnot*, "All that disgraced my betters met in me" (120) resonated with Churchill's self-referencing in *The Rosciad* "Whom Nature cast in hideous mould, / Whom, having made, she trembled to behold" (405-6).⁴⁸ While Weatherly is certainly right in noting how each poet negotiates their physicality through poetic meter, it would be a misreading to suggest that Churchill considered his own physical self as deformed or that his ursine like appearance disarmed or threatened his poetic sense of self. A more precise reading of *The Rosciad* might point to how the trembling of a personified Nature figures Churchill as sublime rather than pitifully deformed.

Whereas Pope constructed his poetic identity as a way of distracting himself and his critics from his emasculated physique, the most cursory reading of Churchill's poetry reveals how his own poetic identity was thoroughly bound up with the physical. Churchill draws his sense of bodily masculinity into the orbit of his poetic identity without hesitation. Even when approaching the end of

⁴⁵ Laura J. Rosenthal, "'Trials of Manhood': Cibber, *The Dunciad*, and the Masculine Self", in *More Solid Learning: New Perspectives on Alexander Pope's Dunciad*, Catherine Ingrassia and Claudia N. Thomas, eds. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000), p. 105.

⁴⁶ Deutsch, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Edward H. Weatherly, "Churchill's Literary Indebtedness to Pope", *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Jan., 1946), p. 61.

⁴⁸ Weatherly, "Churchill's Literary Indebtedness to Pope", p. 63.

a fatal process of syphilitic degeneration in *Independence*, Churchill does not take poetic flight from his own body, but instead remains textually faithful to its collapsing form. Contrasting the imbalance of Pope's slight body and weighty masculinised poetic identity, Churchill's poetic energy is in direct proportion to his bodily mass.⁴⁹ Both *The Apology* (1761) and *Night* (1761) offer examples of Churchill's own poetic self-construction. *The Apology* was published as a response to the *Critical Review* XI (March, 1761), which had mistakenly attributed the unsigned *Rosciad* to the "Connoisseurs" George Colman, Bonnell Thornton and Robert Lloyd. Both Lloyd and Colman separately denied authorship of the poem publicly, and the *CR* XI (April, 1761), in a review of the third edition of *The Rosciad* (the second edition of the poem was printed with Churchill's name on the title page), admitted, and apologised for, the mistaken attribution.⁵⁰

In *The Apology*, anonymity registers as a cowardly and unmanly condition. In effectively rejecting the literary closet, Churchill positions himself against a critical establishment, which he views through the political metaphor of a usurping absolutist monarchy: "How could these self-elected monarchs raise / So large an empire on so small a base?" (83-84). The "Puny Elves" of the critical establishment resonate with the demarcation of the fribble in *The Rosciad* (102). Once again, in Churchill's verse, monikers such as "Jacobite" or "fribble" elide into one another, becoming reimagined in terms of a singular threat to political culture: the sodomitical. Again, such an antagonism is expressed both thematically and formally. While smooth and polished Popean verse is described as "tedious" (*Ibid.*, 369), Churchill, aligning himself with Dryden, depicts the contemporary taste for formal perfection as a kind of aesthetic impotence (*Ibid.*, 376-382).⁵¹ Conversely, his rough and nervous lines are to be privileged against the majority of contemporary poets who "mangle vigour for the sake of *sound*" (*Ibid.*, 349). Churchill's poetic manifesto promotes a reinvigoration of an enervated English national form. Poetry, for Churchill, as well as William Cowper and Robert Lloyd, is emasculated by the predominance of a mode of

⁴⁹ Smith, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Churchill, *The Poetical Works*, Grant, ed., p. 457; p. 476.

⁵¹ Churchill also displays a preference for a seventeenth-century English poet Edmund Waller, whom he cites as the "Parent of harmony in English verse", and as the poet who "In couplets first taught straggling sense to close" (*The Apology*, 363; 365).

poetics that labours over epithets, alliteration, and formal perfection at the expense of manly vigour and spontaneity.⁵² Churchill's opposition can be characterised as an antagonism toward the predominance of both political and formal mid-century "quietism".⁵³ The apolitical poetry of Gray, Mason, Gay and the Whartons implicitly endorses a corrupt political regime.⁵⁴

More than an antagonism toward the constraints and regularities of mid-century verse, Churchill's formal opposition is undergirded by an effeminophobic attitude toward an apolitical poetry of concealment, patronised by an aristocratic class that is itself increasingly figured as sodomitical. Such opposition is formally and thematically constructed in *Night*, where the syntactical parallelism of the couplet registers as isomorphic with the content. The poem expresses "personality" within a universalised context of moral, philosophical and social polarities.⁵⁵ The transparency of libertinage is opposed to the hypocrisy (figured as 'Prudence') of the diurnal world, while 'Reason' is set against the instabilities of collective opinion: "Reason, collected in herself, disdains / The slavish yoke of arbitrary chains" (*Night*, 45-6). The psychological importance of the homosocial is established in the poem's opening stanza: "Oft with thee, LLOYD, I steal an hour from grief, / And in thy social converse find relief" (*Ibid*, 3-4).

Bertelsen suggests how the poem captures the "paranoiac isolation" experienced by Churchill and Lloyd during their late night drinking sessions.⁵⁶ More specifically, he suggests that the economic difficulties and artistic frustrations that both men faced during this period are made manifest in Churchill's frequent tonal lapses into "doubtfulness" and insecurity.⁵⁷ The economic prosperity of the daylight world is exposed alongside its moral bankruptcy, yet there is nothing explicit in the poem to suggest that Churchill and Lloyd represent the polar end of this spectrum. As Bertelsen notes, "The sons of Care" are detached from this world of commerce (*Ibid.*, 18).⁵⁸ For

⁵² Lance Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club: Literature and Popular Culture, 1749-1764* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 100-101.

⁵³ Conrad Brunström, *William Cowper: Religion, Satire, Society* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), p. 46.

⁵⁴ Brunström, *William Cowper*, p. 46.

⁵⁵ Smith, p. 36.

⁵⁶ Bertelsen, p. 121.

⁵⁷ Bertelsen, p. 121.

⁵⁸ Bertelsen, p. 123.

Churchill, the subjective weighs in heavier than the objective. Universal or homogenous codes need to be broken down and reassessed within the parameters of a relativistic framework.⁵⁹ Although John Armstrong was also ironically ultra-masculinist, his health regime of keeping “Good hours” is one such universal prescription that is dismissed by Churchill’s alternative masculinist agenda. Armstrong’s refusal of late nights represents a rejection of unconcealed hedonism. Conversely, the performance of frank hedonism is always masculine in Churchill’s moral economy.

Night mocks Armstrong’s caveat in *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744) against the influence of “the night’s unwholesome breath” on the body, that “exhausted and unstrung / Weakly resists” the night’s “mirth and wine”.⁶⁰ Churchill mocks this anxiety by anthropomorphising the “damps and vapours” that “sap the walls of health” as if by stealth (*Ibid.*, 61-62). Armstrong is depicted as one of those physicians who engender an effeminate culture of malaise through their diagnoses of imagined symptoms (*Ibid.*, 71-72). Rather than lament a depressing isolation, *Night* buoyantly defends a libertinage diametrically opposed to “Those Hackney Strumpets, PRUDENCE and the WORLD” (*Ibid.*, 296). Churchill’s own health regime is curiously described in terms that resonate with his earlier imagining of homosociality, in so much as soul and body are metaphorically imaged as brothers, as individual men, pulled together through the cohesion of healthy male conviviality (*Ibid.*, 65-68). A statement of his libertine values suggests how the homosocial protects against the prudence of good hours society:

THUS have we liv’d, and whilst the fates afford
 Plain Plenty to supply the frugal board,
 Whilst MIRTH, with DECENY his lovely bride,
 And Wine’s gay GOD, with TEMP’RANCE by his side,
 Their welcome visit pay; whilst HEALTH attends
 The *narrow circle* of our chosen Friends,
 Whilst frank GOOD-HUMOUR consecrates the treat,
 And — makes society complete, (*Ibid.*, 286-93).

⁵⁹ Bertelsen, p. 128.

⁶⁰ John Armstrong, *The Art of Preserving Health* (Dublin: 1756), III, pp. 421-433.

Marriage unites the abstractions Mirth and Decency, while Wine meets Temp'rance, leaving Health to attend to the "narrow circle" of friends. Intriguingly the use of an ellipsis in the eighth line of this stanza was abandoned after the third edition of the poem, with subsequent editions featuring the word woman instead.⁶¹ As Sedgwick notes, the status of women and the arrangement of genders are deeply and inescapably encoded in the matrices of relationships that outwardly exclude women, such as homosocial or even homosexual relations.⁶² Woman, at a textual and symbolic level, figures elliptically in the homosocial domain, as markedly absent, though necessary as a conduit for, and object of, exchanges between men. As Smith suggests, there is a sense in this passage, as in the 'apology to the fair' at the end of *The Times*, that woman somehow modifies man; just as the abstraction Mirth modifies Decency through marriage.⁶³

It is exactly this heterosocial form of engagement, with "woman" modifying man, that is constantly returned to as the gendered basis of Churchill's politics. Crucially, this transformed heterosocial libertinage finds its antithesis in an existing pederastic economy of male subjection, figured by John Stuart, the Earl of Bute's tutelage of George III.⁶⁴ The final stanzas of *Night* lament William Pitt's resignation from the cabinet, presenting the new minister Bute as the pederastic instructor of the new schoolboy, King George III. In advising prudence, Bute outlines a form of political duplicity that maintains surfaces in order to conceal depth: "Outward be fair, however foul within" (*Ibid.*, 313). Whereas the sexual economy of Churchill's homosociality is figured as heteroerotic, if not necessarily productive, Bute's guidance — "Let PRUDENCE lead thee to a postern door" — gestures at the sterility, both sexual and economic, of the Scottish ministry. Yet, importantly, allegations of Bute's own sexual transgressions were decidedly heterosexual.

⁶¹ Smith, p. 137.

⁶² Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 5.

⁶³ Smith, p. 40.

⁶⁴ Bute had been George III's tutor since the death of his father, Frederick, Prince of Wales, in 1751. Notably, popular sexual anxieties surrounding Bute and the Royal family centered not so much on his attention to George, but instead, focused on the extent of his relationship with the King's mother Augusta, Dowager Princess of Wales. See E. H. Weatherly, "Introduction", *The Correspondence*, p. xi, in E. H. Weatherly, ed.

Bute was rumoured to be in an illicit relationship with the King's mother, the Princess Dowager. The image of the "postern door", while implying sodomitical sex, is actually about the instrumentality of joyless heterosexual sex. The fiction of Bute's functional relationship with the Princess Dowager activated a different kind of effeminophobic discourse. *Night* features as Churchill's first attack on the new ministry. It also illustrates how the poet's celebration of heteroerotic pleasure as a positive standard enfolds a diverse set of critical antagonisms toward aristocracy, systems of literary patronage, economic restrictions, and the brokerage of the Peace of Paris. Churchill's satire is written for a public of commercial middle-class men and women, in stark opposition to the influence of the aristocracy who are divorced from trade. For Churchill, sterility is not opposed to productivity, but to a pleasurable experience that although potentially procreative is instead premised on enjoyment. Churchill's poems mediate the culture of military and political crisis during the Seven Years' War, and in doing so prescribe phobic boundaries for the mid-century English middle-class patriotic community.

(1.2) “Of Neuter Gender, tho’ of Irish Growth” Charles Churchill’s Fribble

Churchill’s satiric portrait of the Irish actor, dramatist and stage manager, Thady Fitzpatrick, in *The Rosciad* (1761) borrows heavily from David Garrick’s effeminophobic lampooning of Fitzpatrick as ‘Fitzgig’ in his verse-satire *The Fribbleriad* (1761). As Laurence Senelick notes, Garrick presents the character of the fribble as being synonymous with effeminacy.⁶⁵ If Fitzpatrick signifies nonexistence, to use Golden’s phrase, then I query how such nonexistence becomes culturally and politically legible only through the perceived distortion of the effeminate body. What the legibility of this effeminacy might have signified in mid eighteenth-century English culture and, more narrowly, what its relationship to Georgian political culture might have been are not easily determined. The fribble’s body is also ethnically marked as Irish, and this section examines what this suggests about the phobic alignment of axes of gender, race and class in Churchill’s poetry.

Fitzpatrick’s portraiture is just one instance in a list of xeno-effeminophobic portrayals of players in the poem. In a similar way, Churchill’s satiric attack on Samuel Foote accuses the actor of an unnatural talent for bodily malleability. Passages such as these reveal that physicality itself signifies gender for Churchill. In this way, the physical is collapsed into gender, and bodies are only legible as human when they register as being coherently gendered:

By turns transform’d into all kinds of shapes,
Constant to none, F[oo]te laughs, cries, struts, and scrapes:
Now in the center, now in van or rear,
The Proteus shifts, Bawd, Parson, Auctioneer.
His strokes of humour, and his bursts of sport
Are all contain’d in this one word, Distort. (*The Rosciad*, 395-400).

The above passage satirises Foote’s farce *The Minor* (1760), in which he lampooned, among others, George Whitefield, the leader of the Calvinistic Methodists. In the satire, Foote played the role of all three characters: the bawd, Mrs. Cole, the parson, Shift, and the auctioneer, Smirk.⁶⁶ The important word comes after the prolonged caesura in the last line of the passage above: “Distort”.

⁶⁵ Laurence Senelick, “Mollies or Men of Mode? Sodomy and the Eighteenth-Century London Stage”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1990, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 52.

⁶⁶ See Douglas Grant, ‘Notes to the Poems’, in *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, Douglas Grant, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 464.

Foote's performative malleability brings into sharp relief anxieties surrounding the authenticity of his own maleness offstage. In a pointed reversal of this effeminophobic rhetorical strategy, Foote satirised the incongruity between Churchill's literary ambitions and clerical office in the figure of Manly in a revision of his play *Taste*, performed at Drury Lane on April 6th, 1761.⁶⁷

The seemingly mock-heroic poem consists of twenty-eight penetrating portraits of contemporary actors and actresses that are tenuously held together by a structural fiction of succession.⁶⁸ It begins with the fiction of a vacant chair, the chair of the great Roman actor Roscius, with William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson recruited, after some deliberation, as the judges entrusted with the task of deciding upon Roscius's successor from a catalogue of London's theatrical milieu; the poem concludes with a description of David Garrick's manly suitability as successor; Robert Lloyd's *The Actor* (1760) has been cited as an obvious source of inspiration.⁶⁹ More than a critique of the personalities of individual players, *The Actor* admonishes that the spectacle of the theatre should "purge the Passions and reform the mind", advising that for this mass catharsis to be realised, stagecraft should conform to more naturalistic parameters: "More natural Uses to the Stage belong, / Than Tumblers, Monsters, Pantomine, or Song".⁷⁰ Moreover, as Senelick notes, the poem promotes the English stage at

⁶⁷ Foote's *Taste*, produced in 1752, was originally a satire on the vanity of persons who paid for self-portraits, and the dishonesty of self-appointed critics of art who defraud their gullible patrons into accepting forgeries as genuine pieces of high-art. *Taste* was staged intermittently throughout the 1750s and had been mocked by Bonnell Thornton in *The Drury Lane Journal* as a "footy performance". The revised version added a short first scene that satirised Churchill and a Thornton-Lloyd-Colman composite figure, while it also featured a considerably altered second act that ran through Churchill's theatrical criticism in *The Rosciad*. Foote's critique of Churchill centers on the clergyman's urban metamorphosis into a 'man about town'. Andrew Kippis, a biographer, details the sort of clothing Churchill adopted as a "blue coat with metal buttons, a gold-laced hat, and ruffles". Foote's lampooning centres on the discrepancy between Churchill's ursine self-fashioning and his foppish and affected critical taste, signaled in a material sense by his new mode of dress. See Bertelsen, p. 81; Edward H. Weatherly, "Foote's Revenge on Churchill and Lloyd" *Huntington Library Quarterly*, IX (1945), pp. 51-6; Andrew Kippis, *Biographia Britannica* 2nd ed. (London, 1778), III, p. 571.

⁶⁸ Despite the appearance of ironic satire throughout the poem, its resolution is notably not ironic, leading Thomas Lockwood to suggest that it is not a mock-heroic poem at all. Lockwood notes how the stylistic imagery does not ironically confuse the poem's scale of values; the style, for example, does not present the players as being something, which they are not. Rather, Churchill comments on each player, stating whether they are good or bad, strictly according to an announced intention of motto, which prefaces the poem. See Lockwood, p. 127.

⁶⁹ Wallace Cable Brown, *Charles Churchill: Poet, Rake, and Rebel* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 50.

⁷⁰ Robert Lloyd, *The Actor* (London: 1760), p. 17.

mid-century as an institutionalised space, central to national “character building”, with English comedy and tragedy serving to fortify audience morality and taste.⁷¹

While Churchill’s inclusion of Lloyd in the poem as the youth who alone “stemm’d the mighty critic flood” invites us to trace a symmetry between these poems (*The Rosciad*, 194), the personal invective that distinguishes Churchill and shapes the circulation of the poem, is noticeably unparalleled by Lloyd.⁷² Thomas Davies describes how, with the “art of a skilful surgeon, the poet probed the wound to the bottom, but was not very gentle in the use of his instrument”.⁷³ A surgical metaphor is particularly apposite here as the player’s body is at the centre of satiric focus throughout the poem. More significant is the trope of gender ambivalence that signals deficiencies in embodied performance. Distortion in *The Rosciad* is about an unintelligibility that cannot be read in normatively gendered terms. Crucially, as a mid-century text, the poem comes at a time when the category of effeminacy was undergoing deep semantic reworking. A critique of hyper-heterosexuality as effeminate gave way in the period to an exclusive connection between effeminacy and sodomy. Satirical representations of the effeminate fribble did much to persuade readers and theatre audiences that the source of male effeminate manners had little to do with heterosexual exertion, excessive or otherwise.

Much later, John Caspar Lavater, in his *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789) didactically contrasted male bodies with what is, by the late 1780s, firmly perceived as the “striking contrast” of the fribble’s body.⁷⁴ Lavater’s commentary on fribblish physicality is useful for what it reveals about the centralised position that the fribble assumed within Anglo-centric and bourgeois regulatory discourses of male gendering. The fribble’s mind is unable to comprehend “either the great or beautiful, or the simple and natural” and crucially, we are told, remains in a perpetual state of childhood: “a being who, in the commerce of the world, at court, and in private, on the theatre, and before his

⁷¹ Senelick, pp. 56-57.

⁷² Thomas Davies captures the mood of anxiety and excitement permeating London’s theatrical world upon the publication of the poem when he recalls how: “the players spread its fame all over the town; they ran about like so many stricken deer”. See Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* Vol. 1 (London: 1780), p. 314.

⁷³ Davies, p. 314.

⁷⁴ John Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy* (London, MDCCLXXXIX [1789]), Vol. 3, p. 213.

looking-glass, will never be anything but a consummate fool”.⁷⁵ More than providing negative prescriptions for masculine behaviour, the fribble’s effeminate and asexual preference for the society of women, signalled the reversal of heterosocial gender complementarity. As Thomas A. King argues, the fribble was paradigmatic of those “bodies outside of privacy”, which were part of the urban scene and provided stereotypes against which writers could form and defend private pleasures and interests.

The charge of effeminacy is an intensely political one that routinely functioned to delegitimise a man’s socio-political worth. As Lavater’s *Essays on Physiognomy* indicate, by the late eighteenth century, effeminacy had become recognisably linked to sodomy or the asexual; a connection that pointedly disavowed an earlier understanding that had registered heterosexual excesses as similarly degenerative. For Churchill, linking effeminacy to the sodomitical and presenting it as a condition of other nations, both within the British polity and external to it, facilitates an ideological working out of heterosexual excess and machismo as both patriotic and legitimising. Healthy and continuously proven heterosexuality is conducive to a patriotic nation and its material prosperity, even if in reality such exertions lead to venereal disease and premature death. Curiously, while living an incredibly anti-heterosocial life, at the core of Churchill’s poetics is a commitment to the heterosocial image. As a native of London, Churchill rejected the idea that the urban is corrupt and corrupting. While one can find many literary and proto-anthropological accounts that read the fribblish body as symptomatic of the metropole, *The Rosciad* stands out for its determined conflation of Celtic peripheral space with the conditions of effeminacy and sterility. In opposition to fribblish acting, Churchill champions David Garrick’s abilities:

‘If manly Sense; if Nature link’d with Art;
‘If thorough knowledge of the Human Heart;
‘If Pow’rs of acting vast and unconfi’d;
‘If fewest Faults, with greatest Beauties join’d;
‘If strong Expression, and strange Pow’rs, which lie
‘Within the magic circle of the Eye;
‘If feelings which few hearts, like his, can know,
‘And which no face so well as His can show;
‘Deserve the Pref’rence; —Garrick take the Chair;

⁷⁵ Caspar Lavater, p. 213.

‘Nor quit it—’till Thou place an Equal there.’ (*Ibid.*, 1081-1090).

Against the irrational and childlike fribble, Churchill depicts “manly Sense” as the primary prerequisite of any worthy English Roscius (*Ibid.*, 1081). The binary formed by the caesura in the first line of the stanza suggests that the manly faculty is securely prioritised over a smooth linking of the otherwise tense dichotomy of nature and art. A lack of sense, of a fictional interior maleness, constitutes outward affectation. Garrick is presented as being in absolute control of what is received by audience. Although rendered a spectacle, Garrick’s “thorough knowledge” of emotion gives him control over the gaze that would otherwise subject him.

In this sense Garrick’s mastery of performance relates to his mimetic ability in not only reproducing social reality onstage but in reproducing the correct or sanctioned version of that reality. Lee Edelman has identified an important narrative gap in mid-eighteenth-century textual and judicial representations of the sodomitical. Reading both pamphlets and trial records, Edelman shows how, “in its figural orbit”, the sodomitical became a challenge: “to the bourgeois gentleman’s most valuable and hence most anxiously defended property: the interiority that both signals and constitutes his autonomous subjectivity, and thus the authority whereby he controls the meaning of his signifying acts”.⁷⁶ In the context of an emergent and therefore highly insecure middle-class ideology of social authority, Edelman suggests that sodomy came to be understood as an obstacle to the bourgeois body’s ability to maintain, control and arrange the “signifying intentions of a self conceived as the property the bourgeois gentleman inalienably possesses *in himself*”.⁷⁷ In short, Edelman finds that in textual and verbal accounts of sodomy, the gentleman’s body becomes a site of refused entry. Whereas servants’ bodies or lower class bodies are frequently the sites for sodomitical activity, the genteel male body is figured as that which remains spatially closed to such transgression. Edelman reads this elliptical middle-class male body as a rhetorical strategy that projected an imagined middle-class body as impenetrable.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: essays in gay literary and cultural theory* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 126.

⁷⁷ Edelman, *Homographesis*, p. 128

⁷⁸ Edelman, *Homographesis*, p. 128

In *The Rosciad*, Garrick's hypothetical ascension to the Roscius's chair is premised on just such an impenetrable performance. Garrick not only plays the part of gentleman, fop, and beau, but he does so in such a way that his body and his performance remain his own property, displayed but never owned by participants. Revealingly, effeminophobic representations of the fribble and the castrato function as disavowed distortions, which negatively define a narrative of belonging for the mid-century English political nation. In this way, Churchill uses effeminacy as shorthand for the sterile excesses of the indigenous Celtic fringe. Effeminacy is displaced away from the political and corporeal bodies of the English, thus legitimating a colonialism that was increasingly being critiqued for its effeminate and luxurious excesses. In other words, in casting the fribble as Irish, Churchill renders the discourse of effeminacy in xenophobic terms, specifically anti-Italianate and anti-Celtic.

The most coherent passage of this satire in *The Rosciad* centres Fitzpatrick. This extensive portrait was added to the eighth edition of the poem following Fitzpatrick's quarrel with Garrick over the Fitzgiggo riots at Drury lane and Covent Garden in January, 1763.⁷⁹ These riots were prompted by the enforcement of full-price admittance rates for audience members regardless of when they arrived for the performance. The feud can be traced back to the late 1740s when Garrick satirised Fitzpatrick as a fribble in his farce *Miss in her Teens* (1747). Fitzpatrick retaliated by publishing *An Enquiry into the Real Merit of a certain Popular Performer* (1760), which discredited Garrick's acting, in the service of "rectifying the corrupt taste of the public".⁸⁰ In *An Enquiry*, Garrick's acting is unfavourably contrasted in gendered terms with that of the Irish actors James Quin and Henry Mossop. Garrick's "languor" and "sluggishness" in his role of Pierre in *Venice Preserved* is juxtaposed against the celebrated "manliness of expression" of Quin and Mossop. Notably, "the little great man", as one contributor dubs him, cuts an "insufficient figure" on the stage.⁸¹ In a reversal of the pederastic binary of dominant/man and passive/boy, the *Anti-*

⁷⁹ Douglas Grant, 'Notes to the Poems', in Grant, Douglas (ed.) *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 460.

⁸⁰ Thaddeus Fitzpatrick, *An Enquiry into the Real Merit of a Certain Popular Performer* (London: 1760), p. 27.

⁸¹ Fitzpatrick, p. 3.

Theatricus persona makes this effeminisation explicit when he notes how Garrick is:

a person exhibiting himself a spectacle to every 'prentice boy, who, with a shilling in his pocket, accepts the invitation, promulgated in the play-bills, and asserts the in-disputable right of signifying his approbation or dissatisfaction.⁸²

Most alarmingly then, Garrick's presence on the stage leaves him vulnerable to the objectifying and penetrating male gaze.

In response to this *Enquiry*, Garrick recast Fitzpatrick in his verse-satire *The Fribbleriad* in the role of a fribble simultaneously named "Fizgig" and "X, Y, Z?".⁸³ In the preface, Garrick mockingly describes the poem as "an *Illiad* in a *nutshell*" with Fizgig amounting to the "*Achilles*" of the piece.⁸⁴ Garrick portrays Fitzpatrick as a hack scribbler who disseminates a "falshood, malice, envy, spite", which becomes his distinguishing mark.⁸⁵

A *Man* it seems — 'tis hard to say —
A *Woman* then? — a moment pray —
Unknown as yet by sex or feature,
Suppose we try to guess the creature;
Whether a *wit*, or a *pretender*?
Of *masculine* or *female* gender?
Some things it does may pass for either,
And some it does belong to neither:
It is so fibbing, slandering, spiteful,
In phrase so dainty and delightful;
So fond of all it reads and writes,
So waggish when the maggot bites:
Such spleen, such wickedness, and whim,
It must be Woman, and a Brim.
But then the Learning and the Latin!⁸⁶

Garrick's portrait of Fitzpatrick as a fribble is not simply of a womanly man, but can be more properly described within the one-sex model as the image of a being falling away from the masculine ideal toward feminine defectiveness. Rather than elaborating Fizgig as a womanly man, Garrick refuses gender coherence by deploying indeterminate terms such as: "'tis hard to say" and "Unknown". Significantly, the fribble's behaviour may "pass for either" or "neither", while

⁸² Fitzpatrick, p. 20.

⁸³ David Garrick, *The Fribbleriad* (London: printed for J. Coote at the King's Arms, in Pater-Noster-Row, MDCCXI, 1761), p. vii.

⁸⁴ Garrick, p. vii.

⁸⁵ Garrick, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Garrick, p. 2.

womanly spleen undercuts the masculine “Learning” and “Latin” of a fribble’s conversation. But here the flux between the one- and two-sex models in this period is at play, for what is most monstrous about Garrick’s fribble is its unintelligibility within an emerging heterologic of incommensurability between the sexes. The persistent use of the question mark “?”, along with the classification “X, Y, Z”, extend this gendered indeterminacy into a questioning of the very humanity of the fribble, emphasized by the description of the fribble as a non-human “creature”. More tellingly we are told that wounding the pride of the “*Lady-fellow*” scribbler causes “*Male, female, [to] vanish*” into “malice, rage and fear”.⁸⁷

In *The Rosciad*, Churchill draws on Garrick’s satiric portrayal of Thady Fitzpatrick. Rather than the effeminate body being locatable at the metropole, as John ‘Estimate’ Brown, for instance, emplaces it, Churchill specifies fribbles as a tribe that is Celtic in origin. In fact, the fribble’s explicit “*Irish growth*” is the only certainty in a description that is otherwise freighted with ambiguity:

A Motley Figure, of the FRIBBLE TRIBE,
Which Heart can scarce conceive, or pen describe,
Came *simp’ring* on; to ascertain whose sex
Twelve sage impannell’d Matrons would perplex.
Nor *Male*, nor *Female*; *Neither*, and yet both;
Of *Neuter* Gender, tho’ of *Irish* growth;
A six-foot suckling, mincing in his gait;
Affected, peevish, prim, and delicate;
Fearful *it* seem’d, tho’ of Athletic make,
Lest *brutal breezes* should too roughly shake
Its tender form, and *savage* motion spread
O’er its pale cheeks the horrid manly red (*The Rosciad*, 141-152).

Tellingly, a definitive sex is something to ascertain rather than being clearly indicated by the fribble’s body or self-presentation. In line with the one-sex model, the fribble, we are told, is not male or female, but “both”, a description that again presents ‘sex’ in terms of a single continuum. Moreover, Churchill specifies fribbles as an Irish “TRIBE”. As Nicholas Hudson argues, within the pressures of a homogenising discourse of imperial expansion at mid-century, non-European populations were classed as tribes on the basis that they lacked the cultural and political requirements to justify the honorific title of “nation”.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Garrick, p.5.

⁸⁸ Nicholas Hudson, “From ‘Nation’ to ‘Race’: The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol.29, No. 3 (1996), p. 257.

Thus, Churchill's depiction of the Irish as a fribblish 'tribe' serves to rhetorically undermine any possibility for Irish political or cultural participation in the modern British nation. This xeno-effeminophobic depiction of an Irish fribblish tribe in *The Rosciad* anticipates later deployments of the term within imperialist discourse to denote non-Europeans. The adoption of the noun tribe as a common descriptor functioned in slave rhetoric to erase the distinctive cultures and traditions of those trafficked from the African continent. Churchill's use of 'tribe' operates in a similar way, levelling the distinctions of Irish and Scottish, which facilitates an English xeno-effeminophobic metropolitan queering of Britain's Celtic fringe as distinctly non-European and uncivilised. Whereas Alexander Pope's *Arbuthnot* (1735) casts Lord Hervey as the castrated Sporus, a figure of contemptible subordination, Churchill's fribble is unique for its explicit conflation of androgyny with ethnicity through Celtic tribal classification: "Of Neuter Gender, tho' of Irish growth" (*Ibid.*, 142).

The caesural pressure in this line comes from the unresolved illogic of connecting "neuter gender" with a decidedly Irish form of "growth". How can sterility produce growth? Arguably, such sterile growth can only become intelligible when considered within the logic of a kind of English imperialist discourse at mid-century that zoned the Celtic periphery as both economically unproductive and sexually non-reproductive. Whereas Fitzpatrick's sexed body is unintelligible in Garrick's *The Fribbleriad*, Churchill articulates an "Affected, peevish, prim, and delicate" body that is nonetheless still legibly masculine, being "six-foot" and "of Athletic make" (*Ibid.*, 148). Crucially, the satire gains its force from this queer spectacle of incongruity, from the disconnection between a body that is sexed as male but which remains indeterminately gendered. The depiction of the strong physicality of the athletic fribble figures an anxiety of unrealised potential; the fribble has the raw material and energy to be manly, but lacks the ability to harness it.

Churchill's hiberno-effeminophobic satire centres on the dissonance between male bodies that are normatively sexed as male yet are seemingly incapable of performing the prescribed masculine role: "A six-foot suckling mincing in its gait". In Butlerean terms, the Irish fribble lacks a crucial stabilising concept of masculinity and is thus prohibited from accessing the sort of normative British middle-class identity that drives imperialist logic at mid-

century.⁸⁹ More complexly, Garrick's performing of a hegemonic bourgeois masculinity in *The Rosciad* necessitates a binarised imagining of the female players as natural and incommensurable counterparts. Churchill's consistently positive commentary on women seems all the more striking when we recall how female players were routinely denounced as prostitutes and courtesans. As Kristina Straub notes, an actress's public profession complicated the assumption that feminine sexuality was the private and passive opposite of masculinity.⁹⁰

Moreover, whereas narratives of professionalisation enabled actors like Garrick to legitimate their effeminate and public subjection on stage, conversely, for actresses, it "intensified the contradiction between femininity as public spectacle and emergent definitions of the middle-class woman as domestic and private".⁹¹ According to Straub, the female player's body is a site of "excessive sexuality", one that "must be — but never fully is — contained or repressed".⁹² Yet, as Jon Thomas Rowland notes, in *The Rosciad* actresses such as Kitty Clive, Jane Pope, Mrs Vincent, Hannah Pritchard, Mary Anne Yates and Miss Hart are all presented as "touchstone[s] of the intrinsic, the natural".⁹³ Rather than directly engaging with anxieties regarding the female player's complication of heteroerotic privacy, Churchill simply essentialises female players as incommensurably female, as possessing "Bare merit", figuring players such as Kitty Clive as "Original in spirit and in ease" (*Ibid.*, 691). Just as fribblish gender ambivalence is the mark of a player's inauthentic performance, a female player's intelligible femininity becomes the very source of her 'natural' acting.⁹⁴ In spite of the publicness of the theatre, Clive's heterosocial domesticity is reaffirmed by the observation that: "Easy as if at Home, the stage she trod" (*Ibid.*, 689). Hannah Pritchard is similarly praised for joining "in private life / the tender parent and the virtuous wife" (*The Apology*, 290-91). Moreover, Clive's

⁸⁹ According to Butler all identity is fixed through the stabilising concepts of sex, gender and desire. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 2nd edn. (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 23.

⁹⁰ Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, p. 89.

⁹¹ Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, p. 89.

⁹² Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, p. 89.

⁹³ Jon Thomas Rowland, "SWORDS IN MYRTLE DRESS'D" *Toward a Rhetoric of Sodom: Gay Readings of Homosexual Politics and Poetics in the Eighteenth Century* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1998), p. 204.

⁹⁴ Jane Pope's underlying femininity is described in the line: "Not without Art, but yet to Nature true" (*The Rosciad*, 699); while Mrs. Vincent similarly maintains a balance of naturalness over artificiality: "laughs at paltry arts, and scorns parade" (*Ibid.*, 703-704).

performances are not legibly erotic, rather than seductive, she “hid[es] all attempts to please” (*The Rosciad*, 692). That female players are flawed allows for a framing of woman as heterosocial subject rather than heteroerotic object.⁹⁵

Churchill’s respect for women actors finds a more sustained enthusiast in Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788), whose sponsorship of the actress Sarah Siddons was about putting such de-eroticisation into practice. As Conrad Brunström notes:

With the active cooperation of Sarah Siddons, Sheridan helped create an ideal of audience involvement based on a new and radical form of bifurcation whereby the very distinction between player and the role emphasised the idea of her talent Within the frame of the proscenium arch at Drury Lane (and elsewhere on tour), Siddons was available to the eye and the ear, though never to the touch Audiences owned her in the context of the “gaze” but only in the context of “the gaze”.⁹⁶

Through his partnership with Siddons, Sheridan promoted the freedom of the gaze while restricting the erotic desires of audience participants. Sheridan features as the penultimate portrait before Garrick emerges and is provisionally announced as Roscius’s successor.⁹⁷ Sheridan’s performance is similar to his fellow Irish fribbles as it is critiqued in terms of a gender unintelligibility: “His voice no touch of harmony admits / Irregularly deep, and shrill by fits: / The two extremes appear like man and wife, / Coupled together for the sake of strife” (*Ibid*, 1003-6). Sheridan’s failure to command heterosociality, figured through the nuptial simile, is the marker of his relatively poor performance. Yet, however adversarial, both Sheridan and Churchill are seemingly invested in cultivating a space for female performers to perform without the intrusion of lurid catcalls and unwelcome male advances. For Churchill, it seems, the free sexual availability of

⁹⁵ Churchill intriguingly chooses ‘unattractive’ female players, such as Miss Hart as subjects of his praise. Hart’s lack of beauty may also serve to reaffirm Churchill’s preoccupation with a fixed and ‘natural’ feminine interiority. It also may have something to do with Churchill’s own appearance, and his empathy for those who must labour to project a charismatic personal presence. Hart was not remarkably beautiful and was later unkindly described as “a lady who Churchill particularly compliments in his *Rosciad*; though, from her present face and figure, one would be led to imagine that such a compliment was but a *poetical license*”. See *Theatrical Biography*, 1772, I, 105-6, qtd. in D. Grant, “Notes to the poems”, p. 471.

⁹⁶ Conrad Brunström, *Thomas Sheridan’s Career and Influence: An Actor In Earnest* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011), pp. 49-50.

⁹⁷ Sheridan’s successes at Drury Lane during the season of 1760/1, according to Davies, caused some jealousy on Garrick’s part. By the time of the poem’s publication, Sheridan had redirected his energies away from the theatre and into producing his lectures on oratory and elocution, which Churchill later satirises in *The Ghost*. See Davies, p. 293.

an actress forecloses more meaningful erotic attachments. Moreover, de-sexualising women on the stage works to make hetero sex private at the very moment of its most theatrical exposure.

In being particularly appreciative of the less obviously attractive female players, Churchill may well be acknowledging the fact that they (like himself) need to try harder; their charismatic presence involves more personality. Moreover, in treating actresses as if they are somehow less attractive than their admirers might otherwise suggest, *The Rosciad* adopts William Hogarth's view of female beauty as decidedly less than ideal. Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753) broke the mould of Shaftesburian idealised 'beauty', serving to render female beauty all the more tangible and accessible.⁹⁸ In this way, Churchill's gazing is all the more erotic for its adherence to a practical Hogarthian aestheticism, which refuses to idealise beauty to the point of an abstraction that is divorced from all utility and function. In claiming that actresses such as Clive, "In spite of outward blemishes . . . shone", Churchill makes actresses more alluring for their very failure to live up to aesthetic and performative ideals, while also humanising them to the extent that intrusive objectification registers as antisocial.

All female players are pardoned as flawed though authentic performers: "We love e'en foibles in so good an heart" (*Ibid.*, 706). Intriguingly, the "diffidence and fear" which "MODEST terrors cause" are natural qualities that should be celebrated in female players, and more generally, in women (*Ibid.*, 707; 709). While women are pardoned for their foibles and faults, the verbal stammering of fribblish behaviour is condemned as thoroughly aberrant. Presenting female players in this way allows for a staging of women as maternal, domestic, asexual, and nurturing, in line with the 'natural' attributes of the ideal woman within the emerging two-sex model. The inclusion of a diatribe against the Italian opera in the final section of *The Rosciad* brings into sharp relief an ideological framing of the natural female body as a synecdoche for a healthy body politic. Here, Churchill turns to a condemnation of Thomas Augustine

⁹⁸ Ronald Paulson notes how: "The Shaftesburian Beautiful, with nothing opposed to it but the Ugly, was the ideal without blemish. Hogarth prefers the oval to the circle (and the broken oval at that), the triangle to the square, odd numbers to even, and irregular patterns to regular". See William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, Ronald Paulson, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. xxvi.

Arne's opera *Artaxerxes*, which had been first performed at Covent Garden in early 1762. This attack on Arne's eunuchs pre-empts an extended attack on the castrati in his later poem *The Times* (1764):

Men without Manhood, Women without Heart
Half-Men, who, dry and pithless, are debarr'd
From Man's best joys — no sooner made than marr'd —
Half-Men, whom many a rich and noble Dame,
To serve her lust, and yet secure her fame,
Keeps on high diet, as We Capons feed,
To glut our appetites at last decreed, (*The Times*, 234-240).

The anxiety in this passage is not on gender inversion or confusion, but on the perversion of heteroeroticism. Rich Dames keep eunuchs for their own sexual gratification, thus disrupting off stage (and exciting on stage) perverse forms of heterosexual pleasure.

Unsurprisingly, the earlier attack in *The Rosciad* duplicates the conflation of xenophobia and effeminophobia found in many civic and moralistic commentaries on the popularity of the opera at mid-century. Specifically, the critique of Arne's opera is interesting for what it suggests about the sort of pleasures that are appropriate to the British stage and to its people:

But never shall a Truly British Age
Bear a vile race of EUNUCHS on the stage.
The boasted work's call'd NATIONAL in vain,
If one Italian voice pollutes the strain.
Where Tyrants rule, and slaves with joy obey,
Let slavish minstrels pour th' enervate lay;
To Britons, far more noble pleasures spring,
In native notes, Whilst BEARD and VINCENT sing.
(*Ibid*, 721-28).

The enjambed closed couplet at the beginning of the stanza formally secures the incommensurability of 'true' British pleasures with the queer pleasures of the Italian eunuchs. Further, the implied sexual sterility of the eunuch resonates with the neuter gender of the Irish fribble. Importantly, the castrato and fribble are neuter in the sense of being neither gender and are thus incapable of procreation. The alignment of the Irish fribble with the Italian castrato serves to position the British Celtic fringe as foreign and therefore perversely un-British. The appearance of Irish fribbles and Italian castrati on the London stage threatens to

enact a reversal of “kind Nature’s first decrees” (*Ibid*, 719). Heterosexual complementarity, described as “Nature’s first decrees”, is implicit in the poem’s pairing of the natural performances of Garrick and the female players.

More explicitly, in contrast to the unwholesome and monstrous mixed gender of the Irish fribble, Churchill gestures toward Mrs Vincent and John Beard, as examples of “native” singers, from which “far more noble pleasures spring” (*Ibid*, 727). This two-sex framing of Vincent and Beard works to foreground gendered incommensurability as a feature of the British stage, and by metaphoric extension, as integral to the (re)productive nation. Crucially, the ideological forging of this staged heterosociality is achieved through the xenoeffeminophobic construction of the Irish fribble and the Italian castrato as castrated members of sterile races. *The Rosciad* functions to exclude the Irish as constituents within this gendered political vision of the mid-century British nation by ontologizing the fribble as embodying an indeterminate sex that is also read as a marker of its degenerate race. Through its queer portraiture of the Irish player Thady Fitzpatrick as a fribble, the poem displaces effeminacy away from the political and corporeal bodies of the English, thus legitimating an urbanism that was increasingly exciting critique for its own effeminate excesses.

(1.3) Ghost and Goddess: Ossian and Windiness

‘Primitive’ societies, and ‘the other’ within — Gaelic culture, the poor — are disenfranchised at the outset from the Enlightenment project as being incapable of thinking beyond themselves, or attaining that generosity of vision that comes so effortlessly to citizens of the world. Insult is added to injury as there is not only the actual experience of hardship or suffering, but the added indignity of ostracization or isolation. Solidarity among the oppressed, particularly across cultural boundaries or between different societies with shared experiences of colonialism, is ruled out *a priori* as being beyond the reach of the primitive mind. It became imperative for this reason to widen the gap between civility and savagery — a process facilitated greatly by clearly defined ‘stages’ of history — to prevent primitive societies from aspiring to traits that could qualify as modern, rendering them eligible for the notions of liberty, justice, and equality that were the sole preserve of advanced Western societies.⁹⁹

The groan of the people spread over the hills; it was like the thunder of night, when the cloud bursts on Cona; and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow wind.¹⁰⁰ (*Fingal*, III, *The Works of Ossian*)

Or riding on the *hollow Wind*,
HORROR, which turns the heart to stone,
In dreadful sounds was heard to groan. (*The Ghost*, II, 714-716).

This section addresses Charles Churchill’s most protracted poetic work *The Ghost*, I-IV (1762-63), along with other subsequent poems such as *The Prophecy of Famine: A Scot’s Pastoral* (1763) and *Gotham*, I-III (1764). In particular, these poems are considered in light of the literary controversy surrounding James Macpherson’s translations of ancient Gaelic poetry, first published in his *Fragments of ancient poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (1760). Building on the previous reading of the xeno-effeminophobic construction of Thady Fribble Fitzpatrick in *The Rosciad*, this second section is concerned with identifying the contours of xeno-effeminophobia in these anti-

⁹⁹ Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke And Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Colonial Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 220-221.

¹⁰⁰ James Macpherson trans., *The Works of Ossian, The Son of Fingal*, Vol. 1 (London: 1761), in *The Poems of Ossian and related works: James Macpherson*, Howard Gaskill, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 77.

Ossian poems. *The Ghost*, I-IV centrifugally engages with the Celtic peripheries, while *The Prophecy*, satirically modelled on Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd, A Scots Pastoral* (1725), is set in the Scottish Highlands. While *Gotham*, I-III, does not explicitly engage with Britain's Celtic fringes, as Adam Rounce notes, Book I stands out for its unusual critique of "the ideology of Empire and the sufferings of native peoples under colonialism".¹⁰¹ As Rounce notes, the poet's intensified involvement with John Wilkes accounts for the relatively sudden and vitriolic directness of his character assassinations.¹⁰² The Wilkite politicisation of Churchill's poetry can be witnessed throughout *The Ghost*, in so much as what begins in March 1762 as a playful and Shandean celebration of the absence of any poetic "theme or direction" solidifies in the fourth book (eighteen months later) into a coherent and scathing attack upon the perceived venality and alleged Scottish-led corruption of the Bute administration.¹⁰³

The Cock Lane Ghost story was a focus of public controversy and, for many, amusement throughout London.¹⁰⁴ The following extract from *The London Magazine* (January 1762) captures a sense of this public excitement:

The town has been greatly alarmed in the course of this month, by a strange, and yet unaccountable affair, in Cock lane, West Smith-field . . . The child upon certain knockings and scratchings, which seem to proceed from beneath her bedhead, is thrown into violent fits and agitations; and a woman attendant, or the father, Mr. P--- has put questions to the spirit or ghost, as it is supposed by the credulous to

¹⁰¹ Adam Rounce, "Notes" in, *Charles Churchill Selected Poetry*, Adam Rounce, ed. (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2003), p. 110.

¹⁰² Rounce, "Introduction" in, *Charles Churchill Selected Poetry*, Adam Rounce, ed. (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2003), p. xiii.

¹⁰³ Rounce, "Introduction", p. xiii.

¹⁰⁴ The Cock Lane ghost was believed to be that of Fanny Lynes, who had died from small pox in 1760. Fanny had previously taken rooms at an address, which belonged to Richard Parsons in Cock Lane, residing there with her deceased sister's husband William Kent. At the centre of this ghost story is, seemingly, an actual dispute between Parsons and Kent, which involved a debt of £12 owed to Kent by Parson. Unwilling to repay, Kent proceeded to sue Parsons for reimbursement. This financial disagreement also caused Kent and Lynes to relocate to a neighbouring address, where the latter subsequently died, in February 1760. In January of 1762, Parsons claimed that his eleven-year-old daughter was functioning as a medium for Fanny's spirit. Under the guidance of The Rev. John Moore, lecturer of St. Sepulchre's, séances with Fanny were conducted, which ascertained that William Kent had poisoned and murdered his sister-in-law while she was suffering from small pox. As a result, Kent was publicly suspected of murder. London cultural life was nourished by the Cock Lane affair: "the ludicrous part of the town has been diverted with smart paragraphs in the news-papers, some of them seasoned with wit, and the very theatre has joined in laughing this ridiculous affair out of the minds of the multitude. —Blessed times! when common sense itself is openly attacked, by ghosts, methodists, antinomians, and a long *et cetera* of foes to reason and true religion". See Grant, pp. 483-85; *The London Magazine. Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, February 1st, 1762, p. 104.

be, and they also dictate, how many knocks shall serve for an answer, either in the affirmative or negative: and though these scratchings and knockings, had disturbed Fanny before her death, it is now supposed to be her spirit, which thus harrasses the poor family and engrosses the attention of the public.¹⁰⁵

Its popularity led The Rev. Stephen Aldrich, who had attended to Fanny during her illness, and who was also supportive of Kent, to form a committee to investigate the affair. The investigative committee, endorsed by the Lord Mayor, Sir Samuel Fludyer, consisted of Samuel Johnson, Dr John Douglas, and Lord Dartmouth. The committee agreed upon a plan to ascertain the existence of the ghost, which involved a person entering the vault of St. John's and waiting for Fanny to knock on her own coffin.¹⁰⁶ When the knock failed to manifest, the committee's interrogation of Parson's daughter "at such a distance from Cock lane, as will puzzle her familiars to exercise their wanted dexterity, and satisfy the gaping town" led Johnson to conclude in *The Gentleman's Magazine* that the ghost was a deception.¹⁰⁷ *The Ghost* lampoons Johnson as "Immane Pomposo", a sobriquet that signalled both pompousness and verbosity (II, 335). In early 1762, Fanny's ghost was a topic of ridicule in the theatrical pieces such as Garrick's interlude *The Farmer's Return* (1762) and Smith's "Prologue to the Drummer, or Haunted House":

If in this credulous, believing age,
We bring a harmless ghost upon the stage,
Some will perhaps conclude—in hopes of gain,
We've hir'd the knocking spirit from Cock-lane;

¹⁰⁵ STE. Aldrich and James Penn, *The London Magazine. Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*. (January, 1762), p. 51.

¹⁰⁶ An account of the descent into the vaults of St. John's Church: "The company, at one, went into the church, and the gentleman to whom the promise was made, went, with one more, into the vault: The Spirit was solemnly required to perform its promise, but nothing more than silence ensued. The person supposed to be accused by the ghost, then went down, with several others, but no effect was perceived. Upon their return they examined the girl, but could draw no confession from her. Between two and three she desired, and was permitted, to go home with her father". See *The London Magazine. Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, February 1st, 1762, pp. 103-4.

¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the story still persisted, with Parson's daughter continuing to report the ghost. Her complaints eventually lead to an exhumation of Fanny's corpse. Kent brought legal proceedings against the Parsons and his accomplices. The trial occurred on the 10th of July 1762 and lasted only twelve hours. All accused were found guilty and Kent's name was cleared. Intriguingly, when Parsons stood in the pillory at Snow Hill on the 16th of March protesting his innocence, the crowd, did not receive him with hostility, but instead, provided him with a collection of money. Parsons was still protesting his innocence at this stage, yet his reception, is clearly an indication of a widespread, public belief in Fanny's ghost. See S. Aldrich and J. Penn, *The London Magazine*, p. 51.

— “Prologue to the Drummer, or Haunted House”, *Occasioned by the Cock lane Apparition. Written and Spoken by Mr. Smith, at Covent- Garden Theatre.*¹⁰⁸

The Ghost figures as simply another satire on Cock lane.¹⁰⁹ However, as Raymond J. Smith points out, “very little of the 4500 line poem concerns the Cock Lane Ghost, which is all but lost in a tangle of digression”.¹¹⁰ Satire on Fanny’s ghost conjures up the spectral form of Macpherson’s Ossianic hero. In his discussion of the Ossian controversy, Luke Gibbons has shown how primitivism was deployed within a stadialist historiography to widen the gap between civility and savagery. In the case of Ossian, such a temporal gap presented mid-century Scots as a corrupted society, degenerated from the glory of a noble pre-commercial past and thus inferior to developed society of neighbouring England. Moreover, such a view merged the lowland and highland Scot. After 1745, Ossian disarmed the English fear of a “Mob of ragged Highlanders” by consigning the militant Highlander to the mistiness of the past.¹¹¹ While accepting this part of Ossian’s cultural impact, following Juliet Shields’s reading of how the Ossian controversy hinged on definitions of masculinity,¹¹² I argue that Macpherson’s Highland warrior threatened to confuse both past and present.

Churchill’s anti-Ossian poems draw on xeno-effeminophobic critique in order to debunk Macpherson’s sentimentalised textual image of the Celtic Warrior and the *telos* that it unfolds. Rather than allaying anxieties in a neat polarising of past and present, I read Macpherson’s Ossianic figure as enacting a form of literary temporal drag, which in fact disrupts the progressiveness of an English Enlightenment developmental meta-narrative. In *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), Elizabeth Freeman theorises temporal drag, which she specifies as the disruption of the political present by the anachronistic drag of the past in the present:

¹⁰⁸ Anon, *The London Magazine. Or, Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer*, February 1st, 1762, p. 103.

¹⁰⁹ Anon, *The London Magazine*, p. 103.

¹¹⁰ Raymond J. Smith, *Charles Churchill* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 42.

¹¹¹ John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (Dublin: G. Faulkner, J. Hoey, and J. Exshaw Booksellers, 1757), p. 12.

¹¹² Juliet Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity 1745-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 25.

It may be crucial, then, to complicate the idea of horizontal political generations or waves succeeding each other in progressive time with a notion of “temporal drag” thought less in the psychic time of the individual than in the movement time of collective political fantasy. Exteriorized as a mode of bodily adornment or even habitus, temporal drag may offer a way of connecting queer performativity to disavowed political histories.¹¹³

Freeman deploys the word drag in all its semantic richness. Drag here is both a process of gradual movement across time and space, and a mode of physical display. Temporal drag refers to specific staged resistances in contemporary queer politics that retain and redeploy the past performances. In this way, Freeman’s ‘temporal drag’ provides an important challenge to Judith Butler’s presentist formulation of drag as continuous repetition without a past. Freeman’s concept usefully illuminates how the Ossian controversy hinged on the issue of a sentimentalised masculinity that was out of step with the dominant teleological narrative. Examining Churchill’s anti-Ossian poetry, this section reads Macpherson’s Highland sentimentalised warrior as enacting a textual temporal drag, as presenting a performance of the present in the past that returns as the past in the present. The Ossianic warrior queerly bridges the gap between primitive and civilised, and thus in Freeman’s terms, links a “queer [textual/oral] performativity to disavowed political histories”.¹¹⁴ The Ossianic Highlander’s literary performance serves to project the Scottish past as mirror for the cultivated English present.

Churchill’s critique of Ossian draws heavily on the effeminophobic and sodomophobic cultural anxieties of the 1760s. The ghostly shriek of the hollow wind provides the basis for Churchill’s very literal figuring of Ossianic poetry and of Bute’s political virtue as insubstantial. Commentators have identified how the very ‘windiness’ of anti-Ossian commentary had its own specific cultural meanings. As Conrad Brunström notes in discussing Churchill’s antagonism to Thomas Sheridan’s oratorical schemes:

For Churchill (influenced perhaps by Swift’s *Tale of a Tub*), the vogue for oratory in the early 1760s was symptomatic of a “windy” (and overwhelmingly Scottish) concentration of degenerate political

¹¹³ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 65.

¹¹⁴ Freeman, p. 65.

and cultural tendencies. Traditional English common sense was under attack as a result of forces of Celtic mystification (promoted by the hated Earl of Bute, prime minister and Ossian's dedicatee) and Sheridan was implicitly allied, according to Churchill, with essentially reactionary forces of political obfuscation The cult of oratory was, for Churchill and Wilkes, a cult of obfuscation and confusion.¹¹⁵

As Brunström incisively suggests, Churchill's anti-Ossian critique, and more particularly, his lampooning of Sheridan's "ghostly lectures" presents oratorical skill as mere wind, both exemplifying and privileging the skill of written Shandean digression in *The Ghost* as a more solid, taxing, and liberating practice.

As Brunström writes:

By the 1760s, there are (according to Churchill) two versions of fantastic invention at loggerheads: the destructive version, typified by Gray, Mason, Ossian, Scottish mysticism, Bute and anyone else Churchill had a recent argument with, and the positive version, typified by Churchill himself, the Nonsense Club (Churchill, Lloyd, Thornton, Colman and Cowper), Sterne, Shakespeare and Matthew Prior. The mystics and the digressives are firmly opposed to crazed quasireligious sublimity.¹¹⁶

Brunström has identified how Nonsense Club anti-Ossianism was about celebrating a particular kind of English literary canon, based on an empiricism that was antagonistic to all things "fashionable, delicate, airy, and Italianate".¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, Churchill's satire on windiness is also corporeal as much as it is rhetorical. In particular, by recalling Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of A Tub*, Churchill's satire returns to the orifice of the anus and the container of the bowels as abject bodily sites. The following extract describes the collective self-sodomising of the Æolist priests of Swift's *A Tale*, who preserve their own flatulence through secret funnels that are attached to barrels:

It was an invention ascribed to Æolus himself, from whom this sect is denominated, and who, in honour of their founder's memory, have to this day preserved great numbers of those *barrels*, whereof they fix one in each of their temples, first beating out the top; into this *barrel*, upon solemn days, the priest enters, where having before duly prepared himself by the methods already described a secret funnel is also conveyed from his posteriors to the bottom of the barrel, which admits new supplies of inspiration, from a *northern* chink or cranny.

¹¹⁵ Conrad Brunström, *Thomas Sheridan's Career and Influence: An Actor In Earnest* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011), p. 63.

¹¹⁶ Brunström, "Be Male And Female Still", p. 44.

¹¹⁷ Brunström, "Be Male And Female Still", p. 44.

Whereupon, you behold him swell immediately to the shape and size of his *vessel*. In this posture he disembogues whole tempests upon his auditory, as the spirit from beneath gives him utterance, which issuing *ex adytis* and *penetralibus*, is not performed without much pain and gripings.¹¹⁸

The swell described here comes from a series of inflations that register as sodomitical. It takes little interpretive energy to ascertain that in this scene, the swollen “vessel” is the phallus, which, as the parting reference to Book II of Virgil’s *Aeneid* tells us, penetrates the inner most recesses (*ex adytis* and *penetralibus*). More than a critique of breathy and insubstantial rhetoric, for Churchill, the Ossianic ‘text’ was itself a form of ‘windiness’ ‘preserved’ through an oral tradition. In this way, Macpherson’s claim that the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760) had been orally passed on, *dragged* through time in some pure formlessness, to emerge in the 1760s, mirrors the Æolist sodomitical practice, in so much as both the sect’s funnelling and the paradox of Macpherson’s written account of oral records without original sources amounts to the very same thing: a perseveration of air.

Moreover, the declared agenda of *The Ghost* is itself ghostly Swiftian in its continuation of the satirist’s intention in *A Tale*: “to write upon nothing; when the subject is utterly exhausted, to let the pen still move on; by some called the ghost of wit, delighting to walk after the death of its body”.¹¹⁹ Thematically, the poem was initially associated with Laurence Sterne rather than Swift, with reviewers suggesting that Churchill had borrowed from the digressiveness of Shandean prose.¹²⁰ While clearly digressive, *The Ghost* also formally manages to retain the control of Pope’s prospect poems. This tension between thematic digression and formal control is central to the masculine aesthetic of Churchill’s writing. As Brunström suggests, for Churchill, as well as for Laurence Sterne and Robert Lloyd, a Shandean textual digressiveness amounts to “a flexible informality of loose associations that constantly draws attention to the character

¹¹⁸ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, Angus Ross and David Woolley, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 75.

¹¹⁹ Swift, p. 102.

¹²⁰ Withholding commentary until the publication of the III and IV books of *The Ghost*, *The Monthly Review* (xxvi [1762], 313-15) noted the similarity between Churchill and Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767), describing the work as a: “digressive, incoherent production...which may not improperly be termed a kind of *Tristram Shandy in verse*” (xxvii [1762], 316), qtd. in Charles Churchill, *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, Douglas Grant, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 485.

of the artist/narrator”, in so much as digression itself provides “the stick with which to beat pretension and assert authorial independence”.¹²¹ Brunström deploys the prescriptions of mid-eighteenth-century formal poetic discipline to show that the very adoption of such Shandean digressive self-assertion provides Churchill and other Nonsense Club members with a way of formally confronting the aesthetic regularity and mechanism of Pindaric ‘Ode-mongers’, such as Thomas Gray (1716-1771) and William Mason (1725-1797).¹²²

Of particular interest is the paradoxical oscillation, outlined by Brunström, between loose associations and a return to the more solid theme of the artist/narrator. If Shandean digression provides a route for poetic self-assertiveness, then it should be acknowledged as a form of identity that is secured through the mastery and exclusion of a plethora of ‘loose associations’. Therefore, this identity is negative and limited, a fact that in the final estimate, seems all the more singular and impoverished given the scope of digressive potential experienced by the reader. We find this in *The Ghost*, where the abstracted Fame’s flight of fancy enlarges the speaker’s optic only to return at the close of Book IV, to the rigid frame of a stationary scene, peopled by statuesque figures: “All stood more / Like Statues than they were before.” (*The Ghost*, IV, 1909-1910). Indeed, the arrival of the reputed Jacobite Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, a key prosecutor of Wilkes, ensures that a range of religious, ethnic, cultural and political specificities are suppressed in deference to the hegemonic “Yoke of pow’r” of Mansfield’s “Public Virtue” (*Ibid.*, 1932); a condition of civic participation that, however far Fancy may have flown, is nonetheless distinguished as a property of the metropolitan centre.

As Brunström argues, “self-conscious digression is the Churchillian expression of English liberty and professional independence”.¹²³ If poetic digression is bound up with the assertion of freedom, then what is really at stake, upon closer reading, is the exclusionary basis of such constructions of freedom. Digression amounts to an act of deviation, one that enacts a process of negatively demarcating the norm or standard that is returned to — the space from which the speaker narrates. As we will see, *The Ghost* and *The Prophecy of Famine* are

¹²¹ Conrad Brunström, *William Cowper: Religion, Satire, Society* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), p. 53.

¹²² Brunström, *William Cowper*, p. 54.

¹²³ Brunström, *William Cowper*, p. 67.

heavily informed by exclusionary biases. Moreover, in Churchill's case, libertarian digression provides another instance for the negotiation and construction of a particular model of masculinity, one that values freedom over constraint. In defiance of structures of patronage, the freedom to digress, to effectively write about nothing, registers as perhaps the most potent display of authorial autonomy possible. In *The Ghost*, poetic and sexual creativity are indistinguishable. Churchill boasted that its very writing took shape during the free space between exhausted lapses from coition.¹²⁴ In this instance, the fusion of sexual and creative energies finds its most concentrated expression in the equation of boundless textual digressiveness with sustained sexual performance.

Book I of *The Ghost* was originally drafted from an earlier and unpublished prototype, entitled *The Fortune Teller*. While Churchill demonstrates the same type of authorial self-awareness that characterises the later books (most notably in the form of unwieldy parenthetical digressions), the remnant of a more conventional prototypical structure in Book I reins in the digressive potential that becomes actualised throughout the following three books.¹²⁵ Smith reads the first book as presenting a “capsule history of credulity”, while he also notes its lengthy satiric portraiture of the ‘hero’ William Talbot, Lord Steward of the household.¹²⁶ Book II offers the most sustained reference to Fanny's ghost, with a mock account of Johnson's committee and its investigation into the Cock Lane ghost. Book III follows the investigative committee to the house of the Lord Mayor (Dullman) where they seek the suppression of the abstracted Fame from spreading word of their foolish conduct around town.¹²⁷ Book IV offers a political critique of city politics, with the Mayor announcing the hoax as a plot and calling a public assembly to discuss it, before sending his chaplain Lewis Bruce (Crape) as a proxy to the citizens'

¹²⁴ In a letter to John Wilkes, dated July 13th, 1762, Churchill recounts his attendance at Cock Lane Ghost trial: “Where is the Ghost. Faith I cannot tell — the flesh has engross'd so much of my care that I have never once thought of the Spirit”. After this double reference to Fanny's Ghost and the delayed composition of *The Ghost*, III, Churchill goes on to detail the bodily pleasure of sexual intercourse with his Ossianic-sounding mistress Lindamira. He proceeds to relate how the accused “proposed to bring the Girl into Court” but were advised, by Mansfield, against it. See E. H. Weatherly, ed., *The Correspondence*, p. 5.

¹²⁵ Bertelsen, p. 107.

¹²⁶ Smith, p. 42.

¹²⁷ Smith, p. 42.

meeting.¹²⁸ Book IV concludes after a lengthy debate over the merits of Reason and Fancy with the ethereal description of Crape's procession to the assembly ending with a portrait of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield.¹²⁹

It is significant that the fractured form of *The Ghost* resonates with the fragmentary composition of another contemporaneous literary enterprise: James Macpherson's *Fragments of ancient poetry*. Macpherson presented *Fragments* as a translation into English of an esoteric collection of Gaelic songs by the third-century Celtic bard, Ossian — allegedly passed on orally from generation to generation.¹³⁰ The absence of any standardised dictionary and grammar of Scots Gaelic made it difficult to disprove the authenticity of Macpherson's work.¹³¹ As Gibbons conjectures, Macpherson's reluctance to vouch for the existence of original translations did not stem from the factual absence of originals, but may have derived from his reluctance to admit that such documents had more in common with the "vagaries of oral tradition" than with the "purity of manuscript sources".¹³² Put another way, Macpherson's reservation concerning the oral tradition betrays a deeper anxiety about the value of such a cultural tradition, and indeed, of Gaelic culture itself; mirroring the attitudes of both the burgeoning literary marketplace and its fetish for the printed text. Viewed in this light, it is easy to see how even Samuel Johnson's seemingly innocuous demand for Macpherson to produce the original manuscripts enforces a sort of cultural attenuation, a damage, in its blatant disregard for the oral as a valid or 'advanced' mode of cultural preserve and transmission.¹³³ While for Macpherson and his enthusiasts, *Fragments* was considered a paean for a Celtic past in which the manly Scot-Celtic warrior exercised not only his military prowess but also his inherent moral superiority, Churchill presents *The Ghost* as an ironic elegy for a past that never was. For Churchill, Macpherson is an entryist Scot who is deploying Ossian as a passport for access to London's literary-political circles.

¹²⁸ Smith, p. 42.

¹²⁹ Smith, p. 42.

¹³⁰ Macpherson recounts in his preface to *Fingal* how he was encouraged to journey into the Highlands to "recover what remained of the works of the old bards, especially those of Ossian, the son of Fingal". See Howard Gaskill, ed., *The Poems of Ossian*, p. 36.

¹³¹ Clare O'Halloran, "Irish Re-Creations of the Gaelic Past: The Challenge of Macpherson's Ossian," *Past & Present*, No. 124 (Aug., 1989), pp. 82-83.

¹³² Gibbons, p. 216.

¹³³ Gibbons, p. 216.

The initial popularity of Macpherson's *Fragments* was overshadowed by the enduring controversy over the authenticity of the subsequent *Fingal* (1761) and *Temora* (1763). Repeated calls by David Hume and Samuel Johnson for Macpherson and his benefactor Hugh Blair to produce source texts proved fruitless. Issues of literary authenticity elided into questions of national legitimacy. *Fingal* and *Temora* engendered anxieties about conceptions of Britishness being forged in the eighteenth century. Though the definitional reach of the category of Britishness included Scots, the anti-Ossian literature demonstrates an antagonism to the Scottish claims to Britishness. We might say that Churchill's anti-Ossian satire betrays an anxiety concerning the diffusion of the Englishness, which takes the shape of an antagonism toward Britishness through affirmations of an English literary canonicity and of a discrete English masculinity, premised on the cultural myth of the Trueborn Englishman. As Juliet Shields notes, the Ossian controversy was largely historiographic and centering on the anachronistic nature of the refined sentiments that the Ossianic third-century Celtic warriors expressed.¹³⁴

Macpherson's Highland warriors blended a barbaric pugnacity with what Walter Scott described as "the courtesy, sentiment, and high-breeding" of Samuel Richardson's typified embodiment of genteel masculinity: Sir Charles Grandison.¹³⁵ Such an admixture of aggression and genteelness is usefully conveyed by Cuchullin: "But tho' my hand is bent on war, my heart is for the peace of Erin" (*Fingal*, I).¹³⁶ As Juliet Shields observes, the Ossian controversy notably put forward the construct of a racialised, primitive Celtic sensibility "that was compatible with a deracinated, civilized British sensibility".¹³⁷ In the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, as well as the parliamentary snub of the 1757 Militia Act, the figure of the Ossianic Highlander, however domesticated, provided an emasculated Scotland with a narrative of a heroic martial past, rather than one of embarrassing defeat.¹³⁸

Supported by a polygenetic historical narrative, the insularity of the Celts depicted by Macpherson posited a consanguineous and homogeneous pre-

¹³⁴ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 25.

¹³⁵ Walter Scott, "Review of Malcom Laing's *Poems of Ossian*" *Edinburgh Review* 6 (1805), p. 429, qtd. in Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 26.

¹³⁶ Gaskill, ed., *The poems of Ossian*, p. 56.

¹³⁷ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 28.

¹³⁸ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 44.

commercial society, uncorrupted by the degenerative effects of promiscuous luxury. More threatening was the way in which Macpherson's Celtic Highlander became valorised as a model of a sentimentalised masculinity, characterised by "a subtle balance of courage and compassion".¹³⁹ In his *An Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland* (1771), Macpherson indicates how Britons have traditionally failed to translate "great actions in the field" into written accounts produced with "dignity and precision in the closet".¹⁴⁰ Having acknowledged the imprecision of narratives of Britain's past, he goes on to state that the aim of *An Introduction* is to "dispel the shades which cover the antiquities of the British nations, to investigate their origin, to carry down some account of their character, manners, and government, into the times of record and domestic writers".¹⁴¹ Seemingly, Macpherson's agenda is to construct what paradoxically seems like a Whiggish Celtic *telos* for Great Britain. As *Fingal* implies and *An Introduction* makes explicit, Macpherson's Highland Celtic masculinity is situated at the germinal point of what Wilkite politics privileged as a decidedly English liberty, ensured through forms of mixed-government that originate from distinctively Gothic, or Anglo-Germanic sources.¹⁴²

Another way of thinking about Churchill's antagonism toward Macpherson involves considering what Jonathan Dollimore has theorised in *Sexual Dissidence* (1991) as the 'perverse dynamic'. In this early study of queer criticism, Dollimore engages a reading of the post modern in the early modern, and vice versa, and in doing so, offers a literary-historical reassessment of the Freudian theory of perversion that is attentive to both psychoanalytic and materialist concerns. In sum, the perverse dynamic accounts for what Dollimore identifies as the "paradoxical cultural centrality of homosexuality" in contemporary society.¹⁴³ The perverse dynamic: "signifies that fearful interconnectedness whereby the antithetical inheres within, and is partly produced by, what it opposes".¹⁴⁴ Dollimore's perverse dynamic "denotes certain

¹³⁹ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁰ James Macpherson, *An Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland* (Dublin: 1771), p. 4.

¹⁴¹ Macpherson, *An Introduction*, p. 5.

¹⁴² Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 42.

¹⁴³ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 33.

¹⁴⁴ Dollimore, p. 33.

instabilities and contradictions within dominant structures which exist by virtue of exactly what those structures simultaneously contain and exclude.”¹⁴⁵ The dynamism of Dollimore’s reading of perversion involves what he identifies as a process of “transgressive reinscription”.¹⁴⁶ He specifies this process in terms of the “proximate” of the perverse dynamic:

the proximate is often constructed as the other, and in a process which facilitates displacement. But the proximate is also what enables a tracking-back of the ‘other’ into the ‘same’. I call this transgressive reinscription, which, also provisionally, may be regarded as the return of the repressed and/or the suppressed and/or the displaced via the proximate. If the perverse dynamic generates internal instabilities within repressive norms, reinscription denotes an anti-essentialist, transgressive agency which might intensify those instabilities, turning them against the norms.¹⁴⁷

Read in this way, Macpherson’s sentimentalised Celtic Highlander is queerly proximate, related both temporally and geographically to the Wilkite Englishman.¹⁴⁸ As Fiona Stafford remarks, Macpherson’s translations provided an interpretation of a Celtic oral culture for an English metropolitan audience.¹⁴⁹ While the act of any translation maintains a notion of original difference even while erasing that difference, the similarity of Ossianic masculinity to the genteel manliness of English men affirms sameness rather than difference, functioning in terms of Dollimore’s perverse dynamic as a tracking back of the other Celt into the same Briton, a process of political redefinition in which Southern Britons became fragmentary and composite rather than constitutive.¹⁵⁰ Both Dollimore’s perverse dynamic and Freeman’s temporal drag provide frameworks that account for the xeno-effeminophobic anxiety of Churchill’s anti-Ossian poetry.

Ossianic celebration inherently enacts a diffusion of the sort of Wilkite masculinised Englishness that Churchill is committed to promoting and securing. Ossian threatens to assume the position of originator for a shifting and problematic mid-century formation of masculinity, while the favourable reception of Macpherson’s translations in England prompted reconsiderations of the outlines of a British literary canon. As Howard D. Weinbrot notes in

¹⁴⁵ Dollimore, p. 33.

¹⁴⁶ Dollimore, p. 33.

¹⁴⁷ Dollimore, p. 33.

¹⁴⁸ Dollimore, p. 33.

¹⁴⁹ Fiona Stafford, “Introduction”, *The Poems of Ossian and related works: James Macpherson*, Howard Gaskill, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. viii

¹⁵⁰ Dollimore, p. 33.

Britannia's Issue (1995), "Ossian soon penetrated into England", paradoxically promoting both Scottish and British pride, which "help[ed] to force a united kingdom to accept the implications of such a name".¹⁵¹ Thomas Gray, a practitioner of the sort of enervated form opposed by the Nonsense club was unsurprisingly pro-Ossian. After reading Macpherson's translated Gaelic poems Gray confessed to having "gone mad about them".¹⁵² Gray's enthusiastic embrace of Ossian is, in Churchill's view, indicative of the threatening erasure of English poetry within a reconceived British literary pantheon.

For Churchill, digression is "like a colt unbroken, /Spurning Connection, and her formal yoke" (*Gotham*, II, 205-206). Digression, the act of linguistically remaining a moving target, provides one way of creatively evading the sterility of formal sameness. Churchill's privileging of a digression demonstrates his antagonism towards the elasticity of Macpherson's Ossianic British identity. The opening of *Gotham*, II, makes explicit the connection between poetic and sexual expression. Poetic expression, as a feminised form, poses a problem for the male poet, who must "make proud sense against her nature bend, /And wear the chains of rime, yet call her friend" (27-28). Whereas Foppish poetry (Ossian and Odes) leans heavily on formal ornament, Churchill distinguishes his writing as being too careless and spontaneous for such deliberation:

Nothing of Books, and little known of men,
When the mad fit comes on, I seize the pen,
Rough as they run, the rapid thoughts set down,
Rough as they run, discharge them on the Town. (171-174)

Poetic production for Churchill is described in terms of progeny that are premature, though not Dunciadic: "Hence rude, unfinish'd brats, before their time, / Are born into this idle world of rime," (175-176). Whereas "Fops" dress up poetic expression to the point of distortion, Churchill argues that his poetry, even in its blunders, is more productive, feeding critical discourse and generating controversy, in contrast to unproductive sameness of more formally and

¹⁵¹ Howard D. Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature From Dryden To Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 540.

¹⁵² See Thomas Gray's letters of June 1760 to Wharton and Stonehewer, *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray* new. edn., H. W. Starr, 3 vols., Paget Taynbee and L. Whilbey, eds. (Oxford, 1935), 2: 692-685; See F. Stafford, "Introduction", p. v.

thematically restrained poets (191-194). Adherence to formal restraint denotes an effeminate inauthenticity, which is forcefully countered in *Independence* by Churchill's self-image as "The real *Bard*, whom native Genius fires" (297).

