Serial Selves:
Identity, Genre, and Form in the Eighteenth Century

by

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Abstract

This dissertation studies modes of fashioning textual selfhood in the eighteenth century. It begins with an exploration of how a critical paradigm of modern selfhood functions in current eighteenth-century criticism, and then attempts to build from theories of diaries and periodicals a second category, which I call "modes of seriality," to determine how the features of serial production and publication might interact with or disrupt the expectations engendered by the paradigm of the modern self. The first part addresses two serial life writing texts. In my reading of Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs* I demonstrate how she manipulates serial features in the telling of her own life, so that her identity becomes a patchwork, woven together through the words and experiences of others. The chapter on Charlotte Charke's *Narrative* examines how the actress negotiates serial features and the conventions of confessional narrative to create an identity that both conforms to and resists the expectations of criminal auto/biography. Reading these serial lives helps me build a framework for understanding how writers of lives engage with serial features.

The second part of the dissertation uses that framework to interrogate three texts from genres that are often referenced in eighteenth-century discussions of modern selfhood. First I look at how Daniel Defoe's use of serial features in *Robinson Crusoe* call into question the myth of the modern individual's dependence on the teleology of progress and interiority. The next chapter examines how Benjamin Franklin's sense of community identification is both reproduced in and reflected by serial features in his *Autobiography*. The final chapter in this

section engages with recent criticism on sentiment and identity to examine how the form of Frances Sheridan's *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* routes selfhood through engagement and exchange with others.

The third part of the discussion turns to two periodicals, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *Spectator* and Eliza Haywood's *Female Spectator*, to examine how periodical texts that model and participate in collaborative construction interact with features of modern individualism. This dissertation seeks to broaden our understanding of the processes available for constructing a "self" in the eighteenth-century.

Introduction: Serial Narrative and Paradigms of Selfhood

Types of serial publication in the eighteenth century were widespread and varied: by the

early 1700s: "the nationwide distribution network for periodical publications was already more

highly developed than that for works in volume form" (Law). This ease of publication and access

introduces the possibility that many of the texts we turn to in the study of eighteenth-century

selfhood were not only published, but perhaps also constructed using serial features and

conventions. Since life writing genres such as diary, journal, and letters are also serial in nature,

and the novels of the period often borrowed these genres for their narrative framework, a

question regarding the relationship between the construction of textual self and serialization

seems appropriate, especially in light of recent interest in theorizing the serial.[1]

Theorizing the serial and its features as a formal framework for conveying textual self—

or the particulars that make up one's identity on the page—offers a way to approach these texts

from outside the models preferred by modernity and contemporary criticism. The first two works

I address, Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs* and Charlotte Charke's *Life*, are produced and published

serially, as are the periodicals I take up in the final section. Though the texts I focus on in the

middle section—two novels and an autobiography—are not published serially, all three employ

narrative strategies that replicate the features of the serial.

In order to situate this study in discourses of eighteenth-century selfhood, I attempt to

engage with two critical frameworks common in approaches to texts of the period. The first is a

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[1] Studies of the serial and seriality have increased over the last decade or so. In fact, as I was finishing this
dissertation I received two calls for papers in as many weeks by conferences interested in exploring the nature of the
serial as a textual and cultural category.

paradigm constructed and perpetuated by readers and critics across the last two centuries as a

central mode for understanding the necessary features of a modern "self." In his introduction to

Sources of the Self, Charles Taylor calls this construct "the ensemble of (largely unarticulated)

understandings of what it means to be a human agent: the sense of inwardness, freedom, [and]

individuality…that are at home in the modern West" (xi). Literary criticism often assigns the

long eighteenth century as the significant period in the development of both that modern

understanding of selfhood and the narratives that reflect it. This paradigm of the modern self,

often routed through seventeenth-century Enlightenment thought, privileges an individual,

autonomous, unified subject and is defined by a compulsion for interiority and reflexivity

ascribed to the influence of the Protestant Reformation.[2] These tenets of modern selfhood are

almost ingrained in the way we approach eighteenth-century studies. Students of the period are

introduced early to the concept, if not necessarily the term, as they learn about the self-

accounting confessional style of Daniel Defoe's protagonists and the interiority of Jane Austen's

heroines. Even criticism that is not interested in issues of identity often takes as a given some or

all of its tenets; our expectations of a protagonist to be a "dynamic" rather than a "static"

character, for example, are grounded in the kind of progressive development defined in the

paradigm.

  Since this is a discussion of texts and textual conventions that represent self, I am

primarily concerned with how the attributes of the modern self outlined above manifest in

narrative. The genres that reflect this concept of selfhood generally have a narrative structure that

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[2] I define the concept in this discussion by drawing on Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, which examines how our current understanding of "modern" selfhood is intertwined with concepts of morality. There are versions of the development of modern selfhood that posit alternative models, however; in Dror Wahrman's *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth Century England* he describes a much more sudden emergence of modern selfhood late in the period, while Bedford locates a more developed iteration of it in earlier centuries.

is cohesive, linear, and progressive. That is, the speaker (and the reader) recognize in the story a beginning and end point, a clear path from the first to the last, and a completed self that has evolved across the time and space of the narrative. In autobiographies, memoirs, and "lives" this progress often loosely mirrors the life cycle; the narrative begins with birth and upbringing, traces the significant milestones in the development of the self, and closes at the (near) ending of the life. In narratives that reflect this modern version of selfhood, the speaker achieves the completion in question through some sort of self-realization. For the purposes of this discussion I refer to these kinds of narratives as "modern" life writing texts because they reflect the characteristics of the paradigm. Though few texts reflect all of these features, from *Robinson Crusoe* to the modern day memoir, we locate—indeed, often actively look for—aspects of this formula in most first-person narratives that aspire to represent a self, whether fictional or real.

The most common iteration of this framework categorizes the development of the notion of modern selfhood as a progressive movement across the eighteenth century, when it finally culminates in the beginning of the Romantic period. Critics cite various social, political, and cultural influences that fostered its development: Enlightenment philosophy; the Protestant Reformation; industrialization and urbanization; and the rise of capitalism and the middle class are all identified as contributors to the conditions in the eighteenth century that brought about the gradual dominance of modern selfhood as the primary mode for thinking about personal identity. One of the goals of this project is to press just a little on the paradigm of the modern self and its features as they manifest in narrative. Even a cursory examination reveals that though its development can be traced across the period in broad strokes, there are also early examples to indicate that the narrative conventions of modern selfhood were already firmly established in the first half of the eighteenth century and available as a mode of self-representation. Such an

examination also shows that early and mid-century writers were already modifying those conventions, which indicates that across the period there might be a more varied and fluid set of concepts about selfhood from which to draw than the modern paradigm and its attendant conventions and notions of progression can contain.

This brings us to the second critical framework I take up in this discussion. In an attempt to re-examine the claim that there was a significant "shift" in notions of identity from the eighteenth century on, scholars of seventeenth-century literature have begun to consider the relationship between pre- and post-eighteenth century narratives of selfhood. In order to contextualize the development of the modern self, historically criticism has identified at the turn of the eighteenth century a shift, even a break, with earlier forms of creating and expressing selfhood. This shift has been defined broadly as one that moves its focus from collective and communal to individual and internal, though recent studies have begun to question both sides of this hypothesized break, particularly by exploring how individual identity was expressed in unconventional ways pre-eighteenth century.   In my discussion of serial selfhood I posit that aspects of this discourse of collective identity, rather than disappearing in the face of the developing modern self, persisted into the eighteenth century and became one of several available modes of expressing self. But because identifying features of the modern self became a central focus of literary scholarship focused on the eighteenth-century, we have neglected to fully explore the possibilities available in alternative kinds of self-narration in the period. Examining eighteenth-century self-representation in the context of those earlier modes might allow us to re-access what we think we know about its development.

How exactly did one claim "selfhood" in eighteenth-century narrative? To what extent did notions of selfhood evolve across the eighteenth century? This project considers the modes of

selfhood available to eighteenth-century writers and suggests that seriality and its attendant narrative and formal structures provides a space to consider how we how we understand and employ theories of textual self-representation and the foundations on which that understanding was built. We are most familiar with self-construction in genres that reflect modern notions of what it means to be a self, genres such as autobiography, memoir, and novel. These genres invoke particular formal expectations of their subjects: introspection and reflexivity, experience reflected in a pattern of progressive chronology and linearity, and a sense of cohesion and finality. When these genres are produced or published serially, the more flexible, fluid, fragmented, circuitous, and inclusive features of a serial narrative have the opportunity to modify and even elide those expectations. I suggest imagining eighteenth-century selfhood on the page had just as much to do with exceptionalism, fragmentation, incompletion, and the ephemeral as it did the unity, continuity, and completion we have come to expect as hallmarks of the modern self.

In invoking the serial as a category of inquiry I emphasize its function as a vehicle of production as well as publication. There are many different kinds of serials, and we will explore that complexity in depth later in this discussion, but in general I use serial in a sense similar to genre: a category with a specific set of formal narrative conventions and features that produce particular expectations in the reader. The critical benefit we gain from this approach is twofold: first, it allows us to read some early examples of life writing—autobiography, memoir, novel, lives—from a fresh perspective. In addition, it has the potential to broaden the canon of texts representing selves. Narratives of selfhood—both actual and fictional "lives" to use the most common eighteenth-century term—appear across genres, in poetry, in novels, as vignettes in periodicals and conduct books, and of course as an independent generic category.

In exploring and defining seriality, I draw from both genre and life writing theory. Studies of the serial are not thick on the ground—especially studies focused before the nineteenth century. My framework for reading serial selfhood builds on theorizing of the diary, also serial, though arguably more often considered private rather public. I am particularly indebted to the theoretical work on diaries of Suzanne Bunkers and Cynthia Huff. I also engage with theories of how self emerged and evolved in the eighteenth century, building on the foundational life writing studies of Patricia Meyer Spacks and Felicity Nussbaum. Life writing theory further assists me in exploring how the nature of the serial provides a space for community exchange and collaboration between writer and reader. Finally, because the paradigm of the modern self is so ingrained in eighteenth-century studies, in an effort to understand both how we depend of the paradigm of the modern self and how we challenge that paradigm, I engage with literary, historical, and philosophical criticism on the period, from studies focused on the domestic, such as Michael McKeon's *Theory of the Novel,* to work grounded in to political and national identity, such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

When a particular narrative becomes a dominant influence on how we make meaning, shifting ourselves away from that narrative can be difficult. This study examines serial selfhood as a possible model that can complicate and disrupt features of modernity. By reexamining existing assumptions regarding both the paradigm of modern selfhood and the genres that manifest it, I engage with and expand upon recent interest in how we can complicate notions of identity construction. Theories of selfhood have been complicated in criticism of more recent life writing by scholars who have challenged, for example, an emphasis on individual experience, or the portrayal of a life in a single cohesive trajectory. I carry that scrutiny backwards to discover what we might learn from exploring other modes of creating and expressing selfhood available to

writers of the period. In the remaining pages of this introduction, I will sketch out the ways in which the paradigm of the modern self is employed in eighteenth-century studies and outline a framework of seriality that has the potential to engage with and alter our understanding of that paradigm.

A Dominant Paradigm: Critical History

According to the *Encyclopedia of Life Writing*, a text that seeks to chart broad cultural developments across life writing, Alexander Pope and William Wordsworth differ most in the shift from a macro to micro focus on identity—Pope's Essay on Man (1734) proposed self-analysis for the study of "Mankind," while Wordsworth's Prelude (1799), a text that is "part of a larger emphasis on personal experience that can be traced in Romantic and pre-Romantic" writing, champions the importance of individual introspective analysis (Quinn 137).[3] This Pope and Wordsworth comparison reflects a persistent trend over the last two centuries in literary, philosophical, and historical constructions of the paradigm of the modern self and its lasting effects. Broadly represented, this trend locates the roots of the modern self in pre-eighteenth-century Western autobiographical, religious, and philosophical writing, assigns its progression as a central mode of understanding selfhood across the long eighteenth century, and places the culmination of the concept around the beginning of the Romantic period. The progression is traced in a shift from a contingent and communal emphasis on identity derived from and submerged in ideological frameworks such as religion and the court pre-eighteenth century to an individual and private self in the early nineteenth century.

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[3] *The Prelude* was published in 1850, but the 1799 date when Wordsworth began writing is more significant here, since I am attempting to show how a shift in the concept of selfhood is traced across the century.

The foundation for tracing selfhood's most persistent paradigm to the eighteenth century begins in Enlightenment philosophy. Charting a course through earlier thinkers such as Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Locke, and Montaigne in his work *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor finds that in comparison to the apparent lack of emphasis on individuality in the centuries before, "by the turn of the eighteenth century, something recognizably like the modern self is in process of constitution, at least among the social and spiritual elites of northwestern Europe and its American offshoots" (185). This emphasis on process, on a sense of progression across the period, reflects the fact that "scholarship published under the rubric of the British eighteenth century has long tended toward historicism and shown some regular suspicion toward an oppositionally constructed 'theory' (or 'system' in eighteenth-century parlance)" (Wallace 10).[4] At the end of the century that process completes in the reflexivity and interiority assigned to the Romantics. Miriam L. Wallace examines how this critical approach is reconciled with nineteenth-century historicism, arguing that "where eighteenth-century scholars see continuity and continuing development, Romantic scholars are often invested in the narrative of Romantic exceptionalism" as the culminating iteration of the modern self (10). This distinction is at the crux of the issue I outline here: a preoccupation with the historical progression of the modern self may have obscured other ways of thinking about the development and expression of selfhood in the eighteenth century. In fact, the trajectory of the 'novel' or of narrative prose has been central to contemporary study of British eighteenth-century "modern" identity, while a tendency to privilege lyric poetry has long defined British Romanticism (7). The link between these two

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[4] Wallace does note that historicism is not without flexibility: "The view of what historically-informed work should look like has changed, as the writings and perspectives of women, non-Europeans, the middling or working classes, and other marginalized peoples have been increasingly incorporated into study of the period. Nevertheless, a strongly historicist, not to say classicist, predilection still pertains to eighteenth-century studies, even as greater attention is granted to writers popular in their own day, but long considered peripheral to the core great tradition" (10).

period claims is one of identification—identification with the paradigm of the modern self. Just as eighteenth-century novel studies emphasize the progressive individual experience, often focusing on the first person "I" that becomes such a pervasive narrative tool in the period, so nineteenth-century analysis finds the lyric voice to be a reflection of an individual, interior, often isolated voice that represents many of the traits of the modern self.[5]

Despite much recent critical scrutiny of the dominant paradigms of selfhood in autobiography studies and related fields, the progressive narrative of the modern self and its connection to eighteenth-century thinking and writing continue to persevere. Its characteristics are deeply ingrained in the way we think and write about selfhood, both historically and currently. Early and often foundational literary critics cement the concept by focusing on and reifying intellectual figures such as Descartes and Locke as providing the genealogical foundations of the self. Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel*, makes direct connections between that genre and the tenets of the modern self:

> Descartes…did much to bring about the modern assumption whereby the pursuit of truth is conceived of as a wholly individual matter…The novel is the form of literature which most fully reflects this individualist and innovating reorientation. *Previous literary forms had reflected the general tendency of their cultures to make conformity to traditional practice the major test of truth*…This literary traditionalism was first and most fully challenged by the novel, whose primary criterion was truth to individual experience—*individual experience which is always unique and therefore new" (*13; italics mine).

This tendency to distinguish between the novel and "earlier forms," either literary or autobiographical, is not a singular one on Watt's part (though perhaps he was one of the first to make it, at least in regards to the novel).[6] Because we locate the "rise" of the modern self in the eighteenth century, it must be seen as breaking tradition with some earlier version. Watt also

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[5] See Wallace, also Virginia Walker Jackson traces the relationship between lyric and selfhood in *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Poetry*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005.
[6] See also Michael Mckeon, *Theory of the Novel*; J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels*.

clearly links the novel with autobiography, a pairing that would eventually become ubiquitous in eighteenth-century studies: "Defoe initiated an important new tendency in fiction: his total subordination of the plot to the pattern of the autobiographical memoir is as defiant as assertion of the primacy of individual experience in the novel as Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* was in philosophy" (15). "Autobiographical memoir" here invokes the progressive plot of the individual as we are most familiar with it, in which through a chronological telling of select significant experiences (family history, birth, youth, work, accomplishments), at least some of which involve the subject being tested and tried, a unified selfhood emerges. The nineteenth century's bildungsroman is another good example of a variation of this formulation.

Throughout subsequent decades, studies that have focused on the eighteenth century have taken this modern version of selfhood and its progressive development over the course of the period for granted as a starting point for understanding the much broader category of eighteenth-century identity. Even if critics and scholars are not actively looking for the traits that define the modern self, they generally assume their presence and build an argument based on those assumptions. Like Taylor, eighteenth-century criticism often looks to Augustine's *Confessions* (ca. 397) in particular as one early model for the development of the kind of reflexivity that leads to a favoring of interiority as integral to modern selfhood. Spiritual autobiography with its accompanying self-reflection and progressive plot is a staple in the production of life writing and selfhood before, during, and after the eighteenth century; we could cite texts such as John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and Jonathan Edwards's *Narrative*.[7] Moreover, this model of selfhood is not limited to religious aspects—the

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[7] Much work has been done on spiritual autobiography in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; for the purposes of this discussion, see Nussbaum, Felicity. *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology In Eighteenth-century* England. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989; Spacks, Patricia Ann Meyer. *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel In Eighteenth-century England.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.

confessional format that depends on a combination of reflective self-analysis and active

restructuring of the subject is identified in criticism of various genres (both historically and

today)—including criminal narratives.[8] But these confessional genres are often grounded in

communal rather than individual acts, performed in front of an audience with the power to pass

judgment. This historical feature is pertinent to texts such as *The Memoirs of Letitia Pilkington*

and *The Narrative of Mrs. Charlotte Charke*, which demand a kind of public trial.