Formal restraint registers as inauthentic due to its very foreignness, as a native Genius is somehow more naturally accustomed to liberated verse. As Rounce notes, the sort of Scotophobia demonstrated by Churchill and Wilkes reveals far more about a definitional incoherence in 'Englishness' as a category during the 1760s, than it does about Scotland.¹⁵³ Critics have tended to read the virulent extremism of mid-century anti-Scottishness as evincing deepening divisions between North and South Briton. But as Linda Colley notes, English insecurity regarding Scotland at mid-century might be read instead in light of an increasing blurring of boundaries between the two nations.¹⁵⁴ Mid-century definitional problems with Englishness frequently took the shape of jeremiads on the alarming and escalating erosion of English national vigour. Whereas Macpherson's Celtic warriors are uncorrupted paragons of race purity and martial prowess, mid-century southern Britons according to John 'Estimate' Brown's diagnostics are "rolling to the Brink of a Precipice" due to a "vain, luxurious, and selfish Effeminacy".¹⁵⁵ Brown's apocalyptic perorations present an image of an enervated English state, populated with an androgynous and effeminate people, who can do little but panic when a "Mob of ragged Highlanders marched unmolested to the Heart of a populous Kingdom".¹⁵⁶ For Churchill, digression provides a formal way of vigorously maintaining difference (as Englishness) in the face of a sameness advanced under the shared name of Briton.

The Ghost is an English metropolitan mock epic, concerned with defensively demarcating a Wilkite Englishness, that is not, as Rounce rightly suggests, "mythic . . . [or] isolationist" but which relegates such mythicism to an Ossianic imaginary.¹⁵⁷ The digressive mastery of the multiple authorial voices of

¹⁵³ Adam Rounce, "Stuarts without End": Wilkes, Churchill, and Anti-Scottishness, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Volume 29, Number 3, Fall 2005, p. 26.

¹⁵⁴ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837* 2nd (ed.) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 121.

¹⁵⁵ John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (Dublin: G. Faulkner, J. Hoey, and J. Exshaw Booksellers, 1757), p. 12; p. 20.

¹⁵⁶ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁷ Rounce, "Stuarts without End", p. 25

The Ghost amounts to a formal, patriotic and sexual xeno-effeminophobic privileging of difference over sameness. Such a formal strategy is at the heart of a Wilkite project that is aggressively opposed to what Shields has identified as the feminised or sentimental model of masculinity that marks British identity as inclusive at mid-century.¹⁵⁸ In the relegating the Ossianic to a mythical imaginary, Churchill presents Enlightenment empiricism as an English practice that provides the best defence against foreign superstition. Importantly, for Churchill, this is an empiricism that privileges the haptic over the cognitive, putting bodies where dominant Enlightenment narrative would place Reason, or the mind. As Thomas Lockwood notes, this empirical tendency is represented throughout *The Ghost* in episodes that are consistently *felt* rather than *thought*.¹⁵⁹ By contrast, abstraction and orality are designated as thoroughly Scottish systems of exchange.¹⁶⁰ History for Churchill is haptic, being both felt through the body and perpetuated through bodies, which carry the mark of its passing. As Freeman argues, sensory modes of apprehending history were superseded at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the cognitive systematising of historical inquiry.¹⁶¹ In tracing this lost apprehension of history, she embarks upon a historiographical method termed “*erotohistoriography*”.¹⁶² For Freeman, erotohistoriography is a way of handling history that accounts for bodily response as a form of understanding. Such a practice also connects to the occluded understandings of the past that involved the pleasure of archival touch.

The Ghost's mock-pastoral scenes present an erotohistoriographical account of the history of Scottish inauthenticity, which connects negative somatic response with the absence of the archive. Though a sensory historical interpretative mode may have been supplanted by cognitive practice, Churchill's

¹⁵⁸ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁹ Lockwood, p. 52.

¹⁶⁰ Archibald Hamilton and his “polish'd falsehoods into public brought” (*The Apology*, 46), is the first example of Churchill's imaging of a dubious, and unfixed, Scottish discourse.

¹⁶¹ According to Freeman, by this time “history should be understood rather than felt, and written in a genre as clearly separable from fiction (if not from narrative) as possible”. See Freeman, p. 95.

¹⁶² In her reading of the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Freeman describes ‘erotohistoriography’ as being “distinct from the desire for a fully present past, a restoration of bygone times. Erotohistoriography admits that contact with the historical materials can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, even pleasurable ones, that are themselves a form of understanding. It sees the body as a method, and historical consciousness as something intimately involved with corporeal sensations”. See Freeman, pp. 95-96.

haptic historical touch, in its privileging of the dominant culture's written, tangible record over the Gaelic oral tradition, demonstrates the extent to which embodied history could be just as bound up with the exacting pressures of Enlightenment empiricism. The satiric references to Macpherson's dubious textual translations in *The Ghost* and *The Prophecy* become emblematic of Scottish cultural and political inauthenticity. As Rounce points out, Macpherson's duplicity reflects back upon his benefactor, Bute.¹⁶³ Macpherson's dedication of *Fingal* to the Earl of Bute translates aesthetic or textual dubiousness into political inauthenticity.

Notably, Celtic is a capacious and unsettled category for both Macpherson and Churchill. *The Ghost* views the Celtic periphery of Scotland as homogenous rather than as a heterogeneous place fragmented into Celtic Highlands and commercial Lowlands. However, the extent to which Macpherson sees the northern Celtic periphery encompassing Ireland is ambiguous.¹⁶⁴ Churchill's reaction to Macpherson's Ossian demonstrates an ideological antipathy to Britishness as a noun. In this way, the Trueborn Englishman conflates the Celtic fringes of Scotland and Ireland as populated by a homogenous tribe of fribbles. Just as the Irish fribblish is cast outside the boundaries of English heteronormative nationalism, Macpherson's translations register as simply another inauthentic textual body that Anglo-middle class masculinity must disavow.

Throughout the first book of *The Ghost*, Churchill groups together the following number of topical persons: Duncan Campbell, Elizabeth Canning, George Whitefield, Richard Baker, and most significantly, the disgraced military figure George Sackville Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville. The satiric inclusion of these media figures works to reaffirm Churchill's earlier poetic conflation of xenophobic and effeminophobic energies in *The Rosciad*. The first stanza of

¹⁶³ Rounce, "Stuarts without End", p. 24.

¹⁶⁴ In *Fingal*, Macpherson seems unconcerned about his conflation of Irish and Scottish Gaelic poetic narratives. At a time when historical narratives provided an anti-colonial discursive space for native assertion, Irish antiquarians such as Charles O Connor and Sylvester O'Halloran criticized Macpherson's undifferentiated use of Gaelic poetry, refuting particularly his confusion of the Fionn and Ulster cycles, his appropriation of Irish heroes, and his refusal to view the Scots as being of Irish origin. This response undoubtedly prompted Macpherson to re-examine Hiberno-Scottish Gaelic relationships in *Temora*. If nothing else, the Ossian controversy generated interest in Gaelic exegesis within both Protestant and Catholic intellectual circuits in Ireland. See Stafford, "Introduction", p. vii.

Book One begins with an historical overview of the development of Western occultism, which presents the figure of the “Sage” as a historical constant (*Ibid*, 14). Churchill proceeds to describe how “antient people” of “CHALDEAN” origins, “Gaz’d on the Stars, observ’d their motions, / And suck’d in Astrologic notions,” (*Ibid*, 23-26). In a botanic metaphor, Churchill outlines a cross-fertilisation of occultism from the Orient, moving geographically in the fourth stanza from Chaldee to Egypt.

In the following stanza, Ancient Greece and Rome are thus polluted through a climatic Mediterranean proximity to “fertile Egypt” (*Ibid*, 57). Churchill notes how the Grecian sages rhetorically and performatively borrowed from the Egyptians, a connection that undermines the “blind obedience pay[ed] to ancient schools” by an effeminate critical regime (*The Rosciad*, 185). The ‘cult of breath’ should be regarded within the context of a much earlier eighteenth-century philosophical and literary debate about the merits of ancient and modern learning, satirised by Jonathan Swift in *The Battle of the Books*, as “the terrible fight that happened on Friday last, between the ancient and modern books in the King’s Library”.¹⁶⁵ In general terms, the Ancients proposed that rhetoric and oratory with their allied skills of exegesis and persuasion could intellectually outweigh the Modern scientific study of material phenomena.¹⁶⁶ Within the first few stanzas, Churchill is therefore situating the “Bigots to Greece, and slaves to musty rules” as contemporary exponents of the cult of breath being historicised (*The Rosciad*, 186). The sixth stanza bridges the earlier section of the poem with the present through its reference to the cross-eyed George Whitefield, a Calvinistic-Methodist Church leader (*The Ghost*, I, 71-72). Spiritual rhetoric is particularly breathy, being bound up with the aural of a preacher’s sermon, rather than any material experience. Whitefield, or “the *squinting* Dame” possesses poor visual perception, which becomes an extended

¹⁶⁵ Jonathan Swift, *Jonathan Swift: A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, Angus Ross and David Woolley, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 108.

¹⁶⁶ In *The Ghost* and *The Prophecy* Churchill brackets the Ossianic text into the category of the Ancients, who worked to build on Classical knowledge through imitation. This implicit categorising of the Ossianic text suggests its imitative and therefore inauthentic status. In his antagonism toward the cult of breath Churchill seems firmly Modern being concerned with observation and quantification as empirical practices. For a discussion of the debate in the eighteenth-century between Ancients versus Moderns see Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: history and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 267-413.

metaphor throughout *The Ghost* for the cult of breath's neglect of the visual or material stimuli (II, 645). Churchill proceeds in a lengthy seventh stanza to document how a system of prophetic readings shaped political culture in the Roman Empire: "And ev'ry Crow was to the State / A sure interpreter of Fate" (*The Ghost*, I, 77-78). Churchill describes how the Roman "holy Seer", thinly veiled as Bute:

Officiously would interfere,
With pious arts and rev'rend skill
Would bend Lay Bigots to his will,
Would help or injure foes or friends,
Just as it serv'd his private ends. (*Ibid*, 98-102).

In Rome, military matters are decided by esoteric readings of "*double tripe*" or of an "*Ass's scull*" (*Ibid*, 90; 92). Usefully and playfully, the noun 'tripe' suggests both animal anatomy and verbal nonsense.

In an allusion to General George Sackville's display of cowardice at the battle of Minden 1759, Churchill writes: "When Gen'als would their station keep / Or turn their backs, *in hearts of sheep*" (*Ibid*, I, 94).¹⁶⁷ Here, the extension of animal anatomical imagery suggests the effeminising capacity of the prophetic as a regulatory system, while the turning of backs crudely connects cowardliness with sodomy. The description of Rome segues into an extended commentary on the corrupted English state, which is presented as "a fortune-telling host" (*Ibid*, 115). Scotchmen "Possess the gift of *second-sight*" and can "By lyes prophetic heap up riches, / And boast the luxury of breeches" (*Ibid*, 137-138). Scottish second sight is a densely worked political critique insofar as Jacobitism operates on a prophetic narrative, on the belief that at some point in the future the Hanoverians will be overthrown and the Stuart lineage restored. This is also a clear satire on Bute's extension of the culture of court preferment to parliament. Scotsmen are foreigners who can talk their way into positions that should be unavailable to them. Bute, who owes everything to Royal patronage, is assumed

¹⁶⁷ George Sackville Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville (1716-85), held the position of commander-in-chief of the British forces on the Rhine serving under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. At Minden in 1759, Sackville neglected to obey the prince's order to lead the British cavalry in pursuit of the French. Sackville was subsequently tried by court martial in 1760 and was found 'unfit' to serve in any military capacity. Churchill's reference to Sackville is the first instance in his poetry of his recurring indictment against an aristocratic form of effeminacy, which differs from his earlier demarcation of a fribblish masculinity in *The Rosciad*. See Grant, p. 487.

to exercise power even in retirement. His conferral of preferment is therefore postern — of the back door — a politics of patronage that is inherently and structurally sodomitical.

In an effort to satirically historicise the source of England's corruption, Churchill focuses on Duncan Campbell (1680?-1730), a popular Scottish seer, who was born both deaf and mute. Campbell succeeded as a juvenile prophet in Edinburgh before coming to London in 1694 to practice fortune telling.¹⁶⁸ For Churchill, Campbell fits the profile of the Scot who quits his "barren heaths" to "never venture back again" (*Ibid*, 133-136). He is also someone who clearly defeats the odds stacked against him: "Who *blind* could ev'ry thing *forsee*, / Who *dumb* could ev'ry thing *foretell*" (*Ibid*, 142-143). By way of historical allegory, the inclusion of Campbell facilitates a critique of Bute:

CAMPBELL foretold, just what he wou'd,
And left the Stars to make it good;
On whom he had impress'd such awe,
His dictates current pass'd for LAW;
Submissive all his Empire own'd;
No star durst smile, when CAMPBELL frown'd. (*Ibid*, 163-168)

Churchill represents Bute as simply another Scottish "fav'rite" who has come to London "To tell *our* fortunes, make *their* own" (*Ibid*, 174; 182). Bute remains in focus in the next section of *The Ghost*, I, which describes male heroism as rhetorical and breathy, as opposed to embodied and performed. For instance, Churchill presents William Talbot as a man of pleasure who plays at being a Statesman.¹⁶⁹ As an effeminately disordered aristocrat, the hero Talbot is better placed in fictional disorder "Amongst the chiefs of *Butcher-Row*" (*Ibid*, 203). Sackville is shown to exercise the same sort of prudence that Bute, in his tutelage of King George, advises at the close of *Night*. For both, heroism must be

¹⁶⁸ Grant, p. 486.

¹⁶⁹ In a letter describing his duel with Talbot, Wilkes articulates himself as "a private English gentleman", before moving on to acknowledge his opponent as "superior in rank, fortune and abilities . . . but . . . equal only in honour, courage, and liberty". While granting Talbot superiority in class and economic terms, Wilkes simultaneously deconstructs this superior image through effeminising language, when he describes how he first encountered Talbot "in an agony of passion" and "half frantic" before their duel see: Grafton, Augustus Henry Fitzroy, Duke of. *Letters between the Duke of Grafton, the Earls of Halifax, Egremont, Chatham, Temple, and Talbot, Baron Bottetourt, Rt. Hon. Henry Bilson Legge, Rt. Hon Sir John Cust, Bart. Mr. Charles Churchill, Monsieur Voltaire, the Abbé Winckleman, &c. &c. and John Wilkes, Esq. With Explanatory Notes.* (London, 1769), pp. 11-12.

exercised with caution and discretion. Sackville “talks as he were cannon-proof” yet ultimately, when threatened, his courage, as well as his body, fades (*Ibid*, 222).

The final couplet of the stanza elliptically arranges Bute with Sackville: “Whence *planet-struck* we often find / The - -, and SACKVILLES of mankind” (*Ibid*, 249-250). Heroic masculinity is shown to be of breath rather than substance. Sackville’s and Bute’s manliness is as phantasmic as the nominal subject of the poem, Fanny. In noting “That this same HONOUR may be won, / And yet no kind of danger run)”, Churchill demonstrates how honour has become meaningless (*Ibid*, 235-236). Honour, considered as a particular code shaping masculinity, is posited as mere rhetorical construction. “The *Man of War*”, who Churchill depicts as both Sackville and Talbot, plays at ‘honour’ by projecting machismo publicly in order to conceal a lack of interiorised heterosocial privacy (*Ibid*, 289). Mystic schools of art provide men like Talbot and Sackville with ergonomic risk-assessment guides for all potential challenges to their masculinity. Through prophetic divining, cowards like Sackville and Talbot can ascertain who is honourable and who is merely playing at ‘manliness’ through rhetorical self-construction. Moreover, in an apt simile, Honour is sexualised as being: “like a *Maidenhead*, / Which if in private brought to bed, / Is none the worse, but walks the town, / Ne’er lost, until the loss be known” (*Ibid*, 316-320). The Parson figure is equally duplicitous: “Fraid of detection, not of sin,” whose “*holy lust*” brings him “Thro’ some bye Alley, or Back-door” (*The Ghost*, I, 327; 325; 330). Notably, the Parson’s prophetic ritualising fails as a prophylactic measure: “With the same caution *Orthodox*, / Consults the *Stars*, and gets a *Pox*” (*Ibid*, 331-2). Quack doctors and critics are the modern day equivalent of the sages Churchill has been historicising.¹⁷⁰

The first book of *The Ghost* closes with references to both Mary Tofts, a woman who claimed to have given birth to rabbits, and Elizabeth Canning, a

¹⁷⁰ The *Critical Review* and the *Public Ledger*, as well as newspapers such as the *Gazetteer* and *London Daily Advertiser* are portrayed as disseminators of fanciful rhetoric (*Ibid*, 375-400). Richard Baker’s dubious *Chronicle of the Kings of England* is referenced at this point as a reminder that such discourse has the capacity to reformulate historicity, and that in some way, the overall imperative of historicising credulity in Book One, is itself a response to contemporary authors, such as Baker, who are careless with factuality. Conversely, the later reference to Lord Lyttleton’s (1709-73) excessive reprinting of a *History of Henry the Second* (four editions, 1755-71) satirises the search for historical accuracy (*The Prophecy*, 78). See Rounce, ed., *Charles Churchill: Selected Poetry* (Nottingham: Trent editions, 2003), p. 96.

servant girl who claimed in 1753 to have been abducted by a gypsy named Mary Squires. Having brought her to the house of a procuress Mrs. Wells in Enfield Wash, Canning reported that Squires stripped her of her clothes, and forcibly held her in a cold garret room, with only a small amount of bread and water, for nearly a month. Canning claimed that her captors attempted to force her into prostitution before she could climb out a window and, in a state of undress, walk back to her mother's house.¹⁷¹ Notably, there was also an erotic subtext to the scandal that figured the Sapphic desires of Canning's abductors. After the conviction of Squires and Wells, Sir Crisp Gascoyne, Lord Mayor of London, reopened the case, and the subsequent proceedings overturned Squires's conviction, eventually finding Canning guilty of perjury and sentencing her to transportation to America.¹⁷² The Canning controversy had been revived around the time of the publication of *The Ghost* as Squires's death had been reported in 1762 and it was generally believed that Canning had returned from transportation to collect a legacy of £500.¹⁷³ The controversy generated a pamphlet war in the 1750s between 'Canningites', such as Henry Fielding, who constructed Canning as "an inarticulate but creditable Pamela" and the 'Egyptians', such as Sir Crisp Gascoyne, who viewed Canning in terms of "suspect female sexuality".¹⁷⁴ Support for Canning skirted around the lack of material evidence for her incarceration, neglecting to offer an explanation for her unsoiled clothes, or specifically, for the absence of any signs of menstruation taken by her detractors as proof of perjury. Condemnations of Canning claimed that she was attempting to cover up venereal disease treatment or an abortion, and in these accounts, the female labouring-class body is figured as diseased and incapable of reproductivity.¹⁷⁵

As Sally O'Driscoll notes, depending on perspective, Canning could only either fulfil the role of pure and domestic womanhood, or its ill defined

¹⁷¹ Kristina Straub, "Heteroanxiety and the Case of Elizabeth Canning", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 30, no. 3, Only Connect: Family Values in the Age of Sentiment (Spring, 1997), p. 296.

¹⁷² Straub, "Heteroanxiety", p. 296.

¹⁷³ Tofts scandal occurred much earlier, in 1726, but was renewed in William Hogarth's satirical print *Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism* (1762). See Grant, p. 488.

¹⁷⁴ Straub, "Heteroanxiety", p. 298.

¹⁷⁵ Sally O'Driscoll, "Queerness, Class, and Sexuality", in *Queer People: Negotiations and Expressions of Homosexuality, 1700-1800*, Chris Mounsey and Caroline Gonda, eds. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), p. 78; Straub, "Heteroanxiety", p. 298.

“Other”.¹⁷⁶ At a time when anxieties about English identity were routed through broader anxieties concerning women’s sexuality (with gendered idealisations culturally available to contain both fears), the controversy exemplified what Straub terms “heteroanxiety”: a fear concerning the “reified heterosexual configuration of desire that is core to eighteenth-century, modern conceptions of the social”.¹⁷⁷ Canning’s case complicated the idea of the chaste domestic woman by illuminating the instability of the role’s definitional boundaries. In *The Ghost*, Canning’s sexually suspect labouring-class body becomes abstracted along with that of Fanny Lynes, as a non-presence, a non-entity. If the narrative of Canning’s incarceration somehow troubled the parameters of the domestic woman (and of Englishness) as Straub suggests, then her conflation in *The Ghost* with Mary Tofts, the woman who gave birth to rabbits, signifies the sterile and incredible outside of the productive heterosocial. For Churchill, superstition is just another obstruction to liberty, which in turn fits into a wider moral and personal preoccupation with “freedom versus restraint”.¹⁷⁸ Notably, while the labouring-class female body is defined as “Other” to middle-class domestic femininity, it is upper-class men, such as Sackville and Talbot, who provide a benchmark for middling-sort English masculinity. Just as Canning is conflated with Fanny, these men enact rhetorical performances of machismo for the courtly society that are by all accounts spectral. Just like Fanny, they too “only talks by sounds and signs” and significantly, “will not to the eye appear, / But pays [their] visits to the ear” (*Ibid*, 518; 519-520).

Book II of *The Ghost*, published alongside Book I in March 1762, begins with a discussion of the restraint of artistic convention, before Churchill, in a Shandean-like admission of textual disorientation, decides upon his mistress “Arrow” as a muse, who will help him to his “journey’s end” (*The Ghost*, II, 119; 118). It is unclear whether or not Churchill’s journey will end in orgasm, or finalised poetic expression, or both.¹⁷⁹ The conflation of heterosexual drive and

¹⁷⁶ O’Driscoll, p. 79.

¹⁷⁷ Straub, “Heteroanxiety”, pp. 298-297.

¹⁷⁸ Lockwood, p. 28.

¹⁷⁹ What is clear, however, is that Churchill considered (hetero) sexual and poetic expression as closely related practices. For example, John Wilkes states in a letter dated June 15th 1762 (after the publication of the first two books of *The Ghost*) “Pray remember the ghost for me to-night, and next monday we meet at Medmenham.”, Churchill’s drafting of at least books III and IV of *The Ghost* was contiguous with his attendance at Sir Francis Dashwood’s debauched orgies at Medmenham Abbey. Churchill’s reply, dated July 13th, humorously boasts that his writing is

poetic expression figures in book II with Churchill's rejection of contemporary poets who obsequiously bow to the pressures of tradition: "court an *antiquated Muse?*" (*Ibid.*, 80). In contrast to this breathiness, Churchill's muse is present and tangible. Significantly, an epistemological privileging of the haptic emerges as the foundation of Churchill's antagonism toward the cult of breath, which is condensed in Book II into the figures of Pomposo (Samuel Johnson) and Trifle (William Legge, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth). Both Pomposo's verbosity and Trifle's lengthy digressive oration mark their love of a "fluency of speech, / [that] Would various *mighty nothings* teach" (*Ibid.*, 565-6).

In yet another Shandean admission, the speaker confesses that he has been led by a "wild excursive FANCY . . . / Into a second Book thus far, / Like some unwary *Traveller*" (*Ibid.*, 106-8). The adjective 'unwary' appositely suggests the attitude that digression amounts to an artistically courageous form of masculine assertion. What, perhaps, becomes clearest when reading Book II is Churchill's desire to avoid the containment and restraint bound up with artistic emphasis on any one particular subject. The most coherent section of this Book, perhaps, is Churchill's invocation of a "Solemnly dull, and truly sad!" form of 'truth' (*Ibid.*, 168). Recalling Pope's verse on Swift in *The Dunciad*, Churchill informs us that the truth he wishes to summon does not have the easy mien that won over Swift, nor is it Rabelais's strumpet truth, or Cervantes's ambiguous value.¹⁸⁰ This truth is a surprisingly sober one, entirely distanced from the humorous revelations of Sterne's prose.

Truth, which appears as a rather dull value, is a "down-right *City TRUTH*" with "Deportment grave, and garments plain" which are opposed to the performative and deceptive pomp and ceremony of the Court (*Ibid.*, 198; 210). The twentieth stanza is a rather long digression that situates Churchill's particular truth is inherited from the patriarchal triumvirate of the scientific revolution: Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle and Sir Isaac Newton. In the same stanza, there is a digression concerning William Lauder, which intensifies the

subsumed in frenzied heteroerotic exchanges: "Where is the Ghost. Faith I cannot tell—the flesh has engross'd so much of my care that I have never once thought of the Spirit", See Weatherly, *The Correspondence*, pp. 3-5.

¹⁸⁰ See *The Dunciad Variorum*, i. 19-22; See also Grant, p. 489.

satiric attack on Johnson.¹⁸¹ The particular truth Churchill calls on is akin to the desire for authenticity within the national canon that urged Douglas to expose Lauder as a ‘traitor’. The cruel jibe Polypheme signifies both a figurative and literal obscured perception. Johnson is charged with intellectual elitism and is depicted as removed from the main eddies of intellectual discourse: “Who, proudly seiz’d of *Learning’s* throne, / Now damns all Learning but his own” (*Ibid*, 665-6). Johnson is lampooned as egotistical and tyrannical: “Whose ev’ry word is Sense and Law,” (*Ibid*, 656). A decade later, Johnson would revive the Ossianic controversy by calling on Macpherson to produce the source texts in his *Journey to the Western Isles* (1775), an account of his tour of Scotland with James Boswell.

There is an important transitory connection here between the fraudulence of Lauder and the charge of Macpherson’s forgery. Another form of ‘truth’ inspires critics to “track FINGAL in the *Highland* snow,” and to form their judgements, “From *Manuscripts* they cannot read.” (*Ibid*, 234; 236). The very materiality of the English literary canon is shown as being under attack from the proponents of the cult of breath in the form of Lauder and, ironically, Johnson. Scottish literary culture, in its Gaelic orality, is threateningly amorphous. Scots like Macpherson can ‘write’ their own literary culture into a ‘national canon’, subsuming English literary culture into a reconceptualised British canonical framework. Here it would seem as if Churchill is aligning himself with Douglas as a defender of an English literary tradition, which now faces ruin from the cult of breath’s undermining of print. This is a degeneration, which strategically has (as will become evident from *The Prophecy of Famine*) Scotland as its locus. Through the use of the disjunctive method, truth is presented as a semantically slippery value, one that alarmingly can be both invoked to defend and corrupt English cultural forms.¹⁸²

Churchill’s marshalling of the crowd in *The Ghost* resonates with the “motley mixture” of dunces that Pope’s Goddess Dulness summons in *The Dunciad* (II, 21). Yet upon closer examination the composition of the crowd

¹⁸¹ Lauder infamously had attempted to prove, by forgery that Milton was a plagiarist and, as Churchill recalls, had secured the support of the “*Letter’d POLYPHEME*” Samuel Johnson, who “Like a base Coward, Skulk’d behind” after Dr. John Douglas disproved Lauder’s accusation in his pamphlet *Milton vindicated from the charge of plagiarism* (1751) (*Ibid*, 230; 232). See Grant, p. 489.

¹⁸² Bertelsen, p. 114.

assembled at Cock lane is revealing for its implied conflation of asexual or sodomitical sterility with the nothingness of the spectral:

Ladies, who to a *Spirit* fly,
Rather than with their husbands lie;
Lords, who as chastely pass their lives
With *other* Women as their *Wives*;
Proud of their intellects and cloaths,
Physicians, Lawyers, Parsons, Beaux,
And, truant from their desks and shops,
Spruce Temple Clerks, and 'Prentice Fops,
To FANNY come, with the same view,
To find her false, or find her true. (*Ibid*, 293-300)

Sexually unresponsive women (who should be in bed with their husbands, as 'Arrow' is with Churchill); asexual Lords; middle-class artificial arbiters of 'taste'; and lower-class effeminate shop assistants all wait to hear a scratch or a knock.

He said, no need to say it twice,
For THRICE she *knock'd*, and THRICE, and THRICE. (*Ibid*, 327-8)

The crowd's initial reaction (including Trifle, Pomposo and Patience) is one of genuine terror and silence. Even the "*Immane POMPOSO*" cannot compose himself sufficiently to "T'import one crabbed foreign word" (*Ibid*, 335-356).

The verbal response, when it comes, is described in a series of dehumanising and xenophobic metaphors as unintelligible. The audience emit the noise of "chatt'ring Geese", a noise that could also be described as the language that "Discord" speaks, which is geographically specified as belonging to "*Welch women*" or to the "confus'd and horrid sounds / of *Irish* in Potatoe grounds" (*Ibid*, 343-48). The sounds of the Celtic periphery are depicted here as Fribblish and inhuman. Such emphasis on the unintelligibility of the Celtic fringes is itself a reaction to the primitivism of Macpherson's *Fingal* and *Temora*. As Luke Gibbons notes, Macpherson claimed that Ossian, against the "mere provincialism of the bards" wrote in more universal sphere, a fact that allowed Macpherson to gloss over the specificities of Gaelic culture that would "prevent cross-cultural communication — and, by extension, citizenship, the

capacity to become a citizen of the world”.¹⁸³ It is in response to Macpherson’s lack of context that Churchill specifies the sounds of the Celtic fringe, as a way of collapsing the Ossianic universality that would confer the title of ‘citizen of the world’ on its inhabitants.

What follows is Trifle’s long oration on the subject of the afterlife, which is, by any estimation, simply a waste of breath. He talks not for a set agenda or clearly defined purpose, but rather, in order to produce something to fill the void left by Fanny’s non-presence. Through Trifle, with his rhetorical regime of strategically placed coughs and pauses, Churchill mocks orators who “Talk not for *our* sake, but their *own*” (*Ibid*, 372). Trifle’s view of the afterlife involves a long specification of ‘justice’ and several visions of purgatory and heaven, one in which “*plaintive* FOPS, debauch’d by GRAY, / All sit together in a ring, / And laugh and prattle, write and sing” (*Ibid*, 518-20). The reference to Gray’s same-sex debauchery clearly extends Colman and Lloyd’s sodomophobic satirising of the poet in *Two Odes* (1760). Finally, Trifle arrives at some sort of agenda: “POMPOSO, PLAUSIBLE, and I, / With FANNY, have agreed to try / A deep concerted scheme. This night, / To fix, or to destroy HER quite” (*Ibid*, 589-92).

As mentioned earlier, in order to achieve this, the investigative committee must descend into the vaults to ask Fanny to sound out her presence with a knock. Once again, the noise emitted by the spectators upon receipt of this plan is unintelligible, and for an entire stanza Churchill debates which simile might best convey this aural unintelligibility. Johnson’s multi-syllabic verbosity, strengthened by research for his *Dictionary* (1755), is portrayed by Churchill as a means of strategic obfuscating: “Who, to increase his native strength, / Draws words, six syllables in length” (*Ibid*, 673-74). Rather than these breathy oratorical strategies, Churchill proposes to “Relate plain Facts; be brief and bold;” as opposed to the obscure “*Flounces* and *Furbeloes* in Rhime” of the oracular poets (*Ibid*, 803; 802). Significantly, ‘straight-talking’ poetics leads to an anti-climax, with a brief description of the committee’s descent “Into the vaulted womb of Death” (*Ibid*, 597): “SILENT ALL THREE WENT IN, ABOUT / ALL THREE TURN’D SILENT, AND CAME OUT.” (*Ibid*, 807-8).

¹⁸³ Gibbons, p. 217.

Breathy rhetoric can never reach a satisfactory climax, as it is bound up with an economy of pleasure that must be continually deferred if it is to be, at all, sustained.

The following instalment of *The Ghost* operates on the basis of deferred meaning. According to Lance Bertelsen, Book III features as the “high water mark” of Churchill’s “aesthetic of spontaneity”.¹⁸⁴ The first stanza offers a clichéd panoramic view of rural morning activity, while the third stanza presents the poet’s unconstrained free-flowing movement through temporality and space: “Free as the Air, and unconfin’d, / Swift as the motions of the Mind, The POET darts from place to place, / And instant bounds o’er Time and Space” (*The Ghost*, III, 33-6). The mock-pastoral description of rural morning and the proclamation of freedom that accompanies it, as Bertelsen notes, are followed, not by a return to the subject of the poem, but rather by a shifting digression on Rogues of Modesty that terminates with a self-conscious admission of digression.¹⁸⁵ The admission is at once a feigned apology for the unwieldiness of the poetic narrative, while it also serves as a description of a breathy and insubstantial rhetoric: “things of no consequence expressing, *Describing* now, and now *digressing*” (*Ibid*, 61-2). What is most obviously being expressed here is creative freedom. This sense of freedom is seemingly positive, yet early references to Macpherson’s embellishments prefigure this ‘freedom’ in the negative:

When happy Bards, who can regale
Their Muse with country air and ale,
Ramble afield, to Brooks and Bow’rs,
To pick up *Sentiments* and *Flow’rs*; (*Ibid*, 1-6)

Churchill proceeds to invoke an infantilised William Whitehead (1715-85), the poet laureate, who is depicted as a “Sworn foe to Satyr’s gen’rous stroke” (*Ibid*, 164-5). Whitehead had published *A Charge to the Poets* (1762), a guide for aspiring poets which charged both *The Rosciad* and *The Actor* with Garrick fanaticism.¹⁸⁶ After a stationary moment, “Pois’d in mid-air —” (*Ibid*, 181), the Shandean speaker jolts on to a further digression concerning “an ancient Dame”

¹⁸⁴ Bertelsen, p. 109.

¹⁸⁵ Bertelsen, p. 109.

¹⁸⁶ Grant, pp. 492-493.

named “FAME” (*Ibid*, 191-2). What follows is a rather lengthy passage, steered by Fame, a feminised abstraction that substitutes Macpherson’s virtuous Celtic female character for an ignoble “Hag” (*Ibid*, 216).

The passage on Fame in Book III animates a central preoccupation of *The Ghost*: the tension between the aristocratic court and the city. In what follows, the poorly sequenced coronation procession of George III on the 22nd of September is juxtaposed against the heterosocial bourgeois reception of the Royal family at the Guildhall on the 9th of November 1761. Another popular city spectacle, the Sign-painters’ exhibition, features during Fame’s digressive panoramic view of the metropolis, thus extending the poem’s structuring of a court-Buteite versus city-Pitt-Beckford opposition into the realm of aesthetics.¹⁸⁷ As Bertelsen notes, the exhibition of painted signboards and carved symbols generated “a forced recognition of both the graphic and semiotic richness of the ubiquitous commercial ‘art’ pervading everyday life”.¹⁸⁸ Both William Hogarth and Bonnell Thornton were seemingly interested in the way in which the Sign-painters’ exhibition troubled the assumption that the exhibition space was for ‘buyers of art’ rather than the ordinary Londoner.¹⁸⁹

The exhibition, while disturbing the conception of ‘art’ as the privilege of the upper classes, also functioned to promote a metropolitan alternative to foreign or classical aesthetic models. While native English sign boards signalled a popular and commercially metropolitan form of art, the accompanying performance of an “Ode on Saint Caecilia’s Day” adapted to the “Ancient British Musick” of plebeian instruments of the hurdy-gurdy, Jew’s harp, saltbox, and marrow bone and cleaver, added a decidedly aural Englishness to the

¹⁸⁷ Bonnell Thornton’s *The St. James’s Chronicle* appeared in 1761 with an advertisement announcing the ‘hoax’ exhibition of signboards. The exhibition was organised by Thornton, with input from other ‘Nonsense club’ members Robert Lloyd, George Colman, Churchill, and William Hogarth. Controversy had arisen in 1761 when Hogarth and other artists left the ‘Society of Arts’ due to its “heavy-handed directorship and its insistence on hanging amateur and professional pictures side by side”, The ‘Society of Artists’, was thus formed, exhibiting on the 9th of May, just after the ‘Society of Arts’ exhibition, which had opened on the 27th of April.¹⁸⁷ By the following year, Hogarth had left the Society of Artists and was prepared to be involved in Thornton’s ‘Sign-Painters’ exhibition, which opened on the 22nd of April 1762. The exhibition catalogue featured a collection of sign-boards, ninety-seven in total, resembling signing that could be typically seen throughout the metropolitan centre, over shop fronts and courtyards. Hogarth, under the name of ‘Hagarty’, was involved in this carnivalesque display and humorously embellished signs. See Bertelsen, p. 138; p. 143.

¹⁸⁸ Bertelsen, p. 149.

¹⁸⁹ Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth Volume 3 Art and Politics, 1750-1764* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993), p. 357.

exhibition's visual catalogue.¹⁹⁰ Just as Thornton privileged the expressiveness of English in *City Latin* (1760), in *The Ghost*, the 'natural' "artless *Eloquence*" of the female parliament of Billingsgate fish market is fore-grounded as a space of authentic 'native' expression (III, 1219-1220).¹⁹¹ Furthermore, in *The Ghost*, metropolitan space is zoned as the very citadel of Englishness, in an aesthetic and political context that privileges and promotes a national and seemingly inauthentic British homogeneity over and above the terrain, both symbolic and real, of specific English locality. In contrast to Thomas Sheridan's standardised, and decidedly British, elocution of the "Pew'rer's-Hall" lectures, Churchill presents both the orality and auralty of "an ample square of sacred ground" of London, "Where artless *Eloquence* presides, / And *Nature* ev'ry sentence guides." (*Ibid.* 1218-20). As Brunström notes, with no informed appreciation for cultural diversity, Sheridan "regarded local accents as a barrier, something that over-determined communities and individuals in discriminatory and wasteful ways".¹⁹² Churchill's animus is a reaction to the Enlightenment citizenry of the World; deployed here by Sheridan as a citizenry of the English-speaking world secured through elocutionary exactness.

Such a response comes with Book III's description of the Tower of London, the site where "*Rebel* SCOT hath often bled," lie "*Female parliaments*" where both "*French*" (polite or aristocratic society) and "*Erse*" (Celtic Other) are disdained and the "Honours of the *Vulgar Tongue*" are celebrated (*Ibid.* 1221; 1225-8). In keeping with Churchill's praise of female actors in *The Rosciad*, English women emerge here once again as emblematic of a 'natural' and uncorrupted Southern racial and (hetero) sexual purity. Moreover, this framing emerges in structural tension with the aberrance of the Celtic Fribble. The representation of Scotland as the Goddess Famine in *The Prophecy* forecloses the feminising of Scotland as an attractive 'bride' or 'maiden' in national literary narratives of Anglo-Scottish Union post 1707. In fact, the Union itself is

¹⁹⁰ Paulson, *Hogarth*, p. 338.

¹⁹¹ Bonnell Thornton's satirical essay, *City Latin* (1760), while critiquing the poor use of Latin on an inscription dedicated to William Pitt, also questioned why the inscription could not be written in the "native language". Thornton's essay playfully privileges the expressiveness of native English against foreign or classical linguistic systems. See Bonnell Thornton, *City Latin, or Critical and Political remarks on the Latin Inscription on Laying the First Stone of the Intended New Bridge at BLACK FRIARS* (London: 1760), pp. 1-35.

¹⁹² Brunström, *Thomas Sheridan's Career*, pp. 114-5.

allegorised as an “ill match’d pair” of men, whose horses, one “fat and sleek” the other “lean and bare”, suggest a union of unequal states: “And POVERTY was yoked with PRIDE” (*Ibid.* 1701-6). While the metropolitan space is demarcated from the foppish Court and from the Celtic periphery, Book III demonstrates through its satiric dialogue between Dullman (Samuel Fludyer, Lord Mayor of London) and Crape (Lewis Bruce, Fludyer’s Chaplain) that this urban space is under corrupt and Buteite control. After discussing the report of the investigative committee, Dullman decides to pronounce the affair a plot and to arrange for a citizens’ assembly, which provides the scene of the ultimate exhibition at the close of *The Ghost*. Book IV exposes Dullman’s duplicity, in a speech ventriloquizing Bute’s advice to his royal charge in *Night*: “In public, CRAPE, You must appear, / Whilst I in privacy sit here, . . . / And, you performing what I bid, / Do all, as if I nothing did.” (*The Ghost*, IV. 1485-90). Crape is Dullman’s puppet, just as George III is portrayed not as a Bolingbrokean Patriot king but as Bute’s “Puppet king” (*Ibid.* 174).

The expression of Dullman’s political cautiousness in sending Crape as a proxy to the citizens’ assembly further emphasises the pederastic control of the king. Book IV contains a rather lengthy section that deals with the tension between the abstractions of Reason and Fancy, which uncovers the way in which Fancy masks the operation of political power. Fancy for Churchill is power with Reason featuring as its critique. It is an energetic abstraction that allows William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield, to literally change his form: “Creates, and makes himself new o’er, / Mocks boasted vain *Reality*, And *Is*, whate’er he wants to Be” (*Ibid.*, 308-10). In a Foucauldian sense, Fancy designates the “omnipresence of power”, its diffusion across a complex matrix as opposed to its totalisation in any particular structure.¹⁹³ As the speaker exclaims: “FANCY to me is All in All” (*Ibid.*, 291-2). Though Fancy appears weighted as a positive value, Mansfield’s emergence conveys a certain performativity and duplicity, which is grouped under the sign of Fancy. Initially unnamed, Mansfield emerges “In *foreign* garments”, in “glossy *Plaid*” and is identifiable through the symbolic “*White Rose*” (*Ibid.*, 1807-1813). The unnamed Mansfield is presented as the stereotypically duplicitous Scot: “Faithful to James he still remains, / Tho’ he the

¹⁹³ Michel Foucault, *The Will To Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: I*, Robert Hurley, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 93.

friend of George appear: / *Dissimulation's Virtue here*" (*Ibid*, 1848-50). Playing into popular anxieties at mid-century, the Mansfield figure enacts the threatening performance of a rough north invading the south. In an image that receives fuller treatment in *The Prophecy*, Mansfield's Jacobitism is described in terms of an infection: "Born in a Country, *where the will / Of One is Law to all*, he still / Retain'd th' infection, with full aim / To spread it wheresoe'er he came" (*Ibid*, 1863-6). The closing passage recalls the monstrous portraiture of fribble in *The Rosciad*, in so much as Mansfield's closeted self is thoroughly dehumanised as a "savage Monster" and the last and formally *closed* couplet enacts the Buteite distinction between an individual's closeted (closed-off) and public personhood: "And burning with the glorious flame / Of Public Virtue, MANSFIELD came" (*Ibid*, 1933-1934).

A central critique of courtly spectacle emerges in Book IV with a lampooning of the king's coronation procession, which ridicules Talbot and his horse as 'Bellerophon' and 'Pegasus' (*The Ghost*, IV, 923-38). Churchill derisively conflates both rider and horse: "To twist and twine, both Horse and Man, . . . / We scarce could think they were not one?" (*Ibid*, 935; 938).¹⁹⁴ In its very backwardness, Talbot's embarrassing horsemanship registers the anality traditionally ascribed to the sexual economy of the court. Not only does Churchill allude to the trope of the courtly sodomite, the lines that follow depict a Buteite-engineered class and racial degeneration: "Bring the names of *new-coin'd* Peers, / Who walk'd, Nobility forgot, / With shoulders fitter for a knot," (*Ibid*, 940-3). *North Briton*, No. XII (Saturday, August 22, 1762) wryly notes how these sixteen peers "are given their pensions for services that will be performed".¹⁹⁵ Not only is the Court being scotchified but genteel Londoners are being excluded from its society: "Tell how our City-Chiefs, disgrac'd, / Were at an empty table plac'd" (*Ibid*, 953-4). Both Books III and IV construct a binary of metropolitan England opposing the mystifications of a rural and Celtic peripheral

¹⁹⁴ A similar lampooning of Talbot's performance appeared in *The North Briton*, No. XII: "Lord Talbot's horse, like the great Planet in *Milton*, *danc'd a-bout in various rounds his wand'ring course*. At different times he was *progressive, retrograde, or standing still*. The *progressive* motion I should rather incline to think the merit of the *horse*, the *retrograde* motion, the merit of the *Lord*". See John Wilkes, *The North Briton: Revised and corrected by the author. Illustrated with explanatory notes, and a copious index of names and characters. In two volumes.* (London, 1766), p. 63.

¹⁹⁵ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 62.

space. The court functions as an interior contaminated zone, as a place for Scots to circulate, securing positions and preferment. This Wilkite binarism of city versus a Celtic court presents the Scots as internal colonisers of the metropole.

Put in this light, the noun Britishness marks the linguistic achievement of a process of internal colonisation, which reads the difference of the Celt as sameness of Britishness. Book III offers the most coherent anti-Ossian and anti-British diatribe of the entire work. After a passage burlesquing Pope's story of 'Pan and Lodona' in *Windsor-Forest* (1713), the speaker announces that England, the destination of the poem, has become "the Scene" (*The Ghost*, III. 423):¹⁹⁶

Tho' Worlds on Worlds should rise between,
Whither we must our course pursue)
ENGLAND should call into review
Times long since past indeed, but not
By ENGLISHMEN to be forgot,
Tho' ENGLAND, *once* so dear to Fame,
Sinks in GREAT BRITAIN'S *dearer* name. (*Ibid.* 424-30).

Calling into "review" "times long past" involves for Macpherson a reorientation of developmental origins for the category of 'Great Britain'. As Shields notes, it involves a shifting of origins from Gothic or Anglo-Saxon to Celtic, or rather a substitution of Whiggism for Celtic whiggism.¹⁹⁷ For Churchill, such a re-writing of English history as a comparative, rather than formative element in British nation building, alarmingly promotes a diffuse notion of Englishness and of English masculinity. A re-writing of what was perceived as Scotland's barbaric and aggressive militant past undermines the aggressively heteronormative and xenophobic Whiggism, which features in Wilkite political culture. The acceptance of the Ossianic warrior results in a confusion of the axioms of Wilkite political culture, as the Ossianic text posits Celtic space as the germinal point for formations of nation and of normative masculine embodiment.

The Prophecy of Famine is a complex response to this Ossianic historiographical anxiety. The poem's mock-pastoral reinstates typically

¹⁹⁶ Weatherly, "Churchill's", p. 63.

¹⁹⁷ Shields, *Sentimental literature*, p. 42.

xenophobic imaginings of the Scottish as poverty-stricken, hungry, infected, and unrelentingly rapacious, while also adding an intense sexual frustration to this descriptive catalogue. *The Prophecy* presents itself as an anthropological demystification of the Northern Celtic periphery. Notably the fraudulence of the Ossianic text is consistently reiterated: “Thence issued forth, at great MACPHERSON’s call, / That *old, new, epic Pastoral*, FINGAL” (*The Prophecy*, 129-30). *The Ghost* also heavily invests its energies in disturbing this Ossianic *telos*. The two stanzas after Fame’s flight trade on the dissonance between the Ossianic Scottish man and the abject Wilkite Scottish ‘Other’. Churchill mentions that historical writing could frame a picture of “*Chiefs of old*, / In plain and rugged honour bold, / To Virtue kind, to Vice severe” (*The Ghost*, III. 431-433). These warriors were “*Patriots*, whom in her *better days* / *Old Rome* might have been proud to raise, / . . . And, when they could do no more, THEY DIED” (*Ibid*, 437-438; 442). The emphasis here is on the ghostly or spectral quality of these distant historical figures. In keeping with the nominal subject of the poem, the Ossianic heroic warrior is thoroughly emasculated, being relegated to the past or more specifically to a place of haunting, coterminous with Fanny, to a place of almost mythic or fictional instability.

As Churchill reminds us: “Nothing is sure and stable found, / The very *Earth* itself turns round” (*Ibid*, 413-414). Yet, what is observable or quantifiable in *The Ghost*, are contemporary Scots, who in contrast to the Ossianic hero are: “A servile, mean, degen’rate race, / *Hirelings*, who valued nought but gold, / By the best Bidder bought and sold, / Truants from Honour’s sacred Laws, / Betrayers of their Country’s cause” (*Ibid*, 444-48). If the source of the text’s fraudulence hinges on the anachronism of Macpherson’s sentimentalised warrior, it is crucial to note how such an argument operates by registering Macpherson’s construction of masculinity as culturally defective and ultimately misplaced. Celtic warriors cannot display politeness or any refinement of feeling because the gestation required for such gendered subjectivities is entirely lacking. A century later, such a racialised stadial view of historical development and its corollary exclusions would reach its apotheosis in the nineteenth-century British liberal

colonialism that “political institutions such as representative democracy are dependent on societies having reached a particular ... level of civilization”.¹⁹⁸

As Uday Singh Mehta argues, the contours of such liberalism in the nineteenth century connected India with Britain’s Celtic ‘pre-history’ as a way of both including and simultaneously excluding India from political self-representation.¹⁹⁹ In this way, such an analogy seemingly accounted for India’s ‘anomalous’ position within Britain’s imperial narrative. Yet, contradictorily, for Churchill, the English colonialism that affects the Celtic fringe is to be maintained, while Europe’s colonisation of the more distant regions is critiqued in *Gotham*, I, as a brutalising practice carried out in the name of Christian piety:

the Man, who finds an unknown Country out,
By giving it a name acquires, no doubt,
A Gospel title, tho’ the people there
The pious Christian thinks not worth his care.
Bar this pretence, and into air is hurl’d
The claim of EUROPE to the *Western World*. (7-12)

More than a critique of the European self-appointed task of mapping the ‘unknown’ world, *Gotham* presents colonialism as an abuse of the natural right of the native peoples:

His royal master’s name thereon engrav’d,
Without more process, the whole race enslav’d,
Cut off that Charter they from Nature drew,
And made them Slaves to men they never knew. (*Ibid*, 19-22)

Given Churchill’s support for the continuation of the Seven Years’ War, a conflict that laid the foundations of the British Empire, his spirited attack on the ideology of Western imperialism in *Gotham* seems highly insincere. However, in the lines that follow, Churchill makes an important distinction between the ‘Gothamite’ colonialism of England and the more dishonourable practices of Spain and France. While Spanish and French colonisers merely reproduce abroad

¹⁹⁸ Uday Singh Metha, *Liberalism And Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 81.

¹⁹⁹ As Metha points out, the nineteenth-century British liberal thinker James Mill in his *History of British India* asserts an analogy between Indian society (The Brahmens) and the society of Celtic Druids: “The Druids among the ancient Britons . . . possessed many similar privileges and distinctions to those of the Brahmens”, qtd. in Singh Metha, p. 75.

the very conditions of slavery that they experience at home, Churchill argues that Gothamite colonialism can never engender slavish conditions because they are incompatible with the enjoyment of English liberty by English men:

An ENGLISHMAN, in *charter'd* FREEDOM born,
Shall spurn the slavish merchandize, shall scorn
To take from others, thro' base private views,
What He himself would rather die, than lose. (*Ibid*, 49-52)

While Adam Rounce reads *Gotham*, Book I, as an unusual Churchillian critique of colonialism,²⁰⁰ any understanding of Churchill's anti-colonialism (however unusual) should also acknowledge the way in which Gothamite authority or English colonialism is sanctioned within what could be more properly described as a critique not of colonialism wholesale, but of the practices of Britain's colonial competitors.

English men, "blest with LIBERTY, reveres her plan" and thus would refuse both a savage's "childish hire" and his selling of "his Country for a bit of glass" (*Ibid*, 40; 44). Of course, in making such a claim, Churchill's interest lies in establishing England and English men as bound to the cause of Liberty, which transcends material concerns. In *The Ghost*, part of Churchill's anti-Ossian critique involves a strategic depiction of the Scots as unpatriotic sell-outs. In using the term 'Hirelings', Churchill rehearses a prevalent xenophobic characterisation of the Scot as disloyal and unfixed, or placeless, while also commenting on the Treaty of Paris as a Scottish peace that has been achieved through bribery.²⁰¹ He also alludes here to Johnson's *Dictionary* where pension is detailed as recompense for state hirelings.²⁰² Scots are "Slaves to the *Minion of an Hour*, / Lacquies, who watch'd a *Favourite's* nod, / And took a *Puppet* for their *God*" (*The Ghost*, III, 450-452). What began as a description of Macpherson's indistinct sentimental Celtic Warrior gradually evaporates over the course of two stanzas to reveal a picture of the practices of all those (including George III) who are in the service of the Scottish ministry. The Ossianic imagining of a sentimentalised male Scot is exchanged for its primary symbolic

²⁰⁰ Rounce, *Charles Churchill*, p. 110.

²⁰¹ For commentary on the 'unplaced' Scot at mid-century see Penny Fielding, *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography: North Briton, 1760-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 13-40; See also Grant, p. 495.

²⁰² Rounce, *Charles Churchill*, p. 98.

competitor, the stereotype of the servile, disloyal, and ruthless Scot ‘on the make’. The remainder of Book III focuses on maintaining this xenophobic construction of the Scottish people as a “fatal race, / Whom GOD in *wrath* contriv’d to place, / To scourge our crimes, and gall our pride, / A constant thorn in ENGLAND’S side” (*Ibid*, 1011-1014).

Rather than the third-century Celtic warrior, Scottish men are aligned with a more recent cultural and political event, the failed Jacobite invasion of the South: “Those Countrymen, who from the first / In tumults and *Rebellion* nurs’d” (*Ibid*, 661-662). The use of enjambment here plays with the idea of non-English northerners as fellow countrymen, as fellow Britons, only to disrupt this communal unity, in the following line, by driving “Countrymen” into the italicised and historicised noun “*Rebellion*”. The smooth formal association of these nouns ensures a disruption of the very fabric of the category Great Britain. William Pitt and Newcastle have been edged out of government by the machinations of Bute’s “active ministry”, which ironically proves impotent against England’s effeminate neighbour, France. Bute’s administrative “œconomy” is draining English energies by “treasures hurl’d / In *Subsidies* to all the world” (*Ibid*, 469-470). Any consideration of William Pitt as the architect of such foreign economic policy is unsurprisingly omitted.

The motto on the title page of *The Prophecy* is taken from the last line of Virgil’s ninth Eclogue and reads: “Carmina tum melius, cum venerit IPSE, canemus” (“Our songs we shall sing the better, when the master himself is come”).²⁰³ The ‘master’ is a clear reference to the Pretender and therefore rehearses the prevalent connection between Scottishness and Jacobitism. As *The Prophecy*’s conclusion would suggest, the master could also have been identified as Famine’s “Darling Son”: Bute. This is an ambivalence that invites a confusion or conflation of Bute and the Pretender (*The Prophecy*, 531). The extract comes from an oration on the installation of the Jacobite Earl of Westmoreland by Dr. William King (1685-1763) at Oxford in 1759.²⁰⁴ King, the Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford, provides here the quintessential example of a hard-core Jacobite miraculously converted to the House of Hanover upon the accession of George

²⁰³ (Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough (London: Loeb, 1924), p. 74) quoted in Adam Rounce (ed.) *Charles Churchill: Selected Poetry* (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2003), p. 94.

²⁰⁴ Grant, p. 510.

III.²⁰⁵ Jacobite revelation extends in *The Prophecy* into a xenophobic demystification of the ambiguities of the Northern Celtic periphery. In doing so, Churchill continues in the strain of early eighteenth-century feminised literary depictions of Scotland as bride or maiden.

As Juliet Shields notes, by the mid-century, anti-Scottish propaganda demonstrated English anxieties surrounding Scottish empowerment by projecting an “uncouth masculinity” onto the Scots.²⁰⁶ *The Prophecy* resists this shift in the gendered iconography of Scotland by maintaining a female figure as emblematic of Scottish nationality. Moreover, the type of Scottish masculinity in *The Prophecy* is post-Culloden and severely atrophied. Both the fourth and fifth editions of the poem were published with the addition of a caricature frontispiece, entitled *Famine*. The piece depicted an emaciated and emasculated Scot, dressed in tattered tartan plaid and standing before what is presumably Famine’s cave.²⁰⁷ The intensity of Churchill’s anti-Scottishness has much to do with the work’s literary progenitors.²⁰⁸ *The North Briton* sketch of Mac Barebones’s ravenous feast on English Roast beef metaphorically communicates the process of a parasitic Scottish infiltration of the English metropolitan centre.²⁰⁹

Both references are earlier examples of Churchill’s deployment of “a rather simplistic food / nationality metaphor”, which becomes centralised in *The Prophecy*’s depiction of Scotland as the Goddess Famine.²¹⁰ Such depictions were not confined to the anti-ministerial writers, but rather filled the missives of satirists on both sides. For example, earlier, ‘Richard Draff’, a fictional

²⁰⁵ Grant, p. 510.

²⁰⁶ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 58.

²⁰⁷ Grant, p. 510.

²⁰⁸ Some form of mock-pastoral was originally intended as a piece for publication in *The North Briton* entitled, “The Scottish Eclogue”. Though this eclogue never appeared, Churchill’s first contribution to *The North Briton* in the seventh issue can surely be read as emanating from the same material. The epistolary piece is written in the ironic Scottish persona of ‘BLUESTRING MAC STUART’, a reference to Bute’s anticipated entry into the Order of the Garter. See: L. Bertelsen. *The Nonsense Club*, p. 176. Neil Schaeffer has mistakenly (in Bertelsen’s view) read Churchill’s ‘Bluestring’ as a misprint of ‘Blustering’. See Neil Schaeffer, ‘Charles Churchill’s Political Journalism’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 9 (1976), p. 414.

²⁰⁹ Churchill’s ‘B. Mac Stuart’ possesses “the gift of *Second Sight*” and proceeds to approximate “many objects in the *camera obscura* of futurity”, detailing a prophetic narrative that amounts to a prophecy of England falling under Scottish domination. ‘Bluestring’ dryly notes how John Bull was choked by “inadvertently swallowing a thistle” before ending the letter with a mock advertisement for a prose poem, entitled ‘O! the ROAST BEEF! Or, The Case is altered’ by Lazarus Mac Barebones. See Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 31.

²¹⁰ Bertelsen, pp. 176-77.

contributor to Tobias Smollett's *The Briton*, No. 14 (Saturday, 28 August 1762) described Churchill and Robert Lloyd as: "two staunch understrappers, one of them a reverend deacon in a laced hat and leather breeches [Churchill]; the other a learned pedagogue [Lloyd], without any breeches at all. Their appetites are very keen; their teeth very sharp; they are coupled together, and crouch for employment, eager to bite, and tear, and taint, and havock".²¹¹ Richard Draff ('Draff' meaning waste) could easily assume both Scottish and English forms.

In its arrangement of subjects and rhetorical designs, *The Prophecy* mirrors Churchill's own development from a satirist, preoccupied with aesthetic and personal issues, to a zealous Wilkite propagandist.²¹² The poem begins with a section on literary criticism, before moving onto an ironic defence of the Scottish people, which segues into an apostrophe to Wilkes, before concluding with the substance of the original Scottish eclogue. *The Prophecy* registers as thoroughly anti-Ossianic in its depiction of a moribund Highland landscape. As Shields notes, Scotland is so impoverished that it is difficult to imagine how Ossianic genteel masculinity could have developed there.²¹³ This barrenness is also a response to the Ossianic Celtic Whig *telos* of the Celtic periphery as a Northern germinal point for the institutions and structures of mid eighteenth-century Great Britain. The poem's mock-pastoral landscape reiterates the fact that nothing, least of all 'refined' British society, could have originated in such a ruinous place. Importantly, as with Georgic poetry's deployment of fecundity within a sexual and agricultural symbolic register, sterility is depicted in *The Prophecy* in both agricultural and sexual terms.

The Highland environment is thoroughly vacant: "No living thing, whate'er its food, feasts there, / But the Cameleon, who can feast on air" (*Ibid.* 299-300). Added to this dearth, we find a diminished population that is homosocial, consisting of just two shepherds; the contemptuously named Jockey and Sawney. The Highland's barrenness is usefully aligned with the sterile or non-reproductive sexual capacity of this male pairing. This mock-pastoral sterility is integral to *The Prophecy*'s expression of Scottish effeminate sexual

²¹¹ Tobias Smollett, *The Briton*. No. 14. Saturday, 28 August 1762, in Tobias Smollett, *Poems, Plays, and The Briton*, Bryon Gassman, O M Brack, JR., Leslie A. Chilton, eds. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 311.

²¹² Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 177.

²¹³ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 58.

rapacity and its concomitant political impotency. Notably, the Goddess Famine speaks from a maternal position, referring to the shepherds and to Bute as ‘sons’.²¹⁴ There is also an allusion, typical of anti-Buteite propaganda of the time, to the alleged affair between the Princess Dowager and Bute. The Scottish architect William Chambers had constructed the so-called ‘Great Pagoda’, the tallest building designed and completed in eighteenth-century England, located in the grounds of Kew, home of the Dowager Princess of Wales. The phallic-like structure was quickly dubbed Bute’s Erektion and Churchill’s reference to Gisbal and Pagoda (*Ibid*, 69-70) intentionally profits from the way in which the alleged affair metonymically conveyed a wider social and political Scottish penetration of England.²¹⁵

The connected absence of women and the infertility of the landscape symbolically convey an enervation of Scottish nationality in this poem. As part of the poem’s mock-pastoral framing, we are shown how these shepherds attempt performances of national music and literature; Jockey plays the bagpipes all day while Sawney exerts himself in bawling out “HOME’S madrigals, and ditties from FINGAL” (*The Prophecy*, 290). Both can trace their lineage “From great and glorious, tho’ forgotten, king” having been “born and bred / On the same bleak and barren mountain’s head” (*Ibid*, 273-4). In a mock-pastoral tone, the speaker describes how the men despise “Dress and her vain refinements” (*Ibid*, 284), their uncivilised physicality perfectly mirroring the sparse landscape. Juxtaposed against this savage, brutish masculinity is an equally rough femininity. As Shields notes, in xenophobic national iconography, brutish masculinity and savage femininity become interchangeable, as both are considered morally inferior to civilised English men.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ There is a suggestion that Churchill’s mother may have been Scottish: “Vile parricide! Which gave a parent birth” (*The Prophecy of Famine: A Scot’s Pastoral*, 222).

²¹⁵ Rounce also notes how ‘Gisbal’ is a code word for Bute, whose alleged relationship with the Princess Dowager was lampooned in *Gisbal: an Hyperborean Tale*, See: A. Rounce (ed.), *Charles Churchill*, p. 95; A. Rounce, “Stuarts Without End: Wilkes, Churchill and Anti-Scottishness”, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 29, Number 3, Fall 2005, p. 24; Vincent Carretta, noting the increase in invective and caricature in mid-century Georgian political satire, points to the engraving, attributed to George Townshend entitled *The Scotch Broomstick and the Female Beesom, a German Tale, by Sawney Gesner* (1762), which again satirises the alleged affair between the Princess and Bute. Carretta describes this increase in invective as a new form of “political pornography”. See Carretta, *The Snarling Muse*, p. 232.

²¹⁶ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, p. 58

In *The Prophecy*, heteroerotic sexual frustration is part of a broader thematic of cultural, political and social degeneration. Food consumption and sexual pleasure are conflated in the image of the ‘*Highland Lass*’ violently scratching Sawney’s breast before collapsing in a hunger-induced stupor. Even when possible, copulation is particularly pressured in such a sterile context (*Ibid*, 293-4). In pointed contrast, *The Prophecy*’s apostrophe to Wilkes establishes a coherent ideological linkage between English patriotic male bonding and healthy heterosexual exertion:

From those gay scenes, where mirth exalts his pow’r,
 And easy Humour wings the laughing hour;
 From those soft better moments, when desire
 Beats high, and all the world of man’s on fire,
 When mutual ardours of the melting fair
 More than repay us for whole years of care,
 At *Friendship*’s summons will my WILKES retreat, (*Ibid.*, 153-159).

Heteroerotic desire is necessary to the structural economics of male patriotic love, with the hetero ‘sex act’ functioning as recompense for “years of [patriot] care” (*Ibid*, 158). Importantly, Wilkes’s summons and retreat from the heterosexual act, almost at the point of sexual apotheosis, suggests his masculine self-mastery as opposed to the now obsolete meaning of effeminacy as caused by the exposure of the male subject to the desired feminine.

The content of the shepherds’ dialogue in Famine’s cave (which is a parody of Roger and Patie’s opening dialogue in Ramsay’s drama *The Gentle Shepherd* [1725], Act I, Scene I, 1-170.) allegorises the Anglo-Scottish union as a lover’s betrayal with the sub-narrative of Jockey’s separation from his ‘bonny Highland lass’, Maggy, who jilted the shepherd by eloping with a “foreign loon” (*Ibid*, 367). The Union has left Scottish men without a secure and unambiguous sense of national allegiance; the promise of which is conceptually figured through the idea of copulation with Maggy. More alarmingly, post 1745 has thoroughly depleted Scottish resources of manly vigour: “Five brothers there I lost, in manhood’s pride” (*Ibid*. 391). The only sort of penetrative production available in the poem involves the queerly erotic “low supple arts” of male Scots, who have successfully “sapp’d [English] vigour to increase their own” (*Ibid*, 199-200). The homoerotic undercurrent of Scottish penetration of English society is hinted at in the following line: “‘Into our places, states, and beds they

creep” (Ibid. 215). It is unclear, perhaps deliberately so, whether or not these Scots adventurers encounter (or perform the role of) an English gentleman or his wife when they transgress into the proverbial bed.

Intriguingly, Churchill structures the male relational bonds between Sawney and Jockey as devoid of any exchange of women. The absence of woman, an absence further emphasised by the Goddess’s spectral presence as a non-woman, mutates the normative erotic triangular arrangement of the male homosocial continuum. There is also an emasculation of Scottish men through the routing of the spectral Goddess as a source of political strength. Unlike the fluid and functioning economy of Wilkite male patriotism, the shepherds in their lack of female company suffer an imbalanced or perverse homosocial formation, which leads to an alarmingly deficient sense of national and male selfhoods. If Scotland is Jockey’s Maggy, or female more generally, then the poem uses this symbolism to track the alarmingly deficient and queer homosocial bonds of the shepherd couple in the context of a decidedly post-coition/post-Union Scotland. At the same time there is an inherent paradox in the presentation of the Scotsman’s sodomitical penetration of the passive England that provides a way of symbolically recuperating feminised patriotism exchanged in the Union or suppressed post Culloden by returning the feminine subject to the homosocial triangulation, thus normalising hetero male bonds.

The rhetorical lubrication necessary for Jockey’s and Sawney’s penetration of England is provided by the Dunciadic Goddess Famine, who deploys the language of Exodus to prophesy a Northern invasion of the South: “A barren desert, we shall seize rich plains / Where milk with honey flows, and plenty reigns” (Ibid, 449-50). As Bertelsen notes, Churchill’s depiction of ‘famine’ is animated by vivid descriptions of the sort of bodily corruption caused by venereal disease.²¹⁷ In his correspondence with Wilkes throughout the middle of 1763, Churchill expresses feelings of debility and confinement bound up with an “Eruptio Veneris” and in one such letter actually confirms that “The Scot’s

²¹⁷ While acknowledging the risk of biographical fallacy in his reading, Bertelsen points to how Famine’s cave is described in terms of debility (“Efts strove in vain to crawl” [*The Prophecy*, 329]) and discharge (“smear’d the slimy walls” [*Ibid*, 330]) relating this imagery to Churchill’s own experience (contiguous with the poem’s drafting) of painful penile discharge and the hunger associated with the common venereal treatment of mercury-induced ‘salivation’. See Bertelsen, pp. 180-182.

Pastoral arose from a pox”.²¹⁸ Moreover, when we consider the logic of the poem’s connection of healthy patriotism with the pleasures of the melting fare, it is unsurprising that the Goddess Famine — as emblematic of the Scottish nation — is presented as sexually abject, thus signalling the perverse nature of the Union and the Britishness fostered by it.

If the heteroerotic were integral to Wilkite patriotism, then logically the abjection of Scottish femininity or of Scotland as feminine would function to demarcate Scottish Jacobite patriotism as deficient, or in a homophobic sense, as structurally perverse. *The Prophecy* is primarily a poem about impoverishment, and the central homosocial relationship between Jockey and Sawney depicts the frustration of incomplete sexual and national expressiveness. Both *The Ghost*, I-IV and *The Prophecy* express and co-join anti-Buteite and anti-Ossianic aesthetic and textual impulses, which are in turn enfolded into the earlier Churchillian rhetoric of xeno-effeminophobic demarcation. The final stanza of *The Prophecy* presents the passing of the preliminaries of the Treaty of Paris along with Pitt’s resignation as empirical evidence for the commencement of Famine’s prophecy:

To sooth our rage, the temporising brood
Shall break the ties of truth and gratitude,
Against their Saviour venom’d falshoods frame,
And brand with calumny their WILLIAM’S name;
To win our grace, (rare argument of wit)
To our untainted faith shall they commit
(Our faith which, in extremest perils tried,
Disdain’d, and still disdains, to change her side,
That Sacred Majesty they all approve,
Who most enjoys, and best deserves their Love. (*Ibid*, 553-562).

As Rounce notes, the William being referred to here is either an allusion to William III, a saviour like figure in Whig popular history of England from the Stuart monarchy in 1688, or a more immediate allusion to William, Duke of Cumberland (1721-1765), son of George II, and a “chief impetus” behind the suppression of the 1745 uprising.²¹⁹ Churchill’s referencing of two Whig Williams is, perhaps, a conscious attempt at reversing Pope’s ambiguous use of

²¹⁸ Weatherly, *The Correspondence*, p. 55.

²¹⁹ While functioning as a useful symbol of anti-Scottish sentiment, the Duke was also among those who expressed strong disapproval of Henry Fox’s bribery as a method of ensuring the passage of the preliminaries of the Treaty of Paris through the Commons. While more to the point of Wilkite political endeavour, Cumberland also voted with the minority in the Lords on 29th of December 1763, against the motion that privilege of Parliament did not protect MPs from prosecution for writing and disseminating libellous materials. See Rounce, *Charles Churchill*, p. 100.

the name in a hostile pro-Jacobite context at the close of *Windsor Forest*; where he contrasted the peaceful reign of the Stuart Queen Anne with the tyranny of William, recalling both the Norman invader of 1066, but also the 1688 ‘invasion’ of England by William of Orange.

As this reading of the anti-Ossian texts *The Ghost*, I-IV, and *The Prophecy of Famine* demonstrates, Churchill’s writing registers cultural anxieties in the 1760s concerning a Scottish internal colonising of England. Broadly considered, this anxiety can also be characterised as a fear about Englishness being subsumed by Britishness. James Macpherson’s ‘translations’ of the Gaelic poems of Ossian have been read as enacting the ideological cultural work of domesticating a savage Celtic society for the readership of ‘advanced’ and civilised British nation. Yet Macpherson’s Highlander was also disruptive for the anachronism that he provoked. Read in terms of the queer historical and temporal theories of Freeman’s temporal drag and Dollimore’s perverse dynamic, Macpherson’s Ossianic warrior disturbs stadialist Enlightenment historiography by presenting sentimentalised masculinity as a symbol of the sameness of Britishness, against the difference of Englishness. Moreover, Churchill’s Patriot Kingdom in *Gotham*, I, has been read as endorsing rather than critiquing the ideology of Empire. Gothamite authority is secured through a decidedly English form of liberty. In *The Prophecy*, the Goddess Famine foretells the cultural and political contamination of the North by the South that is at the heart of Churchill’s anti-Ossian position. Patriotism is eroticised in *The Prophecy*, with woman becoming the conduit for the transmission of male emotional attachment. The following section discusses the erotics of Churchillian patriotism more fully. Reading both *The Times* (1764) and *Independence* (1764), this section moves from the spectral to the sodomitical, tracing the fraught connections between the Wilkite Englishness and the emergent articulation of the heteroerotic as the very sign of political and cultural legitimacy.

(1.4): “Apology to the Fair”: *The Times* and *Independence*

My dearest Churchill,

I receiv'd yesterday *The Times*, which I admire almost beyond any even of your pieces. You have greatly excell'd *Juvenal* in his own manner. Your apology to the fair at the end saves all, and will leave the modestest virgin un-hurt by the boldness of some of your descriptions. I never read so many spirited lines together. Accept my warmest thanks and congratulations.²²⁰

Pardon of Women with Repentance buy,
And learn to honour them, as much as I.

(Charles Churchill, *The Times*, 701-702).

Both *The Times* and *Independence* offer an explicit articulation of two central and interrelated ambitions in Churchill's work: the separating out of heteroerotic pleasure from its authentication in a narrative of sexual reproduction, and the discrediting of birth as an indicator of social and political worth. The sort of aristocratic ideology that Churchill critiques has been usefully summarised by Michael McKeon as a set of related beliefs, which include the notion that birth makes worth, that the interests of the family are identified with those of its head, and that among the gentry property should be transmitted patrimonially and primogeniturally, through the male line.²²¹ Central to Churchill's political critique was an appeal to the fair. As we shall see, Churchill deployed an exclusively and aggressively heterosexual politics as the only form of legitimate politics in the context of the fraught xeno-effeminophobic culture of the 1760s. Critics such as Lance Bertelsen have long identified the strong connection between Churchill's corpus and a particular class, that of “gentlemen and gentlemen-tradesmen with an independent turn of mind— the middling sort”.²²² This section analyses how these poems both adopt and contribute to the rich symbolism of mid-century gender and class instability. In *The Times* and *Independence* Churchill articulates a critique of aristocratic ideology that

²²⁰ Edward H. Weatherly ed., *The Correspondence of John Wilkes and Charles Churchill* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), pp. 91-92.

²²¹ Michael McKeon, “Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Spring, 1995), p. 297.

²²² Bertelsen, p. 237.

harnesses prevalent anxieties regarding the imagined impenetrability of the heterosexual male ‘middle-class’ body. To put it another way, this poetry engages with a form of paranoid masculinism that is closely connected to the shifting social, economic, and political boundaries of the middling sort.

While the perversion or economising of heteroerotic desire signals effeminacy for Churchill, an unregulated male heterosexual appetite conversely functions to secure the normativity of heterosexuality, in so much as the heteroerotic becomes less about the imperatives of biological reproduction and more about the enjoyment of pleasure in and of itself. The association of excessive pleasure with degeneracy threatened the security of positive pleasure as the mark of the heterosexual order. As we have seen, for John "Estimate" Brown, effeminacy was a capacious category. As Brunström notes, Brown highlights effeminacy for reasons that are ergonomic in basis, and related to an awareness of the increasing division of labour.²²³ Selfish effeminacy is in some sense the result of men subcontracting many of the human faculties that ought to comprise the totality of the active citizen.²²⁴ In his *Estimate*, Brown warns his readers that a much more extensive work is planned, but that the nation is at present experiencing a crisis “so important and alarming” that some immediate intervention is needed.

The crisis is summarised in the following alarmist vein: A “vain, luxurious, and selfish Effeminacy” is presently eroding the very moral fabric of England, and in true apocalyptic fashion, Brown forewarns: “We are rolling to the Brink of a Precipice that must destroy us”.²²⁵ Both Brown and Churchill perceive the nation as being afflicted by a climate of effeminacy that is (temporally speaking) a recent phenomenon. In a similar vein to Churchill, Brown spatially constructs the external and foreign (mainly continental Europe) as a site saturated with effeminacy, while London functions as a perversely internal site for sodomitical contamination. For the Rousseauist Brown, coming from the rural Lake District, the locale of the town is visually corrupt and corrupting.²²⁶ *An Estimate* concludes with the imaging of an enervated English

²²³ Brunström, “Be Male and Female Still”, p. 39.

²²⁴ Brunström, “Be Male and Female Still”, p. 39.

²²⁵ Brunström, “Be Male and Female Still”, p. 12; p. 20.

²²⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau set out the terms for the City as a corrupting place in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality among Men* (1755).

nation, emasculated both from within and from without while open to attack and failing to match France in the colonial arena.²²⁷

As Dollimore has commented, the connections between sexual deviance and political imbalance or crisis have a long history, which is “sedimented into our language and culture”.²²⁸ Furthermore, Dollimore has persuasively indicated that homophobia often intersects with other kinds of phobia such as misogyny, racism, and xenophobia.²²⁹ Intriguingly, he suggests that the figure of the sodomite is often culturally deployed as a signifier for some threat, or as a symbol that embodies a foreign infection or incapacity that is linked to the experience of domestic social and economic difficulties.²³⁰ For Brown, the effeminate male is certainly positioned outside of the national community, as effeminate minds cannot absorb the “*public spirit*”, or more tellingly, due to the current climate of effeminacy a “*Love of our Country*” is no longer widely felt.²³¹ While effeminacy is simply an evil in itself for Brown, Churchill’s view is much more strategically formulated. Risking anachronism and applying Dollimore’s theoretical framework to the Churchill’s *oeuvre* enables a view of the sodomitical as a condensation or displacement in the poet’s satire of social and political anxieties into the category of the effeminate male.²³²

Significantly, Churchill appropriates much, but not all, of what Brown writes. From the first stanza it becomes clear that an effeminate climate is affecting the nation, but more precisely that this attitude is directly connected to broader instabilities regarding the economy. Personal vanity has made men “all wild rivals in expence” (18), as “ev’ry coxcomb [dresses] against his brother”, resulting in the fact that “E’re banished Industry had left our shores” (19-20). In critiquing the importation by the nobility of French clothes and fabrics, Churchill is drawing on the contemporaneous energies of those repeated protests in the English press, after the Treaty of Paris, against the anti-patriotic preference for French commodities, which underlined the detrimental effect of fashion on English domestic industry. A foppish love of French lace and frills enjoyed by “gambling Lords in Vice so far” is partly to blame for economic instability and

²²⁷ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 88.

²²⁸ Dollimore, pp. 236-7.

²²⁹ Dollimore, p. 236.

²³⁰ Dollimore, p. 237.

²³¹ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 41; p. 42.

²³² Dollimore, p. 240.

uncertainty (27). *The Times* sets up an analogy that connects an enervated economy with the visible ‘failure’ of some ‘effeminate’ men to signify as masculine. He informs us that the current time is one when “debts are an Honour; Payment a disgrace” (48), when “Men of weak minds [are] high-plac’d on Folly’s list” (49). Inversion is synonymous with perversion. Largely, “Trade cannot subsist” ... “If faith ’twixt Man and Man is once destroy’d” (50; 52). The frustration of trade is a particularly fraught anxiety that is imaginatively construed as both male genital impotence, and more centrally, as the substitution of heteroerotic pleasure for sodomy. The trade system is degenerating because the men who hold influence over it are in fact most protected from its failure, and are therefore ironically disengaged from it: “But what is Trade, and Tradesmen to a Lord” (54). Sodomy as a non-procreative practice is perhaps the most readily available symbol for the figuring of unproductive economic practices and the misspending of otherwise bankable financial capital.²³³

The figure of the “helpless Widow” is deployed here by Churchill to express this disinterest and its overt consequences (66). “FABER” (55), believed to be Halifax, is positioned as the unaffected and unsympathetic Lord, his lack of conscience resulting in the Widow’s “streaming eyes” and calls for vengeance (69-70). Just as the sodomite renounces his obligation to women by committing homoerotic acts, the Lord’s effeminate inability to properly guide economic affairs generates further distress for the fragile and seemingly abandoned category of woman. Churchill sees nothing inherent within the system of government that might keep FABER regulated, and in exposing this condition he offers an effective critique of the existing pretensions to court piety and restraint (95-102). Later on, he suggests that the Church as an institution functions as a cover for sodomitical activity: “nor trust him to the gown, / ’Tis oft a covering in this vile town (643-644). Effeminacy by implication is therefore embedded within a nexus of control, both religious and political, emerging as the very condition of those institutions that govern. What is of concern here is not just sodomitical sex or effeminate behaviours, but rather, how exactly the tyrannical political orthodoxy (who supposedly enjoy and display both) serve to dislocate and indeed, ‘pervert’ healthy heterosexual transmission.

²³³ Cameron McFarlane, *The Sodomite in Fiction and Satire 1660-1750* (New York: Columbia University, 1997), p. 54.

Undermining a central political fiction of the mid-century, the “perfect balance and order of the family”, the aim of his satire is the perversion and redeployment of the familial narrative.²³⁴ The family is satirically positioned as financially benefiting from this political system through prostitution and sexual trafficking. Sexual appetite is fundamental to the health of the economy, and seemingly ‘good’ mothers and fathers know this. Churchill perverts both the maternal and paternal roles by presenting the image of a mother coaching her daughter for a career as a life-long “Adulteress” (146) before her father “Sells her to some old Letcher for a wife” (145). As Cameron McFarlane has suggested, the representation of sodomy in the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries is connected to a diverse range of perversions or disorders, which were seen to be penetrating the English national body.²³⁵ The potential for infection of the national body is great, and the luxurious East figures in addition to continental Europe as a site of sodomitical contagion. Churchill views the stimulus of the urban scene as negatively as Brown does, pointing out that even heterosexual sexual transgression is carried out in full view: “And LUMELY e’en at noon his mistress meets” (287). However, unlike Brown, the real problem (tongue-in-cheek) for Churchill is not that female prostitutes throng the city’s streets, but rather that they are idle due to current sodomitical tastes. Sodomites now “ply in public” stealing “the bread from much more honest Whores” (295-296). The “GANYMEDE”, the “delicious boy” has replaced the female prostitute and “*Woman* is out of date” (332-333; 319).

Notably, Brown articulates gender distinctions as becoming increasingly indistinguishable, stating: “the Sexes have now little other apparent Distinction beyond that of Person and Dress . . . The one Sex having advanced into Boldness, as the other have Sunk into *Effeminacy*”.²³⁶ Notably, Samuel Johnson in *The Idler*, ironically celebrates the idea of “*Female Buffs*” and “*Lady Hussars*” in his proposal for a female army.²³⁷ Female soldiers can help officers maintain appearances by powdering wigs and brushing down coats on the battlefield and on the high sea. Both Johnson and Brown, to various degrees, fear

²³⁴ Carol Watts, *The Cultural Work Of Empire: The Seven Years’ War And The Imagining of the Shandean State* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 139.

²³⁵ McFarlane, p. 33.

²³⁶ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 34.

²³⁷ Samuel Johnson, *The Idler*, No. 5. SATURDAY, MAY 13, 1758.

that an “Excess of delicacy has destroyed” manly ‘taste’, and that the fairer sex will naturally take this opportunity to assert their own female masculinity.²³⁸

Intriguingly, Estimate Brown’s more alarmist prognosis of gender blurring was criticised for what it suggested about women, or as one writer put it: “the Effeminacy of the female part of his Charge”.²³⁹ In *Some Doubts occasioned by the Second Volume of An Estimate of The Manners and Principles of The Times* (1758), Soame Jenyns challenges Brown’s characterisation of the ‘mannish’ manners of women. Whereas Soame sees male effeminacy, albeit in non-political or non-courtly urban spaces, he strenuously refutes Brown’s anxiety over the manly-woman:

There are some obvious instances of this [confounding of the sexes], which seem to have escaped this acute Gentleman’s observation, I mean of men, who talk and reason, like the aged part of the other Sex. I grant, there are *Fribbles* and *Daffodils* and *Messalina*’s, but they seem to be not so common in either House of Parliament, or at Court, or at the places of Diversion, which he tells us he frequents, in Quality of national preacher, as *Manly* men and *Tender* women. I should imagine they are rather uncommon, being usually pointed out, and described, by no other Characteristic so much, as their unnatural Metamorphosis.²⁴⁰

In Jenyns’s own humorous estimate, Brown is himself a womanly man, who merely draws distinctions from the small “Circle of his own acquaintance”.²⁴¹ While accepting the prevalence of effeminacy in peripheral terms, Jenyns’s *Doubts* recuperates the category of woman as normative and uncorrupted by present tastes for the homoerotic. Notably, Churchill does not follow the same condemnatory line as Brown, and instead extends Jenyns’s defence of woman into a celebration of the social and sexual purposes of the sex:

Woman, the pride and happiness of Man,
Without whose soft endearments Nature’s plan
Had been a blank, and Life not worth a thought;
Woman, by all the Loves and Graces taught,
With softest arts, and sure, tho’ hidden skill
To humanize, and mould us to her will;
Woman, with more than common grace form’d *here*,

²³⁸ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 30.

²³⁹ Soame Jenyns, *Some Doubts occasioned by the Second Volume of An Estimate of The Manners and Principles of The Times. Humbly proposed to the Author or to the Public.* (London: Printed for W. Sandby, in *Fleet-street*. MDCCLVIII., 1758), p. 17.

²⁴⁰ Jenyns, pp. 17-18.

²⁴¹ Jenyns, p. 18.

With the persuasive language of a tear
To melt the rugged temper of our Isle,
Or win us to her purpose with a smile;
Woman, by fate the quickest spur decreed,
The fairest, best reward of ev'ry deed
Which bears the stamp of honour, at whose name
Our antient Heroes caught a quicker flame (301-314).

The repetition of the italicised noun “*woman*” confirms the inclined nature of woman, as both mentally passive and physically prostrate. In *The Times*, ‘*woman*’ is thus both favourably disposed and spatially positioned for male desire. Churchill presents the social and sexual rewards of women, curiously presenting their effeminising potential as the only positive value within a society where sodomitical desire has come to dominant.

Unlike Brown’s jeremiad, *The Times* does not present anxieties about a blurring of the sexes, nor does it seem to pause over common fears about depopulation. The particular anxiety put forward centres on the perceived loss of heteroerotic lust, in so much as the man’s gaze upon a beautiful woman has literally “lost its use;” (320). Anxiously, Churchill proclaims that: “No more the Eye / With *female* beauty caught, in wild amaze, / Gazes entranc’d, and could for ever gaze” (320-322). Thomas A. King reads *The Times* as lamenting the fact that the cross-sex gaze, once considered effeminising, is now in fact treated nostalgically in so much as Churchill presents cross-sex gazing as a “manly pleasure threatened with extinction by the new visibility of sodomites”.²⁴² The nostalgia invoked in *The Times* is very much about a lost enjoyment of pleasure. Yet, the visibility of the sodomitical, not just men who engage in sodomy but the pederastic asymmetries of power which such acts figure and engender, does not “threaten” cross sex gazing. Sodomitical desire and the heteroerotic are both manly pleasures, though admittedly, the latter leads to abuses of power, the former, stable social and political life. More than an attack on sodomitical sex, Churchill’s anxiety is about a loss of proper register for female beauty. Moving beyond Hogarth’s aesthetic view of the imperfect beauty of women in *The Rosciad*, here Churchill echoes Edmund Burke in *Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) where he characterises the socialising effect of the cross-sex gaze as “the

²⁴² Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750 Volume 2: Queer Articulations* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. xvii.

deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried”.²⁴³ More than disgust at the visibility of the sodomite, Churchill’s anxiety about the loss of the centrality of female beauty can be read in Burkean terms as disruptive of the very social fabric. For Churchill, the sodomite’s gaze is representative of the perceived anti-socialness of all homo desire.

While Chapter Four engages with Burke’s sodomitical aesthetics in more detail, it is worth noting how *The Times* works out one of the central phobic positions of Burke’s *Enquiry*. If heteroerotic desire, lust mixed with love, is the passion that glues society together for Burke, then Churchill’s satiric positioning of the female body as unattractive places homo desire as the very source of societal dissolution. Rather than being unnatural *tout court*, sodomitical lust is ironically the normative desiring mode in *The Times*, so much so, that Churchill sardonically advises those who now unfashionably prefer the heteroerotic to move to “Afric’s wilds” where such lust is not denied (497-500). The socialising potential of man’s love for a beautiful women has been completely undone by a sodomitical regime, and a regression to a baser, instinctual lust between the sexes, as demonstrated in more primitive and foreign societies registers as the only way for men to enjoy such pleasure. While *The Times* disagrees with Brown’s criticism of women, it also pushes the already heightened rhetoric of *An Estimate* even further. In Section VII of his *Doubts*, Jenyns mocks Brown’s paranoid reading of servants putting their masters in danger, by pausing to ask why effeminate lords would be so brave as to “suffer so graceless and abandoned a Crew to interrupt their Ease and endanger their Safety?”.²⁴⁴ In *The Times*, male homosocial space is a zone of erotic jeopardy, with Churchill humorously, though also seriously, gesturing toward the desirability of an all female environment for young boys: “Be all his Servants, Female, Young, and Fair” (651). Male relatives and friends cannot be trusted as Churchill formulates a slippery continuum from men promoting the interests of fellow men to men sodomising other men. In such a time as this, even the most unremarkable intimacies of domestic male life are rendered suspect.

²⁴³ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Adam Philips, ed. ([1757] Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 105.

²⁴⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 24.

The spectacle of male beauty, or the rendering of the male body as beautiful spectacle, is the primary and overriding anxiety of the poem. Given the normative nature of male-male desire, men can only avoid enforced sodomitical penetration by doing one of two things. The first option is to become a transvestite:

Lay by they sex, thy safety to procure;
Put off the Man, from Men to live sure;
Go forth a woman to the public view,
And with their garb assume their manners too. (*Ibid*, 509-512).

A seemingly pro-Brown paranoiac poem such as *The Times*, upon closer reading, actually advises the very thing that Brown rails against the most: the adoption of female manners by men. The other option is the concerted cultivation of a reputation of physical ugliness:

Let it be bruited all about the Town,

That He is coarse, indelicate, and brown,
An Antidote to Lust, his Face deep scar'd
With the Small Pox, his Body maim'd and marr'd,
Eat up with the Kings-evil, and his blood,
Tainted throughout, a thick and putrid flood,
Where dwells Corruption, making him all o'er,
From head to foot, a rank and running sore.
Should'st Thou report him as by Nature made,
He is undone, and by thy praise betray'd;
Give him out fair, Letchers in numbers more,
More brutal and more fierce, than throng'd the door
Of LOT in SODOM, shall to thine repair,
And force a passage, tho' a God is there. (*Ibid*, 621-634).

“Women-haters” will not desire an unfit or scarred male body, and thus either male transvestism or reputed ugliness is the only form of resistance left available. Churchill’s use of the older category of “woman-hater” once again confirms that the real anxiety running throughout *The Times* involves a loss of the capaciousness and socialising force of heteroerotic pleasure in its reduction to a purely procreative function, with women “kept for nothing but the breed” (*Ibid*, 332). While the poem expresses a common fear that sodomites will “stop the

propagation of Mankind” (*Ibid*, 554), the primary and related anxiety in *The Times* involves an imagining of a world where heteroerotic pleasure is itself taboo, where the proverbial pubescent “Boyish blush” at the sight of a beautiful woman is a historical occurrence (*Ibid*, 1). No longer sexually desired by the majority of metropolitan men, women have new found public freedoms, being able to walk freely at night without fear of sexual assault (*Ibid*, 523-524). Ironically, the only oppression women face in such a sodomitical world is widespread contempt for not being the desired sexual object. Much more than any ganymede, fribble, pathick, catamite, or molly, Churchill’s physically abusive woman-hater underscores the very decentring of the female body as a source of pleasure and as a body that prompts feelings of love and protection designs. Try as they might, women cannot even “be Whores” as men cannot share whoredom with women (*Ibid*, 534-536).

This final stanza seems predictably fitting as an Old Testament envisioning of a sodomitical apocalyptic world, where London is rendered in biblical terms as a latter day Sodom. Yet, the passage ends with a heterosexual life-coach couplet, which offers a way of avoiding such biblical punishment. Unlike the Irish fribble of *The Rosciad*, London sodomites can, like all good sinners, decide to repent and reform:

Let them fly far, and skulk from place to place,
 Not daring to meet Manhood face to face,
 Their steps I’ll track, nor yield them one retreat
 Where they may hide their heads, or rest their feet,
 Till God in wrath shall let his vengeance fall,
 And make a great example of them all,
 Bidding in one grand pile this Town expire,
 Her Tow’rs in dust, her Thames a lake of fire,
 Or They (most worth our wish) convinc’d, tho’ late,
 Of their past crimes, and dangerous estate,
 Pardon of Women with Repentance buy,
 And learn to honour them, as much as I. (*Ibid*, 691-702).

Figuratively and ironically, Churchill’s “Manhood” prods “SODOM”, pushing sodomites back into obscurity. In such a decidedly sodomitical setting, one would expect that only an assertive and excessive heterosexuality, an indulgent and misogynistic libertinage would be advocated by the unambiguously heterosexual Churchill. Yet, importantly, the above assertion of male power only

comes after the speaker turns his gaze away from the woman-haters, to address his true, albeit, silent interlocutor:

But, if too eager in my bold career,
Haply I wound the nice, and chaster ear,
If, all unguarded, all too rude, I speak,
And call up blushes in the maiden's cheek,
Forgive, Ye Fair—my real motives view,
And to forgiveness add your praises too.
For You I write—nor wish a better plan—
The Cause of Woman is most worthy Man—
For You I still will write, nor hold my hand,
Whilst there's one slave of SODOM in the land. (*Ibid*, 681-690).

Women stand as the chief benefactors of the speaker's anti-sodomitical activism. For Churchill, sodomitical critique is part of a more capacious 'love' that is both heteroerotic and patriotic. In this sodomitical context, venery is vindicated as a sort of necessity; a vindication that, perhaps, underwrites the poet's own rapacious exploits. Crucially, as Philip Carter notes, effeminacy for John Brown is a social failing, as manliness is defined throughout *An Estimate* by social rather than sexual acts.²⁴⁵ While exploiting, and indeed contributing to the same paranoid xeno-effeminophobic register as Brown's *Estimate*, *The Times* presents its critique of effeminacy in terms of the sodomitical, as a fear not of gender inversion, but of the loss of heteroeroticism. More than a social failing, effeminacy in *The Times* signifies the undoing of the social, which Churchill, following Burke, premises on the loveliness of feminine beauty.

Churchill's depiction of the sodomitical in *The Times* is unusual for the way in which it refuses to denigrate the feminine within its overall condemnation of the effeminate. Connecting Restoration libertinism with the effeminate mollies of the early eighteenth century, Cameron MacFarlane states: "All representations of sodomy and of the sodomite, before *and* after 1700, involve a misogynistic assertion of masculine power and pre-eminence over a repudiated, feminine weakness."²⁴⁶ Granted, the woman-haters of *The Times* are misogynistic sodomites, yet the entire import of the poem stresses female resilience and complementariness rather than weakness. In fact, women are most threatening within the sodomitical world of *The Times* as they are freed from their usual

²⁴⁵ Philip Carter, "An 'effeminate' or 'efficient' nation? Masculinity and eighteenth-century social documentary", *Textual Practice* 11 (3), 1997, p. 433.

²⁴⁶ McFarlane, p. 49.

objectification within a heteroerotic economy of desire. Churchill's apology to the fair in *The Times* separates out the clauses of effeminacy from femininity within the pre-existing syntax of patriarchy, while also casting the sodomite as a 'woman-hater'. This separation is indicative, perhaps, of the new role of the sodomite at mid-century as "Other", not only to patriarchal power, but more specifically to a heterosociality, which although ultimately based on men's power over women, premised itself on the natural complementariness and incommensurability of men and women.

If *The Times* defends woman from the charge of Brown's *Estimate*, Churchill's *Independence* can be read as a recuperation of a particular class of men as the patriotic body of the nation. The portrait of the Bard, which opens the poem, is in many ways a continuation of Churchill's imagining of the anti-sodomitical activist:

HAPPY the *Bard* (tho' few such *Bards* we find)
Who, 'bove controulment, dares to speak his mind,
Dares, unabash'd, in ev'ry place appear,
And nothing fears, but what he ought to fear.
Him Fashion cannot tempt, him abject Need
Cannot compel, him Pride cannot mislead
To be the slave of greatness, to strike the sail,
When, sweeping onward with her Peacock's tail,
QUALITY, in full plumage, passes by;
He views her with a fix'd, contemptuous eye,
And mocks the Puppet, keeps his own due state,
And is above conversing with the great. (*Independence*, 1-12).

Bardic autonomy is ensured by the self-acquisition of capital, which seemingly flows uninhibited from the literary market place. This provides the artist with a way of securing economic independence, which in turn affords creative freedom. Curiously, though perhaps unsurprisingly, little attention is given to the very insecurity of such markets, though overall the poem celebrates the dynamic over the static, the insecure over the established. Rather than devote lines to the anxieties brought about by attempts to generate and sustain subscription lists, Churchill takes the economic independence afforded by the market as the space from which to critique the traditional system of patronage. A poet's economic security allows for a truly patriotic form of poetry, one where the author's own opinions and assessments find expression.

Broadly speaking then, *Independence* is about constructing a different form of reader and author outside of the boundaries of the aristocratic patronage system. In many ways, Churchill's literary independence is part of, though not reductive to Wilkite debates over the freedom of the press. In *The Conference*, published in November 1763, Churchill, again in dialogue with a Lord, apologises for the scandal of his elopement with young mistress Elizabeth Carr, before arguing for a separating out of his private and public selves. As mentioned previously, *The Conference* presents Churchill's satirist persona as being literally made by the public: "A gen'rous PUBLIC made me what I Am. / All that I have, They gave; just Mem'ry bears / The grateful stamp, and what I am is Theirs" (150-152). Churchill's publicness literally marks him as a satirical writer. According to the Lord, "public ties" are merely selfish connections:

Whate'er we talk of wisdom to the wise,
Of goodness to the good, of public ties
Which to our country link, of private bands,
Which claim most dear attention at our hands,
For Parent and for Child, for Wife and Friend,
Our first great Mover, and our last great End,
Is One, and, by whatever name we call
The ruling Tyrant, SELF is ALL in ALL. (*Ibid*, 171-179)

Against Pope's conflation of self-love and social sympathy, the Lord discounts Churchill's noble service to the public as gratifying baser ends. Such publicity is rendered the very means by which Churchill gains authority: "From the indulgence of the PUBLIC rise; / All private Patronage my Soul defies" (*Ibid*, 147-148). Publicity is rendered the very mark of male authorial freedom and autonomy. Writing for an expansive public replaces the hierarchical and asymmetrical relationship of patron and bard with the more democratic and diffuse interaction between the bard and the "people". If historically speaking, patronage enacted the erasure of the poet in deference to the patron, *The Conference* argues for the necessity of maintaining the privacy of the personal, to ensure that a bard's public role is not undermined: Publicness in this rendering does not mean exposure of the private life, but is rather about protecting the private from the political. In a final response to the scandal of his elopement with Elizabeth Carr, Churchill dismissively writes:

Enough of this — let private sorrows rest —
As to the Public I dare stand the test;
Dare proudly boast, I feel no wish above

The good of ENGLAND, and my Country's love. (*Ibid*, 237-240).

If ministerial corruption is sodomitical, Churchill makes the hypocritical case that any revelations of private illicit heterosexual sex should not interfere with a man's patriotic credentials.

Publicness and authorial autonomy is also a central theme in *Independence*. In figuring the patronage system as pederastic and antagonistic to independent thinking, *Independence* illustrates how emergent debates about male autonomy, privacy, and freedom of expression were cast in deeply sodomphobic and effeminophobic terms. Freedom from sodomitical subjection became the primary motivation and defence of both the public and private spheres. The poem posits an imagining of a celestial courtroom setting, where the figure of the Bard, self-made and autonomous, is juxtaposed with that of the undeservedly privileged Lord. As Brunström notes, "*Independence* is a poem that juxtaposes [Churchill's] own coarse unpredictability with aristocratic insubstantiality".²⁴⁷ From the outset, we are given an image of the 'Bard' as autonomous, an image that is sharply reversed in the second stanza with that of the writer receiving patronage. Churchill directly links patronage to prostitution: "Have stoop'd to prostitute their venal pen" (*Independence*, 23). Ultimately, patronage functions as a repressive economy as it subjugates writers, situating them as inferior to "that thing we call a *Lord*" (*Ibid*, 26). In the third stanza, Churchill enters into a rather long discourse regarding the semantic stability of the noun "Lord". The noun "thing" is deployed as an anti-descriptor in the poem. Further on, he elaborates, summarising that a Lord "Lives on another man, himself a blank" (*Ibid*, 71), while "A *Bard* owes all to Nature, and Himself" (*Ibid*, 74). Static title loses out here to dynamic self-development.²⁴⁸ Intriguingly, there is an important emphasis between fulfilling personal growth and the limits of an empty title, which focuses on gender, and in particular, on bodily 'masculinity'. The Lord approaches Reason's weighing scales as a "figure strange and queer" (*Ibid*, 115), and in the following stanza, Churchill devotes seventeen lines to a description of the Lord's physicality.

²⁴⁷ Brunström, "Be Male And Female Still", p. 43.

²⁴⁸ Bertelsen, p. 237.

As Bertelsen notes, more than simple caricature, this passage functions allegorically as a portrait of “the political posture of the English aristocracy”.²⁴⁹ While the Lord’s attitude is “Erect and proud, / A head and shoulders taller than the crowd” (*Ibid*, 119-20), physically his body is “meagre, flimsy, void of strength” (*Ibid*, 117). The Lord’s skin is “loose / O’er his bare bones” (*Ibid*, 120-121) while his face is “so very thin” (*Ibid*, 122) and “unbles’d with beard” (*Ibid*, 127). The epicene figure of the Lord, most likely based on George Lyttleton, signifies imbalance, as the aristocracy as an emasculated social class attempt to assert authority on political ‘legs’ designed “only to support a spider’s weight” (*Ibid*, 130).²⁵⁰ The ruling class is severely atrophied, and as the Lord “Shaking himself to pieces” (*Ibid*, 133) attempts to “shake the sky” (*Ibid*, 134), the common people, the middling sort, simply watch on, ridiculing the demystified Lord from below. Conversely, the Bard we are told is a man “Nature built on quite a diff’rent plan” (*Ibid*, 148). The definition of the Bard that follows incorporates the physical and social characteristics of the middling sort of English society.²⁵¹

Clearly gesturing to Hogarth, Churchill in a self-portrait conceives of the bard as a “Bear, / His Dam despis’d, and left *unlick’d* in scorn” (*Ibid*, 149-150), an image that Bertelsen convincingly suggests resonates with the neglected and abandoned within the metropolis.²⁵² Moreover, Churchill presents the voice of the Bard as a sort of chaos, a “*Babel*”, which at once brings to mind the unintelligible rabble of the street mob.²⁵³ When the Bard comes into focus, we see a figure with broad shoulders, vast bones, and “muscles twisted strong” (*Ibid*, 157). His arms are “two twin Oaks” (*Ibid*, 163), while his legs are “so stout / That they might bear a Mansion House” (*Ibid*, 163-64). The body Churchill presents reflects the bodily masculinity of a day-labourer or merchant. Moreover, the description of the Bard’s arms of oak connects with the rich symbolic associations long attached to the oak tree within the British cultural imagination. Once again, the Churchillian body is historically haptic, as both living history and potent historical symbol. The Bard, with arms of oak and legs so strong that

²⁴⁹ Bertelsen, p. 239.

²⁵⁰ Bertelsen, pp. 239-240.

²⁵¹ Bertelsen, p. 241.

²⁵² Bertelsen, p. 242.

²⁵³ Bertelsen, p. 242.

‘bear a Mansion house’ suggests at once the common people; the mansion house being the mansion of the Lord Mayor of London and therefore the powerbase of the urban magnates.²⁵⁴ Churchill envisions the common people — specifically the English common man — as the true bearer of maleness, and more precisely, as the embodiment of a specifically English type of masculinity. ‘Maleness’ here is not simply reductive to socially constructed gender, but is also, more capaciously, about a form of politics, a mode of sociality, which makes men independent, private and autonomous. The masculinity that was posited as being out of vogue in *The Times*, and anxiously blurred in *An Estimate*, is celebrated here in *Independence* in the burly figure of the Bard, who reveals the common man as the source of both landed and mercantile power.²⁵⁵

However, while the Bard’s physicality may seem stable, Churchill reveals that such stability is in fact in flux. There is a movement from the position of cleric to that of dandy, from “graver fool” (*Ibid*, 172) to fop, until the Bard seemingly settles into the category of a “HERCULES, turn’d *Beau*” (*Ibid*, 175). The figure of the Bard incorporates and therefore disarms the potential effeminacy of the fop. Oddly enough, Churchill adopts decidedly ‘queer’ tactics by taking a negative cartoon of himself and consciously inhabiting and owning it:

Brown *Cassock* which had once been black,
Which hung in tatters on his brawny back,
A sight most strange and awkward to behold
He threw a covering of *Blue* and *Gold*. (*Ibid*, 167-170)

The fashionable covering of blue and gold, foppish as it is, is proudly displayed by Churchill as part of his decidedly unfashionable autonomous social position. As Brunström notes, Churchill celebrated his own failures and the criticism that was levelled at him as a way of “forstall[ing] serious satiric opposition”.²⁵⁶ As a decidedly effeminophobic poet, he was often critiqued for his own foppish literary ambitions. As mentioned earlier, Samuel Foote satirised the incongruity between Churchill’s literary life and clerical office in the figure of Manly in a revision of his play, *Taste*, performed at Drury Lane on April 6th, 1761. Not surprisingly then, the type of masculinity that Churchill’s Bard embodies has a

²⁵⁴ Bertelsen, p. 242.

²⁵⁵ Bertelsen, p. 242.

²⁵⁶ Brunström, “‘Be Male And Female Still’”, p. 43.

capacity that effectively neutralises any emasculating threat. Camping it up in foppish dress is a way of paradoxically invigorating one's masculinity. Furthermore, the Bard's free movement between various social roles subversively suggests the arbitrariness of all identity positions.

As expected, when judged on Reason's scales, the Bard's worth far outweighs that of the Lord's. In this instance, the Lord is literally airy and Ossianic, a figuring that makes real the true weight of merit over birth (*Ibid*, 209-210). As in *The Times*, Churchill locates the effeminacy of the attenuated ruling elite as a condition of the present, projecting backward to a time when the Lord was, among other things, "Plain in his dress, and in his manners plain" (*Ibid*, 338). Patronage is bound up with an effeminate sense of fashion, and Lords "keep a *Bard*, just as they keep a *Whore*" (*Ibid*, 392). *Independence* clearly presents the deficiencies of the ruling elite in gendered terms. Intriguingly, when threatened, Churchill's bard, though "still at large, and *Independent*" (*Ibid*, 534) is but a "melting mass of flesh" (*Ibid*, 531). The bodily masculinity, presented to the reader earlier, is oddly no longer tangible and what finally resists and eludes the control of the ruling elite is the Bard's "Soul" (*Ibid*, 532). This soul or spirit promises a transcendence of the bodily, along with the virtual formation of a patriotic community:

O my poor COUNTRY — weak and overpower'd
 By thine own Sons — eat to the bone — devour'd
 By Vipers, which, in thine own entrails bred,
 Prey on thy life, and with thy blood are fed,
 With unavailing grief thy wrongs I see,
 And, for myself not feeling, feel for *Thee*.
 I grieve, but can't despair — for, Lo, at hand
 FREEDOM presents a choice, but faithful band
 Of *Loyal PATRIOTS*, Men who greatly dare
 In such a noble cause, Men fit to bear
 The weight of Empires; *Fortune, Rank, and Sense,*
Virtue and knowledge, leagu'd with *Eloquence,*
 March in their ranks; FREEDOM from file to file
 Darts her delighted eye, and with a smile
 Approves her honest Sons, whilst down her cheek,
 As 'twere by stealth (her heart too full to speak)
 One Tear in silence creeps, one honest Tear,
 And seems to say, Why is not GRANBY here? (*Ibid*, 555-572)

In this penultimate and alarmist stanza, the English body-politic is 'devour'd' by vipers resting in its very bowels, an image that suggestively conflates a

triumvirate of aggressors: aristocrats, Scots, and sodomites. An abstracted Freedom knowingly approves of Churchill's independent patriots, who long for the imminent return of the Marquis of Granby, the military commander who replaced the disgraced George Sackville. In this way, Granby links the patriots of *Independence* with the woman-lover patriot of *The Times* by figuring the embodiment of manly patriotic virtue.

In the final stanza, Churchill, in a militant tone, advises these men to "Be as One Man" (*Ibid.*, 593), a call for solidarity and, in a way, for male gender conformity. The organisation of this group of men is based on their authentic male gender status, on their secure sense of their own English maleness and class positioning:

O Ye brave *Few*, in whom we still may find,
A Love of Virtue, Freedom, and Mankind,
Go forth — in Majesty of Woe array'd,
See, at your feet Your COUNTRY kneels for aid,
And, (many of her children traitors grown,)
Kneels to those Sons She Still can call her own,
Seeming to breather her last in ev'ry breath,
She kneels for Freedom, or She begs for Death —
Fly then, each duteous Son, each English Chief,
And to your drooping Parent bring relief.
Go forth — nor let the Siren voice of ease
Tempt Ye to sleep, whilst tempests swell the seas;
Go forth — nor let Hypocrisy, whose tongue
With many a fair, false, fatal art is hung,
Like Bethel's fawning Prophet, cross your way,
When your great Errand brooks not of delay;
Nor let vain Fear, who cries to all She meets,
Trembling and pale — A Lion in the streets —
Damp your free Spirits; let not threats affright,
Nor Bribes corrupt, nor Flatteries delight.
Be as One Man — CONCORD success ensures —
There's not an English heart but what is Your's.
Go forth — and VIRTUE, ever in your sight,
Shall be your guide by day, your guard by night —
Go forth — the Champions of your native land,
And may the battle prosper in your hand —
It may, it Must — Ye cannot be withstood —
Be your Hearts honest, as your Cause is good. (*Ibid.*, 573-600)

Paradoxically, Churchill's effeminophobic satire calls for men to join closer together. Offering the obverse of the Scottish shepherds' relationship with the Goddess Famine, England is personified as the injured mother in this stanza, in need of help from her "duteous" sons. The bardic freedom that opened the poem is here broadened out in an imagining of the patriotic bonds shared by a minority

of independent men. Both *The Times* and *Independence* critique the aristocratic elite as effeminate, while simultaneously situating the ‘middling sort’ man as the true bearer of a patriotic masculinity.

While Churchill’s satire deploys a sodomitical discourse as a form of critique, its appeal to gender complementariness and to a class-based form of patriotic masculinity suggests a process of heterosexual gender codification as well as sodomitical demarcation. *The Times* exemplifies this process with its concluding appeal to the feminine. The stability of male subjectivity is enabled through a phobic positioning of the figure of the effeminate sodomite, which crucially becomes reaffirmed through the poet’s strategic plea, by his forceful pulling of the category of woman into the orbit of his reverse homoerotic discourse. While the primary section of *The Times* delineates the effeminate sodomite as displaced from a type of hyperbolic Wilkite masculinity, its conclusion constructs a binarism that sees the category of woman as incommensurable and complementary to the male hetero subject. The natural visual and aural stage pleasures of Vincent’s and Beard’s singing that concludes *The Rosciad* is rendered here in deeply and explicitly political terms. The imaging of this heteronormative union balances out the poem’s construction of political authority as sodomitical. As John Tosh argues: an “ethic of public service” provided a shared narrative strain in both “gentle and bourgeois modes of masculinity”.²⁵⁷ The poem *Independence*, with its explicit call to the middling-sort man to confront the degenerate and impotent hierarchy, fits easily into this pattern. Yet, as I have argued, this appeal to activate extra-parliamentary participation is more strategically formulated and more politically inflected in Churchill’s *Independence* than in Brown’s *An Estimate*. The masculine ideal of active citizenship appealed to in these poems is also one of dutiful and compulsory heterosexual assertion. The sexual rhetoric that animates both *The Times* and *Independence* reinforces the symbolism of heteronormative inclusivity as a way of rhetorically obviating the material requirements of the public-political sphere.

²⁵⁷ John Tosh, “The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750-1850”, in *English Masculinities: 1660-1800*, Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen, eds. (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1999), p. 221.

(1.5) Conclusion

C—ll wrote poems against the Scots, and continued to carry his son about with him in Highland cloaths, and some went even so far as to propagate every where, that a jury of Scotsmen had found W—s guilty. However, C—ll the genius soon dropped; he went over to see his patron, and drinking too freely of new wine at Bouloigne, he died of a surfeit, unrelenting and unprepared, bewailed by few, except such as were sorry for his impieties, and the ungenerous treatment he gave to his own spouse, to whom he became unfaithful; and decoy'd a girl of eighteen years from her parents, people of credit and reputation.²⁵⁸

If Andrew Henderson's posthumous summary of Churchill's poetic career achieved its anti-Wilkite aim of discrediting the poet's political endeavours, then its efficacy surely rested on its reversal of those postures Churchill had adopted in his poems. The anti-Scottishness of Churchill's poetry and professed politics was frequently critiqued as a somewhat fake posture, designed to excite the popular mood of anti-Scottish feeling and to dislodge Bute from high political office. Henderson's pointed reference to the scandal of Elizabeth Carr can also be read as an attempt to undermine the highly gendered and sexualised politics advanced in Churchill's poetry, at the heart of which is not a libertine eroticising of woman, but a supposed recognition of English women as complement and helpmate to the Trueborn Englishman. Rather than living a David Garrick-like life of heterosociality, Henderson notes how Churchill literally died of a "surfeit", of excess.

As many of his detractors were aware, the difficulty with critiquing Churchill centred on the fact that he consciously took pleasure in being contradictory. Railing against foppish fashions while conspicuously enjoying them, was, for him, part of a strategic and bold reclaiming of authority for a metropolitan English (and more specifically London) identity and location that was increasingly being critiqued as the locus of national degeneration. Churchill's verse-satire is not less valuable for its overt topicality, but rather more interesting and more relevant for what this overtness tells us about shifting conceptions of authorial identity and the formation and, indeed contestation, of

²⁵⁸ Andrew Henderson, *A letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of T—e: or, the case of J- W—s, Esquire: with respect to the King, Parliament, courts of justice, ...* (London, 1768), p. 30.

the literary and public spheres. While the following chapters engage with these questions by discussing the polemical essays sheets of the early 1760s, it is important to note Churchill's own modest contribution to the liberal theorising of literary and public spheres. By naming names and keeping erudition to a minimum, Churchill made doggerel the discursive material of an increasingly expansive public sphere. Following Pope, Churchill has been read as an inferior and overly topical satirist. While Churchill's literary merit is obviously inferior to Pope's, such an assertion of canonical importance risks over-shadowing the intellectual egalitarianism of Churchill's poetry. Writing for the 'public' required a political expediency and prolific intensity, demands that were incongruous with the literary modes of patronage and the elite club.

In Churchill's poetry, a sodomitical form of effeminacy figures a pederastic and anachronistic publicity as the antithesis of bardic freedom. By critiquing the acting talents of the London stage, *The Rosciad* also maps out Ireland as a place of backwardness and unproductive sterility; a positioning that registers as un-modern and crucially non-valuable in the context of a mid-century expansionist British imperial ideology. *The Ghost*, I-IV, and *The Prophecy of Famine* transport this earlier xeno-effeminophobic construction of the Irish Fribble into broader and more sustained literary and political debates about the semantic elasticity of the category of Britishness, ignited by the Ossian controversy. For Churchill, Macpherson's sentimentalised Celtic Highland warrior threatened to disrupt the very coherency and legitimacy of what was, by all regards, a rather loose Wilkite historical narrative that underwrote the rights and permissions of the trueborn Englishman. Effeminising the Scots as rapacious and sexually avaricious enabled Churchill to articulate patriotism as balance, one that was described in decidedly erotic terms.

Both *The Times* and *Independence* co-articulate a critique of the aristocracy that presents the source of the nation's enervation as stemming from the systems of subjection that aristocratic tradition sustains. *The Times* satirically, though forcefully, imagines a post-Seven Years' War England in sodomitical terms as a society that has lost its regard for the loveliness of women. In Burkean terms, this leads to the loss of the sort of sociability that is naturally engendered through heteroeroticism, with a debased and unsociable lust emerging by default. In this way, the poem presents the antisocial reality of a

reduction of heterosexuality to its reproductive function. Even as the nation continues to propagate under the sodomitical dispensation, society itself is being undone and in many ways reversed, by the newfound centrality of the homoerotic. *Independence* addresses Estimate Brown's assertion that the English nation is too effeminate to feel patriotic love, by rhetorically recruiting this community of patriots. The claim of this authorial independence is bound up with this patriotic community for Churchill; while the articulation and contestation of both is, again, about the larger issue of the right of the "public" to claim discursive authority and control. Tellingly, in the phobic movement between the two poems, the resolve comes from the pushing back of a sodomitical publicity, to make room for a public of private, independent patriots. As Chapters Two and Three bear out, such a claim to publicity, for Churchill, curiously rests on the privacy of the heteroerotic.

Chapter II

Closet Politics

Privacy, Desire & the True-born
Englishman

(2.1) Preface

The xeno-effeminophobic themes of Charles Churchill's poetry were largely provoked by the controversial career of the radical Whig John Wilkes (1725-1797). Having ironically failed to get elected in 1754 at Berwick-on-Tweed, the northernmost town in England, Wilkes entered parliament as a non-elite M.P. for Aylesbury in 1757.¹ In the early 1760s, at the close of the Seven Years' War, the Wilkites engendered fractious debates on a number of issues, such as the illegality of general warrants, the freedom of the press, the right of an electorate to choose its representative, and the validity of public opinion. Although largely confined to the 1760s, these controversial debates contributed to the development of the public sphere, while also providing the germinal point for the later political reforms of the mid-nineteenth-century. As we will see in this chapter, Wilkes's anti-ministerial defence of the press and his argument for the illegality of general warrants rested upon the assumption of the privacy of the bourgeois heterosexual male subject. These interrelated issues were addressed in the pages of *The North Briton*. They were further ventilated when the essay sheet was prosecuted for sedition in 1764. In addition to this, the government obtained the proof sheets from Wilkes's private printing press of an obscene poem, mocking Bishop Warburton, Pope's literary executor. While *The North Briton* was being denounced in the Commons, Lord Sandwich, Wilkes's libertine friend, read extracts from *An Essay on Woman* in the House of Lords, hypocritically condemning it as a scandalous libel of Warburton. Though Wilkes quickly won ground by winning his action against the illegality of the general warrant issued to arrest him, the government's two-pronged attack led to the loss of his parliamentary seat, a further loss of legal status (and identity) through outlawry, injury from a duel, and the enforced abandonment of his native London for Paris.

Cultural, political, and literary historians such as Kathleen Wilson, Anna Clark, Matthew McCormack, and Carol Watts have all separately commented on the

¹ Following the wishes of the Duke of Newcastle and his patron Temple, Wilkes stood for election at Berwick-on-Tweed, making a speech that naively declared his intention never to engage in bribery with his constituents. Notably, his competitors Thomas Watson and John Delaval disagreed with the young Wilkes's idealism and both were elected. Wilkes submitted a formal petition to the House of Commons about what he saw as the 'bribery' of his competitors and was defended by Pitt in parliament when he was summoned to present his case. Pitt's speech moved beyond the topic of Wilkes to attack the administration and therefore was the first public indication of his drift from Newcastle. In 1757, Thomas Potter's acceptance of a lucrative position as vice treasurer to Ireland facilitated a reshuffle of the faction's seats that allowed Wilkes to secure a seat for Aylesbury. See Arthur H. Cash, *John Wilkes: The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 41-46.

centrality of the Wilkite radicalism of the 1760s and early 1770s to broader codifications of bourgeois gender formation within eighteenth-century socio-political culture.² Moreover, historians of political masculinity have identified the 1760s as a decade in which discourses of sexuality and politics were conflated in British culture, noting in particular how the political campaigns and persona of Wilkes came to signify this overt sexualising of politics.³ In *The Independent Man: Citizenship And Gender Politics in Georgian England* (2005), Matthew McCormack reads how the category of independence became meaningfully deployed in various contexts as a way of affirming particular and often incongruently stylised forms of male political subjectivity. Demonstrating how such political masculinity revolved around a highly gendered concept of independence, McCormack presents an impressive critical and historical reading of discursive constructions of political masculinity from the Wilkite 1760s to the Reform Debates of the mid-nineteenth century. Tracing the historical, political and cultural influences on Wilkes's political formation, McCormack places libertinism in an equally constitutive relationship with concepts of Englishness, classical-republican theories of politics, and issues of class.⁴ Within the study's capacious survey, Wilkes's political identity is positioned as benefitting from a rich tradition of Whig Country and neo-classical Republican oppositional critical discourses.⁵ In a broader sense, McCormack demonstrates how Georgian political subjectivity reached definitional closure through various exclusions, namely women and effeminate men. He concludes that the legacy of the Georgian cult of independence has impoverished contemporary masculine norms that still gain

² See Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 29-54; Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 19-53; Anna Clark, "The Chevalier d'Eon and Wilkes: Masculinity and Politics in the Eighteenth Century", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Nationalism (Fall, 1998), pp. 19-48; Matthew McCormack, *The Independent Man: Citizenship And Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Carol Watts, *The Cultural Work of Empire: The Seven Years' War and the Imagining of the Shandean State* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

³ McCormack, p. 88.

⁴ McCormack, pp. 80-92.

⁵ McCormack identifies how Wilkes's political identity was informed by a Country tradition that "emphasized the independent checks that balanced the constitutional structure: in particular, the power of the Commons to check the government, and of the electorate to influence the composition and conduct of the Commons"; In addition, the language of Wilkite opposition is deployed within the frame of a neo-classical Republican argument, which "emphasised the role of the independent householder-citizen in the polity, an ideal that meshed with English conditions since, in practice, voters were householders". See McCormack, p. 3; p. 13.

coherence along exclusionary racist, misogynist, and homophobic trajectories.⁶ Yet, overall, this reading of Georgian political subjectivity neglects to acknowledge the way in which such exclusions came into formation.

More problematic is an evident lack of awareness regarding the historicity of effeminacy in this reading. As if interchangeable terms of signification, McCormack notes how feminine and effeminate subjects were both disempowered and positioned outside of the definitional boundaries of the cult of the Georgian Independent:

effeminacy as well as femininity was also politically disempowering. Men who were younger, poorer, non-English or homosexual were similarly disadvantaged by the cult of the independent man. Understandings of who was capable of independence were constantly being renegotiated, but arguments for empowerment based upon 'independence' always required an 'other' in the form of a disempowered dependant. *In-dependence* is a negative term – the condition of *non-obligation* – so to argue that only *non-obliged* persons should participate in politics is to imply that supposedly *obliged* persons should not.⁷

While McCormack is certainly right to view both the feminine and effeminate as beyond the boundaries of Georgian political subjectivity, his anachronistic use of the noun 'homosexual' along with a reading of effeminacy as an obliged condition risks an uncritical conflation of effeminacy and the feminine. If the feminine enters into an incommensurable and complimentarily apolitical relationship with the masculine during the eighteenth century, then it would be a misreading to place effeminacy as a mere effect or consequence of this gendered arrangement. The emergence in the late eighteenth century of what Thomas Laqueur controversially describes in *Making Sex* (1990) as a two-sex gender model, which gradually superseded an older Galenic hierarchical mode of comprehending bodies as one sex, ensures that effeminacy can never be positioned with any assurance.⁸ Instead, effeminacy, as a disavowed potentiality for the male gendered self, can only ever announce the insecurity of such a gender arrangement. In short, McCormack's locating of eighteenth-century effeminacy at the site of a feminine cultural and sexual 'obligation' risks obscuring the complexity of deployments of the category of effeminacy in the eighteenth century, thus occluding its ideological function in an emergent organisation of male political culture.

⁶ McCormack, p. 210.

⁷ McCormack, p. 5.

⁸ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body And Gender From The Greeks To Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 6-7.

In particular, Kathleen Wilson's rigorous socio-cultural historical analysis is useful because it foregrounds how Wilkes's "phallic adventuring" operated as a means of defining the effeminate.⁹ Expanding on this point, Wilson succinctly outlines how:

Gender as well as history was used to naturalize the claims for political subjectivity made through resistance arguments, exemplified most cogently in the Wilkite model of "manly patriotism". Circulated through newspapers, pamphlets, plays and street theatre as well as the homosocial milieu of radical club life, the model of manly patriotism simultaneously defined and solicited a particular version of masculinity to be put at the call of patriotism that marginalized and opposed non-resisting and hence "effeminate" others.¹⁰

While the above conflation of 'non-resisting' with effeminacy requires some further examination, Wilson's point regarding patriotism exercised by "austere, forceful and independent masculine" subjects, which in turn become privileged as 'legitimate' resources for the work of nation and empire-building, demonstrates the centrality of a model of masculinity to Wilkite politics.¹¹ In reading the Wilkite movement, Wilson is attentive to how "political and sexual subjects were one and the same, and manly patriotism embellished a heterosexist version of masculinity that aggressively eschewed "effeminacy" in the political and sexual realms".¹² Whereas Wilson views Wilkite politics as conflating the sexual and political, this section argues that attention to Wilkes's defence of his *North Briton* and *Essay* demonstrates how, in fact, the sexual figures as that which must be recuperated from the political.

For Wilson, the identification of the sexual as political within Wilkite male subjectivity, comes at a time (the decade of the 1760s-1770s) that witnessed a shift in Whig political thought, when, for the first time in three generations, Whigs felt the need to ground their narratives of male political subjectivity in property: firstly, in terms of their family (in wives and children) and secondly, in their interests in trades, the marketplace, labour and their financial contributions to the polity through taxation.¹³ As we will see, Wilkite property figures the homosocial, which is rendered a form of property, between men that is invested in their shared material spaces, such as the cider brewers' orchard. Likewise, heteroerotic desire is a property that must be preserved and protected. Moreover, Wilson's historical reading, careful as it is in

⁹ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 220.

¹⁰ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 219.

¹¹ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 219.

¹² Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 221.

¹³ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 225.

other ways, neglects to interrogate effeminacy as a historical category, instead placing it as something that is already ‘aggressively eschewed’. In an almost essentialised way, sexuality — particularly heterosexuality — is an already known category in Wilson’s analysis, a position that deprives her reading of an awareness of the very formativeness and insecurity of Wilkite ‘phallic adventuring’.

In discussing Wilkes’s particular brand of English libertinism (defined as an exercising of hedonistic freedom in sexual, financial and convivial terms) McCormack distinguishes the Wilkite opposition of the early 1760s (designated by the anti-ministerial essay-sheet *The North Briton*) from the controversy surrounding Wilkes’s later contesting of the Middlesex election in 1768. In McCormack’s view, having returned from a period of exile in France (1764-1768), Wilkes was confronted by the fact that “societal mores were changing ... [and] many of the supporters he needed neither approved of his libertine morality nor accepted that his private life was separable from his public cause”.¹⁴ In response to detractors that emphasised his perceived libertine excesses, McCormack argues that John Wilkes “had to change his public persona in order to maintain the adherence of his supporters in the 1770s and beyond”.¹⁵ Yet such a reading of Wilkite politics as moving from a professed libertinism to a reformed gentlemanly status overlooks the more conventional aspects of Wilkes’s construction of masculinity. In particular, Wilkes’s public shows of devotion to his daughter Mary (Polly), as well as the more private and less lavish support that he afforded his children born outside of his marriage to Mary Mead, is central to a shift from the image of Wilkes as a neglectful husband to Wilkes as a devoted father.¹⁶ To suggest as McCormack does, that Wilkite politicking (biographical evidence would suggest that his personal life remained ‘libertine’) became somehow less libertine in response to a newly emergent male political image at the end of the 1760s risks misreading Wilkes’s libertinism as determining — as opposed to signifying a determinant of — his political position.

¹⁴ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 88.

¹⁵ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 88.

¹⁶ John Sainsbury has documented Wilkes’s devotion to Polly as well as to his other children born outside of marriage. Sainsbury notes how Wilkes was, however, selective in who he admitted into his domestic circle, and although providing for the gentlemanly education of his ‘nephew’ John Smith, the son of one of his previous lovers Catherine Smith, Wilkes forcefully excluded both Catherine and John from the “charmed circle of his domestic world”, See John Sainsbury, *John Wilkes: The Lives of a Libertine* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 40.

While McCormack is right to distinguish the controversies of ‘seditious libel’ of *The North Briton*, No. 45 and ‘scandalous blasphemy’ of the libertine *Essay on Woman* from his later expulsion after winning the Middlesex Election in 1768, such differentiation risks over-emphasising Wilkes as a ‘reformed rake’, thus neglecting the important continuities of his negotiation of male political subjectivity. It is crucial to acknowledge the way in which Wilkes’s form of libertarian and libertine masculinity centred around a defence of the ‘privacy’ of a masculine domestic and heterosexual sphere, regardless of oppositional critiques that would brand Wilkes and Wilkites as being beyond the acceptable contours of polite society. In tracing the tensions regarding libertinism within the Wilkite camp, Kathleen Wilson and Carol Watts draw attention to the way in which the material support garnered for Wilkes came under strain as bodies like the Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights (SSBR) experienced fragmentation ostensibly due to disagreements over his continued libertinism.¹⁷ Wilson notes, the decamping of some members of the Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights to form the Constitutional Society in 1771, professed that the “banishment of ‘regularity, decency and order’ from the Wilkite camp as a main cause;”¹⁸ Yet issues of regularity, decency and order have more immediate connotations than libertine anarchy. While acknowledging the topical link between reckless financial and sexual consumption within contemporary constructions of libertinism in *John Wilkes: The Lives of a Libertine* (2006), John Sainsbury has pointed to Wilkes’s financial as opposed to sexual excess as the primary cause of such political fragmentation.¹⁹ While clearly profligate, in other matters, particularly in relation to the education of his daughter Polly, Wilkes was equally generous in the distribution of his funds.

Documented instances of the formation of political splinter organisations, with a very clear antagonism to the more raucous elements of the Wilkite movement, notably support McCormack’s identification of the popularisation of “a new image of

¹⁷ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 221; Watts, p. 139.

¹⁸ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 221.

¹⁹ The Society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights was formed in an effort to discreetly pay off Wilkes’s creditors in an effort to allow him to maintain the dignity of a private and financially solvent man, which was necessary to the advancement of his political ambitions. However, many, including the Rev. John Horne, objected to Wilkes’s “attempt to intercept subscriptions intended for the payment of his debts so that he could continue his career of extravagance”. Financial complaints mounting against Wilkes also extended to claims that he embezzled money from the Aylesbury Foundling hospital during his period as treasurer and director, as well as improperly benefitting from his role as the colonel of the Buckinghamshire militia. See Sainsbury, p. 219.

political manhood” at the close of the 1760s. However, disavowals of political association professed on the basis of an aversion to Wilkes’s libertinism must be treated with caution and considered in light of the fact that such internal critique adopted the basis of much of Wilkes’s long-standing oppositional critique. While the Wilkite movement clearly attracted and contained a raucous element, it would be a mistake to take these claims for disassociation at face value. Though his opponents often invoked it during his political career, Wilkes never adopted libertinism as an overt position, or addressed himself publicly in those terms. Moreover, when the issue of the *Essay on Woman* was read aloud by Lord Sandwich in 1763 in the House of Lords, the hypocrisy of the condemnation was not lost on the parliamentarians. Throughout Wilkes’s career, the accusation of libertinism, along with the scandal of the sodomitical, was always readily available to political actors to denounce their opponents. As Anna Clark has noted, Wilkes’s “libertine masculinity became an essential part of his political critique”.²⁰ In the case of Edmund Burke and the Rockinghamites, such scandal led them to separate their position on the issues arising from Wilkite disputes (the illegality of general warrants or interference in parliamentary elections) from the personality and actions of the political actor, Wilkes. Rockinghamites could agree with the terms of Wilkite protest, while also rejecting any association with the personality of Wilkes. The political leverage that such a critique yielded was deployed both by and against Wilkes throughout his political career. Sainsbury usefully examines Wilkes’s self-fashioning as a libertine family man by situating such libertinism within the context of a somewhat earlier eighteenth-century movement for the reformation of (male) manners:

Libertinism of whatever kind offered a challenge to eighteenth-century reformers of male manners. Suffused with the new culture of sensibility, and usually animated by religious zeal, they saw in the home itself, when properly constituted, a compelling alternative to the disreputable resorts of libertine men, and one in which a proper notion of manhood might be redefined. As a well-known rake, Wilkes was an obvious target for such a campaign, yet at the same time he posed something of a conundrum for it, because, borrowing from the language of sensibility, he insisted that he loved the domestic life. Confounding the assumptions of the reformers, he offered the curious spectacle of the domestic libertine.²¹

²⁰ Anna Clark, “The Chevalier d’Eon and Wilkes: Masculinity and Politics in the Eighteenth Century”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Nationalism (Fall, 1998), p. 22.

²¹ Sainsbury, p. 1.

Whether we read Wilkes's particular performance of masculinity as falling in line with an emerging image of political manhood, as a reformed Mr B (missing a Pamela), or simply, from the start, as a figure who confounded reformist constructions of male subjectivity, it is clear that a model of masculinity is both rhetorically and figuratively central to the attraction of Wilkite politicking throughout the decade. I will argue that sexuality is a charged rhetorical site for Wilkes, one that allows for the rhetorical expansion of male agency within what was by all accounts a rigidly hierarchical and stratified political sphere.

The later Wilkite campaign against the Duke of Grafton, First Lord of the Treasury from August 1766 to February 1770 (and Prime Minister for most of that time) is a case of Wilkes critiquing Grafton's behaviour, not as libertine but as anti-heterosocial. As Sainsbury notes, Grafton was well known as a gambler and womaniser, yet his exploits had excited very little public notice until he attended the opera in the King's Theatre in the Haymarket on April 16th 1768, accompanied by his mistress, Nancy Parsons.²² Also attending the opera, in an independent capacity, was Grafton's wife, whom he had been separated from for four years. The spectacle of Grafton and his mistress parading in front of his wife and the King and Queen was vigorously condemned by commentators such as *Junius* as a transgression well beyond the boundaries of polite society; one which caused unnecessary embarrassment to Grafton's wife, and her family.²³ Sainsbury reads the Wilkite condemnation of Grafton as attempting to assert a moralistic critique of aristocratic libertine sexual licence, while also carefully distancing Wilkes's own indiscretions from such behaviour.²⁴ Rather than read the Wilkite response to Grafton's treatment of his wife as a hypocritical cashing in on popular anti-aristocratic attitudes, such a response might be better described as a continuation of the rhetorical (if not actual) privileging of the wifely woman within Wilkite discourse, evidenced in Churchill's apology to the fair at the close of *The Times*.

In light of Wilkes's own desexualised self-imaging in epithetical terms as "an extinct volcano", it is not surprising that historical and cultural commentators continually frame discussions of the Wilkite controversy of 1763-1770 by foregrounding the way in which Wilkes's libertinism becomes eschewed in his later

²² Sainsbury, p. 202.

²³ Sainsbury, p. 202.

²⁴ Sainsbury, p. 202.

central involvement in London's political and municipal life.²⁵ Pro-Wilkite publications such as *English Liberty Established: OR, The most material Circumstances relative to John Wilkes Esq* (1768), a collection of Wilkes's letters, speeches and other Wilkite responses to the events of '64 and the Middlesex electoral crisis, framed Wilkes's libertinism as a form of anti-ministerial criticism. Whereas anti-Wilkites charged Wilkes with libertinism, such charges were deconstructed in pro-Wilkite literature as anti-Wilkiteism. A section entitled to "The enemies of Mr. Wilkes", addresses the charge of blasphemy against *An Essay*, along with the charge of seditious libel for No. 45. In such a context, the spectre of Wilkes's libertine masculinity is raised, albeit to be deployed as a form of anti-administration critique:

Though Mr. Wilkes's private character may have been very exceptionable in times past, it does not follow that it is so now. Why may not he have seen the error of his ways, as well as some other *great men* who were once great sinners, but are now happily regenerated, and, by means of their reformation, are basking in the sunshine of Court favour and preferment.²⁶

Notably, the emphasis here is not placed on Wilkes as a repentant libertine but shunted onto "some other *great men*" and the hypocrisy of all professed reformation in the context of a thoroughly corrupt political system. In "Mr. Wilkes's Speech to the Court of King's Bench, the 20th of April, 1768", also contained in *English Liberty Established*, Wilkes responds to the charge brought against him for authoring *An Essay on Woman*, stating that:

As to the other charge against me for the publication of a poem, which has given just offence, I will assert that such an idea never entered my mind. Blush again at the recollection that it has been at any time, and in any way brought to the public eye, and drawn from the obscurity in which it remained under my roof. Twelve copies of a small part of it had been printed in my house at my own private press. I had carefully locked them up, and I never gave one to the most intimate friend. Government, after the affair of the North Briton bribed one of my servants to rob me of the copy, which was produced in the house of Peers, and afterwards before this honourable court. The nation was justly offended, but not with me, for it was evident that I had not been guilty of the least offence to the public.²⁷

²⁵ George Rudé, *Wilkes And Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 191.

²⁶ Anon, *English Liberty Established: OR, The most material Circumstances relative to John Wilkes Esq; Member of Parliament for the County of MIDDLESEX* (London: [s.n.], 1768), p. 15.

²⁷ Anon, *English Liberty Established*, p. 22.

Rather than representing himself as a reformed rake as commentators have suggested, however feigned, Wilkes's blush at the government's publishing of the *Essay* is less repentant than it is resistant. Recalling the administration's ransacking of his home in *A Letter to the worthy Electors of the Borough of Aylesbury, in the County of Bucks* (1764) he metaphorically extends such a transgression into an account of the breach of the proverbially inviolable English household. Within such a frame the *Essay*, as Wilkes's property, registers as a literary analogue for the Gentleman's Lockean claim to property in the labour and pleasure of his own body, a position that recasts the administration's condemnation of the *Essay* as an attack on the privacy of the heteroerotic.²⁸ Such an appeal, then, becomes all the more symbolically potent when we recall how Churchill's *The Times* boldly presented the visibility of the sodomitical as an index of a broader cultural, political and social degeneracy: "Go where We will, at ev'ry time and place, / SODOM confronts, and stares us in the face" (293-294). Wilkes's appeal to the privacy of the heteroerotic is brought into sharp relief when considered against the Churchillian biblical reading of the visibility of the sodomitical body as signifying the apotheosis of political decay, of the Dunciadic nightmarish and sterile state of the sameness of sameness.

The administration's publishing of the *Essay* signals an attack on the privacy of the heteroerotic. In this light, the controversy becomes reimagined in sodomitical terms as the machinations of a perverse administration. Not only is the *Essay* locked up in private obscurity, but also, a member of the household, a servant, is bribed by government officials to steal a copy of the document. Framed in such a way, the controversy becomes a perversion of patriarchal authority (master-servant relationship) and an intrusion into the private domain of the heteroerotic. Contrary to McCormack's reading of Wilkes's rejection of "libertine morality" in the face of changing political and societal mores of the 1760s, the consistent response to the *Essay* controversy demonstrates his self-construction as a defender of the Magna Charta ensured rights

²⁸ In Chap. V. of Property, in *The Second Treatise of Government* (1690), Locke argues that it is labour that fixes man's property claim: "We see in *Commons*, which remains so by Compact, that 'tis the taking any part of what is common, and removing it out the state Nature leaves it in, which *begins the Property*; without which the Common is of no use. And the taking of this or that part, does not depend on the express consent of all Commoners. Thus the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my *Property*, without the assignation or consent of any body. The *labour* that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath *fixed* my *Property* in them". See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 288-289.

and liberties of the Trueborn Englishman; a construction which long predates such perceived socio-political change.²⁹

The government's smear campaign against Wilkes's libertinism does not prompt him to reconsider or regulate the perceived excessive nature of his desire but instead provides an opportunity for him to present the controversy as the undertaking of a sodomitical regime bent on unnaturally curtailing the Englishman's right to property and, more significantly, to the exercising of pleasure in ownership of the property. In adopting such a position, Wilkes recasts the charges brought against his *Essay* as threatening the boundaries of an emerging sense of middle-class Georgian masculinity located in the domestic. Rather than rejecting libertine sexuality, Wilkes converts it into the very sign of the newly domesticated and heteronormative middle-classes, thus foregrounding the privacy of the heteroerotic as a constitutive element of an Englishman's sense of property. Moreover, such a defence of the Englishman's 'sex' is not something new or revised in the context of the late 1760s. Wilkes's earliest responses to the *Essay* controversy foregrounded the publishing of the poem as a ministerial violation of middle-class bourgeois interests.

Wilkes's *A Letter to the worthy Electors* demonstrates how the working out of heterosexuality's entitlement to privacy is part of the same discourse that promotes electoral rights and permissions. Writing from exile in Paris (October 22nd 1764), Wilkes addresses his electorate, and in doing so, rhetorically transcends his expulsion and outlawry by repositioning himself as an elected member of parliament, entrusted by virtue of his position with the task of protecting the "liberty, safety, property, and all those glorious privileges, which are [his constituents'] birth-right as Englishmen".³⁰ The letter is prefaced by an extensive extract from Jonathan Swift's first political tract, *A discourse of the contests and dissensions ... in Athens and Rome* (1701), which states that "*Vox populi, vox Dei* ought to be understood of the Universal bent and current of a People, not of the bare Majority of a few *representatives*".³¹ By invoking Swift, from the outset Wilkes appeals to the electorate as the true source of parliament's authority. In this light, his expulsion by parliament is secondary to the

²⁹ McCormack, p. 88.

³⁰ John Wilkes, "A Letter to the worthy Electors of the Borough of Aylesbury, in the County of Bucks.", in Grafton, Augustus Henry Fitzroy, Duke of. *Letters between the Duke of Grafton, the Earls of Halifax, Egremont, Chatham, Temple and Talbot, Baron Bontentort, Right Hon. Henry Bilson Legge, Right Hon. Sir John Cust, Bart. Mr. Charles Churchill, Monsieur Voltaire, the Abbé Winckelman, &c. and John Wilkes, Esq. With explanatory notes.* Vol. 1. (London, 1769), p. 180.

³¹ Wilkes, "A Letter to the worthy Electors", p. 179.

primacy of his affective connection with his constituents, a connection that has not been severed, though it may require reaffirming.

Wilkes writes that he “should have gloried in [his] *expulsion*, if it had not dissolved a political connection with [his] friends at Aylesbury”.³² Not only a direct and vituperative attack on him, Wilkes demonstrates how his expulsion from parliament is a perversion of his electorate’s right to choose their representative. In reclaiming his role as M.P. for Aylesbury, Wilkes extends the range of his apologia to incorporate a broader critique of the administration’s infringements on the propertied men of his electorate. In this light, Wilkes’s anatomising of the charges levelled against him will function to ensure “the preservation of the rights and privileges of every *Englishman*”.³³ Importantly, *A Letter* distinguishes the charges brought against him as being of two different natures; *North Briton*, No. 45 being of a public nature, while the “idle poem” is presented as a private issue.³⁴ Again, the defence proffered is that the *Essay* is a separate issue and “of a private nature”.³⁵ Wilkes’s reluctance to address the poem is important for the type of argument that it generates. We are informed that his reticence comes from a belief in: “the right of private opinion in its fullest extent, when it is not followed by giving any open, public offence to any establishment, or indeed to any individual”.³⁶

The particular charge brought against the *Essay* relates to part of the prosecution’s claim that the poem ridiculed the Athanasius creed, and in a looser sense: “questioned the existence, or denied the perfections of the Supreme Being”.³⁷ Responding to these claims in *A Letter*, Wilkes states that:

In my own closet I had the right to examine, and even to try by the keen edge of ridicule, any opinions I pleased. If I have laughed pretty freely at the glaring absurdities of the most monstrous *creed*, which was ever attempted to be imposed on the credulity of Christians, a creed which our great Tillotson WISHED THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND WAS FAIRLY RID OF, it was in private I laughed.³⁸

³² Wilkes, “A Letter to the worthy Electors”, p. 186.

³³ Wilkes, “A Letter to the worthy Electors”, p. 218.

³⁴ Wilkes, “A Letter to the worthy Electors”, p. 209.

³⁵ Wilkes, “A Letter to the worthy Electors”, p. 182.

³⁶ Wilkes, “A Letter to the worthy Electors”, p. 209.

³⁷ Anon, *English Liberty Established*, p. 13.

³⁸ Wilkes, “A Letter to the worthy Electors”, p. 210.

Wilkes's reference to the closet draws on the emerging sense of such a domestic space as not "any odd room, but rather a space reserved for devotion".³⁹ Here the frame of a Protestant devotional rhetoric of retirement and meditative prayer gets shifted, ever so slightly, to touch on an imagining of heterosexual licence. In the privacy of the closet, Wilkes argues, a man has the right to his own experiences of pleasure. Paradoxically, Wilkes's politics involve fighting his way into the closet. In *A Letter*, Wilkes figures his arrest for No. 45 and the seizure of his papers as an attack on the closet, or more precisely, on the 'closetedness' of the heteroerotic. In addressing his electorate of independent true-born Englishmen, Wilkes presents the administration as the 'Stuart' robbers of "the recesses of closets and studies", who will not just seize a gentleman's body or his home, but will seek out his pleasure: "to convert *private amusements* into *State crimes*".⁴⁰

Wilkes's concern with the autonomy of the true-born English subject does not terminate with the category of the gentleman, but, as he pointedly tells us, is extended from Gentlemen and Peers to the middling and inferior sort:

When I was brought before the court of *Common Pleas*, I pleaded the cause of *universal liberty*. It was not the cause of Peers and Gentlemen only, but of *all the middling and inferior class of people, which stand most in need of protection*, which I observed was on that day the great question before the court.⁴¹

By presenting his case under the banner of universal liberty, Wilkes can assert the position of a disinterested defender of the natural rights and permissions of the English subject. Such an infringement on the trueborn Englishman is presented in curiously sodomitical terms. While woman and nature will forgive the bawdiness of the poem, the actors in Wilkes's prosecution such as John Kidgell and Lord Chief-Justice Mansfield cannot, thus betraying their antagonism to the scene of the heteroerotic and exclusion from it. Ironically, as Adrian Hamilton has noted, Kidgell may have forged parts of the *Essay* pre-publication.⁴² While Wilkes tentatively makes the claim that the *Essay* was "pretended to be found" among his possessions, he nonetheless admits authorship of a version of the poem, and his primary concern in *A*

³⁹ Michael Edson, "'A Closet or a Secret Field': Horace, Protestant Devotion and British Retirement Poetry", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 35, No. 1 (2012), p. 21.

⁴⁰ Wilkes, "A Letter to the worthy Electors", p. 211.

⁴¹ Wilkes, "A Letter to the worthy Electors", pp. 203-204.

⁴² Adrian Hamilton, *The Infamous Essay on Woman or John Wilkes seated between Vice and Virtue* (London: André Deutsch, 1972), p. 157.

Letter is to defend the right of a gentleman's privacy in matters religious and sexual.⁴³ This chapter argues that in Wilkite literary narratives, the privacy of the closet, whether religious or sexual, becomes the litmus test for the Englishman's liberty.

As argued earlier, Churchill's patriotism is constructed from an anti-aristocratic standpoint: "I rev'rence Virtue, but I laugh at Birth" (*Independence*, 266). Churchill's imaging of Wilkes as a model English Patriot explicitly conflates heteroerotic and patriotic energies, situating his libertine "soft better moments" when "desire / Beats high" on a continuum with his call to "that *antient* seat" a metaphor that symbolises independent and manly political participation in the broadest sense (*Ibid.*, 155-156; 160). Though McCormack neglects to reference Churchill's poem, *Independence*, he views Wilkes's political identity in composite terms, suggesting that 'liberty' is clearly informed by libertinism. In historicising such libertinism more closely, Anna Clark views Wilkes's homophobia in light of a classical-republican conception of power, in so much as the Roman sexual system was based on the male domination of others — to submit was to forfeit citizenship. Audrey Williamson's *Wilkes: 'A Friend To Liberty'* (1974), in an unfortunate comment, symptomatic of its time, excludes any "perverse", "homosexual" activity from Wilkes's later rakish involvement with Sir Francis Dashwood's Medmenham Abbey at West Wycombe: "Whatever the rituals and whatever the form of the lecheries, there is no real indication either of 'group sex' or of perversions such as homosexuality, although these have been claimed by some purely sensational writers".⁴⁴ With almost uniform consistency, commentators on Wilkes pointedly refer to his libertinism either as an exclusively heterosexual practice, or more generally, as blatantly homophobic. While Clark's reading is clearly accurate in its conflation of male sexual dominance with stable citizenship or political legitimacy, such an analysis overlooks the way in which some women are rhetorically privileged in the Wilkite-Churchillian model of patriotism.

Tracing these trajectories in the Wilkite literary and political narratives in the early 1760s forms the basis of this chapter. As Carol Watts writes:

⁴³ Wilkes, "A Letter to the Worthy Electors", p. 112.

⁴⁴ Audrey Williamson, *Wilkes: 'A Friend To Liberty'* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1974), p. 38.

When the Wilkite ‘volcano’ erupted in the 1760s, it offered a constitutive drama for the bourgeois imperial subject and thus for the mid-century state.⁴⁵

Close readings of *The North Briton* remain attentive to how such drama, to deploy Watts’s pithy word, foregrounded a particular model of masculinity. In analysing Wilkite literary narratives through a close reading of the fragmented *Essay*, as well as *The North Briton*, this section investigates how Wilkes’s closet politics argued for a more expansive public-political sphere while making the sodomitical, in the form of a political pederasty, the very mark of democratic failure. In critically attending to these early Wilkite parodies and satires, Chapter Two moves beyond the frame of the previous discussion, to assess how the category of effeminacy in the 1760s comes to signify political illegitimacy, and moreover, how such illegitimacy gets attributed to political factionalism. Beginning with a close reading of both the scandal and text of *An Essay on Woman*, I show how, in this instance, the sodomitical is annotated into both textual and cultural marginality. The Wilkite parody of the *Essay* and the scandal that surrounded it functioned to locate the heteroerotic as a form of property, which conferred access to the political. Having paid particular attention to the form of the *Essay*, the chapter proceeds to an exploration of the political essay-sheet war between the Wilkites and the pro-administration propagandists, Tobias Smollett and Arthur Murphy. In reading *The Briton*, I seek to demonstrate the extent to which Smollett recasts a Wilkite imagining of the Scot as unproductive and self-serving within the bounds of the Wilkites’ own sodomitical anxieties.