Feminist and gendered readings of eighteenth-century texts often locate agency or lack

thereof in the gendered individual.[9] In her introduction to *Autobiograpics*, Leigh Gilmore links

autobiography and individualism, noting that "the near absence of women's self-representational

texts from the critical histories that authorize autobiography indicates the extent to which the

genre that functions as the closest textual version of the political ideology of individualism is

gendered as 'male'" (1). Studies of sentiment and sensibility in the late eighteenth century seek

to imbue women with that ideology of individualism by identifying the movement's emphasis on

emotive and reflective qualities in conjunction with interiority and individuality.[10] Interiority

then becomes, by the end of the century, an important marker of selfhood in fiction, so that we

might read Jane Austen's *Emma* and her constant self-scrutiny, for example, as a much more

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[8] For discussions of criminality see Faller Lincoln, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth-Century England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987; Gladfelder, Hal, *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England: Beyond the Law*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001.

[9] See Ballaster, Ros. *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*. Oxford: ClarendonPress, 1992; Bannet, Eve Taylor. *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000; Binhammer, Katherine. *The Seduction Narrative in Britain, 1747-1800.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009; Nussbaum, Felicity. *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology In Eighteenth-century* England. Baltimore: Johns HopkinsUniversity Press, 1989; Smith, Sidonie. *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self representation.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987; Spacks, Patricia Ann Meyer. *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel In Eighteenth-century England.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.

[10] Although the gaze is on the other's pain and suffering, it is the inherent and internal ability to sympathize that marks an individual as experiencing sentiment—in fact in Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* Harley's individual experience was so strong it killed him.

authentic representative of self than Haywood's unreflective *Fantomina* at the beginning of the century or even *Betsy Thoughtless* in the middle.

Recent focus on studies of the domestic and its novelistic representation by scholars such as Michael McKeon, Nancy Armstrong, and Gillian Brown contribute to the reinforcement of the paradigm of the modern self through their focus on the relationship between domesticity and bourgeois culture and its attendant issues of public and private identities. Much fascinating work has been done on narratives centered around the domestic (particularly in the genre of novels); nevertheless, the emphasis on a "private" life is inextricably bound up with the idea of an "individual" self since it serves to separate the self from the public (or the other).[11] To what extent this emphasis is dependent on positing the novel as a dominant genre for defining both the eighteenth century and the modern self is difficult to tell, but I suspect the relationship between the three (novel, modern self, eighteenth-century studies) is much more complex and historically tangled than any of us have yet to acknowledge. That the novel acts as a defining marker for both the eighteenth century and the modern subject is a critical given. Even a text that seeks to complicate this pairing, such as J. Paul Hunter's *Before Novels* (1990), still assumes that the two are inseparable, as evidenced by the title itself. Hunter's book offers a valuable model for thinking about the relationship between self-representation and genre. He notes that the novel in the second half of the nineteenth century seemed to have a "tendency to both probe and promote loneliness and solitariness" along with a "tendency to enclose" as well as expose the self (39):

> Perhaps because the novel emerged when it did, just as the urban consciousness began to focus on the overwhelming sense of solitariness of one among many, it developed early a generic ability (nearly instinctive among its authors) to record poignantly the modern perception that, however close to another consciousness

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[11] Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge*, Johns Hopkins UP, 2006; Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, Oxford UP, 1987; Brown, Gillain, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth Century America*, University of California Press, 1990.

one came, whatever the relationship between people, there is always a sense of incompleteness, isolation, and frustration that approaches despair. (40)

This "nearly instinctive" relationship between the novel and elements of the modern self seems almost inevitable and self-fulfilling, as does the assumption that both became dominant by the end of the eighteenth century.

The beginnings of autobiography as a genre of "self made by oneself" is generally assigned to the eighteenth century in studies of British literature, and even then, usually late in the period (Folkenflik 8). In a thorough review of the history of the term autobiography, or self-biography, and the genre it signifies, Robert Folkenflik finds that "the earliest uses of the term suggest several reasons why the major tradition of autobiography began with (or slightly before) the advent of Romanticism in the nineteenth century. First, such writings, building upon eighteenth-century empiricism and individualism, were encouraged by Romantic subjectivity and its expressive poetics" (8). Building on the eighteenth-century philosophical background most often represented by Locke, Patricia Meyer Spacks brings together the novel and autobiography to examine the "period's doubts about the substantiality of identity" and explore the "consciousness operating on experience" that allows eighteenth-century writers to reaffirm their individual identity through text (23). Spacks' text is not arguing for a particularly modern self, but it often assumes that self in its readings. Felicity Nussbaum's *The Autobiographical Subject* (1989) looks closely at autobiographical texts—diaries, journals, and autobiographies—in order to understand how the genre was manipulated ideologically to support, challenge, or create self through gender and class.[12] Her concern with the flexibility, permeability, and fragmentation of the self displayed in life writing across class and gender, categories previously seen as much

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[12] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, Harvard UP, 1976; Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England,* Johns Hopkins UP, 1989. Both Spacks and Nussbaum are still cited in current critical discussions of eighteenth-century life writing.

more rigid and fixed, is convincing, but she is concerned to look within, rather than beyond, the

narrative of the modern self:

> Autobiographical writing encouraged a consciousness of a more particular sense
> as requiring realization through self-interested pursuit. Thinking of oneself as
> bourgeois justified pursuing one's own individual self-interest, while believing
> that self-interest to be virtually synonymous with communal interest…To be
> middle class required thinking of 'self' differently—individually." (53-4)

Whatever else autobiography does, Nussbaum argues, it "does not however escape the familiar

ways of making meaning in a given historical moment," and that familiar way may be too tightly

bound up in the paradigm of the modern self (29).

Reinforcing this paradigm established as an eighteenth-century construct, critics of

nineteenth-century literature continue to trace the progression, and perhaps culmination, of the

modern self in both poetry and prose. In *Democratic Subjects: The self and the social in

nineteenth-century England*, Patrick Joyce claims that the "role of Enlightenment thinking, and

of romantic individualism, have traditionally been given the place of pride after Protestantism in

this narrative of the [modern] self" (18). Studies focused on "Romantic Individualism"

emphasize the modern self as an imaginative space of individuality and contemplation of that

individuality—a critical continuation of Wordsworth's own "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*:

Though a poem represents the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," it nevertheless lacks

value unless it comes from an individual who has "also thought long and deeply." The increasing

focus on the lyric voice in nineteenth century poetry imported all the isolation and interiority of

the novelistic voice into readings of poetry, which in turn continued the privileging of the

paradigm of the modern self, and reinforced its position as a foundation of eighteenth-century

studies.[13] The resulting narrowed focus in reading eighteenth-century possibilities of narrated

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[13] Though more recent studies are challenging this reading of the lyric in the nineteenth century. See for example
Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery*, Princeton UP, 2005.

selfhood limits both the texts we approach, since the canon tends to favor texts that are "models" of developing modern selfhood, and the way in which we approach these texts, since we already have the paradigm as an overlay for the text.

The Modern Self in the Eighteenth Century

Of course, eighteenth-century writers did have access to and utilize a conception of modern selfhood, and its characteristics are apparent across the period. But despite the pervasiveness of the theory of progression, itself likely a byproduct of the paradigm in question, it is difficult to trace exactly how and to what extent the development of the concept of the modern self "progressed" across the period except in a very broad sense. Though we can identify instances of it throughout, and our current canon indicates that by end of the period, the paradigm of the modern self was becoming increasingly utilized by writers and critics, at least in philosophical and literary circles, there is plenty of evidence that writers in the late 1600s and early 1700s were fully aware of its conventions, whether or not they chose to use them.

Two examples from the period of writers using and theorizing self-representation will serve to illuminate that writers of the eighteenth century were already engaged with this concept of selfhood. In 1711 Joseph Addison's narrator, after a brief tongue-in-cheek sketch of his life from birth to date, opens the first essay of the *Spectator* papers with a prescriptive for how to convey oneself in print: "I have given the reader *just so much* of my History and Character, as to let him see I am not altogether unqualified for the Business I have undertaken. As for the other Particulars in my Life and Adventures, I shall insert them in following Papers, as I see occasion" (104; italics mine). This declaration demonstrates that Addison's Spectator clearly understands the expected conventions for writing a life: start with birth, end with death (or very near to it),

and include in between reflection on all the significant points of one's life that might flatter the subject and instruct the reader. However, he insists on controlling how and when he will employ these conventions: he offers the reader "just so much" rather than promising the usual "full and honest account,"[14] and his implied selectivity—"Particulars…as I see occasion"—suggests that the linearity and cohesion that have come to be the expected conventions of a life in text are not his top priority.

Forty years later Samual Johnson writes in the *Rambler* on the value of biography: "The incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely translated by tradition" (207). Johnson, too, eschews the expected format for recording "lives" in text, in his words "a formal and studied narrative, begun with [a] pedigree and ended with [a] funeral,"(206). Instead he favors the fleeting, the obscure, the unexpected, and he privileges character over chronology. These early reflections about what it means to craft textual selfhood illustrate two significant points: that the dominant generic conventions of representing a modern self in text are already well-established in the first half of the eighteenth century, and that writers of the period felt free to challenge those conventions.

We can trace the lineage of the progressive model across the period from Descartes and Locke to David Hume and Adam Smith, who laid groundwork in philosophical thinking reflected in the writing of eighteenth-century lives by speculating about the nature of experience and its relationship to self-knowledge and the relationship between the self and society.[15] While Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* does a good job of indicating how these concepts of communal identity were mapped, he too is building on Lockean theory as he begins his treatise:

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[14] Similar promises of transparency are customary in many fiction and non-fiction texts of the period claiming to be have truth value, including Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* Charlotte Charke's *Memoirs*.

[15] I use the term *society* in the very broadest sense here to mean that which is not the self, i.e. contact with outside the self in whatever form and on whatever scale. This could indicate "England" or an immediate family, or a coffeshop crowd.

"As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected… [Our senses] never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person" (3). Even though Smith does attempt to assert that in this isolation the self can only be fully recognized by participation in society, his basic tenets indicate that by the time *Moral Sentiments* reached its final revision in 1790, the philosophical structure of the modern self that Taylor traces through earlier thinkers has begun to be taken for granted in the period's intellectual arena. But our scholarship might be inhibiting us here—while useful for recovering an intellectual history, to ascribe this kind of thinking broadly across the century would be exclusionary. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a preoccupation with sentiment may have further established the philosophical foundations of the modern self; Robin Blackburn characterizes the shift toward this modern conception of self as an increasing "individualist sensibility" (4).

There are references to the modern self and its characteristics across the eighteenth century in texts outside of philosophy—texts that we would classify today as novels, or biography and autobiography. To what extent these references imply progression may be more a function of canon selection than actual representation. This short excerpt from the first chapter of Colley Cibber's *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (1740) provides an example of these characteristics: "A Man who has pass'd above Forty Years of his Life upon a Theatre, where he has never appear'd to be Himself, may have naturally excited the Curiosity of his *Spectator*s to know what he really was, when in no body's Shape but his own" (6). Certainly Cibber's promise of "an honest Examination of my Heart" and a "History of my Private Life" point to his attempt to reveal in his narrative something underneath the public Cibber which cannot be reached or known except by himself, yet the context of his apology, as a history of the theater, is

communally based (7). Other biographers and autobiographers of the period also often mark themselves or their subjects with words that indicate their uniqueness and otherness—words such as "original," "singular," "odd," etc.[16] The end of the eighteenth century marked a significant increase in the representation of the individual life in texts, and the belief that the self can be recovered and expressed in narrative only through the practice of observation and recording by the individual him or herself. This practice previously found its most common expression in the form of diaries and journals; the first person omniscient narrative found in many novels of the period, particularly epistolary novels, focused similarly on the experience of the individual to drive the narrative forward. The "I" was finding its way into public discourse in the mid to late eighteenth century in a way it never had previously. This is not to say that that "I" didn't exist, but that it was less often published prior to later eighteenth century, which is often what leads us to make broad distinctions about self that are perhaps not as chronologically tidy as they appear.

All of this indicates that the concept of the modern self was present and popular in eighteenth-century narrative, but not that it was exclusive. We see Addison and Johnson acknowledge the expectations engendered by the dominant paradigm; Addison assumes a "life" requires the speaker to provide "history," or a chronological recitation of events, and the speaker must appear "qualified" or knowledgeable about the expectations of writing a self. Johnson uses language even more in tune with generic features of modern selfhood, imagining authors of predictable strategy think (incorrectly) they are "writing a life when they exhibit a chronological series of actions or preferments" (206). Yet while their language gestures indicates familiarity with a paradigm of modern selfhood and its attendant conventions, both actively push on those

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[16] For example, Ian Watt points out: "It is significant that the trend in favour of originality found its first powerful expression in England, and in the eighteenth century; the very word 'original' took on its modern meaning at that time…the term 'original' which in the Middle Ages had meant 'having existed from the first' came to mean 'underived, independent, first-hand'" (14).

conventions, which suggests that though the dominant paradigm was firmly established even in the eighteenth century, there were patterns of exception that merit closer scrutiny and indicate broader availability of concept: instances where the paradigm is adapted or abandoned; occasions where conventions and expectations indicate that notions of selfhood are more fluid than the conventions of modern selfhood imply. Yet critical studies still tend to isolate that model as the dominant one by the end of the period. This study examines how our interpretation of these individual features in eighteenth-century self-conception might have caused the paradigm of the modern self to become overdetermined, especially in the case of particularly canonical texts, and reveals how they could just as easily be adapted and manipulated independently of the paradigm.

Theorizing Alternatives to Modern Selfhood

Many contemporary critics of life writing, particularly those who focus on twentieth century narrative, reformulate narrative of the self as a function that is always performed to some degree in relation to others; selfhood as they understand it depends as much on outward interaction as inward introspection. Moreover, recent critical work has found that early autobiographical texts, those that precede the period to which the development of the modern self is assigned, highlight the degree to which a subject is constructed not just alongside or against, but in constant negotiation with all kinds of others.[17] These re-conceptions of the periods that bracket the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries argue compellingly for a more expansive reading of texts often earmarked as heralding the modern singular self, as well as the inclusion of texts not previously thought to convey selfhood.

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[17] For the purposes of this discussion, I refer to the action of this kind of negotiation and exchange and the product it creates as "collaborative."

Critics of early modern autobiography often point out that the "shift" we trace from a seventeenth-century self that is traditional, collective, undefined individually and submerged in spiritual, social, or cultural institutions to an eighteenth-century modern self is problematic at best. Instead they are beginning to put pressure on what the markers of an "individualized" self. Recent studies emphasize that in early modern life writing, "individual experiences are defined by a strong sense of social expectation and obligation" (Bedford, Davis, Kelly 6).[18] Expressing a self, the editors of *Early Modern Autobiography* explain in their introduction, "referred to understandings of oneself *within* a wider frame, and more often than not individuality was marked less by how one stood *out* than by how effectively one fitted *in*" (14). Certainly eighteenth-century scholarship has also noted this relationship between public and private selves. It often focuses, however, on influence rather than interaction and exchange, an approach in which the majority of power is assigned to the public, to the social and cultural discourses the self participates in, rather than to the individual. A consequence of this angle is that any fluidity or malleability in representation is often identified as deviance or resistance, depending on whether the interpreter is looking for a negative or positive association. In studies of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the tendency to see interaction between individual and public as a one-way movement out too often leads us to a narrative of resistance or compliance in which the self reacts to and is therefore separated from the social, cultural and political forces pressed upon it. This approach in turn reinforces the paradigm outlined above that emphasizes the solitary self because the application of resistance or compliance isolates the individual from the world around her.

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[18] Bedford, Davis and Kelly: (Introduction to *EMAB*) "Self-description, therefore, referred to understandings of oneself within a wider frame, and more often than not, individuality was marked less by how one stood out than by how effectively one fitted in" (14).

In their "Introduction" to *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England*,

Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle point out that early modern lives "took many forms,

ranging from the more explicitly autobiographical—such as diaries, letters, and memoirs—to

less obvious choices like religious treatises, fictional romances, and even cookbooks (1). In still

other cases, writers combined generic elements from traditional forms in new and creative ways,

and "in the process, they produced rhetorically sophisticated discourses of the self and

demonstrated how textual form and the subjectivity it produces are mutually constitutive" (1).

Yet in the case of the onset of autobiography, the "rise of the novel," and the rise of the

individual, a bind seems to exist in which the generic elements dictate the selfhood, instead of

the other way around: Roy Porter claims that "Defoe's influential narratives invited identification

with the protagonist as outsider or loner…it was via such fictions and their spinoffs, like digests

and magazine short stories…that the enlightened voyage into the self , its yearnings and

ambiguities, was pursued and popularized (283-86). The autobiography, often conflated with

terms like "life" or "memoir" in both the eighteenth-century and contemporary criticism, also

carries close ties to the yearning, ambiguous modern subject and his impeachable individuality.

Often it is tempting to read "kinds of selves" based on generic conventions, a kind of

deconstruction of self based on its vehicle. But focusing on the serial and its features allows us to

explore genre hybridity by displacing genre as the dominant category of examination.