⁴⁵ Watts, p. 141.

(2.2) “Spend when we must”: Economising Desire In *An Essay on Woman*

Let peals of laughter, Codrus! round thee break,
Thou unconcerned canst hear the mighty crack:
Pit, box, and gallery in convulsions hurled,
Thou standst unshook amidst a bursting world.

Alexander Pope, *Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot* (85-88).

Who sees with equal Eye, as God of all,
The Man just mounting, and the Virgin’s Fall ;
Prick, Cunt and Bollocks in Convulsions hurl’d,
And how a Hymen burst, and now a World

Pego Borewell [pseudo.], *An Essay on Woman* (87-90).

An analysis of both the poem and Wilkes’s defense of it reveals the significant contribution of Wilkite politics to the modern conceptual framing of heterosexuality, which is partly premised on the assumed privacy of the heterosexual subject. Although the *Essay on Woman* is a slight and unstable text upon which to build a heavily theoretical argument, I demonstrate how it and the controversy that it provoked centralised heterosexual sex as healthy and normative, while displacing, both textually and figuratively, non-heteroerotic forms of sex as definitively “outside”.⁴⁶ The intense androcentric collaborative drafting of *An Essay on Woman*, as well as its controversial position in the government’s anti-Wilkes agenda, provides an unparalleled literary resource for an analysis of the framing of mid-eighteenth-century male homosociality. The *Essay*, which is a pornographic parody of Alexander Pope’s *An Essay on Man* (1734), was the result of a libertine literary collaboration between John Wilkes and his self-labelled “friend and pimp”, Thomas Potter, which began towards the end of the 1740s and was substantively completed by the mid-1750s.⁴⁷ As John Sainsbury notes, the *Essay*’s joint production positions the text as “the literary analogue of the libertine enterprise itself, at the heart of which was mutual

⁴⁶ I am indebted here to Carol Watt’s incisive reading of Wilkite politics in terms of Judith Butler’s formulation of “the constitutive outside” whereby social subjects come into being through “exclusionary tactics whereby “unlivable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life are densely populated by those “who do not enjoy the status of subject,” and yet serve to reinforce “the defining limits of the subject’s domain””. See Watts, 143.

⁴⁷ Adrian Hamilton, *The Infamous Essay on Woman or John Wilkes seated between Vice and Virtue* (London: André Deutsch, 1972) p. 13; p. 189; Sainsbury, p. 146.

encouragement to unfettered erotic performance”.⁴⁸ Specifically, the poem is a parody of a particular edition of Pope’s *Essay*, which was heavily annotated by Bishop William Warburton. Footnotes, most probably written by Wilkes, are ascribed to Warburton, and two other erudite commentators, “Rogerus Cunaeus” (cunt fucker) and “Vigerus Mutoniatus” (large strong penis).⁴⁹

Although the *Essay* contained a crude reference to the genitalia of the King’s favourite Lord Bute, Warburton was the focus of the administration’s legal pursuit.⁵⁰ It was on the somewhat tenuous basis of his inclusion in this triumvirate of annotators that the government contrived to raise the issue of the *Essay* in the House of Lords as a case of ‘obscene and impious’ libel against a House member. The clergyman, who had been appointed to the Bishopric of Gloucester in 1759, was only too willing to be a participant in the attack. During the composition of the work, Thomas Potter had been intent on seducing Warburton’s wife, Gertrude.⁵¹ As Potter admitted, his cordial acquaintance with Warburton during the 1750s was merely a homosocial pretext for sexual access to Gertrude. Frequent epistolary boasts to Wilkes detail the progress of this seduction.⁵² As an aggressive heterosexual attack, Potter envisioned his cuckoldry of Warburton as an apposite reward for the clergyman’s literary disdain of the ‘Pestilent Herd of Libertine Scriblers’ and for his converting of Pope, an “icon of neo-

⁴⁸ Hamilton, p. 252.

⁴⁹ Cash, *John Wilkes*, p. 152.

⁵⁰ The *Essay*’s reference, most certainly added by Wilkes, to Bute’s genitals, “Godlike erect, BUTE stands the foremost man” (52), was apparently mistakenly leaked from Wilkes’s private press at Great Georges Street by, Samuel Jennings, a printer, whose wife had used one of the spare proof sheets of the poem to wrap up the butter for his lunch. His companion at lunch, another printer, Thomas Farmer, noticed the obscene reference to Bute on his friend’s lunch wrapping as well as some scribbled marginal notes in Wilkes’s hand. Farmer salvaged the document to show his employer William Faden, who was the publisher of the *Public Ledger* and of Samuel Johnson’s *Idler*. Unfortunately for Wilkes, Faden being Scottish and a supporter of Bute was unlikely to have found the heroic couplet humorous. From Faden the proof sheet found its way to the Rev. John Kidgell, who, although accustomed to rakish behaviour, being under the patronage of Lord March, professed shock and disgust upon seeing the proof sheet in his long-winded pamphlet *A Genuine and Succinct Narrative of a Scandalous, Obscene, and Exceedingly Profane Libel, Entitled An Essay on Woman*. Kidgell was in all probability a little envious of the poem, as his own career as a pornographic writer had produced the tedious and unremarkable soft-porn novel, *The Card*. From Kidgell, via Lord March, the proof came into the hands of Philip Carteret Webb, who immediately contrived to obtain a full set of proofs. See Hamilton, p. 195.

⁵¹ The name ‘Gertrude’ evoked images of incest, adultery and usurpation in the context of anti-Bute satire in the 1760s. Anti-ministerial satirists, attempting to discredit Bute over his alleged affair with the Princess Dowager, depicted her as Gertrude and Bute as Claudius, which figured George III as Hamlet. The implication was that George III needed to reassert his authority and reclaim his sovereign power. See Vincent Carretta, *George III and the Satirists from Hogarth to Byron* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 68-71.

⁵² Sainsbury, p. 150.

classicism”, into a representative of “religious orthodoxy”.⁵³ Warburton was rumoured to be sexually impotent, and when Gertrude gave birth to her only child it was widely speculated that Potter was the child’s father. Warburton’s impotency and his imagined sexless marriage were the subject of more extensive ridicule in Book III of Churchill’s poem *The Duellist* (1764). Warburton’s perceived failure to father a child has rendered him “A Man, without a manly mind” (*Ibid.*, 788). His impotency is both sexual and literary, with Churchill describing him as a Popean parasite, as unproductive and consuming: “No husband, tho’ he’s truly wed; / Tho’ on his knees a child is bred” (*Ibid.*, 789-790). The satire on Warburton’s impotency is analogous with the Wilkite critique of Buteite œconomy discussed later, in so much as both figure unproductive consumptions.

That *An Essay on Woman* might be read as the literary record of an erotic triangle between Warburton, Potter and Gertrude, frames the poem as a collaboratively formed libertine discourse that rehearses the male enacted performance of a woman’s sexual exchange; what Gayle Rubin famously termed the ‘traffic in women’, through marriage, at the basis of patriarchal kinship structures.⁵⁴ Moreover, as Sedgwick argues, drawing on Rubin, this symbolic and material structure of exchange underpins homosociality.⁵⁵ *The Essay on Woman* scandal symbolically and materially brings into sharp relief issues of property and exchange. For example, the idea of Gertrude’s consent to Potter, of her own possible desire for him, must be read as disruptive of woman as property in its flirtation with the possibility of an ascribed agency. This subversive space is attenuated however when confronted with the terms of Rubin’s female exchange. Within this system, Gertrude is never self-possessed, being only ever Warburton or Potter’s property. She is never in control of her own body, in the Lockean sense of a man’s property in the labour of his own person. More precisely, perhaps, she is always properly Warburton’s, though she tenuously occupies or had occupied a position as Potter’s stolen possession. Eve Sedgwick’s view that cuckoldry is, by definition, “a sexual act, performed on a man, by another man” reinforces Rubin’s concept of woman as property in sexual exchange.⁵⁶ In this way, Warburton’s property in his own person extends capaciously to include property in the person of his

⁵³ Sainsbury, p. 149.

⁵⁴ Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”, in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, Rayna R. Reiter, ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 177.

⁵⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 25-26.

⁵⁶ Rubin, p. 177.

wife. Such an extension, therefore, insists that the essay (or attempt) Potter makes on Gertrude is really fundamentally an essay on the property of Warburton, which, properly speaking, consists of two bodies, his own and Gertrude's.

If the *Essay* partly represents Potter's more literal essay (attempt) on Gertrude, then Warburton's peripheral position as annotator resonates with his position as cuckold. If the pseudo-Warburtonian annotator is signified as impotent in the *Essay*, it is because annotation is merely descriptive rather than performative, being situated outside the poem's conjuring of frenzied heterosexual intercourse. Although Potter died in 1759, at the time of Wilkes's persecution for libelling Warburton in the House of Lords, Wilkite propagandists revisited the sexual triangle between Potter, Warburton, and Gertrude in an effort to ridicule and, perhaps, silence Warburton. In the early 1760s, Wilkes revised *An Essay on Woman* by making several sodomophobic additions. In reading this version of the poem, I wish to consider how the *Essay*'s manifest heterosexual pugnacity — its imperative to “fuck the Cunt at hand, and God adore” (92) — suggests important things about the relationship between homosociality and a hyperbolic and highly insecure heterosexuality at mid-century. Despite the charges brought against Wilkes, the poem was never actually published for public consumption, being produced only for the circular and contained aural pleasures of libertine societies, such as Sir Francis Dashwood's Medmenham Abbey. Lord Sandwich's performance in the House of Lords enacted the publishing of the *Essay*, serving to “out” the poem, wrenching it, as it were, from the closeted space of the fluidic libertine circle and releasing it into a judicial, concrete and public domain.

As noted earlier, this was certainly Wilkes's argument in *A Letter to the worthy Electors*, and this position was adopted in a number of pro-Wilkes pamphlets, such as *A Letter to J. Kidgell* (1763), written by John Almon, Lord Temple's propagandist.⁵⁷ By the 1760s, before the poem was printed privately, its authorship in London circles had become firmly attributed to Wilkes.⁵⁸ *The Auditor* of September

⁵⁷ Wilkes mockingly writes that the poem was “read before that great assembly of *grave lords*, and *pious prelates*, *excellent judges of wit and poetry*”. See Wilkes, “A letter to the worthy Electors”, p. 212.

⁵⁸ That the *Essay* is a product of London's popular culture of the 1740s and 1750s can be seen from its many dated allusions or references to persons or society scandals of that period. Fanny Murray, the poem's dedicatee, had been the chief courtesan at Covent Garden for this period, but had retired to marriage and family life by 1757. However, the extent to which these allusions were the work of Potter is unclear. See Sainsbury, p. 249.

1762 announced that the author of the *North Briton* had “displayed a curious felicity in converting the whole *Essay on Man* into a bawdy poem”.⁵⁹ As Anna Clark notes, in the absence of an authentic published copy, the public were partly satiated in their literary desire for the *Essay* by the many spurious editions that were quickly issued.⁶⁰ Confusion surrounding the essay persists: only three eighteenth-century copies have survived, all of which are pirated versions of the embellished second “government edition” of the poem.⁶¹ The text survives as a fragment, consisting of only 94 lines, or 24 proof pages. The manuscript reads as a line-for-line perversion of all 1,304 lines of Pope’s original.⁶² According to Wilkes: “Not quite a fourth part of the volume had been printed at my own private press” and moreover, “of that *fourth* part only twelve copies were worked off, and I never gave one of those copies to any friend”.⁶³ In late 1762, Wilkes began to consider privately publishing the poem. He instructed his main printing staff, Michael Curry and George Savile Carey, to begin preparations for the publication of a re-drafted and slightly augmented version of the *Essay* with the same type and format as Warburton’s edition.

Added as a coda to the original body of the *Essay* were two short poems that parodied those included in Warburton’s note-heavy edition of *Essay on Man*. Pope’s ‘Universal Prayer’ is imitated line-for-line by another ‘Universal Prayer’, while ‘The Dying Christian to His Soul’ is crudely burlesqued by the ‘Dying Lover to his Prick’. Most likely Wilkes was the sole author of these pieces. Later in “A Letter to his Grace the Duke of Grafton”, Wilkes recalls “the compliments [William Pitt] paid [him] on two certain poems in the year 1754”. He writes: “If I were to take the declarations made by himself and the late Mr. * Potter *à la lettre*, they were more charmed with those verses after the ninety-ninth reading than after the first”.⁶⁴ Another short poem which was added to this section, ‘The Veni Creator, or the Maid’s Prayer’, was an imitation of a popular hymn the ‘Veni Creator Spiritus’ and was most likely written solely by Wilkes. Parodies of Pope’s “Design” and “Advertisement”, which Wilkes

⁵⁹ The *Auditor*, September 1762, quoted in Hamilton, p. 189.

⁶⁰ Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 31.

⁶¹ Sainsbury, p. 149.

⁶² Wilkes, “A letter to the worthy Electors”, pp. 210-211.

⁶³ Wilkes, “A letter to the worthy Electors”, pp. 209-211.

⁶⁴ John Wilkes, “A Letter to his Grace the Duke of Grafton”, in *Grafton, Augustus Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Letters between the Duke of Grafton, the Earls of Halifax, Ergemont, Chatham, Temple, and Talbot, Baron Botte tourt, Right Hon. Henry Bilson Legge, Right Hon. Sir John Cust, Bart, Mr. Charles Churchill, Monsieur Voltaire, the Abbé Winckelman, &c. &c and John Wilkes, Esq. With explanatory notes. Vol. 1.* (London, 1769), p. 231.

also composed, were to be included in the revised version. The printers were instructed to disbind and rebind Warburton's edition of *An Essay on Man* into the text of *An Essay on Woman* so that each authentic line mirrored its corrupted other.⁶⁵ The interleaving of Pope's *Essay on Man* into *Essay on Woman* provided a material analogue for the poetically laboured act of heterosexual insertion in *An Essay on Woman*. Yet the erotics of insertion here are not so stable. One could just as easily construe the insertion of *An Essay on Woman* into Pope's *Essay on Man*, by virtue of its very backhandedness, as Wilkes "fucking with" but also, "fucking" Pope, through a sodomising of his text.

Notably, the Wilkite parody duplicates what Seamus Deane identifies as Pope's impulse in *An Essay on Man* to locate a sort of harmonising unity within an emergent form of diverse modernity.⁶⁶ The purpose of *An Essay on Man* is to sketch out "A general Map of Man", to mark out the boundaries of such a unity in order for it to be naturalised.⁶⁷ This overriding drive or, indeed desire, leads to the weighty oppression of affirmative couplets such as: "And spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite, / One truth is clear, 'Whatever is, is RIGHT'" (Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, I, 293-294). As *Essay on Man* makes clear, the "gen'ral ORDER," that is "kept in Nature" is also "kept in Man" (*Ibid.*, 171-172). As such, man is privileged as the crowning race within such cosmic diversity:

Far as Creation's ample range extends,
The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends:
Mark how it mounts, to Man's imperial race,
From the green myriads in the peopled grass: (*Ibid.*, 207-210).

In both sensual and mental faculties, Man ascends to the "imperial race". In the second epistle of *An Essay on Man*, Pope argues that self-love and reason have a shared end with "Pain their aversion, Pleasure their desire" (*Ibid.*, II, 87-88). In this section, Pope also specifies "lust" as a desire to be modified: "Lust thro' some certain strainers well refin'd. / Is gentle love, and charms all womankind" (*Ibid.*, 189-190). Without lust, Pope argues, there can be no "sympathy", and without sympathetic bonds there can be no society:

⁶⁵ A. H. Cash, *John Wilkes*, p. 130.

⁶⁶ Seamus Deane, *Foreign Affections: Essays on Edmund Burke* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), p. 56.

⁶⁷ Alexander Pope, *Pope: Poetical Works*, Herbert Davies, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 240.

Each loves itself, but not itself alone,
 Each sex desires alike, 'till two are one.
 Nor ends the pleasure with the fierce embrace;
 They love themselves, a third time, in their race.
 Thus beast and bird their common charge attend,
 The mothers nurse it, and the sires defend;
 The young dismiss'd to wander earth or air,
 There stops the Instinct, and there ends the care;
 The link dissolves, each seeks a fresh embrace,
 Another love succeeds, another race.
 A longer care Man's helpless kind demands;
 That longer care contracts more lasting bands:
 Reflection, Reason, still the ties improve,
 At once extend the in'trest, and the love;
 With choice we fix, with sympathy we burn; (*Ibid.*, 121-135)

Significantly, *An Essay on Man* figures lust as an entirely natural and healthy drive, which will naturally progress into an affective bond of reciprocal love. Its “fierce embrace” will bear a family — a testament to the “love” that animated the initial union. Moreover, for Pope, as it was for Burke some decades later, this immediate and instinctual lust, that when modified, provides the basis of “more lasting bands”. In this way, lust is modulated into a lasting affective bond. As the caesura in the last line demonstrates, the union of the men and women allows for a wider circle of sympathetic attachments: “With choice we fix, with sympathy we burn”. Homoerotic lust is both the source, and perpetuator of, our instinctual and social experiences as humans.

While Pope's *Essay on Man* does not explicitly treat of “unnatural lust” or homoerotic desire, the first epistle implicitly demonstrates the possibility of the emergence of such desire. In the outlining of the mechanics of “The gen'ral ORDER”, we are told that: “From Nature's claim whatever link you strike, / Tenth or then thousandth, breaks the chain alike” (*Ibid.*, I, 245-246). Should lust be “confused” or “misdirected”, we are told that:

The least confusion but in one, not all
 That system only, but the whole must fall.
 Let Earth unbalanc'd from her orbit fly,
 Planets and Suns run lawless thro' the sky (*Ibid.*, 249-252)

In this way, a confusion of desires cannot be reconciled within the system as outlined in Pope's *Essay*. The homoerotic in this instance resonates with an Early Modern (and arguably still prevalent) figuration of the sodomitical as “a principle of demonic

disorder”.⁶⁸ In this light, homoerotic lust is presented as a confusion that must remain outside the boundaries of such a Popean system. Even if homoerotic lust somehow emerged within the system, Pope’s careful linking of the heteroerotic with broader patterns of sociality ensures that such lust will always register as both antagonistic toward, and outside the boundaries of, that all-encompassing harmonious unity that *An Essay on Man* seeks to secure. Yet if “Whatever is, is RIGHT,” and same-sex desire *is*, then Pope’s logic ensures that such desire not only *is* but *is right* as well.

In the Wilkite parody, *An Essay on Woman*, such exclusions are rendered explicit in both textual and ideological terms. While homoerotic desire seems to have been part of the libertinage of the poem during its earlier drafting, Wilkes’s revisions to the poem in the 1760s make such a disavowal more pronounced. The most detailed revision by Wilkes was his addition of a title page featuring a copper engraving of a phallus, which was marked in Greek with the title ‘Creator of the World’, and had a Latin line beneath reading: “*In Recto Decus*”, ten-inches or ten-inches in scale’.⁶⁹ The original phallus is, Wilkes tells us “the property of a great Prelate, and was drawn (actually ex-Arch-i-e-pisco-typo, *drawn out* to that length) by his Chaplain”.⁷⁰ The inscription under the copper engraving reads: “From the original frequently in the crutch of the Most Reverend George Stone, Primate of Ireland, more frequently in the anus of the intrepid hero George Sackville”.⁷¹ So far as can be read from the surviving fragment, at the level of form, the *Essay* structurally disavows non-reproductive forms of sexual pleasure by anxiously situating references to same-sex acts outside its heroic couplets, placing them either in the title frontispiece, the preface, or in the pseudo-Warburtonian footnotes. The frontispiece with its homophobic imaging of Stone and Sackville’s sodomitical sex is the clearest example of this paratextual displacement. Sackville’s refusal to obey the Prince of Brunswick’s orders to charge the French at the battle of Minden in 1759 provoked an enduring scandal, which led to a court martial that ruled him unfit for military service. Literary caricature frequently connected effeminacy or cowardliness with the sodomitical by presenting the satiric scene of Sackville showing his rear at Minden.

⁶⁸ Cameron McFarlane, *The Sodomite In Fiction & Satire: 1660-1750* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 17-18.

⁶⁹ Hamilton, p. 195.

⁷⁰ Hamilton, p. 203.

⁷¹ Hamilton, p. 195.

In the Advertisement, Wilkes continues this line of effeminophobic attack by noting how a “great pre-late, whose abilities stand confessed in Ireland no less than in England, made the very last Summer an Essay on Wo-man ... but this must be a mistake for I am well assured that at the time he was on the other side of the *Pyrenees, employed in a more *priestly way*”. The note for Pyrenees describes it as the “space between the Anus and Vulva in women and Scrotum in men”, while also deploying a xeno-effeminophobic trope in its situation of effeminacy as a foreign vice.⁷² Stone and Sackville (along with Potter) were significant figures in the Ascendancy civil and religious administration in Ireland during the 1750s. Potter’s textual omission but implied inclusion is, perhaps, indicative of the shift in male libertinage that Wilkes expresses through his revising of the *Essay*; in so much as his omission serves to suitably distinguish the phallic adventuring of the poem from Potter’s sodomitical and even bestial exploits.⁷³

The title page attributes authorship to ‘Pego Borewell’. Notably, the anachronistic use of the word “pego” (which is seventeenth-century argot for penis), as well as the verb in the second line of the first stanza swive (meaning to fuck), recalls the libertine discourse of the Restoration period.⁷⁴ Such a connection is also established in “The Design”, where Wilkes supplants Pope’s reference to Lord Bacon with one to Rochester.⁷⁵ The main import of the poem involves, as Wilkes tells us, an erotic examination of the body of a “woman” with the aim of describing “the true *End and Purpose of her Being*”.⁷⁶ “Woman is of all Sciences the most difficult” claims the speaker Pego Borewell, who can only “examine the *open and perceptible Parts*” aided by an enlarged optic — and an intensity of uninhibited erotic scope.⁷⁷ Admitting that the “finer *Nerves and Vessels* [must be left to] the Faculty,” Borewell announces his intention to explore bodily passages fully: “I now only open the Fountains and clean the passage; but I intend, if life and Strength allow me, *to deduce the Rivers, and follow them in their Course and to their Source*” adding a cautionary note, “I expect the Red-Sea, which I dread as much as any Egyptian of old”.⁷⁸ Borewell’s maritime

⁷² Hamilton, p. 199.

⁷³ Wilkes’s additions to the *Essay*, in particular the title page, with its libertine attack on the alleged sodomitical practices of Stone and Sackville, has been read as indicative of a shift in “the character of English libertinage” at mid-century. See Sainsbury, p. 249.

⁷⁴ Sainsbury, p. 147.

⁷⁵ Hamilton, pp. 206-207.

⁷⁶ Hamilton, p. 207.

⁷⁷ Hamilton, p. 209.

⁷⁸ Hamilton, pp. 210-211.

metaphor conflates the imperial with the sexual imperatives of a mid-century trueborn Englishman. The logic of such a conflation playfully works to imagine the end to the Seven Years' War as an undesirable collapse into sexual abstinence. Such a conception of an enervated state arising through inaction finds expression in the October 2, 1762 *The North Briton*, No. 18:

But to let our fleets lie rotting in port, to suffer our men to be enervated with sloth, and to dissolve in inactivity, to squander away our treasures, and to send out, merely by way of amusement and to take the air, our bravest admirals and our strongest fleets, at a time when we are engaged in a war with France and Spain, these are instances of such a confident and well-grounded superiority, as must strike terror into our enemies, and reflect the highest credit on that administration for whom alone such glorious proofs of power were reserved.⁷⁹

The Peace of Paris, in the supposed generosity of its concessions, makes men “dissolve in inactivity.” Such stagnation finds a “natural” corrective in the *Essay*'s imagining of “healthy” sexual and colonial exploration.

The main body of the *Essay* facilitates male self-assertion through the fantasy of complete sexual possession of a voiceless woman, named Fanny:

AWAKE, my Fanny, leave all meaner things,
This morn shall prove what rapture swiving brings.
Let us (since life can little more supply
Than just a few good Fucks, and then we die)
Expatriate free o'er that lov'd scene of Man; /
A mighty Maze ! for mighty Pricks to scan; (1-5)

The pseudo-Warburtonian note for this verse reveals a desperate and anxious heterosexual imperative: “to preserve the Individual and propagate the Species”.⁸⁰ Wilkes's derision of the anxiousness of this procreative imperative emphasises how heterosexuality in the *Essay* is based, not on procreativity, but rather on the virile man's experience of sexual pleasure. Indeed, the real concern for Wilkes centres on performance, with premature ejaculation registering as an acute anxiety. Libidinal male energy must be channelled into a heteroerotic economy where “nature” is observed, where sexual energy itself is property that is self-regulated: “and if it rise / Too quick and rapid, check it e'er it flies; / Spend when we must, but keep it while we can: / Thus Godlike will be deem'd the Ways of Man”. The presentation of self-regulation here speaks to a formative narrative strain in the construction of middle-

⁷⁹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 96.

⁸⁰ Hamilton, p. 213.

class masculinity at mid-century. Premature ejaculation as a condition is analogous to a loss of bankable financial capital, symbolising an impoverished status within the newly masculinised framework of the commercial classes. In light of Shawn Lisa Maurer's argument that a "commercial man's self-control, understood as frugality, and his access to and application of capital also qualified him to understand and meet the country's need in the role of citizen", the line "Spend when we must, but keep it while we can" demonstrates a Wilkite strategic conflation of commercial and sexual productivity, which carefully positions the bourgeois male as the most eligible driver of such forces.⁸¹

Whereas Pope's deistical system in *An Essay on Man* is cosmic and external, Wilkes's *Essay* renders heteroerotic desire an internal ordering principle that lacks extrinsic regulation but must be self-controlled.⁸² Those messages of self-regulation can be situated alongside such earlier works as John Armstrong's Georgic poem *The Oeconomy of Love* (1737), which, as Conrad Brunström writes, "attempts to produce a holistic, almost tantric view of sex as the measure and the test of healthy retention and control of forces".⁸³ Issues of self-control have a sexual resonance at mid-century, particularly in relation to anxieties about onanism. As Thomas Laqueur has shown, private masturbation elicited fears about a potential "derangement of sociability that might well be hideously destructive to the body but that was terrible even if it had no organic effects".⁸⁴ In a paradoxical way, Wilkes's *Essay* — a masturbation narrative that was to be read alone or with friends — advances a policy of sexual control that similarly figures non-productive pleasures in terms of social derangement and sexual deviance. If Pope's *Essay on Man* posits heterosexual procreation as the basis for sociability, Wilkes's *Essay on Woman* posits heterosexual copulation as the basis for the social order in its entirety. Most conspicuous is Pope's line "Laugh where we must,

⁸¹ Shawn Lisa Maurer, *Proposing Men: Dialectics of Gender and Class in the Eighteenth-Century English Periodical* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 29.

⁸² Thomas Laqueur notes the profoundly individualistic culture of the Enlightenment, which "invented the notion of morality as self-governance; it insisted that all humans shared a common moral capacity and the specific psychological capacities that we needed to exercise our freedom". See Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2004), p. 19.

⁸³ Brunström, "'Be Male and Female Still': An ABC of Hyperbolic Masculinity in the Eighteenth-Century", in *Presenting Gender: Changing Sex in Early-Modern Culture*, Chris Mounsey, ed. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), p. 32.

⁸⁴ Ten years earlier, J Paul Hunter presented Laqueur's argument in terms of the cultural anxieties stemming from the novel as an antisocial, addictive and solitary reading practice in *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1990), p. 40; for Laqueur's reading of masturbation as antisocial see Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, p. 41.

be candid where we can” (15), which denotes, in some respects, a mode of social performance — interactive parameters that could, properly, be termed wit.

Eve Sedgwick has identified wit as “a seventeenth-century name for the circulable social solvent, the sign that ... represented political power in the male-homosocial framework”.⁸⁵ Sedgwick’s analysis of Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) reveals that by the mid-eighteenth-century, “sex” had taken on the same “representational volatility, the same readiness to represent every form of mobility and claim to power” as the earlier sign of “wit”.⁸⁶ A comparative reading of Pope’s *Essay* with *An Essay on Woman* reveals an important slippage in the homosocial sign, in so far as Wilkes exchanges Pope’s “wit” for an explicitly male heterosexual erotic of sex: a sign that postures as the only available structure for male “mobility” and the “assertion of power.” Wilkes’s *Essay*, written for homosocial performative exchange, nonetheless evidences instability in the very terms of that homosocial solvency underwriting male bonds at the mid-century; it is thus useful both as an index of normative male to male bonding and, conversely, as a literary record of the faultline along which certain relations were paradoxically organised and displaced.

As Sedgwick notes, “any purchase on the male homosocial spectrum . . . will be a disproportionately powerful instrument of social control”.⁸⁷ More precisely, Sedgwick alerts us to the importance of the category “homosexual” in the eighteenth century; how its discursive power comes not from its “regulatory relation to a nascent or already-constituted minority of homosexual people or desires, but from its potential for giving whoever wields it a structuring definitional leverage over the whole range of male bonds that shape the social constitution”.⁸⁸ The structural displacement of non-reproductive sexuality in the *Essay* suggests that by the 1750s, heteroeroticism was militantly erasing homoerotic desire from the homosocial continuum. The couplet “Prick, Cunt, and Bollocks in Convulsions hurl’d, / And how a Hymen burst, and now a World” suggests both a sexual breach and a more symbolic rupturing of homosocial bonds from their links to homosexuality (89–90). In parodying that very Popean zeugma, the *Essay* disrupts pre-existing categories of equivalence. To put it crudely, the bursting of a hymen in this context secures heterosexual homosocial bonds

⁸⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 73.

⁸⁶ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, pp. 73-74.

⁸⁷ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 86.

⁸⁸ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 86.

through the exclusion of homoeroticism, making the very staging of the heteroerotic the totality of legitimate desire.

Within the heteroerotic fantasy conjured by the poem, insertion denotes social and political agency. Homoerotic insertions, while evidenced, are ultimately ridiculed and restricted to the liminal space of annotation. This structural disavowal continues throughout the *Essay*, where lesbian eroticism and a xenophobic construction of Scottish female sexuality are also consigned to the liminal space of annotation. One annotation deploys a botanic metaphor to discuss the “vegetation of Pego”, which, it is claimed, “will shoot forth most amazingly, quite on a sudden, especially in a *Hot-bed*, and as suddenly shrink back”.⁸⁹ The erudite and obnoxious annotator goes on to remark: “There is a bastard Plant, Called Clitoris, much of the same nature, though seldom large; I mean in this country”.⁹⁰ In a similar displacement of non-reproductive forms of sexuality as outside the poem and therefore outside the nation, the annotator states, “For at Lesbos it was the formidable Rival of Pego. The Lesbian ladies knew perfectly the Virtues of it, and preferred it to the other Plant”.⁹¹ Finally, a crudely xenophobic and misogynistic conflation renders the hygiene of Scottish women abject as a Celtic form of female sexuality: “It is shocking [the annotator writes] to find how much it is neglected, especially in the Northern Part of this Island”.⁹² Not only homoeroticism, but also the very bodies of those designated as Other in entho-cultural terms, gets relegated to the sterile spaces of annotation.

The model of libertinage practiced by Rochester, or even by Thomas Potter, could, as Sainsbury notes, “casually confuse the erotic attractions of women and boys (and their representative orifices) without compromising their manhood”.⁹³ If Wilkes’s libertinage, unlike that of Rochester, excludes the boy as a potential erotic partner, it is surely because that libertinage is bound up with an anti-aristocratic critique envisioning the elite class as unproductively sodomitical, degenerate, and effeminate. Rather than view Wilkes’s 1760s *Essay* as evidencing a shift from libertinage to sexual discipline, I have argued that this work is integral to the production of heteronormativity based on a reconceived heteroeroticism in the eighteenth century. Treating Wilkes’s brand of homosociality as not a static affective

⁸⁹ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 215.

⁹⁰ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 215.

⁹¹ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 215.

⁹² Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 229.

⁹³ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 229.

mode of relation, but rather an exemplification and enactment of a shift in the homosocial continuum—one that is itself historically contingent and changing—illuminates the heteronormative ideological work of the *Essay* as both text and media event.

When read within a Sedgwick's frame we can see how the *Essay* deploys heteroeroticism as a “disproportionately powerful instrument of social control”; one that presented political power in the male homosocial domain by prioritising heteroerotic pleasure over procreativity, while simultaneously annotating homoeroticism as sexually and textually deviant. *An Essay on Woman* suggests not a shift in English libertinage, but rather the formation of a competing—and deeply politicised—model of male bonding. Wilkes's contribution to heteronormativity was to demand that male heterosexuality be considered a private as opposed to a public issue. Both the *Essay*'s emphasis on pleasure over procreativity, as well as Wilkes's defence of a man's right to privacy in sexual matters discursively produced a form of heterosexuality that provided the foundation for a more capacious model of rhetorical political participation. Within the shifting and contested dimensions of the emergence of a public sphere, Wilkes's ‘closet politics’ not only addressed independent and propertied men but also reached out to the plebeian and “middling sort” of man by virtue of their shared heteroeroticism; visualising an inclusive public-political sphere that straddled boundaries of class while simultaneously refusing entrée along racial and sexual lines.

(2.3) Two Physicians and a Fishmonger: Sodomy and Colonial Anxiety

I shall not enquire whether you are a North Briton, a South Briton, or an Antient Briton, but I shall venture to pronounce with your antagonist, that you are little better than a *Foolish Briton*, for having undertaken a task at once so odious and impracticable. Had you stood forth the champion of any particular minister however respectable he might be in point of real character, I should consider you a sort of Don Quixote in humanity, going to encounter the wind-mills of popular clamour and abuse, which it is the passion and privilege of an English mob to raise and discharge at all administrations. But in taking up the cudgels for a minister who happened to be born on the north-side of the Tweed, I know not whether you most excite my pity or indignation. All you can say, Sir, in his justification, may be answered in one word, and that word shall be unanswerable: it shall have more efficacy than the ABRACADABRA, or any talisman that ever necromancy contrived... I will silence you with one word; he is a—*Scotchman*.⁹⁴

In the fourth issue of the pro-ministerial essay-sheet *The Briton* (Saturday, 19 June 1762), an anonymous addresser relates the impracticality of defending a Scottish minister in the face of London's decidedly Scotophobic rabble. In the charged, xenophobic patriotic national climate of the closing months of the Seven Years' War any "*Foolish Briton*" who would labour to defend the "Cocoa Tree Cabal", also known as the "Peace Party" of Lord Bute and Henry Fox, must first confront the fact that "*Scotchman*" has become "a term which implies everything that is vile and detestable".⁹⁵ In this instance, place of birth preconditions a form of political illegitimacy, a lack of agency or authority that cannot be displaced. Later in the issue, Smollett's addresser tellingly aligns the Scot with other delegitimised and negatively constructed forms of identity. The anecdote involves a contest between two physicians for a position at a city hospital. The addresser relates how an "honest fishmonger" approached one of the candidates to express his approval of his candidacy for the position, explaining that the doctor's "opponent was a man of worse character".⁹⁶ When prompted to explain his remarks, the fishmonger reportedly assured the candidate that: "The worst they can say of you is, that you are an Atheist

⁹⁴ Tobias Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 4. Saturday, 19 June 1762, in Byron Gassman, O. M. Brack, JR., and Leslie A. Chilton (ed.) *Poems, Plays, and The Briton* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 256.

⁹⁵ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 4. Saturday, 19 June 1762, p. 256.

⁹⁶ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 4. Saturday, 19 June 1762, p. 256.

and a S—te [Sodomite], but your competitor is a *Scotchman*”⁹⁷ A denizen of London and a constituent of the sort of Wilkite rabble Smollett and Murphy would later respectively denounce in *The Briton* and *The Auditor*, the fishmonger can overlook the candidate’s atheism and sodomitical tendencies but cannot discount the other candidate’s Scottishness. As John Brewer has shown, such Scotophobia was particular to the metropolitan social and cultural space of London in 1760s, with the abuse directed at Bute being inversely proportionate to the support that Wilkes attracted through the call of an overtly xeno-effeminophobic English nationalism:

Europe’s largest urban community - dominating the nation to the extent that one-sixth of the population spent part of their working life there – was endowed (unlike Paris, its nearest rival) with the autonomous and surprisingly democratic municipal government and within its parliamentary constituencies with a very broad electorate, both of which were the seed-grounds of political sophistication – even if largely, though by no means completely, confined to the metropolis – were greater than in any other European nation and it could only have been in such a climate and with such conditions that Bute could have suffered so much abuse... In this respect Bute’s career represents the reverse of the Wilkite coin: just as Wilkes was able to rally and unite a number of disparate political elements to his cause, so hostility to Bute produced a similar (indeed overlapping) if transitory political cohesion. And just as it was the issues that Wilkes stood for and represented that imbued his career with political significance, so too the political importance of Bute’s career is bound up with the issues that he unwittingly raised and the objects of hostility that he represented.⁹⁸

In addition to the “surprisingly democratic municipal government” and “broad electorate” that Brewer outlines, the 1760s also witnessed a widening, in Habermasian terms, of the public sphere, that was both illustrated and performed through “the state of the confrontation between the government and press, as it drew out over the entire century”.⁹⁹ In this way, the circulation of anti-Buteite “public opinion” in its challenge to administrative authority and autonomy, served, albeit in a transitory and superficial sense, to broaden out the participatory demographic of the public sphere. In this way, metropolitan anti-Scottish discourse of the 1760s served to engender debates about the legitimacy of political participation of the English middle-classes through a figural phobic disinvestment of the Scot as politically legitimate. In this section, Smollett’s sodomophobic response to Bute’s detractors is assessed in

⁹⁷ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 4. Saturday, 19 June 1762, p. 256.

⁹⁸ John Brewer, “The Misfortunes of Lord Bute: A Case-Study in Eighteenth-Century Political Argument and Public Opinion”, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Mar., 1973), p. 19.

⁹⁹ Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Burger, with Frederick Lawrence (Trans.) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Tyne & Wear: Athenæum Press, 2002), p. 60.

terms of the way in which he redeploys the language of sodomy as a reverse political discourse in *The Briton*, which enables a refusal of Scotophobia by reimagining the Scots as the source of the heterosexual reproduction of the British nation. Rejecting the sterility and impotence of Churchill's caricaturing of Jockey and Sawney in *The Prophecy*, Smollett recasts the Wilkites as a sodomitical faction, pushing for continued hostility, which would bring the respectable British nation to the point of depopulation and economic ruination. More broadly, this section argues that debates about political inclusion in the 1760s are deeply enmeshed in the cultural xeno-effeminophobic anxieties of the time, in so much as the sodomitical, as both an act and a set of behavioural traits, comes to bear the very sign of political illegitimacy within the public-political sphere.

Juliet Shields, in an examination of the dynamics of masculinity and anti-Scottish prejudice at play in his novel *Roderick Random* (1747), argues that Smollett "intended this polemical comparison to denounce the virulent Scotophobia kindled by the Scottish Earl of Bute's recent appointment as First Lord of the Treasury".¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Shields notes the apparent awkwardness of the conflation of sodomite and Scot, in so much as the "uncouth and uncivilised Scot in many ways seems the antithesis of a simpering, sophisticated sodomite like Roderick Random's Captain Whiffle".¹⁰¹ Yet, in reviewing Smollett's conflation of Scottishness and the sodomitical in the fourth edition of *The Briton* as a precursor to her reading of *Roderick Random*, Shields argues that for Smollett, both the "Scot's vulgar aggression and the sodomite's degenerate effeminacy" registered as deviations from "the genteel masculinity proper to a commercial nation like England".¹⁰² Shields rightly points to how both the sodomite's effeminacy and the Scot's alleged innate pugnacity diverged from an emerging standard of genteel and polite masculinity. However, as Roderick himself learns later when seeking out the patronage of Earl Strutwell, not all men who engage in the "spurious and sordid desire" are as legible as Captain Whiffle.¹⁰³ Roderick's town meeting with Strutwell is more alarming than his earlier maritime encounter with Whiffle, as it demonstrates how the norm of metropolitan genteel and polite masculinity is deployed as a defence of sodomitical pleasure from those

¹⁰⁰ Juliet Shields, "Smollett's Scots and Sodomites: British Masculinity in *Roderick Random*", *The Eighteenth Century*. Lubbock: Summer 2005. Vol. 46, Iss. 2, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Shields, "Smollett's Scots", p. 1.

¹⁰² Shields, "Smollett's Scots", p. 1.

¹⁰³ Tobias Smollett, *Roderick Random*, George Saintsbury (ed.) *The Works of Tobias Smollett in Twelve Volumes: Vol. III Roderick Random* (London: Gibbings & Company Lim, 1895), p. 45.

attitudes, which in Strutwell's view, have more to do with narrow-minded "prejudice and misapprehension, than [with] true reason and deliberation".¹⁰⁴

In extolling the literary merits of Petronius, Strutwell advances a defence of sodomitical pleasure as legitimate and even aesthetically "fashionable".¹⁰⁵ Intriguingly, Strutwell defends desire by claiming the societal benefits of the non-procreativity of sodomitical sex:

At this day it prevails not only over all the East, but in most parts of Europe; in our own country it gains ground apace, and in all probability will become in a short time a more fashionable vice than simple fornication. Indeed, there is something to be said in vindication of it; for, notwithstanding the severity of the law against offenders in this way, it must be confessed that the practice of this passion is unattended with that curse and burden upon society, which proceeds from a race of miserable and deserted bastards, who are either murdered by their parents, deserted to the utmost want and wretchedness, or bred up to prey upon the commonwealth. And it likewise prevents the debauchery of many a young maiden, and the prostitution of honest men's wives; not to mention the consideration of health, which is much less liable to be impaired in the gratification of this appetite, than in the exercise of common venery, which by ruining the constitutions of our young men, has produced a puny progeny, that degenerates from generation to generation.¹⁰⁶

Rather than engendering a depopulation of the nation, the appetite for sodomy, will instead preserve the English people from the enervation of the very effeminate excess of heterosexuality. Far from being incommensurable with heteroerotic pleasures, sodomy in fact facilitates such pleasure by keeping the diseases engendered by heterosexual venery in check, thus preventing the production of a puny and degenerate progeny. Rather than the later Wilkite conflation of sodomitical sterility with national and economic decline, Strutwell presents sodomy as that which secures heterosexual and economic production. That Strutwell's normativity is so evidently unquestioned in this passage is demonstrated by the fact that Roderick never suspects Strutwell to be a sodomite, but rather ironically fears, after this speech, that Strutwell may view him as a post-Grand Tour youth, who had developed an appetite for such pleasures abroad.¹⁰⁷ From Roderick's protestations against what he assumes to be the

¹⁰⁴ Smollett, *Roderick Random*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ Smollett, *Roderick Random*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁶ Smollett, *Roderick Random*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁷ Roderick fears that he might have given Strutwell cause to suspect him of indulging in sodomitical pleasures: "From this discourse, I began to be apprehensive that his lordship, finding I had travelled, was afraid I might have been infected with this spurious and sordid desire abroad, and took this method of sounding my sentiments on the subject". See Smollett, *Roderick Random*, pp. 44-45.

Earl's "suspicion" of his own sodomitical appetite, Strutwell is able to read Roderick's abhorrence and therefore knowingly restrain his erotic pursuit.

Furthermore, it takes Roderick's worldlier friend, Banter, to inform him of Strutwell's actual agenda in defending Petronius. Having learned of his would-be patron's notoriety for "a passion for his own sex", Roderick is left ruminating on the inherent (and for the most part latent) homoeroticism of routine and unremarkable homosocial exchanges:¹⁰⁸

I found every circumstance of Strutwell's behaviour, exactly tallying with the character that he had described. His hugs, embraces, squeezes, and eager looks, were now no longer a mystery, no more than his defence of Petronius, and the jealous frown of his valet-de-chambre, who, it seems, had been the favourite pathic of his lord.¹⁰⁹

More threatening than the identifiably effeminate Whiffle, Strutwell's normativity and normalising of homoeroticism serve to uncomfortably unsettle Roderick's sense of the heteronormative in a wholly unprecedented way. In his double-sided offer to Roderick of both figurative, and in this case, literal, entry into English 'High-society', Strutwell demonstrates the perils, in terms of identity loss, of Scottish entry into the British imperial project. In this case, rather than Roderick's Scottish uncouthness being a deviation from a genteel norm, Strutwell demonstrates the inauthenticity and, indeed, hypocrisy of such a Southern metropolitan standard.

In this light, we might say that Smollett refused any easy connection between passive effeminacy and sodomy in an effort to show how such desire can not be settled in any one set of behaviours or attributes. Reading Roderick's encounters with both Whiffle and Strutwell should remind us of Smollett's own prickliness about the terms of his entry into English High society in the 1760s. As sodomites, Whiffle and Strutwell present such hierarchies as inherently corrupt and corrupting. As commentators have noted, Smollett's preoccupation with the sodomitical was long-standing. As Cameron McFarlane writes, from his earliest published poems of *Advice: A Satire* (1746) and *Reproof: A Satire. The Sequel to Advice* (1747), Smollett presented the alterity of the sodomite in a way that "[drew] upon the conventions of sodomitical practices — disorder, corruption, effeminacy, un-Britishness".¹¹⁰ In returning to the question of Smollett's fascination with the sodomitical, this section examines Smollett's antagonism toward the Wilkite conflation of the sodomite and

¹⁰⁸ Smollett, *Roderick Random*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁹ Smollett, *Roderick Random*, p. 48.

¹¹⁰ McFarlane, p. 121.

the Scot. In his polemical writing, Smollett is well aware of the rhetorical usages of the sodomite and is well equipped to redirect such sodomitical anxieties back onto his Wilkite detractors. It is no mistake that the accoster of the candidate is a fishmonger and therefore a member of the lower plebeian classes that were contributing to Wilkite popular protest. For Smollett, the charge of sodomy allows for the rhetorical exhaustion of Scotophobia, a pushing of such approbation to the reach of its rhetorical limit. Nevertheless, in its very excessiveness, Smollett's explicit co-positioning of 'atheist' and 'sodomite' as somehow morally, politically, and socially lesser than the greater cultural Other of the 'Scot', figures as an attempt at dismantling such a xeno-effeminophobic positioning. If the Scottish male subject is politically de-authorised in terms of a signifying political economy that disavows the sodomite and atheist as disruptive and decidedly beyond the boundaries of political ordering, then Smollett's satire on the Wilkite movement adopts, reverses, and finally redeploys the delegitimising language of the sodomitical. In challenging these arguments, *The Briton* harnesses the phobic energies of sodomitical rhetoric in an effort to reimagine the Scot as an integral constituent within a newly conceptualised British polity at the close of the Seven Years' War. For Smollett, the sort of sizing up of colonial expansion that comes with the terms of treaties such as Utrecht or the imminent 'Peace of Paris' provides an opportunity for the national reassessment of interior domestic relations.

In the fourth issue of *The Briton*, Smollett sets the ideological framework for the pro-administration counter attack that would unfold over the remaining thirty-four papers. Unsurprisingly, the close of the fourth paper attempts to address the source of much mid-century anti-Scottishness, the failed Jacobite uprisings of 1719 and 1745. While the addressor admits that Scotland has "given birth to two dangerous rebellions", he also notes that a significant percentage of the men that supported Cumberland were indeed Scottish, thus complicating any easy association of the Scot with sedition. While such a contention is perhaps unremarkable, what follows provides a clear instance of the manner in which Smollett drew upon an imperial imaginary to foreground the political legitimacy of the Scottish male subject:

Let it be moreover remembered, that many of those delinquents were cut off by the sword; that some were offered up as necessary victims to public justice; and that survivors have since literally washed away their offences with their blood; witness their bones now bleaching in almost every quarter of the globe, — at Cape Breton, Ticonderoga, Fort du Quesne, and

Quebec, in Guadeloupe and Martinique, before the walls of Pondicherry,
and in the plains of Westphalia.¹¹¹

While not denying Scottish uncouthness outright, Smollett contends that in the aftermath of the battle of Culloden, Scots have patriotically rechanneled their indigenous pugnacity into the equally militant project of empire building. As Shields notes, *Roderick Random* demonstrates how the colonial commercial spaces that were opened up to Scots after 1707 provided for a Scottish self-definition and autonomy from “the morally corrupt metropolitan south” through commerce that was an alternative to the failed militancy of Jacobitism.¹¹²

In the context of these polemical essay-sheets, the fishmonger anecdote narrates a certain Wilkite and metropolitan resistance to narrative strategies of integration through empire. Rather than using imperial commerce as a way of securing and affirming Scottish autonomy from Southern Briton, Smollett, even in his choice of eidolon — *The Briton* — returns to the framing possibilities of colonial space as a way of articulating commercial Britain as British rather than narrowly Wilkite and English. *Roderick Random*, according to Shields, rehearses a particular ideology of empire, which enacts a disentanglement of Scottish productivity from its corrupt and degenerate Southern counterpart. Yet in the face of an effeminophobic sodomising of the Scot as unproductive or non-reproductive, Smollett reformulates Scottish imperialist endeavour in *The Briton* into a test case for British political agency, over and above, Scottish autonomy. If a minority of Scots can be charged with Jacobitism and blamed for the failed 1745 rebellion, then Scottish men should also be recognised as bearing a significant portion of the human and material cost of English imperial expansion.

The gruesome literary image of the bleached bones of Scots scattered across every ‘quarter of the globe’ indignantly underscores the distressing illogic colonial participation and political negation. Noting how Scottish men are deployed to carry out the militant and productive work of British Empire building, Smollett asks how it is that the domestic Scot can be justifiably maligned as an unproductive sodomite, thus displaced from the centre of such processes? Smollett’s argument for Scottish political agency in the British nation through their colonial participation was still being invoked. A spurious issue of Arthur Murphy’s *The Auditor* (No. VIII. Monday,

¹¹¹ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 4, pp. 258-9.

¹¹² Shields, “Smollett’s Scots and Sodomites”, p. 7.

February 28, 1763) published in *The Political Controversy*, Vol. III, sets out the Smollettian case:

examine the conduct of our Scotch fellow subjects...*Which of our commanders deserted his colours, ran away in the field, or expressed fear in the cabinet? Which of them was executed for neglect, or cashier'd for cowardice?* Was not at least three parts of our invincible navies manned with their seamen, and our regiments filled with their soldiers? Sorry am I to tax a Briton for ingratitude; but let him make a candid examination into the state of our forces, and he will see no inconsiderable part of those successes upon which we particularly plume ourselves, is owing to that nation which he professes to hate and despise.¹¹³ (my italics)

Recalling Smollett's argument for validating the Scot's claim to Britishness by positioning Scottish men as the bearers of a martial manliness, the writer proceeds to quip that with the "acquisition of the Welch and Scotch to the English government we are now capable of cutting the brilliant figure which we make in the annals of Europe; and that by, the most solemn acts, they were publicly incorporated long before Snowhill had a Distiller's shop, or perhaps long before Snow Hill was inhabited".¹¹⁴ Cast in such a historical frame, the very Englishness of Wilkes's family home and gin distillery of Snow Hill is mockingly undermined.

Much of Smollett's paper is taken up with direct or indirect responses to the denigration levelled at Bute from the pages of Wilkes's and Churchill's *The North Briton*. The task of *The Briton* was to showcase the benefits of a peaceful conclusion to what had been an immensely expensive war, and moreover, to present the terms of the Peace of Paris as favourable to the commercial and territorial interests of Britain. Inevitably, discussing the terms of the Peace often gave way to defending Bute from anti-Scottish attacks. Bute was frequently maligned in the Wilkite press as the ignoble lover of George III's mother, the Dowager Princess. Such lampooning was effeminophobic in the eighteenth-century sense of effeminacy being also taken to mean an ignoble "serving" of women.¹¹⁵ Moreover, charges of improper and excessive influence over the king gained credence from the fact that Bute's former role as tutor had established an asymmetrical relationship of power that, for some, had

¹¹³ Anon, *The Auditor*. No. VIII. Monday, February 28, 1763, in John Cæsar Wilkes. *The Political Controversy: or, Magazine. Of ministerial and anti-ministerial essays; consisting of the Monitor, Briton, North Briton, Auditor, and Patriot. Entire; (with select pieces from the news-papers) collected and brought into one point of view. With annotations, anecdotes and remarks. By the editor, John Cæsar Wilkes, Esq;* Vol. III (London: printed by S. Williams, bookseller, on Ludgate-Hill, MDCCLXII, 1762), pp. 236-237.

¹¹⁴ Anon, *The Auditor*. No. VIII. Monday, February 28, 1763, p. 239.

¹¹⁵ Brunström, "Be Male and Female Still", p. 45.

alarming remained unchanged. In many ways, anxieties over Bute's Court influence figured his political position as pederastic. The first paper of *The Briton* reverses the pederastic binary that concludes Churchill's *Night* (1761) by claiming Bute's role in forming George III as a 'Patriot King':

if the person whose character you have defamed and traduced by implication, under the odious title of *favourite*, be a nobleman of unblemished integrity, who attached himself to his Sovereign in his tender years, who helped to form his young mind to virtue, who infused into his heart the principles of a patriot king, directing him to pursuits which were truly royal;¹¹⁶

Here Smollett figures Bute not as a 'favourite' but rather as a Bolingbrokean fashioner of patriotic kingship, an imaging that is in direct contrast to Churchill's satirical scene of the tutor Bute advising the young George to take the "postern door". In defending Bute, Smollett imagines him as a patriotic as opposed to a pederastic influence. Apologies for Bute's Scottishness could also, somewhat humorously, take the form of an assurance of the First Lord of the Treasury's talent for suppression: "that no Englishman shall perceive in your conduct, the least marks of your having been born on the other side of the Tweed".¹¹⁷ Curiously, while Scottishness is something that should not foreclose political participation, Smollett contradicts his argument by reassuring his metropolitan readership that Bute's conduct remains unmarked by the sort of embarrassingly provincial "Scotticisms" that *The North Briton* claims to find in the pages of *The Briton*.¹¹⁸ Smollett demonstrates a typically Janus-faced national pride coupled with an assimilationist energy, similar to that shown by other Scots such as James Boswell and James Beattie.¹¹⁹

In defending Bute's private character and political conduct from his Wilkite detractors, Smollett also betrays an anxiety about the inclusiveness of the political nation. In fact, Smollett's defence of the administration involves an anxious profiling of the sort of English citizenry, those invested with political agency that added to the Scots, denote the colonial polity of Great Britain. Unsurprisingly, this is a description

¹¹⁶ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 1, p. 246

¹¹⁷ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 6, p. 266.

¹¹⁸ "Though I am a North Briton, I will endeavour to write *plain English*, and to avoid the numerous Scotticisms the Briton abounds with; and then, as the world is apt to mistake, he may be taken for a *Scotsman*, and I will pass for an *Englishman*", John Wilkes, *The North Briton*, No. 1, Saturday June 5, 1762, in *The north Briton. : Revised and corrected by the author. Illustrated with explanatory notes, and a copious index of names and characters. In two volumes. ...* (London: 1766)., p. 5.

¹¹⁹ While proud of their nationality, Scots also sought ways of effacing its traces, see: James Beattie, *Scotticisms, arranged in alphabetical order, designed to correct improprieties of speech and writing. To which is added, a lecture on elocution: by Dr. Blair* (Edinburgh: Printed for the booksellers, 1797).

that is undemocratically pitted against the growing popular base of merchants that had a commercial interest in the continuation of the Seven Years' War and were thus, in a populist sense, invested in the Wilkite antagonism toward the administration's peace plans. In appealing to the English citizenry for the advantageousness of a successful peace, Smollett constructs two homogenous communities, the respectable and industrious English, and the rabble, or what Murphy would similarly denigrate as the mobocracy. In the thirteenth issue of *The Briton* (Saturday, 21 August 1762), Smollett mockingly describes the rabble class as existing within a kind of political wilderness that is separated from the Lords, Commons and City. Such a class constitutes a "fourth estate" that is divided into "three corporations, viz. Hedge coffee-house politicians, bankrupt mechanics soured by their losses, and splenetic sots, who change their non-opinions oftener than their linen".¹²⁰ Smollett's distaste for popular "non-opinions" betrays a broader anxiety concerning the growth of political consciousness, which was linked to the expansion of the print market at mid-century. Most obviously, Smollett's opponent Wilkes and the respective Wilkite anti-ministerial and electoral campaigns of the 1760s championed, and indeed instanced, the validity of such forms of political discourse.

Pointedly, the very first issue of *The North Briton* (Saturday, June 5, 1762) opened with a statement that equated the freedom of the printed word with personal liberty: "The *liberty* of the press is the birth-right of a Briton, and is justly esteemed the firmest bulwark of the liberties of this country".¹²¹ Paradoxically, in writing *The Briton*, Smollett sets himself the task of gaining popular political support through an invalidation of expanded political participation. Such a negation requires a further tightening of the definitional parameters of Englishness:

By the English people, I do not mean the base, unthinking rabble of this metropolis, without principle, sentiment, or understanding; the undistinguishable babblers that open on every scent with equal clamour; the vilest stubble of faction, supplying fuel to every incendiary. To the abandoned, the idle, and the profligate, scenes of tumult and dissention will always be agreeable. The English people, considered as a respectable community, are honest, the sober, the thriving sons of industry, who have an interest in the country they inhabit; who have sense to value the blessings they enjoy. They compose the strength and riches of the nation; consequently their ease and happiness ought to be the great object of every administration. But, this object cannot be properly consulted while our country is involved in a cruel and destructive war, which hath shed her

¹²⁰ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 13, p. 294.

¹²¹ Wilkes, *The North Briton.*, p. 2.

best blood, exhausted her treasure, and strained every sinew to bear loads
it hath imposed.¹²²

In crudely separating the wheat from the chaff as it were, Smollett imagines a category of English people that would rival Scottish Presbyterians in their sober industriousness. These English people are, unsurprisingly, situated as the body of people that give strength to the body politic, while also being the source of the nation's wealth. It is for the benefit of this class — and this class alone — that the administration operates.

This particular issue of *The Briton* prompted a spirited, humorous, and highly significant issue of *The North Briton*, No. 19 (Saturday, October, 9, 1762), which strongly rebuked the paper for presenting:

an impudent libel on all the good people of *England* in general, as well as on the city of LONDON in particular, representing all the *nobility, gentry, merchants, tradesmen, yeomen* and all the *commonalty*, as a seditious rabble, which despises all government, because they express a dislike to some measures relative to a *peace*; and as our contribution is reproached with being an *ochlocracy*, or mob common-wealth, because it permits our people to murmur with impunity at the conduct they cannot approve, which by-the-bye is inculcating the vilest tyranny ever practiced by the worst monsters of all the *Roman* emperors.¹²³

In this response, *The North Briton* defends the broader social stratification that is actively engaged in the political-public sphere. Political participation, the act of legitimating political activity with the litmus test of public opinion, manifested by both the nobility and commonalty, in “murmur[ing] with impunity at the conduct they cannot approve,” is defended here against *The Briton*'s dismissal of the Wilkites as an illegitimate “mob common wealth”. *North Briton*, No. 19, then proceeds to interrogate a passage in *The Briton*, which describes Wilkes and Churchill, and Wilkites more generally, as “a set of speculative philosophical reformers who have espoused the plebeian interest, from an innate aversion to all order and restraint.”¹²⁴ The humorous passage that follows presents a long list of all authors who have theorised government, from Moses to Gordon, before stating: “I have never heard, that any of them were accused of being philosophers, who *hated all order*. This extraordinary species of philosophers was reserved for the discovery of that *extraordinary genius*, the author of the Briton”.¹²⁵ Dismissing the connection between plebeian interest and

¹²² Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 6, p. 266.

¹²³ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 100.

¹²⁴ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 100.

¹²⁵ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 100.

anarchy, *The North Briton* moves on to consider more carefully the implications of a dismissal of such interests.

For the Wilkites, at the core of Smollett's antagonism toward the "plebeian" interest is a far more alarming political framework; one that views natural freedom, or liberty, as a mere construct. For *The Briton*, we are told, anarchy arises from "*the opinion that every individual is equally free by nature, and hence has an equal right to intermeddle in the administration of public affairs: a principle, he says, subversive of all government*".¹²⁶ For Smollett, the natural equality of the individual, which forms the basis of their right to political participation within a (hierarchical) public-political sphere is merely an "opinion", shared by some and contested by others. The response in *The North Briton* is crucial for the way in which it insists upon the conversion of such natural equality from 'opinion' to 'axiom':

Government is a just execution of the laws, which were instituted by the people for their preservation : but if the people's implements, to whom they have trusted the execution of those laws, or any power for their preservation, should convert such execution to their destruction, have they not the right to intermeddle? Nay, have they not a right to resume the power they have delegated?, and to punish their servants who have abused it? If *our king can do no harm*, his ministers may, and are accountable to the people for their conduct. This is the voice of *Locke*, the voice of our laws, the voice of reason; but we own, not the voice of tyrants and their abettors, nor the voice of the *Briton*.¹²⁷

Governmental authority comes from "the people". Moreover, it is an authority that does not settle in the institution of parliament but is instead extra-parliamentary. In Wilkite terms, a just form of governance is one in which the administration operates as a cipher for power, which is invested by the commonalty, in the trust that their "self-preservation" will be secured. If, by principle, the king can do "no harm", then it is the ministers that must be checked should such powers be turned from preservation to destruction. Government acts with a power that is "delegated" by the very mob-commonwealth that *The Briton* derides. While *The North Briton* is clearly not advancing, or indeed claiming, any form of rigorous or scholarly political philosophy, issue No. 19 is nonetheless important for its defence of opinion, as well as its conversion of the inherent equality of the individual from the unstable realm of opinion to the security of more solid axiomatic ground. *The North Briton*, No. 19 also anticipates the Wilkite argument in the later Middlesex Election controversy 1768-

¹²⁶ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 101.

¹²⁷ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 101.

1769. When parliament refused to accept Wilkes's election on the basis of his outlawry, Wilkites argued that parliament had no right to decide its membership.

Authority comes from the people, who provide a crucial check on Crown influence. Moreover, this is not a position that Smollett would be able to convincingly counter in *The Briton*. Class, in Smollett's view, is divided between the 'respectable nation' and the lump of the mob-commonwealth, with the security of the former being eroded by the interests of the latter. Crucially, Smollett draws on a language of effeminacy as a register of cultural and political crisis in order to legitimate his argument for the preservation of the respectable nation. A paranoid language of effeminate excess plays an important role in his framing of the mercantile interests as a rapacious and excessively damaging social and economic force. Reflecting John 'Estimate' Brown's diagnosis of "self-love and rapine" as the root cause of national degeneracy,¹²⁸ Smollett suggests how the stock-jobbers, usurers and speculators are pushing the respectable nation to the point of ruination: "Our very existence as a powerful nation, seems to be at stake.... Whatever may be urged by a set of infamous usurers, who prey upon the necessities of their country, I insist upon it, the public credit is drawn so fine as to threaten cracking at the very next stretch".¹²⁹ In the eighteenth century, the exchange of goods for profit was entirely dependant on a functioning credit system, with about two thirds of all trade arrangements involving credit rather than cash.¹³⁰ If the credit system was to crack, then traders, especially those in excessive debt, a sizeable proportion of the Wilkite mercantile base would be left financially ruined. Conversely, a later issue of William Beckford's *The Monitor, or British Freeholder* (Saturday, October 2, 1762) refutes these anxieties outright, claiming that English credit is in fact full: "All nations, even our very enemies, are glad to trust their money upon the faith of an English parliament".¹³¹ While the nation is borrowing heavily and must eventually deal with the burden of this accumulating debt, *The Monitor* argues that the interest rates are "fixed" and "without a cruel taxation, and a due approbation of the revenue, arising from our conquests, might be

¹²⁸ John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (Dublin: G. Faulkner, J. Hoey, and J. Exshaw Booksellers, 1757), p. 89.

¹²⁹ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 6., p. 267.

¹³⁰ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), pp. 186-187.

¹³¹ *The Monitor, or the British Freeholder* (Saturday, October 2, 1762), John Cæsar Wilkes (ed.) *The Political Controversy* Vol. I, p. 438.

so made as, in a few years, to reimburse the expences of the war, and thereby discharge the national debt".¹³²

While Smollett argues in an alarmist tone that the fiscal system is already on the cusp of collapse, the Wilkites and Beckford's City interest (represented by *The Monitor*) push for further consumption as a way of generating growth. More than commercial arguments for and against peace, Wilkites present pro-ministerial argument as generating a new form of duplicitous politics. *The North Briton*, No. 14 (Saturday, September 4, 1762) frames the peace in terms of "the private views of the new managers", drawing a historical comparison with the political culture "of England at the end of Queen Anne's reign" as well as the earlier pederastic machinations of "the *Queen Mother* and *Mortimer*".¹³³ Cast in such a light, the Peace of Paris becomes merely a rehashing of "the shameful peace of *Utrecht*" when a Tory faction forfeited considerable gains.¹³⁴ Yet, in this paper, the thrust of the Wilkite argument abandons historical analogy to demonstrate that the tenets of Buteite politics advanced in *The Briton* go well "beyond *Machiavellian* politics".¹³⁵ In the seventh issue of *The Briton* (Saturday, 10 July 1762), Smollett had declared:

It is a maxim adopted by all civilians, that no state can be bound by any treaty, which shall turn out manifestly prejudicial to its interest, because it is always supposed, that every engagement of this nature, is contracted with a view to self-preservation, or public advantage; therefore every treaty in which these ends are shamefully sacrificed, must be *ipso facto* void and of no effect: for, it is a self-evident absurdity to suppose that any community can knowingly betray its own concerns.¹³⁶

According to Smollett, such capriciousness had been "exercised by all states, and in all ages, and without which, every federal connection might be converted into a shameful bond of perpetual slavery".¹³⁷

More than the machinations of a self-interested faction, *The North Briton* presents the Smolletian contingency strategy as indicative of a new mode of duplicitous politics that will work to "destroy the most sacred ties" between men.¹³⁸ *North Briton*, No. 15 cites the example of George Grenville who, upon entering

¹³² *The Monitor, or the British Freeholder* (Saturday, October 2, 1762), John Cæsar Wilkes (ed.) *The Political Controversy* Vol. I, p. 438.

¹³³ Wilkes, No. XIV. Saturday, September 4, 1762, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, p. 72.

¹³⁴ Wilkes, No. XIV. Saturday, September 4, 1762, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, p. 72; Wilkes, No. XIV. Saturday, September 4, 1762, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, p. 23.

¹³⁵ Wilkes, No. XIV. Saturday, September 4, 1762, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, pp. 75-76.

¹³⁶ Smollett, No. 7. Saturday, 10 July 1762, p. 271.

¹³⁷ Smollett, No. 7. Saturday, 10 July 1762, p. 271.

¹³⁸ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, pp. 75-76.

Bute's political order, supposedly had to sacrifice "every social and friendly tie" in order to "cement the union" with faction.¹³⁹ Under such a Scottish dispensation, and for the sole benefit of "*Scottish civilians*", any commitment between powers is subject to arbitrary revision.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, in the Wilkite nightmare of "*Scots law*", it is envisioned that the transfer of property between men and through the patrimonial line — itself the material basis of patriarchy — is disrupted: "if an immense property should be wickedly left by a father in his dotage, from an only *English* son into a *Scottish man's* family, the *Scotsman* may, consistent with honour and conscience, keep the whole, yet endeavour to pervert and entirely change the clear will and intention of his great benefactor".¹⁴¹

This material perversion of the very basis of patriarchy resonates with a further inversion of imperial expansionist energies under the Scottish dispensation. The choice of a former Irish colonial administrator as a treaty negotiator in Paris demonstrates that the Scots are enacting an Ossianic colonisation of England by securing a peace in their own interest.¹⁴² In Wilkite terms, Smollett's capricious attitude to treaties stems from his adherence to a Scottish legal system that is based mostly on Roman law, as opposed to an English legal tradition that is based on so-called common law. As argued earlier, the Scottish Lord Chancellor, Lord Mansfield, attacked in *The Ghost*, and perhaps attacked more frequently than Bute in Wilkite literature, symbolises Fancy's triumph over Reason, which can also be read as the supplanting of English common law with a Jacobite and Roman system of subordination. Mansfield was celebrated in some quarters as a judge who had brought equity and reason to bear on the law; adapting it to suit the needs of the mercantile community by bringing into the Court of King's Bench new commercial litigation. Mansfield was known for making judgments that "had rationalized the law governing

¹³⁹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, p. 31.

¹⁴⁰ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, p. 31.

¹⁴¹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, p. 31.

¹⁴² "I rejoice to hear that the administration is so fortunate in the choice of a noble personage, who has *condescended* to go on the part of England, not to *sign* but to *treat of a peace*. His Grace's happy temper, his winning manners, and obliging deportment, will soon secure him in the hearts of the *French* as entirely as they did the hearts of the *Irish*, who lived so blessed under his government. I hope for this purpose that his old secretary, the *learned* master of the rolls, is to attend the embassy... His Grace has been pleased to declare that he wept over our victories, so have the *French*: there may therefore be a full chorus of *sighs* and *groans* between them: and when their tears are dried up, I suppose they will laugh together at our loss of *Newfoundland*. I will venture to prophesy, that on the noble *duke's wish'd for* return to his native country, he will be attended to the *Gallic* shore by at least as great crowds of *Frenchmen*, shrugging their shoulders, as he was to the Irish shore, by the *men, women, and children of that country, all dissolved in tears*". See Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 1, p. 77.

contract, insurance and bills of exchange, and had streamlined procedures”.¹⁴³ His application of Reason to common law, while welcomed by some merchants, provoked distrust from common lawyers who saw it as an infringement of Scottish civil law on discrete and superior English legal practice.¹⁴⁴ The decision at the beginning of George III’s reign to award judges tenure for life and thus ensure “judicial independence” was, for the Wilkites, undermined by Mansfield, who exemplified the influence of the Crown and the administration.¹⁴⁵

Scottish infiltration of England is occurring not only in law, but also more alarmingly in foreign policy. In the Wilkite Scottish prophesy of the settling of the Peace of Paris that unfolds in *The North Briton*, No. 14, the gestural image of the French shrugging in disbelief at the absence of British peace terms is inversely proportionate to the “tears” shed by the indigenous Irish at the harshness of their own experience of colonialism. That the officials chosen to negotiate the Peace terms are part of the Dublin Castle administration excites the Wilkite fear of England becoming an Irish kingdom, colonised by the Scots. The Wilkite focus on “Irish tears” does not amount to a critique of the English colonial system in Ireland, but instead emphasises the potential for the shedding of such tears on English shores. English passivity is further emphasised by the Grace who, throughout the negotiations, will confirm, rather than conceal, the “*nakedness* of our land” representing the country in Smolletian terms as “totally exhausted, and unable to proceed at all with the war”.¹⁴⁶ Scots, in negotiating the Peace, are presenting England as ripe for colonisation.

The highly fraught issue of national belonging gets played out in the discursive overlap between debates on the national prosperity and colonial expansion in polemical writing on the Peace of Paris. Peter De Bolla, in analysing the discourse of debt during the Seven Years’ War, notes how the period between the mid-1750s and mid-1760s witnesses an evolution in discussions of the management of the national debt, in so much as “by the end of the Seven Years’ War opinion had evolved, or perhaps been pushed into an acceptance of a permanent discrepancy between the

¹⁴³ John Brewer, “The Wilkites and the law, 1763-74: a study of radical notions of governance”, in John Brewer and John Styles (Ed.) *An Ungovernable People: The English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 159.

¹⁴⁴ Brewer, “The Wilkites”, p. 159.

¹⁴⁵ Brewer, “The Wilkites”, p. 157.

¹⁴⁶ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 267.

total circulating specie and the debt”.¹⁴⁷ Such acceptance is itself premised on an “awareness ... of the discourse of infinite debt, along with a clear belief in the ability to master and control it”.¹⁴⁸ De Bolla notes how “the body”, in both figurative and literal terms, is deployed within the discourse on the national debt as a legitimising trope for such excess:

These forms of control and the methods used to understand the unruly increase of debt — the infinite expansion of debt produced by the ever greater desire for capital appreciation through interest — are significantly tied to a particular figurative site, that of the body and its circulatory system. This use of the body and its blood and its blood as a figure or trope enables a crucial set of changes to take place in the relationships between the private individual and the state, or person and nation ... The change in ‘opinion’, then, over the maintenance and management of the debt is much more than the result of public debate; it is one of the effects of an irreversible transfer from the private body to the public corporation, a transfer that is also effected around the figural use of the body and the in-corporation of the national bank.¹⁴⁹

To register debt as legitimate excess, the coeval bodily discourse of sexual propriety, must be imported and assimilated in order to figure such excess as healthy, or in sexual terms, as heteronormative.¹⁵⁰ The Wilkite call for the continuation of the war effort, and thus for the resultant growth of the national deficit, resonates with, and is in part animated by, the cultural reimagining of male heterosexuality as naturally “excessive”, and in turn, with the shifting of the problematic of “excess” — itself a formative strain in a variety of discrete legislative discourses present in this period — onto both the figure of the sodomite, and the rich symbolic register that ‘he’ simultaneously exemplifies and collapses into.

Arguments for the continuation of the war effort are indeed legitimised by recourse to seemingly discrete, though intensely imbricated sexual and financial discourses; ones that operated by registering their own excesses as normative. Whereas national debt historically provoked an alarmist imagining as a corruptive force on the body-politic, De Bolla notes how “during the 1760s jeers at such an old fashioned superstition [became] a sign of the new commercialism having come of age,

¹⁴⁷ Peter De Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics and the Subject* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 111.

¹⁴⁸ De Bolla, *The Discourse*, p. 111.

¹⁴⁹ De Bolla, *The Discourse*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁵⁰ Referencing an economic tract entitled *Thoughts on money, circulation, and paper currency* (1758), De Bolla notes how a prohibitive language of effeminacy is deployed to marshal an individual’s economic affairs: “the importation of an adjacent legislating discourse represents one of the ways in which a discursive excess may be controlled. Here it is the bounds of correct sexuality and proper manners that are invoked as the discursive police”. See De Bolla, *The Discourse*, p. 125.

come into power [with] assertions that a healthy national debt is representative of, if not productive of, a healthy nation". In this way, we can see how the Wilkite legitimization of heterosexual and economic excess is part of the same argument, which is woven into the very discursive fabric of the period. Whereas Wilkes's championing of heterosexuality deployed effeminophobia to shunt the problematic of excess onto the sodomitical, within the discourse of the national debt, the institution of the Bank of England, with its charter renewed in 1764, is rhetorically invoked to stem the financial excess. De Bolla notes how public banking in the Seven Years' War period wins out over private banking, through the rehearsal of the reassuring argument that the Bank of England, or public banking more generally, operates on the founding principle of "the production of excess *within limits*".¹⁵¹ From the Wilkite perspective, the greater the debt, the greater the implicit national 'confidence'.

Public or national banking provides the assurance that monetary excess is always existent within a controllable limitation: a belief that is "often argued for in the same breadth as extolling the virtues of the British constitution and its basis in the free-born Englishman".¹⁵² In fact, as De Bolla shows, when viewed within this frame, excessive debt registers confidence in the appropriate workings of both the government and the nation's financial institution. In arguing for the Peace, Smollett therefore required a complex polemical strategy; one which not only reproduced the alarmist rendering of debt as a disruptive force, but which engaged the Wilkite argument for a limited excess along its densely worked financial, colonial and indeed sexual argumentative strains. The alarmist tone of Smollett's elasticated view of public credit reaches a heightened pitch in the anxious rendering of the colonialising process that follows:

We all remember the difficulties of last year, when the high premiums granted by the g—t, tempted every individual who could command a sum of ready money, to leave his just debts undischarged, that he might embrace the proffered advantage. Thus all the cash in the kingdom centred in the capital, and the extreme parts were left almost entirely without circulation. The disaster would have been lighter, had it been immediately distributed again from the exchequer, through the canals that would have diffused over the extremities of the nation;¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ De Bolla suggests that "the institution of the bank soaks up or cushions the effects of excess; it generates credit in the economy within the limits which can be laid down by government: it allows a degree of excessive productivity to money just as government allows a degree of freedom to the individual". See De Bolla, *The Discourse*, p. 130.

¹⁵² De Bolla, *The Discourse*, p. 130.

¹⁵³ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 111.

Whereas *The North Briton* advises its readers to reject “that unmanly despair, which has been so industriously inculcated in order to justify the procuring an accommodation *on any terms*”, Smollett, in attempting to advance an argument for peace, plays on the very precariousness of imperial expansion.¹⁵⁴ Public investment in government premiums has drained capital from even the most extreme parts of the nation, resulting in an unprecedented concentration of wealth in London. Rather than designating Britain’s fringes as unproductive, the Celtic periphery is reconfigured through the corporeal metaphor as providing the lifeblood for imperial activity. Amputating these spaces, as it were, disrupts the very symbolic legitimising function of the body, as described by De Bolla. Whereas *North Briton*, No. 4 (Saturday, June 26, 1762) had claimed that the monies collected by Scots in England would be “expended in *Scot-land*”,¹⁵⁵ Smollett counters this by invoking a considerably toned down version of Brown’s paranoid image of a mutilated Body politic in *An Estimate*; stressing that the peripheral spaces of Britain are now left “almost entirely without the circulation”.¹⁵⁶

Having reevaluated the domestic fringe as in fact central to Britain’s imperial project, Smollett moves on to foreground the very precariousness of empire. If the exchequer had re-circulated some of the capital back “through the canals that would have diffused over the extremities of the nation”, the immensity of the impending collapse could have been significantly lessened.¹⁵⁷ Instead, Pitt’s foreign policy has lead to an investment in German subsidies, which will have no yield, and the protection of the American colonies: “but great part of it was conveyed to Germany, from whence it never can return; and considerable sums were remitted to America, from whence it must one day return, tho’ perhaps too late to save the credit of the nation”.¹⁵⁸ Smollett’s comments on America usefully demonstrate how the ideological business of empire building at mid-century was fraught with anxieties concerning the promised reflux of expenditure. Cast within such a frame, *The Briton* can alarmingly and somewhat convincingly minimise Wilkite anti-peace discourse as an excessive

¹⁵⁴ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁵ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁶ Brown, p. 84.

¹⁵⁷ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 267.

¹⁵⁸ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 267.

“rage for conquest” that if left unchecked will leave the ‘respectable nation’ in the effeminate condition of being “weakened, exhausted, and unable to proceed”.¹⁵⁹

In the twelfth issue of *The Briton* (Saturday, 14 August 1762), Smollett begins to invoke a heightened language of imperial sublimity as a justification for charges of ministerial ineptitude:

He must be ignorant indeed, who does not know that the British settlements and possessions abroad, are infinitely too extensive to be secured in every part, by any land or naval force we can exert: that in the prosecution of an active war, small considerations must sometimes give way to objects of great importance; and that if the defence of Newfoundland had been weakened, in order to strengthen the armament destined against the Spanish settlements in the West Indies, the ministry would have been excusable, and even praise-worthy, for hazarding a little to gain a great deal: but the truth is, no such risk was run; no force was recalled from Newfoundland; the fishery was guarded by the usual convoy; not a French man of war was to be seen upon the Atlantic; and the harbour of Brest was blocked up by an English squadron. The enemy made a desperate push”.¹⁶⁰

While his suggestion that the French simply made a “desperate push” seems a pitiful attempt at assuaging what was considerable public anger at the loss of the Newfoundland fishery, such an assertion is explicable when we consider that his broad argument has less to do with the particulars of territories lost or gained and is more invested in foregrounding the inherent instability of all imperial conquest. As Adam Smith, one of empire’s earliest critics, had claimed, the viability and maintenance of the imperial project necessitated its incompleteness: its own rhythmic stops and starts.¹⁶¹ For Smith, the colony must be understood as a space that necessitated a process of continuous colonisation. In light of this, the project of empire was ultimately unachievable and unsuccessful.

In arguing for the cessation of the Seven Years’ War, Smollett does not advocate an end to the project of imperial expansion, but conversely must find a way of countering Wilkite propagandists who attempt to discredit his arguments in these terms. The issue is not with the idea of the colonial project itself, but involves the way in which it is practised. Edmund Burke would later adopt a similar line of critique,

¹⁵⁹ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 267.

¹⁶⁰ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 300.

¹⁶¹ “The empire [i.e., in America], however, has hitherto been, not an empire, but the project of an empire ... It is surely now time that our rulers should either realize this golden dream, in which they have been indulging them-selves, perhaps as well as the people; or that they should awaken from it themselves, and endeavor to awaken the people...If the project cannot be completed, it ought to be given up.”, Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 486, qtd. in Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 12.

which carefully distinguished between the ‘ideas’ and ‘practices’ of colonialism.¹⁶² For Burke, the failure of the colonial project in both Ireland and India could be attributed to factional agents who misrepresented the English, or British, constitutional system for their own self-serving agendas.¹⁶³ In this oft quoted passage from his parliamentary speech on “Fox’s India Bill” (1783), Burke indignantly tells us that representatives have maintained the “intoxicating draught of authority” in such foreign locales, but have failed to materially situate themselves in any meaningfully productive relationship with the indigenous population: “England has erected no churches, no hospitals, no palaces, no schools; England has built no bridges, made no high-roads, cut no navigations, dug out no reservoirs”.¹⁶⁴ The English presence in India remains, and will continue to remain, sterile, unproductive, and materially uncultivated. According to Burke, the cause of such poor administration is bound up with an effeminate masculine dispensation that has consistently failed to mature into the more venerable form of patriarchy:

The natives scarcely know what it is to see the gray head of an Englishman. Young men (boys almost) govern there, without society and without sympathy with the natives.... Animated with all the avarice of age and all the impetuosity of youth, they roll in one after another, wave after wave; and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights.¹⁶⁵

The rapacious and effeminate authority that Burke critiques is entirely opposite to those sanctioned forms of patriarchy endorsed in his earlier aesthetic writing, namely the “venerable” father and the more intensely affective “feminine partiality” of the grandfather.¹⁶⁶ Without ‘sympathy’, the passion that marks the threshold into the social and which prevents men from becoming “indifferent spectators of almost any thing which men can do or suffer”, there can be no society.¹⁶⁷ The effeminate faction

¹⁶² Seamus Deane, *Foreign Affections: Essays on Edmund Burke* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), p. 93.

¹⁶³ Deane, p. 93.

¹⁶⁴ Edmund Burke, “Speech on Fox’s East India Bill (1783)”, in Edmund Burke, *Edmund Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches*, Peter J. Stanlis, ed. (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968), p. 377.

¹⁶⁵ Burke, “Speech on Fox’s East India Bill”, p. 376.

¹⁶⁶ In Section X, “How far the idea of BEAUTY may be applied to the qualities of the Mind” in Part III of his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757; 2nd edn, 1759), Burke outlines the superior authority of the grandfather: “The authority of a father, so useful to our well-being, and so justly venerable on all accounts, hinders us from having that entire love for him that we have for our mothers, where the parental authority is almost melted down into the mother’s fondness and indulgence. But we generally have a great love for our grandfathers, in whom this authority is removed a degree from us, and where the weakness of age mellows it into something of a feminine partiality”. See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Adam Phillips, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 101.

¹⁶⁷ See Section XIII “Sympathy”, Part I, Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 41.

of boys governing India do so by means of a terror that presses “too nearly” to effect a sublime and peaceful form of governance.¹⁶⁸

While any engaged discussion of Burke’s speeches and writings on India in the 1780s is decidedly beyond the scope of a project that has its research basis in the period of the Seven Years’ War and its aftermath, it is useful, however, to note how faction is presented by both Smollett and Burke as the last refuge for the exercising of an abusive and brutishly anachronistic political homosociality. While Burke presented Warren Hastings and the Anglo-Irish ascendancy in terms of an excessive and damaging factionalism,¹⁶⁹ the rhetoric of Smollett’s earlier critique of the Temple faction’s drive for conquest in *The Briton* trades in a similar connection between faction, self-interest and excess. In short, for both authors, effeminacy, as a condition of excess, serves as shorthand for broader colonial excesses. In profiting from Adam Smith’s diagnosis of the inherent incompleteness of all forms of imperialism, Smollett also argues for an end to the Seven Years’ War that heavily relies on a Burkean aestheticising of the vast and overwhelming infinitude of the British Empire. Sublimity emerges as a key descriptive trope in Smollett’s conception of systemic imperial exchanges. In particular, *The Briton* presents an argument for peace within an aesthetic of the sublime; while also, importantly, reworking such capaciousness into a critique of the Wilkite imaging of the Scot as unproductive sodomite. Both Smollett’s and Murphy’s argument for acceptance of the Peace of Paris presents the imperial project as inherently degenerative through recourse to Estimate Brown’s connection of an influx of colonial wealth with national decadence.

In its staggering incredibility, the Wilkites lampoon Smollett’s diagnostic as fanciful and embarrassingly Ossianic. In particular, *The North Briton*, No. 24 (Saturday, November 13, 1762) presents a “DIALOGUE of the LIVING, *Between Earl Buchanan and Duke of d’Ossuna*” that ridicules the sort of Estimate Brown/Dr. Farquharson cause and effect equation of luxury with degeneracy, which the pro-administration essay-sheets tentatively assert.¹⁷⁰ The success of the sugar and fur trades cannot be reconciled with the corruption of the nation:

These islands are not worth one farthing, if we consider the real value of things — they increase our sugar trade ; that is granted : but sugar is a promoter of disease and luxury — it makes many of those citizens rich and

¹⁶⁸ See Section VII “Of the Sublime”, Part I, Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁹ Deane, p. 92.

¹⁷⁰ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 133.

assume airs of consequence; the greatest of evils ! — the great Dr. *Farquharson* is now writing a folio to prove it the source of all disorders; gout, stone, phthisis, sciatica, cholera, hot, cold, wet, and dry disorders — it is the strangest, the vilest of all compositions, filled with all the noxious particles of all the elements, and only capable of giving inspiration to a *Creolian Lord Mayor* — The sugar cane is a paltry plant — Dr. *Hill* only recommends the great virtues of the *Sugar-Stick* itself, to be drawn out by inward suction, and, I own, so far nothing in this island can equal that plant, but the *Carduus Augustæ benedictus*.¹⁷¹

In a humorous — and clearly eroticised passage — John Hill is quoted as classifying the sugar cane as a “paltry plant” that along with the Scottish thistle, gives pleasure by “inward suction”. Pushing the illogic of the pro-ministerial paper’s antagonism toward luxury to its extreme, the Earl and Duke agree that the losses incurred by the Peace of Paris will have long-term benefits, as forfeiting “the sugar islands to France [ensures] they will become enervated in years to come”.¹⁷² By counter-intuitively allowing for French colonial supremacy, Britain can set its main rival on the path toward the pitfall of devastating cultural degeneracy. Here *The North Briton* knowingly exploits one of the central paradoxes of John Estimate Brown’s *An Estimate*, which presents the incommensurability of “republican identity with imperial destiny”.¹⁷³ Colonial assertion in Brown’s paranoid *Estimate* will always lead to national effeminacy, a particular equation that leaves all forms of assertion suspect.

In a similar vein, the fur trade is positioned as corrupting to those receptive to such enervation. Whereas the inhabitants of Canada are guilty of the “scandalous invention!” of the “use furs for warmth”, the Duke of d’Ossuna informs his companion that Scottish ladies have “cats and dogs for that purpose”.¹⁷⁴ The reference to the Scottish ladies recalls the earlier reprint in *North Briton*, No. 13 (Saturday, August, 28, 1762) of James Howell’s *A Perfect Description of the People and Country of Scotland* (1649), a highly xenophobic letter, which imagines the scene of Scotland at the time of James VI-I (1566-1625). Howell reserves most of his gall for the figure of the female Scot; vituperatively stating that Scottish women’s “flesh naturally abhors cleanliness” before admonishing that: “To be chained in marriage with one of them were to be tied to a dead carcass, and cast into a stinking ditch; formosity and a dainty face they dream not of”.¹⁷⁵ In continuing this xenophobic and

¹⁷¹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 133.

¹⁷² Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 133.

¹⁷³ Brunström, “Be Male And Female Still”, p. 42.

¹⁷⁴ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 133.

¹⁷⁵ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 70.

deeply misogynistic portrayal of Scottish women, the Duke of d'Ossuna suggests that the “delicious roughness of those animal skins promotes that friction”, which, in any case, is of no consequence to Scottish women as, we are told: “such delicacy is rarely found in our hardy, naked-thighed country”.¹⁷⁶ The argument here, insulting as it is, presents the Scottish people as being too inured to conditions of scarcity and filth to ever become effeminised through luxury. While clearly xenophobic, the claim that the Scot provided a bulwark against an overwhelming tide of luxury would form the basis of part of the anti-Ossian reaction to Macpherson’s valiant and martially noble Highlander. Losses incurred denote the promise of future gains, as luxury can be promoted abroad as a way of “banish[ing] this unnatural effeminacy from our nation, and throw it with double weight, in conjunction with the pernicious sugar, on the constitutions of our enemies”.¹⁷⁷

In the final section of the dialogue between the Earl of Buchanan and the Duke of d'Ossuna, the conversation moves away from the more absurd prophesising of sugar encrusted national enemies “crippled with gout and a legion of other disorders”, to focus on the colonial frontiers of North America and India.¹⁷⁸ The Duke of d'Ossuna informs the Earl of Buchanan that the American merchants, planters “and a thousand various species of mushrooms” have grown too rich.¹⁷⁹ With the accumulation of such wealth, it is only a matter of time before “America give laws to the universe” and therefore, d'Ossuna advocates the adoption of Irish colonial policy in America: “we must act like skilful gardeners, and prune the luxuriances — I am convinced of the justness of such politics: your Lordship well knows that was the foundation of my conduct in Ireland, by which I acquired so much glory”.¹⁸⁰ While clearly a laboured piece of satire, once again the overriding anxiety here centres on the threat of an inversion of colonial policy by the Scottish faction, in so much as, under such a dispensation, England could become subject to its own ambitions; a threat that would be given fuller treatment in the later issues on Dashwood’s cider taxes.

In India, the “conquests ... signify not a bawbee: spice, china, arrack, and all the other commodities are worse than nothing; pimps to luxury and nourishers of

¹⁷⁶ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, pp. 133-134.

¹⁷⁷ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, pp. 133-134.

¹⁷⁸ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, pp. 133-134.

¹⁷⁹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 134.

¹⁸⁰ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 134.

wickedness”.¹⁸¹ The merchants of the East India Company “are too rich already” and since their supply of “Saltpetre” (an ingredient of gunpowder), will not be required in a peacetime nation, the “*East India trade*” should be abandoned.¹⁸² The concluding assertion that “Trade [is] the bane of our nation!” usefully conveys the absurd extremity of such illogic: if commerce is somehow enervating, then by principle, all trade should be suspended. The Peace of Paris therefore provides an ideal opportunity for the accomplishment of the suspension of trade. It is against this satirical backdrop that Smollett must find a way of advancing a favourable view of the peace terms in *The Briton*. In the eighteenth paper (Saturday, 25 September 1762) he offers a view of the imperial process that profits from a Burkean language of the sublime. Smollett argues that the distance to, and uneven spatiality of, Britain’s heterogeneous imperial domains renders such territory almost impossible to govern:

When we consider the extent of our conquests in North America, stretching above twelve hundred leagues from the banks of the St. Laurence to the Mississippi, peopled by new subjects, indisposed to our dominion from national as well as religious aversion, *and surrounded by innumerable nations of fierce Indians, whom it will be absolutely necessary to over-awe and restrain by a chain of strong forts and garrisons*: when we reflect upon the great expence of men that will be required for retaining Martinique, Guadaloupe, Senegal, and Goree; and remember the shocking mortality that rages among Europeans in those unhealthy climates; we must surely own, that the retention of all our conquests, tho’ perhaps attended with some immediate advantage in point of wealth, would, in a great measure, conduce to the depopulation of our mother-country, and of consequences turn out a very grievous misfortune.¹⁸³ (My italics)

The Briton argues that the North American colonial presence — in its current embryonic militancy — simply cannot engender the spectacle of sublimity that is required to restrain the so-called “fierce Indians” into a state of “over-awe”. The mechanics of such a colonial sublime are completely necessary in respect of alien crown subjects that are defined by an impenetrable alterity, which is firmly embedded in diverse traditions and religious beliefs. The material resources required for the maintenance of empire, through a staging of the sublime, are wholly lacking. Within such a context, the continued aggression would inevitably lead to exhaustion. Put in this light, City opposition to the Peace of Paris can be viewed as stemming from the effeminately avaricious nature of the inhabitants of ‘London’s Empire’.

¹⁸¹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 134.

¹⁸² Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 134.

¹⁸³ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, Vol. 2, p. 331.

Framed in sodomitical terms, the consequence of acceding to factional demands is projected as the sterility of depopulation. While the conquests are “perhaps attended with some immediate advantage in point of wealth”, Smollett warns that the “shocking mortality that rages among Europeans in [such] unhealthy climates” would ultimately lead to “the depopulation of our mother-country, and of consequences turn out a very grievous misfortune”.¹⁸⁴ Previous to this, Smollett had advanced a common eighteenth-century assumption, not refuted until the 1801 census, that the number of people in Great Britain and Ireland (a figure that does not exceed eight million in his view) has been “very perceptibly decreasing from the beginning of this century, even during a period of profound peace”.¹⁸⁵ The mass urbanisation of Britain envisioned leads on to a cursory examination of the Romans and Carthaginians as examples of nations that have suffered ruination through empire. As Carol Watts notes, anxieties concerning depopulation were “connected both to the move from the country to the city, mourned in Goldsmith’s ‘The Deserted Village’, and to the future of empire itself”.¹⁸⁶ The engendering of such anxieties did not go unchallenged, and while not responding directly to *The Briton*, *The Monitor* nevertheless rejects wholesale any arguments for terminating the war that centre on the issue of depopulation; any “visible *decrease of men*” is a natural consequence of the war effort, and such decreases have not disturbed the processes of agriculture or manufactures, and even if they did, *The Monitor* argues that the “supernumerary poor”, provide a reserve stock that at such times of need “cannot be better employed, than in the service of their country”.¹⁸⁷

Yet Smollett is invested in his argument for mass depopulation for more than pro-ministerial propagandist reasons. Having laid the groundwork for his argument of depopulation, he moves on to ask “How is Great Britain qualified to make or retain extensive conquests?”.¹⁸⁸ In arguing that “only an handful of people, daily diminishing” can man the imperial project, Smollett advances an anti-Scotophobic argument that trades the fishmonger’s joining of the Scot as (or worse than) a sodomite for a privileging of Scotland as the source for the heterosexual reproduction of the nation. Rather than adopting a Roman integrationist policy of “strengthening ...

¹⁸⁴ Smollett, *The Briton* No. 18, p. 331.

¹⁸⁵ Smollett, *The Briton* No. 18, p. 331.

¹⁸⁶ Watts, p. 122.

¹⁸⁷ *The Monitor, or the British Freeholder* (Saturday, October 2, 1762), *The Political Controversy* Vol. I, John Cæsar Wilkes, ed., p. 438.

¹⁸⁸ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 18, p. 331.

numbers by naturalizing foreigners,” Wilkites, argues Smollett, “seem rather inclined to weaken our own hands further, by affecting a disunion with a whole nation of our fellow-subjects [the Scots], whom, some among us, have spread no sarcasms, no abuse, no falsehood, to provoke and exasperate”.¹⁸⁹ In Smollett’s view, Wilkite expansion will not only lead to depopulation, but will also curtail the capaciousness of the category of ‘British’ through its exclusionary impulses. In many ways, Smollett’s anxieties about depopulation in *The Briton* rehash more general fears, which arose from England’s “swing to the East” in the 1750s.¹⁹⁰ As Linda Colley notes, the refocusing of England’s imperial gaze on India generated its own form of crisis, since in “the context of India’s geographical scale and its vast, indigenous population Britain’s smallness appeared particularly painful and exposed”.¹⁹¹ In trading on these cultural anxieties, *The Briton* reworks such fears into a sodomitical imagining of the Wilkite/Temple faction as rapacious aggressors, concerned with consumption rather than generation.

Put in this light, Wilkite Scotophobia is shown to circumscribe the “reservoir of men” that is deemed necessitous for the maintenance of empire. In opposition to a sodomitical imagining in cultural terms, the logic of Smollett’s anti-Scotophobia works to foreground the heterosexual capacity of Scots. Earlier, in the eighth issue of *The Briton*, Smollett had caused controversy by describing how the 1745 Jacobites “headed by a pretender to the crown, had defeated a body of regular forces, and penetrated into the very bowels of South Britain; when the whole nation was overwhelmed with fear”.¹⁹² Here, the Jacobite invasion is depicted in clearly sodomitical terms, as the “very bowels” of England are “penetrated”. Such a positioning of ‘Jacobite’ as ‘sodomite’ is revised in the context of the eighteenth paper’s anxieties over depopulation. Having demonstrated the anti-imperial consequences of anti-Scottishness, Smollett proclaims that:

There is no room for hesitation — let us lay all prejudice, all party aside: let us unite as Britons, as fellow-subjects, and fellow citizens. Let us despise and detest those parricides that have endeavoured to *kindle the flames of civil discord in the bowels of their country*.¹⁹³ (My italics)

¹⁸⁹ Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 18, p. 332.

¹⁹⁰ Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (Westminster: Knopf Publishing Group, 2004), p. 245.

¹⁹¹ Colley, *Captives*, p. 245.

¹⁹² Smollett, *The Briton* No. 8, p. 275.

¹⁹³ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 332.

In arguing for the unity of Scottish and English subjects under the banner of British imperialism, Smollett substitutes Wilkite for Jacobite as the source of “discord” in the “bowels” of England. Construed within the boundaries of such an argument, Wilkite “parricides” fan the flames of anti-Scottish prejudice, privileging a chaotic disunity that holds the fearful promise of a sodomitical depopulation of the nation. The redeployment of the language of sodomy provides the surest means of delegitimising the Wilkite rabble’s claim to political legitimacy. Smollett’s countering of Wilkite radicalism is not confined to arguments surrounding imperial expansion or failed Jacobitism. The fifteenth issue is given over to a satiric dialogue between Lord Gothamstowe (Lord Temple) and Capt. Iago Aniseed (John Wilkes). As readers would have recognised, aniseed is an aromatic seed that is used medicinally to expel wind from the bowels. In an indirect allusion to the Æolist Priests of Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub*, Smollett represents Wilkes as being simply full of wind. This Swiftian allusion returns to the anus or the bowel as a way of affirming the wastefulness and insubstantiality of Wilkite radicalism.

Smollett’s sodomitical rhetoric reaches its apotheosis in *The Briton*, No. 14, with the statuesque image of a “petrified” “*Jahia Ginn*” or John Wilkes. Jahia Ginn is shown with his “mouth standing wide open as a spout for the discharge of filth”, an image that figures the mouth as a filthy anus.¹⁹⁴ More than windy rhetoric, the dialogue between Lord Gothamstowe and Capt. Iago Aniseed verges on those pleasures that made Roderick Random recoil in horror. To the neglect of all other familial or heteroerotic affective ties, Aniseed has “cleaved unto [Lord Gothamstowe]”.¹⁹⁵ As Edmund Burke discovered in his service to William Hamilton, the asymmetrical structures of inequality that are bound up with systems of patronage can often lead to such a cleaving, however unwelcome. Here, Smollett presents the Temple faction (and all factions) as involving a Strutwell type sodomitical patronage. In *The Briton*, Smollett reverses the fishmonger’s slur on the Scottish physician, by presenting Scotland as a site for the heterosexual reproduction of the nation, while also managing to disarticulate the discourse of Wilkite radicalism within the fraught bounds of its own sodomitical anxieties.

¹⁹⁴ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 310.

¹⁹⁵ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 315.

(2.4) Conclusion

In recent literary-historical criticism, John Wilkes has primarily been read as a profligate libertine, who having engendered serious political discontent in the 1760s eventually became part of the conservative City establishment in the 1770s. Central to such readings is the sense that Wilkes in some way abandoned libertine politics for a less adventurous life. While this is, indeed, a helpful way of patterning Wilkes's political career, I argue that the label 'libertine' confuses the way in which Wilkes actually approached 'sexuality'. Querying the reading that views Wilkes's conflation of the political and sexual as absolute and determined in the early 1760s, this chapter argues that for Wilkes, the sexual, indeed, the heterosexual, is not political, but rather must be anxiously protected from the political. If Wilkes's politics is to be considered libertine, such 'libertinism' is to be found at the intersection between the public and the private. Whereas a Restoration libertine such as Rochester saw only the erotic geographies of psychology and sensation at play, easily transferring their sexual exploits from the privacy of the bedroom to the publicity of St. James's Park, male sexuality for Wilkes is conversely a form of property, one that demands privacy and protection from the intrusions of State-craft.

The *Essay on Woman* controversy demonstrates how issues of the private and public elide into the question of publication in this period. While the administration accused Wilkes of publishing the poem and of libelling Warburton, Wilkes maintained that the 'private' printing of the "idle" poem for circulation among friends did not constitute publishing and that Lord Sandwich, in reading the poem in the House of Lords, had in fact published it. Although the poem is a slight and unstable text upon which to build a heavy theoretical reading, I have argued that the controversy generated by the poem constituted a media event, which moved well beyond the particulars of the text. Engaging in both a textual and contextual analysis reveals much about how the *Essay* controversy generated debates that defined the boundaries of masculinity within the fractious Seven Years' War period, while more broadly, contributing to the working out of the ideological patterning of the bourgeois heterosexual male in Western modernity in the long eighteenth-century. In its satire of Warburton as an overly erudite and weighty annotator, the *Essay* presents annotation as a form of literary impotency; annotation as a textual practice defers pleasure, is descriptive rather than performative, and is firmly situated "outside" the authorial

male fantasy of unfettered sexual exploration of a woman's body. In treating of this tension between impotency and heterosexual assertion, I demonstrate that Wilkes's *Essay* is useful both as an index of normative male-male bonding, and conversely as a literary record of the faultline along which certain relational positions were paradoxically organised and displaced.

The first section to deal with the polemical essay-sheets renews and extends the question of Smollett's fascination with the sodomitical. Here, I read the way in which *The Briton* casts back sodomitical anxieties that both plague and sustain the coherence of Wilkite political critique. In reading Smollett's *Briton*, this section has shown how concerns about luxury are shifted back and forth between pro and anti-ministerial writers as a way of both promoting and undermining the terms of peace. Smollett's argument for Peace relies upon an anxious aesthetic of the colonial sublime; one that seeks to demonstrate the precariousness of all colonial expansion. However, arguments for the Peace of Paris allow Smollett to reassess the terms of Scottish entry into the British colonial project. His argument regarding depopulation in *The Briton* harnesses prevalent mid-century anxieties in an effort to stabilise Scottish integration into 'British' cultural and political life. It is within the particularly fraught terms of debates about how Britain might sustain its increasing Empire that Smollett reimagines his native Scotland; not as a sterile and uncultivated place, but as the source for the heterosexual reproduction of the nation. Curiously, Smollett's narrative of Scottish inclusion works on an anti-democratic basis, which posits the 'natural equality' of "the people" as merely opinion. Smollett's confining of Britishness to a respectable nation of English and Scots alike prompts the spirited defence in *The North Briton* of the axiomatic basis of the equality of "the people".

Chapter Three reads *The North Briton* and *The Auditor*, as well as the weekly political digest of these papers, *The Political Controversy* (1762-1763), to further explore how debates about public and private — about the democratic entitlement of public opinion — were deployed within an effeminophobic and sodomophobic cultural and political register of crisis. In reading *The North Briton's* response to the cider excise, I argue that responses to the invasion of assumed privacies excite responses that trade on the incommensurability of the private and the pederastic. The chapter concludes with an examination of the failures of Arthur Murphy's second political essay-sheet *The Auditor*. Here it is argued that such failures are not only

interesting, but made somewhat explicable in light of Murphy's attempts to critique the very model of masculinity that authenticated Wilkite politics.

Chapter III

Mobocracy

Public Opinon, Excise, & Florida Peat

(3.1) Preface

The *liberty of the press* is the birth-right of a BRITON, and is justly esteemed the firmest bulwark of the liberties of this country. It has been the terror of all bad ministers; for their dark and dangerous designs, or their weakness, inability, and duplicity, have thus been detected and shewn to the public, generally in too strong and just colours for them long to bear up against the odium of mankind. Can we then be surpriz'd that so various and infinite arts have been employed, at one time entirely to set aside, at another to take off the force, and blunt edge, of this most scared weapon, given for the defence of truth and liberty?.¹

The shibboleth of liberty, long established as part of the stock Whig political vocabulary, would be frequently drawn upon throughout the satirical pages of *The North Briton* and other Wilkite papers. Encroachments on the “liberty of the subject” could take the repressive forms of censorship of the printing press as well as the more tangibly invasive nature of Sir Francis Dashwood’s “*odious and partial*” cider tax.² For Wilkes and Churchill, English liberty was a fundamental right conferred by birth, which secured male political legitimacy at a time when the category of ‘Englishness’ itself was becoming pressured due to increasing imperial accumulation. As we have seen, for the ‘Others’ of Wilkite discourse, Wilkite liberty could be just as negatively defined in xenophobic terms as “the liberty of bullying and being abusive with ... blackguard tongues”.³ For Arthur Murphy, the authors of *The North Briton* and *The Monitor* are merely “Saturday Politicians”, who conducted an unlawful highwayman style politics that was edging ever so close to the pillory.⁴ Regressing to the scatological frame of an earlier riposte to Churchill, *Ode to the Naiads of Fleet-Ditch*, Murphy describes the transmission of political news among the readers of these Saturday essay-sheets in grossly bodily terms: “*Lick up the Spittle, Sir, of the lowest buffoon in the streets, and cough it up again with the addition of your own phlegm; it will be received, commended and admired*”.⁵ Of course, Murphy’s own offering *The Auditor*, was deemed to stand outside of

¹ John Wilkes, No. 1. Saturday, June 5, 1762. *The North Briton: Revised and Corrected by the Author. Illustrated with Explanatory Notes, and a Copious Index of Names and Characters. In Two Volumes* Vol. 1 (London: 1766), p. 2.

² Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 4; p. 249.

³ Boswell, *Boswell’s*, F. A. Pottle ed., p. 72.

⁴ Arthur Murphy, *The Auditor*, Thursday, August 12, 1762, in *The Political Controversy*, Vol. I, J. C. Wilkes ed., p. 155.

⁵ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 158.

this network of bodily fluidic exchange, a position that enfolded an antagonism toward the concept of public opinion.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), Jürgen Habermas underscores how the Wilkite agitations of the 1760s exemplify a formative stage in the evolution of a public discourse that emerged from institutions and new large daily newspapers, which critically reflected on political issues.⁶ In Habermas's much debated historical narrative of the emergence of a 'public sphere',⁷ "A political consciousness developed in the public sphere of civil society which, in opposition to absolute sovereignty, articulated the concept of and demand for general and abstract laws and which ultimately came to assert itself (i.e., public opinion) as the only legitimate source of this law".⁸ Historians influenced by Habermas have noted the centrality of Wilkite politics to the advancing of a particular form of publicity. For example, Christopher Reid speculates that:

An undoubted virtuoso in the literature of politics, Wilkes used his polemical talents to force himself into the public consciousness, to register his importance as a public figure. It might even be argued that he was responsible for a new understanding of the term 'public', for forging a new concept of that realm of life".⁹

John Wilkes's and Charles Churchill's *The North Briton*, Arthur Murphy's *The Auditor*, Tobias Smollett's *The Briton* and William Beckford's *The Monitor*, provide rich and largely unexamined records for both the development and contestation of what Habermas identifies as the emergence of a critical public sphere in the eighteenth century.

The most significant Wilkite contribution to the expansion of the public sphere was the radical legal defence of the liberty of the press. This defence proceeded on two fronts, namely the legal querying of general warrants and

⁶ In Habermas's reading, the establishment of political opposition papers in the eighteenth century, such as Bolingbroke's *The Craftsman* or later, the publication of *The Letters of Junius* in the *Public Advertiser* (21 November 1768- 12 May 1772), can be read as a particular and new form of "confrontation between government and press" that can be as the public sphere. See Habermas, pp. 60-61; pp. 64-67.

⁷ Brian Cowan surmises a key strand in the critical treatment of Habermas's category of the 'public sphere' by noting that the term has "become so fluid that with little imagination it can be applied to almost any time and any place". See Brian Cowan. "What Was Masculine about the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England", *History Workshop Journal*, No. 51 (Spring, 2001), pp. 127-128.

⁸ Habermas, p. 54.

⁹ Christopher Reid, *Edmund Burke and the Practice of Political Writing* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), pp. 162-163.

followed by the illegal publishing of accounts of parliamentary debates. As John Brewer notes, in 1762 and 1763, when the supposed authors, publishers and printers of *The Monitor* and of *The North Briton* No. 45 were detained on the basis of a general warrant issued by the secretary of state, Wilkes and the printers responded by “countersuiting officialdom”.¹⁰ As we have seen in the earlier discussion of the *Essay on Woman* scandal, Wilkes and his supporters attacked general warrants as a gross abuse of government power. General warrants that did not name any individual could be used to detain persons who had allegedly committed a crime. Alarming, the warrant also provided for the seizure of private papers. As Brewer points out, the success of this initial Wilkite legal challenge was remarkable:

Once the court accepted that the secretaries of state and their messengers (who had actually executed the general warrants) were not justices of the peace and constables and were therefore not protected in law, the radicals were able to wreak their revenge. By June 1764, only a little more than a year after Wilkes’s arrest as the author of the *North Briton* no. 45, fourteen printers had won successful verdicts for damages against the messengers of the secretaries of state. The secretary himself, Lord Halifax, despite his repeated attempts to stave off proceedings, was successfully prosecuted by Arthur Beardmore and by Wilkes, who received damages of £1500 and £4000 respectively.¹¹

The success of this concerted legal attack on general warrants “affirmed the radical dictum that no man, no matter how elevated his office, was above the law”.¹² Wilkes’s assertion of his entitlement to privacy in *An Essay on Woman* case was the first episode in what became a more sustained radical commitment to “the notion of all subject’s equality before the law”.¹³

The final two stanzas of the second book of Churchill’s *The Duellist* (January 1764) dramatises the government’s abuse of power by narrating the arrest of printers of *The Monitor* in November 1762 in mythical-biblical terms:

The Printers saw—they saw and fled—
SCIENCE, declining, hung her head,
PROPERTY in despair appear’d,
And for herself destruction fear’d;
Whilst, under-foot, the rude slaves trod

¹⁰ John Brewer, “The Wilkites and the law, 1763-74: a study of radical notions of governance”, in *An Ungovernable People: The English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, John Brewer and John Styles eds. (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 143.

¹¹ Brewer, “The Wilkites”, p. 143.

¹² Brewer, “The Wilkites”, p. 143.

¹³ Brewer, “The Wilkites”, p. 146.

The works of men, and word of God,
 Whilst, close behind, on many a book,
 In which he never deigns to look,
 Which he did not, nay—could not read,
 A *bold, bad* man (by pow’r decreed
 For that bad end, who in the dark
 Scorn’d to do mischief) set his mark
 In the full day, the mark of Hell,
 And on the Gospel stamp’d an L.

LIBERTY fled, her friends withdrew,
 Her Friends, a faithful, chosen few;
 HONOUR in grief threw up, and SHAME,
 Cloathing herself with HONOUR’S name,
 Usurp’d his station; on the throne,
 Which LIBERTY once call’d her own,
 (Gods, that such mighty ills should spring,
 Under so great, so good a King,
 So Lov’d, so Loving, thro’ the arts
 Of Statesmen, curs’d with wicked hearts!)
 For ev’ry darker purpose fit,
 Behold in triumph STATE-CRAFT sit. (517-542).

Under Bute’s regime — both his term of office and his alleged back-stairs influence — Scottish State-craft has usurped Liberty’s throne, with the personified abstraction of “SHAME” dragging it up in “HONOUR’S name”. These final stanzas present the printers’ arrest as merely the beginning of further infringements on those material and intellectual rights that Liberty should ensure: Property and Science. The final book of *The Duellist* introduces a mock privy council that consists of Wilkes’s chief prosecutors: William Warburton, Sir Fletcher Norton, and Sandwich. The form of corruption that this triumvirate advances resonates with Churchill’s later criticism of the sodomite’s publicness in *The Times*. Both sodomy and corrupt forms of power are conflated in so much as the sodomitical necessitates pederastic asymmetries that are inherently corrupt and corrupting, while, in turn, all visitations of political corruption bear the trace of pederastic desire in the mark of male subjection. “CORRUPTION” “(who, in former times, / Thro’ fear or shame conceal’d her crimes” (III, 593-594), emerges like (and as) sodomy, as the very mark of political power.

In 1771, the Wilkite defence of the freedom of the press extended into the issue of the right of newspapers to publish the proceedings of parliament. Although the publishing of debates was a breach of parliamentary privilege, Wilkite radicals were committed to the accountability and transparency of the legislature, and therefore published the proceedings of parliament in Wilkite

newspapers such as the *Middlesex Journal* and the *London Evening Post*.¹⁴ Continuing to publish parliamentary reports, the Wilkites defied the House of Commons' summons, with one editor, Robert Morris, releasing a statement that rejected the summons on the basis that the Commons "was not a properly constituted court of law".¹⁵ The arrest of Wheble of the *Middlesex Journal* was a tightly orchestrated affair. The arrest (which came with a £50 reward provide by the Crown) was entirely choreographed. Wheble allowed his servant, Edward Carpenter, to arrest him. He was then brought before John Wilkes, who in his capacity as City alderman and magistrate judged the arrest illegal on the basis that "Carpenter was not a City peace officer, and that the cause of arrest was neither a felony nor a breach of the peace".¹⁶ As the Wilkites intended, a series of arrests on the newspapermen occurred, which put the legality of the House of Commons' summons under scrutiny.

Wheble had charged his servant with assault to cement the illegality of his arrest. In addition to Wheble's case, a more serious incident occurred when William Whittam, a House of Commons messenger, forcefully arrested another printer, John Miller. Miller charged the messenger with assault and the messenger was forced to give bail before the Lord Mayor and alderman Oliver and Wilkes agreed to his release.¹⁷ Opposing the jurisdictional autonomy of the City of London against the corporate privilege of the House of Commons provided the Wilkites with a way of legally affirming the liberty of the press, and by extension, the property and privacy of the newspapermen. Charging the messengers with assault productively reduced the Wilkite anti-ministerial argument to a simple defence of one's own person. The charge of assault functions to disavow the pederastic asymmetry of power bound up with the House's summons and its rejection of the principle of public transparency. Although the Commons imprisoned Mayor Crosby and Alderman Oliver in the tower, and rejected Whittam's charge, Carpenter was found guilty of assault.¹⁸

¹⁴ Brewer, "The Wilkites", p. 140.

¹⁵ Brewer, "The Wilkites", p. 140.

¹⁶ Brewer, "The Wilkites", p. 140.

¹⁷ Brewer, "The Wilkites", p. 140.

¹⁸ Brewer, "The Wilkites", p. 141.

Following the printers' cases of 1771 the Commons acquiesced to the publishing of its proceedings.¹⁹

The Wilkite defence of the liberty of press through their manipulation of the law resulted in an increase in support for radicals in London in the early 1770s.²⁰ The publishing of parliamentary debates was a significant Wilkite contribution to the public sphere. As Brewer notes, after 1771 "the House could only close its galleries to the public; it could not prevent any 'stranger' once present, from making its deliberations known to the world at large".²¹ However, less documented is the extent to which Wilkite publications, particularly issues of *The North Briton* that discuss the excise placed on cider, advanced the emergence of a private sphere. According to Habermas:

As a privatized individual, the bourgeois was two things in one: owner of goods and persons and one human being among others, i.e. *bourgeois* and *homme*. This ambivalence of the private sphere was also a feature of the public sphere, depending on whether privatized individuals in their capacity as human beings communicated through critical debate in the world of letters, about experiences of their subjectivity or whether private people in their capacity as owners of commodities communicated through rational-critical debate in the political realm, concerning the regulation of their private sphere. The circles of persons who made up the two forms of public were not even completely congruent. Women and dependants were factually and legally excluded from the political public sphere, whereas female readers as well as apprentices and servants often took a more active part in the literary public sphere than the owners of property and family heads themselves.²²

In many significant ways, the Wilkite movement contributed to, and drew its energies from, both the literary public and the political public, while simultaneously refusing accommodation in either. Part of the Wilkite argument involved the reconceiving of what counted as public. Habermas notes how: "The identification of the public of 'property owners' with that of 'common human beings' could be accomplished all the more easily, as the social status of the bourgeois private persons in any event usually combined the characteristic attributes of ownership and education".²³ In this way, Wilkite publications such as *The North Briton* both advanced and profited from the rhetorical conflation of 'property owner' with 'humanity', to the extent that such confusion had "positive

¹⁹ Brewer, "The Wilkites", p. 141.

²⁰ Brewer, "The Wilkites", p. 141.

²¹ Brewer, "The Wilkites", p. 141.

²² Habermas, pp. 55-56.

²³ Habermas, p. 56.

functions in the context of the political emancipation of civil society from mercantilist rule and from absolutist regimentation in general”.²⁴

Central to this construction of the property owner as public man was the revision of the notion of privacy. As Thomas A. King argues, the rise of the public sphere necessitated the rewriting of privacy as the normative precondition for the subject’s publicity; a reconceiving that disavowed its early modern position as “the negative condition of males-or female-bodied individual’s lack of public representativeness”.²⁵ In King’s reading, privacy signifies a man’s “autonomy from the seizure by the state, of the male-bodied individual’s property in goods, his body, and the intellectual, affective, spiritual, and instrumental capacities ostensibly innate in his body”.²⁶ King’s reading of the rewriting of the private as part of the public reminds us that Habermas’s public of property owners were invested in property claims that went beyond the material. As I have shown in my analysis of *An Essay on Woman*, Wilkes’s defence of heteroerotic privacy obviated this necessary credential of property; rendering heteroerotic labour as shared property, which facilitated access to a more capacious model of rhetorical political participation. Building on this argument, this chapter examines the Wilkite opposition to the cider taxes, along with the controversy involving Wilkes and Bute’s twelve-year-old son as episodes that shaped the Wilkite contribution to the re-conception of heteronormativity in the eighteenth-century.

Anti-ministerial writers attempted to discredit the Wilkite version of the public. For Arthur Murphy, publicness must remain vested in the established institutional centres of the parliament and the crown. As a result, he views his role as author of *The Auditor* as amounting to that of a guardian of the “understandings of the good people of England”.²⁷ Public opinion is generated from “the vilest provisions” by “a few scribblers, all bankrupts in wit, as in fortune and character [who are] busily employed to increase the fermentation, in

²⁴ Habermas, p. 56.

²⁵ Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: Volume 2, Queer Articulations* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. 223.

²⁶ King, *Queer Articulations*, p. 223.

²⁷ Arthur Murphy, *The Auditor*. Thursday, August, 19, 1762., in John Caesar Wilkes (ed.) *The Political Controversy; or. Weekly magazine of ministerial and anti-ministerial essays; consisting of the Monitor, Briton, North Briton, Auditor, and the Patriot, [and others] entire; (with select pieces from the news papers) ... With annotations. anecdotes and remarks.* Vol. 1 (London: Printed for S. Williams, 1762), p. 192.

the selfish hope that, if they can contrive to make the PERNICIOUS SPIRITS rise, the very LEES and DREGS may follow them”.²⁸ We can discern here a resistance to the expansion of the public-political sphere documented by Habermas. Revealingly, Murphy’s self-positioning did not go unnoticed, and we can see that the pseudonymous John Cæsar Wilkes, editor of a weekly digest (subsequently published in five volumes as a complete set) of the essay-sheets entitled *The Political Controversy* chastises the self-importance of Murphy’s assertion in the following annotation:

Sure no writer of any great age ever possessed a modesty so consummate as the AUDITOR; and pray, Sir, *who set you* “to watch over the understanding of the good people of England?” A mighty pretty sort of guardian *you’d* make upon my word, for the understanding of *other* people, when you *so* frequently give incontestable proofs of the fallability of your *own!* — How necessary was our undertaking to publish the debates of these political gentry at one view; and of submitting their different merits to the determination of the public. Without such a plan, people might be led into an opinion that there was one man of sense in the kingdom, but the AUDITOR. Self sufficiency, Mr. Auditor, is no more a sign of sound understanding, than recrimination is of good cause: Before you censure your opponents for their flippancy, learn to be less pertly presuming your self: And before you undertake to regulate the judgment of your neighbours, be careful lest you explore any poverty in your own.²⁹

At first glance, considering the pseudonym of John Cæsar Wilkes, readers might be inclined to cynicism and to register this upbraiding of Murphy as merely covert Wilkite strategy. However, as Robert D. Spector notes, the editor of *The Political Controversy*, although ultimately more sympathetic to the anti-ministerial *The North Briton*, does attempt to strike a balance in his critique of both pro and anti-ministerial essay-sheets, and in particular, rebukes *The North Briton* for its overt xenophobia.³⁰ Moreover, the political digest was also a space for the working out of concepts of Britishness. Responding to another instance of xenophobia, the editor Cæsar Wilkes forcefully rejects a historical analogy, deployed by Beckford in *The Monitor*, between Henry III and George III as instances of “a king of England governing and being governed by favourites”.³¹

²⁸ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 192; p. 193.

²⁹ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p.192.

³⁰ Robert D. Spector, *Political Controversy: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Propaganda* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 120.

³¹ William Beckford, *The Monitor, or British Freeholder*, Saturday, July 24th, 1762. in John Cæsar Wilkes (ed.) *The Political Controversy* Vol. 1, p. 60.

In annotating this issue of *The Monitor*, Cæsar Wilkes questions the comparison between Bute and the French ministers of Henry III, since Scottish interest cannot be seen as discrete from “the one common cause”.³² Against such Scotophobia, the editor asks: “What separate views can they [the Scots] entertain? Has not every thing which promotes the emolument of any *one*, a tendency to secure the welfare of the other *two*? [England and Ireland]”.³³ As Simon Neuter, the fictional author of the mock-paper *The Fumbler* expressed it: “The term Hanoverian cannot now be in use, as we have a king truly British, both by birth and inclination; all his subjects have equal claim to his protection”.³⁴ The editor’s annotations of *The Political Controversy* provide a paratextual space for the ideological profiling of the constituents of the British nation at mid-century. Not only geographical considerations, but also objections to mass political participation come under the editor’s scrutiny.

In chastising Murphy for his self-appointment as watcher of public opinion, the editor of *The Political Controversy* affirms the value and autonomy of such opinion, while also foregrounding the importance of printed political digests in equipping private individuals with the necessary information to engage in rational critical debate within a political-public sphere.³⁵ Moreover, it shows how Murphy’s self-posturing as the regulator of political debate is thoroughly at odds with a burgeoning mid-century climate of inclusive political discussion among the middling and lower urban classes in London. At a time when definitions of “the people” proved to be both porous and expansive within political rhetoric, Murphy is interested in demonstrating that literacy does not constitute any form of democratic entitlement. Both Murphy and Smollett perpetuate the pro-ministerial line of refuting the weight of “the people” on the King’s prerogative. In an odd way, Murphy’s self-appointment as the “watcher” of public opinion is directed at ensuring that such “opinion” is kept in check as a

³² Beckford, *The Monitor*, p. 60.

³³ Beckford, *The Monitor*, p. 60.

³⁴ Simon Neuter, *The Fumbler*. Wednesday, August 4th, 1762. *The Political Controversy* Vol. 1, J. C. Wilkes ed., p. 126.

³⁵ The forum for the public sphere of private people who come together to legitimate authority before public reason is, as John Brewer notes, an urban as opposed to courtly space, consisting of salons, clubs, coffee-house and tavern societies. The maintenance of this space was bound up with the “vital institution of the press”. See John Brewer. “This, that and the other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in *Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe eds. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), p. 3.

non-entity, or to adopt Smollett's terms as "no-opinions".³⁶ However, Habermas's critics claim this was equally true of Addison and Steele; with Murphy's play *The Upholsterer* being Addison's invention.³⁷ John Cæsar Wilkes's barbed riposte not only resonates with the Wilkite strategy of prioritising 'public opinion' in an effort to turn "the principle of publicity against the established authorities", but also demonstrates the absurdity of Murphy's broader attempt at winning over the public by denying the very validity of their engagements.³⁸ While Habermas foregrounds the nineteenth century as the period in which "'public opinion' came fully into view as a problematic entity", the fractious nature of political debate during the Seven Years' War and the subsequent Wilkite agitations of the 1760s demonstrate the extent to which public opinion had already come to weigh in on the realm of politics.³⁹

Read in terms of Habermas's historical narrative of the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century, Murphy and Smollett are both distinguished in their overt resistance to the expansion of print culture and extra-parliamentary political participation. Conversely, Wilkite arguments conflated property owners with humanity, while also rhetorically extending the franchise to include those 'middling and inferior' peoples whose political agency the pro-ministerial writers could not accommodate. Wilkes's satirical and often cruelly vituperative exchanges with Murphy provide a rich site for the consideration of how the discourse of Wilkite liberty functioned to provide a meaningful creed for the political agency of white, heterosexual, and propertied English middle-class men. More than an abstraction that could be rhetorically invoked for the advancement of freedom of the press and trade, the working out of a specifically Wilkite form of liberty also served to legitimatise the political agency, real or imagined, of some British men while forcefully excluding others in terms of their

³⁶ Tobias Smollett, *The Briton*, No. 13 Saturday, 21 August 1762, in *Poems, Plays, and The Briton*, Byron Gassman, O. M. Brack, JR., and Leslie A. Chilton eds. (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 304.

³⁷ Brian Cowan argues that Addison and Steele's "spectator project" functioned to "put the reform and the discipline of public sociability at the heart of its agenda". Murphy's character of "Quidnunc"—from the Latin, "what now?" Or "What news?"—comes from Addison and Steele, who coined it as a neologism to denigrate new forms of male sociability. See Brian Cowan, "Mr. Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2004), p. 346; p. 353.

³⁸ Habermas, p. 56.

³⁹ Habermas, p. 240.

ethnic and gendered identities, perceived sexual practices or the legibility of their affective intensities.

That such exclusions were fissured by contradictions will be familiar from our examination of Smollett's counter-arguments surrounding depopulation and imperialism. These contradictions underscore the inherent tensions of British colonialism during the period of its most formative material expansion. As Daniel O'Quinn has recently suggested, the complexity at the heart of imperial expansion at mid-century centred on the issue of "how to accommodate the two definitions of empire — that is, empire understood as sovereign monarchy over the realm and empire understood as 'extensive or enormous monarchy'".⁴⁰ This pressing ideological crisis arises from the coexistence of both definitions of empire, which hinged on the threat of an unsettling of the "dyadic structure" of "king-in-parliament", in so much as: "any subsumption of the outside into the purview of the inside had the potential to separate Parliament from the king and precipitate a regression to either absolute monarchy or republicanism".⁴¹ The designation of colony provided a means for settling this outside-inside representational demand.⁴² In the period of the American Revolution, the word "colony" comes to take on a new meaning in so much as such spaces become reorganised sites of militant or sovereign governance, as opposed to their former status as juridical domains.⁴³

In the 1770s, well over half a century since the union of the English and Scottish crowns, O'Quinn notes how the definition of colony had long since been assigned to "locales across the sea".⁴⁴ Yet, as we shall see in the following chapter's discussion of Edmund Burke's early political writings, the 'Kingdom of Ireland' frustrated the definitional closure of colonial space to those expanses beyond the British Archipelago. Patriotic discourse in Ireland in the eighteenth century focuses on the British parliament as the oppressor, rather than the Crown. Indeed, as the pages of *The North Briton* (as well as Churchill's *The Prophecy of Famine: A Scot's Pastoral*) attest, any investment of the Celtic fringe with colonial agency was resisted. Of course, such a metropolitan resistance was part

⁴⁰ Daniel O'Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium 1770-1790* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 30.

⁴¹ O'Quinn, p. 30.

⁴² O'Quinn, p. 31.

⁴³ O'Quinn, p. 31.

⁴⁴ O'Quinn, p. 31.

of its concerted effort against the Bute administration and its brokerage of the Peace of Paris. Liberty provided a symbol of a particular kind of political-public sphere, in which public opinion was made the rhetorical currency of authority. Wilkes and Churchill articulated a narrow form of liberty that was exclusively English and antagonistic to all other constituents of the British polity. Revealingly, Smollett's satirical appellation of "London's Empire" is particularly apt as a description of the sort of political and commercial constituency that Wilkes foregrounds as the sole driver of imperial expansion. For Murphy, the British constitution has always enjoyed a "strong mixture of the popular government", for "no laws can be enacted without the consent of the people, given by their representatives".⁴⁵ However, the xenophobic culture of anti-Scottishness has rendered some subjects suspect, while a "great commoner" [William Pitt, the elder] has presented the sovereign as a foreigner with no loyalty only to "a little German electorate" unable to be located on the map.⁴⁶ In light of such xenophobic "Impressions", Murphy proclaims:

no wonder if England swarms with politicians; and every mechanic thinks he has a right to dictate the measures that ought to be pursued, and the men who ought to be entrusted with the conduct of affairs. A great number of heads must see more than one; the voice of the people is the voice of God; wisdom crieth out in the streets; and many more wise sayings may be said to assert the rights of the people ... One real advantage will ever result from the favourite of the mob, which is this: whenever, by adopting the wisdom which crieth out in the streets, he has made himself their idol; he may then change the current of their opinions, and incline them to that very system of politics, which but lately they thought ruinous to their country. And this very revolution in sentiment has been happily brought about by the present Tribune of the people, who has now made all his admirers as violent for a German war, upon the most extravagant terms, as they were formerly against it at a reasonable and moderate expence.⁴⁷

In Murphy's view, Wilkite political participation does not involve an autonomous exercising of one's opinion within a public sphere, but should be cynically viewed as a rigidly managed affair in which the Wilkites, the architects of a "revolution in sentiment", manipulate the popular feeling toward the war. This is a mode of politics that, in Churchill's pre-Wilkite poetry, is invalidated through a metaphorical conflation of the feminine and the sexual: "From nymph

⁴⁵ Murphy, *The Auditor*, pp. 181-182.

⁴⁶ Murphy, *The Auditor*, pp. 181-182.

⁴⁷ Murphy, *The Auditor*, pp. 181-182.

to nymph the state infection flies, / Swells in her breast, and sparkles in her eyes.” (Charles Churchill, *Night*, 227-228). In an echo of a rather inconsistent Churchill, Murphy mockingly attributes “wife sayings” as the discursive basis for Wilkite liberty.⁴⁸

It was against such a feminising (and thus invalidation) of popular political participation that Wilkites had rhetorical recourse to the almost mythic category of the trueborn Englishman, along with its attendant envisioning of the inviolable certainty of one’s political rights and permissions. As Carol Watts incisively notes, the trueborn English subject of Wilkite discourse was:

a symbolic construction of considerable ideological force, and densely worked: undoubtedly xenophobic and nationalist at root, specifically masculine, redolent of patriot principle and the defence of a constitutional inheritance of ‘liberty’, self-possessed and associated with a virile agency. If the figure of the true-born subject had great affective weight, condensing as it did a mass of desires, fears and identifications, it was also flexible, shifting in meaning depending on the ‘enemy’ it faced and who was claiming it. Those ranged against it might be imperial competitors, external French or Spanish aggressors, by definition enslaved and enslaving, effeminate and luxurious; or internal enemies, as is always the case in Wilkite literature, the Scots, ‘like nature’s bastards’, their freedom one of strategy and barbarism.⁴⁹

Watts coherently details the malleable semantics of the trueborn Wilkite Englishman by emphasising how each particular “enemy” shaped the logic of Wilkite resistance, in so much as “The true-born subject was thus often defined, in a Butlerean sense, by its constitutive outside, a social zone of illegitimacy and counterfeiture”.⁵⁰ For Watts, it is the language of bastardy that comes to constitute the boundaries of the trueborn subject at mid-century. Arguably, the narratives of bastardy and of the outside/inside colonial anxiety — both of which were connected — exemplify a broader masculine and paradoxical desire for legitimacy through illegitimacy, for a self-exercising of modern political agency. Such a desire was firmly rooted in the Seven Years’ War period and endured in the legacy of its aftermath.

Similar to the twentieth-century *Bildungsroman*, narratives of bastardy worked toward an affirmation of identity through a fraught textual movement of

⁴⁸ Murphy, *The Auditor*, pp. 181-182.

⁴⁹ Watts, p. 113.

⁵⁰ Watts, p. 114.

deracination before an eventual terminus of normative reaffirmation.⁵¹ Watts argues that Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* "organises the plotting of bastardy according to radically different principles".⁵² The novel focuses "on the pervasiveness of *misrecognition*: that what appears to be habitual and stable about social life is no more than a fiction, but that, in Humean vein, fiction is all there is to make sense of".⁵³ Of particular interest here is Watts' suggestion that Sterne's fluid and subversive writing of bastardy signifies in both political and literary terms: "a new articulation of mid-century masculine identity".⁵⁴ Within the ideology of a hegemonic and hopelessly inefficient Filmerian paternalism⁵⁵ and its concomitant familial metaphoric conflation of state and private household, Watts argues that Sterne's narrative deployment of a vexatious bastardy proffered a Lockean rebuttal of such totalising governance.⁵⁶

A bastardy plot not only figures the transgression of Christian marriage, but could also be construed in xenophobic terms as an incursion of the state. In Watts' reading, the mid-century discourse of bastardy is linked to the Wilkite movement in its challenge to the legitimacy of paternalistic forms of governance. Wilkite liberty, enjoyed by the 'Trueborn English subject, was centred on a man's Lockean right to command his own, "Time, person, property", free from the interference of those higher in rank.⁵⁷ Importantly, such 'freedom' is ensured by the laws of the state; a protection that positions the trueborn English subject as both the chief beneficiary and foremost protector of the legal system. John Wilkes and the Wilkite movement that first developed out of the controversies surrounding *The North Briton* and *An Essay on Woman* articulated a new form of

⁵¹ Watts, p. 116.

⁵² Watts, p. 117.

⁵³ Watts, p. 117.

⁵⁴ Watts suggests that "Bastardy thus can be read as a metaphor for a more general social alienation, a mark of an inadvertent 'living of the self' in Sterne's words that is both a form of freedom and disorientation from the historical continuum, the passage of generations. On the one hand this produces a new articulation of mid-century masculine identity On the other, it inaugurates in the novel a thoroughgoing attempt to make sense of that disorientation, and the anxiety that accompanies it: a mode of historical reflection about the nature of authority itself. See Watts, p. 117.

⁵⁵ Robert Filmer's *Patriarchia* (1636-1642) was written before the English Civil War, and remained unpublished until 1680, when it was deployed in attempts to exclude the Catholic Duke of York (subsequently James II) from the throne. Filmer argued for the pure absolutist power of the monarch, and based his argument on the patriarchal narratives of the bible. See John Morrow, *History of Political Thought: A Thematic Introduction* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 1998), pp. 134-139.

⁵⁶ Watts, pp. 121-127.

⁵⁷ Watts, p. 115.

male subjectivity that “affectively anchored popular desires and energies in the institutionalising of forms of sovereignty that well suited the new modelling of the imperial state”.⁵⁸ As Watts notes:

Such a formation of identity was not simply a characteristic of the radical political culture of the time, which sought to harness the energies released by imperial accumulation in the new social subjects it brought into being, even as it envisioned a remodelled social order.⁵⁹

As this chapter will demonstrate, the negotiation of male political subjectivity in *The North Briton* suggests that within the mid-century ideology of imperial expansion, male subjectivity not only found a rhetorical scapegoat in the figure of the sodomite, but also positioned sodomy as the trace of an anachronistic form of publicness — one which recalls the pederastic arrangement of masculinity associated with Stuart absolutism. For Watts, in Wilkite literary narratives, “the language of sodomy provides one means of projecting unrecuperable forms of material excess onto others, while retaining its own libidinous forms of exchange”.⁶⁰ If the illegitimate figure of the bastard characterises the dynamism of the identity formation of the post-Seven Years’ War bourgeois subject, then the immutably unnatural sodomite signifies all that cannot be recuperated through the narrative trope of bastardy reconstitution.

The essay-sheet propaganda war carried out between *The North Briton* and *The Auditor* rehearsed and contested not only notions of the public, but also of the private. Through the controversies debated in *The North Briton*, Wilkites engaged in the construction of a form of privacy that was coeval with the development of the modern form of heteronormativity. As Thomas A. King argues, “privacy and heteronormativity were mutually produced as the capacities of classed bodies”, which provided “an oppositional corporeality to that of courtly subjection while restricting enfranchisement to the propertied”.⁶¹ King demonstrates how class came to anchor such a development as exclusively bourgeois. At the same time, in Wilkite literary narratives the heteroerotic provides the very means for those disenfranchised along class lines to secure their own liberty. In Wilkite literature, the identification of a public of property

⁵⁸ Watts, p. 115.

⁵⁹ Watts, p. 115.

⁶⁰ Watts, p. 141.

⁶¹ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 424; King, *The English Phallus*, p. 13.

owners with humanity and thus as “*one public*” finds rhetorical extension through the affective intensities of a common language of the heteroerotic.⁶²

While the language of sodomy certainly signalled the boundary coordinates for the libidinous energies of the trueborn subject, thus constituting the definitive outside for such Wilkite identifications, it should be noted that this process was itself unsettled by the self-articulation of sodomitical desire; of the sodomite asserting his own terms of interpretation for such acts. Although the legal punishment of sodomy, along with the consolidation of its position as the opposite of heteronormativity, became more concerted and pronounced in the eighteenth century, Faramerz Dabhoiwala argues that in private, “homosexual freedom was also justified with growing confidence as natural, harmless, and commonplace”.⁶³ Intriguingly, the personal defences of men who were arrested for sodomy echoed the language deployed in assertions of Wilkite liberty. The defence of William Brown, arrested for cruising for sex in 1726, is an oft quoted example: “*I did it because I thought I knew him, and I think there is no crime in making what use I please of my own body*” (original italics).⁶⁴ While more pithy than the fictional Strutwell’s aesthetic-based defence, both centre on the naturalness of sodomitical desire.

Watts’s argument that the language of sodomy provided a way of “projecting unrecuperable forms of material excess onto others” must confront the fact such “others” had asserted their own authority within a similar Wilkite political vocabulary. As this chapter demonstrates, such articulations of the private and manly entitlement to pleasure (homoerotic or otherwise) were rendered untenable by the Wilkite construction and playful performance of a form of masculinity that privileged the collective body of movable property-owning men, legible through the imprint of their exclusively heteroerotic desire; which now registered as a form of property. The very coherency of this newly eroticised political dispensation rested on the sodomitical being wholly inadmissible as a “residual” form of pederasty; a sign or trace which recalled the penetrative act of sodomitical sex, but also the asymmetrical relationships of

⁶² Habermas, p. 56.

⁶³ Dabhoiwala, p. 130.

⁶⁴ Dabhoiwala, p. 131.

power that are seemingly engendered through sodomitical practices.⁶⁵ “Economy” comes via Latin from the Greek word “oikos” meaning home or a feminised hearth. Thus, when considered in terms of its etymological roots, Bute’s unproductive measures are figured in terms of a disruption of a feminine order.

More than providing a visual for unrecuperable excess as Watts sees it, under such a political dispensation, sodomy came to signify a self-interested and unproductive form of pleasure. *The North Briton*, particularly in terms of its overt antagonism toward the administration’s fiscal policy of taxation, partakes in what Carol Watts identifies as the disruptive and anti-Filmerian potential of Sterne’s bastardy prose project, a project which, to return to an earlier point, is evidence of a new form of mid-century masculinity. According to Watts:

For John Wilkes the homology between house-hold ‘oeconomy’ and the maintenance of the state was to be refused. It was one thing to acknowledge the mastery of domestic paternal order, which suggested a masculine virility, and another to accept patriarchy at the level of state, where it could in his view only represent an absolutist centralisation of power in the crown and Bute’s ministry In the name of ‘oeconomy’ people would be made to pay for the cost of the war while an elite made the lucrative benefits from it.⁶⁶

Not only oeconomy, but other political key words, such as: “‘Candour’ ... universal satisfaction and harmony’, a ‘spirit of concord’, are revealed as “ideological, illegitimate infiltrated by political spin”.⁶⁷ In the first section of Churchill’s *An Epistle to William Hogarth*, an abstracted Candour, a symbol of freedom from malice or “kindliness”,⁶⁸ enters into a dialogue with the poet, functioning as a “vehicle for irony” that in attacking the poet’s values serves to “substantiate the satirist’s assumed position of personal integrity that is opposed to corruption of the world”.⁶⁹ Candour advocates distorted values that affirm the poet’s position. When considered in this light, candour becomes more than rhetoric infected by political spin, a Pelhamite piece of political cant,⁷⁰ but rather,

⁶⁵ King, *The English Phallus*, p. 64.

⁶⁶ Watts, p. 128.

⁶⁷ Watts, p. 114.

⁶⁸ Smith, p. 63.

⁶⁹ Smith, p. 64.

⁷⁰ Issue number forty-three of *The North Briton* (Saturday, March 19, 1763) compares Henry Pelham’s “candour” to the present ministry’s “cant word” oeconomy. See *The North Briton*, pp. 242-243.

symbolises a condition of freedom from political malice, which serves as the ideological basis of a particularly potent form of Wilkite idealism.

In many ways, the intrusive œconomy signals the opposite of candour's representation of an ideal form of freedom. In Watts's careful reading, the Wilkite attack on the semantics of œconomy is explicable as an exercise in discrediting the "paternalistic certainties" of the Bute administration's cultivation of a Filmerian political culture.⁷¹ Undoubtedly, the Wilkite antagonism toward Buteite œconomy conveys reservations regarding the proper functioning of political power: the dyadic 'king-in-parliament' framework. As we have seen, *The Briton* rehearses a view of the financing of the Seven Years' War, which predicts imminent financial disaster for the respectable members of the British nation. Wilkites are self-serving and corrupt, and the only truly patriotic financial practice involves the implementation of a regulatory œconomy, which *The North Briton* presents as a damaging and alarming infringement on English liberties. Both critiques, though seemingly advocating opposite foreign policies and fiscal strategies, authenticate their positions by engaging effeminophobic anxieties. Whereas Smollett advances an exhausted image of the body politic languishing in effeminate malaise, Wilkite opposition presents the administration's taxing of the war effort as a perversion of candour, and more alarmingly, as an assault on the freedom and privacy of the trueborn subject.

⁷¹ Watts, p. 114.

(3.2) “Under the influence”: Economy, Liberty and Cyder

Whilst Vice presumptuous lords it as in sport,
And Piety is only known at Court;
Whilst wretched LIBERTY expiring lies
Beneath the fatal burthen of EXCISE;
Whilst nobles act, without one touch of shame,
What men of humble rank would blush to name;

(Charles Churchill, *An Epistle to William Hogarth*, 183-188).

E're a great Nation, not less just than free,
Was made a beggar by Economy;

(Charles Churchill, *The Times*, 29-30)

The first section of *An Epistle to William Hogarth* (1763) involves a dialogue between Churchill and an abstracted Candour, with the poet entering into vigorous debate on the topic of his friend John Wilkes. Churchill rails against Francis Dashwood's "fatal burthen" of cider taxes, fastening onto the extension of excise duties as the proverbial nail in the coffin of English liberty. Such poetic hyperbole found its prose equivalent throughout the final numbers of *The North Briton*. The administration's management of the economy had been the focus of an energetic Wilkite critique before the suppression of the notorious forty-fifth issue (a forty-sixth paper was substantively completed though never published). Specifically, papers forty-two, forty-three and forty-five address the extension of the excise. By the mid-century, a thorough system of excise collection had been established:

The Excise was a highly centralized system of revenue collection which embodied two chains of command, both of which led to the central Excise Office, presided over by the Board of Commissioners in London. The province or 'country excise' were divided into a number of collections (36 at first, eventually 53) which came to correspond roughly with the English counties. Each of these was presided over by a collector who toured his collection eight times a year (nine before 1759), and receiving money from traders according to the assessments made by his officials (usually called gaugers), and remitting it to a receiver-general in the London main office. Most collectors employed a clerk, and nearly all were also accompanied by supernumeraries, young trainee excisemen, whose job was to carry their port-manteaux and help guard the moneys. The officers who gauged excisable commodities in the countryside — beer, malt, hops, soap, salt, candles and leather — numbered 1000 in 1690 and some

2800 in 1780. As they made their rounds — either a footwalk or a longer ‘ride’ — assessing and measuring goods at their point of production or distribution, they were scrutinized and monitored by their supervisors (58 in 1690, 272 in 1780) to prevent fraud or collusion with the traders.⁷²

As Brewer demonstrates, the system of excise was a highly organised operation, which fed monies directly into London from the country. Moreover, while the frequency of annual collections reduced from nine to eight after 1759, the number of excise officers nearly doubled throughout the century. The task of both gauging commodity possession and extracting the necessary taxes on such material necessitated the enlistment of a sizeable network of officials, operating within a rigidly hierarchical system. John Barrell, writing about invasions of spaces that were considered private in the 1790s, has detailed how (the younger) William Pitt’s introduction of a new tax on the wearing of hair powder (initially applauded as a tax on the rich, though eventually shown to have consequences for those less well off), represented how something so personal as the decision of whether to wear hair powder or not could become a charged site of public controversy and political debate.⁷³ More than an invasion of the dressing room, the cider taxes are presented in *The North Briton* as an encroachment of the state upon the individual and, more alarmingly, upon the individual as part of an extended social community.

Eighteenth-century taxation was a highly intrusive business. Taxation enforcement disrupted assumed privacies, bringing into sharp relief the fraught question of what belonged to the private citizen and what exactly counted as public. For the Wilkite position, the libertine Francis Dashwood’s taxing of cider, a fact which presented its own biting irony, amounted to yet another — though more immediate and serious — manifestation of Bute’s duplicitous œconomy:

There is not a poor, insignificant, *English Tory*, or *Scottish Jacobite*, clerk, who has been three days in the *customs*, or *excise*, but has already learnt his lesson, and talks incessantly of the new minister’s *oeconomy*. We hear nothing but *oeconomy*, and though we cannot, in any one business of national concern, discern the least trace of it. It is become the *shibboleth* of the whole *Scottish* faction; for *their countryman* is for ever retailing the *word* to us, even when he is practising the most unbounded prodigality.⁷⁴

⁷² Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p. 102.

⁷³ John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 11.

⁷⁴ John Wilkes, No. XLII. Saturday, March 19, 1763, *The North Briton*, p. 243.

While the association of Bute with Jacobitism was a well-established charge at this stage of the Wilkite attack, the following passage goes further in its argument for dissonance between the policy of frugality and the actual wastefulness of administrative expenditure. If we recall the erotic fusion of fiscal policy with heteroerotic libidinous desire in the line: “Spend when we must, but keep it while we can” (*An Essay on Woman*, 15), then the sodomitical resonance of such Buteite prodigality — as both misdirected pleasure and luxurious corruption — becomes apparent.

The term *œconomy* is rhetorically invoked to mask the “profusion and extravagance” of a discrete set of men, namely the “*friends of the minister*”.⁷⁵ While the half-pay army list is filled with Jacobite appointments “without a pretence of the least service to the public”, it is then claimed the present loan of “3, 500, 000 *l.*” has provided its subscribers with an immediate advance of seven per cent: “The whole loan amounted to 3, 500, 000*l.*, consequently in the period of a very few days, the minister gave among his creatures, and the tools of his power, 350, 000 *l.* which was levied on the public: the most enormous sum ever divided in so short a time among any set of men”.⁷⁶ While the “necessaries of government” during the last two wars — the War of Jenkins’s Ear and the Seven Year’s War — necessitated the sale of lottery tickets, now at a time of peace, the Bute administration are holding two lotteries, and at different stages of the year, “promoting the spirit of gaming, so peculiarly pernicious to a commercial country”.⁷⁷ At the expense of “gentlemen of the first monied property in the kingdom”, the constituents of the public-political sphere, the national economy under Bute’s stewardship has been restricted to the financing of “a set of hungry, avaritious, rapacious dependants”.⁷⁸ Revealingly, the paper concludes with the author invoking the public/private divide by stating that: “For the future, whenever I hear of *Scottish œconomy*, I shall conclude, that in private and household concerns it means *sordidness*, in public matters *profusion, corruption* and *extravagance*”.⁷⁹ The connection between sordid privacy and public luxury

⁷⁵ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 243; p. 246.

⁷⁶ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 245.

⁷⁷ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 247.

⁷⁸ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 248.

⁷⁹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 248.

forcefully works to image the misuse of capital in terms of the non-procreativity of sodomitical pleasure.