Eighteenth-century serials, like their modern counterparts, mixed content and forms with little

restraint or thought for the kinds of restrictions we imply when we think of genre. Reading

across instead of through genre offers a new way to consider selfhood as a more flexible writers

present by utilizing whatever genre(s) they happen to be working with. To consider serial

features as a means of conveyance with the flexibility to represent the complexity of selfhood

throughout the eighteenth century rather than a set of different sized boxes that dictated the representation of self across the period allows us to broaden the focus on progression, isolation, and interiority to reveal how selfhood reflected in narrative is interactive as well as reactive, communal as much as it is individual, and fluid in movement rather than merely linearly progressive. Does a particular genre tend to house and support one kind of specific identity—or even more to the point, can a particular genre represent an entire period's take on such a complicated concept as "self"? Or are we creating a teleological trap in which the rise of the novel and the rise of the modern subject equal selfhood at the cost of other lived "lives" represented in text?

Recent theories in what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson identify as the "third wave" of life writing studies conjecture that all lives are to some degree interactive on the page as well as while they are being lived—that is, that a life story cannot be told in isolation. This approach posits selfhood as subjects "enacted and reiterated through cultural norms and discourses," and challenges the idea of the self as a fixed or finished entity reported on the page (Smith and Watson 214). Writers of "lives" in any genre must take into account the ways in which their textual subjects interact with the communities they speak in and to; they must consider the position from which the subjects construct identity at any given time. As Smith and Watson point out, as a product of a particular historical moment and specific social and cultural constructions, these "subject positions…are always multiple and often contradictory," allowing an elasticity in the creation of identity that is perhaps best expressed with a flexibility of form (215). Because in eighteenth-century criticism examinations of self-construction remain bound up in the paradigm of modern selfhood, it is sometimes difficult to access these kinds of theories in the literature of the period. Critics have begun to make headway by overlaying the period with

theory that originates in particular and specific fields, such as gender and feminist studies. These approaches have increased the scope of the canon over the last few decades by recuperating texts by and about women which were either rejected for aesthetic reasons or relegated to the status of source documents that had little to no intrinsic literary value. But while individual specialty approaches do expand our critical understanding of the subject position in the eighteenth century, we need not only to identify the multiple possibilities of selfhood, but also to push on the centrality of modern individuality. This requires us to move beyond the recovery and recuperation of obscure texts and change the way we read the ones we have privileged for years.

Seriality: An Alternate Paradigm

In this project I bring together fiction and nonfiction texts that actively negotiate selfhood both inside and *outside* the parameters of the modern self. These examples cut across genre, form, gender, and publishing practice. Some of the texts, such as Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs* and Charlotte Charke's *Life*, have been recuperated and have recently begun building a place in the canon. Others, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, have impressive and even overwhelming canons of criticism themselves and are so well and often read that it sometimes seems difficult to approach them with a fresh angle; by linking lesser-known texts to well-known ones, I attempt to read these established texts with fresh perspective. The crucial link between these texts is their use of what I am identifying as "modes of serial production"; that is, they all utilize features of seriality in some way to disrupt narrative expectations of modern selfhood. I hope to show that reading seriality as a means of not just publication, but *production*, allows us to locate iterations of self that perhaps elide expectations of identity categories and conventions.

Serial publications of various kinds account for a significant portion of published material in the eighteenth century, though seriality before the nineteenth century has been little studied. Study of serial publication pre-1800 has historically been sporadic and secondary—it is generally cited as either periphery to single-volume eighteenth-century publication or as merely a precursor to Victorian serial publication. Michael Harris suggests that this narrowing of the significance of seriality limits our ability to think critically about eighteenth-century text, since "any representation of print and the book between 1690 and 1820 must focus on the serial (and serialization) not just as a peripheral topic nor as a prelude to the nineteenth century, but also as a central component to the general analysis" (5). Eighteenth-century serials have in the past been limited in use-value to documents that provide context for understanding political and social nuances of the period.[19] Canonical exclusivity has also kept serial writing in the eighteenth century under the radar: "another set of limitations…relate to issues of perceived quality, to a willingness to accept a hierarchy of texts, whose pinnacle is represented by the books of writers whose work is fenced off in what has been referred to as 'the canon'"(Harris 6). This exclusion is not limited to serial texts in the eighteenth century, certainly, and is, as Harris himself acknowledges, beginning to be challenged across the period in many genres. However, it has constricted the way critics have thought and talked about the place of serial textuality in the eighteenth-century canon—the favoring of texts that have been granted literary status, such as the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* and the exclusion of other, less "artistic" texts is one way this has happened, but also the inclusion of certain kinds of texts with only a limited function, such as a record of political conversation, has limited what we think these texts can tell us about the period and its writers and readers.

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[19] See Harris, Michael. "Locating the Serial: Some Ideas about the Position of the Serial in Relation to the Eighteenth-Century Print Culture." *Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History: 1995 Annual.* Eds Michael Harris and Tom O'Malley. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995.

Starting with definition is essential, since there seems to be no general agreement on the term serial, either in the eighteenth century itself, or in the criticism about it.[20] I would like to begin with Richmond P. Bond's definition of periodical from his 1977 *Studies in the Early Eighteenth-Century Periodical*. Bond's book goes on to deal with the periodical proper, that is "periodical" as a noun. While that is one kind of serial we are concerned with here, it is too limited for this discussion. But if we treat "periodical" as an adjective, one nearly synonymous with serial, the defining work he does in his opening paragraph offers us scaffolding on which to build our own notion of serialized publications in the eighteenth century:

> The periodical is usually a series of numbered and dated issues produced under a continuing title on a definite frequency for an indefinite period. It differs from a collection of related pamphlets or allied books in its very periodicity, and from its older, often mercurial brother-in-print the newspaper in that the latter is more concerned with momentary matters and proceeds on a less leisurely course. The periodical is a publishing enterprise with editorial problems of contents and methods and deadlines, with business problems of production and circulation and solvency. Every issue in a periodical is a unit in serialization subject to the limits and challenges of date, length, format, audience, and temper of the time; each number is part of a whole. (3)

Bond here is talking about the periodical rather than periodical publishing, but much of what he has to say provides a foundation for formulating a definition of periodical, or serial, lives published in the eighteenth century and their relationship to our notions of selfhood as they emerged from that period. In addition to being found in lives that were actually published serially, these are shared characteristics with diary and epistolary conventions that were widely used in eighteenth-century publication. The numbering and/or dating, the continuing title and indefinite period, the concern with immediacy and the unhurried pace (since there is no definite

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[20] A distinction needs to be made between the kinds of serial—or part—publication in the eighteenth century. Sometimes publishers just broke up the piece in parts, sometimes it was all written beforehand and sometimes it was written as it was published, sometimes authors chose to use the conventions of seriality as a conscious tool in the construction of the text. Of course, serialization was by no means limited to nonfiction. Though the serialization of novels is most often associated with the nineteenth century, it is generally agreed by scholars of the period that Smollett's *Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760) "marks the culmination of all the traditions and processes" of serialized fiction (Keymer 377).

goal of completion), and the reciprocal relationship between part and whole create an effect

much different than the one we have come to expect from narratives that utilize the paradigm of

the modern enlightened self. The serial is a text composed of fragments, often with no defined

end point. It concerns itself with the immediate and minute rather than progression, though it is

not without patterns of its own. Its periodicity invokes a particular elasticity of timing and

chronology; and it often has an unspecified duration (so not necessarily a clear beginning, middle

and end), but creates continuity by continuous themes and self-reference, which makes it

digressive rather than linear. Finally, it offers the opportunity to not only speak to but interact

with its particular audience, creating a space of negotiation and exchange.

Serials do depend on style and publication features first and foremost for their

cohesiveness.[21] Like diary and journal, they carry the expectation of commonality in content, in

that they are composed of thematic threads that connect individual issues.[22] These threads allow

the form to be both flexible and continuous simultaneously. The serial can help us understand

how a self shifts between positions through interaction with the communities that it navigates:

writing and publishing in installments has the effect of interrupting temporal and narrative

progress and inviting exchange and interaction between writer and reader, allowing selfhood to

"form at the intersections of multiple discursive trajectories" (Smith and Watson 215).

These features of seriality, which separately can be located not only in periodicals but in

a variety of genres, provide effects that encourage a heterogeneous reflection of selfhood. In a

more flexible form such as a serial selfhood becomes provisional rather than concrete; the

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[21] Of course, there are a variety of larger "wholes" in the world of the serial. Because of requirements of plot and character development, readers expect a much tighter connection between parts with a novel than with, say, a periodical like the *Spectator*. This is a distinction I (and others) make between "serial" and "part publishing."
[22] I am developing a theory of reading based of Philippe Lejeune's concept of traces in *On Diary*, Eds. Jeremy Popkin and Julie Rak, Trans. Katherine Durnin, Biographical Research Center: University of Hawaii, 2009.

subject can adjust or remake herself based on the moment rather build a self based largely on reflection. Modes of seriality need not be considered as mutually exclusive to the paradigm of the modern self, because the serial adapts expected form to provide space for its features and purpose. For example, the serial text is still self-referential but without a dependence on linear plot—as soon as the reader stops reading one "part" there is the expectation that the next "part" will pick up and carry on with similar techniques, conventions, and themes. Linearity and plot exist at a level of choice rather than necessity. The cohesion of the text is both circular and interwoven; the selfhood inside the text is free to move in multilateral directions.

The paradigm of modern selfhood is most familiarly represented by what I am calling "retrospective genres," which are, as Roy Pascal explains, significantly different than serial forms such as diary: autobiography "is a review of a life from a particular moment in time, while the diary, however reflective it may be, moves through a series of moments in time…We expect from a diary all the uncertainties, false starts, momentariness that we find in them. From the autobiography, however, we expect a coherent shaping of the past; and if diary entries or letters are quoted, we need the explanatory interpretive commentary of the author (3-5). Autobiography retrospectively creates a linear narrative that builds toward one specific fixed moment in time— that of its production, while "a diary…is created in and represents a continuous present" (Culley 20). The "certainty" implied by autobiography carries the expectation of a self defined by cohesiveness, progression, and linearity, and generally seeks to by the end of the text to convey some higher meaning or significance with the life; there is no room for the "uncertainties, false starts [and] momentariness" Pascal identifies in the diary. A serial by its very nature can have multiple beginnings, middles, and endings; it can move through narrative free of linear constraints; it can create cohesion through content and context rather formal features like

chronology. This new serial paradigm, I argue, interacts with the familiar and ubiquitous model

of modern selfhood outlined above, but its narrative parameters are more flexible and forgiving,

and it allows hybridity of form and voice to disrupt the narrative features we have come to

identify with the development of selfhood across the eighteenth century.

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I have divided my project into three parts. Part One takes a literal approach to seriality

and life writing and considers the complexities of presenting lives, and particularly female lives,

in installments. This section examines the effects of serial features on the construction,

publication, and reception of eighteenth-century lives using as case studies two women's "lives"

that were published serially. Chapter 1, "Serial Identity in Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs*,"

demonstrates how Pilkington manipulates serial features in the telling of her own life, so that her

identity becomes a patchwork, woven together through the words and experiences of others.

Chapter 2, "Charlotte Charke and the Problem with Serial Confession," examines how the

notorious actress negotiates serial features and the conventions of confessional narrative to create

an identity that both conforms to and resists what we think of dominant patterns of self-narration.

These womens' serial lives help us begin to build a framework for understanding how serial

features engage with textual self-construction.

Part Two uses serial features as a framework to examine two novels and an

autobiography that engage with serial features in some manner and produce effects similar to

those in the first section's serial lives. The first two chapters in this section address texts that are

strongly associated with particular attributes of the modern self. Chapter 3, "Serial Convention

and the Novel: De-Mythologizing *Robinson Crusoe*," examines how Crusoe's use of serial

features in his narrative calls into question the myth of the modern individual's dependence on

the teleology of progress and interiority. Chapter 4, "Fits and Starts: Ben Franklin's Serially Autobiographical Self," examines how Benjamin Franklin's sense of community identification is both reproduced in and reflected by serial features in his *Autobiography*. Chapter 5, "Serial Domestic Identity in the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*," engages with recent criticism on sentiment and identity to examine how the form of Frances Sheridan's *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* routes selfhood through engagement and exchange with others.

Part Three of the discussion turns to two periodicals, Addison and Steele's *Spectator* and Eliza Haywood's *Female Spectator*, to examine how periodical texts that model and participate in collaborative construction interact with features of modern individualism. Chapter 6, "The Coffeehouse Club and the *Spectator* Diary: Making the "Self" in Public Spaces," examines the periodical within the context of diary form and coffeehouse culture in the period to argue that the serial features of the diary are replicated in the periodical and thereby construe the periodical as a space for communal construction of selfhood. The final chapter looks back to issues of gender and femininity introduced in the first section. "Gendered Embodiment and collaborative Identity in the *Female Spectator*," turns to Eliza Haywood's project, patterned on that of the *Spectator*, to examine how the serial form provides a space for gendered identity that is able to penetrate public spaces where female identity might otherwise be excluded.

Many studies that focus on the eighteenth century still seem to take at least some aspects of modern self for granted as a starting point for understanding eighteenth-century identity. My project proposes that we look more actively for other modes of self-construction across the period. Already scholars of twentieth-century life narrative have challenged many of the notions of selfhood derived from the paradigm of the modern enlightened individual. But Smith and Watson acknowledge that "the unitary self of liberal humanism remains a prevailing notion

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governing Western configurations and disciplines of selfhood" (206). Most significantly this is because that notion, in our critical history, is grounded by our location of its development in the long eighteenth century. "Around the globe," Smith and Watson insist, "contesting versions of selfhood are posed in diverse kinds of life narratives that introduce collective, provisional, and mobile subjects" (206). These subjects are also in eighteenth-century life narrative, waiting for us to discover their stories, or to read them in a different way, waiting for us to see the heterogeneous possibilities in a life told serially.

Part One: Lives Produced and Published Serially

Even when we read serially published lives from the eighteenth century, our tendency is to approach them holistically rather than paying close attention to what the nature of serialization might tell us about those lives. Shifting serial texts from the margins of eighteenth-century studies to the center and focusing on their particular features and effects allows us to reexamine critical and ideological assumptions about how lives and selves are constructed and conveyed in text. The two chapters in this section explore the relationship between seriality and self-representation by asking questions such as what do eighteenth-century lives look like in serial format, and what would happen if we read those lives as representative rather than exceptional? How might the serial convey eighteenth-century experience differently? Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs* and Charlotte Charke's *Life* were not only published but written in parts, making them serial in both production and publication.[23] Both texts are written by women who were in their own historical moment considered marginal for various reasons, and who use serial form to create texts that achieve a flexibility of form and voice not often associated with life writing of the period, particularly in feminine lives.

The lives that these two extraordinary eighteenth-century women produced and published have only recently found their way to (semi) canonical status as the recovery of previously

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[23] Though we need to take care, when thinking about how various selves are constructed through serial means, to what extent the authors in question are conscious of and intentionally using the traditions and processes of seriality. Mary Hamer points out that serial publication "was a group activity. The part played by those who were not writers—publishers, printers, engravers, compositors, bagmen—was essential in getting the monthly or weekly part into the hands of the reader" (I).[23] Though some texts were written to be published in parts, others were randomly divided by publishers and printers for reasons that had little or nothing to do with serial content. The texts in this chapter were both *produced* and *published* serially.

overlooked or marginalized texts has happened in the last fifty or sixty years; only more recently have they been read as texts first and foremost about producing their own identity. This is at least in part because both women write under the shadow of canonical masculine figures: Pilkington is linked to Jonathan Swift, and Charke to her father, Colley Cibber. Since both texts offer themselves as "lives" but clearly depart from normative public autobiographical practices, they are often read as deviant or subversive in content, the focus placed on scandals such as Pilkington's divorce or Charke's cross-dressing.[24] Formally, too, these texts are often identified as distortions of canonical genres, so Pilkington's insertion of her poetry is explained as merely a deviation from the norm (whether that norm is publication of a poetry collection or a prose narrative) and Charke's abrupt and episodic narrative is compared to progressive autobiography formats and found inferior. These conclusions, however, are based on expectations of what a published "life" is expected to look like in a specific tradition of life writing. Removing these texts from those expectations and reading them in a more heterogeneous context of how self might have been perceived and constructed both publically and privately allows us to consider them both generically and ideologically.[25] It allows us to re-ask questions like: What ends or goal or purpose does life writing serve, and how are those able to be conceived differently if we examine selfhood constructed through other lenses, such as seriality? The lives of Laetitia Pilkington and Charlotte Charke reveal that there are a myriad of reasons for performing selfhood in the public sphere, including self-defense and response to an external call for self display, as well annihilation of self into the public. Perhaps reflexivity is rejected in favor of an active, externalized self, recognized in communal interaction. These narratives of selfhood

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[24] See Kristina Straub. *Introducing Charlotte Charke: Actress, Author, Enigma.* Ed. Philip Baruth.
[25] Using seriality, I follow Leigh Gilmore's model in *Autobiographics*: "A study of autobiographics allows for removing…writers…from interpretive contexts in which their works are canonized" in order to put pressure on those contexts and their assumptions (43).

engage with—even depend on—others, and they combine the conventions of seriality with more specific life writing conventions and genres to maximize that engagement.