Wilkite literary narratives conflate fiscal and sexual drives, and it is through such an interpretive optic that that Bute exercising of œconomy registers as a perverse form of unproductive pleasure. *The North Briton*, No. 42 (Saturday, March 19, 1763) makes explicit reference to the King's speech on the economy, in which he "strenuously advised his parliament *to lay the foundation of that ŒCONOMY, which we owe to our selves, and to our posterity, and which can alone retrieve this nation from the heavy burden brought upon it by the necessities of this long and expensive war*".⁸⁰ The entire force of the irony in this pithy extract from the King's speech falls upon the noun "posterity". Posterity clearly invites a sodomophobic semantic slippage from postern to posterior. Buteite œconomy is sodomitical in its focus on posterity at the expense of a freer libertine enjoyment of the pleasures of the moment. The Scottish faction is defined by its self-perpetuation and avarice, an image that is diametrically opposed to the easy male sociability of John Wilkes. The irony centres on the fact that the deployment of a Buteite form of œconomy ensures that any form of posterity is impossible as sodomitical practice is non-procreative. Contrary to Estimate Brown's prognosis of excess as an enervating force, Wilkite antagonism toward Buteite fiscal policy posits that sexual and economic regulation is at the core of Britain's enervation. As John Brewer notes: "Eighteenth-century Englishmen were convinced that Britain's ability to win wars was in large part attributable to a thriving economy".⁸¹ The reining in of fiscal affairs gets projected by Wilkites as a curtailment of the natural desires, proper to the working of British colonialism.

In response to Smollett's critique of the Wilkite rage for conquest, *The North Briton* reveals how the frugality of the administration is entirely self-enriching at the very expense of Smollett's respectable nation. Yet the financing of a war from taxes, particularly in its aftermath, was crucial for the maintenance of empire and for the viability of its future expansion. In facing these issues, the Wilkites object to the extension of excise on two grounds. Firstly, it is argued in *North Briton* No. 43 (Saturday, March, 26, 1763) that the cider tax is a timely

⁸⁰ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 244.

⁸¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p. 178.

intervention in fiscal affairs by an administration seeking to exploit public anxiety over the terms of the peace negotiations with France.⁸² The same number also offers another, more elaborate objection, which involves a constellation of grievances that centre on the enforcement of the tax:

This *odious* and *partial* tax is likewise to be enforced in the most *odious* and *partial* manner possible, by an extension of the laws of *excise*. The very word is hateful to an *English* ear, and the new doctrines introduced by that most grievous system of laws have, in a good measure, repealed the most favourite law of our constitution, which has ever been considered as the birth-right of an *Englishman*, and the sacred *palladium* of liberty; I mean the trial by JURY. In every case of property, where the *excise* is interested, the decision is not by a JURY, where the party has a right to object to any one or more of *twelve* partial or prejudiced men, but in *one* or *two justices*, or *commissioners*, who may have private, selfish views, and from whom generally there is no appeal.⁸³

The “grievous system of laws” introduced by the extension of excise have ‘repealed’ one of the most crucial safeguards inherent in the constitution, namely trial by jury. Rather than a jury of twelve ‘partial’ or ‘prejudiced’ men, the power over male liberty and property rights is perversely invested in a few justices or commissioners entrusted by the collection officers to secure the excise duties. At issue here is the asymmetry of power between excise men and the community of “private” gentlemen, farmers and freeholders throughout the “*Cyder* countries”.⁸⁴ Without recourse to trial by jury, such a relationship of power risks becoming naturalised.

Significantly, the most junior officer, derogatorily referred to as a “gauger”, served as the embodiment of the excise system. Although considered to be a lowly profession, the disproportionate power that excise men wielded over a gentleman’s property was expressed in terms of cultural anxieties regarding class mimicry and transgression. In his *Letter to the worthy Electors*, Wilkes describes the Excise man as the “most despicable of our species” before characterising the Excise as “the most abhorred monster which ever sprung from arbitrary power”.⁸⁵ Monstrous and unnatural, the gauger provoked an anxiety that was expressed in metaphorical imagery patterned by the rhetoric of sodomitical rape. More than fears of insertion, the excise man also generated anxieties of

⁸² Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 250.

⁸³ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 249.

⁸⁴ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 266.

⁸⁵ Wilkes, *A Letter to the worthy Electors*, p. 188.

class transgression. Harley, the hero of Henry Mackenzie's sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771), misinterprets the class of a fellow dining companion, and is quickly informed that despite appearances, the man is a gauger. Such men, Harley's companion tells him, can "pretend an acquaintance with men of quality" because of the authority and access that such roles inappropriately afford.⁸⁶ Such "insolent" gaugers are described in *The North Briton* No. 43 as agents of ministerial corruption:

By the mode of the tax on *cyder*, not only professed dealers in that commodity, but many new orders of men become subject to the laws of *ex-cise*, and an insolent *exciseman*, under the influence, perhaps by the order of an insolent minister, may force his way into the house of any private gentleman, or farmer or freeholder, who has been guilty of voting contrary to a ministerial mandate, and of obliging a friend with part of the growth of his own orchard.⁸⁷

Within a heightened paranoid vein, Wilkes describes how gaugers, as agents of the corrupt administration can, by force, enter the house of "any private gentleman, or farmer or freeholder" who has exercised his own domestic affairs contrary to the administration's 'authority'.

Some months later, Churchill's *The Duellist* presented "Excisemen" as the abettors of an abstracted "Corruption" (III, 593-608). At the extra-textual level, *The Duellist* is a response to Samuel Martin's rather unexpected and dramatic challenging of the author of *The North Briton* to a duel on the 15th of November 1763 during the House of Commons voting of No. 45 as a seditious libel. Martin, MP for Camelford and joint secretary to the Treasury, was apparently seeking to recuperate his reputation after being ridiculed in issues thirty-seven and forty for assisting the administration's bribery of parliamentary members during the Peace of Paris debates. In parliament, Wilkes remained silent during the outburst, but later wrote to Martin to accept the challenge. The duel was carried out in Hyde Park, and was concluded after one round. Wilkes was wounded in the shoulder, but not fatally, and he urged Martin to abscond before the authorities arrived. Many, like Churchill, claimed that Martin had

⁸⁶ Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, Brian Vickers ed., 2nd edn. ([London: T. Cadell, 1771] Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 22.

⁸⁷ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 249.

premeditated the duel at the request of the administration. Martin was thereafter known by the dishonourable sobriquet of “Target Martin”.⁸⁸

At the close of the third and final book of *The Duellist*, Martin is signalled by the abstraction “Fraud” as the chief agent of an assassination plot that would lure Wilkes to his death through his commitment to honour:

M[ARTIN], the *Duellist*, came forth;
All knew, and all confest his worth,
All justified, with smiles array’d,
The happy choice their Dam had made. (III, 1013-1016)

Within the narrative arc of the three books that comprise *The Duellist*, Martin stands as the antithesis of Wilkes, who in Book I, unsurprisingly emerges as the personification of true English patriotism:

Should such a Wretch, with sword or knife,
Contrive to practice ‘gainst the life
Of One, who, honour’d thro’ the land,
For Freedom made a glorious stand,
Whose chief, perhaps his only crime,
Is (if plain Truth at such a time
May dare her sentiments to tell)
That He his Country loves too well; (235-242)

At a micro-thematic level, the poem connects Wilkes’s patriotism with an imagined English past where liberty and healthy heterosexual exertion were fruitfully conjoined. In place of a House of Commons “Batter’d, and hasting to decay” in which men are “To laziness and vermin bred” (II, 393-394), Churchill imagines a pastoral scene of rustic brides and manly swains engaged in “Martial pastimes” on the “scared green” (*Ibid*, 392-393). Within the frame of this pastoral lament, Nathaniel Carrington’s arrest of printers under the general warrant issued for the arrest of the author of *The North Briton*, No. 45, is rendered quasi-mythical while also being invested with historical status as a marker of statecraft’s usurpation of the Goddess Liberty, who has now become “As One in some strange Country born” (II, 500).

⁸⁸ Unusually, Martin had already decided on pistols as the duelling weapon (a provision traditionally reserved for the challenged individual) and reports indicated that he had spent the summer practicing his marksmanship. See Charles Churchill, *Charles Churchill Selected Poetry*, Adam Rounce, ed. (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2003), pp. 108-109.

The Duellist presents Martin's challenge as part of an insidious series of assassination attempts on Wilkes's life, and in so doing dramatises Wilkites as embattled defenders of an expiring English liberty.⁸⁹ In many ways, the poem extends the arguments put forward throughout the excise issues of *The North Briton* under discussion here. Arbitrary excise laws are interchangeable with general warrants as abusive practices that register the exercising of a sodomitical form of power. The figure of the excise man or 'gauger' animates this corruptive and corrupting form of sodomitical power in the very intrusive act of entering and assessing a Gentleman's property. The "odious mode" of tax collection, detailed in *The North Briton*, involves a breach of privacy that should not be considered in light of contemporary notions of a modern domesticity located in the family.⁹⁰ In refining Habermas's account of the rise of a public critical sphere in the eighteenth century, John Brewer has demonstrated the "remarkable interpenetration of public and private in this period".⁹¹ More recently, Thomas A. King has argued that the commonly noted "feminization" of eighteenth-century society might be read, not as men's assimilation of attributes that were somehow essentially feminine, but "as men's laying claim to body and social spaces (the heart and the hearth) they had once devalued as effeminate, assigning a new moral value to domesticity and conjugality on the grounds of liberty".⁹² Terms such as private and public are both equally unhelpful and necessary when examining the Wilkite resistance to the extension of the excise. In Wilkite satire, sodomy, signals corrupt power as the very mark of publicity, while recourse to "privacy" operates as a men's "laying claim" to spaces that were both communal and private.

In light of Brewer's outlining of the interpenetration of public and private in the period, the Wilkite response to the cider taxes rehearses the very

⁸⁹ Churchill arranges Martin alongside what he viewed as two other assassination attempts on Wilkes while in exile in France. The first involved a Scottish captain in the French service, John Forbes, who challenged Wilkes but was restrained by the French authorities (reports circulated in London that Wilkes had engaged in a duel with Forbes and had been killed). The second attacker was another Scot, Alexander Dunn who was found in Wilkes's lodgings. It was believed that Sandwich had hired Dunn to assassinate Wilkes, and shortly after being intercepted was admitted insane and confined to an asylum. See *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, Charles Churchill, Douglas Grant ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 531-532.

⁹⁰ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 249.

⁹¹ Brewer, "This, that and the other", p. 17.

⁹² Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: Volume I The English Phallus* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 221.

permeability of the public and private. The sort of ‘privacy’ that is threatened here is that which secures and perpetuates the relational and affective bonds of gentleman, farmers and freeholders, a privacy that certainly finds coherence in the material space of the individual’s property, but that extends well beyond this to include a capacious zoning of the communal as ‘private’. Privacy denotes ‘candour’ in the form of freedom from malicious intrusion, but also speaks to the more important freedom of authority over one’s own property. Dashwood’s cider taxes are designated as “unsocial attacks” on the privacy of such a homosocial community, insofar as the implementation of the excise has rendered the otherwise unremarkable material bonds of male friendship — the casual sharing out of the “growth of part of his own orchard” — problematic under the pressure of Scottish œconomy.⁹³ In his revision of the stringent private/public sphere binary framework, Lawrence E. Klein numerates the existence of several public spheres, including the magisterial, civic economic and social.⁹⁴ While such taxonomies can always be expanded and problematised (and indeed this is Klein’s point) he notes that the economic public sphere was a crucial discursive space for the intersection of private and public interests, in opposition to the magisterial public sphere:

It is true that economic activity was understood by some as private (a function of private property and private enterprise): this understanding of economics fits with the view of “public” and “private” discussed under the magisterial public sphere. However, economic activity was also understood to be oriented publicly. Indeed, economic debates in the eighteenth century investigated the inextricability of private and public aspects of economic activity. In essential respects, a market, whether a physical space or a diffuse process, was (then as it is now) a public phenomenon. Moreover, economic activities (both productive and consumptive) went on in settings that were most often recognizably public.⁹⁵

In this way, economic critiques that emanated from the civil public sphere worked to underscore its autonomy and, indeed, privacy from the magisterial realm. Moreover, Klein notes that “the gender of these eighteenth century publics

⁹³ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 237; p. 266.

⁹⁴ Klein details how the highly restricted magisterial sphere was bound up with the agency of state, while the ‘civic public’ sphere worked as a space of critique for the magisterial sphere. In addition to this, the economic and associative public spheres involved, respectively, the public workings of the market, which were built on private interests and the public sociability of eighteenth-century life. See Lawrence E. Klein, “Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, The Public and the Nation (Fall, 1995), pp. 103-104.

⁹⁵ Klein, p. 104.

cannot be determined by an a priori commitment to the publicity of men and the privacy of women”.⁹⁶ In Wilkite literature, the interrelated publics of economic, civil and associative spheres are gendered as masculine private spaces, which are subjected to the machinations of a public sodomitical faction.

As outlined in *The North Briton*, No. 30 (Saturday, December 25, 1762), an issue devoted to the exposition of the workings of ‘faction’, a constant and “infallible *criterion*” of such political arrangement involves the “wicked art of sowing discord, and infusing of groundless jealousies among people; whether directed against their old firm friends, or their great and spirited allies”.⁹⁷ In this way, faction conflates and complicates the personal and the political. At issue here is the very form that male relationships assume within factionalism. Moreover, *The North Briton*, No. 19 (Saturday, October, 9, 1762) presents the Bute faction, and the model of political masculinity that it advances, as anachronistic with the sodomitical marking the sign of such anachronism. The author of *The Briton* we are told, is an “advocate for despotic power and slavery, who seems rather to have been born, adapted, and formed for the instruction of the court of *Nero*, than for the modelling the court of so gracious a prince as *George III*”.⁹⁸ Bute has made the political culture of George III’s court, and by extension his reign, one of submission and publicity, in so much as, like Sporus, all men are “bred” for a penetrative form of subjection.

Bute’s pederastic politics finds its most anxious figuring in the Wilkite antagonism to the excise. The wider homosocial community of men, but also their more immediate familial networks are subject to the excise:

Even for what is used in his own family, a *poll-tax* of five shillings *per head* is to be paid, by all persons of the family under *nine* years of age. I am glad the limitation is confined, by this *merciful* and *forbearing* ministry, to that tender age, because I think *master* (I beg his pardon, *captain*) *Elliot*, at *ten* years of age, with such a commission in his pocket, ought to pay himself, or at least, be paid for by his *Papa*, (I beg pardon again, I mean his father) Mr. *Gilbert Elliot*; out of the *half pay*, which he receives, in these days of *oeconomy*, for the eminent services performed to the public by the *little master*.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Klein, p. 105.

⁹⁷ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 167.

⁹⁸ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 102.

⁹⁹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, pp. 249-250.

The extension of the excise is part of a “Scottish” pederastic œconomy that in its drive to secure wealth is prepared to regard some children as men, while essentially treating all men as children. *The North Briton*, No. 43 argues that the profit made by new loan subscribers proves that the tax was unnecessary.¹⁰⁰ While just three days before the signing of the Peace, the navy, victualling, and transport service were “charged on the sinking fund, at four *per cent*”, only then to be sold at “half *per cent*. discount”, the beneficiaries of the new loan enjoyed gains (of about “two *per cent*”) that were significantly denied to the more traditional creditors of the nation.¹⁰¹ From the point of such a paranoid Wilkite view, the Buteite œconomy represents the sterile and unproductive stagnation of capital within the self-aggrandising networks of political elitism. Under such an anti-patriotic and self-consuming dispensation, the colonising forces of British imperial expansion not only pilfer the riches of India, but also plunder the inner reaches of an English gentleman’s orchard.

The last published issue of *The North Briton*, No. 45 (Saturday, April 23, 1763), presents the “wicked extension of the arbitrary mode of excise” along with “the late ignominious *Peace*” as the most damaging legacies of the Bute administration.¹⁰² As *The North Briton*, No. 44 (Saturday, April 2, 1763) announced, Bute had resigned office on the 8th of April 1763. Yet, for Wilkes and the Wilkites, Bute’s resignation was not met with any triumphalism. A change of office would not change the terms of the Peace of Paris, nor would it reverse the arbitrary terms of the excise. Rather than the accusation of its blatant confusion of the persons of king and minister, the most significant and enduring legacy of *North Briton*, No. 45, for politics, would instead be its championing of liberty. Such sentiment is encapsulated in the paper’s pithy concluding quotation from Dryden: “Freedom is the English subject’s Perogative”.¹⁰³ While Bute may have resigned, any minister’s quitting of office could not erase the fact that “every preferment given by the crown will be found still to be obtained by *his* enormous influence, and to be bestowed only on the creatures of the *Scottish* faction”.¹⁰⁴ Regardless of the particular formulation of the government of the day,

¹⁰⁰ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 250.

¹⁰¹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 251.

¹⁰² Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 261.

¹⁰³ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 268.

¹⁰⁴ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, pp. 265-266.

‘faction’ will always exert its insidious control in a number of arenas. However, what is evident in the Wilkite reaction to the extension the cider excise is the extent to which ‘faction’ is figured in terms of both a rapacious and effeminate excess, as well as a self-serving and sterile bond; a figuration which finds its most visceral expression in the scene of the lowly gauger who can, upon a whim, decide to enter and search “at pleasure” the “private houses” of “a *peer, gentleman, freeholder, or farmer*”.¹⁰⁵ Ministerial abuses suspend the very bonds of male friendship, upsetting its hierarchies and protocols, and rendering the sodomitical the very sign of political power. It is exactly this unnatural form of male political friendship, evidenced in George III’s relationship with his “*Favourite*” Bute, that allows for a slipping of the royal prerogative from the crown to the ministry, turning a King’s speech into a “*minister’s speech*” and sinking the crown into “prostitution”.¹⁰⁶

A spurious issue of *The Auditor* (April 25, 1763), published in *The Political Controversy*, Vol. III (sometime after the final issue of *The Auditor* appeared on February 8th 1763) argued that Magna Charta justifications for opposing the excise were “ridiculous”.¹⁰⁷ The anonymous hack writer is a pro-Wilkite, who, writing two days after the publication of the last *North Briton*, ironically proclaims that: “king and parliament are indued with a power of invading our property, abridging our liberty, and even of taking our life, without the aid or advice of any jury at all, without being subject to the least control, or once called to an account for the nature of their proceedings”.¹⁰⁸ In the events that would unfold over the coming months, Wilkes’s concurrent trials for sedition and blasphemous libel — his appearance at the Court of Common pleas and his eventual outlawry and exile — the subject of Wilkite radical argument would remain bound to the content of this ironic passage. The assertion of an Englishman’s right to liberty contained within it the promise of a prosperous and wealthy bourgeois class. Liberty, whether economic, religious, political or indeed sexual, found a much-needed coherence in a particular model of masculinity, both practiced and rhetorical. This model gained definition and political

¹⁰⁵ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 266.

¹⁰⁶ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p.268; p. 263; p. 267.

¹⁰⁷ Anon, *The Auditor*, Monday, April 25, 1763, *The Political Controversy*, Vol. III, J. C. Wilkes, ed., p. 50.

¹⁰⁸ Anon, *The Auditor*, p. 52.

relevance in the pages of *The North Briton*, particularly in the paper's defence of property, popular political participation and above all, privacy. In the concluding section, the discussion will turn to a reading of Arthur Murphy's attempts to unravel the Wilkite political argument by critiquing the gendered basis of its rhetoric.

(3.3) Irish Blunders: Schoolboy Scandal and the Florida Peat Joke

Most properly therefore, O eyes, and with great justice may you be compared to those foolish lights which conduct men through dirt and darkness, till they fall into a deep pit or noisome bog

(Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub* [1704])

DEEP in this *bog*, the AUDITOR *lies still*,
His labours finish'd and worn out his quill ;
His *fires* extinguish'd, and his works unread,
In peace he sleeps with the forgotten dead.
With heath and sedge oh! may his tomb be drest,
And his own *turf* lie light upon his breast.¹⁰⁹

True to the bottom, see Concanen creep,
A cold, long-winded, native of the deep:

(Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*, II, 299-300).

Arthur Murphy's *The Auditor* engaged most with the cult of Wilkes's masculinity; its criticism consisted of character assassinations on Wilkes, which attempted to disrupt his cultivated image as a protective father and honourable citizen. It was in attempting to discredit Wilkes that Murphy made two serious errors of judgement. One involved the printing of a letter, the other the fabrication or acceptance of a story about Wilkes encountering Bute's son. His decision to publish the spurious Florida Peat letter sank *The Auditor* as it provided Wilkes with an opportunity to invalidate Murphy's role of auditor along effeminophobic and xenophobic lines. Analysing Wilkes's damning critique of Murphy's political writing reveals the ideological conflation of Irishness with effeminacy. The exchanges between *The Auditor* and *The North Briton* were perhaps the most personally invective of the entire essay-sheet war. Arthur Murphy's explicitly political writing began with *The Test* (1756-1757), a weekly anti-Pitt and pro-Henry Fox paper, issued every Saturday for a span of thirty-five weeks. That *The Test* was more successful as a political essay-sheet than *The Auditor* is due to Murphy's performance of the seemingly contradictory position of consistently attacking Pitt, the 'great Commoner', while simultaneously aligning himself with the interests of the city-merchants. One of the main

¹⁰⁹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 200.

rhetorical positions of *The Test* was to argue that it was due to Pitt's mishandling of events that the merchants of London had received little protection for their commerce and that "their ships have been cut away out of their very harbours".¹¹⁰ Pitt is figured by Murphy just as the Wilkites would image Bute in the later debates of *The North Briton*, as a man filled with private ambition, with an "uncontrollable lust not of serving, but subjecting the public"; as a man who undeservedly holds "a monopoly of power, to the exclusion of another, willing and able to serve the same public".¹¹¹

While Murphy claimed to have the interest of the city-merchants in mind in *The Test*, he stops short of attempting to win over Pitt's wider popularity base, viewing those middling to inferior class citizens as having no real stake in the political affairs of the state. The fact that this outright rejection of the mobocracy in the earlier debates of the late 1750s did not sink *The Test* is largely due to the way in which Murphy was able to negotiate a particularly clever passage between anti-Pittite sentiment and a commitment to Pitt's mercantile support base. Taking into account this earlier career, Murphy was the most experienced pro-ministerial in the Peace Party campaign. In retrospect, it therefore seems unlikely that *The Auditor*, as opposed to *The Briton*, would produce the most tactical blunders throughout its campaign. Yet, with *The Auditor* came a reversal of positions. No longer writing in opposition to the administration, Murphy found himself at the other end of the spectrum, defending not a popular minister, but one who was becoming increasingly berated as a self-interested and foreign oligarch. His tactic in *The Test* of rhetorically constructing himself as a guardian of an ailing George II was also unavailable, and in contrast, Murphy had to find creative ways in *The Auditor* of refuting George III's depiction as a schoolboy king being manipulated by his former tutor Bute. With the absence of recourse to the very rhetorical tools that made *The Test* successful, he unsurprisingly made central his strategy of denouncing popular political participation, especially as it became centralised within Wilkite politics. However, the difficulty with such an anti-mobocratic view in the early 1760s was that it amounted to a wholly out-of-touch apolitical

¹¹⁰ Arthur Murphy, *The Test* (London: G. R. W. Owen and S. Hooper, 1756-1757), p. 93.

¹¹¹ Murphy, *The Test*, pp. 58-59.

posture, one that left Murphy's political propaganda unable to engage with the core of what carried the Wilkite political agitation so far.

Regardless of his previous experience in writing *The Test* (and it is likely that Bute recruited him as a pro-ministerial writer on that very basis), *The Auditor* was the most unconvincing and unsuccessful essay-sheet, largely due to two errors of judgement on Murphy's part. Firstly, he published an unverified story regarding an encounter between John Wilkes and Bute's youngest son. The accusation provoked Wilkes and Churchill to seek revenge by writing an anonymous and ludicrous letter to *The Auditor* congratulating the Peace Party government for having facilitated a lucrative deal, whereby Florida farmers could sell peat to Jamaica to keep impoverished Caribbean natives warm. Wilkes intended the letter to satirise the bombastic claims made by the Bute administration for the commercial and territorial gains of the Treaty. Murphy's surprising and seemingly inexplicable credulity in publishing the letter effectively served to sink *The Auditor*, which lost all credibility after the episode was publicly ridiculed in *The North Briton*, No. 35. As Robert Donald Spector notes, long after the cessation of his political papers, Murphy's dramatic works were subjected to rough critical treatment, which continually recalled his earlier pro-Bute writings.¹¹²

According to Spector, Murphy's omission of his polemical journals from his later (and carefully prepared) collected *Works* of 1786 was an attempt at securing "a fairer hearing from future audiences than he had received from contemporaries".¹¹³ Yet, Murphy's *Works* contains a play, *The Upholsterer* (originally performed in 1758), which retained a reference to the Florida Peat affair from the 1763 edition of the play:

QUIDNUNC: I have made a discovery, - Florida will be able to supply Jamaica with Peet [sic] for their winter firings. I had it from a deep politician.

RAZOR: I am glad the Poor People of Jamaica will have Florida Peet to burn.¹¹⁴

¹¹² R. D. Spector, *Arthur Murphy*, p. 32.

¹¹³ Spector, *Arthur Murphy*, pp. 32-33.

¹¹⁴ *The Upholsterer, Or, What NEWS? A Farce in Two Acts, As it is now performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden* (London: Printed for P. Valliant, 1763).

The retention of the reference is odd considering Murphy's later attempts to erase any trace of his political propaganda from his corpus. For example, the introduction to his 'complete' *Works* explicitly states: "Of the political papers which fell from my pen many years ago, I hope no trace is left".¹¹⁵ The inclusion of the Florida Peat joke should be read as an act of self-mockery on Murphy's part, which reveals his acceptance of himself as a failed political propagandist. In a paradoxical way, the very failure of Murphy's essay-sheet *The Auditor* legitimises his own deep-seated distrust of popular political debate. In the *Upholster*, the politicised discussants of the Florida Peat trade scheme, Quidnunc (a City tradesman) and Razor (a City barber) exactly mirror the politicised mechanics and cobblers denigrated throughout the pages of *The Auditor* as the constituents of London's "MOBOCRACY".¹¹⁶ It is only fitting that Quidnunc and Razor should talk about Florida peat, as it is exactly this sort of speculative and unviable enterprise that such uninformed debates engender and sustain. If Murphy considered himself a failure as a political propagandist, it was very much a failure that was caused by his engaging with these very debates. In short, Murphy was duped into trusting public opinion in the form of Viator's letter.

With both pro-ministerial papers being conducted by an Irishman and a Scotsman, it is unsurprising that the trajectory of anti-ministerial satire would fall so heavily along lines of nationality. While Smollett meets Wilkes's Scotophobia head on in *The Briton*, Arthur Murphy demonstrates a curious reticence about his own Irishness. In many respects, it is this reticence that secured a deadening blow for his political opponents, who having fastened onto it, exposed and satirised Murphy's insecurity in a mock-pastoral construction of the Irish bog landscape. Smollett's confidence in defending himself as a Scot and a British subject can be placed within a broader narrative of mid-century entryist Scots in London in the 1760s, buoyed up by the political success of Bute. Defending Bute's character provides Smollett with an opportunity to respond to the "torrent of general abuse" that is directed against his own "country".¹¹⁷ Smollett challenges *The North Briton* to "particularize one blemish in [Bute's] private life"

¹¹⁵ Jesse Foote, *The Life of Arthur Murphy* (London: Printed for J. Fauldner, 1811), p. 190.

¹¹⁶ Arthur Murphy, *The Auditor* (Thursday, July, 22, 1762), in *The Political Controversy*, Vol. I, J. C. Wilkes ed., p. 48.

¹¹⁷ Tobias Smollett, *The Briton*. No. 10. Saturday, 31 July 1762, in Tobias Smollett, *Poems, Plays, and The Briton*, Bryon Gassman ed. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 285.

before presenting Wilkites in general terms as “rendering themselves so impure, by [their] exercise of scattering their filth, that no man can enter the lists with them, but at the hazard of contamination”.¹¹⁸ In countering such assertions, Wilkite propaganda rezones this contaminated landscape of filth as the Celtic fringe, an imaginative exercise that involves various strategic and phobic constructions of peat and heath lands.

As argued previously, Smollett’s confidence in asserting Bute’s ministerial credentials also served as a means of foregrounding Scottish centrality and suitability within the polity of Great Britain — of making Scottish identity modern and metropolitan as opposed to anarchistic and rural. The very name *The Briton* works to locate the Scottish as a part of, rather than apart from, mid-century political structures, in the same way that Wilkes’s use of the appellation *The North Briton* satirises. Contrastingly, Murphy’s choice of *The Auditor* as an eidolon speaks to a sense of authority gained from assuming the impartial status of an outsider, one who stands to gain nothing from such assessments. Murphy can faithfully “audit” the political situation because in many respects, as an Irishman, he stands outside it — his nationality confers a marginality that leaves him “Othered”, yet paradoxically, better equipped to assess the very terms of political debate. Notably, where Smollett challenges stereotypes of Scots, we find Murphy adopting such caricature, only to displace the sentiment elsewhere.

Of course, as Murphy was well aware, thorough disengagement and disinterest from the very terms of popular political debate had become untenable at mid-century. Rather unconvincingly, however, he constructed his authorial persona in *The Auditor* as a completely autonomous figure: “UNSOLICITED, UNPLACED, UNBRIBED, AND UNPENSIONED”.¹¹⁹ In writing the essay sheet, Murphy clearly struggled to maintain even the illusion of being an impartial auditor. Moreover, he seems unaware that his attempt to cultivate an apolitical position is itself, in the context of the 1760s, a profoundly political posture. In short, staying out of politics and advocating that others do so on grounds of their class, is perhaps one of the most contentious positions to assume

¹¹⁸ Smollett, *The Briton*, p. 285.

¹¹⁹ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 5; while Murphy may not have received a pension for his *Auditor*, it is clear that he used whatever influence that position afforded him to secure a pension for Samuel Johnson. See Spector, *Arthur Murphy*, p. 33.

within the fractious political domain at the close of the Seven Years' War. Despite his best efforts, Murphy was politically undone by the very exchanges of public opinion that he discredited in *The Auditor*. Nevertheless, Murphy's inclusion of a letter that professed the viability of a Peat trade in the colonies should be read in light of the way in which colonial ideology was redeployed by authors such as Smollett to argue for the recognition of the material value, and indeed, requirements of the Celtic "Other" within the British Empire. Weeks before the Florida Peat joke, *The Political Controversy*, Number IV, Monday, November 8th, 1762 contained an extract from a letter by Philangus that had been published in the *London Chronicle*, which appeared at the close of *The Auditor* (Thursday, November 4, 1762). In this letter, echoing Molyneux and Swift, Philangus argues that the suppression of indigenous Irish trade has been entirely detrimental to English colonial ambition. Moreover, in reading this issue of *The Political Controversy* it is decidedly unclear where exactly Murphy's *The Auditor* ends and Philangus's letter begins. In this way, the genre of the political digest, inviting confusions over the boundary of authorial intention, offers a space for the subtle collation of interests and agendas that would, if treated more directly, upset the more dominant political narratives being advanced.

Philangus ostensibly offers a "sketch of the war" as a response to an economic pamphlet, *The Commercial principles of the late negotiation*. In short, Philangus relates how France has enjoyed a lucrative and uninhibited trade in "cloths and stuffs" with Turkey, before arguing that Ireland should be allowed to enter into competitive trade with France as a way of upsetting French gains:

The checks which our ancestors improvedly put on that nation have heretofore banished many of their woollen-manufacturers to France, where they have instructed their hospitable benefactors to our undoing: the present distresses and exhausted condition of France gives us an opportunity of letting loose the Irish upon them, and of encouraging an attempt by the Irish against the French Turkey wollen [sic] trade: let us now seize it before it be too late: and if what I have heard and believe of that nation to be true, they deserve our countenance.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Philangus, "From the *London Chronicle*-a sketch of the war", *The Political Controversy*, Vol. II, J. C. Wilkes, ed. p. 130.

Philangus adopts a Smollettian strategy of demonstrating the anti-colonial illogic of economic restrictions on Ireland.¹²¹ Just as *The Briton* rehearsed anxieties regarding depopulation as way of advancing its argument for Scottish inclusion in the British nation, here Philangus argues for indigenous Irish trade through recourse to English colonial fears concerning the continuing dominance of superior French trade networks. Philangus even redeploys Smollett's fiscal-corporeal metaphor to suggest how all capital gains accrued from Irish trade will circulate back to the metropole, to be shared "in our public mart for honours and preferments, gaiety and pleasures, luxury and idleness".¹²² As the cases of Smollett and Philangus show, debates about the close of the Seven Years' War often incorporated critiques of Britain's more intimate and historical colonial arrangements. While the respective political status of Scotland and Ireland in relation to England was quite distinct, such arguments demonstrate the tendency for discussants of the war to make the case for English colonial success further afield, which demanded better terms of inclusion for both Scottish and Irish subjects within the British polity.

In this light, Murphy's knee-jerk commitment to Florida peat may be explicable, if we conjecture that he might have considered the similar opportunities that such a scheme might generate for Ireland. This is not to retrieve Murphy's blunder as an act of covert economic patriotism, an act of career revisionism that even he could not have hoped for in the introduction to his *Works*. Rather, assessing the Florida peat joke in terms of the broader span of *The Political Controversy* digest allows us to view an otherwise inexplicable lapse of judgement in light of the broader strategies. While Murphy was reticent

¹²¹ Philangus goes on to ask: "Would ye not be surprised to hear that the island pays annually near 300,000L. of the money annually raised on us for taxes? And yet I have heard such a thing advanced, and thus accounted for; many of the nobility and gentry of this kingdom have large estates there; many pensions on their civil and military lists are payable to persons residing here; many of the nobility and gentry make this kingdom their constant residence; many more reside here occasionally and for great lengths of time, and when they return to Ireland, are as constantly succeeded by others, as must be the case, when any of them are enabled to indulge themselves in the pursuits of pleasure, interest, or education; the money computed previous to the year 1730, to be annually drawn out of that kingdom upon these accounts did not the much exceed the annual sum of 600, 000 L. as was accurately demonstrated by one Mr. Prior who published the names of the then respective absenters, as he called them, together with their respective incomes: and I am told the truth and justness of that calculation was never yet controverted; neither can it be denied but that many new estates have been, since that, purchased there, whose proprietors are constant residents in England their native country; it is likewise certain that the estates in Mr. Prior's calculations have greatly increased in the annual value and return here". See Philangus, p. 130.

¹²² Philangus, p. 131.

about his own Irishness in the pages of *The Auditor*, his detractors certainly were not. The interactions between Murphy and Wilkes also provided the occasion for a counter effeminising of Murphy as an Irish Bog man. In *The North Briton*, No. 35 (Saturday, January 29, 1763), Viator's mock pastoral imaging of Caribbean planters cosyng up to their warm Florida peat fires extends into an equally satiric view of Murphy's native bog landscape, the Irish Bog of Allen. As his mock tomb inscription suggests, having been discredited over the Florida peat joke, the Bog of Allen now serves as a political and literary burial site. His "*fires extinguished*" and "works unread", Murphy "*lies still*", deep in his peat tomb. While the mock-tomb-inscription is clearly intended to be (and is) funny, it nevertheless registers as yet another Wilkite mock-pastoral depiction of Britain's Celtic fringe as an unproductive and sterile space. Mock-pastoral depictions of both Scottish and Irish landscapes in Wilkite literature continually rehearse this connection of barrenness with the Celtic landscape.

The hibernophobic satire on Murphy's native Bog of Allen can be grouped with *The Ghost*, I-IV (1762-63) and *The Prophecy of Famine* (1763); both of these conflate High and Lowland Scottish landscapes into one extensive barren plain. Such material sites provided a rich imaginary for the articulation and contestation of ideas of Irish and Scottish nationhood in the eighteenth century. In the context of *The North Briton*'s imaging of Murphy as Bog man, the bog is rendered as a symbolic signifier, not only for Murphy's own artistic sterility (as a successor to the Irish Concanen in *The Dunciad*) or of agricultural sterility, but also, serves as a condensed image for a broader nexus of political, cultural and even sexual sterility that is attributed to the Celts. The *terra infirma* of the bog is relevant for attributions of Murphy's sodomitical sterility as peatlands regularly entombed the bodies of what Karin Sanders describes in *Bodies In the Bog* (2009), as transgressors punished, or offered up as spiritual sacrifices, for sodomitical practices.¹²³ Such a connection between the Irish bog and the sodomitical finds its earliest recording in the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus's (AD 56-c.120) description of the Celtic "*corpores infames*" in his

¹²³ The bog has historically been designated as a burial site (both actual and imaginary) for sodomites and other "transgressors". See Karin Sanders, *Bodies In The Bog and the Archaeological Imagination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 63.

Germania (AD 69-96). In this light, the Wilkite imaging of Murphy's bog burial among the "forgotten dead" reveals a crucial sodomitical resonance.

In terms of this dimension of sexual imaging, there are key differences in how Scots and Irish are depicted in Wilkite writing. Even though the Scottish landscape is depicted as sterile and unproductive, the mid-century Scot 'on the make' still exhibits vigour in quitting such desolation for London. In contrast, the conflation of Murphy's body with the very landscape of the bog suggests a thorough lack of vitality. The sterility of the Celtic fringe is presented as being first and foremost, a non-pleasurable sterility that renders the Celt alien, superfluous, and in the final analysis, exterior to an English and Wilkesite vision of imperial growth that is underwritten by a model of masculinity personified by Wilkes. As argued earlier, Churchill's apostrophe to Wilkes at the beginning of *The Prophecy of Famine* serves to map out such a distinction in terms of masculinity and spatiality. The apostrophe comes before the speaker's flight to the northern climes of Scotland, and thus positions such a model of healthy masculinity and patriotism as belonging properly to the Southern Briton.

In contrast to the poem's stereotyping of the Scot as a "disinterested friend", Wilkes is presented as exercising the sort of "national sensibility of attachment" — a form of belonging of which Scottish men are often said to be incapable.¹²⁴ What is interesting, however, is how such a Wilkite patriotic model is underwritten by a version of masculinity that separates a heterosocial and companionate male-female relationship from a homosocial and political male form of bonding, while also curiously emphasising the centrality of the heterosocial to this male political culture. Wilkes's "soft and better moments", which spring from the "mutual ardours of the melting fair" are shown to remunerate patriotic exertion even when such patriotism, signalled as 'friendship', is exercised at a distinct remove from the heterosocial. The model of Wilkite masculinity that is established as the norm from which Celtic models deviate is importantly one of divided sociability and the hetero-economical regulation of passive and active excesses.

An early issue of *The Auditor* is taken up with a reply to a letter from a fellow Irishman, "Patrick Fitzramble", noting that "the writer of it seems to have

¹²⁴ Penny Fielding, *Scotland And The Fictions of Geography: North Briton 1760-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 17.

fallen into a whimsical and diverting embarrassment”, a sort of “Irish embarrassment” that alarmingly “an whole nation” — the British nation — risks being led into, and it is Murphy’s self-proclaimed duty to examine Paddy Fitzramble’s letter and to “treat it in the way of clear and sober animadversion”.¹²⁵ Paddy’s letter is a ‘ramble’ in both senses of the verb. He rambles on about inheriting an American relative’s fortune and then proceeds to claim that after reading William Pitt’s declaration that “America was conquered in *Garminy*” in one of Murphy’s “*Dublin journals*” he was encouraged to set off to find his ‘American fortune’ in Germany:

I enquired my way into *Garminy*, and got into the very heart of it, and I *axed* my way to America, and I could not hear a word about it *at all, at all*. Ow! Says I, I *mane* the place that was conquered here t’other day. But the *Garmins* knew nothing about it; and then I found my way to the army, and fell in with some *tight lads*; and where is this same *America*, says I, that you have conquered among ye? Upon which the boys fell a laughing at me, and told me the devil a thing at all they have conquered, and that *America* lay all the way over the *Western Indian seas*, and was subdued by GENERAL WOLFE upon the spot itself.¹²⁶

Here Murphy recalls the “Grand Pensionary” Pitt’s “turgid assertion that America was conquered in Germany”, which he offered as a defence of his policy reversal¹²⁷ upon ordering British troops to Germany in 1756.¹²⁸ The pointless trek to Germany that is prompted by Paddy taking Pitt’s assertion literally, is satirically figured as a decidedly “*Irish blunder*” — one that becomes less humorous when “serious reflection” leads Murphy to observe: “that the whole British army have been led into the same *Irish blunder*, if they have ever imagined that they were in the plains of *Germany* fighting for the reduction of *Canada*”.¹²⁹ Such political naivety, to be expected from a primitive Paddy, could alarmingly befall an English citizen (or has befallen a ‘Pittite’) who neglects to bring “sober animadversion” to bear on the oratory of the ‘Man Mountain’, Pitt,

¹²⁵ John Cæsar Wilkes, ed., *The Political controversy: or, Magazine. Of Ministerial and anti-ministerial essays; consisting of the Monitor, Briton, North Briton, Auditor, and Patriot. Entire; (with select pieces from the news-papers) collected and brought into one point of view. With annotations, anecdotes and remarks.* (London: printed by S. Williams, bookseller, on Ludgate-Hill, MDCCLXII, 1762), p. 4.

¹²⁶ Wilkes, *The Political Controversy*, p. 4.

¹²⁷ Murphy recalls how Pitt had asserted that “Not a single guinea, nor a drop of British blood shall with my consent, be spent in the gulph of Germany”---and again, “A continental war is a mill-stone about the neck of a British ministry, and will one time or another plunge them to the bottom”. See Wilkes, *The Political Controversy*, p. 7.

¹²⁸ Wilkes, *The Political Controversy*, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Wilkes, *The Political Controversy*, p. 5.

for as Murphy warns: “Great orators are ever apt to hazard strong and daring metaphors, and so lose all proportion between words and things; but people of sober sense should be cautious how they suffer themselves to be amused by figures in speech, otherwise FALSEHOOD will strut abroad in the garb of a TROPE, and it will then be easy to gull a people, as to make a fool of Mr. *Fitz-Ramble*”.¹³⁰

Murphy’s own hibernophobic portrayal of Paddy Fitz-ramble as a credulous fool serves to reaffirm a stereotype of the Irish Celt as ignorant and easily gulled, while also working to discredit Pitt’s English popular support base by way of an implied association. In his rambling, both vocal and physical, Paddy demonstrates a lack of understanding that debars him from any real political participation in the work of empire building. Quite literally, Paddy’s ramble across Europe in search of his American fortune demonstrates his own “Othered” status in a narrative of British expansion, while also curiously serving to foreground Murphy’s sober grasp of such a project, his ability to assess how both the British army and nation might just as easily be led into an “*Irish blunder*”. Ironically, Murphy’s own devastating “*Irish blunder*” in inserting Viator’s spoof letter into the tenth issue of *The Auditor* (Saturday, December 18, 1762) would discredit his own political rambblings. The Viator joke hinges on the presentation of Florida as an advantageous gain. Even its seemingly “unprofitable tracts”, its “large bogs, or marshy grounds” are deemed to be ripe for commercial gain.¹³¹ Viator’s pastoral vision of the growth of profit from agriculturally sterile land borrows somewhat from Pope’s *Windsor Forest* (1713), which praises the outcome of the Peace of Utrecht, a treaty that paved the way for English supremacy in imperial trade during the reign of the last Stuart, Queen Anne.¹³² *Windsor Forest* projects a fantasy of agricultural triumph, as even the most infertile land is rendered productive: “And ’midst the desert fruitful fields arise” (26). In order to satirise Murphy’s ‘Fitzramble’-like ignorance of colonial landscapes and economies of exchange, the Viator letter gulls Murphy with such a Popean fantasy of sterile growth and productivity:

¹³⁰ Wilkes, *The Political Controversy*, p. 5.

¹³¹ Wilkes, *The Political Controversy*, p. 358.

¹³² Helen Deutsch, *Resemblance & Disgrace: Alexander Pope and the Deformation of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 54.

The only at present unprofitable tracts of Florida, are certain large bogs, or marshy grounds, which produce an excellent kind of fuel; being pretty much the same thing which is called in England peat or turf. Of this there is by far a greater quantity than would serve the inhabitants for firing.... I can safely affirm that not one of the lower kind of planters have a comfortable fire in their parlours or bed-chambers; nay even amongst the better sort I have seldom seen a good fire, though at the severest season of the year.¹³³

Murphy's inexplicable publishing of such a letter, one that professes to find a profitable market in providing warm fires for the inhabitants of an already stiflingly warm Caribbean climate, exposes his unsuitability for the role of an 'auditor' of any serious political debate regarding trade networks and the acquisition or, indeed, loss of imperial territory.

The lampooning of the Viator letter in *The North Briton* trades on Murphy's misreading of the commercial viability of the 'Florida Peat' scheme. Wilkes mockingly suggests that it will not be long before other sterile landscapes are celebrated as prized acquisitions in *The Auditor*: "we are only to wait a little while till a kind correspondent sends him *another letter* to blazon in as lively, and *faithful* colours the *solid value* of the blake and barren deserts of *Canada*".¹³⁴ Murphy's "*Florida Turf*," mockingly described by Wilkes as "that fine, rich vein of trade" that provides "*comfortable fires* to our cold, frozen *West-Indian* islands" rehearses the very illogic of sterility that, from a paranoid and xenophobic Wilkite perspective, is the driving force behind the Bute ministry's peace negotiations.¹³⁵ The parting shot of *The North Briton*, No. 35, involves a curious imagining of Murphy's sterile birth as a bog man. Moving on from the mock-pastoral image of Caribbean farmers cosyng up to their peat fires, Wilkes presents a conflation of the Irishman with his "native" landscape; one that evinces the effeminophobic contours of English hibernophobia at mid-century:

This wonderful genius, the AUDITOR, who for the advancement of *political science*, has so happily emerged though no so pure as I could wish, from his *native bog* of *Allen*, is too grave a politician to *sport on the turf of Florida*. According to the *simple* primitive ideas, which in the first dawn of life so deeply impressed his *soft*, tender mind, he considers wisely and soberly the real and solid benefits of this *new*, but important, commerce of *peat*, so necessary to the *comforts of life*. To carry on *that trade*, I dare say he would be ready to bargain even for his dear *natale solum*, and would no more scruple

¹³³ Wilkes, *The Political Controversy*, p. 358.

¹³⁴ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 198.

¹³⁵ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 198.

to begin a treaty to *sell his country*, than he did to sell himself. At present he only proposes the *Florida peat at a cheap rate for the lower kind of the planters in our West-Indian islands, to have a comfortable fire in their parlours or bed-chambers*, to which there can be no objection, provided he will first build *chimnies* in their *parlours or bed chambers*.¹³⁶

Murphy is presented in entho-cultural terms as a man whose “*simple primitive ideas*” were “in the first dawn of life so deeply impressed [on] his *soft, tender mind*”.¹³⁷ The softness of the bog symbolises Murphy’s passivity — a passively effeminate mind, and a body receptive to insertion. Moreover, such passivity and softness is coded within the Irish bog landscape as a precondition for Irishness. The material site of the bog — a space that avoided or resisted the Enlightenment project of agricultural improvement — served as a very literal and layered entropic space, containing both past and present at its core.

Whereas the ravenous Scottish swains Jockey and Sawney are depicted as excessively hungry for sexual gratification and political advancement, Murphy’s (and by extension the Irish man’s) form of effeminacy is pitched at the other, passive end of the continuum. While anti-Scottish satire presents “Scots on the make”, both Fitzamble and Wilkes’s eventual imaging of Murphy as Fitzamble through the Viator letter episode, satirically figures the Irish Celt as passive and non-assertive. Such effeminate passivity is diametrically opposed to the sort of patriotism outlined in Churchill’s apostrophe to Wilkes in *The Prophecy*. Murphy, the Bog man would not only go as far as selling his “country”, his “*natale solum*”, but also himself, his own body, in order to gain commercial and political advancement.¹³⁸ While Celtic landscape is zoned as agriculturally and therefore commercially unproductive in Wilkite satire, the forms of Scoto and Hibernophobic landscaping used to convey this sterility reveal how effeminate models of masculinity could be encoded in depictions of such Celtic landscapes, and ultimately, how various registers of effeminacy were deployed to delimit the Celt from gaining any form of political agency. The initial cause of the Florida peat joke that ended Murphy’s career as a political writer arose from his publishing of an unverified story that claimed that John Wilkes had accosted the youngest son of Lord Bute.

¹³⁶ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 198.

¹³⁷ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 198.

¹³⁸ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 198.

In his *Letter to the worthy Electors*, Wilkes describes how “The Winchester Story” was “ushered to the public with the greatest parade, as well as with all the impudence of malice, and rage of party”.¹³⁹ In recalling the charge, Wilkes is determined, even after his trials for sedition and libel, to remind his electorate that he “disproved so fully [the story] ... that not the least shadow of a doubt remained in any mind as to [his] entire innocence of the most illiberal charge”.¹⁴⁰ The story described how “Colonel Cataline” (John Wilkes) had happened upon Bute’s schoolboy son in a Winchester bookshop and informed him that his father would, without a doubt, be either beheaded or lynched within the next few months:

Nor would I have COLONEL CATALINE be a manager of the prosecution, but rather turn evidence, for which the reader will think him well qualified, when he has read the following short story, which he may depend is authentic. A young gentleman of 12 years old, who is placed for education at Winchester college, and is the son to the noble lord in question, being the other day in a bookseller’s shop at Winchester, COLONEL CATALINE entered the place, and most liberally and manfully accosted the youth in question in these words--“Young gentleman, your father will have his head cut off----*Sir !--I never heard that he had done anything amiss; he has a great many friends,---such as **---**---and **---and***---and the right honourable George **-----Ay ! He is your father’s great puppy-dog, ---but depend upon it your father will lose his head, or the mob shall tear him to pieces.*¹⁴¹

In *North Briton*, No. 21 (Saturday, October 23, 1762), Wilkes declared: “upon my honour ... every particular of the charge is false”.¹⁴² The entire issue is devoted to Wilkes’s refutation of what he describes as a fable “cook’d up” by *The Auditor*.¹⁴³ Unable to obtain confirmation of the incident from either Bute’s son or the headmaster of his Winchester school, Wilkes goes so far as to publish the correspondence he received from the headmaster, Dr John Burton, who maintained that he would not “concern [himself] in the affair” or “read any public papers relating to it”.¹⁴⁴

Wilkes goes to great length to refute Murphy’s accusation. In his response he even relates how a soldier stationed at his militia camp did in fact

¹³⁹ Wilkes, *A Letter to the worthy Electors*, p. 214.

¹⁴⁰ Wilkes, *A Letter to the worthy Electors*, p. 214.

¹⁴¹ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 424.

¹⁴² Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 115.

¹⁴³ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 115.

¹⁴⁴ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, pp. 115-116.

verbally abuse a Winchester schoolboy and was swiftly reprimanded and punished by Wilkes.¹⁴⁵ The accusation is a slight on the integrity of both individuals, and though reluctant or advised not to meet him, Wilkes argues that the boy's honour necessitates a meeting.¹⁴⁶ The paper then moves onto a broader critique of the Winchester school's refusal to cooperate with Wilkes, which chastises Dr Burton for being more concerned with "instruction in languages" than in "whether his pupils tread the paths of honour, or give themselves up to vice and meanness".¹⁴⁷ While it is likely that Wilkes did in fact meet Bute's son in passing (in the company of Lord Sandwich), it seems highly unlikely that any aggression or threatening behaviour occurred. While Wilkes acknowledges that Bute's son more than likely concocted the original charge, he reprimands Murphy for "the many incoherent fictions raised upon it".¹⁴⁸

Demands to have the encounter publicly verified by the schoolboy or his headmaster were evaded by Murphy. Instead, *The Auditor* claimed that Wilkes was such a contemptible figure, that whatever innocence he might profess in relation to Bute's son became redundant when viewed in light of his overall character:

They [the public] have a right to evidence tending to prove that he has not been, for several months past, a cutpurse of empire and the rule, a slanderer of his king, a defamer of the royal family, a man engaged in an assassination-plot against the highest and worthiest characters in the kingdom, a propagator of known falsehood, a libeller of an whole nation, and the desperate tool of a ruined faction.¹⁴⁹

Murphy, clearly unable to substantiate the story desperately (and hypocritically) attempted to present Wilkes as a dishonourable and seditious "assassin" of characters. In annotating the issue of *The Auditor* that accused Wilkes of the verbal attack, the editor John Cæsar Wilkes, regrets that the paper has been taken up with the "personalities of our political disputants" but confesses that Murphy has ample room for the attack, and that if the Winchester story has any foundation "no treatment can be too severe for the folly and malevolence of

¹⁴⁵ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁴⁶ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁷ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 116-117.

¹⁴⁸ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁹ Murphy, *The Auditor*, pp. 81-82.

Colonel Cataline, in relation to that circumstance”.¹⁵⁰ If (and the editor does indeed stress this ‘if’) the story is verifiable, then Wilkes stands to lose all political credibility.

Murphy’s relation of the story of Bute’s son in *The Auditor* forms a particular plank within his anti-Wilkite strategy, as it figured, in pederastic terms, an abuse of power between a man and a boy. Such an engagement was decidedly beyond the propriety of emergent gentlemanly norms and thus served to disrupt the heteronormativity of Wilkite political subjectivity with the spectre of pederasty. Wilkes’s treatment of his wife, Mary Mead, from whom he had separated shortly after the birth of their daughter, Polly, is criticised in this passage. Murphy consistently pitched his attack against what he saw as the very real divergences between Wilkes’s cultivated persona and the facts of his relationships: “Of your behaviour to a wife, who trusted her person and her fortune to you, I shall not here make mention”.¹⁵¹ Murphy attacks Wilkes’s behaviour toward his wife by pointing out that he spends more time between his militia and Stowe, than he does at Aylesbury, and that the “luxury of a dinner” is, for him, privileged above the company of his own wife.¹⁵² Both the treatment of Bute’s son and more significantly, that of his wife reveals, for Murphy the rhetorical nature of Wilkite masculinity, and by extension, the inauthenticity of his politics. By this time, of course, Wilkes had been separated from Mary Mead for a number of years, yet the point that Murphy puts forward is nonetheless well supported by Wilkes’s lifestyle, where the heterosocial is deprioritised for the homosocial. Again, Murphy’s construction of Wilkes as a ‘woman-hater’ of sorts, echoes Smollett’s caricaturing of the affective intensities of Wilkes’s bond with Lord Temple in the dialogue between Capt. Iago Aniseed and Lord GothamStowe, which features in *The Briton*, No. 15 (September 4th, 1762).

Such anti-heterosociality is pointedly contrasted with Murphy’s rather odd and intrusive celebration of George III’s heterosexuality in *The Auditor* (Thursday, August, 19, 1762). Wishing to think of happier thoughts, Murphy turns in the latter part of this issue to a discussion of the birth of the Prince of Wales, offering an account of “what passed in [his] mind upon so joyful an

¹⁵⁰ J. C. Wilkes (ed.) *The Political Controversy*, Vol. I, p. 424.

¹⁵¹ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 383.

¹⁵² Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 383.

occasion".¹⁵³ Murphy opens the celebratory passage with the following statement: "I consider a Queen-Consort as one of the principal instruments by which providence may either defeat or perpetuate the succession in the house of Hanover".¹⁵⁴ Humorously, in annotating this passage the editor Cæsar Wilkes dryly asks: "How in the name of Gothic stupidity could you avoid such a consideration, unless you had discovered some other method of continuing the human species, besides the customary means?".¹⁵⁵ Murphy proceeds to establish a connection between healthy heterosexual exertion, domestic conjugal happiness and "the King's wise and upright government":

We have long known that his majesty was compleatly happy in his choice, and that he had actually taken to his throne and bed a princess of those virtues and endowments, which he had reason to promise himself; with pleasure we heard that he who sustained the weight of public care, and lived in sollicitude for the welfare of an whole people, was thoroughly blessed with domestic happiness and connubial felicity. Every Briton, who feels the high advantages of the King's wise and upright government, must naturally have rejoiced to hear that he could, in common with his ordinary subjects, find an agreeable repose from the fatigues of business.¹⁵⁶

In incredibly voyeuristic prose, George III's proven heterosexuality is commended as the bridging factor between the Crown and the "ordinary subjects", with heterosexual pleasure providing "an agreeable repose" for all. Such "repose" resonates with Churchill's depiction of "those soft better moments," which arise from the "mutual ardours of the melting fair" (*The Prophecy*, 155; 157). Crucially the difference between Wilkite pleasures of the 'melting fair' and George III's "agreeable repose" is marriage. Both Wilkes and Churchill were heavily criticised for the mistreatment of their wives. In fact, Churchill's poem *The Conference* was written as an apologia for his elopement with the fifteen-year old Elizabeth Carr, a breach of heterosociality that even Wilkes chastised him for.

Murphy understood the usage of the heteroerotic as the sign of political legitimacy in Wilkite ideology. In his leering account of George III's domestic bliss, Murphy implicitly positions the sort of libertine phallic adventurism associated with Wilkes and Churchill, along with sodomy, as practices that

¹⁵³ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 193.

¹⁵⁴ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 193.

¹⁵⁵ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 193.

¹⁵⁶ Murphy, *The Auditor*, pp. 195-196.

confer illegitimacy. He invokes the companionate marriage ideal to position any critique of the King or his ministers as anti-heteronormative:

I will not charitably suppose, that even the prostitute scribblers of the present times would not poison this weight, if they could; and seditious as they are, I will go so far as to imagine that they must share in the general joy which now expands all hearts, when we see the patriot purpose for which our sovereign *turned his thoughts towards the thoughts of a consort*, namely, *to make the happiness of his people stable and permanent to posterity* in part accomplished by the birth of a son to inherit (it is hoped to be at a distant period) both his virtues and his crown. A patriot prince thus avowing cares of such general import to the public welfare, and so soon indulged in his utmost wishes, gives us reason to think him peculiarly favoured by providence on account of his many good and sublime endowments.¹⁵⁷

In this passage, Murphy redeploys a central Wilkite strategy of connecting healthy heterosexual exertion with economic prosperity. If Murphy's formulation leaves Wilkites out in the cold, it is precisely because such heterosexuality is presented in terms of the union of marriage. Yet, as is often the case with Murphy, his stylising of the King and Queen's conjugality articulates the private heterosocial scene while undermining it completely through the very act of its description. For Wilkes, while the heteroerotic confers public political legitimacy, the mark of this legitimacy is privacy. Wilkes's sexual politics in the 1760s is invested in protecting the heteroerotic from the political.

Responding to Murphy's and Smollett's continual affirmations of the integrity of Bute's private life, *The North Briton*, No. 20 (October 16, 1762) asserts:

But surely the public has very little to do with the private life and morals of the minister : let him discharge the duty he owes to the state with fidelity and integrity (with capacity he cannot) and I will not follow him in his private hours of retirement. Whether they pass in the most trifling amusements, in the wonderful disquisitions of a little genius on *cockle-shells*, *flowers*, or *plants*, or the hidden, gloomy recesses of guilt, shall not be my inquiry.

For Wilkes, a man's public role is entirely separate from his private life. Yet, as Anna Clark incisively notes, Wilkes's separating out of the public and private lives of men had a limited applicability:

[Wilkes] was unable to carry out the full logic of his Lockean separation of the public and private; he might have equally argued...that "sodomy" was a private act that did not need to be persecuted under the criminal justice system, since it, like his own

¹⁵⁷ Murphy, *The Auditor*, p. 196.

libertine behavior, was condemned mainly by the church. Furthermore, by contrasting sodomy, despotism, and foreign vice with the virtues of the freeborn Englishman and his constitution, Wilkesites based political rights not on reason but on nationality and masculinity. Wilkes's belief that only public service counted, that personal life was a private matter, really meant that only heterosexual men had a right to do whatever they wanted in private.¹⁵⁸

Clark suggests that Wilkes could have pushed the logic of his Lockean public/private divide to defend the right of privacy of the sodomite. However unlikely such a defence would have been, it is worth pausing to consider this unlikelihood. For as we have seen, for Wilkes and Churchill, the sodomitical denotes the very mark of publicity: "Go where We will, at ev'ry time and place, / SODOM confronts, and stares us in the face;" (*The Times*, 293-294). In Wilkite terms, the sodomite cannot claim the right to privacy, because the sodomitical and the private are incommensurable. Rather than the sodomite being denied the privacy assumed and defended by the heterosexual freeborn Englishman, within the Wilkite model of citizenry the sodomite's publicness emerges as the very thing that provides for the privacy of the heteroerotic. In politicising the homoerotic, Wilkites can protect the heterosexual as a private rather than political issue.

While *The Auditor* was the least successful of the essay-sheets that debated the close of the first global war, Murphy's pro-ministerial satire was most attentive to the gendered and highly insecure rhetoric of his anti-ministerial opponents. It is unlikely that the story of Wilkes's encounter with Bute's son was entirely fabricated, although it is almost certain that it was embellished. Murphy's decision to publish an accusative story, which he knew to be unverifiable, was a serious error of judgment on his part. Yet, had the story been widely accepted, his ambition of derailing the Wilkite opposition may well have been fulfilled. Murphy was well aware that the success of the Wilkite anti-ministerial campaign largely centred on the cultivation of Wilkes as a manly, independent and honourable political participant (irrespective of his personal heterosexual exploits). The Schoolboy story, if believed, would serve to debunk such a political self-fashioning in an irrevocable way. *The Auditor's* attempts to undermine the gendered basis of Wilkite politics were largely unsuccessful.

¹⁵⁸ Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 45.

Murphy's voyeuristic prose on the proven heterosexuality of George III attempted to rework the Wilkite ideological connection of unambiguous heterosexuality and national stability for the pro-ministerial agenda. Yet in imagining the scene of George III's domestic and sexual bliss, Murphy undermined its privacy entirely, an undermining that Lord Sandwich would also be accused of by Wilkes for his "publishing" of *An Essay on Woman* in the House of Lords' debate. Both cases, one condemnatory, the other celebratory, have equal standing in Wilkite terms, as each involve the bringing forth of heterosexuality into a position of unacceptable public scrutiny.

In attempting to disrupt the Wilkite conflation of unambiguous heterosexuality with national prosperity and political stability, Murphy attempted to recast Wilkes as a pederast, who in criticising the King's ministers advanced a politics that was decidedly anti-heteronormative and selfishly unpatriotic. Murphy's attempts to undermine the gendered basis of Wilkite politics ensured that his own engagement would become more and more *ad hominem*, a fact that paradoxically effeminised the very terms of his own debate. Unlike Smollett, who directly responded to Wilkite anti-Scottishness in *The Briton*, Murphy does not display any confidence or indeed pride, in his own 'Irishness' nor does he present Ireland as a constitutive part of the British Empire that was being debated in the weekly exchanges between essay-sheets. Whereas Smollett maintains that Scots gain agency through their colonial participation, Murphy, in his discussion of the Paddy Fitz-Ramble, endorses a prevalent stereotyping of the Irish adventurer as unintelligent and easily gulled. The later hibernophobic passages in *The North Briton* would recall this duplicitousness by noting the incredible extent of Murphy's passive and self-effacing effeminate nature. The damning conclusion for Wilkes is the fact that not only is Murphy prepared to sell his own country, but he is also willing to self himself. Murphy's reticence about his Irishness is explicable in the sense that the same buoyant entryist culture for Scots in London in the 1760s simply did not exist for the Irish. More than Smollett, Murphy is the proven outsider within these debates. Whereas Smollett, bolstered by both the political and literary successes of Bute and Ossian, could assert his Scottishness as a mark of Britishness, Murphy must rather downplay his Irishness as a sign of difference, which confers political illegitimacy along intensely effeminophobic lines.

The final put-down of Murphy in *The North Briton*, No. 35, is revealing for what it implies about the casual political illegitimacy conferred by both the noun and adjective “Irishness”, which is regarded in any case as merely a synonym for the thoroughly delegitimised and delegitimising noun “Catholic”:

I do not doubt but our disciple of *St. Omers*, who is rather the greater genius, would instruct his fellow labourer, the poor Briton, to throw away his *Scottish* pack of dullness, and in time they would both surpass in perfidy and fraud the most refined Jesuit, who is to be tolerated in these new conquests---possibly to read mass to this good *Irish Catholic*. If no untimely end prevents the dullest *play-wright* of our times, he may then at last present us with a woeful *Tragedy*, both *new* and *interesting*, drawn not from fable and invention, but founded on his own real adventures, and *hair- breadth scapes*. Leaving however, to the ridicule of mankind, this egregious dupe the AUDITOR, * the most *fond believing* fool of the age, I shall take a *comparative view* of some of the important articles *of the two negociations*, in 1761 and 1762, and will in a summary way state what is *restored to England*, and her allies, and what is yielded to *France*.¹⁵⁹

Murphy, having actually been educated “contrary to British law” at St. Omer, a Jesuit monastery near Boulogne, is fit for only one colonial purpose.¹⁶⁰ *The North Briton* mockingly advises Murphy to convince Smollett to “throw away his *Scottish* pack of dullness” and join him in embarking upon the “tolerated” colonial adventurism of the Jesuit missionary. If Murphy survives the harshness of such foreign climes, he might live to fulfil his Dunciadic potential of “a woeful *Tragedy*” based on his experiences. Tellingly, *The North Briton* turns at this point from derisively speculating on Murphy’s Jesuit missionary career and its literary presentation to the more sober business of discussing the political text of the Peace of Paris. The rhetorical turn is an important one as it serves to consign both *The Auditor* and *The Briton* to the inauthentic cultural realm of the Ossianic. In this final critique both Murphy and Smollett are viewed as only being equipped to carry out the mercenary or spiritually misguided labour of Empire building. Unable to enter into sober, English debate, both would-be Britons have merely encouraged and produced fantastical accounts, rambling on like Paddy *Fitz-ramble*, in a bid to find their fortunes.

¹⁵⁹ Wilkes, *The North Briton*, p. 200.

¹⁶⁰ Spector, *Arthur Murphy*, p. 19.

(3.4) Conclusion

While not everything about the controversies generated by John Wilkes throughout the early 1760s is political, almost every debate that Wilkes provoked during the close of the Seven Years' War involved the argument about what is, and is not, political — where does individual autonomy begin and end? Central to this argument is the defence of extra-parliamentary dissensus as a determining factor (perhaps, the most significant) in the business of sanctioned institutional politics. In the Wilkite anti-ministerial journalism of the early 1760s, public opinion becomes defended as a source for the legitimation of administrative political authority. As demonstrated, both the pro-ministerial polemical writings of Murphy and Smollett are distinguished in their overt resistance to the perceived threat of the democratic potentiality of the expansion of print culture and its engendering of a 'public sphere'. While male ownership of 'property' has been read as the primary entry requirement for membership of the public sphere, this chapter has argued that in Wilkite literary narratives, the heteroerotic provides the very means for those disenfranchised along class lines to secure their liberty and their right to political 'participation' through the exchange of opinion. In Wilkite literature, the identification of property owners with humanity, and thus as a single public, is rhetorically extended through the affective intensity of a shared heteroerotic culture.

In retrieving the heterosexual from the political, Wilkes makes this the very entry point into political life. In this way, the sodomitical bears the mark of an anachronistic political arrangement that is both incommensurable and antagonistic to the newly claimed privacy of the heteroerotic. In the final issues of *The North Briton*, the pederastic political regime of Bute's administration finds its most anxious expression in the Wilkite antagonism to Francis Dashwood's excise on cider. In these issues, the lowly person of the gauger is alarmingly rendered as a force of violation for the assumed privacies of Gentleman and their extensive network of fellowmen. The gauger is a cipher of arbitrary power. I have shown how anxieties surrounding the gauger in Wilkite literary narratives are expressed in metaphorical imagery patterned by the rhetoric of sodomitical rape. Wilkite critique of the Buteite œconomy conveys distaste for the consideration of "posterity" at the expense of a freer libertine

enjoyment of pleasure in the moment. *North Briton*, No. 45, in both its antagonism toward the excise extension, and its rejection of the sort of political arrangement that allows for the slippage of crown prerogative to minister, rails against the sort of back-stairs politics that Edmund Burke would come to detest in his promotion of a politics of moral friendship in his early career. The Wilkite rejection of the significance of Bute's resignation is important for what it suggests about Buteite corruption amounting to a culture that cannot be located in the person and influence of one particular minister. It is exactly this anxiety concerning the pederastic potential of all 'friendship' that influenced Burke, not only in his early career, but also throughout his entire political life.

The final section of this chapter examined Arthur Murphy's failure as a political propagandist. While Murphy's tactical errors of judgement seem inexplicable considering his earlier success as a polemicist at the start of the Seven Years' War, I argue that his decision to publish the Winchester Story was in fact a calculated attempt to discredit Wilkes on the basis of his own gendered politics. Whereas *The Briton* reflects back the charge of sodomy onto the Wilkites, Murphy's *The Auditor* is perhaps most aware of the fact that so much of Wilkes's success relied on his appeal to a model of masculinity and heterosociality, which despite all his posturing, he never really occupied. While Murphy's decision to publish the Viator letter is less understandable, I have argued that a broader view of the scope of debates collated in *The Political Controversy* digest might suggest more patriotically economic reasons for this otherwise foolish publication. Murphy's Irishness was the real disadvantage in his steering of the pro-ministerial *Auditor*. Whereas Smollett could command confidence in the role of Scotland in the work of British Empire building, Murphy is a decided outsider in these debates, and must disavow his own Irishness as a sign of difference, which confers political illegitimacy along intensely effeminophobic lines.

In the final chapter, the anxiety regarding back-stairs politics in the reign of George III, in many ways excited by *North Briton* No. 45, is assessed in terms of the later Wilkite electoral agitation of the late 1760s and early 1770s. This chapter reads the early aesthetic and political writings of another Irish man, Edmund Burke, within the fraught effeminophobic cultural and political register of crisis in the 1760s. Beginning with Burke's earliest aesthetic and political

writings, this chapter demonstrates how the Burkean sublime offers a potential resolution for the paradox of assertive enervation found in both Estimate Brown's and Smollett's writings on colonialism. Having argued for the inherently effeminophobic dynamic of Burke's sublimity, the chapter concludes with an examination of Burke's prescriptions for homosocial political arrangement, situating such ideas as a response to the curiously effeminate Wilkite doctrine of political representation.

Chapter IV

Homosocial Aesthetic

Back-Stairs Politics & the Sublime

(4.1) Preface

Indeed so natural is this timidity with regard to power, and so strongly does it inhere in our constitution, that very few are able to conquer it, but by mixing much in business of the great world, or by using no small violence to their natural dispositions.¹

When ministry rests upon public opinion, it is not indeed built upon a rock of adamant; it has, however, some stability. But when it stands upon private humor, its structure is of stubble, and its foundation is on quicksand.²

Having returned to Britain after four years in exile in 1768, John Wilkes attempted to re-enter politics by seeking a royal pardon and the reversal of this outlawry.³ His appeals ignored, Wilkes stood as a candidate in the Middlesex parliamentary election, topping the poll by a huge majority. Having being elected as an MP for Middlesex, Wilkes claimed parliamentary privilege against the suite of charges facing him. The government refused to consider legitimate the Middlesex freeholders' decision to choose Wilkes as their representative in parliament on the basis of his outlaw status, which in effect rendered him a legal non-entity. Even though the House of Commons expelled Wilkes in February 1769, he simply resubmitted his candidacy and was returned unopposed.⁴ After being elected by the Middlesex electorate, expelled by parliament, and returned unopposed on four consecutive occasions, the House incapacitated Wilkes as a disqualified candidate for re-election before choosing to elect his rival, Henry Luttrell.⁵ Although he secured a mere 296 votes in comparison to Wilkes's 1,100, Luttrell was chosen by the House as the elected candidate for Middlesex; thus the government denied the Middlesex freeholders their true representation in law. Even though Wilkes's outlawry was subsequently reversed, it was merely a necessary step in the government's prosecution. After this reversal, Wilkes was arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment on the earlier charges of seditious libel for *The North*

¹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Adam Phillips, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 62.

² Burke, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, in *Edmund Burke: Selected Writings And Speeches*, Peter J. Stanlis, ed. (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968), p. 139.

³ Peter D. G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: A Friend to Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.66; p. 70.

⁴ James T. Boulton, *The Language Of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 12.

⁵ Boulton, p. 12.

Briton, No. 45 and the blasphemous libelling of Bishop Warburton in his *Essay on Woman*. The controversy that surrounded Wilkes's expulsion differed from the fracas earlier in the decade, as this was an electoral dispute. Yet, Wilkes and the Wilkites still lobbied against the earlier grievances surrounding general warrants and unfair taxation. The government's decision to deny the validity of Wilkes's representation and election brought into sharp relief the issue of whether or not parliament had the authority to elect its own members. As the Wilkites argued, the government's unwavering position on the expulsion threatened to establish "the power of the House of Commons over [its members]".⁶ Responding to expulsion, Wilkes, and pro-Wilkites more broadly, sought to reassert the electorate as the legitimate source of parliament's authority. To put it somewhat reductively, the Middlesex controversy engendered a crisis over the boundaries of proper legislative authority.

As we shall see, the controversy over representation arose at a time of increasing discontent among American colonists about the absence of their own electoral rights and permissions. Broadly speaking, the Whig consensus at the close of the 1760s was that a political crisis had developed which could only be remedied by addressing the increase in Crown influence that had occurred during Bute's administration. Crown, in this instance, should not be taken to mean the personage of the king, George III, but the court culture of preferment, nepotism and pervasive corruption that rendered free debate in parliament meaningless. A recurring question throughout these years centred on the role of the independent man in politics and the most suitable mode of political conduct. Edmund Burke's entrance into the English political world occurred during this crisis period of the mid to late 1760s. It is therefore no surprise that much of his early writing addresses the very question of the public man and political conduct. Entering politics initially as the MP for the pocket borough of Wendover and then later obtaining the prestigious seat of Bristol, Burke was from the outset "depicted as the eighteenth-century theatrical stereotype: the Irishman-on-the-make".⁷ An Irish adventurer in the British political world, Burke was, like his fellow countryman Arthur Murphy, denounced as a 'bog man', by men of nobility, who quipped: "what stake has he in the country? What cares he whether

⁶ Anon, *A Letter To Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.* (London: Printed for J. Almon, opposite Burlington House, in Piccadilly, 1770), p. 45.

⁷ Katherine O'Donnell, "'To Love the little Platoon': Edmund Burke's Jacobite Heritage", in *Edmund Burke's Irish Identities*, Seán Patrick Donlan ed. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), p. 17.

the ship sinks [or] swims? A fellow come out of an Irish bog”.⁸ While Murphy was reticent about his own nationality, Burke’s Irishness came to bear on all of the major episodes of his distinguished parliamentary career: his support for the American colonists in the 1770s; his uncovering of the squalid dealings of Warren Hastings and the East India Tea Company in the 1780s and, of course, his denouncement of the French Revolution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791).