Chapter I: Serial Identity in Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs*

At the end of the second volume of her *Memoirs*, Laetitia Pilkington promises her readers

that her next installment will be "filled with more surprising Events, and infinitely more

entertaining than either of the forgoing [volumes]" (253). Several pages before this teaser we

receive the eighteenth-century equivalent of scenes from the next episode:

> But, alas! before the Return of Winter I had neither Shop, nor almost an
> Habitation; by what strange Reversal of Fortune I was again reduced to the utmost
> Calamity; and by what unexpected and signal Mercy delivered from it, must, as it
> is impossible for me to get it into the Compass of this Volume, be the Subject of a
> Third. (245) [26]

These strategically placed references to the next volume of an ongoing narrative are designed to

whet the reader's appetite and generate sales (or subscriptions) of the work. Using serial form to

complicate what it means to present selfhood to the public, Pilkington follows up her teaser with

a promise at the end of the chapter: if the readers do not agree that the third volume is even more

interesting and engaging than the other two, then she will "for ever quit my Magic Art, and

> *Deeper than did ever Plummet sound.*
> *I'll drown my Book.*   Shakespear (sic) (253)

The stakes for Pilkington's narrative seem clear: dependent on an ongoing interaction between

writer and audience, the "life" of the subject may find itself facing an untimely end if it cannot

keep its reader engaged. The emphasis is on the textual self as a site of exchange and

collaboration: the audience's response controls not only the fate of the book, but in a manner of

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[26] All citations from Pilkington's text come from *Memoirs of Laetitia Pilkington,* Ed. A.C. Elias, Jr. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997.

speaking, the fate of its author, since the book is a representation of self. As a result of this connection, the serially produced and published *Memoirs* evolve in relation to the writer/reader relationship, allowing Pilkington to situate her textual self in an ongoing and reciprocal discourse of self-definition, rather than according to expectations of progression or chronology. When we critically define a lineage of published representations of selfhood, particularly across this period, we tend to move toward the genres that have become representative of the self, first-person genres that are complete, progressive, and introspective, such as various forms of autobiography or novels, narratives that are distinguished by a form that includes a beginning, middle and end.[27] Though in authoring her *Memoirs* Pilkington reflects self-interest, particularly in her goals of self-defense and professional recognition, in this chapter I argue that serial conventions, and particularly those associated with diary writing, provide an alternative platform for fashioning selfhood in and against the reading public. Instead of being limited by a particular genre and its conventions, she uses the serial to pick and choose from multiple traditions how she will narrate her life. Pilkington's text reflects a negotiation of self that speaks to early modern methods of fashioning textual selfhood: "a constant interplay between two poles: the grand ideals of selfhood (immortality, stability, presence), and the everyday terrain of passing observations" and the immediacy of response (Bedford 2). Pilkington accesses conventions usually ascribed to early modern expressions of selfhood to fashion a specifically gendered literary self that depends on direct exchange and engagement with community in both form and voice, and that refuses to be bound by either restrictions implied by both a lineage of conventionally male-dominated genres such as autobiography and poetry, or a reading public who would judge her actions based on her gender.

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[27] Which in eighteenth-century terminology could include memoir.

To what extent eighteenth-century identity is dependent on notions of communal interaction has become an area of interest in recent criticism. Under particular scrutiny is the perceived shift located from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century from an emphasis on communal forms of identity to the privileging of the individual, historically assigned to burgeoning Enlightenment values. Patrick Colman, in his introduction to *Representations of Self*, argues that

> the very possibility of a "self" in the paradigmatic Enlightenment sense—an autonomous individual, testing rules imposed from without against a sensibility nourished from within, demanding as a matter of right to flourish in his or her own way—has been called into question….What is new in the current debate is not skepticism about the self's inner coherence…What is now at stake is the legitimacy of focusing on the self as a foundational idea, however conceived. (3)

Examining the perpetuation of the primacy of modern individuality, he cites "postmodern and postcolonial theorists" who argue "the abstract (but in fact Eurocentric) universalism" in the critical notions of self developed based on Enlightenment literature. But the serial features that were so prevalent in eighteenth-century publication provide a counterpoint to that assumption of Eurocentric universalism, itself a product of a limited and exclusionary model based on canonical and generic constructions we have come to consider foundational. Rather than reject self as a foundational concept, seriality allows us to locate in its production and publication characteristics broader and more flexible access points available to eighteenth century writers. Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs* has long held a marginalized place in the canon as an informative document about eighteenth-century culture and a significant albeit flawed biography of Jonathan Swift.[28] In reading the *Memoirs* as first and foremost an unconventional text of self-construction, one that challenges many of the expectations we have come to expect in the texts that represent

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[28] See A.C. Elias' "Introduction" to the *Memoirs*, as well as his "Laetitia Pilkington on Swift: How Reliable is She?" In *Walking Naboth's Vineyard: New Studies of Swift*, Eds. Christopher Fox and Brenda Tooley, Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame, 1994.

selfhood, I ask to what extent those "Eurocentric" notions of modern self are merely products of

the way we have critically chosen and read identity texts.[29]

Reading Pilkington's *Memoirs* in an a lineage of women's life writing that emphasizes

gendered strategies, allows us to privilege her project of self-construction rather than her other

author functions of biographer and cultural recorder. In *Autobiographics*, Leigh Gilmore

identifies in women's life writing "elements of self-representation which are not bound by a

philosophical definition of the self derived from Augustine …elements that instead mark a

location where self-invention, self-discovery, and self-representation emerge" (42). Recent

feminist studies have begun to trace a critical history that challenges the primacy of

enlightenment models of selfhood in both past and present life writing—particularly diary

writing—of women.[30] Exploring gendered features of women's life writing, Gilmore identifies

"discursive contradictions in the representation of identity (rather than unity), the name as a

potential site of experimentation rather than contractual sign of identity, and the effects of the

gendered connection of word and body" (42). In their introduction to *Inscribing the Daily:*

Critical Essays on Women's Diaries, Suzanne Bunkers and Cynthia Huff describe how the selves

constructed in many of these texts are community based, interactive, and mutable:

> Women's diaries assume a distinctive place within the self-construction of
> narrative: they pose questions that invite us to think differently, to see anew. First,
> their narrative structure of repetition within the cycle of dailiness invites us to

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[29] Summing up the shifting ground in autobiography studies over the last thirty years, Bunkers and Huff comment that "the autobiographical act would seem to signal a sense of community among critics of autobiography…yet leaves room for a lack of hegemony, particularly in terms of self construction. By suggesting that the voices in the autobiographical chorus are various, yet possessing common strains, these critics make way for the contributions of both diaries and women in the autobiographical act. The solidity of a consistent model and the construction of the self as a distinct entity give way to increased emphasis on the multiplicity of self construction, varying textual strategies, and the location of the diary within cultural frameworks" (4-5). This seems to speak more particularly to what I would like to think about for the eighteenth century in a broader sense. Critics of autobiography have long questions notions of self, but this questioning has not necessarily always carried over into other fields/branches of criticism.

[30] Helpful critics from feminist and women's studies of life writing are Leigh Gilmore, Suzanne Bunkers and Cynthia Huff, Rebecca Hogan, Sidonie Smith, Julia Watson.

discover patterns that do not follow a progressive timeline and that do not necessarily culminate in the creation of selfhood through accruing tests of individual acts. Rather, reading women's diaries may well require us to see repetition as a positive value in a world where the self is sustained and assessed by its renewed commitment to others. Second…the use of encoding, whether in the form of silences and gaps or foreign and special phraseology, invites us to interrogate the public/private construction of the diarist as well as the truth value and presumed historical objectivity of the diary record. (Bunkers and Huff 20)

Since diaries are serial, Pilkington's serial *Memoirs* share many of diaries' formal features and effects: multiple installments written over a period of time, continuing title and indefinite period, focus on immediacy and moment, unhurried pace (since there is no definite goal of completion), and a larger relationship between part and whole. Bunkers and Huff explore how diary form "as a text…and as a theoretical tool, allows us to question epistemological and critical assumptions" we assign to particular categories such as the narrated enlightened individual (2). Though the focus of their collection is on dairies specifically, many of the questions they bring to bear in theoretical readings of diary features can be reframed in a broader context to help us think about the critical assumptions and historical development of selfhood though seriality. Serial features such as repetition and encoding provide opportunities to elide particular narrative expectations.

Of course, the most significant departure a serially published life narrative has from the genre of diary writing is that we think of diaries, by and large, as personal or private genres, seldom published. But they were not private in the contemporary sense we have of diary. Diaries and journals were often shared among intimates, as well as documents that recorded family and community history. They were also a place in which the self could be examined in relation to others, where "the self is sustained and assessed by its renewed commitment to others" (Bunkers and Huff 20). And though we don't tend to think of diary writing as a shared practice since we tend to privilege interiority in connection with self-construction, in *On Diary* Philippe Lejeune complicates the binary of public and private in regards to diaries: diary keeping was born, he

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points out, as a community practice (51). Lejeune traces diary back to antiquity through record keeping, archives, and accounting: "a country with no archives is unsure of its identity" he explains (51). He also complicates diary by commenting that its function of "self care" or self-examination was recorded in letters to others, marking its features as interactive rather than solitary (53). This understanding of the function of diary practices and their serial components allows a critical reading of the formal features in Pilkington's serially published text that leads us to a broader understanding of the public use of private conventions of self-construction and reveals how Pilkington accesses and deploys the communities around her to fashion selfhood.

The *Memoirs* are planned and published in three installments, the first part becoming available to the public in February or March of 1748, the second in December 1748, and the third, incomplete at the time of her death in 1750, was not published until 1754, finished by her son Jack. She originally intended two volumes that were published together, but decided to publish only one volume at a time.[31] Her impetus seems to have been part financial need, part desire to participate in the literary community, and part desire to acquit herself from accusations of infidelity and promiscuity. Whatever her original intention, it is clear Pilkington quickly saw the rhetorical as well as financial value in serial publishing (Elias xxiii). In his Introduction to the annotated text, A.C. Elias acknowledges that she seems to be increasingly aware of the strategy of leaving her readers wanting more so they will come back for the next installment: "In the midst of her last-minute additions to Vol. II, she complains that she has no space to finish the story of her years in London, featuring a 'strange Reverse of Fortune' which we will surely want to read about" (xxiv). Perhaps she even hints to us that she understands the benefits of serial

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[31] In reference to a letter published in the *Memoirs*, Elias conjectures that she was influenced by Colley Cibber (*Memoirs* 327).

publishing when she comments about her readers that she "would rather have them rise from Table with an Appetite, than Glut them" (7).

In the opening of *Memoirs*, Pilkington acknowledges that identity is as much a function of public as private, of external opinions as much as anything intrinsic or internal to the individual: "However numerous my Mistakes in Life have been, they have still had most surprizing Additions made to them" (9). She also recognizes the very real consequences that the influence of these others has on her situation, since "they have render'd my honest Industry ineffectual" (9). It does not in fact seem to matter who the individual is so much as who she is believed to be, and Pilkington's *Memoirs* attack this problem head on by turning her text into a kind of negotiation of identity between her and the community of readers, many of whom she assumes to be the "Clergy-Men and Ladies of Honour" who have commandeered her self-representation: "I therefore hope, those who have taken such unbounded Liberties with my Character, will also allow me to paint out theirs, only with this Difference, that I shall confine myself to Truth, a Favour, I never yet received at their hands" (10). Critics have often approached the *Memoirs* as a vehicle for revenge based on language such as this, but what Pilkington actually proposes is an interactive self-representation that indicts all parties involved with or in the text in a kind of shared communal authority.[32] If her "painting" does not represent the "truth," readers will recognize this and, as we will see shortly, because of the serial nature of the text, be able to engage with both text and author. But in the process they are themselves

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[32] For critics who address revenge and scandal in the *Memoirs*, see Elias' "Introduction" ; Nussbaum, Felicity. *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology In Eighteenth-century England.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989; Spacks, Patricia Ann Meyer. *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel In Eighteenth-century England.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.; Thompson, Lynda M. *The Scadalous Memoirists: Constantia Phillips, Laetitia Pilkington and the shame of 'publick fame.'* Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000; and Todd, Janet M. *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction* 1600-1800. New York: Columbia UP, 1992.

drawn into a tension with author and narrative: they are compelled to interact in a way that does not compromise the shared truth value of the text.

Publication research has shown that serial publishing enabled, even encouraged, a modified textual experience for readers and writers, one much more dependent than single volume publication on exchange and therefore more open ended in its conventions and expectations: Fergus cites the permeable line between author and reader in eighteenth-century periodicals:

> Traditionally, English essay-periodicals and magazines…invited and printed reader's submissions; readers could and did become writers, though unpaid. As a result, the eighteenth-century periodical constituted a kind of coffeehouse in print, a technology that permitted the illusion of a 'face-to-face' exchange of view despite distances in time space and elsewhere—for instance, class (Fergus 213).

Serial writing practices can tell us much about how interaction and exchange are deployed in text, particularly since many of these conventions of community building around these periodicals overlap with the methods of identity formation we identify in the period that involve exchange: association with family, neighbors, the art of conversation, and the shared reading of texts such as periodical, novel, letter and journal.

The *Memoirs* are hybrid in both voice and genre. Eighteenth-century critics have generally had difficulty in classifying Pilkington's narrative—it has been variously read as autobiographical scandal apology and/or revenge taking, gossip reporting, political polemic, and biography (of Swift). In the history of eighteenth-century criticism it is generally treated as a document of cultural and historical record in regards to social, political, and literary issues and persons. Rarely has it been treated as an autobiographical text in its own right. To complicate these matters of content, Pilkington also creates hybridity with genre, blending poetry and prose. The imbedded poetry, both her own that of others, is difficult and slightly foreign particularly for

modern readers, who are unaccustomed to verse as a form of life narration. Elias notes that "by

sinking her poems into a rambling autobiographical narrative," Pilkington strayed from

normative literary practices of the eighteenth century, which are dominated by verse. Elias

inserts Pilkington into a lineage of traditional autobiographers and then points out that this only

heightens the differences in her text.[33] My goal is to show that placing Pilkington in that lineage

is a mistake. Women's diary writing offers a critical lens through which Pilkington's text need

not be classified as deviant or lacking:

> The diary's flexibility and adaptability enhance its uses in our lives and academic
> disciplines. Its form, simultaneously elastic and tight, borrows from and at the
> same time contributes to other narrative structures. Its content is wide ranging yet
> patterned, and what is excluded is as important as what is included. Because the
> form and content of the diary are so adaptable and flexible, the study of diaries
> brings into play issues of historical, social and self-construction; exchanges
> between reader and text; and connections between, and differing effects of,
> published and manuscript diary records. (Bunkers and Huff 1)

Flexible form, open yet patterned, based on exchange: these characteristics speak to the

definition of serial we began to lay out earlier in the chapter, which is of course not surprising,

since the diary is itself serial life writing.

Pilkington uses the notion of shared public identity and communal authority to negotiate

her selfhood through others in the text. The *Memoirs* begin in the expected format for a

retrospective autobiography, with birth and family history. The first volume quickly parts from

the expected pattern, however—we rush through Pilkington's childhood and early adolescence to

reach what arguably becomes the selling point for the first volume: Pilkington's relationship with

Jonathan Swift: "It is a very great Loss to the World, that this admirable Gentleman never could

be prevail'd on to give us the Particulars of his own Life…I hope my Readers will indulge me in

the frequent Mention I shall make of Doctor Swift" (23-4). This strategy builds on the

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[33] Elias traces the traditional lineage of first person autobiography, including religious confessions deriving from
Augustine and first person narratives of great exploits, either political, military or personal.

understanding that Swift, as a recognizable figure, provides a link between author and reader; instead of being based solely on the experiences of the writer, it is based on shared experience with an additional figure who holds a particular appeal for the reader. The inclusion of Swift does not signify a lack of presence on Pilkington's part, but rather a consciously strategic mode of self-construction—one that incorporates self with other.[34] Swift provides a connection point between author and reader and assures Pilkington a broader audience for her own story by engaging the audience with the "Delight and Instruction" she gained from his "Conversation" (26). Her relation of Swift, however, is one meant to entertain rather than instruct, and her emphasis is on her interaction with him and the closeness of their relationship:

> Altho' it is not in my Power to give a succinct Account of the Dean's Life, neither have I any Intention to attempt it, yet I believe I am better qualified to attempt it, than most who have undertaken it, as they were absolute Strangers to him…The Dean for the latter Part of his Life, contracted his Acquaintance into a very narrow Compass, for as he was frequently deaf, he thought his Infirmity made him troublesome, and therefore kept no Company but such as he cou'd be free so with, as to bid them speak loud, or repeat what they had said. It was owing to this, that Mr. Pilkington and I frequently pass'd whole Days with him, while Numbers of our betters were excluded. (33)

This passage excuses Pilkington from the expectation of comprehensive knowledge of Swift's life while simultaneously imbuing her relation with authority as one of Swift's intimates late in his life, one he trusted at vulnerable moments. Having established this intimacy, Pilkington uses Swift's reports of Swift's good opinion of her in various ways: in regard to her writing, when she reprints a letter he wrote praising her verses, and in regard to her marital fidelity, as she is able during this period of time with Swift to depict her marriage as one of perfect accord. Her appropriation of Swift thus gains her both creditability and a measure of fame by association, for even Swift's very notoriety, she is well aware, will help her sell her story.

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[34] The most well-known example of this autobiographical strategy in the eighteenth-century is James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, which is arguably also a life of Boswell as told through his interaction with Samuel Johnson.

The engagement with Swift early in the volume having disrupted expected narrative patterns, the *Memoirs* now wholeheartedly embrace the flexibility of serial genres and their ability to elide chronological and linear narrative. Pilkington's purpose in fashioning a public self is not that of retrospective genres of modern selfhood; she is defending herself against accusations of infidelity, attempting to support herself in a culture where a lone female without protection has few choices, and determined to foreground her own literary talent. Her language of apology indicates that she clearly understands the readers' expectations of the genre but is deliberately choosing not to adhere to it. Instead she adopts a serial strategy that is digressive and interactive. Philippe Lejeune, in *On Diary*, defines the diary in textual terms: "the true, authentic diary (meaning an honest diary)" is discontinuous, full of gaps, allusive, redundant and repetitive, non-narrative (170).[35] But diary is not without narrative structure. Lejeune refers to the diary as discontinuous and non-narrative only in the sense that it "is not "constructed like a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end" (170). In this, as in the allusiveness and repetition, the diary is serialistic in nature. And though it is discontinuous in the sense of story-telling narrative, it is also self-referential, which gives it a different kind of continuity. Pilkington's *Memoirs* use language such as "thread" and "digression" and she directly addresses the reader frequently. In diary theory, Lejeune identifies these kinds of narrative progressions, which can be dropped and retrieved throughout the text, and which are multiple, intersecting and overlapping, as "traces." These traces, mere fragments of self on their own, create form:

> The diary's discontinuities are organized into series and rewoven into continuities. Suppose the contents of your day can be divided into 99 categories. Today you are going to write about things in, let's say, categories 38 and 86. Are

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[35] Defining diary seems on some level a rather adolescent exercise: we are all familiar with the form and structure of diary writing. Indeed, that form and structure is so ingrained in the genre that if you buy a true "diary" (as opposed to, say, a notebook) it will likely come already structured for you—lined, with a place at the top of each page for number and date—perhaps even a lock to indicate the way we think of present day diary keeping as a private and individual practice.

you going to write about 5, 47, and 79 tomorrow? That is highly unlikely, luckily for your diary, which would lapse into incoherence. The diary has the opposite tendency: it is methodical, repetitive, and obsessive…*In the tapestry of your life, you follow very specific threads, and only a small number of them*. (179; emphasis mine)

The diary text is made up of multiple traces, which sometimes exist side by side in the narrative, sometimes compete, and sometimes fall away only to return later. Considered as discontinuities that are brought together and regulated by serial form, the serial can function as a vehicle for self-construction with many of the same features as the diary. Attempting to locate the traces in Pilkington's narrative, treating it like a serial form of autobiography rather than a progressive or retrospective narrative, gives us a new way to understand how Pilkington is wielding the tools of textual self-construction. One such trace, for example, is clearly her desire to defend herself against accusations of infidelity and sexual immorality. The text repeatedly brings up and defends against her husband's accusations of her infidelity, as well as providing examples of her resistance to temptation offered by the men around her:

> I started up and threw my Gown about me, but I was not quite so quick in putting on my Cloaths as the Gentleman was, in taking his off, resolving, without the least Ceremony to come to Bed with me…And as I had no Protector, no Friend, no Guardian, I burst into tears and told him, if he was a Gentleman, he would not insult Misery. (90)

This passage not only testifies to Pilkington's chastity, but also underscores the reasons she has for repeatedly defending it throughout the text: "no Protector, no Friend, no Guardian." This absence of support exemplifies the problem of creating identity outside of community—it is tenuous at best, and constantly open to attack. To remedy this vulnerability that an individual faces, another trace follows her attempt to establish herself in a community of literary minded individuals; hence, the imbedding of her own poetry along with excerpts from other more established figures. Readers and critics often find these two purposes of the narrative

incongruent—is she writing a life or publishing a volume of poetry?—but such a reading stems from the genre expectations that are called up by forms of autobiography that are linear, progressive, and selective. The poems are part of the inclusivity that the seriality of her narrative allows.

Pilkington's insertion of poetry speaks both to earlier life narrative in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and to later nineteenth century expressions of self-representation in poetry, providing et another "lineage" Pilkington accesses. In fact, in many ways we could see Pilkington as continuing an alternative tradition of self-expression through text: in early modern autobiography that was not so genre constrained and that had more fluidity in its conventions, "narrative coherence often depended on unifying ideas or concerns rather than mimetic reproduction of history (Skura 2). In her study of Tudor autobiography, Meredith Skura examines fifteenth and sixteenth century poets who in by twentieth century critics were "praised for writing poetry that was less a statement about the world than an enactment of the mind attempting to understand it" (19). Yet, as Skura points out, they are still "excluded from histories of autobiography" largely due to genre restrictions—most of those histories focus on prose (19). Yet the link between poetry and autobiography remains a constant; one of the ways to write about oneself that *was* most familiar to the eighteenth-century reader was poetry or collections of poetry. John Milton, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray are all poets who arguably at least implicitly inserted autobiographical elements into their poetry. Often these were occasional poems, situational and grounded in a particular experience or expression surrounding an event, such as Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," in which he examines his career and its critics, or Dryden's The Hind and the Panther, which deals with his conversion to Roman Catholicism.

This form of life writing carried into the nineteenth century and became even more explicitly autobiographical in examples such as Wordsworth's "Tinturn Abbey" and Coleridge's *Conversation Poems*. But poetry as a mode of self construction has been overshadowed by prose genres in the critical history of life writing studies, and identity studies more generally.[36] Inserted strategically throughout the *Memoirs*, the poetry is itself a discourse of identity available to Pilkington in her historical moment, perhaps made more so by the fact that poems share many of the more serial features of diary and journal and letters, particularly in their topography in the page: the text is broken in parts, the language is often fragmented, they are often highly self-referential. Pilkington's inclusion of poetry, a form that engendered self-representation from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth, challenges many of the features of the prose texts from which we largely draw our definitions of the modern self.

The inclusion in the text of outsides voices demonstrates Pilkington's complex and varied inclusivity. She addresses readers directly, both as an appositive and in direct response to replies made between the publication of volumes; she includes their written texts and her replies. Such address has often led to accusations by both her contemporaries and modern critics that the primary purpose of the *Memoirs* is revenge and blackmail, since she reports conversations that have taken place not only before the volumes were begun, as with Swift, but even as they are being published. These exchanges revolve around possible collaborators, including but not limited to patrons. For example, in the third volume's preface she reports through letters an exchange with Samuel Foote, who was, it seems, a potential patron, but failed to deliver. Pilkington's own self-construction in this exchange is one of reciprocity rather than

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[36] Studies of Early Modern identity are beginning to address the prominence of prose in a lineage of life writing.

subordination; she represents herself and Foote as equals and offers him her support as she can provide it, with a public endorsement of his work. In return, she expects his support as a subscriber to her own work. When he fails to hold up what she sees as his end of the bargain, she remarks on his "extraordinary revolution," and after paying him back in kind she goes on to reiterate her successful participation in the literary community, choosing to cite not only contemporaries (whether they patronize her or no) such as Pope and Cibber, but also situating herself in high tradition with the likes of Milton and Shakespeare. In her determination to construct herself as part of a specific and recognized community, Pilkington is willing to appear as both the victim and the aggressor, and the *Memoirs*, whatever else they may be, are never as simple as a vehicle for revenge or even financial support.

The presence of other voices, Foote's being only one example of many, both imbedded in the text and framing it, disrupts the kind of singularity implied by first person narration. Since its structure is less insistent on continuous narrative, the serial form allows a multi-voiced space for self-construction. Eighteenth-century subscription practices often provided paratextual framing apparatuses such as letters of endorsement or dedication writer by various individuals surrounding the text, including the author, editors, sponsors, and the like. The serial nature of Pilkington's *Memoirs*, however, provide an unusual component in that the framing material is more directly in conversation with the text itself. The preface at the beginning of the second volume consists of poems inserted from readers commenting on volume one, on which Pilkington then comments in the text. This back and forth exchange is much in the manner of the editor of a communal publication like periodicals or newspapers, or perhaps even a modern-day blog; she reports that she has received "as many Pacquets of a Day, as a Minister of State,; some praising, and some abusing me; the best of which in my Praise, I have chosen out for their

Perusal" (125). Pilkington's choice to bring in the voices of readers creates a communal text in which she strategically uses others to enhance her own self-representation. The serial here negates the need for retrospection and secondhand reporting in self-construction; instead the material of Pilkington's selfhood is immediate and primary, dependent on the moment and the moments that came before in the serial, a provisional self that evolves as the texts does in unpredictable ways.

Less common, but still found in serial texts of the period, is the multiplicity of voices inside Pilkington's text. The first person narration is constantly interrupted by secondary texts that Pilkington uses for a variety of purposes: to back up her own statements, as inflammatory material to respond to, or as self-characterization from a third party. Modern fans of scrapbooking will likely feel an affinity with the collage-like quality of Pilkington's text; it also speaks to the letterbook, a popular genre contemporaneous with Pilkington's text.[37] This inclusion becomes heavier as the volumes progress, culminating in the complete usurpation of Pilkington's voice by that of her son at the end of the third volume after her death, but the presence of others, though more sporadic, is notable even in the early pages of volume one. Of course, in the literary community Pilkington engages, the inclusion of excerpts from both classical and contemporary works in one's own text are a common mode of interaction, but before she even leaves her girlhood, Pilkington includes two verse epistles of significant length from Constantia Grierson, who is represented in the text as Pilkington's close companion, from whom she was "seldom asunder" (18). The poems are youthful expressions of admiration and friendship between the two girls, and they represent Pilkington in a light that certainly contradicts her rather sullied reputation following the scandal in her marriage. This strategic use

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[37] Eliza Pinckney' Letterbook, for example, as well as close approximations in fiction such as Frances Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (see Chapter 5).

of others' voices and words as self-definition and self-expression, both in Pilkington's text and in general, is indicative of a far more collaborative and communally based conception of self than we generally recognize as developing, or perhaps continuing, during this period.

The multiple voices engender another kind of diaristic practice in the *Memoirs*—the encoding of Pilkington's text speaks to the inclusivity of serial forms of life writing. Particularly for modern readers, the diary is full of often frustrating instances that lack contextualization or seem to imply some previous information to which we are not privy; she refuses and/or threatens to name names throughout the text, references current events without explanation, and often directly addresses a small section of her audience or even an individual reader, referencing some exchange that has clearly not been shared in the text with the majority of the audience. Lynn Bloom refers to this abbreviation of context as a common diaristic trait: "It [the diary] lacks sufficient development and detail to make it self-coherent. Someone else has to identify the people, places, and allusions, explain the meaning of actions and events in the diaries…for the authors do not" (26-27). What Bloom does not address is the strategy behind Pilkington's encoding. It allows her to address multiple audiences and to access the private in a public space, collapsing the tension between the two. The provisionality of the serial encourages this kind of fragmented audience address, because an author can maintain multiple threads at one time, and not all threads are directed toward all audiences. Elias's edition of Pilkington's text demonstrates how very strongly she relies on this strategy—the notes for the text are included in a second volume that, at nearly five hundred pages, exceeds the *Memoirs'* actual text by nearly one third. If, as Bloom describes, the diary is a "private, heavily coded, self-referential work" (27), the *Memoirs* are clearly no less so. Pilkington maintains a diaristic control over the narrative that forces the reader to piece together the text, to find and follow the various threads. Yet such heavy

encoding also indicates how dependent she is on her relationships, and communal connections in producing her own textual self. Pilkington's own awareness of the communal nature of self construction comes up repeatedly in the narrative. Near the beginning of volume one, she offers what seems to be a preemptive apology: "I hope, if I should live to publish these Writings, none of the hounorable Persons mentioned in them as having once been my Friends will be offended at it" (25). The concern Pilkington expresses here at the communal involvement invoked by self construction echoes contemporary concerns about the ethics of life writing.[38] At the beginning of part three Pilkington addresses directly and a bit defensively the idea that self construction is communal: "I should now be glad to know how I could prosecute my own History without intermingling that of others; I have not lived in Desarts, where no Men abide, nor in a Cave, like Eccho" (263). In this sense, the encoding becomes inclusive rather than exclusive; clear to the participants; it is likely that the text would have been much less of a puzzle and more of a secret code for Pilkington's contemporary readers—one that created an immediate sense of participation in the text if the reader was "in the know."

In its physical form, this memoir of Laetitia Pilkington, this story of an individual, resembles nothing so much on the actual page as a kind of patchwork, with lines and sections and fonts all competing for the readers' notice. The interjection of letters and poetry and citation that Elias finds problematic are actually all pieces of the serial whole that represents Pilkington's selfhood on the page. Multiple voices and genres are represented by blocks of text that stop and start with an abruptness that belies the smooth forward movement assumed in a life narrative. The material text itself is marked by a periodicity that encourages the abbreviated reading practice of a periodical and gives the text a highly fragmented quality. This formatting both frees

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[38] See particularly Thomas Couser, *Vulnerable Subjects: Ethics and Life Writing,* N.Y.: Cornell UP, 2004; and Paul John Eakin's edited volume, *The Ethics of Life Writing*, N.Y: Cornell, 2004

Pilkington from the strictures of progressive form and encourages a high level of reader participation, since it belies the continuous narration the drives the reader forward in a single-voiced text, or one that depends on progressive narrative. In telling a story about her experience with Swift, Pilkington offers an interesting textual model for her own patched together narrative identity:

> "So he [Swift] brought to me out of his Study a large Book, very finely bound in Turkey Leather, and handsomely gilt; "This," says he, "is a Translation of the Epistles of Horace, a Present to me from the Author, 'tis a special good Cover! But I have a Mind there shou'd be something valuable within side of it." (33)

The "something valuable" that Swift wishes to place inside the cover are letters from his own correspondence; he charges Mrs. Pilkington "'to paste in these Letters, in this Cover, in the Order I shall give them to you'" (33). In placing importance on both choice and order, Swift is creating a serial document, much like Pilkington's, that reflects self using the voices of others; his connection with the "special good cover" is a further link to personal identification with the material text. The letters are written by the most recognized literary writers of the time, and as they are pasted into the book and discussed by Swift and Pilkington, the construction of a textual community, both literally and figuratively, surrounds both Swift and Pilkington.[39] This community of literati is one that Pilkington consistently evokes in her own text, and so she could offer no stronger evidence of her right to be included in that community, and to represent Swift to it, than this scene. Pilkington collaborates with Swift here in more ways than one: just as she pastes Swift's letters from others into the binding, she is also pasting the man himself into her own text, consciously and selectively, as a tool of her own self-construction.

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[39] Included along with Lord Bolingbroke are "Lady Masham, the Earl of Oxford, Doctor Atterbury, Bishop Burnet, Lord Bathurst, Mr. Addison, Archdeacon Parnell, Mr. Congreve, Mr. Pultney, Mr. Pope, Mr. Gay, [and] Dr. Arbuthnot" (34).

The intersection between communal identity and textual self-construction has only begun to be explored in criticism of this period.[40] The serial hybridity of voice and form Pilkington achieves within her *Memoirs* offers a counterpoint to many of our received notions about the modern self. It also provides a framework of continuity with, rather than a distinct break from, readings of life writing in the seventeenth century. Katharine Hodgkin argues that "self-writing in the early modern period is seldom governed by narrative or chronological structure....It is characterised by fluidity and variety, and by constant merging of forms and styles, and it crops up in unexpected ways and places" (23). Seriality's ability to evade expected features such as chronology, completeness, and emphasis of major events over daily life (such as in diary and journal) and its ability to provide engagement and exchange with its readers offers a textual space quite different from the ones we use to trace the progression of the modern self. And in fact, once we see that there are other ways to read those texts that we use to characterize the development of selfhood in the eighteenth century, we may discover that those very canonical texts have more to say than we realized. For example, John Bunyan is frequently recognized as foundational in spiritual autobiography, and what we draw from his texts is the emphasis on interiority, on separating the individual from society. Yet as Hodgkin argues, "The version of selfhood much of this writing [seventeenth century] presents is often strange to us in its preoccupations. Writing the self, in spiritual autobiography, emerges paradoxically out of a discourse which strives in certain ways toward an annihilation of the self; spiritual autobiographers wrestle with the self-centeredness, the suspicious proximity to arrogance, of their project" (23). Though spiritual autobiography is traditionally traced as a foundational genre

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[40] Though caution is necessary when applying the theoretical terminology of life writing studies in its contemporary sense. As Colman points out, some critics would "repair the damage [the Enlightenment] caused [to the concept] by reabsorbing the self into the stabilizing web of community and tradition" (3), while others would argue that "tradition is only another story, invented to mask the contingency of the particular" (3).

for the modern self, because it is interior, based on self accounting, and focused on responsibility

of the individual, this idea that it also seeks the annihilation or submersion or fusion of the self

with the other, and even that it is often an exchange between the autobiographical subject and

God (as opposed to being a completely isolated exercise) speak to some of the ideas of

community and collaboration that I am trying to get at here as foundations for the concept of self.

In "Critical Debates and Early Modern Autobiography" Lloyd Davis examines the

"effects of canonization and generic limits" on textual representations of identity, arguing that

that the "idealization" of particular genres can "extend for many years after the texts are written

and published (29). It is Davis' contention that the "diverse genres that proliferate in the early

modern period can alter and perhaps challenge these patterns" (29). Davis too finds that the

thrust of the individualist self I identify as a central paradigm is located in the eighteenth century.