Acknowledging Burke’s inherited position among the “faded remnants of Catholic, Gaelic, Royalist gentry stock”, as Katherine O’Donnell productively argues, allows us to see that a dominant motivation animating his politics was “a desire to protect the riches of traditional culture and societies from the arrogance of greed and from the persecution based on a hatred fuelled by myths, savage caricatures and colonial stereotypes”.⁹ Born in Dublin in 1729, Burke spent much of his early childhood living with his maternal family, the dispossessed elite Irish Catholic Nagles of Co. Cork, who had managed to maintain their fortunes when the Stuarts lost the throne. Burke spent his formative years at the Nagle home in Ballyduff, and was fostered by his mother’s oldest brother Patrick Nagle in line with the Gaelic tradition.¹⁰ The local hedge-school master, in the grounds of the ruined Nagle family castle, provided Burke’s earliest formal education.¹¹ Burke was then sent to a Quaker boarding school in Ballitore, Co. Kildare, run by Abraham Shackleton. As F. P. Lock notes, intense social immersion in these self-contained communities had a lasting impact on Burke, forming his view of man as “pre-eminently a sociable animal, happiest and best able to fulfil his nature in groups: in families, in extended kinship networks, in larger national and religious loyalties”.¹² These early experiences influenced his belief that moral qualities mattered significantly more than abstract ideas or political theories.¹³ Refining the very dictum of ‘men not measures’, Burke’s politics is one of lived experience and interpersonal exchange among men of equal standing.

Burke enrolled in Trinity College Dublin on the 14th of April 1744, where he received a thorough grounding in the classics, languages and oratorical instruction. It was during his time at Trinity that he began to draft his aesthetic treatise *A*

⁸ F. P. Lock. *Edmund Burke: Volume I: 1730-1784* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 10.

⁹ O’Donnell, p. 25.

¹⁰ O’Donnell, p. 18.

¹¹ O’Donnell, p. 20.

¹² Lock, *Edmund*, p. 10; p. 22.

¹³ Lock, *Edmund*, p. 26.

Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757), in addition to co-founding the college's debating society and writing the pro-Charles Lucas newspaper *The Reformer*. Having matriculated from Trinity, Burke spent most of his early twenties in London, where he did not complete his studies at the Middle Temple but instead led a dissolute life with his companion William Burke.¹⁴ William Burke was no blood relation, although both he and Burke claimed to be kinsmen and shared a common purse for their entire lives.¹⁵ Little records survive from this period of Burke's life except *A Note-Book* comprising the literary and philosophical musings that he shared with William. In the mid 1750s, Edmund Burke suffered a nervous breakdown, and was subsequently cared for at the home of the Irish Catholic physician, Dr Nugent. Following his convalescence, Burke married Nugent's daughter Jane, in 1757, the year of the *Enquiry's* publication. The success of this publication gained him admittance to the prestigious circles of London's literary society. After an unhappy period in the service of the Irish administrator, William Hamilton, Burke assumed the position of personal secretary to the Whig magnate Lord Rockingham. As a member of the Rockingham party, Burke was never part of the inner circle of power, and during the party's first term, 1765-1766, Burke never held office. Although he proceeded to gain a reputation as a distinguished orator, he never obtained high-office.

In 1765, Rockingham was called to form a government by the king as a result of the extended fall-out from the resignation of Lord Bute in 1763. The first Rockingham ministry lasted a little over a year and its fall witnessed a division in the party, with some men opting to remain in government rather than return to the opposition. As Stephen K. White notes, Burke's early career was dominated by three key issues that arose in the aftermath of this collapse: the nature of political party and its defence; the relationship of Britain and its colonies and the growing influence of the Crown.¹⁶ As a non-elite MP, Burke also spent much of his early career attempting to cultivate his own independence in a number of personal and professional areas. His purchase of a landed estate, the Gregories in Beaconsfield, counts as one material and important instance of his striving toward self-authentication as a property-owning gentleman. However, as I argue, the party

¹⁴ O'Donnell, p. 20.

¹⁵ O'Donnell, p. 20.

¹⁶ Stephen K. White, *Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics And Aesthetics* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 44.

system, or what could be more generally conceived of as the organisational basis of male sociality, was an issue that had plagued Burke from the time of the *Enquiry*. Burke's writings on parliamentary organisation laid the foundation for our contemporary notions of party. As we have seen from the discussion of the political essay-sheets in earlier chapters, political organisation or 'connexion' in the 1760s was consistently presented in terms of faction. A key narrative strain in the Wilkite discussion of faction involved the imagining of factional power as pederastic or sodomitical, in so much as faction was motivated by an unproductive self-interest. The Wilkite imagining of sodomitical faction engendered a new rhetorical inclusivity in politics, in so much as men could become politicised through their shared heteroeroticism, which was paradoxically rendered private and protected from the political.

Burke's early career provides a fascinating and productive lens for viewing the electoral shift in Wilkite politics that occurred at end of the 1760s. Reading Burke via Wilkes also reveals the extent to which Burke's ideas of party and political representation were shaped by the fractious debates engendered by the Wilkites. Of particular interest is the remarkable in which Burke puts a gloss on the extremities of Wilkite effeminophobic rhetoric. In many ways, Burke's early Rockinghamite writing attempted to uncover and disavow the Bute ministry's pederastic asymmetrical structuring of power that both Churchill and Wilkes had railed against earlier in the decade. The most direct assault on this mode of politics came with his animus toward the "king's friends" of the "double-cabinet" in *Thoughts on The Cause of Present Discontents* (1770).¹⁷ However, as F. P. Lock notes, long after the resignation of Bute, Burke "persisted in interpreting every move or measure of the ministry in terms of secret influence and the sinister designs of the king's friends, though by now Charles Jenkinson had replaced Bute as the *eminence grise*".¹⁸ Contrary to Frank O'Gorman's reading of Burke's early political writing as being directed against the "myth of the influence of Lord Bute", this chapter argues that the anxieties that plague these texts are not related to the person of Bute, but rather to what Thomas A. King identifies as a courtly political culture based on "pederastic

¹⁷ Burke, *Thoughts on the Cause*, p. 117.

¹⁸ Lock, *Edmund*, pp. 393-394.

submission and preferment”.¹⁹ Moreover, Seamus Deane has argued that the Irish Ascendancy and the East India Company became even more “glaring and ruinous” forms of faction for Burke in later years, as unlike the king’s inner advisers these factions were indeed acting as substitutions for state power.²⁰ Deane’s insight regarding substitution helps to foreground a key difference between Burke and Wilkes’s framing of secret pederastic structures of power. Whereas Wilkes’s exploited prevalent xeno-effeminophobic anxieties to discredit the person of Bute, Burke’s anxieties are pitched, not at any particular individual in office, but rather at the abstract level of the culture from which this person or set of individuals profit.

Adhering to Burke’s early aesthetic and political writings, this chapter traces the extent to which Wilkite anti-ministerial politics not only contributed to Burke’s imagining of political structures of power and secret influence, but also determined his view of political organisation in the form of party. Burke’s ideas on political organisation were therefore born out of the fraught xeno-effeminophobic discourses that originated in the Seven Years’ War and continued throughout the 1760s. In order to assess Burke’s intervention in the Wilkite debates of the late 1760s, we need to read how his earlier writing on the categories of the sublime and beautiful developed an aesthetic of the homosocial, which in separating delight from pleasure, ensured against asymmetries of power in political culture. Coming at a time of intense anxiety over English decadence and military failure, Burke’s early aesthetic writing engages with the effeminophobic discourses through its presentation of the sublime as an enervative though ultimately assertive experience. In his seminal study, *The Discourse of the Sublime* (1989), Peter De Bolla foregrounds how Edmund Burke’s aesthetic writing announced a new reading of aesthetic experience as corporeally and psychologically affective; a move that signalled a departure from the preceding Longinian rhetorical approach.²¹ In addressing this newfound aesthetic interest in the psychological, De Bolla considers it “from within the discourse on the sublime, and from within its contextualizing

¹⁹ Frank O’Gorman, *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 25; Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: The English Phallus* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 2004), pp. 54-55.

²⁰ Seamus Deane, *Foreign Affections: Essays on Edmund Burke* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), p. 92.

²¹ De Bolla groups Burke’s *Enquiry* along with Gerard’s *Essay on Taste* and Kames’s *Elements of criticism* as aesthetic texts published during the Seven Years’ War period that evidence this shift to psychology. See Peter De Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics and the Subject* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1989), p. 13.

discursive network”.²² Examining this discursive network involves tracing the gap between a discrete discourse on the sublime and the set of prevalent discourses engendered and sustained in Britain throughout the Seven Years’ War.

Taking one prevalent war discourse — the discourse of debt — De Bolla notes that while both discursive preoccupations are discrete and evidence no easy or casual overlap, their apparent similarities are nevertheless strikingly significant. Attending to this issue, he suggests that the discourse on the sublime and the discourse on debt are remarkably linked in so far as:

both the discourse on the sublime and the discourse on the national debt during the Seven Years’ War ran into a problem of immense scale and importance which becomes legible when we see these discussions as legislative discourses. This problem was conceived as the following: how can one control a discourse which sets out to examine the ways and means for controlling an excess, the sublime experience in the case of one and the national debt in the other, when that excess is visualized by the discourse of analysis as its own product? It is this question which forces the discourse on the sublime to a recognition of its own productive powers, and which does not so much turn to psychology as produce the object for it: it produces the autonomous subject.²³

As a legislative discourse, the discourse on the sublime produces the very excess that it seeks to examine. So far, we have seen how sodomy — or the sodomitical — emerges within a fraught effeminophobic register as the distinguishing mark of excess throughout the polemical debates of the Seven Years’ War. Smollett’s *The Briton* No. 6 (Saturday, 3 July 1762) examples this in its use of sublime language to figure British colonial and financial projects as excessive in decidedly sodomitical terms. De Bolla’s reading of the mid-century discourse on the sublime and on the national debt is reinforced by Smollett’s alarmist account of the limits of both the public credit and Britain’s colonial expansion elided into a broader anxious discourse concerning the war effort and depopulation.

More to the point of this chapter is De Bolla’s sketching out of the “problematics of the discourse on the sublime” in terms of four discursive analytic features: “its importation of an external legislating authority, its tendency towards the breaking of its own boundary, its self-articulation as theory in the light of its sense of these matters, and its production of a gendered subject position”.²⁴ De Bolla

²² De Bolla, p. 13.

²³ De Bolla, p. 14.

²⁴ De Bolla, p. 58.

states that “Gender differentiation” is a “common problematic feature” of the discourse on the sublime at mid-century, providing a fraught point of negotiation for theorists of the sublime.²⁵ Sexual experience and sublime experience are remarkably linked in so much as the ‘transport’ and ‘rapture’ of sublime sensation resonates with the experience of sexual pleasure.²⁶ The discourse of sublime engenders the very excess of its own analysis, with the result that the confrontation and generation of such ‘excess’, produces a “sexed subject”, which signals a point of refused theorisation or apprehension.²⁷ Sexual experience is sublime and sublime experience is erotic because of the inherently gendered structuring of its enquiry:

This is not only because the presumed ‘bliss’ arising from that union is the only physical analogue that approaches the extreme sensation of the sublime. It is also because the discourse on the sublime produces and examines subjectivity in gender-specific terms, thereby signalling its participation within a larger set of discourses determining sexuality for the period.²⁸

In broaching this topic, De Bolla focuses his argument on the Longinian rhetorical tradition of sublime oratory, and more precisely, on the text of Thomas Sheridan’s *A rhetorical grammar*, to demonstrate how in oratory, sublime experience gets restricted to the transport brought about by the performative power of the speaker, who, although addressing an audience, lacks the confrontation with the “Other” or the social realisation of the self that characterizes the Burkean sublime.²⁹ Rhetorical performance, in this instance, is the basis for the orator’s “experience of masculinity, of male power”.³⁰ Sheridan’s coaching of prospective orators on ways to maintain an audience’s attention is couched in suggestive sexual language, with the verbs ‘swallowing’ and ‘enlarging’ being “commensurate with a certain male experience of sexual arousal, and the loss of self-control an habitual trope of a certain male description of sexual fulfilment”.³¹ Churchill’s critique of Sheridan’s voice in *The Rosciad* in gendered terms reinforces De Bolla’s reading of the masculine “voice” as

²⁵ De Bolla, p. 56.

²⁶ Building on De Bolla’s work, Richard C. Sha has suggested that scholarly attention needs to be paid to the conflation of sexual and aesthetic experience in so much as: “Our sense of a binary opposition between sexuality and aesthetics has blinded us to a shared wariness of purpose between aesthetics and sexuality in [the context of] Romanticism generally”. See Richard C. Sha, *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 3.

²⁷ De Bolla, p. 56.

²⁸ De Bolla, p. 56.

²⁹ De Bolla, p. 56.

³⁰ De Bolla, p. 56.

³¹ De Bolla, p. 57.

the basis of oratorical sublimity: “His voice no touch of harmony admits / Irregularly deep, and shrill by fits: / The two extremes appear like man and wife, / Coupled together for the sake of strife” (1003-1006).

Oratorical performance, as theorised by De Bolla in terms of sexual arousal and seduction, would not be so problematic if it did not threaten to upset the gendered terms of sublime/masculine and beautiful/feminine. Whereas the erotics of an oration can be casually described as heteroerotic when a male speaker is addressing a female audience, De Bolla pauses to consider the potential homoeroticism of Sheridan’s orator when confronted by the task of speaking to an all male group:

Power here is a male privilege, a masculine experience of the sublime, so that while the desire to seduce one’s hearer’s is most commonly described in heterosexual terms, of the orator ‘coming on’ to an adoring and pliant female audience, here the ravishment and transport are so great, and so clearly a facet of sublime experience, that the discursive analytic *demands* that all described, whether orator or audience, experience a certain masculine sense of power and hence are subject to one of the defining characteristics of male gender difference.³²

The ravishment brought on by sublime transport is somehow so great that it remains a primarily masculinising experience for all concerned. Whereas De Bolla underscores the potential for a homoerotic experience of the rhetorical sublimity, his reading of the Burkean “psychological-physiological” sublime neglects to consider the homoerotic, or at the very least, the potential for homoerotic relations, particularly as they arise within the very terms of Burke’s argument for the socialising force of the beautiful.

Yet De Bolla does engage this issue in an oblique way, for his analysis remains attentive to how discourse on the sublime both produces, and already comes freighted with “gender differentiation”. Revealingly, sublime experience is itself an exercise in gendered subject formation:

the imminent trajectory of the discourse on the sublime is towards the examination of subjectivity. Yet that discourse continually forecloses on the possibility of the subject; it constantly sees it in terms of an unlegislable, an unthinkable. Burke’s intervention into the discourse on the sublime is precisely at the level of the subject matter, understood in the full complexity of that term. For the boundary which is continually invoked and tested in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory divides the subject of aesthetics — sublime sensation — from the subject, or self. Outer experience and inner sensation are split across the bar that divides

³² De Bolla, p. 58.

the world from the self, and the discourse of analysis reflects this division. If the subject matter — sublime experience — were to leak into the subject, if consciousness were to become a productive, as opposed to a reactive force then subjectivity would become both the means by which the sublime was mediated, from world to consciousness, and produced. The agenda under discussion, then, is the formation, persistence and intelligibility of subjectivity, and it is the transformation of this agenda into a productive and problematic motivating force within the discourse of analysis, the recognition of it as that force, which I wish to point to in Burke's *Enquiry*.³³

In terms of the Burkean sublime, for De Bolla, subject formation emerges from 'within limits'. Keeping consciousness reactive as opposed to productive, the *Enquiry* ensures that "excess" is kept literally and figuratively at a safe distance. Elaborating on this point, he argues that Burke's analysis of the sublime "opens up the fissures within the discourse on the sublime through which a discourse of the sublime may leak and be perceived".³⁴ Burke's overt concern with a language of analysis and description means that power itself gets corralled into a discourse of analysis on control.³⁵ Specifically, power is the name given in the *Enquiry* to these leakages, with "power" having "an unfixed value and location, functioning as a trope which articulates the technologies of the sublime".³⁶

We might note here how "power" in De Bolla's reading resonates with Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse as "an instrument and effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy".³⁷ It is in these very terms that De Bolla reads Burke's sublime as leaking into the discrete discourses that surround it. As Christopher Stokes summarises, sublimity is productive of excess, which in the context of the discursive nexus of the 1760s needs to be "checked by surrounding discourses such as rhetorical education or theology".³⁸ In Burke's account, as De Bolla notes, recourse to the godhead as an infinite summit for sublime progression provides the final resolve for the threatening "excess" that sublime enquiry inevitably engenders:

Burke, for a number of reasons, among which we must include political aims and ends, stops short of a discourse of the sublime, and in so doing he reinstates the ultimate power of an adjacent discourse, theology,

³³ De Bolla, p. 65.

³⁴ De Bolla, p. 72.

³⁵ De Bolla, p. 72.

³⁶ De Bolla, p. 72.

³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Will To Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 3rd edn., Robert Hurley, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 101.

³⁸ Christopher Stokes, *Coleridge, Language, and the Sublime: From Transcendence To Finitude* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 105.

which locates its own self-authenticating power firmly within the boundaries of godhead.³⁹

Burke's turn to theology as the ultimate legislative origin of the sublime has the effect of disempowering the spectator of his *Enquiry*. In this way, "self-authentication" comes not from the mastery of any subject but emanates from the very centre of the cosmic order, the creator. Placing God as the source of the sublime enacts a reading of power as being, in Foucauldian terms, literally everywhere. Such a theological limit, as the most intense manifestation of sublimity, comes within a text that pointedly resists the flow of power into one form of threatening excess. Crucially, De Bolla argues that the "internal resistances of Burke's text ... restrict the full play of this trope thereby defeating a description of the sublime experience uniquely in terms of an empowered subject".⁴⁰

Building on De Bolla's reading of Burke's aesthetic writing within an entire range of broader discourses present in the period of the Seven Years' War, this chapter foregrounds how the Burkean sublime not only engages with, but also provides a resolution for the polyvalent discursive crisis of effeminacy. So far in this study we have seen how effeminacy was an anxious and capacious discourse in the 1760s, signalling excess in social, economic, civic, and political writings. While, broadly speaking, effeminacy denoted an opposite position to manliness, it also could be taken to mean a hyper-masculinity and excessive heterosexual sexual appetite. By mid-century, this older meaning had become somewhat out-dated. Increasingly, effeminacy was connected to sodomy as well as to feminine behaviour, most apparent in the metropolitan club figure of the molly. Moreover, we have seen how in Wilkite politics the sodomitical comes to bear the full semantic meaning of effeminacy, with heterosexual erotic excess naturalised as a stabilising force. Significantly, and irrespective of any semantic shift, effeminacy always denotes a form of "excess" that generates its own form of crisis. Crucially, what we find is a cross over and deep imbrication between discourses on the sublime and discourses on effeminacy in this period; with both centering on and producing an excess that must be somehow discursively policed. Burke's writing on the sublime and beautiful restricts homoerotic effeminate excess in the experience of the sublime, while

³⁹ De Bolla, p. 72.

⁴⁰ De Bolla, p. 72.

obviating the enervation of excessive heteroerotic pleasure by making it socially constitutive.

De Bolla's analysis, concerned mostly with the rhetorical sublime, pivots on his self-enforced "hard concept" distinction "between a discourse on and a discourse of something [(i.e. the sublime)], in order to investigate the ways in which theories of the sublime function as theories".⁴¹ It is Burke's decision to locate the sublime in God that stops an otherwise leaky analysis from veering into the danger-laden discourse "of the sublime" and the self-authenticating subject that it engenders. More squarely than De Bolla, I attend to Burke's *Enquiry* with the aim of demonstrating how the Burkean sublime, in its recourse to theology as a legislative doctrinal arena, and in its account of an individual's bodily experience of sublimity, is itself responding to the polyvalent discursive crisis of effeminacy during the Seven Years' War. De Bolla's argument for Burke's total exclusion of the excess of the sublime contradicts his earlier reading of the sublime as a discourse that inevitably runs over, exceeding and preceding the boundaries of its own analytic constitution. My reading of Burke's *Enquiry* examines the sublime as a curiously effeminising experience, while also questioning the implications of this finding for readings — such as those by Terry Eagleton — which position Burke's aesthetic project as "indissociable from an emergent project of bourgeois political hegemony, [which redefined] the relations between that law and freedom, mind and the senses, individual and whole".⁴²

Stephen K. White has productively shown how Burke's early aesthetics comes to bear on his later political writings. White argues that Burke responds to the crises of the 1770s and 1780s in a way that laments the breaking down of the "natural, binary world of 1757, with its oppositions between sublime-masculine-public and beautiful-feminine-private".⁴³ While White's argument is important for foregrounding how Burke's "notions of the beautiful and sublime relate to a legitimate political order", I disagree that the *Enquiry* presents any sort of secure aesthetic dichotomy based on a stable world view.⁴⁴ In this chapter, I read Burke's aesthetic writing as a response to the discursive crisis of effeminophobia at the beginning of the Seven Years' War. Viewing Burke's aesthetics as a response to this

⁴¹ De Bolla, p. 111.

⁴² Terry Eagleton, "Aesthetics and Politics in Edmund Burke", *History Workshop*, No. 28 (Autumn, 1989), p. 54.

⁴³ Stephen K. White, "Burke on Politics, Aesthetics, and the Dangers of Modernity", *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Aug., 1993), p. 513.

⁴⁴ White, "Burke on Politics", p. 508.

crisis uncovers the way in which a displacement of passivity in mens' social and political arrangement is central to the ideological agenda of the treatise. The explication of the beautiful as the basis of social reality, as well as the physiological account of the sublime, works to legitimise the disempowering effeminate affect deployed in anxious accounts of bodily degeneracy; and of the body politic enervated by the increases in commercial luxury afforded by colonial expansion. In extending De Bolla's reading, this chapter traces the conflation of the discourse on the sublime and discourse of effeminacy in the *Enquiry*, seeking to demonstrate how Burke's resistance to excess is itself part of a broader engagement with a more pervasive and threatening discursive excess springing from effeminophobic narratives. If the sublime exceeded its own terms of analysis, it is worth pausing to consider how the figure of the sodomite in the 1760s, by and large a by-product of discursive anxieties regarding effeminacy, manifested a similar discursive overflow. This becomes evident when we consider how even a poem such as *The Times*, while constructing the sodomite as foreign, invariably produced the domestic sodomite as a form of discursive excess.

As should be clear thus far, discourses on sodomy and effeminacy in this period, whether civic, moral, political, or economic, were chiefly about the condemnation and de-legitimation of certain fashions, beliefs, cultures, and financial policies as enervative, excessive, corruptive or unnatural. We might say then that both the discourse on the sublime and these phobic discourses were bound up with a subject formation that operated through a division of the authentic from the illegitimate. The effeminate body is often construed as the inauthentic surface without substance. Burke is keen to dismiss anxious theories of enervation based on luxury or wealth. In the context of gendered imperial anxieties, the "ideological role and implications of Burke's theory" downplays the harmful effects of luxury.⁴⁵ While the moral and civic debates over luxury may seem like an inappropriate context in which to situate Burke's *Enquiry*, it is worth noting that formal and declared aesthetic theory in this period is "not primarily about art but about how we are formed as subjects and how as subjects we go about making sense of our

⁴⁵ Tom Furniss, *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender, and Political Economy in Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 19.

experience”.⁴⁶ Crucial to this subject formation is the rejection of the excess unwittingly produced by the discourse of the sublime. As Cameron McFarlane notes, this production is not a “reverse discourse” in the Foucauldian sense of the sodomite appropriating and redeploying the terms of his own phobic constitution, thus typifying a positive identity.⁴⁷ While sodomites and mollies do not claim identity, as such “identity” is not claimable in an eighteenth century context, McFarlane argues that the sodomophobic and effeminophobic discourses on sodomites and mollies prompted the distinction “between the observer and the observed, between subject and object to blur, to collapse”.⁴⁸ This problematic of an anxious blurring of distinction can be productively connected with the remedial affective process of sublime experience as outlined in the *Enquiry*. I contend that sodomy, read in legal terms as a penetrative attack on the male body, as well as those effeminophobic anxieties that are directed toward perpetrators of this ‘unnatural crime’, find resolution in Burke’s negotiation of excess. Moreover, Burke’s account of the sublime, in its recourse to a theological terminus, serves to disarm prevalent effeminophobia. By incorporating effeminate feelings of passivity and masochistic delight into the affect of the sublime, Burke normalises effeminacy as part of male subject formation.

Rendering luxury non-threatening and shifting the threat of male passivity from the intimate domain of the beautiful to that of the distant sublime feature as key engagements with the crisis of effeminacy during this period. Moreover, Burke’s working out of the passions of male society in the *Enquiry* ensures that pederastic asymmetries of power between men, fuelled by mistrust or even fear, can never be conducive to a functioning political society. Instead, Burke offers a version of the general society of men that is animated by a mutual love that is anathema to the type of asymmetry of power that would render a man effeminately subjected. The first part of this chapter reads Burke’s *Enquiry* in an attempt to show how his delineation of both the society of the sexes (heterosocial) and general society (homosocial) is invested in the disarming of the enervative affect of female beauty, as well as the disavowal of male passivity as a constitutive form for political participation. Having

⁴⁶ Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla (ed.). *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 2.

⁴⁷ Cameron McFarlane, *The Sodomite In Fiction & Satire, 1660-1750* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 22.

⁴⁸ McFarlane, pp. 22-23.

established how Burke's aesthetic writing engages with effeminophobic discourses, the second part of this chapter traces the influence of this aesthetic resolution on his theorising of party in the late 1760s. Querying Frank O'Gorman's view of Burke's early political writings as merely "echoing Rockingham's sentiments, not prompting them",⁴⁹ I argue that Burke's doctrine of party is heavily influenced by the homosocial aesthetic of his earlier treatise.

⁴⁹ O'Gorman, p. 26.

(4.2) Bitter Apples of Sodom: Edmund Burke's Taste and the Effeminising Sublime

Smells, and *Tastes*, have some share too, in ideas of greatness; but it is a small one, weak in its nature, and confined in its operations...It is true, that these affections of the smell and taste, when they are in full force, and lean directly upon the sensory, are simply painful, and accompanied with no sort of delight; but when they are moderated, and in a description or narrative, they become sources of the sublime as genuine as any other, and upon the very same principle of a moderated pain. "A cup of bitterness;" to drain the bitter "cup of fortune;" the bitter apples of "Sodom." These are all ideas suitable to a sublime description.⁵⁰

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about the terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure....when danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we ever day experience. The cause of this I shall investigate hereafter.⁵¹

In section II of the second part of his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke makes his case for a 'cause and effect' relation between visually terrible objects and our experience of the sublime.⁵² Burke categorises the sublime as "whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects".⁵³ However, not all terrifying experiences can be considered sublime, as Burke adds that "When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we everyday experience".⁵⁴ The sublime must always be at a distance from the male subject, if the experience is to cause delight, without delight the experience cannot be sublime. Burke goes to some length to distinguish the feelings of delight and pleasure, and this tenuous differentiation will be returned to at a later

⁵⁰ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 78.

⁵¹ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, pp. 36-37.

⁵² Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 53.

⁵³ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 36.

⁵⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, pp. 36-37.

point in the chapter's discussion of the *Enquiry* and effeminophobic discourse. What interests me here is the distance that Burke presents as a necessary precondition of the sublime experience. If "custom reconciles us to everything", as Burke later suggests, then the local or familiar cannot excite the delightful sublime. The paradox of the everyday sublime is somewhat resolved if we consider its imperial origin. In mid-century Britain, nothing else, perhaps, could excite more sublime feeling on a daily basis than media reports of the military successes and catastrophes of the Seven Years' War.⁵⁵

Section II of Part II, entitled "Terror", points more directly to this idea of the imperial sublime. Burke outlines how fear "robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning", before suggesting how the psychological affect of fear extends into the physiological condition of pain. He notes how "fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain".⁵⁶ It is worth noting here that when Burke writes about "cause and efficient cause", or what I term "affect" he means "affections of the mind, that cause certain changes in the body; or certain powers and properties in bodies, that work a change in the mind".⁵⁷ Therefore, affecting both body and mind, the terror of an object is not dependent on a "greatness of dimensions", which is exemplified by the fact that certain animals of small proportions, such as snakes, can still excite feelings of the sublime, irrespective of size. After delineating the relative unimportance of physical proportion to objects of terror, Burke details how an idea of terror can enhance our perception of vast spaces: "things of great dimensions, if we annex an adventitious idea of terror, they become with-out comparison greater".⁵⁸ To illustrate this, he contrasts "A level plain of a vast extent on land" with the "prospect of the ocean", which is described as an "object of no small terror".⁵⁹ The remainder of this section foregrounds the proposition that terror is the "ruling passion" of the sublime, a position Burke supports by positing a common semantic slippage, across various languages, between words that mean astonishment and words that mean terror.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ That the noise of artillery is listed as one of the most affectingly sublime sounds, tells us that for military conflict to be sublime, some measure of distance is necessary, as close proximity would render the encounter simply terrible. See Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 75.

⁵⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 75.

⁵⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 118.

⁵⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 118.

⁵⁹ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 118.

⁶⁰ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 118.

While “a vast extent of land . . . may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean” Burke pauses to ask if land “can ever fill the mind with any thing so great as the ocean itself?”.⁶¹ In the *Enquiry*, the sublimity of the sea far outstretches that of land, and it is this seemingly minor contrast that I wish to draw attention to as a starting point for my chapter’s discussion of Burke’s sublime and effeminophobic panic during the Seven Years’ War. What appears in section II as a quite casual affirmation of pelagic ‘sublimity’ has quite a different resonance when read in the context of the popular imperial anxieties of the 1750s. Burke’s *Enquiry* emerged at a time when many civic commentators were energetically establishing connections between luxury, ‘effeminacy’ and national degeneration in their diagnoses of an enervated body politic. Rather than celebrating ‘manly’ behaviour, the theatre of war frequently cast back a distorted image of an incompetent elite officer class. The narrative of Admiral John Byng (1704-1757), who was court-martialled and executed for his failure to secure the trading post of Minorca against the French in May 1756, presents an episodic example of how imperial anxieties became condensed into broader fears over manliness and its antithesis, effeminacy. Foppish effigies of Byng were burned in symbolic executions throughout the country, rehearsing the belief that Byng’s unmanliness had precipitated Minorca’s fall. The effeminophobic lampooning of generals for their unmanly failures functioned, with varying levels of success, in order to deflect criticism away from the more material shortcomings of Newcastle’s Administration.⁶²

While Byng’s effeminacy was seen as a social, moral and political failing, by 1763 Charles Churchill could write of the “sheep [’s] heart” and “turned back” of a similarly disgraced military figure, General George Sackville (*The Ghost*, I, 94).⁶³ The allusion to ‘a turned back’ indicates that the sodomitical was becoming aligned with the Burkean feminised social behaviours of ‘weakness’ and ‘timidity’.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 54.

⁶² Katherine Wilson makes the point that some extra-parliamentary campaigns *intensified* their attacks on the Government as a result of its attempt to foist blame onto figures like Byng. See Wilson, *The sense of the people*, p. 181.

⁶³ George Sackville Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville (1716-85), held the position of commander-in-chief of the British forces on the Rhine serving under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. At Minden in 1759, Sackville neglected the prince’s order to lead the British cavalry in pursuit of the French. Sackville was subsequently tried by court martial in 1760 and was found ‘unfit’ to serve in any military capacity. Churchill’s reference to Sackville is the first instance in his poetry of his recurring indictment against an aristocratic form of effeminacy, which differs from his earlier demarcation of a fribblish masculinity in *The Rosciad*.

⁶⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 106.

Burke's first political work, *A Vindication of Natural Society; or, a View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every Species of Artificial Society* (1756), implicitly criticised the extremes of effeminophobic political discourse. *A Vindication* was primarily a satire on the deist writings of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1687-1751), whose works had been posthumously published as *Letters on the Study and Use of History* (1752).⁶⁵ The text takes the form of a "letter" from a Noble Lord to a younger Lord who is about to enter political life. The Noble Lord writes from a retreat (perhaps because of political disgrace) advising the young man against entering politics. The Lord's critique of all social foundation leads, as Frank N. Pagano notes, to a preference for the 'state of nature'. Viewing civil society from this basis can engender the premise that "no society and no government are legitimate".⁶⁶ The irony of the text emerges from its critique of civil society and failure to vindicate natural society in any obvious way.⁶⁷ Broadly considered, Burke's animus in *A Vindication* falls on the premise that Reason alone can explain civil society. Yet the whole text is plagued by contradictions. In an obvious way, the Lord's advice to avoid political life is undermined by the letter, which is at its most basic level political discourse between male friends.⁶⁸

Though Pagano reads surface and concealed messages in Burke's *Vindication*, it would perhaps be adequate to accept that the text is not a straightforward satire on political cultures. It is difficult not to read the Noble Lord's comments on the effeminacy of the noble class without registering its particular social and military resonance in the late 1750s. Critiquing his own class, the Lord writes:

The ruling Nobility are no less afraid of one another, than they are of the People; and for that Reason, politically enervate their own Body by the same effeminate Luxury, by which they corrupt their Subjects. They are impoverished by every Means which can be invented; and they are kept in perpetual Terror by the Horrors of a State-inquisition; here you see a People deprived of all rational Freedom, and tyrannized over by about two thousand Men...⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Lock, *Edmund*, p. 82.

⁶⁶ Frank N. Pagano, "Burke's View of the Evils of Political Theory: Or, 'A Vindication of Natural Society'", *Polity*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Spring, 1985), p. 449.

⁶⁷ Pagano, p. 451.

⁶⁸ Pagano, p. 452.

⁶⁹ Edmund Burke, *A Vindication of Natural Society: or, a View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every Species of Artificial Society. In a Letter to Lord *** by a Late Noble Writer* (London, 1756) (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2010), p. 21.

If the ruling elite is effeminate it is an entirely calculated form of enervation. Rather than an effeminate loss of control, what is really being satirised here is an anxiety regarding control. Languishing in effeminacy is safer than attempting to hold onto sovereign power through assertion. This is exactly the point that John ‘Estimate’ Brown advances in *An Estimate*, albeit in a more serious manner: if everyone is effeminate, if effeminacy predominates, then it is harder to isolate and reform.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, a later anti-aristocratic passage explores how the complacency of the ruling nobility of the ‘Republic of Venice’ politically enervated the Body Politic; thus positioning aristocratic, rather than middle-class consumption, as the source of a broader degeneracy.⁷¹

In keeping with the internal ambivalence of the *Vindication*, the Lord’s later commentary on the ‘Republic of Athens’ implicitly criticises contemporary effeminophobic attacks on military commanders like Byng:

If they were unsuccessful, instead of growing wiser by their Misfortune, they threw the whole blame of their own Misconduct on the Ministers who had advised, and the Generals who had conducted those Wars; until by degrees they had cut off all who could serve them in their Council or their Battles.⁷²

It is difficult to see how this passage could have been read in isolation from civic and moral tracts like Brown’s that alarmingly diagnosed “effeminacy” as the basis of national enervation. A “Modern system of false Delicacy” has effeminised men to such an extent that patriotism is “no longer felt”, as “Effeminate minds cannot contain *public spirit* or *Love of our Country*”.⁷³ As a consequence, England’s imperial effort is left unmanned: “How few can arise, amidst this general *Dissipation* of Manners, capable of conducting its Fleats and Armies?”.⁷⁴ The logic of Brown’s paranoid view suggests that national effeminacy is caused by colonialism, which as a project serves to enervate the people to the point where assertion itself becomes impossible. In this way, colonialism ultimately undermines its own structures of dominance; England’s “common *Impotence*” will encourage French invasion.⁷⁵ Burke, as F. P. Lock notes, was entirely dismissive of the argument that national

⁷⁰ Conrad Brunström, “‘Be Male and Female Still’: An ABC of Hyperbolic Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century”, in *Presenting Gender: Changing Sex in Early-Modern Culture*, Chris Mounsey, ed. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), p. 39.

⁷¹ Burke, *A Vindication*, p. 39.

⁷² Burke, *A Vindication*, p. 23.

⁷³ John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (Dublin: G. Faulkner, J. Hoey, and J. Exshaw Booksellers, 1757), p. 63; Brown, *An Estimate*, pp. 41-2.

⁷⁴ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 79.

enervation stemmed from material prosperity.⁷⁶ If Brown and his readership feared that Britain's imperial activity was sinking manly vigour into a collective mood of "selfish Effeminacy", then Burke's aesthetic of the sublime sea might be implicitly aimed at recuperating Britain's imperial effort as a manly enterprise.⁷⁷

Burke's rejection of Brown's alarmist diagnosis was notably more direct in other contexts. Reviewing the second volume of the *Estimate* in *The Annual Register* (1758), he charges Brown with exploiting popular anxiety regarding the nation's recent military setbacks, which "infused so general a discontent into the minds of all people, that even a severe national satire was not then disagreeable to the public disposition".⁷⁸ In the review, Burke argues that the *Estimate* contributes nothing new to debates about the war, describing Brown's recourse to a paean for the lost virtue of the past as merely trite rhetorical flourish. In the review, Burke deals carefully and systematically with the content of both the first and second parts of Brown's *Estimate*. In doing so, he advances an anti-effeminophobic argument that unhinges the contradictions in Brown's diagnosis. Dismissing Brown's view of past ages as being somehow more virtuous than the present, Burke states that "the degeneracy of the times has been the complaint even of the times which we admire".⁷⁹ *The Annual Register* review echoes the arguments against Brown's *Estimate* put forward by Soame Jenyns in *Some Doubts*, with Burke pausing at times to underscore the illogic of Brown's cultural diagnosis, asking if society has always contained a "uniform progress of degeneracy how has [it] subsisted?".⁸⁰ The bulk of the response is spent detailing Brown's complaint that an "excess of delicacy" has destroyed "taste", be it in fashion, food or the visual and literary arts.⁸¹ Manly taste, in Brown's view, has been compromised by "excess", a predicament that renders music, poetry, painting and any form of artistic expression complicit with the growth of male effeminacy. While Burke strongly rejects this position, the scope of the review does not allow for any sort of thorough account of the manliness of contemporary taste.

It is highly likely that Brown's complaints about effeminate taste influenced Burke's changes to the second edition of the *Enquiry*, which was published a year

⁷⁶ Lock, *Edmund* p. 135.

⁷⁷ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 20.

⁷⁸ Anon, *The annual register, or a view of the history, politics, and literature, for the year 1758* 7th ed. (London: printed for J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, 1783), p. 444.

⁷⁹ Anon, *The annual*, p. 444.

⁸⁰ Anon, *The annual*, p. 444.

⁸¹ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 30.

later in 1759. Aside from some references to the criticism of reviewers such as Arthur Murphy, the most significant change to the treatise involved the addition of an ‘Introduction on Taste’. Arguing against David Hume’s assertion of the varying affects of beauty in “Dissertation IV: of the Standard of Taste”, in *Four Dissertations* (1757),⁸² Burke argues for a general uniformity of sense impressions upon people.⁸³ For Burke, the sense of taste is aligned with “natural pleasures” in so much as the sweetness of honey is pleasant, just as the bitterness of vinegar is considered unpleasant.⁸⁴ While causally demarcating this natural ordering of pleasures, Burke specifies that habit can render tobacco more preferable to some men than sugar, while others may even prefer the taste of vinegar to milk.⁸⁵ Accepting the force of habit on the senses, Burke argues that deviations from ‘natural pleasures’ are permissible and do not have the power to weaken the natural order of taste. Even if a man may prefer bitter to sweet, “he knows that habit alone has reconciled his palate to these alien pleasures”.⁸⁶

The faculty of sense is more complex, but the concept of a fixed sense ordering remains central to it:

On the whole it appears to me, that what is called Taste, in its most general acceptation, is not a simple idea, but is partly made up of a perception of the primary pleasures of sense, of the secondary pleasures of the imagination, and of the conclusions of the reasoning faculty, concerning the various relations of these, and concerning the human passions, manners and actions.⁸⁷

The “ground-work” of taste demarcated above is the same for all individuals and provides the foundation for Burke to reason on matters of taste.⁸⁸ However, even though this sense foundation is established, the qualities of ‘sensibility’ and ‘judgement’, which “compose what we commonly call a *Taste*, vary exceedingly in various people”.⁸⁹ A defect in sensibility leads to “a want of Taste”, while “a weakness” in judgement “constitutes a wrong or a bad [taste]”.⁹⁰ In developing this point, Burke contrasts a “cold, and phlegmatic” man who remains unaffected by the

⁸² David Hume, *Four dissertations. I. The natural history of religion. II. Of the passions. III. Of tragedy. IV. Of the standard of taste.* (London: printed for A. Millar, in the Strand, MDCCCVII. [1757]), p. 204.

⁸³ Locke, *Edmund*, pp. 116-117.

⁸⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 14.

⁸⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 14.

⁸⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 22.

⁸⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 22.

⁸⁹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 22.

⁹⁰ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 23.

most “striking objects”, with a man “used continually to the storms of ... violent and tempestuous passions”.⁹¹ Both categories present defective taste faculties that are equally problematic, yet the excessive passion of the latter man figures the effeminate excess that Brown rails against in his *Estimate*. In many ways, the insensible man signifies another extreme: that of excessive manly taste. Whether caused by insensibility or excessive passion, both men “become as stupid and insensible” as each other.⁹²

Burke’s discussion of ‘defective taste’ demonstrates the imbalance of Brown’s paranoid preoccupation with effeminate taste. In Burke’s account, both effeminate excess and manly insensibility register as equally problematic categories. Regardless of the acquired habits or defects of individuals, Burke is keen to show how the natural order of taste still subsists at its most basic level. Even though both men are ‘insensible’, Burke stresses that “natural elegance or greatness” affects them in the same way: “whenever either of these happen to be struck with any natural elegance or greatness, or with these qualities in any work of art, they are moved upon the same principle”.⁹³ Again, the natural order of taste is not corroded by the disposition or preference of either of these men, and ultimately still affects them, albeit in a limited way. Furthermore, the cause of “wrong Taste”, we are told, comes not from some unnatural force of enervation but from a defect of judgement, which can be attributed to either a “natural weakness of understanding” or “a want of proper and well-directed exercise”.⁹⁴ Nowhere in the ‘Introduction on Taste’ is there a sense that a man’s deviation from the natural order of the senses is corruptive or enervating. In Part II of the *Enquiry*, Section XXI, Burke expands on his introductory discussion of the sense of taste by outlining how excessively bitter tastes, when moderated in “a description or narrative” are “suitable to sublime description”.⁹⁵ He lists “the bitter apples of Sodom” as the type of sensory description that provokes sublimity.⁹⁶ This section provides the most literal example of how the sublime is figured in terms of sodomitical excess. The connection between sodomy and excess is an established rhetorical feature of the effeminophobic discourse of the period, yet Burke’s figuring of sodomy as sublime

⁹¹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 23.

⁹² Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 23.

⁹³ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 23.

⁹⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 23.

⁹⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 78.

⁹⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 78.

functions at varying levels to defuse the alarmist tenor of Brown's pronouncements in *An Estimate*.

Firstly, as we have seen, the spatial mechanics of sublimity ensure that its cause is always at a remove, and therefore unthreatening to the subject. Thus, at a very basic level, rendering the sodomitical sublime disarms the primary anxiety surrounding the sodomite — the threat of male rape. Moreover, it is no mistake that Burke chooses to figure sodomy in sublime terms in a section on the senses of taste and smell. While ostensibly writing about a literary experience of sublimity,⁹⁷ the sensory language of smell and taste redirects the discussion of literary sublimity back to the corporeal. Yet we might also say that figuring sodomy in terms of bitterness also prompts us to consider both the taste and the penetrative act, in light of Burke's discussion of man's "alien pleasures" in his "Introduction on Taste". If the bitter apples of Sodom underscore sodomy in descriptive terms as "bitter", then by Burke's logic, a man's preference for the sensation of bitterness over sweetness, however irregular, is merely an acquired preference. Read in this way, a man's taste for sodomitical pleasure does not constitute the perversion of any natural ordering of pleasures but should be considered as a permissible deviation from it.

The 1759 addition of the "Introduction on Taste" is, perhaps, the most obvious point for Burke's engagement with the extremities of effeminophobic anxiety, manifest in Brown's paranoia over excess in male delicacy. Yet, as Brunström notes, Brown's gendered nationalism connects him with the "aesthetic and sexual apartheid proclaimed by Burke's categories of the sublime and beautiful".⁹⁸ In Brunström's view, Brown presents the "absurd extremity of patterns of thinking made respectable by Adam Ferguson and Edmund Burke".⁹⁹ Brown's alarmist rhetoric reaches its highest pitch in his diagnosing a contemporary blurring of gender distinctions that has left men 'unmanned' and women "advanced into Boldness".¹⁰⁰ It is difficult to see how Burke's *Enquiry* makes this argument in any way respectable. While men are becoming increasingly effeminate in Brown's view, manly women, in a typically misogynistic formulation, are positioned as the real sources of male corruption. If anything, Burke's aesthetic writing challenged the

⁹⁷ It is likely that Burke had in mind John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), X, 547-72, which describes Sodom's "fruitage fair to sight", which "more delusive, not the touch, but taste / Deceived". See John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, John Leonard, ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 232.

⁹⁸ Brunström, "Be Male", p. 42.

⁹⁹ Brunström, "Be Male", p. 42.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *An Estimate*, p. 34.

very illogic of Brown's analysis. In thinking about how Burke might be responding to Brown and to a more general mood of gender crisis, it is tempting to read the sublime and beautiful in reductively gendered terms as demarcating masculine and feminine positions. In this way, we might see Burke's gender apartheid of the sublime and beautiful as a response to the gender crisis of the *Estimate*. Yet this reading runs the risk of occluding the insecurity of gender in Burke's *Enquiry*. While Burke's aesthetic writing is undoubtedly shaped by the alarmist tenor of Brown's *Estimate*, we need to carefully trace how such phobia is worked out in the main analysis of the *Enquiry*, not only in terms of Taste, but more complexly, in relation to the problematic of the sublime itself.

Extending De Bolla's reading of the Burkean sublime's formation of subjectivity, Furniss argues that Burke's aesthetic writing "draws on, and attempts to intervene within, an ideological struggle in eighteenth-century Britain which came to a head in the war years of 1756-63".¹⁰¹ Considering Burke's approach to the sublime as a discursive construct, he argues that sublimity in the *Enquiry* is not ahistorical or culturally deracinated, but is instead deeply enmeshed in the historical, political, social and cultural issues of 1750s.¹⁰² Furniss has persuasively argued that the Burkean sublime has a wider importance as an authenticating narrative for the political and economic projects of the rising middle-class.¹⁰³ According to Furniss:

One of the problems which faced the middle-class in the eighteenth century was to make individual ambition appear both socially beneficial and natural It also needed to articulate an ethos which prompted the kind of labour needed to achieve its ambitions and to justify the recruitment of labourers into agricultural and eventually industrial capitalism.¹⁰⁴

As discussed in earlier chapters, individual ambition and the entrepreneurial drive for economic prosperity prompted narratives of crisis that connected sordid colonialism with the dreaded cultural degeneration attributed to effeminate manners. The opportunistic, individualist entrepreneurial nature of much of eighteenth-century imperial warfare raised anxieties about the corruption of the self.

¹⁰¹ Furniss, p. 19.

¹⁰² Furniss, p. 28.

¹⁰³ Furniss, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Furniss, p. 32.

In Furniss's analysis, the Burkean sublime provides one way for the middle-classes to underscore their interests as separate to those of the aristocratic and elitist sections of society often targeted in anxious narratives of decadence:

That which is thought to literally threaten self or state in this period is "luxury"- which the middle class, at this point, strenuously sought to distinguish itself from and repudiate. In this mind set, as we will see, the beautiful becomes associated with the luxury which was thought to threaten the emerging middle class not only from above and below — through the aristocracy and the labouring poor — but from a fatal tendency within its own ethos. The sublime can therefore be seen as an aesthetic means through which the bourgeois thought establishes itself, in the face of the charges of luxury brought against it by traditional writers, as the locus of individual effort and virtue. The labour which generates the sublime (or which the sublime generates) therefore provides the middle class with the self-image which denies individual and collective luxury of the upper and lower classes.¹⁰⁵

Here he suggests how the Burkean sublime at once functions to reinvigorate the masculine subject, while simultaneously serving to define and suppress the feminine in "the discourse, which ushers in the bourgeois capitalist epoch".¹⁰⁶ Central to Furniss's reading is the densely worked concept of a sublime form of competitive labour that is reactionary and even antagonistic to the beautiful. In his reading, the sublime is always working ahead of the sphere of the beautiful, "staving off [its] devastating effects" and providing a means of resistance that facilitates the very "civilization" that beauty threatens to undermine.¹⁰⁷ Sublimity is competitive, and unlike the beautiful, is not experienced through sympathy with others, but instead in "competition against, and at the *expense* of, other human beings".¹⁰⁸ The competitiveness of the sublime is importantly contrasted with the socialising force of the beautiful. What this means then is that feelings of feminine weakness are not socialising, and do not engender relational bonds, which only properly emerge from perceptions of weakness. Furniss reads the 'competitive sublime' as the main plank in Burke's aesthetic argument for legitimating the commercial middle-class.

Responding to Furniss's reading of the sublime as unsympathetically competitive, Luke Gibbons has cautioned against any unproblematic reduction of the Burkean sublime to the ideological agenda of legitimising the commercialism engendered through colonial expansion. Gibbons advises reading Burke's sublime as

¹⁰⁵ Furniss, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ Furniss, p. 41.

¹⁰⁷ Furniss, p. 38.

¹⁰⁸ Furniss, p. 38.

a “sympathetic sublime”, which amounts to a less assured strand in what he terms the “Celtic social theory” that emerged from Scottish Enlightenment writings on sympathy.¹⁰⁹ For Gibbons, writings on sympathy and the sublime in this period are not just British Enlightenment discourses but are in fact “distinctively *Scottish* and *Irish* contributions to modern philosophy”.¹¹⁰ ‘Scottish sympathy’ and the ‘Irish sublime’ present conflicting enthusiastic and dubious narratives for colonialism at mid-century. In this way, he reads important differences between the “sympathy” of Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and Burke’s physiological account of the sublime:

While Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* was instrumental in negotiating the moral and psychological grounds for a civic investment in colonialism, Burke’s *Enquiry* was less sure of its own ground, its concern with terror laying the basis for a fraught engagement with the anxieties of empire, whether generated by the religious bigotry of Ireland, the plunder of Warren Hastings in India, or the sordid excesses of British military policy during the American Revolution.¹¹¹

‘Sympathy’, in Gibbons’s view, derives from the experience of displacement and the challenge of living with the “presence of another within one’s own sphere of existence”.¹¹² Confronted with the task of providing the means for Scottish cultural integration into Britain after the failed 1745 Jacobite rebellion, Smith’s ‘sympathy’ provided the philosophical equivalent of the Ossianic literary agenda attacked by Churchill in *The Ghost* and *The Prophecy of Famine*. Through his philosophical writing of sympathy, Smith counsels Scots not to dwell on the wounds of political defeat, but instead to “cultivate an emotional reserve and a stoic-like bearing”, which will open up the expanding English colonial field for Scottish participation.¹¹³ Against the xenophobic rendering of the Scottish swains ‘on the make’ that we find in poems like Churchill’s *Prophecy*, Adam Smith’s *Moral Sentiments* philosophically reassures that while “the race for wealth” is in progress, all participants share the same ethical boundaries:

In the race for wealth, and honours, and preferments, he may run as hard as he can, and strain every nerve and muscle, in order to outstrip all his competitors. But if he should jostle, or throw down any of them, the indulgence of the spectators is entirely at an end. It is a violation of fair play, which they cannot

¹⁰⁹ Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Colonial Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 89.

¹¹⁰ Gibbons, p. 89.

¹¹¹ Gibbons, p. 88.

¹¹² Gibbons, p. 89.

¹¹³ Gibbons, p. 84.

admit of... They readily, therefore, sympathize with the natural resentment of the injured, and the offender becomes so, and feels that those sentiments are ready to burst out from all sides against him.¹¹⁴

Even if entryist Scots have “sense to get, what we want sense to keep”, as Churchill begrudgingly puts it, Smith’s “sympathy” reassures that all unfair entrepreneurial and social advancement is kept ethically in check by the spectator — individual and collective — who will always sympathise with the injured party (*The Prophecy*, 216). Gibbons’s elaboration of a Scottish or Celtic social theory is reinforced by the earlier reading of the varying polemical successes and frustrations involved in negotiating the importance of the Celtic fringes to the British colonial project in *The Briton* and *The Auditor*. Gibbons’s point again reminds us that nationality comes to bear on what are purportedly ‘universal’ Enlightenment discourses. While Smollett could confidently assert Scottish centrality in British colonialism, and thus claim ‘Britishness’ for Scotland, Murphy’s reticence about his own Irishness provided the basis for a Wilkite delegitimation of his role as auditor of political debate.

Smith’s sympathy is based on the performative model of stoic-like endurance that encourages imitation. Importantly, this is a model that allows the Christian spectator to look benevolently upon his fellow men in distress without the impress of material intervention. In Smith’s moral philosophy, an individual’s ethical faculty comes with the provision of the “impartial spectator”, an imaginatively constructed “great inmate of the breast” or demigod who objectively reflects back to the spectator, the propriety of his social actions.¹¹⁵ Curbing the emotional excesses of social behaviour generates praise among one’s fellow men, and in this way the happiness of society is achieved when the approval of the impartial spectator is confirmed by the actual approval of real spectators.¹¹⁶ D. D. Raphael notes how the conscience, operating through the construction of the ‘impartial spectator’, is closely tied to the issue of self-control.¹¹⁷ Self-control is achieved by “adjusting ... feelings to those of actual spectators” in so much as men learn to act like other men in order to win the praise of other men.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, eds. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc: 1982), p. 83.

¹¹⁵ Smith, p. 134.

¹¹⁶ D. D. Raphael, *The Impartial Spectator: Adam Smith’s Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 39-40.

¹¹⁷ Raphael, p. 40.

¹¹⁸ Raphael, p. 42.

In contrast, Burke's theorising of the social passions in the *Enquiry* puts the spectator firmly in the place of the subject observed:

For sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected; so that this passion may either partake of the nature of those which regard self-preservation, and turning upon pain may be a source of the sublime; or it may turn upon ideas of pleasure; and then, whatever has been said of the social affections, whether they regard society in general, or only some particular modes of it, may be applicable here.¹¹⁹

As Gibbons puts it: "against Smith's 'willed uninvolvedness' and its deference to the stranger, whether without or within, Burke has little doubt that the only genuine solace in times of affliction was that to be had from the ministrations of those closest to us".¹²⁰ Social community must be part of, not apart from, the subject formation. Yet the affect of sympathy, in its dissolve of the boundaries of subjectivity, requires policing. Curiously, "the effects of Sympathy" in Burke's view, merge feelings of pleasure and delight, thus rendering the sublime and beautiful affectively linked: "for terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close, and pity is a passion accompanied with pleasure, because it arises from love and social affection".¹²¹ Moreover, as Gibbons points out, it is in the articulation of this key concept of sympathy that Burke's dichotomy of the sublime and beautiful becomes unhinged.¹²² Acknowledging the plethora of critical readings of the sublime as an individualist aesthetic characterised by safety and self-preservation, Gibbons questions why sympathy may not be read as "a potential source of disruption and social change".¹²³ Elaborating on this point, he gestures toward the function of a Burkean "sympathetic sublime", which rejects the "voyeuristic detachment" afforded by pictorial description, or the frozen image, and forces the spectator's, or rather, the listener's reconsideration of the indeterminacy of language itself, with the effects of words upon the imagination as a primary generator for sympathetic feelings.¹²⁴

In the "sympathetic sublime" immunity from danger is not smugness, but a necessary precondition of the spectator's approaching danger in the first instance.¹²⁵ As Burke suggests, the sublime feeling of 'delight' that is engendered by scenes of

¹¹⁹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 41.

¹²⁰ Gibbons, p. 102.

¹²¹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 42.

¹²² Gibbons, p. 108.

¹²³ Gibbons, pp. 108-109.

¹²⁴ Gibbons, p. 109.

¹²⁵ Gibbons, p. 110.

distress is not any usual ‘delight’ but is “blended with no small uneasiness”.¹²⁶ It is exactly this modified ‘delight’ that renders the scene pleasurable and uneasy at the same time, which, “prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer”.¹²⁷ What is intriguing here is that in Burke’s outlining of the passions that form society — pure delight — the kind that the male subject encounters in sublime experience proper, is denied power as a socialising force. We might even say that the kind of “aesthetics of intervention” that Gibbons finds to be at the heart of Burke’s theorising of sympathy is propelled by the need to make feelings of delight register as active as opposed to passive; to render delight more like the positive pleasure that overwhelms the male gaze when confronted with the most potently erotic scenes of partial female beauty.

Burke’s qualifying of delight as a feeling “not ... unmixed” allows for the sublime — or a version of the sublime — to become socially engaged. Thus, mixed delight, as a socialising force is not problematic, as the male subject does not dwell on this feeling, but instead intervenes in the crisis, thus reaffirming his agency. If delight were to remain unmixed, intervention would not only be sluggish, or unforthcoming, but the entire range of socialising force would be extended to include male feelings of subjection as a basis of social arrangement. In this way, ‘mixed delight’ obviates one of the key dangers in rendering the sublime a socialising force: the reproduction of pederastic asymmetries of power as the relational basis for homosocial community. In varying ways, both Smith and Burke advance social theories that ensure that the asymmetrical relationship of power, deemed to be the base of sodomitical relations, is kept from becoming socially constitutive. In Smith’s *Moral Sentiments* it is the impartial spectator who conditions against men languishing in feelings of passivity. In Burke’s *Enquiry*, the entire theoretical architecture deployed to assess the sublime is structured with this aim in mind. The modification of delight before investing the sublime with social force is one such aim. The rendering of beauty as the basis of societal generation also threatens to be effeminising. As Furniss notes, beauty itself is dangerous as it operates by “arousing no sense of difficulty or resistance”, affording the male subject with “nothing to

¹²⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 43.

¹²⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 43.

labour against” and thus with no power struggle, and therefore no ready means of self-constitution.¹²⁸

Outlining how the subject, the spectator of the *Enquiry*, is repeatedly forced into the self-constituting activity of labour in his “retreat from the ‘feminine’”, Furniss pauses to foreground how the evasion of the beautiful, afforded by the sublime, curiously involves not a refusal of all passivity, but merely a shift in the modality of the male subject’s passive experience. Furniss notes how the sublime is underwritten by the precondition of the subject’s passing through a stage of passivity:

Yet as we have seen this process involves passing through a moment of ‘feminized’ weakness or passivity which is transcended through having recourse to an audacious ruse or metaphor — Burke’s strenuous efforts to distinguish ‘positive’ pleasure from ‘delight’ may hint at a more mutually constitutive relationship between the ‘sublime’ and the ‘beautiful’.¹²⁹

The chief irony of sublime experience uncovered here involves the constitution of male subjectivity through the disavowed experience of its supposed opposite: feminised weakness. Inherent in Furniss’s reading is the contradiction between the purpose of the sublime as an escape route from the beautiful and the actual workings of its internal feminising force. Yet, rather than read this force as the return of the beautiful at a crucial stage of sublime experience, we might see this phase as the subject’s *tacit* acceptance of an exchange of feminine enervation for the pure delight of momentary effeminate passivity. In this way, evading the excesses of beauty for men circuitously leads them back to an inescapable passivity, an emotional state that affords the pleasurable affect of delight.

Read in terms of this dynamic, the masculine sublime, as “an escape from the fatal stasis” of ‘luxury’, confronts and redeploys passivity as a crucial stage in the journey to male selfhood.¹³⁰ Developing Furniss’s reading of Burke’s *Enquiry*, we can see how the sublime not only engages with, but actually incorporates the very passive experience of subjection that registers as the somatic manifestation of a broader social, political and, indeed, cultural decadence. Sublimity, with its negative pleasure of delight, resonates with the negative passivity of effeminacy. However, such male passivity cannot form a social relation as it is experienced in singular terms. Furniss’s view of the beautiful as presenting no interpretive difficulties is countered by Frances Ferguson’s incisive reading, which productively underscores

¹²⁸ Gibbons, p. 39.

¹²⁹ Gibbons, p. 39.

¹³⁰ Gibbons, p. 25.

how Burke's "beheaded woman" — the epitome of beauty — overwhelms the male spectator, in so much as female "deceit is not less powerful for having no rational or volitional origins".¹³¹

Developing this reading in Foucauldian and Deleuzian terms, Peter Cosgrove first reads Burke's separating out of the sublime and beautiful in terms of Gilles Deleuze's "equally daring uncoupling of masochism from sadism".¹³² While female beauty and the 'clear image' appear to present no (physical or cognitive) threat to the male subject, he argues that the *Enquiry* plays out a "struggle", one that is biographical and political: "between a maternal heterocosm and the patriarchal principles of the sublime".¹³³ According to Cosgrove, Burke's shattering of the image-making faculty in sublime experience can be considered as commensurate with the historical shift outlined by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) from a mass policing of the population based on 'spectacle' to a regime of bodily self-regulation through 'exercise'. In the gendered politics of the 1750s the Burkean sublime provides a defence of male social order, as "a sociopolitical counterformation to the enervating threat of a matriarchy".¹³⁴ Both Ferguson and Cosgrove advance important readings of the *Enquiry* that foreground the implicit hazards of rendering the beautiful conceptually unproblematic. As Ferguson puts it, in focusing squarely on the sublime, we as spectators and readers "[fail] to recognize that what we term the weaker [beauty] has greater sway over us than the sublime with its palpably awesome force".¹³⁵ However, we should note that Burke is entirely explicit about the force of the beautiful. It is only when beauty is rendered a social force, and fully embodied in women, that its full power is communicated to us.

The reading of Burkean beauty as masochistically resistant can be productively queried in light of queer theoretical considerations of the erotic practice of S/M. In *Homos* (1995), Leo Bersani productively describes how participants in S/M role-play often reverse the positions of sadist and masochist; resulting in a performative flexibility that brings into sharp relief the question of power's close relationship with self-negation:

¹³¹ Frances Ferguson, *Solitude And The Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 51.

¹³² Peter Cosgrove, "Edmund Burke, Gilles Deleuze, and the Subversive Masochism of the Image", *ELH*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), p. 405.

¹³³ Cosgrove, p. 419.

¹³⁴ Cosgrove, p. 425.

¹³⁵ Ferguson, p. 53.

The reversibility of roles in S/M does more than disrupt the assignment of fixed positions of power and powerlessness (as well as the underlying assumptions about the natural link between dominance and particular racial or gendered identities). From that reversibility we may also conclude that perhaps inherent in the very exercise of power is the temptation of its renunciation — as if the excitement of a hyperbolic self-assertion, of an unthwarted mastery over the world and, more precisely, brutalization of the other, were inseparable from an impulse of self-dissolution.¹³⁶

The reversibility of S/M roles that Bersani describes throws into sharp relief the very tension of Burke's sublime experience: the excitement of a "hyperbolic self-assertion" twinned with an impulse toward "self-dissolution". While it is tempting to read the beautiful as a site of "masochistic formation", which serves as the 'real' anxiety of the *Enquiry*, unlike the dominant and passive positions of S/M, Burke's account of the sublime and beautiful is not role-play. There can be no role reversal for the positions of sublime and beautiful, and furthermore, we might add that unlike the sublime, which the male subject feels, beauty is not something that can be felt, but only known by its affect. Beauty is never an occupied position in the *Enquiry*, and as readers we are never given a sense of what being beautiful feels like. To an extent, this is also true of sublime experience, yet the entire force of the sublime is shown to be constitutive of the self, in so much as feeling sublime becomes, for a moment at least, being sublime. This is never the case for beauty. In fact, the only masochism to be found in the *Enquiry* involves sublime experience.

Ana de Freitas Boe's careful reading of Burke's anxiety over male beauty has shown how beauty as a category actually remains un-gendered for much of the treatise.¹³⁷ While there are difficulties with reading a straightforward gendered dichotomy in *A Philosophical Enquiry*, it is nonetheless clear that a process of gendering is operative throughout the treatise. Building on Alexander Pope's figuring of lust as the basis of society in Epistle III of *An Essay on Man* (121-135), Burke writes:

The passion which belongs to generation, merely as such, is lust only; this is evident in brutes, whose passions are more un-mixed, and which pursue their purposes more directly than ours. The only distinction they observe with regard to their mates, is that of sex. It is true, that they stick severally to their own species in preference to all others. But this preference, I imagine, does not arise from any sense of beauty which they

¹³⁶ Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 96.

¹³⁷ Ana De Freitas Boe, "Neither Is It at All Becoming": Edmund Burke's *A Philosophic Enquiry, the Beautiful, and the Disciplining of Desire*", Queer People V, Cambridge United Kingdom, July 2008 (unpublished conference paper).

find in their species But man, who is a creature adapted to a greater variety and intricacy of relation, connects, with the general passion, the idea of some *social* qualities, which direct and heighten the appetite which he has in common with all other animals; and he is not designed like them to live at large, it is fit that he should have something to create a preference, and fix his choice; and this in general should be some sensible quality; as no other can so quickly, so powerfully, or so surely produce its effect. The object therefore of this mixed passion which we call love, is the *beauty* of the sex. Men are carried to the sex in general, as it is the sex, and by the common law of nature; but they are attached to particulars by personal *beauty*.¹³⁸

While brutes only adhere to distinctions of sex and species, the social, or what Burke terms man's "intricacy of relation", works on the affect of beauty, which "connects with the general passion" some "*social qualities*" that serve to "direct and heighten" the sexual appetite that is common to both man and animal.¹³⁹ Men are "carried to the sex [women]" because of the "common law of nature", and it is an attraction to the particulars of "personal *beauty*" that helps them to fix their social-sexual choice.¹⁴⁰

Contrary to Pope's assertion that "Reflection, Reason, still the ties improve" (*Essay on Man*, III, 133) 'Reason' seemingly does not have a formative part in Burke's heterosocial order. As we are told, this social ordering of the sexes is pre-rational and based on the "common law of nature", which is analogous to the foundation of 'natural pleasures' referred to in the "Introduction on Taste". Yet, Reason does guide men in the self-management of their erotic impulses. Burke makes clear that the frustration of the pleasures of the society of the sexes, the gratification of heteroerotic desire, causes no "great pain", that the "absence of [this] pleasure [is] not attended with any considerable pain".¹⁴¹ Moreover, men are "guided by reason in the time and manner of indulging them".¹⁴² Whereas brutes obey "laws", natural laws, which condition their "inclination" to emerge during "stated seasons", it is through the operation of the reasoning faculty that men direct their own pleasures. Extending on Pope's elevation of "Reason . . . o'er Instinct", Burke foregrounds how pleasure is always within man's control (*Ibid*, 97). Mankind's ability to exercise Reason as a self-controlling device prevents over-indulgence in

¹³⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 39.

¹³⁹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁰ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 39.

¹⁴¹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 39.

¹⁴² Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 38.

the “pleasures of love”.¹⁴³ In this way, Reason ensures that the effeminacy brought about by an over-active heterosexual appetite is avoided. What is emphasised is pleasure, and in particular, hetero pleasure, in and of itself.

Whereas personal beauty encourages men towards individual women, beauty is more capaciously conceived of as:

A social quality; for where women and men, and not only they, but when other animals give us a sense of joy and pleasure in beholding them, (and there are many that do that) they inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them, unless we should have strong reasons to the contrary.¹⁴⁴

Crucially then, beauty is first introduced as a “social quality” that is not limited to the cross-sex gaze. Not only women, but also men, children and animals can excite “love”, which causes feelings of tenderness and affection.¹⁴⁵ Having outlined how beauty is a socialising force in the first part of the *Enquiry*, Burke spends much of the third part limiting the erotic pleasure of the beautiful to the bodies of women. While men may excite the “love” of other men, this “love” is devoid of erotic feeling:

We shall have a strong desire for a woman of no remarkable beauty; whilst the greatest beauty in men, or in other animals, though it causes love, yet excites nothing at all of desire. Which shews that beauty, and the passion caused by beauty, which I call love, is different from desire, though desire may sometimes operate along with it.¹⁴⁶

While beauty is grounded as a property of certain bodies, which causes “love, or some passion similar to it”, Burke ensures that only female bodies excite love that is mixed with desire.¹⁴⁷ While this may seem like an unremarkable, and indeed, unavoidable qualification, it determines Burke’s vision of social order. Importantly, keeping social order largely independent of procreative instinct ensures that heterosexuality itself is not entirely reducible to its procreative function. Moreover, Burke’s entire reading of beauty in the third part of the *Enquiry* rests on disinvesting male beauty of desire. If utility, proportion, or fitness determined beauty then the male body would be “much more lovely than women; and strength and agility would be considered as the only beauties”.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 83.

¹⁴⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 106.

¹⁴⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 96.

Burke's discussion of deformity is particularly interesting when read in dialogue with Hume's comments on beauty in "Of the Standard of Taste". For Hume, beauty exists only in the mind and cannot be assessed as a "quality in things themselves":

Beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment...¹⁴⁹

In contrast to Hume's libertarian aesthetic, Burke argues that deformity is not the opposite of beauty but of "*compleat, common form*".¹⁵⁰ Rather than allow individual sentiments free range, the import of Burke's discussion of deformity demonstrates a clear divide between the positive pleasure of beauty and its absolute opposite: "*ugliness*".¹⁵¹ Between the beautiful and the ugly exists a "sort of mediocrity, in which the assigned proportions are most commonly found, but this has no effect upon the passions".¹⁵² This grey area between beauty and ugliness ensures that when confronted with beauty, our passions are uniformly moved. In contrast to Hume then, Burke advances a concept of beauty as both grounded in bodies and uniformly affective: "beauty is for the greater part, some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses".¹⁵³

Rather than read the *Enquiry* as simply presenting a gendered apartheid, we should acknowledge how Burke's delineation of the sublime and beautiful contributes to complex and interrelated discursive processes of gender and nation formations at mid-century. Part Three of the *Enquiry* culminates in the grounding of erotic beauty in the bodies of women. In arguing that 'perfection' is not the cause of 'beauty', Burke supports the claim with the observation that women "learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness" in a performative effort to appear more feminine, and ultimately more desirable.¹⁵⁴ Beauty in distress is "the most affecting", and aware that beauty involves weakness or imperfection, women, as "guided by nature" regulate their behaviour accordingly.¹⁵⁵ In this way, performed delicacy or weakness is what constitutes a beautiful female body. We

¹⁴⁹ Hume, p. 209.

¹⁵⁰ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 93.

¹⁵¹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 95.

¹⁵² Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 95.

¹⁵³ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 102.

¹⁵⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 100.

¹⁵⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 100.

know that this weakness is, indeed, performed because Burke clearly states that any real weakness, such as that which arises from ill health, has no “share in beauty”.¹⁵⁶ In delineating a range of recognisably feminine behaviours, Burke is in many ways theorising what Judith Butler terms “intelligible genders”.¹⁵⁷ Rather than presenting the beautiful as feminine, Burke’s deconstruction of the beautiful says more about his awareness of the socially constructed basis of both gender and the gendered structuring of desire.

Indeed, a recurring tension evident throughout the *Enquiry* involves the discussion of beauty as both learned behaviour and an inherent property of bodies. The serpentine “S” line, identified by Hogarth in *The Analysis of Beauty* as “that [which] leads the eye a wanton kind of chace” and that gives pleasure, is found in the *Enquiry* in the curve of a woman’s neck and in the swell of her breast.¹⁵⁸ While agreeing with Hogarth’s line of beauty *S*, Burke queries the idea that this particular line is always to be found in “the most completely beautiful”.¹⁵⁹ Burke, as Ronald Paulson notes, “dissociates himself from Hogarth’s epistemology of pursuit (Addison’s Novel)”.¹⁶⁰ In Chapter V of Hogarth’s *Analysis*, it is literally the hair on a woman’s head that is most arousing: “The most amiable in itself is the flowing curl; and the many waving and contrasted turns of naturally intermingling locks ravish the eye with the pleasure of the pursuit, especially when they are put in motion by a gentle breeze”.¹⁶¹ While still describing the beautiful in terms of variety, the idea of pursuit is curiously understated, if at all present, in Burke’s version of female beauty. Unlike the tousled hair of Hogarth’s passing women, the woman in the *Enquiry* is observed in a much more intimate and stationary relation to the spectator:

Observe that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness; the easy and insensible swell; the variety of the surface, which is never for the smallest space the same; the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried. Is not this a demonstration of that change of surface continual

¹⁵⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 106.

¹⁵⁷ Gender for Judith Butler amounts to “the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts [or behaviours that operate] within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being”. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 45-46.

¹⁵⁸ William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, Ronald Paulson, ed. (New Haven: Yale, 1997), p. 33.

¹⁵⁹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 105.

¹⁶⁰ Hogarth, p. xlvi.

¹⁶¹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 34.

and yet hardly perceptible at any point which forms one of the great constituents of beauty?¹⁶²

The most intensely affective form of beauty then, for Burke, is engendered through the cross-sex gaze, which excites love mixed with desire. Peter Cosgrove reads this passage as evidencing “a complex fear of matriarchal rule”: “It is not merely variation that arouses Burke’s anxieties but the simulation of power in an object too small to evoke the terror of the sublime”.¹⁶³ A reading of a woman’s breasts as producing anxiety must be reconciled with the fact that an aim of the *Enquiry* is to show that, while clearly disorientating, beauty is ultimately a relaxing experience. Moreover, Burke is quite clear that the power of an object is not dependent on its proportions, providing the example of the snake as a small creature that still produces feelings of terror. In contrast to Hogarth’s flowing curls, the fluctuating line of beauty is, according to Burke: “a very insensible deviation [that] never varies ... so quickly as to surprise, or by the sharpness of its angle to cause any twitching or convulsion of the optic nerve”.¹⁶⁴ While not denying that the beautiful is powerful, it would seem that Burke’s unique and timely intervention in these debates is not to disarm the enervating force of the beautiful, nor render its transport less powerful, but curiously to intensify its emasculating power.

In addition to this, in “Section XVII: Beauty in Colour” of part three of the *Enquiry*, Burke circumscribes the production of this affect to the bodies of white women by stating: “the colours of beautiful bodies must not be dusky or muddy, but clean and fair”.¹⁶⁵ Later, in the fourth part of the *Enquiry*, Burke reinforces this point with the anecdote of a blind boy, who having regained his sight was purportedly horrified “upon accidentally seeing a negro woman”.¹⁶⁶ The import of this passage is a rejection of Locke’s theory of the association of ideas. In this regard, the boy’s reaction — having never formed an idea of black skin by association — instances the “natural operation” of darkness.¹⁶⁷ Blackness, in and of itself, is not even a colour, and only gains definition from its proximity to coloured bodies. “Black bodies” are “vacuities” in our field of vision. While we might assume that Burke is positioning blackness as a source of the sublime, he concludes his discussion with Section XVIII

¹⁶² Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 105.