If, as Davis claims, the early modern self is more diversely expressed, more fragmented, less

cohesive, then we can read Pilkington's Memoirs in a similar fashion, not as an anomaly that

doesn't fit into the paradigm but as another possible form of expressing textual identity. And it is

a form in sympathy with the diverse and fragmentary qualities that Davis and other early modern

critics locate in life writing before the eighteenth century.[41] Genre, voice, self: everything about

Pilkington's life seems to be diverse and multiple, situational, uncontainable, incomplete,

digressive. Serial convention, rather than attempting to contain her life, allows it to run its riotous

courses.

Seriality depends on situational narrative. It is self-construction in response repeated over

and over. In a sense, it both continues inevitably and begins anew each time an entry is started.

Pilkington's narrative uses situation both to begin telling her life (a need for financial support,

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[41] And in fact, Davis connects these modes to critical claims about the blending of conventional and fragmentary
elements in "postmodern autobiography," citing Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. This suggests a continuity of form,
or rather the absence of form across the eighteenth century from one period to the other.

the suggestion from an outside party) and to construct her life (her interaction with Swift), and then she uses the situation surrounding the publication of the life itself—specifically serialized or part publication—to modify and continue her story. In fact, situation is very much a part of most serialized life writing processes, which is not surprising since most common self-narration genres such as letters, diaries, and journals are informed by situation and daily experience in their purpose and structure. Mary Jo Kietzman emphasizes the situational aspects of self-performance inherent in pre-eighteenth-century real life narratives: "while liberal humanism locates agency and meaning in the unified human subject, the early modern serial subject knows herself and is known (hence is meaningful) only through enactments that are responses to specific situations (678). Indeed, it bears considering that a large part of the population, the largest part, did not necessarily construct self in the modern sense—instead, lives were themselves episodic, fragmented, and situational—periodic. Read in the context of their conscious seriality, Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs* provide a new way to think about how textual practices of self –construction might represent revolving notions of identity in the eighteenth century.

Chapter II: Charlotte Charke and the Problem with Serial Confession

A Narrative of the Life of Mrs Charlotte Charke was produced and published in eight numbers across March and April of 1755. Originally intended to be only "a short Sketch" of her life included in the preface of her novel, *The History of Henry Dumont*, she indicates in the second installment of the *Narrative* that the project has been expanded due to popular demand.[42] Whatever she meant it to be originally, Charke's narration of her life becomes a wonderful, rich, slightly hectic narration of past exploits and present pains; a text that continually references various modes of life writing yet resists satisfactory generic identification as such.

There has been much critical interest in Charke over the last few decades. Her writing is identified as an important resource for thinking about issues of gender and sexuality in the eighteenth century, and scholars have been particularly interested in how her *Narrative* engages with transgression and subversion of cultural norms. Charke's engagement with self-construction takes a central role in how critics approach the *Narrative,* but there is by no means agreement as to what kind of text it is, though there is a lot of thought about what it is not. In his introduction to the text, Robert Rehder describes the episodic nature of the *Narrative* as made up of "interludes" and claims it "is more a gathering of diverse scattered events than a considered effort at self-fashioning" (xv). This is because the text is full of various and fragmented storylines that twist and turn, and appear and disappear, in no recognizable plan: Philip Baruth identifies this style as Charke's "idiosyncratic methods of subject-formation" (2). Most scholars find the text to lack the self-reflection and interiority,

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[42] While we can't know how many readers Charke's *Narrative* had in serial form, we do know that after their serialization the installments were printed in book form and went through two editions in 1755.

yet Madeline Kahn calls the *Narrative* "a curious text that advertises its own failure on every page," which would seem to indicate at least some measure of reflexivity on Charke's part, even if it is not of the variety we expect from retrospective life writing (163).

Surprisingly, though, very little of current criticism has focused on the fact that her work was produced and presented to the public in a serial format. Even though Charke makes it clear that she is purposely writing in parts, few studies gives serious or extended consideration to the widely used mode of production into which her life has been adapted for serial publication.[43] In this chapter I use diary theory to understand how the formal features of the serial in Charke's *Narrative* might modify generic expectations. Since diaries and periodicals are also serial, I argue, they might have a greater affinity with Charke's serially published narrative than other life writing genres.

At the heart of this discussion, indeed, of many discussions about Charke's text, is how the *Narrative* exceeds or fails modern notions of genre. An actress and playwright, many of her literary references derive from plays, and the *Narrative* has been read through the lens of the theater by several critics. Such readings are further encouraged by the connection of her famous father, Colley Cibber. Rehder, among others, likens her *Narrative* to the picaresque novel popularized in the previous century. She is sometimes included in a lineage that traces the lives of famous larger than life female characters such as Long Meg of Westminster and Mary Frith (a.k.a. Moll Cutpurse). The question of how to read Charke's *Narrative* as life writing is ongoing. Critics who find it lacking the necessary self-consciousness of the modern subject tend to connect her to seventeenth century writers thought to be less interested in individuality and

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[43] In his "Introduction" to *Introducing Charlotte Charke*, Philip Baruth does comment on how the serial nature of publishing her life allows Charke to manipulate the situation with her father, but he is not really concerned with what it does to her own self-construction. In "A Masculine Turn of Mind: Charlotte Charke and the Periodical Press" in *Introducing Charlotte Charke*, Hans Turley examines the relationship between Charke and *The Gentlemen's Magazine*, but his focus is on the magazine's treatment of the text rather than Charke's production of it.

introspection as defining traits of selfhood, though as we saw in Chapter One, this approach is problematic. Her use of conversion narrative links her to spiritual and criminal auto/biography conventions. In the *Afterword* of the 2005 collection of critical essays that seeks to reposition Charke in current criticism(s), Felicity Nussbaum points out that this borrowing and blending of genre represents a certain fluidity present in eighteenth-century thought about writing and publication: Charke "to some extent…adapts her lived experience to various ideological grids dominant in the mid eighteenth century—spiritual autobiography, travesty, tragicomedy, and apologia" because in the eighteenth century those categories were not necessarily exclusive (229). I wish to build on this idea by suggesting that as Charke adapts her experience to these various generic grids (and others), the features of the serial make it an ideal vehicle to present that diversity, and that further, a modified grid of criminal confession works particularly well with Charke's serial self-construction.

Particular features of serial genres such as diary and periodical inform Charke's textual self-construction: the circular progression and digression of the text, the inherent encoding of crucial information, and the model of exchange it embraces. Examining these features in the context of Charke's use of criminal confession reveals how she invokes and modifies the framework of confessional models.[44] The *Narrative* engages the conventions of conversion narrative and then challenges those conventions with her refusal to complete the cycle and be judged.[45] As a result, she uses the serial to draw on and subvert criminal confession.

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[44] Felicity Nussbaum, Patricia Meyer Spacks, and Sidonie Smith all argue that Charke takes up in part the conventions of spiritual autobiography. Charke's lack of interiority and the absence of any kind of "conversion" by the close of the narrative have been cited as reasons why Charke's narrative might be considered a failed or incomplete spiritual autobiography.

[45] Those conventions usually involve a linear movement through sin, confession, penitence, and redemption. Spiritual, criminal and slavery narratives all utilized the conversion formula during this period.

The criminal narrative is a broad generic category, so outlining a few common features here will help us to understand why this form of life writing has an affinity with the serial. The genre grew significantly in popularity and accessibility across the second half of the seventeenth century and through the eighteenth. Often published in pamphlet form and in installments, these stories were affordable and widely read for both moral instruction and entertainment. Lincoln Faller identifies two kinds of criminal biography popular in the decades leading up to the publication of Charke's narrative: one that is "morally serious and quasi-realistic," and one that is "generally frivolous, overtly romantic and often fantastic…modeled on the picaresque novel," which is itself episodic (6). Serial collections such as the "Ordinary of Newgate's Account of the Behaviour, Confession, and Dying Words" are a good example of the serious kind, offering a summary of the criminal's downfall, confession, repentance, and (most often spiritual) recuperation or redemption, while the picaresque stories of the unrepentant exploits of rogues, pirates, and highwaymen, and in Charke's case, highwaywomen, make up the second type. The serious brand of criminal narrative fits more closely with a narrative of modern selfhood as we understand it, since it usually manifests as linear and progressive in form, requires that the subject practice self- reflection (penitence), and looks for some kind of transformative quality by the end of the narrative. More akin to a serial, the latter kind of criminal rogue narrative consists of recursive parts that make up a larger whole but are also in many ways distinct episodes in a series.

Yoking the serial to criminal narrative allows an examination of how seriality reflects lived experience. The relative freedoms and instabilities of criminal identification create a site well suited to experimentation with multiple and shifting personas rather than one that is singular and progressive. Without centralized record-keeping, offenders were free to reinvent themselves

in time and space, effectively creating a string of identities that had no clear beginning or ending. In "Defoe Maters the Serial Subject," Mary Jo Kietzman identifies this process as "serial subjectivity,"

> Before a criminal had a 'record' which was, in essence, an authoritative biography, the indictment was the sole discursive site for provisionally establishing a subject's legal identity and history….Each appearance before an official (justice, recorder or judge) offered the criminal opportunity to rewrite her personal history if she wanted to keep living. Indictments, particularly of female offenders, construct the criminal's identity as a series of names (and by implication, a series of lives), making visible the process by which marginalized subjects could claim a degree of agency, however circumscribed, within seventeenth century historical and juridical process. (1)

Kietzman explains that "although the discourse [of serial subjectivity] became particularly visible in the criminal careers of female offenders and the records of the law's effort to curtail their activity, the experience of a large proportion of London's lower class who were by necessity migrants (their lives depended on their ability to move and adapt) resembles" the kind of pattern she is outlining here (687). Serial features allow the act of reinvention that is crucial to representing lived experience, criminal or otherwise, while simultaneously providing a circular and digressive scaffolding that mimics the repetition of everyday life.

Charke opens the first installment of the *Narrative* with a request that her text be given "the common Chance of a Criminal, at least to be properly examin'd, before it is condemn'd" (7).[46] Opening with an invitation, even a demand, that her readers "examine" her life they way they would the life of a "criminal," and saturating the narrative with that genre's language of penitence, confession and recuperation, Charke positions herself in the discourse of what Faller identifies as "serious" criminal biography. At the same time, however, the episodic nature of the serial allows, and even encourages, a second depiction of self constructed in the vein of the

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[46] This and all subsequent quotations are taken from *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke*, Ed. Robert Rehder, London: Pickering Chatto, 1999.

criminal "rogue," located in the frenetic narration of her over the top exploits and her multiple identities.[47] Charke uses the serial format to engage with both models; the combination provides a space for her to experiment with the traditional role of penitent. By offering her adventures for our entertainment and edification, the "rogue" Charke establishes a positive connection with the audience. Then she uses the immediacy of the serial to subvert the confession and take up the audience's role of judge, modifying the expected trajectory of conversion in "serious" criminal biography.

Positioning the text within criminal discourses provides Charke with a discursive framework in which to engage the audience. Criminal accounts written after the victim had been tried and convicted, usually published after execution, often advertised themselves as documents composed of the subject's own words. Many of these narratives sought to engage with both the public and the crime itself, providing a re-reporting that attempted to set the record straight.[48] The author of *The Life of Henry Simms, Alias Young Gentleman Harry*, convicted and sentenced to death for robbery, expresses concern that the public know the truth to disqualify any "false accounts" of his story:

> When a man becomes remarkable in Life, though it be only on the score of Villainy, he generally becomes a Topick of Conversation…Truth is made to subside for the Diversion of a Company, and many things are advanced as Facts, which never had Existence. I will therefore, to prevent the Publick being imposed on by false Accounts, either in Conversation, or in Print, here set down a true and impartial account of my Life, from my Birth, to my unhappy Exit, where not a Villainy I have committed shall be lessened by my narrative, but it shall be set in all its Glare of Light! [49]

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[47] In a different context than the one I will take up here, Sidonie Smith discusses Charke as the female rogue in *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*; the chapter was reprinted in 1998 in a collection called *Introducing Charlotte Charke: Actress, Author, Enigma* in 1998.
[48] These accounts are sometimes published by friends or acquaintances of the condemned, or by independent publishers, but they can also be found affixed to the Ordinary's Accounts.
[49] Excerpt taken from Faller's *Crime and Defoe*.

Criminal auto/biography typically follows a specific narrative pattern—transgression, confession, and penitence—and seeks to reconstitute the criminal in religious, social, and political discourses. In this way it is much like the spiritual narratives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The genre also insists on its own veracity: the goal is to provide a "true and impartial account" of not just the subject's crimes, but also his "life," from the birth to death, which is generally impending. But many criminal biographies are, as we see above, framed as discursive—the criminal's voice prompts an exchange with the audience that insists on a space in which to tell his or her story the "right" way, shifts the responsibility for judgment from the court to the reader—or the public, and asks to be (re)interrogated on the terms defined by the narrative. This reciprocity transacts the reconstitution of the criminal through the judgment of God and society. It is this discursive quality that becomes even more significant when paired with Charke's serial publication, allowing her to alter the direction of the narrative.

Charke combines this discursive tradition with the features of serial publication to carry this hypothetical interaction one step further—she actually engages in a back and forth exchange with her audience, and more specifically her father, and represents it in the narrative, making her text reciprocal rather than singular. Because a serial is grounded in immediacy and momentariness rather than a retrospective narration, the self can be revised as she is crafted. That same immediacy provides another connection between Charke and the reader, since it creates in the reader a sense of participation in the events unfolding. The circular and regressive nature of the serial allow her to go back and revise earlier representations of self based on immediate events but not necessarily change those earlier versions of herself, so that we are left with a more fragmented and multiple iteration of self than we would see in a singularly published retrospective genre.

This affinity with serial life writing genres such as diary indicates that we can read the *Narrative* as a series of traces, or threads, that diverge and converge to allow a flexibility of purpose throughout the text. By shifting from one trace to another, Charke restructures familiar patterns of self-construction, and creates an environment that is conducive to continual reinvention of self rather than a single cumulative identity. Reading the *Narrative* as a series of traces rather than a traditional confessional both releases us from the expectation that Charke realize the conventions of the criminal auto/biography and illuminates the ways in which Charke both takes up and resists the conventions of criminal narrative. Each trace in some way accesses elements of the criminal autobiography frames outlined above, but read together, they complicate the formula associated with the genre

One of the strongest and most consistent threads in the narrative follows the reconstitution of Charke in her father, Colley Cibber's, affection, much in the same way that a criminal autobiography seeks to morally reconstitute the criminal in society. Charke frames the goal of her narrative if she were slated for execution:

> Were I to expire this Instant, I have no self interested Views, in Regard to Worldly Matters; but confess myself a Miser in my wishes so far, as having the transcendent Joy of knowing that I am restor'd to a Happiness, which not only will clear my reputation to the World, but, at the same time, give a convincing Proof that there are yet some Sparks of Tenderness remaining in my Father's Bosom, for his REPENTENT CHILD. (9)

This focus on the confessional demands Charke adhere to a specific pattern: she must admit her crimes, ask for forgiveness, and reiterate her attachment to the community. We might see Charke's initial comment, the invitation for interrogation, as doubly addressed to both Cibber and the reader. It is Cibber's approbation and forgiveness she identifies as the primary goal of the *Narrative*, but she is also concerned about her "reputation to the World." The narrative seeks to reconstitute Charke in the opinion of both with the acts of confession and repentance, because

"'tis the absolute Ordination of the Supreme that we should forgive, when the Offender becomes a sincere and hearty Penitent" (9). Modeling herself and her narrative on conversion patterns, Charke appeals to both her father and the public to witness her repentance and respond accordingly with her reconstitution—"The only Blessing I desire or expect, his BLESSING, and his PARDON" (8).The progression of this thread is compelled not by an overarching telling of Charke's life, but by those incidents that are important to the thread of redress for the wrongs she has (supposedly) committed. Indeed, it challenges the very progression of a linear "life" because from the inception of the narrative it references the present and future rather than the past: "I hope," Charke conjectures early in the narrative, "ere this small Treatise is finish'd, to have it in my power to inform my Readers, my painful Separation from my once tender Father will be more than amply Restored" (9). This remark underlines the unpredictable quality and transformative possibility of the serial. A truly convicted criminal would already know the outcome of the narrative, as would the audience—the sense of the provisional Charke creates would have little traction. The criminal's restoration comes too late for her to "inform" the readers of it.

The pattern of confession in the *Narrative* is further complicated by Charke's insistence throughout the narrative on creating an environment of resistance and mystery rather than the candidness expected from confessional genres. In *Turned to Account*, Faller links amplitude of detail to sincerity in criminal biographies: "it seems a particular proof of [the confessing criminal's] rightness of mind that he holds nothing back, neither out of shame nor from want of attention to detail" (23). We see evidence of this in popular criminal narratives of the period such as Miss Mary Blandy's *Own Account,* in which she carefully reconstructs the trial evidence to

show that she was not guilty of the intent to poison her father.[50] Blandy's step-by-step

reconstruction engages the public in a reconsideration of, if not her conviction, her guilt. She

even addresses the reader directly, in effect asking for a new or revised verdict—a request that

she justifies with the detailed report of her actions in relation to the trial.[51]

Despite her engagement with conversion, the "rogue" Charke is much less forthcoming

about the details of her "crimes" than Blandy is, often avoiding the very discourse of confession

and penitence with which she frames the narrative by refusing the expectation of a detailed

confession. She instigates a trial for her transgressions, but her confession is complicated by her

unwillingness to either make clear in what way she has sinned, or accept full responsibility for

her situation: "Partly thro' my own Indiscretion (and, I am all too well convinc'd, from the cruel

Censure of false and evil Tongues) since my maturity, I lost that blessing [of her father's

affection]" (8). She shifts responsibility throughout the narrative to her father and others,

implying she has not committed all of the crimes, or "indiscretions," imputed to her by "false and

evil Tongues," and she withholds the details regarding her purported crimes, saying only that her

prosecutors (mostly her older sister) "were resolved to carry their horrid Point" against her, and

that she "answered nothing to their Purpose" (65). Even the address to her father resists full

confession: she desires her reputation to be "cleared" not reconstituted. Though as critics have

pointed out, she does construct herself as the penitent prodigal, this construction is not

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[50] Describing in detail the number of times and in what amounts she administered the "powder" to her father, she notes, "Finding it would not mix well with Tea, I flung the Liquor into which it had been thrown out of the Window. I farther declare, that looking into the Cup, I saw nothing adhere to the sides of it…Be pleased to remember, Reader, that I mixed it in but one Cup, and then threw it away" (36).

[51] Mary Blandy was convicted and hanged for poisoning her father in 1752. Her case engendered much publicity and dozens of texts circulated about it. I cite here from *Miss Mary Blandy's Own Account*. London: Millar, 1752.

unqualified.[52] Even when Charke identifies and admits to specific accusations against her, she

often resists revealing the motive behind her actions:

> My being in Breeches was alledged to me as a very great error, but the original
> Motive preceded from a particular Cause; and I rather chuse to undergo the worst
> Imputation that can be laid on me on that account, than unravel the secret, which
> is an Appendix to the one I am bound, as I before hinted, by all the vows of truth
> and horror everlastingly to conceal. (73)

The withholding of cause disrupts the narrative pattern, particularly since the motive of a crime

narrative is a particularly important detail; convicted criminals carefully attempt to explain

motives by distancing themselves from the crime, most often invoking either bad influences or a

temporary loss of self. By refusing to give up the identity of transgressive and admitting to

motive but mystifying the reasons behind her cross dressing, Charke resists the narrative

paradigm of confession that she uses to frame the narrative, and that would give the reader the

expected psychological insight to the individual; in this instance, she cannot, or will not, distance

herself from the crimes for which she puts herself on trial.

In essence, Charke is using concealment and secrecy to encode her confession—only the

principals involved are aware of all the details. The encoding becomes a strategy for negotiating

her relationship with an audience that will eventually become integral in her resistance to the

confessional mode framing her narrative. Unlike Pilkington, who seeks to achieve transparency

in her own behavior and uses encoding as a thinly veiled threat to expose those around her who

might challenge her self-representation, Charke mystifies her own behavior and calls out other

players in the unfolding family drama without detailing their actions. Nowhere in the narrative

does she actually specify the causes of the split with her father; presumably, since he is a primary

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[52] Sidonie Smith, among others, figures Charlotte as the prodigal son, arguing that the type is "culturally distorted"
by Charlotte's attempt to adopt it as a way of representing herself through masculine identity (Masquerade 100).

addressee of the narrative, he already knows what these reasons are, but their omission from the narrative obscures the confessional mode for the general reader.

This diaristic encoding, this quality of in "insider-ness," reifies the community building in the narrative and Charke's dependence on it, but it also creates division and forces the individual reader into a less critical role than might otherwise be called up by a criminal narrative. Despite this text's planned publication for public consumption, the elaboration we would expect in a narrative written for a third party is missing. She includes the names and actions of those around her with little to no explanation of who they are or what their motives might be. This ambiguity refuses the reader a stable position from which to judge; we are never sure if we have all the facts, so any conclusions we can draw from the text are going to be uneasy at best. The *Narrative* navigates various threads addressing multiple and overlapping communities: her family, the theater, benefactors and subscribers to the Narrative, a reading public. Her choice to name those implicated in her "crimes" and "confessions" or not involves complicated maneuvering among and between these groups. The most visibly defined community shifts as the purpose of the narrative shifts, often indicated in the tension between naming and not naming participants or their motivations. One community is often placed into opposition with another. For example, Charke's sister, Catherine, is represented in the narrative as her most aggressive prosecutor; Catherine is the leader of the "triumvirate" that accuses and convicts Charke in her last meeting with her father. Yet again, Charke withholds the details regarding her purported crimes and accusations, saying only that "they were resolved to carry their horrid Point" against her, and that she "answered nothing to their Purpose" (65).[53] But

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[53]In her recent biography *Charlotte*, Kathryn Shevelow hypothesizes that the charges brought against Charke by her sister and the "triumvirate" included Charke's split with her husband, Richard Charke, "reckless, even dissipated behavior," Charke's reputation for playing men rather than women on the stage, and, most incriminating, her cross dressing offstage (198).

Catherine's "Point," is obscured as well, denying the reader the opportunity of aligning themselves with her role. In the absence of this information she becomes a cipher for the accusations Charke refuses to prove false yet asks to be forgiven for. This conflict complicates the *Narrative* if we are looking for a completed criminal confession, but following these two narrative threads, Charke's confessional frame and her mystification of the actual crimes involved, as contiguous and interwoven traces in dialogue with each other, one demanding and one resisting, just as Catherine demands and Charke resists, provides a cohesion in the text that is reciprocal rather than linear.

The reading public is always identified as a member of the textual community in relation to Charke's requested judgment and recuperation, though that position varies widely across the text and ultimately the privilege of judgment is revoked from the reading community. That Charke is aware of the power of the public forum in which she situates her confession is clear from early in the text; after offering her narrative to be interrogated and pleading for the "common chance of a Criminal," from both her father and the public, she asserts authority over her audience and the reception of her confession and questions the ability of some readers to judge adequately her case:

> I should not have made this last remark, but, as 'tis likely my Works may fall into the Hands of People of disproportion'd Understandings, I was willing to prevent an Error a weak Judgment might have run into, by inconsiderately throwing an Odium upon me I could not possibly deserve—FOR, ALAS! ALL CANNOT JUDGE ALIKE. (10)

The ability of community to impact selfhood is a major concern for Charke throughout the narrative, and this passage reflects her struggle to participate in her own self-construction after the text's reception. In criminal auto/biography it is common for a criminal to address the reader directly and ask for a reconsideration of evidence, but it seems an extraordinary move for the

criminal on trial to interrogate her jury and accuse them of "disproportion'd understandings" and

"weak judgment." Charke places her narrative at the mercy of her father and a judging public

and pushes the stable narrating position of the penitent, engaging with the reading community by

defining both how her narrative should be judged and who has the authority to do so. She

instigates a contentious dialogue with readers in which she identifies two possible outcomes in

the judgment of her *Narrative*: shaky reconstitution represented by it "being honoured with the

last row of a library;" or conviction and execution, in which her narrative, after serving as a

wrapper for pastries, is thrown on the floor and "trampled to death by some Thread-bare poet,

whose works might possibly have undergone the same malevolence of fate" (7). As it progresses,

the pact that Charke engages in with the reader depends less on acceptance of convention than

interaction and reaction, her self-construction in the *Narrative* participating in what Gilmore

defines as "the name as a site of experimentation rather than the contractual sign of identity"

(42). The production and publication modes of serial format enable modification of that pact

based on response as the narrative progresses. Indeed, the thread of the narrative is possible only

because Charke is writing serially since it takes places in the moment of writing.

Charke's pact with the reader survives this pressure because it is reinforced by another

thread in the narrative supported by serial practices—the exploits and adventures of the criminal

"rogue." Many critics connect Charke's representation of herself in generic roles as opposed to

an individualized identity to her theatrical background, claiming that she frames her life by

assigning to it "parts" as if in a play.[54] Certainly the influence of the theater on Charke's

narrative merits consideration, but there are other genres in which the generic role plays a

significant part. Specifically, this form of narration speaks to both diary and serial forms of

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[54] For discussions of Charke and the theater see: Baruth, Philip E. Ed. *Introducing Charlotte Charke: Actress, Author Enigma*. Urbana: U of Illinois: 1998; Pullen, Kirsten. *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society*. Camridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.

writing. Perhaps most obviously, this use of character "types," or perhaps characters or caricatures, in text is well-known for its presence in eighteenth-century periodicals such as Addison and Steele's *Tatler* and *Spectator*. But Lynn Bloom points out that characters in diaries also tend to be less developed and have little interiority: rather than being "analyzed or described in depth," the characters around the "I" that is the authorial voice and persona of the diary "are more likely to be identifiable by their roles…and relationships…than as individuals" (27). Charke uses this strategy to categorize those around her, such as her sister Catherine, the evil "Arch-Dutchess," but she also repeatedly employs it to depict herself and her relationship to others. She begins the narrative as "The Penitent," and she is at various points "The Mock Doctor," "the Gardener," "the Porter at The Gate," and "Lady Bountiful," and this only in the first twenty pages or so. The young lover is quickly followed by the good wife when Mr. Charke enters the narrative ("I thought it gave me an Air of more Consequence to be call'd Mrs. *Charke*, than Miss *Charlotte*"), and later, when her father rejects her overtures of apology, she becomes, among other identities, "The Prodigal [son]." Even when she invokes narrative conventions of retrospective autobiography, such as descriptions of birth and childhood, her focus is role playing her own father as child:

> Having, even then, a passionate Fondness for a Perriwig, I crawled out of Bed one Summer's Morning at Twickenham,…and, taking into my small Pate, that by Dint of a Wig and a Waistcoat, I should be the Perfect Representative of my Sire, I crept softly into the Servants-Hall,…to perpetrate the happy Design. (10)

This depiction of the child reproducing the father, like several of the roles she takes on, intersect with the multiple threads in the narrative,[55] allowing her to shift her self-representation as easily as she shifts between patterns of narrative and eliminating the need for a single cohesive identity to emerge across the text. What we don't find is any hint in the narrative of Charke attempting to

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[55] This particular instance could be meant to entertain the reader while also pulling at her father's heartstrings, for example.

internalize and individualize herself to meet the expectations characterized by critical definitions

of modern selfhood; instead she is a chameleon, adapting to fit the circumstances and

relationships of any given moment.

As several critics have pointed out, her narrative begins with a standard dedication, but

that dedication has an interesting twist—it is dedicated from "the author to herself" (5). In these

first pages Charke sets up the division of self present in the narrative proper. Here she frames

another connection to her reader: the presentation of herself as a "NON-PAREIL OF THE

AGE" who is characterized as one "of the greatest Curiosities that ever [was] the Incentive to the

most profound astonishment" (5). This identity continues throughout the narrative, marked by

words such as "prodigal," "wonder," "curiosity," and "oddity." Charke's narrative, she claims, is

un-narratable:

> As I have promis'd to give some Account of my UNACCOUNTABLE LIFE, I
> shall no longer detain my Readers in respect to my Book, but satisfy a Curiosity
> which has long subsisted in the Minds of many: And, I believe, they will own,
> when they know my History, if Oddity can plead any Right to Surprize and
> Astonishment, I may positively claim a Title to be shewn among the Wonders of
> Ages past." (8)

Rather than separating Charke from the reader and emphasizing her individuality, as we might

expect, the use of these descriptors actually locates her as part of a particular dialogue. In a

society that was fixated on collecting and collections, and that commonly kept curio-cabinets

filled with "oddities" and "wonders," to self-represent in such a way would not have the same

negative emphasis on "difference" that we would apply to such words today. Instead, Charke's

approach of "collecting" identities across the text asserts her value to and in a particular

community that values the accumulation of items that signify differently but together create a

discontinuous whole, much like a serial or periodical publication. The construction of this

persona provides a way for Charke to (re)position herself yet again in a discourse with which her readers are familiar.

If serial features destabilize Charke's positioning of herself in the *Narrative*, allowing her to shift from one predefined identity to another, then it is not surprising that one of ways she shifts her position is through an engagement with gender. She clearly identifies herself as a subject that should be marginalized in terms of her gender; in fact, the opening lines request a shift from "female" to "criminal": "As the following History is the Product of a Female Pen,…I therefore humbly move for its having the common Chance of a Criminal" (7). This is only the first of many moments in the narrative when she either elides or simply ignores gendered expectations. Indeed, instead of allowing it to condemn her, Charke uses the questions of gender transgression surrounding her crimes to enhance her rogue identity; it is part of her encoding. We might see on Charke as projecting neither feminine nor masculine, but in fact an anomalous identity; one that combines and exceeds rather than identifies with or crosses gender. I would like to suggest that Charke's gender excess was marked as not just feminine, but other, an elision of gender that culminates in an identity defined by anomaly—a "NON PAREIL," a *"curiosity."* Several critics have examined Charke as a representation of the female rogue, but her adventures take place in and across male (as we saw above, gardener, doctor, porter; she even masquerades as her father) as well as—perhaps more often than—female guises; her identities are not defined by gender so much as they are by her status as an anomalous figure. In an examination of Charke and theatrical cross dressing, Kristina Stroub points out that eighteenth-century gender roles were still more flexible than those in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and that "the cross-dressed actress of the early to mid-eighteenth century seems to constitute a historical possibility for pleasure in sexual and gender ambiguity" (108). Charke's clothed body moves easily

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between male and female throughout the narrative; her construction of gender seems to be less a question of either/or, and more a positon of other that draws from both. Particularly because feminine anomaly was often perceived as a threat, her self-construction across gendered lines that accesses masculinity is necessary to maintain her anomalous identity—the masculine overlay puts a positive spin on the anomalous.[56] Her self-construction as othered, as "odd," allows a kind of detachment or refiguring of the body—Charke's anomaly is social rather than physical.

At least partially unfettered from the bonds of gender category by repositioning herself as an "oddity," then, Charke narrates herself positively through exploits and adventures much like those found in stories of the criminal rogue, an identity that was unlikely to be available to her if she had retained her "female pen," and one that reads at odds with the stated purpose of the confessional. The *curiosity* thread reifies her connection to that other kind of criminal biography that focuses on the picaresque adventures of infamous (and generally male) criminals such as James Hind or the Golden Farmer, narratives that are themselves episodic and continue the representation through role-playing that she begins early in the narrative:[57] the "irregular actions" and "uncommon adventures" of, for example, Charlotte the tavernkeeper, who humorously gifts all of her product on customers in an effort to appear successful, or Charlotte the pastry cook, who does not have the "Materials to make the Pies," or even Charlotte the highwayman, who allegedly robs her own father to demand his forgiveness.[58] The serial format in which Charke writes, itself a set of complete and independent texts that make up a larger whole, encourages the

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[56] Eighteenth-century gender identity aligned "women, even English women, with the generic deformed who defy gender or specific geographic region" (Nussbaum 11). Anomaly submerged in femininity threatens the identity of the nation, but Charke, interestingly, distances herself, or at least her narrated self, from a fully feminine identity.

[58] Though Charke tells the story of this "most villainous Lye" only to denounce it as a rumor. Yet by putting the rumor in print as part of the narrative, she assures that the story will continue to circulate.

serial identities Charke depends on in the text. This thread that follows Charke's rogue criminal narrative also maintains a bond between Charke and her readers (and potential judges), since they are likely to be much more forgiving and tolerant of the entertaining rogue than the wayward and hostile penitent that ultimately denounces their authority.

Towards the middle of the narrative, Charke's meandering narration of her adventures and personas is interrupted by the return of the earlier thread and "one of the most tragical Occurrences of [her] Life, which but last Week happened to [her]" (61). Because the narrative is published in installments, Charke can reflect on her own early narrative purpose:

> The Reader may remember, in the First Number of my Narrative I made a publick Confession of my Faults; and, pleased with the fond imagination of being restored to my Father's Favour, flattered myself, ere this Treatise could be ended, to Ease the Hearts of every humane Breast, with an Account of a Reconciliation. (61-2)

Here the *Narrative* becomes more than a mere reporting of Charke's life; it is now actually a tool of active and contemporaneous self-construction, much like a diary. Except that instead of being a space based on privacy and interiority, Charke has linked her own self-representation to her reading community; through the narrative, her father's forgiveness will ease not only her own, but "the Heart of every humane Breast" that comes into contact with the narrative. To this end, she sends a penitent letter to her father, directing him to the recently published first installment of her narrative, conflating private confession with public. Cibber's refusal to acknowledge the letter by returning it unopened shifts Charke's focus: the examination and possible condemnation of her narrative now depends not on Cibber but on the very public to whom she before assigned "weak Judgment." While Charke has given up on being "pardon'd" by her father, she has not given up on her readers, and her serial publication allows her to reorient her focus in the text. She

prints the letter she sent to her father (which still offers no information about what her errors are) for the "consideration" of the "Reader," and a few pages later she models for them the outcome she is expecting by pardoning her sister for turning Cibber against her: "Tis now my Turn to forgive, as being the injured person; and to show her how much I chuse to become her Superior in Mind, I not only pardon, but PITY her" (65). But Charke's relationship with the public has been complicated throughout the narrative by her refusal to adhere to the conventions of criminal confession—to admit her crimes and their motives or to give the specific details that characterize the genre.