¹⁶³ Cosgrove, p. 414.

¹⁶⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 140.

¹⁶⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 106.

¹⁶⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 131.

¹⁶⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 131.

entitled “The effects of BLACKNESS moderated”. Implicitly carrying forward the anecdote of the boy, Burke states that after the initial shock of encountering a “black body”, custom will work to “reconcile us” to the image.¹⁶⁸ While blackness always has “something melancholy in it”, custom will work to “soften in some measure the horror and sternness of their original nature”.¹⁶⁹ Having delineated the beauty of women as a socialising force, Burke’s discussion of blackness serves to simultaneously disavow the racial other as capable of either the affects of lasting terror or love.

Rather than female beauty causing uneasiness, Burke’s major anxieties surround male beauty and the beauty of the black body. The disavowal of the homoerotic, as a form of desire, along with the affect of the racial “other” hinges on the working out of pleasure and pain. Significantly, the *Enquiry* begins with the delineation of the difference between the emotive boundaries of pleasure and delight. Pain and pleasure are “each of a positive nature” yet they feature as quite distinct experiences.¹⁷⁰ Positive pleasure, which is defined as both *inward* sensation and *external* quality, is not activated by a removal of pain or terror.¹⁷¹ The emotional state that naturally follows the cessation of pain or terror is labelled delight. Such a distinction enables Burke to separate the emotive ranges of the sublime and beautiful; however, his distinguishing of positive pleasure from delight is rather tenuous, regardless of how buried it becomes as the treatise progresses.¹⁷² Both pain and pleasure feature as passions, which are formative of society, with the passions belonging to “self-preservation” turning on pain or danger, while those of pleasure belong to “*generation*”.¹⁷³ The “society of the sexes”, which “answers the purposes of propagation”, is distinguished by Burke from a “more *general society*, which we have with men and with other animals, and which we may in some sort be said to have even with the inanimate world”.¹⁷⁴ *A Vindication of Natural Society* presents a similar distinction between a heterosocial natural society, formed through the “mutual Desires of the Sexes” and a political society, which is transformative and

¹⁶⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 135.

¹⁶⁹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 135.

¹⁷⁰ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 30.

¹⁷¹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 33.

¹⁷² Tom Furniss has noted how Burke’s vigorous efforts to distinguish positive pleasure from delight may hint at a more mutually constitutive, rather than incommensurable relationship, between the sublime and beautiful. See Furniss, p. 39.

¹⁷³ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 37.

exists in men's relations with other men: "Man as he enters it, either has, or soon attains the Spirit of the whole Body".¹⁷⁵ If the desire which Burke sees pulsating through natural society is heteroerotic, then the logic of his separation of natural and artificial society suggests that political culture is animated by some other unspecified desire.

One productive term for this implicit desire might be found in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theorising of homosocial desire.¹⁷⁶ For Sedgwick, desire is not an affective state or emotion, but rather "the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged that shapes an important relationship".¹⁷⁷ Burke does not figure Man's entry into the homosocial body politic as a traumatic rupturing from the heterosocial. The lack of the heteroerotic within male political culture does not threaten political society's heterosocial base. As we have seen, while lust animates the process of generation for lesser species, for Man lust is intermingled with "some *social* qualities, which direct and heighten the appetite".¹⁷⁸ As it is not until Part Three of the *Enquiry* that beauty is grounded as a quality in bodies, it therefore permeates both the homosocial and the heterosocial, disrupting any neat binary between the passions that engender society. If pleasure structures the society of the sexes, it also operates as a power relation throughout general society. In the society of the sexes, beauty as a social quality distinguishes Man from brutes by helping him to "create a preference, and fix his choice".¹⁷⁹ Previously, Burke had outlined how brutes, "whose passions are more unmixed", only note one distinction, "that of sex". Yet, aside from an implied monogamy, it is uncertain how this "emphatic heterosexuality", already acknowledged as a condition in animals, might work to sufficiently distinguish Man.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 20.

¹⁷⁶ Sedgwick's use of desire in formulating male homosocial desire is more akin to the psychoanalytic term 'libido', though how far this desire is sexual, or homosexual is something which needs to be actively questioned as sexuality itself is historically shaped and imprinted. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 39.

¹⁷⁹ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 39.

¹⁸⁰ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 39; Deirdre Lynch, "Domesticating Fictions and Nationalizing Women: Edmund Burke, Property, and the Reproduction of Englishness", in *Romanticism, Race and Imperial Culture, 1780-1834*, Alan Richardson, Sonia Hofkosh, eds. (Bloomington: IUP, 1996), p. 45.

However, what is clear for Burke is that while animals somehow naturally direct their sexual energy toward the opposite sex, mankind curiously requires some sort of social quality to help establish a normative sexual preference. It is exactly at this point that the effeminacy that the *Enquiry* delimits notably differs from the form constructed in civil commentaries. Not only a social failing or mental deficiency, Burke's effeminacy is pre-rational and erotically inflected. Burke's presentation of sexualised female beauty as an affective social quality, rather than a biologically hard-wired property that engenders social affects, points to the insecurity rather than fixity of power relations within the 'society of the sexes'. Toward the close of Part One, Burke reaffirms that the society of the sexes is animated by the passion of love (which contains a mixture of lust) towards its object: the beautiful woman. General society is also animated by love, a passion that in this instance contains no lust towards its object. Beauty is defined rather loosely as a range of qualities found in white bodies: "[which] induce in us a sense of affection and tenderness, or some other passion the most nearly resembling these."¹⁸¹

The distinction between the desires animating the heterosocial and homosocial is predicated on the exclusion of the homoerotic, most particularly from homosocial society, at a structural level. For Burke the passion animating the homosocial or general society is emptied of homoerotic content. That this absence is normative is ensured by Burke's delineation of the general social passions of "*sympathy, imitation and ambition*".¹⁸² Sympathy allows men to enter into what other men feel, while imitation prompts them to take pleasure in "copy[ing] whatever they do", a process that works to form "manners . . . opinions and lives".¹⁸³ Elaborating upon imitation, Burke states:

It is by imitation far more than by precept that we learn every thing; and what we learn thus we acquire not only more effectually, but more pleasantly. This forms our manners, our opinions, our lives. It is one of the strongest links of society; it is a species of mutual compliance which all men yield to each other, without constraint to themselves, and which is extremely flattering to all.¹⁸⁴

As I have argued, the mixed delight of the sympathetic sublime instances one way for obviating the threat of making male feelings of subjection socially constitutive.

¹⁸¹ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 47.

¹⁸² Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 40.

¹⁸³ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 45.

¹⁸⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 45.

We might also note that imitation, as “a species of mutual compliance”, risks tacitly accepting asymmetrical male relations as a central societal link. Imitation, as one of the strongest links of general society, sanctions the unconstrained submission of men to other men. Acknowledging this, Burke argues that ambition precludes the sameness that would arise from pure imitation. Man’s sense of ambition ensures against the loss of hetero (difference) that would be engendered through the homo or uniform “eternal circle” of men passively emulating each other. In the hierarchy of the sentiments that engender Burke’s homosocial sphere, ambition is the ruling passion as it not only drives men but *makes* men: “It is this passion that drives men to all the ways we see in use of signaling themselves, and that tends to make whatever excites in a man the idea of this distraction so very pleasant”.¹⁸⁵ While sympathy and imitation involve collective experience, the *telos* of ambition is individuation, which is in some sense reductive to the production of difference.

Whereas Brown rails against a perceived gendered confusion in the social behaviours and manners of the sexes, Burke takes the source of this social confusion to be male subjection, which he disavows through modifications in the affects of delight and love. Moreover, luxury is also rendered unthreatening by the very power dynamics of the sublime and beautiful, as pleasure is something that men submit to willingly. In Part Four, section XIX, entitled “The physical cause of LOVE”, Burke offers a stage by stage account of the affect of the lovely object on the spectator:

When we have before us such objects as excite love and complacency, the body is affected, so far as I could observe, much in the following manner. The head reclines something on one side; the eyelids are more closed than usual, and the eyes roll gently with an inclination to the object, the mouth is a little opened, and the breath drawn slowly ... All this is accompanied with an inward sense of melting and languor ... beauty acts by relaxing the solids of the whole system. There are all appearances of such a relaxation; and a relaxation somewhat below the natural tone seems to me to be the cause of all positive pleasure. Who is a stranger to that manner of expression so common in all times and in all countries, of being softened, relaxed, enervated, dissolved, melted away by pleasure?¹⁸⁶

In this key passage, the erotic force of positive pleasure is clearly delineated in the laboured description of the physiological effects of the love object. The question that concludes this passage resonates with the rejection of Brown’s paranoid diagnosis in *The Annual Register* review. How can the luxurious dissolve of positive pleasure be

¹⁸⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 46.

¹⁸⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 136.

degenerate if it has been common to all societies in all ages? The logical answer is, of course, that it cannot be, and that such positive pleasure, as a trans-historical constant, must be necessary to the formation of all social order. Even if beauty has the power to sedate the male subject, this sensation is still one that he freely submits to and cannot be overpowered by. In fact, Burke proceeds to reveal that this softening or relaxation is productive of that all-important social passion: love.¹⁸⁷ Rather than being corrosive of societal fabric, as Estimate Brown would have it, Burke presents ‘vain, luxurious, and selfish’ pleasures as the necessary affective condition for the generation of both hetero and homo social spheres. Rather than women corrupting men, the positive pleasure that male-female relationships afford offers the complete reverse in Burke’s view. The enervation wrought by positive pleasure is centralised and, indeed, normalised as a counter to cultural anxiety over decadence.

In his essay, “Pleasure: A Political Issue”, Frederic Jameson broaches the historical question of the curious absence of heterosexual hedonistic “archetypal (male) quest-figures” such as Don Juan within contemporary consumer society.¹⁸⁸ Filling the cultural and political void left by these figures is the abstract field of psychopathology and the more embodied figure of the promiscuous gay man.¹⁸⁹ Although he concludes his reading of Roland Barthes’s concepts in *Le Plaisir du texte* (1973), by affirming the existence of “a politics and a historicity of *jouissance*”,¹⁹⁰ Jameson neglects to elaborate upon the question of the altered object of excessive desire: the historical shift from an exchange of women as sexual objects between libertines and rakes to the late twentieth-century stereotype of the gay man who consents to being the sexual object of other men. Teasing out Burke’s distinguishing of the sublime and beautiful, he tentatively links the “pleasures of fear” that marks the Burkean sublime with Barthesian *jouissance*, in so much as both can be considered as historical responses to the “transpersonal, unifying, impersonal, supreme force of emergent Capital itself”.¹⁹¹

However, without the benefit of “more wide-ranging textual evidence”, Jameson stops short of reading Burke’s sublime as a precursor to the Barthesian

¹⁸⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 136.

¹⁸⁸ Frederic Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 373.

¹⁸⁹ Jameson, p. 373.

¹⁹⁰ Jameson, p. 384.

¹⁹¹ Jameson, p. 383.

sublime.¹⁹² Indeed, Burke's aesthetic categories of the sublime and beautiful engage with the capitalist forces of emergent colonial markets by aesthetically downplaying anxieties over luxury. Addressing Jameson's question, we might posit that the absence of Don Juan has its historical origin in what Faramerz Dabhoiwala describes as the emergent cultural acceptance of "gentlemanly sexual conquest" in the eighteenth century.¹⁹³ In various ways, John Wilkes's *Essay on Woman* and Burke's *Enquiry*, serve to base a hetero structuring of desire not on procreation but on the pleasure of lust, in and of itself. Burke's contribution to the absence of Don Juan from consumer society was to legitimise lust as socially constitutive. If positive pleasure — a hetero structuring of desire — is made non-political in the *Enquiry*, it is achieved through Burke's tenuous distinguishing of pleasure from delight. Jameson's reading of the "pleasures of fear" overlooks the fact that Burke distinguishes the affect of the sublime as delightful rather than pleasurable.¹⁹⁴ Delight, as a sublime effect, is not equivalent to pleasure, as only positive pleasure arises from beauty. Pleasure is divided, in the *Enquiry*, between positive pleasure and negative delight, with delight bearing the full mark of the enervative excess of pleasure proper. Delight then carries the risk of male enervation, yet notably, this is an obviated risk, as pure delight only features in sublime experience. Where there is potential for male subjection is through the experience of the sublime. Such subjection offers a resolution for the paradox of the inherent enervation of all colonial assertion.

The Burkean body, as both a subjected and a productive body, can be usefully read in light of Foucault's theorising of the "political technology of the body":

This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used);

¹⁹² Jameson, p. 383.

¹⁹³ Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), p. 178.

¹⁹⁴ Jameson, p. 383.

the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body.¹⁹⁵

In Foucauldian terms, sublime experience allows for the male body to be both a productive and subjected body by displacing the register of that ‘subjection’ onto the excess of the sublime itself. The male body, as a forceful body, comes through the detour of effeminate delight, as both producer and consumer. The strongest passion caused by the sublime is “astonishment”, which works to suspend the soul with some degree of horror. Civic moralists, such as Brown, considered effeminacy to be a mental condition that arose from a man’s defective reasoning faculty.¹⁹⁶ The language used to describe the Burkean sublime is curiously erotic; it details how the male mind is penetrated: “entirely filled by the object”. The sublime “anticipates our reasonings and hurries us on by an irresistible force.”¹⁹⁷ While astonishment is the chief affect in a subject’s encounter with the sublime, lesser affects include feelings of admiration, reverence, and respect. While the lesser affects are recognisable as codes that centre on social patriarchy, the primary and most immediate emotion of astonishment is undoubtedly an effeminising one. Although polarised as the extremities of aesthetic experience, Burke’s sublime and the beautiful, as Paddy Bullard notes, are both enervating in some way.¹⁹⁸ As I have argued, Burke’s unique intervention in these debates was to celebrate the enervative power of the beautiful, while shunting the excesses of such enervation into the sublime.

Curiously then, Burke’s *Enquiry* emphasised the enervative effects of beautiful bodies and objects at a time of intense anxiety over English decadence. In the *Enquiry*, Burke downplays the ravishing transport of Hogarth’s serpentine beauty, in order to render positive pleasure socially constitutive. The enervation within the sublime is the very excess of male effeminacy, which becomes a phase, a necessary and momentary delightful self-negation. It is precisely this phase of astonished paralysis in the sublime that anticipates and cancels out man’s reasoning faculty, forcing him into an effeminate weakness of mind. Granted, beauty does not require reason to be intelligible as beauty, but man’s interaction with the beautiful is always already within his control. The terror sublime is something to which men will never

¹⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, Alan Sheridan, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 25-26.

¹⁹⁶ Philip Carter, “An ‘effeminate’ or ‘efficient’ nation? Masculinity and eighteenth-century social documentary”, *Textual Practice* 11 (3), 1997, p. 433.

¹⁹⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 53.

¹⁹⁸ Paddy Bullard, *Edmund Burke and the Art of Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 107.

willingly submit. Overwhelming the spectator, sublime astonishment effeminises. Rather than resolve the equation of effeminacy with luxury in the domain of the beautiful, Burke makes effeminacy a sublime condition, thus displacing one form of excess onto another register of excess. Britain's imperial project paradoxically generated desires for manly commercial assertion as well as domestic anxieties concerning the social, moral and political effects of prosperity. Burke's effeminising sublime provides an aesthetic resolution for this paradox, while his "Introduction on Taste" accounts for delicacy in male taste as a deviation from, rather than perversion of, the natural order. As an effeminising though ultimately masculinising experience, sublimity provides resolution for the paradox of imperialist discourses in the public-political sphere at the beginning of the Seven Years' War.

(4.3) Present Discontents: Party and the Politics of Representation

As a response to the political crisis of the late 1760s, Burke's early pamphlets, *A Short Account of A Late Administration* (1766), *Observations on a Late State of the Nation* (1769), and *Thoughts on the Cause of Present Discontents* (1770) announce the manifesto of the Rockinghamites, which proposes the cultivation of political party. As Matthew McCormack notes, Burke saw the association of "men of virtue" as the most effective bulwark against the increase of the Crown's influence in parliamentary affairs.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, Frank O'Gorman rejects the idea that the Crown exerted an unconstitutional influence upon parliament in the 1760s, arguing that Burke and others incorrectly ascribed the behaviour of some ministers to "the insidious plotting of the court".²⁰⁰ According to O'Gorman, "Burke's doctrine of party was a Rockinghamite riposte to Lord Bute: government by party would render government by favourite impossible".²⁰¹ Written to shore up the fragmentary opposition at a time of intense crisis, O'Gorman limits Burke's elaboration of party as a "static" response that was particular to the immediate predicament.²⁰² In this regard, he argues that Burke did not enter politics with any preconceived notions of party.²⁰³ While not denying that Burke's early writings were responses to an immediate crisis, I argue against circumscribing the genesis of Burke's formulation of a party doctrine to the latter part of the 1760s.

Acknowledging O'Gorman's point about the historical invalidity of fears over the machinations of a court cabal should not detract from our appreciation of what are, nonetheless, very real anxieties animating the pamphlets under discussion. Whether based in reality or not, the particular paranoia that Burke expresses is not directed against the person of Bute, but rather emphasises a parliamentary culture that exploits proper political friendship. Whereas O'Gorman reads Burke as participating in the "myth of the influence of Lord Bute", I argue that Burke viewed the crisis in political culture in terms that were neither personalised nor bigoted.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Matthew McCormack, *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.116.

²⁰⁰ O'Gorman, p. 25.

²⁰¹ O'Gorman, p. 26.

²⁰² O'Gorman, p. 32.

²⁰³ O'Gorman, p. 25.

²⁰⁴ O'Gorman, p. 25.

Burke's paranoia surrounds not a person, or even a set of men, but a culture of pederastic relations. Party association is about ensuring equilibrium of feeling among men. Power operates in party as a collective assertion, in so much as love works to disavow asymmetries of influence. Rather than static and time bound, Burke's theory of party is heavily influenced by the homosocial aesthetic of the earlier *Enquiry*. All of Burke's early pamphlets, as Christopher Reid points out, were "party ventures", which were drafted collaboratively with fellow party men.²⁰⁵ While Burke is the author of these pieces, Reid argues that "as a pamphleteer Burke was engaged in one of the more collective forms of writing, one which is not always easily reconciled with more traditional ideas of the nature of literature and the author's role".²⁰⁶ Therefore, we might say that Burke's defence of party is exercised through its very drafting, with the pamphlet registering as the literary analogue of the functioning political party. A central narrative strain in Burke's defence of the brief Rockingham administration involves endorsing a particular form of political homosociality, one that is deemed necessary for the operation of a colonial polity such as Britain.

Professing to deal in "Plain facts; of a clear and public Nature", Burke delineates the achievements of the administration.²⁰⁷ In six pages of deliberately truncated prose, he signals how the Rockinghamites at once mollified the troubled colonists with the repeal of the American Stamp Act, while also managing to assert the constitutional superiority of Britain with their "Act for securing the Dependence of the colonies".²⁰⁸ Not only did the Rockinghamites manage to achieve a needed balance in colonial affairs — an equilibrium that has been subsequently upset — but they also reversed the excessive powers of Bute's government. "Private Houses", Burke informs, "were relieved from the jurisdiction of the Excise" with the repeal of the Cyder Tax, while "personal liberty of the Subject" was reaffirmed through their "resolution against General Warrants".²⁰⁹ Without naming Wilkes or the scandal, Burke refers to the administration's breach of privacy in the *Essay on Woman* affair, by noting that his administration's "Resolution for condemning the Seizure of Papers" rendered those "Lawful Secrets of Business and Friendship" absolute.²¹⁰ In their

²⁰⁵ Christopher Reid, *Edmund Burke and the Practice of Political Writing* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), p. 6.

²⁰⁶ Reid, p. 6.

²⁰⁷ Edmund Burke, *A Short account of a late short administration* (London: [s.n.], 1766), p. 6.

²⁰⁸ Burke, *A Short*, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ Burke, *A Short*, p. 3.

²¹⁰ Burke, *A Short*, p. 3.

short term of office, the Rockingham party had remedied, in Burke's view, the abuses of power perpetrated by Bute's administration.

In this view, the levying of taxes on the American colonists is akin to Dashwood's excise on cider as abuses of power. Put simply, the Wilkite controversies, in Burke's view, stem from the same type of self-serving factionalism that has caused the "Distractions of the *British Empire*".²¹¹ Crucially, not naming Wilkes prevents Burke's argument from descending into a defence of Wilkes's personality and private life. Likewise, instead of focusing on Bute personally, Burke addresses only the political culture that he has profited from. The entire import of *A Short Account* involves distinguishing the Bute and Rockingham administrations, not only in terms of obvious policy differences, but also more broadly, by foregrounding the opposing political cultures that they each engender:

With the Earl of *Bute* they had no personal Connection; no Correspondence of Councils. They neither courted him nor persecuted him. They practiced no Corruption; nor were they even suspected of it. They sold no offices. They obtained no Reversions or Pensions, either coming in or going out, for themselves, their Families, or their Dependants.²¹²

Not only is the culture of the Rockingham administration diametrically opposed to that of the Bute cabal, Burke makes a specific point about the mode of extra-parliamentary politics that the Rockinghamites fostered. If other commentators, such as Junius, sought to inflame political discontent in order to unite a fragmentary opposition in the crisis in British political culture that lasted from 1768-1774, Burke's intervention aimed to account for the present discontents and to propose their remedy.²¹³ In matters of trade, the administration also sought out the opinions of a diverse set of merchants:

The Administration was the first which proposed, and encouraged public Meetings, and free Consultations of Merchants from all Parts of the Kingdom; by which Means the truest Lights have been received; great Benefits Have been already derived to Manufacture and Commerce; and the most extensive Prospects are opened for future Improvement.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Burke, *A Short*, p. 3.

²¹² Burke, *A Short*, p. 5.

²¹³ James T. Boulton, *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 32.

²¹⁴ Burke, *A Short*, p. 4.

While envisioning a parliament free from corrupt placemen and the asymmetries of pederastic power that a politics of preferment entails, Burke makes central the idea of a participatory public of merchants and tradesmen; an extra-parliamentary sphere that is crucial to the overall competence of Britain's colonial enterprise. The prioritising of opinions that come from public assemblies consisting of the merchant classes from all part of the nation registers as the political realisation of Churchill's concluding vision in *Independence* of a patriotic public of merchant-class men claiming discursive authority and control over their own labour.

Though Burke never allies the Rockingham party with the radical Whig fringe, the *Short Account* makes clear that the achievements of his party centre on curbing the very excesses of power that Wilkites oppose. The argument that is constructed in the aftermath of the administration reshuffle of 1766 revolves around the degenerate political culture signalled by the return, not of Bute, but of the type of political arrangements that men like him foster. Burke's *Observations* is a response to a pamphlet by the Irish born American colonial administrator William Knox (1732-1810), *The Present State of the Nation* (1768). Levelling criticism at the Rockinghamites, Knox champions the benefits of Bute's peace settlement; advancing a pro-Bute diagnostic that reproduces the same arguments about depopulation and the "excessive rate of interest" that had been deployed by Tobias Smollett in *The Briton*.²¹⁵ Though considerably less intense than Estimate Brown's rhetoric of imminent collapse, Knox's prognosis continues in a similar vein as the earlier *Estimate*. In this regard, the paradoxical issue of colonial assertion leading to national degeneration is revived. In a typical, albeit heightened xenophobic formulation, Knox figures the British navy as enervating; arguing that upon peace its "foreign" seamen "return, to their own, or other countries, and carry with them the profits of our trade, and our skill in navigating ships".²¹⁶ Knox's *The Present State* reflects on the Wilkite crisis of the early 1760s, advancing a paranoid account of national affairs that is less about cultural degeneration, and more concerned with an inherent weakness in the nation's political structures.

Recalling the earlier controversy surrounding *The North Briton*, No. 45, Knox presents the image of a public that has become disenchanted with "the form of

²¹⁵ William Knox, *The Present State of the Nation: Particularly with respect to its Trade, Finances, &c. &c. Addressed to The King and both Houses of Parliament*. (London: Printed for J. Almon, opposite to Burlington-House, in Piccadilly. MDCCLXVIII. [1768]), p. 7.

²¹⁶ Knox, pp. 8-9.

government” and disinvested in the “excellent constitution”.²¹⁷ The public, in Knox’s view, no longer have “reverence for the customs or opinions of . . . ancestors”, while the frequent shuffling of government ministers has “broke all bands of compact or association”.²¹⁸ Political culture itself has been debased in the years following the cessation of the war, and more alarming than any dissipation in manners, Knox argues that a weakened political system has brought Britain to the cusp of financial ruin:

The power of the crown was, indeed, never more visibly extensive over the great men of the nation; but then the great men have lost their influence over the lower orders of the people; even parliament has lost much of its reverence with the subjects of the realm, and the voice of the multitude is set up against the sense of the legislature. An impoverished and heavily burthened public! A declining trade and decreasing specie! A people luxurious and licentious, impatient of rule, and despising all authority! Government relaxed in every sinew, and a corrupt selfish spirit pervading the whole! The state destitute of alliances, and without respect from foreign nations! A powerful combination, anxious for an occasion to retrieve their honour, and wreak their vengeance upon her! If such be the circumstances of Great-Britain, who, that loves his king or his country, can be indifferent about public measures?.²¹⁹

If the Crown has asserted unprecedented influence in recent years, it is only because parliament has transferred its political legitimacy to the extra-parliamentary multitude. Without explicitly arguing the point, Knox implies that the political culture advanced by the Wilkite agenda has warranted any extension of ministerial powers in Bute’s administration. As a result of the Rockinghamite ministry’s term of office, “Great-Britain risks becoming a tributary to France, and the descent of the crown dependant on the good pleasure of that ambitious nation?”.²²⁰

In fact, the most anxious scenario alluded to in *The Present State* is French occupation of Ireland.²²¹ Though France is bankrupt and her colonies reduced in number, Knox argues that the French nation’s difficulties while “great” are only “immediate and temporary”.²²² Again, like Estimate Brown, Knox presents French defeat as the source of their ultimate longevity. Paradoxically, French territorial losses have only quickened the pace of their inevitable recovery: “loss of her ultra-

²¹⁷ Knox, pp. 63-64.

²¹⁸ Knox, p. 64.

²¹⁹ Knox, p. 65.

²²⁰ Knox, p. 65.

²²¹ Knox asks: “Is it of importance to an inhabitant of Ireland, that, in case of war, that island should become a prey to France; and Great-Britain, unable to recover it by force, be compelled to cede it, by treaty, to purchase peace for herself?”. See Knox, p. 65.

²²² Knox, p. 14.

marine dominions lessened her present expenses”.²²³ Moreover, the nation’s continental position and confirmed “league with Spain” provides the nation with access “to many markets”.²²⁴ In constructing France as the rising colonial power, Knox redeploys Smollett’s sublime vision of the impossibility of maintaining empire. Challenged with the governance of its vast and heterogeneous colonial territories, while also encumbered with increasing public debt, Britain stands on the cusp of ruination. Unlike Brown, Knox actually proposes some solutions for the predicament that he describes. In short, the remedy for the evils of post-Seven Years’ War Britain involves a reassessment of the relationship of metropole and colony. He suggests that Ireland and the colonies “might be in-duced to take off Great-Britain, and defray between them, in the proportion of 200, 000l. by the colonies and 100, 000l. by Ireland”.²²⁵ Acknowledging the colonial resistance to taxation, Knox attaches a significant rider to his call to Ireland and America to foot the war bill; one which involves granting “the right of election” to American colonists along with a vaguer “incorporating of Ireland with Great-Britain”.²²⁶

Broaching the issue of granting electoral permissions to colonists, Knox reasons that the ratio of electors to the “whole people” is disproportionate. Under the current conditions, he argues, it is “not reasonable or fitting, that the right of election for the whole of the elective part of the supreme legislature, should continue restrained to certain inhabitants of Great-Britain, *now*, that so many of the subjects of the realm reside out of Great-Britain”.²²⁷ In advancing this point, Knox is keen to explain that the extension of electoral rights does not signify an increase of “sovereign authority”, as the subjects admitted “were always subjects of the realm”.²²⁸ Knox’s pronouncements upon Ireland, though more laboured, are considerably more ambiguous. In his view, the dominant English metropolitan perspective of Ireland as a “colony” is imbalanced, and “the common interest of all the parts of the empire, requires that the balance should be preserved; and no measure can tend so immediately to that end, as incorporating Ireland with Great-Britain”.²²⁹

²²³ Knox, p. 15.

²²⁴ Knox, p. 15.

²²⁵ Knox, p. 69.

²²⁶ Knox, p. 70; p. 81.

²²⁷ Knox, p. 81.

²²⁸ Knox, p. 82.

²²⁹ Knox, pp. 69-70.

Yet, rather than an “entire and compleat union of the two kingdoms”, Knox suggests the engendering of “community of interest” based on “a common privilege of trading to and with the colonies”.²³⁰ If colonial trade opens up to Irish merchants, then the Irish would willingly pay more taxes in order to safeguard their commercial interests.²³¹ Taxing Ascendency landlords encourages them to recuperate monies by industriously advancing local projects.²³² With this in mind, he argues that the “extreme poverty of the lower class of people” is caused by “the want of judicious taxes”.²³³ Of course, Knox acknowledges that his plans for engendering a community of interest between Ireland and Britain will excite fears over a loss of revenue for British merchants. Echoing Philangus, Knox justifies Irish colonial trade as a potential source of competition for France. Ireland can supply the colonial demand for commodities that Britain cannot supply, or produce cheaply. Growing Irish trade links to the colonies will hold off domestic production, as well as redirect demands away from “cheaper markets”.²³⁴

Observations on a Late State of the Nation advances a lengthy critique of the economic and political diagnoses put forward by Knox. Carrying forward from *A Short Account* the association of the Rockinghamites with political stability, Burke shows how the current political and economic crisis has arisen, not from any displaced colonial disorder, but rather from the internal parliamentary revival of a venal Buteite mode of politics. Burke advances his argument on three fronts. In keeping with the attitude of his response to Brown’s *Estimate*, Burke remains unsympathetic to Knox’s argument that luxury is the source of national degeneration and declares *The Present State* to be a “farrago” that is filled with “arguments ten times repeated, a thousand times answered”.²³⁵ Underscoring the illogic of Knox’s anxiety concerning the superior position of a bankrupt France, he asks how it can be that Britain’s “immense increase of trade” when contrasted with French “disgraces, and defeats” can “leave [France] a gainer on the whole balance”.²³⁶ Pushing Knox’s and Brown’s argument to its logical conclusion, Burke argues that the only way for

²³⁰ Knox, p. 70.

²³¹ Knox, p. 70.

²³² Knox, p. 71.

²³³ Knox, p. 71.

²³⁴ Knox, p. 72.

²³⁵ Edmund Burke, *Observations on a late state of the nation* 3rd ed. (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, MDCCCXIX. [1769]), p. 3.

²³⁶ Burke, *Observations*, p. 6.

Britain to emerge victorious from any conflict is to encourage its own military failure.²³⁷

While *Observations* challenges Knox's diagnosis of atrophied trade networks by providing contrary evidence from the Custom House entry logs, the recurring idea that the wealth gained from trade is enervating is also forcefully rejected by Burke along the lines of his earlier aesthetic discussion of the affects of beauty. Coming toward the end of his lengthy refutation of Knox's arguments, Burke pauses to argue that:

No small part of that very luxury, which is so much the subject of the author's declamation, but which, in most parts of life, by being well balanced and diffused, is only decency and convenience, has perhaps as many, or more, good than evil consequences attending it ... It certainly excites industry, nourishes emulation, and inspires some sense of personal value into all ranks of people.²³⁸

Recasting the frame of his earlier aesthetic discussion of beauty in the *Enquiry*, Burke argues that the affect of luxury is not enervating, but actually socially constitutive in its balanced form. The relaxing and softening effects of the luxurious are equivalent to the emotional state of the primary social passion: love. Sharing its affect with love, luxury functions in the society of the sexes to encourage men to place personal erotic value on individual women, while also prompting them, in general society, to emulate the men that they love, but for whom they feel no erotic desire. The affective dimension of luxury forms rather than weakens the basis of both hetero and homosocial societies. Presenting luxury as social glue rather than social solvent provides Burke with an aesthetically grounded political counter to the paradox of the inherent enervation of all colonial assertion.

The main thrust of *Observations* consists of Burke's robust criticism of Knox's proposals to extract revenues from America and Ireland. In his view, the British Empire is a "complicated oeconomy of great Kingdoms, and immense revenues", which has "by a variety of accidents ... *coalesced* into a sort of body".²³⁹ Shifting from a corporeal to an architectural metaphor, he warns of "an attempt towards a compulsory equality in all circumstances, and an exact practical definition of the supreme rights in every case is ... most dangerous ... The old building stands

²³⁷ Burke, *Observations*, p. 11.

²³⁸ Burke, *Observations*, pp. 147-148.

²³⁹ Burke, *Observations*, p. 94.

well enough, though part Gothic, part Grecian, and part Chinese”.²⁴⁰ Whether described as metaphoric body or building, Britain’s imperial expanse is an organic unity of heterogeneous domains. Knox’s proposed community of interest not only risks upsetting the natural organic development of Anglo-Irish relations, but also overlooks the fact that Ireland already “contributes her part”, in “furnishing troops in war” and serving as “part of [the] foreign establishment in peace”.²⁴¹ Echoing Smollett’s argument for Scottish contribution in *The Briton*, Burke reminds his readers of the material cost which Ireland has already paid into the bank of British colonial success. Challenging this proposed foisting of debt upon the colonies in *The Present State*, Burke asks why it is that Knox supposes the “gentry, clergy, and freeholders of England” would not “rate the commerce, the credit, the religion, the liberty, the independence of their country and the succession of their crown, at a shilling in the pound of Land tax!”²⁴² Burke’s proposal, couched in populist Wilkite rhetoric, smuggles in the proviso that the Trueborn-Englishman must settle the cost of his own liberty.

Knox, in Burkes’s view, “talks of his union, just as he does of his taxes and his sowing, with as much *sang froid* and ease, as if his wish and the enjoyment were exactly the same thing”.²⁴³ Having dealt with Knox’s argument for a community of interest between Britain and Ireland, Burke turns to his proposal for American representation. Rather than dismiss Knox’s plan outright, Burke decides to “indulge his passion for projects and power” by imagining that the “writs are issued for electing members for America and the West-Indies”.²⁴⁴ The satirical description that follows plays out the comedy of errors that will inevitably unfold by granting election rights to the colonists:

Some provinces receive [the writs] in six weeks, some in ten, some in twenty. A vessel may be lost, and then some provinces may not receive them at all. But let it be, that they all receive them at once, and in the shortest time. A proper space must be given for proclamation and for election; some weeks at least. But the members are chosen; and . . . ships are ready to sail, in about six more they arrive in London. In the meantime parliament has sat, and the business far advanced without American representatives. Nay, by this time, it may happen, that

²⁴⁰ Burke, *Observations*, p. 94.

²⁴¹ Burke, *Observations*, p. 95.

²⁴² Burke, *Observations*, p. 88.

²⁴³ Burke, *Observations*, p. 99.

²⁴⁴ Burke, *Observations*, p. 99.

parliament is dissolved; and then the members ship themselves again, to be elected.²⁴⁵

Parliament's legislative power sinks in transit across the Atlantic, and ultimately, Knox's vision of American representation when put under scrutiny is little more than a political farce. The Bute government of Grenville, the Earl of Egremont, the Earl of Halifax, the Duke of Bedford, and Lord Grafton have transferred the domestic discontent surrounding Wilkes onto the much larger canvass of colonial policy in reinforcing a "universal stamp duty on the colonies".²⁴⁶ The inexcusable negligence of Bute's administration has, in Burke's view, caused the present American disorder. Allowing American "assemblies" without "critically settling the limits" of their power served to sow the seeds of the discontent. Moreover, not offering notice of the Stamp Act to either parliament or colonists, while concealing the remonstrance from parliament severely worsened the situation.²⁴⁷

In his anti-democratic attack on Knox's vision of American representation, Burke warns that people must be governed "in a manner agreeable to their temper and disposition; and men of free character and spirit must be ruled with, at least, some condescension to this spirit and this character".²⁴⁸ Admitting that the British colonist "must see something which will distinguish him from the colonists of other nations", Burke neglects to specify what that distinguishing mark might be, and can only wish that parliament possesses "wisdom and temper enough to manage it as we ought".²⁴⁹ The great obstacle to this, the "cankerworm in the rose" is attributed to the pervasive "spirit of disconnexion, of distrust, and of treachery, amongst public men".²⁵⁰ Whereas Knox diagnosed luxury as the cause of national enervation, Burke locates the widespread "uneasiness and apprehension" as a political symptom of those "venal dependants" of Buteite politics who advance their own self-serving agenda, which admits "no bond of union ... principle of confidence".²⁵¹ Rather than existing in the non-political domain of the beautiful, the corruption afflicting Britain at this time of crisis is identified as an imbalance in general or political society. Deploying his own alarmist rhetoric, Burke warns: "if these evil dispositions should

²⁴⁵ Burke, *Observations*, p. 99.

²⁴⁶ Burke, *Observations*, p. 110.

²⁴⁷ Burke, *Observations*, pp. 111-112.

²⁴⁸ Burke, *Observations*, p. 120.

²⁴⁹ Burke, *Observations*, p. 120.

²⁵⁰ Burke, *Observations*, p. 140.

²⁵¹ Burke, *Observations*, p. 141.

spread much farther, they must end in our destruction”.²⁵² In a sentence that reads as shorthand for his entire *Observations*, Burke offers a prescient and pithy lament: “Never, I fear, will this nation and the colonies fall back upon their true centre of gravity, and the natural point of repose, until the ideas of 1766 are resumed, and steadily pursued”.²⁵³

Knox’s concern to grant electoral rights and permissions to the American colonists jarred against the more immediate representational crisis engendered by the Middlesex Election controversy of 1768-1769. What ensued was an electoral farce on par with the fictional one described by Burke in *Observations*. As John Brewer notes, from March 1769 rumours began to spread that the freeholders of Middlesex “deprived of their true representative, namely John Wilkes, would on the basis of the American adage, ‘no taxation without representation’, refuse to pay their taxes”.²⁵⁴ The Middlesex controversy gained momentum from various unrelated factors such as the harsh economic conditions experienced by the majority in London in the late 1760s. Although discrete from the Wilkite electoral campaign, “a remarkable series of industrial disputes” contributed to the mood of crisis in 1768.²⁵⁵ More inflammatory and directly related was the incident that transpired on the 10th of May 1768, when the Third Regiment of Foot Guards was recruited to help Surrey magistrates manage unruly Wilkites assembled outside the King’s Bench prison where Wilkes was confined. A bloody affray ensued, when in retaliation for an official being struck by a stone, a number of grenadiers chased the man, and losing sight of him, mistakenly shot and killed William Allen, the innocent son of a local publican.²⁵⁶ When word broke of the man’s death, the Wilkite crowd became even more incensed and the guards were instructed to fire a volley of bullets, which killed six people, some of whom, Burke noted, were innocent pedestrians, returning home from work.²⁵⁷ In response to the distressing spectacle of what became known as the

²⁵² Burke, *Observations*, p. 140.

²⁵³ Burke, *Observations*, p. 127.

²⁵⁴ John Brewer, “The Wilkites and the law, 1763-74: a study of radical notions of governance”, in *An Ungovernable People: The English and their law in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, John Brewer, John Styles eds. (London: Hutchison, 1980), p. 139.

²⁵⁵ George Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763-1774* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 90.

²⁵⁶ Rudé, p. 51.

²⁵⁷ Rudé, p. 51.

‘Massacre of St. George’s Fields’, the Rockingham Whigs, headed by Burke and William Dowdeswell, petitioned the Crown for a redress of grievances.²⁵⁸

Radicalised further by the bloody scenes of St. George’s fields, the pro-Wilkite press fulminated at Wilkes’s expulsion from the House of Commons and political incapacitation. As one anonymously written pamphlet put it:

Consider, what must have been the Motives which swayed the late Majority to give a Stab even to their own Liberties, in expelling one of their own Members, Mr. *Wilkes* (to whom we are every Individual of us obliged, for our Security from the Inquisitorial Tyranny of General Warrants) in him they sacrificed their Privileges, to gratify the Malice and Resentment of the Favourite, for exposing to the Public his pernicious Machinations (for that was the Truth of the Matter at the Bottom, because it is demonstrative, that he had no real Veneration for the Glory of his Sovereign, by giving up to the Enemy the immense Interests of his Subjects.) This Majority could take one Step further; which was, to vote away your and the whole Nation’s Rights, and to consign us all to Slavery.²⁵⁹

In allowing the government to expel Wilkes, parliament has voted away its own rights and permissions. In addition to pro-Wilkite pamphlets that exploited the illogic of the House’s decision to expel Wilkes, publications on the electoral controversy also revived the sense of patriotic duty and sodomophobic panic of Churchill’s *The Times* and *Independence*. Renewing the patriotic summons at the close of *Independence*, one hack writer calls upon the “degenerate and unnatural sons of Britain” who are “living upon the vitals of [their] bleeding country” to repent, as “God would have ‘saved Sodom for ten righteous sake:’ and if half that number, even five righteous Patriots, were to be found amongst us, we might hope that God would save”.²⁶⁰ Pro-ministerial literature was notably less creative in its assessment of the controversy. The author of *A Mirror for the Multitude* (1768) construes Wilkes as a Scotophobic Popish martyr who being “destitute of ... property and good principles ... is entirely disqualified to be a constituent of the legislature”.²⁶¹ Another pro-ministerial pamphlet merely ran with the rather uninspiring theme of

²⁵⁸ Rudé, p. 107.

²⁵⁹ Anon, *A Cautionary Address to the Electors of England: Being a Touchstone Between the Constituents and Candidates. With a WORD touching John Wilkes, Esq;* (London: Printed for J. Williams, next the Mitre-Tavern, Fleet-Street. 1768), p. 12.

²⁶⁰ Anon, *An Address To The Electors of Great-Britain, On The Choice of Members to Serve them in Parliament, so as to render the Nation that essential Service which its Distresses so greatly demand at this Important Crisis. To which is added, The Test of Patriotism. By A Lover of his KING and COUNTRY.* (London: Printed for M. Lewis and Son, in Pater-noster-Row, 1768), pp. 28-29.

²⁶¹ Anon, *A Mirror For The Multitude; Or Wilkes And His Abettors No Patriots.* (Glasgow: Printed for John Gilmour and Son, and Daniel Baxter, M.DCC.LXX., 1768), pp. 28-29.

opposition, devoting thirty-one pages to a pseudo-historical discussion of the fact that opposition is “destructive of patriotism”.²⁶²

Aside from the stock anti- and pro-Wilkite claims, the Middlesex controversy turned debates toward the issue of representation. In his pro-ministerial *The False Alarm* (1770), Samuel Johnson describes the Wilkite dissensus as a “madness [which] has spread through all the ranks and through both sexes” with “only the wise ... escap[ing] infection”.²⁶³ Refusing to engage in a delineation of Wilkes’s character, Johnson confines his preamble to a snobbish indictment of Wilkites. A man of sense, breeding and education will understand the necessity of parliament’s decision, and it is to these men that Johnson speaks. Far from being the arbiters of democracy, Johnson cites the intimidation of Wilkes’s election candidate as proof of their own anti-democratic bias.²⁶⁴ On the issue of expulsion, Johnson reasons that seeing as “expulsion inferred exclusion”, Wilkes cannot therefore be readmitted to parliament on another vote as the prior exclusion still stands.²⁶⁵ Developing the anti-democratic argument, he points out that parliament is not filled with representatives of the people, but consists of seats gained by influence and allegiance.²⁶⁶

Wilkes responded with *A Letter to Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.* (1770), which challenged Johnson’s claim that parliament’s right to disqualify elected members was a principle of political necessity.²⁶⁷ Wilkes warns that such a principle serves to “make the vote of every elector *useless* and *dead*”.²⁶⁸ Drawing on Churchill’s satirising of the author in *The Ghost*, Wilkes depicts Johnson as the pensioned hack writer of the Scottish administration, whose pamphlet in true Ossianic style, can be read “to observe the airy progress of a system that is to be built without foundation or materials”.²⁶⁹ Johnson’s own anti-Scottish antagonism toward placemen is then ironically revived in light of *The False Alarm*, a pamphlet that has, Wilkes argues,

²⁶² Anon, *Opposition No Proof Of Patriotism With Some Advice Concerning Party-Writings* (London: Printed for T. Evans, in King-Street, Covent-Garden, MDCCLXX, 1768), p. 6.

²⁶³ Samuel Johnson, *The False Alarm* 2nd ed. (London: printed for T. Cadell in the Strand, MDCCLXX 1770), p. 14.

²⁶⁴ Johnson, *The False*, p. 14.

²⁶⁵ Johnson, *The False*, p. 20.

²⁶⁶ Johnson, *The False*, p. 23.

²⁶⁷ Anon, *A Letter To Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.* (London: Printed for J. Almon, opposite Burlington House, in Piccadilly, 1770), p. 14.

²⁶⁸ Anon, *A Letter*, p. 51.

²⁶⁹ Anon, *A Letter*, p. 16.

been commissioned by Scottish men on the basis of its author's pension.²⁷⁰ The main thrust of Wilkes's argument in *A Letter* centres on the representational illogic of repeated expulsion:

The immediate effect of the expulsion is a political *annihilation*. A subsequent return is *not* of the nature of a political resurrection. It has no reference to a former delegation; it sends the member as a new existence, unconscious, unaccountable for former parliamentary delinquencies; his political identity is destroyed; he is become, in the eye of common sense, in the established idea of Parliament, in the express language of the law, to all intents and purposes, ANOTHER MEMBER.²⁷¹

If expulsion has the effect of wiping the political slate clean as it were, repeated expulsion demonstrates the dominance of prejudice against the political identity of a previous member, which in electoral terms has already been removed. Each election reconstitutes the political identity of the given member, as every election comes with a renewed investment of representational confidence from the electorate.

Burke's *Thoughts on The Cause of the Present Discontents* fulminates against Wilkes's repeated expulsion, claiming that "a violent rage for the punishment of Mr. Wilkes" was merely the pretext for the claiming of power over free elections by the closet or interior government.²⁷² As stated in the earlier *Observations*, Burke is keen to show that Bute is merely a cipher for the machinations of the back-stairs cabinet, suggesting that attention should not be paid to the minister's "ambition", but rather to "the circumstances which favoured" his advancement.²⁷³ Had Bute not existed, Burke argues that the culture of double cabinet would still exist. The double cabinet operates by creating an interior arena of influence between the king and his ministers, from within which they proceed to manipulate the members:

They contrive to form in the outward administration two parties at the least; which, whilst they are tearing one another to pieces, are both competitors for the favor and protection of the cabal; and, by their emulation, contribute to throw everything more and more into the hands of the interior managers... When any adverse connection is to be destroyed, the cabal seldom appear in the work themselves. They find out some person of whom the party entertains a high opinion. Such a person they endeavour to delude with various pretences. They teach him first to distrust them to quarrel with his friends; among whom, by the same arts, they excite a similar diffidence of him; so that in this mutual fear and distrust, he may suffer himself to employed in the change that is to be brought about. Afterwards they are sure to destroy him in turn, by setting up in his place some person in whom he had himself reposed the greatest

²⁷⁰ Anon, *A Letter*, p. 32.

²⁷¹ Anon, *A Letter*, p. 22.

²⁷² Burke, *Thoughts on*, p.130.

²⁷³ Burke, *Thoughts on*, p. 118.

confidence, and who serves to carry off a considerable part of his adherents.²⁷⁴

The double cabinet maintains political power by perverting the passions of the homosocial outlined by Burke in the *Enquiry*. By setting parties against one another they offset the productive potential of the passions of sympathy and imitation, while heightening the sublimity of ambition into the condition of fear. More alarming is the pederastic asymmetry of the cabal's power over individual men. Drawn in by a false representation of love, followers of the cabal will perversely seek to emulate it; and the satisfaction of this passion sets the man's manners and opinions on an entirely corrupted basis. Furthermore, Burke warns, "No conveniency of public arrangement is available to remove any one of them from the specific situation he holds; and the slightest attempt upon one of them, by the most powerful minister, is a certain preliminary to his own destruction".²⁷⁵

What is threatened then, is not just a forcing of the constitution "into an aristocracy", but rather the establishment of an absolutist feudal dispensation, under which the very passions of sympathy, imitation and ambition have no social force.²⁷⁶ In addition to the immediate measures of place-bills and restoring free elections, Burke implicitly calls for the adoption of his homosocial aesthetic as the basis of the new political culture of the House. These ideas had been broached earlier in *Observations*, where he concludes his response to Knox with some comments on political obligation. He argues that while private men may be "wholly neutral" when it comes to the present crisis, "they who are legally invested with the public trust, or stand on the high ground of rank and dignity, which is trust implied, can hardly in any case remain indifferent".²⁷⁷ When private men find themselves entrusted with carrying out political duties, Burke advises that they "ought to be circumscribed by the same laws of decorum and balanced by the same temper, which bound and regulate all virtue".²⁷⁸ Men must act in "party with all the moderation which does not absolutely enervate that vigour, and quench that fervency of spirit, without which the best wishes for the public good must evaporate in empty speculation".²⁷⁹ Political party, formed through the passions of proper homosocial constitution, allows for

²⁷⁴ Burke, *Thoughts on*, p. 116.

²⁷⁵ Burke, *Thoughts on*, p. 117.

²⁷⁶ Burke, *Thoughts on*, pp. 116-117.

²⁷⁷ Burke, *Thoughts on*, p. 1.

²⁷⁸ Burke, *Thoughts on*, p. 2.

²⁷⁹ Burke, *Observations*, p. 2.

vigorous ambition moderated by a sympathetic attachment; for role-playing and role reversal that prompts delight free from pederastic passivity.

It is this system that is the most stable way of conducting parliament, and the surest defence against pederastic influence. Lest his theorising of male political friendship be misconstrued as sycophancy, Burke states:

If they are friends of any one great man rather than another, it is not that they make it his aggrandisement the end of their union; or because they know him to be the most active in caballing for his connexions the largest and speediest emoluments. It is because they know him, by personal experience, to have wise and enlarged ideas of public good, and an invincible constancy in adhering to it; because they are convinced, by the whole tenour of his actions, that he will never negotiate away their honour or his own; and that, in or out of power, change of situation, will make no alteration in his conduct.²⁸⁰

The distinguishing mark of Burke's friendship is its anti-pederastic basis. This is not to say that very real inequalities of power do not exist between men, but interpersonal "experience" establishes a moral connection based on the sociality of the beautiful, which obviates material difference by working to "inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them".²⁸¹ The social pleasure of beauty ensures that both parties enter into the relationship willingly. As Paddy Bullard notes, for Burke, the authenticity of friendship, the basis of its political value, "is the practical and moral constraint it puts upon the individual politician's actions and opinions".²⁸² Friendship cannot be deployed as a "political or rhetorical tool — it always has to exist already in the habits and manners of the connection".²⁸³ While the theme of friendship and political abandonment can be attributed to the fact that several Rockinghamites remained in government after the fall of their ministry, Burke sees this as symptomatic of the pederastic allegiances fostered by the double cabinet. Responding to the anti-democratic nature of Burke's proposed remedy, Whig historian Catherine Macaulay critiqued it as merely an excuse for members of the House to "advance party or friends to superiority and power" over the interests of the commonalty.²⁸⁴ Yet Burke's concern over the secret

²⁸⁰ Burke, *Observations*, p. 141.

²⁸¹ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 39.

²⁸² Bullard, p. 113.

²⁸³ Bullard, p. 117.

²⁸⁴ Catherine Macaulay, *Observations on a pamphlet entitled Thoughts on the cause of the present discontents* (Dublin: printed for G. Faulkner, J. Exshaw, H. Saunders, E. Linch, W. Slecter, D.

influence in government in the late 1760s was parliamentary, rather than extra-parliamentary in the xenophobic Wilkite sense of the Bute ministry's anti-democratic subjection of the English people. For Burke, Wilkes was merely an indication of a perversion of parliamentary structures of feeling, a casualty of the pederastic culture that needs to be confronted.

Chamberlaine, J. Potts, J. Hoye, Jun. J. Williams, W. Colles, and R. Moncrieffe, M.DCC, LXX. 1770), p. 29.

(4.4) Conclusion

Edmund Burke's early aesthetic and political writings of the late 1750s and 1760s are forcefully shaped by predominant effeminophobic discourse. While commentators have read Burke's gender apartheid of the sublime and the beautiful as a direct aesthetic response to prevalent fears over luxury and its blurring of gender distinction, I have extended this reading by noting how Burke's discussion of beauty renders its enervative affect as socially constitutive as opposed to degenerative. Burke's entire delineation of what counts as beautiful in the *Enquiry* in terms of fitness, proportion, utility and strength is based on a disavowal of the male body as beautiful spectacle. While some men are undoubtedly beautiful, Burke is keen to demonstrate that the mixing of desire and pleasure is limited to the cross-sex gaze. More crucially, men cannot be enervated by the visual or tangible enjoyment of beautiful bodies and objects as the very contract of pleasure is premised on volitional submission. Burke's positive celebration of the enervative affect of beauty is achieved through his distinguishing of the sublime affect of delight from the positive pleasure of the beautiful. The affect of pure delight amounts to the self-negation of the effeminate. In theorising sympathetic attachment, Burke ensures that this delight is mixed with uneasiness in order to cancel out the problem of effeminate pure delight becoming a socially constitutive force. Pure delight, as the *frisson* of sublime experience, is passed through and therefore staved off as a remedial part of the process of masculine reinvigoration.

Outlining the passions of the society of sexes (heterosocial), Burke contributes to the rewriting of heteronormativity in the eighteenth century as based not on procreation but on erotic pleasure, in and of itself. Moreover, the discussion of general society, or the homosocial, serves to detail a range of passions that function to ensure the incompatibility of pederastic desire with homosocial formation. While imitation, a man's loving emulation of another man, risks engendering sodomitical sameness and its asymmetries of power, Burke ensures that the passion of ambition works throughout male society to maintain erotic desire as being tied to difference not sameness. The mixed delight of sympathy, when added to the force of ambition, ensures that the power relations of pederastic subjection remain inconceivable as an emulated social reality. Moreover, the "Introduction to

Taste” appended to the 1759 edition of the *Enquiry* renders an excess delicacy in male taste as habit rather than the perversion of a natural order. Burke’s discussion of Taste argues for man’s “alien pleasures” as digressive rather than degenerate. While Burke does not of course signal sexual pleasure as one such divergence, his later discussion of smells and tastes examples the literary description of the “bitter apples of Sodom” as befitting sublime experience. While “bitter apples” is indeed a literary example, the bodily language of smell and taste redirects us back to the body. From this sublime remove, Burke leaves open an interpretative possibility, which gently prompts us to view the sodomite and his pleasure as delightful.

The homosocial aesthetic of the *Enquiry* provides the foundation for Burke’s theorising of party during the Wilkite electoral crisis of 1768-1770. Informed by his working out of the enervative threat of excess in the late 1750s, Burke responds to the discontent by reaffirming the proper passions of his aesthetic conception of the homosocial. As I have shown, the particular paranoia that Burke expresses is not directed against the person of Bute, but rather emphasises a parliamentary culture that exploits proper political friendship. The Middlesex crisis underscored how pederastic politics was gaining influence over members of parliament. Yet Burke’s denouncement of Wilkes’s expulsion and political incapacitation in *Thoughts* is not equivalent to the vision shared by extra-parliamentary Wilkites, or John Wilkes himself. The irony of Rockinghamite support for Wilkes, and a reason for caution, was the dissonance between Wilkite representational claims and Burke’s homosocial political aesthetic. Burke’s ideas of party organisation kept the determinant force of public opinion firmly contained to the hustings and the ballot box. In contrast, Wilkes conceived of his political role as involving a continuous symbiosis between the elected and his electors. Nothing illustrates this divergence more clearly than juxtaposing Wilkes’s and Burke’s speeches to the electorate. Addressing the gentleman, clergy and freeholders of Middlesex following his election in 1768, Wilkes outlines how the representative role demands his unreserved service:

Engaged as I have long been in the glorious cause of freedom, I beg you to consider my past conduct as an earnest of the future, and to look on me as a man, whose primary views all will ever regard the rights and privileges of his fellow countrymen in general, and whose secondary views shall be attentively fixed on the dignity, advantage and prosperity of the county of Middlesex. Let me therefore desire you, gentlemen, to favour me from time to time with such instructions as may best enable

me to accomplish those ends; resting assured of always finding me devoted to your service, and that the happiest moments of my life will be those in which I am employed in maintaining the civil and religious rights of Englishmen, and in promoting the interests of my constituents.²⁸⁵

While Wilkes's proclaimed dependence is offset by the reference to his general commitment to safeguarding the rights and permissions of Trueborn Englishman, his speech nonetheless makes clear that the electorate will dictate his parliamentary business.

In his famous speech to the electors of Bristol in November 1774, Burke purposefully substitutes the asymmetry of the relationship of an elected member and his constituents for the symmetrical friendships of fellow parliamentarians. Instead of flattering his electorate with promises of future service, Burke ends his speech by proposing to "cultivate the best correspondence" with his fellow elected representative.²⁸⁶ In his speech, Burke is clear that a friendship based on the promotion of freeholders' interests in parliament is not compatible with the proper conception of parliament as "a *deliberative* assembly of *one* nation, with *one* interest, that of the whole; where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole".²⁸⁷ Although he is elected as a member for the trading city of Bristol, Burke makes explicit that his role as a parliamentarian is not to advance one particular cause, but to consider the whole: "We are members for that great nation, which however is itself but part of a great *empire*, extended by our virtue and our fortune to the farthest limits of the east and the west. All these wide-spread interests must be considered; must be compared; must be reconciled, if possible".²⁸⁸ As Conor Cruise O'Brien notes, had Burke been "an opportunist" he would have avoided "advocacy of anything that might run counter to the perceived interests of his constituents or offend their prejudices".²⁸⁹ Burke remained true to his beliefs, advocating free trade principles in 1778 for Ireland, and more specifically for Dublin or even Cork, both of which were potential rival port cities to Bristol.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁵ Anon, *English Liberty Established: Or The most material Circumstances relative to John Wilkes Esq; Member of Parliament for the County of MIDDLESEX* (London: 1768), p. 20.

²⁸⁶ Edmund Burke, *Speeches And Letters on American Affairs* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons LTD., 1938), p. 75.

²⁸⁷ Burke, *Speeches*, p. 73.

²⁸⁸ Burke, *Speeches*, p. 74.

²⁸⁹ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Edmund Burke* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 29.

²⁹⁰ O'Brien, p. 29.

While not dismissing the likelihood of a nationalist impetus behind these positions, we should also note it as being consistent with Burke's theorising of party. The aim of the good of the entire empire must motivate the business of the parliamentarian, who in any case, relinquishes his local specificity when elected: "You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of *parliament*".²⁹¹ For Burke, being bound to the opinion of his electorate registers as the extra-parliamentary version of Crown influence:

To deliver an opinion, is the right of all men; that of constituents is a weighty and respectable opinion, which a representative ought always to rejoice to hear; and which he ought always to consider. But *authoritative* instructions; *mandates* issued, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest conviction of his judgement and conscience — these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenor of our constitution.²⁹²

Rejecting the extremities of "servile compliance" and "wild popularity", Burke pledges to engage in a form of politics that refuses to sacrifice his unbiased opinion, judgement, and conscience to "any man, or to any set of men living".²⁹³ In place of Wilkes's passive role of representing his electorate's opinion, Burke offers not only his industry, but also his "judgement".²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Burke, *Speeches*, p. 74.

²⁹² Burke, *Speeches*, p. 74.

²⁹³ Burke, *Speeches*, pp. 72-73.

²⁹⁴ Burke, *Speeches*, p. 73.

Conclusion

Oh! That offended Genius wou'd inspire
Me, with one Note from Churchill's well-strung Lyre,
To satirize those Fiends, who unconfin'd,
Will stop the Propagation of Mankind. --- (*Sodom and Onan: A Satire*, p. 1)

As long as homophobia continues to structure queer life, we cannot afford to turn away from the past; instead, we have to risk the turn backward, even if it means opening ourselves to social and psychic realities we would rather forget.¹

The Reverend William Jackson's invocation of Charles Churchill as muse in *Sodom and Onan* (1778) attests to the poet's enduring currency in satire of the later eighteenth century. *Sodom and Onan* attacks the popular actor and playwright Samuel Foote as a predatory sodomitical master, who rages "with Lust" for his "handsome" manservant (*Ibid*, p. 4). Deploying Churchill's sodomitical trope to satirise aristocratic abuses of power, *Sodom* ironically functions as a defence of a member of the upper class.² As publicist to Elizabeth Chudleigh, Jackson strategically branded Foote a sodomite, firstly in the *Public Ledger*, and secondly in *Sodom*, in an effort to prevent the satirising Chudleigh's bigamy in *A Trip to Calais*.³ Newspaper exchanges had figured Chudleigh as an example of aristocratic sexual immorality. Her decision to exercise her prerogative by removing the case from the Court of the King's Bench to the House of Lords, where she would be tried as a peer, disastrously transformed the case "from a private legal matter into a symbolic political issue".⁴ As Matthew Kinservik suggests, a number of high profile cases had ignited much criticism toward the upper classes, and the Lords seized on the publicity of Elizabeth's scandal to "demonstrate their virtue by publicising her vices".⁵

¹ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 29.

² Churchill satirised Chudleigh in *Gotham*, I (1764) for appearing as 'Iphigenia', in a state of undress, at a subscription-masquerade in 1749, while maid of honour to Augusta, Princess of Wales (*Gotham*, I, 419-21). See Douglas Grant, "Notes to the Poems", p. 536.

³ In 1775, Chudleigh's inheritance from her second marriage to the Duke of Kingston in 1769 was being contested on account of a clandestine marriage to Augustus Hervey in 1744. The earlier marriage was an open secret in aristocratic circles, and Chudleigh had even resorted to the rare ecclesiastical legal practice of 'jactitation' against Hervey in 1768. With Hervey's help, the suit was successful and Elizabeth was declared single in 1769, marrying the Duke weeks later with a special license from the Archbishop of Canterbury. See Matthew J. Kinservik, "The Politics and Poetics of Sodomy in the Age of George III", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (2006), p. 221.

⁴ Kinservik, p. 223.

⁵ Kinservik, pp. 223-224.

In May of 1776, John Sangster appeared before Sir John Fielding to present information against Foote for attempted sodomy. Sangster, with the financial support of Chudleigh and the backing of Jackson, convinced a grand jury at the Middlesex quarter sessions to indict the playwright on two counts of attempted sodomy.⁶ While the later poem *Asmodeus* (1776) figures Foote as a sodomite,⁷ *Sodom* dramatises Sangster's charges, casting the servant in the role of an innocent "Lovely Youth" who faces sodomitical corruption from the "rank Desires" of his master (*Ibid*). Having railed against Foote's sodomitical tendencies throughout the first eighty lines of the poem, Jackson expands the charge into a blanket denunciation of the entire aristocratic class by focusing on the courtly and legal machinery that obscures the relation between sodomy and privilege. Redeploying Churchill's satirising of Lord Chief-justice Mansfield at the close of *The Ghost*, IV, Jackson goes even further by locating the abuse of power in the personage of the King, George III.⁸

As Jackson undoubtedly appreciated, a significant impetus behind Churchill's verse satire involved the *ad hominem* distinguishing of those "fiends unconfined" who "stop the Propagation of Mankind" (*Ibid*, p. 2). As argued earlier, poems such as *The Times* and *The Prophecy of Famine: A Scot's Pastoral* articulate patriotism as an erotic balance between active citizenship and enjoyment of the "melting fare" (Charles Churchill, *The Prophecy*, 157). Following Churchill, Jackson presents Chudleigh, not as a sexually transgressive woman, but rather as the victim of the sodomitical woman-haters of her own aristocratic class. Chudleigh's heterosexual scandal is occluded by Jackson's recourse to the Churchillian "apology to the fair", which shunts heterosexual excess into the domain of the sodomitical. More than sexual reproduction, propagation also registers as the generation of wealth and its pleasure as property in the Lockean sense of a man's property in his labour and its pleasure. As the title, *Sodom and Onan*, indicates, the vices of sodom and onan are weighted equally within the phobic economy of the poem.⁹ Due to their sterile and unproductive nature neither practice is permissible within the boundaries of acceptable pleasure.

More precisely, Jackson sees one vice eliding into the other: "He Tampers in subordinate degree, / And Onan, introduces S-d—y" (*Sodom*, p. 2). For both Churchill

⁶ Kinservik, p. 227.

⁷ M. J. Kinservik has identified this later edition from the collections at Beinecke Library, Yale. See Kinservik, p. 227.

⁸ Kinservik, p. 232.

⁹ Kinservik, p. 230.

and Jackson, masturbation and sodomy symbolise unproductive self-gratification. Sterility, the antithesis of fertility, is central to the formal and thematic economy of Churchill's effeminophobic satire. In *Sodom*, Jackson, in his accusation against Foote, conflates the sterility of onanism with the pederastic asymmetry of sodomitical. Moreover, in an overtly Wilkite formulation, George III is "Inveigled by Scotch Insinuation / To pardon Sodomites and damn the Nation" (*Ibid.*, p. 17). Referring to the "Scotch Insinuation" in the context of the late 1770s is a very deliberate attempt at reviving the alarmist tenor of the xeno-effeminophobic rhetoric of the 1760s. As I have shown in Chapter One, Churchill's *The Rosciad* and his anti-Ossian poems *The Prophecy* and *The Ghost*, I-IV, conflate xenophobia with effeminophobia by mapping out the Celtic peripheries of Britain as a backward and unproductive fringe. Crucially, it is through this phobic vision that the Celtic peripheries are zoned as unproductive in the context of a mid-century expansionist imperial ideology. The implications of this theorising for the fields of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Irish studies are rich indeed. While it is now a critical commonplace to argue that a homogenous Celtic image became feminised within the British imagination during the long eighteenth century,¹⁰ closer attention to the differences between Hibernophobic and Scotophobic representations in Wilkite satire suggests an effeminising, rather than feminising, of the Celt. While commentators often use feminine and effeminate interchangeably to describe the gendered typifying of the Celtic image in this period, such analysis overlooks the very historicity and semantic capacity of effeminacy.

In any case, such a construction served to de-legitimize and rhetorically exclude certain Britons from the work of empire building. In specific terms, this rhetorical exclusion worked to debar access to the public-political sphere. Although Wilkes's *An Essay on Woman* is a slight and unstable text upon which to build a heavily theoretical argument, Chapter Two has shown how this pornographic poem and the controversy that it provoked centralised heterosexual sex as healthy and normative, while displacing, both textually and figuratively, non-heteroerotic forms of sex as definitively "outside".¹¹ Wilkite political discourse was deeply xeno-effeminophobic, and its contribution to the coeval, intensely imbricated emergence of heteronormativity and the public sphere in the eighteenth century was to make the sexual, indeed the heterosexual, private as opposed

¹⁰ See Chapter Two "Gendering of the Celt" in Murray G. H. Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 61-93.

¹¹ See Carol Watts, *The Cultural Work Of Empire: The Seven Years' War and the Imagining of the Shandean State* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 143.

to public or political. Once again, the later *Sodom and Onan* goes further than any text preceding Wilkite satire in its figuring of Bute's sodomitical administration. In an inadvertent reference to the King's messengers' ransacking of Wilkes's Great Georges' Street residence in 1764, Jackson rehearses the potent symbolic conflation of physical intrusion with pederastic subjection: "E'er I undress, that B-t-e is not there. / Ne'er in my house a welcome Guest he'll be, / Entering my doors, he'll want to enter me" (*Ibid.*, p. 18).

The above couplet underscores the central ideological contribution of Wilkite literature to the reconceiving of heteronormativity in the eighteenth century. Throughout this thesis I have explored how debates about the public and private — about the democratic entitlement of public opinion — were deployed within an effeminophobic and sodomophobic cultural register of crisis. As Jackson's *Sodom* explicitly suggests, in Wilkite terms, the sodomite cannot claim the right to privacy, because the sodomitical and the private are incommensurable. As Jackson concisely frames it, opening up the private to the sodomitical threatens all boundaries of assumed privacy. Rather than the sodomite being denied the privacy assumed and defended by the heterosexual Trueborn Englishman, within the Wilkite model of citizenry the sodomite's publicness emerges as the very thing that provides for the privacy of the heteroerotic. In politicising the homoerotic, Wilkites can privilege the heterosexual as a private rather than a political issue. In analysing this point, this thesis aims to show how the history of effeminacy is also a history of democracy and its discontents. In Wilkite poetry and polemical journalism, anxieties regarding effeminacy and the sodomitical are deployed as a way of both including and excluding Britons from membership of the British nation.

In the second part of Chapter Two, I analysed how Smollett's arguments for peace rely on an anxious aesthetic of the colonial sublime, one that seeks to demonstrate the precariousness and effeminising nature of all colonial expansion. More importantly, I traced how within this anxious discourse, Smollett reassessed the terms of Scottish entry into the British colonial project. Within the particularly fraught terms of debates about how Britain might sustain its Empire, Smollett reimagined his native Scotland, not in anti-Ossian terms as sterile and uncultivated, but as the source for the heterosexual reproduction of the British nation. Curiously, Smollett's narrative of Scottish inclusion simultaneously advanced an anti-democratic view of an increasingly porous and expansive definition of the "people". While ownership of property has been read as the primary entry requirement for membership of the public sphere, Chapter Three has

argued that in Wilkite literary narratives, the heteroerotic provides the very means for those disenfranchised along class lines to secure their liberty and their right to discursive political participation. Thus, in Wilkite literature, we find that Habermas's identification of a public of property owners with mankind, and thus a single public, is given much needed rhetorical extension through the affective intensities of a shared heteroeroticism. Reading Arthur Murphy's *The Auditor* demonstrates how the gendered basis of Wilkite politicking was itself open to attack.

Jackson's fear of the "Scotch insinuation" some fifteen years after the resignation of Bute, is as much Burkean reference as it is Wilkite. As I have shown in Chapter Four, the paranoia over back-stairs politics that Burke expresses in his early political writing is not directed against the personage of Bute, but rather emphasises a parliamentary culture that exploits proper political friendship. The Middlesex electoral crisis of 1768-1769 indicated how pederastic politics — a politics built on asymmetrical relations of power — was gaining influence over members of parliament. For Burke, Wilkes's repeated expulsion from parliament was a sure indication of this imbalance. Yet, Burke's support for Wilkes is not equivalent to that of the extra-parliamentary masses or the remnants of the Temple faction. Whereas Wilkites located sovereign power in the electorate base, Burke's theory of representation limited the determinant force of public opinion to the hustings and the ballot box. For Burke, being tied to the opinions of an electorate from within parliament registered as the extra-parliamentary version of Crown influence. In place of this effeminate servility is the friendship of parliamentarians, who renounce all local allegiance upon entering parliament. In order to understand Burke's party doctrine we need to return to his earlier aesthetic writing on sociality.

In the final chapter, I have shown how the homosocial aesthetic of the *Enquiry* provides the foundation for Burke's theorising of party in response to the Middlesex crisis. I have shown how Burke's aesthetic writing responds to concerns over luxury and effeminacy that were shaping debates about the Seven Years' War from its outset. The splitting of pleasure into the positive pleasure of beauty and the negative delight of the sublime, allows for the celebration of the enervative affect of beauty as a socially constitutive force. In Burke's social aesthetic, the affect of pure delight signifies the self-negation that underwrites effeminacy. In theorising sympathetic attachment in the *Enquiry*, Burke ensures that this delight is mixed with uneasiness in order to cancel out the problem of pure delight engendering asymmetrical social relations. The mixed

delight of sympathy, when added to the force of ambition, ensures that the power relations of pederasty remain inconceivable as an inter-subjective reality. While this thesis has limited its survey of Burke's writing to his early works, it is clear that a reading of the development of his homosocial aesthetic can be carried much further. As we have seen, the expansion of the authentic public sphere in the eighteenth century was underwritten by a reconceiving of heteronormativity; this democratic expansion served to simultaneously engender and displace the sodomite as the very limit of permissible representation. As an American-British minority gay and lesbian political front advances a political agenda in this century that seeks to secure the privacy, rights, and permissions afforded to heterosexuals, it is important to acknowledge the historical legacy of the incommensurability of the homoerotic with the public-political sphere.

In both the aesthetic and the political realms, Burke's vision of homosociality offered a resolution for the anxious paradox of assertive enervation found in the civic writings of the period. Moreover, in his early political writings, Burke put a gloss on the extremism of the Wilkite xeno-effeminophobic critique. In April of 1780, Burke made a brave speech in parliament, which denounced the crowd's brutal murder of a plasterer, William Smith, who was being pilloried as punishment for "sodomitical practices".¹² As Sally R. Munt argues, in addressing men who have been defined in legal terms as sodomites, Burke draws on the epistemological uncertainty that troubles all sodomitical representation.¹³ He argues that the punishment received by the man was in excess of the crime and its conviction, as the pillory was "a punishment of shame rather than of personal severity".¹⁴ Burke deploys a description of the scene in order to evoke sympathy from his fellow parliamentarians:

The poor wretch hung rather than walked as the pillory turned around ... he had deprecated the vengeance of the mob ... he soon grew black in the face, and the blood forced itself out of his nostrils, his eyes, and his ears. That the officers seeing his situation, opened the pillory, and the poor wretch fell down dead on the stand of the instrument ... The crime was however of all crimes, a crime of the most equivocal nature, and the most difficult to prove.¹⁵

¹² Burke, "Text of Edmund Burke's Speech to the House of Commons on 12th April 1780", in Sally R. Munt, *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), p. 51.

¹³ Munt, p. 41.

¹⁴ Burke, "Text", p. 51.

¹⁵ Burke, "Text", p. 51.

As Munt suggests, Burke's speech allows his fellow parliamentarians to imaginatively enter into the experience as a substitute for Smith.¹⁶ Rather than the brutality experienced by Smith, Burke advocates a tactic of shame. We might also say that for Burke, the real effeminacy in this horrendous scene can be attributed to the crowd, who either participated or languished in pure delight as a grossly asymmetrical, even pederastic, display of power unfolded: the group murder of a restrained man.

¹⁶ Munt, p. 43.

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