In fact, this subversion of her confession becomes even more prominent in the second half of the narrative. Repeatedly the confessing criminal becomes either the victim of her family's, and especially her sister's, "cruel censure," or the roguish oddity jaunting about the countryside—we hear less and less from the penitent prodigal. Charke's attempt to model the correct response for her readers highlights the escalating pressure she places on the early representation of herself as the penitent; she usurps the position of authority and judgment entirely, turning the interrogation back on the reader, and on her father:

> I cannot recollect any crime I have been guilty of that is unpardonable, which the denial of my request may possibly make the world believe I have; but I dare challenge the most malicious tongue of slander to a proof of that kind, AS HEAVEN AND MY OWN CONSCIENCE CAN EQUALLY AQUIT me of ever having deserved that dreadful sentence, OF NOT BEING FORGIVEN. (142)

She withdraws the offer she made in the opening of the narrative—readers are not going to be given the opportunity to judge unless they can do it properly, and the narrative establishes early that no one but Cibber truly had that authority. Instead, Charke aligns her own capacity for judgment with that of God's, much as a criminal biography would end by shifting from the reconstitution of the criminal in society to religious salvation. But Charke, rather than moving

from the social to the spiritual, rejects the social judgment altogether and she is able to do so because the serial reproduces experience as if it is happening in the moment. She is able to reorient herself halfway through the narrative in response to actual events brought about by her *Narrative*. Had she published the entire *Narrative* at the outset, the resulting document would have been entirely different. This particular outcome is possible only because Charke is writing serially.

The act of narrating a life, even a life of crime, is a constant struggle for authority and ownership. Charke offers her narrative to the public not only as a confession, but also as a corrective, and in appropriating authorial authority for her life she also defines the conditions upon which she will be judged. The availability of that authorial control, her ability to define not only how she will be judged, but, ultimately, who will have the authority to convict her, is at least in part a product of her serial production and publication. Serial conventions allow her to fashion through multiple but intertwined threads of narrative an identity that resists the progression expected in the confessional format; instead her text constantly circles back on itself and redefines the parameters of both confession and selfhood. It allows a self that privileges particular threads of experience and ignores others, and that engages with its reader rather than existing in textual isolation. Upon reading Charke, the overwhelming impression one is left with is one of multiplicity: an excess of identities that refuse to be confined to genre expectations. The serial, rather than attempting to contain that excess, celebrates it, and provides a space where selfhood can dictate the conditions in which it is constructed.

Part Two: Seriality as a critical framework

The goal in this second section is to examine how texts that are recognized as carrying at least some markers of modern selfhood would benefit from consideration from a serial angle; where better to start than with texts that epitomize, albeit in different ways, what we have come to accept as harboring attributes of the modern self? That self, Roy Pascal explains, is generally defined in terms more familiar to autobiography than diary: autobiography "is a review of a life from a particular moment in time, while the diary, however reflective it may be, moves through a series of moments in time…We expect from a diary all the uncertainties, false starts, momentariness that we find in them. From the autobiography, however, we expect a coherent shaping of the past; and if diary entries or letters are quoted, we need the explanatory interpretive commentary of the author (3-5). Autobiography retrospectively creates a linear narrative that builds toward one specific fixed moment in time—that of its production, while "a diary…is created in and represents a continuous present" (Culley 20). The "certainty" implied by autobiography carries the expectation of a self defined by cohesiveness, progression, and linearity, and generally seeks to by the end of the text to convey some higher meaning or significance with the life; there is no room for the "uncertainties, false starts [and] momentariness" Pascal identifies in the diary. Yet such claims assume that selfhood written for publication is always grounded in certainty and moving toward completion at some kind of end point. There is no completion of a diary, Lejeune reminds us, except in death. Yet in *Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries*, Robert A. Fothergill found that "certain diaries…by virtue of their authors' conception and practice, and the character of the written documents—

their texture and the shape of their 'authorized' version—are best regarded as a synthesis of the two types," diary and autobiography (152). He contends that serial documents such as diaries can represent selfhood by adapting the narrative conventions of autobiography. It should follow, then, that texts meant to represent self in a more complete fashion could adapt serial features. Character, texture, and shape are at least to some extent products of convention; we surmise that an infusion of diaristic convention would provide autobiography with a foundation for a more dynamic and flexible representation of self: "from a moving vantage-point, the serial autobiographer constantly mediates between a provisional interpretation of his life's meaning and direction, and the fresh experience which may modify that interpretation" (Fothergill 154). In a similar way it is possible to read in the texts I focus on in this chapter as a synthesis of autobiography and diary.

In keeping with the assumption that the concept of the "individual self" developed during the late seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries, it has been commonly noted that much individual diary keeping in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lacked the "inner" and contained little or no overt "self-reflection." Often diaries were much more engaged with the writer's physical being, and "the keepers of personal, non-religious diaries…tended to record events rather than feelings" (Martens 55). But the assumption that diaristic forms lack a sense of individual self merely because they lack the kind of self-reflection and analysis expected by parameters of modern identity is one that has been repeatedly challenged in the last few decades by readers and critics of diaries. Margo Culley argues that "the act of autobiographical writing, particularly that which occurs in a periodic structure, involves the writer in complex literary as well as psychological structures" (10). She points out that modern representations of self might be said to lack as well, since they are often devoid of an kind of "picture of family and

community life" that is implicit and integral in earlier diaries (6). Diarists such as Pepys and

Byrd, and to a lesser extent Boswell, were concerned with reflecting *about* and *within* their

interaction in the outside world, thus bringing the community into the diary.[59] Travel journals

range from deeply introspective to objectively descriptive, and anywhere in between.[60] The focus

in these texts is often uniquely on the construction of self in interaction with two distinctly

different modes of representation, so the inner self is placed in an overtly externalized context.

Chapter 3, "Serial Convention and the Novel: De-Mythologizing *Robinson Crusoe*,"

examines how Crusoe's use of serial features in his narrative belie the myth of the modern

individual's dependence on the teleology of progress and interiority. Chapter 4, "Fits and Starts:

Ben Franklin's Serially Autobiographical Self," examines this autobiographical icon's serial

writing process and the ways in which Franklin's sense of community identification is very much

a product of his serial practices. Chapter 5, "Serial Domestic Identity in the *Memoirs of Miss*

Sidney Bidulph," engages with recent criticism on sentiment and identity to illuminate how the

serial form of Bidulph's *Memoirs* routes identity formation through communal interaction rather

than restricting the identity of the heroine as sentimental readings often suggest.[61] These texts are

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[59] See chapter 6 for a more thorough explanation of how the community was used to construct self in the personal diary.

[60] See for example Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters* and James Boswell's *Tour to Corsica*.

[61] For the purposes of this argument, I do not make a distinction between the "real" and the "fictional." To this end, my focus in the two fictional works is on the first person voices—Crusoe and Sidney Bidulph—rather than Defoe and Sheridan. I treat first person narration that attempts to convey selfhood as a distinct category. This holds whether the narrative is a framed as epistolary or diaristic, or a direct first person account lacking any framework that indicates addressee or genre.[61] Though epistolary and diary forms have historically been lumped together in this period, some examination has been done of the diary novel form. H. Porter Abbott's *Diary Fiction* begins by examining the relationship between novels of letter and diary, and challenging the explicit distinction made between the two, that "letters require and addressee and a diary does not" (9). Instead, Abbott argues, a diary has an addressee that can be just as present as an epistle, even if it is merely the "self objectified sufficiently to be written for" (10). Whether epistolary fiction or diary fiction, Abbott concludes, "The crucial issue is not the existence or non existence of an addressee but the degree to which the addressee is given an independent life and active textual role in the work" (10). This concept can be extended to encompass all first person narrative that seeks to represent selfhood; to constitute selfhood on the page is a performative act that requires an audience. To reexamine these texts in this light is challenging, because it requires us to resist modern notions of the diary as an almost exclusively private, interior, isolating space.

not obviously linked to seriality. Their initial publications were not serial; they are not, as we saw with Pilkington and Charke, produced with a focus on how serial features are implemented in the creation of textual self. Rather, what I am interested in is how we might see these texts as using similar features to serial genres. All of the texts in this section, and many others in the eighteenth century, to some degree access life writing genres that are serial, therefore claiming the same opportunities for self-construction as their "real" counterparts (diaries, letters, etc.). Yet most are read within traditions that limit those possibilities. These texts, despite being earmarked as texts representing the development of the individual, contain formal features and structures that are puzzling to critics, because they do not fit into the categories and lineages of modern selfhood. Often they are found lacking in aesthetics or structure, and critics have long struggled to reconcile deficiencies of form —they are variously accused of being repetitive, fragmentary, and incomplete when the expectations generic form are applied to them. In actuality, the textual elements most often identified as having an uneasy relationship to the formal conventions of autobiography, novel, and modern selfhood are much more at home in the realm of the serial.

Chapter III: Serial Convention and the Novel: De-Mythologizing *Robinson Crusoe*

There is a high probability that, if you locate a critical work about Western myths of individuality in the eighteenth century or following, somewhere it is going to mention *Robinson Crusoe.* Likewise, it is difficult to talk about Crusoe without the attendant baggage of modern individualism; he becomes the ultimate individualist during his time on the island. Geoffrey Still comments on how the castaway and his island have become the stuff of legend in the dominant ideology of the modern self: "Written in the first person, without most of the artistic trappings of more conventional novels' scene setting, dialogue, and layers of irony and ambiguity, the narrative of Robinson's adventures seems to have been designed as a blueprint for the construction of the individualized, adult self" (61). Part capitalist entrepreneur and part Puritan autobiographer, Crusoe seems to fit perfectly into a paradigm that traces the rise of individual selfhood.

The position of the *Life and Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* as a bearer of modern identity was engendered in no little part by Ian Watt's foundational 1957 *The Rise of the Novel*, the third chapter of which is titled, "*Robinson Crusoe*, Individualism, and the Novel." Watt's definition of "individualism" is useful for thinking about how the narrative of the modern self became dominant in this period:

> [Individualism] posits a whole society mainly governed by
>
> the idea of every individual's intrinsic independence both from other individuals and from that multifarious allegiance to past modes of thought…The existence of such a society…depends on a special type of economic and political organization which allows its members a very wide range of choices in their actions, and on an

ideology primarily based, not on the tradition of the past, but on the autonomy of the individual" (60).[62]

The link between the novel and the autobiography—in particular the kind of formal retroactive life narrative we have been discussing, has been traced back to the eighteenth century, with Crusoe as a major figure.[63] Watt identifies Crusoe as a bastion of individualism, but he also recognizes that "Crusoe's merits are combined with a stolid and inhibited self-sufficiency which is disastrous for both the individual and society" (305). Almost twenty years later John Richetti agrees with Watt that Crusoe is an ideal example of the way in which "the novel as a genre…really only cares for personality" (358). Richetti's claim that "the freedom and defining autonomy of the narrative self is the consciousness" reinforces the emphasis on the conventions of the modern self (359).

A move in more recent criticism of Defoe has begun to engage with the *Surprising Adventures* in wider dialogues in eighteenth century criticism, challenging the assumptions that limit the text to particular discussions of genre, such as novel and spiritual autobiography. Melinda Snow, in her article on Defoe's first-person technique, points out how "studies of Defoe that find precedents for his narrative method and character portrayal in seventeenth-century religious autobiographies cannot shed much light on the narrator's ability to describe external details vividly and convey anecdote economically" (181). Snow instead reads Defoe in a tradition of scientific writing. Michael McKeon challenges the primacy of the spiritual autobiography lineage as well, arguing that "the interplay between 'journal' and 'narrative' is as central to secular travel narrative" (54). But often critics who have begun to question *Crusoe's* place as a (or *the*) foundational English novel of individualism are still doing so by depending on

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[62] Watt is not alone in citing modern capitalism and the spread of Protestantism as widely accepted historical causes for this modern individualism.
[63] Smith and Watson summarize the connections between the novel and autobiography in *Reading Autobiography*.

the dominant narrative of the modern self, but simply finding that the novel does not actually meet the requirements of that narrative. Michael Mascuch finds that "as a modern autobiographical performance, Robinson Crusoe is profoundly compromised" because Crusoe is neither the "originator" nor "owner" of his discourse, and because his narration "lacks the unity of an original plot," both of which are required of public performance of self in the modern sense (33). In his critique of Defoe's novel as a vehicle of selfhood, Mascuch burdens it with the expectations of modernity even more heavily than Watt forty years before him: "The action of survival in the physical environment and the act of autobiographical self-identification in the realm of discourse are complementary capacities, constituting under the sign of "Robinson Crusoe" the authority essential to modern personalities" (31). The connection between the physical and the spiritual is a recurring theme in the novel, often read as either in conflict or complimentary to each other. If we were to turn to a different mode of self-construction, however, that of diary, these distinctive threads, or traces if we were to use Lejuene's terminology, could be examined without the negative cast they take on when the text is expected to perform as a narrative emphasizing attributes of modern selfhood. Mascuch also identifies other deficiencies that can be recast in the light of alternate forms of life-writing:

> Robinson Crusoe is not a story with a precise beginning, middle, and end; instead, it is a chronicle of "strange surprising adventures" defined by the chronology of Crusoe's birth at its beginning, and his "strange delivery" by pirates at its conclusion…Therefore, it displays no intentionality attributable to Crusoe. (32)

Mascuch is not looking merely for intentionality here; he wants a specific kind of intentionality: "Had Crusoe found some meaning of his own in his experience and made its discovery the point of its telling, he would have displayed the moral integrity of a modern author" (32). Descriptors such as "meaning" and "cohesive" are closely tied to the expectations of modern selfhood, and by these standards, Crusoe has perhaps failed, as Mascuch so clearly argues. But de-

mythologizing Crusoe, refusing to take for granted the text's indebtedness to, or attempted

construction of, the tenants of the modern self provides an opportunity for a reading that

recuperates Robinson Crusoe from his status as an iconic individualist and resituates him within

a much more fluid tradition of identity production. Examining the formal features of the text that

access serial narration provides an alternative set of conventions for fashioning identity, one that

is not bound by the critical tenets of modern selfhood.

The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures was published as a single volume in April

1719. A few months later, in October 1719, it was published serially in the Original London

Post. Two subsequent volumes came out—a second part, The Further Adventures of Robinson

Crusoe, in August 1719, and a third part, Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising

Adventures, in August 1720. Defoe must have planned to utilize part publishing from the

beginning: early in the first volume, Crusoe tells us, much like Pilkington, that what we are about

to read is "but a Taste of the Misery [he] was to go thro'," and that the rest will "appear in the

Sequel of this Story" (15).[64] Crusoe's relationship to the reader betrays that he is both conscious

of the necessity of self construction against and among others and conscious of not having

anyone to construct against except the reader. One of the most interesting links between Crusoe's

narrative and that of those we have read earlier is the way it attempts to access communal

evaluation. Like Charke and Pilkington, Crusoe invites the reader to judge him, and the traces of

the narrative all seem to be linked to this overarching purpose, despite the claim in the Preface

that the narrative is meant for "the Instruction of others by this Example" (3). He calls himself a

"repenting Prodigal," and he plagues the reader in early pages with repetitions of the warnings he

received from both his father and his fellow sailors. Numerous individual moments as the text

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[64] This and all subsequent quotations from the text are from The Life and Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Ed. Michael Shinagel, New York: Norton, 1994.

progresses—reports of Crusoe's industry, his repeated attempts to reconcile himself to his exile, his struggle with spiritual matters—call for the reader to find him an adequately revised representation of selfhood and humanity. The narration of these moments allow the reader to evaluate his development of self in the narrative when placed against those reminders that in his early state of selfhood, he did *not* construct himself in the context of his communal participation and productivity. Even the inclusion of the Journal, "tho' in it will be told all these Particulars over again," is itself a request for evaluation, since it supposedly offers an unmediated version of the narrative Crusoe has already provided. The capitalist industry and protestant recuperation that famously mark out Crusoe as the epitome of the modern individual are instead repeated attempts to achieve atonement for his early selfish choices.

Yet because so much of Crusoe's narrative consists of diaristic reporting of daily events and activities, it is nearly impossible to trace the internal self-reflection and progression we would use to judge his (supposedly) revised selfhood. The narrative continually diverts us with exhaustive listing, cataloguing and recording. Listing does facilitate self-accounting, but in a much more momentary and active process than the retrospective viewpoint we would expect from an internal narrative voice dependent on reflection. The text's blending of form challenges the linear processes of revelation in confessional genres, just as its episodic nature refuses us any overarching pattern of interior growth. After spending several pages accounting for everything he was able to retrieve from the ship, Crusoe drafts a table to "distinguish [his] case from worse," stating it "like Debtor and Creditor" (49). Situated in two columns and shifting to present tense, much like the journal, the insertion of the lists and table disrupt the narrative's continuity by means of physical difference on the page, demanding a shift in our approach to the text, which both distances the reader from the story and creates an immediacy not present in

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retrospective narrative. The narrative is interrupted on the page in other places throughout the text as well: a chart noting the seasons on the island, a transcript of a dialogue with Friday, and of course the diary itself, which insists with its serial formatting on a reading practice that acknowledges intermittency and immediacy. Indeed, the text has as much in common with contemporaneous ship's journals as it does with depictions of modernity, and ship's journals were documents meant to reflect a communal rather than individual experience and identity, made up of lists of supplies, weather reports, brief excursions, onshore projects such as forts and reinforcements, and interactions with foreign and exotic peoples and objects.

Theories of community and interaction appear contradictory since Crusoe is famous for his aloneness on the island, but he is in fact constantly interacting with others both physical, such as animals and savages, and metaphysical, such as God and the reader. Crusoe's language during his time on the island constantly reconstructs the kinds of communities that he is used to existing within—from families around the dinner table to country houses and nation states. One could argue that no significant part of the text contains only Crusoe alone on the island. He can't construct himself on an empty island because the language of selfhood on which the modern individual depends is available only when aligned with external contexts—the subject position inherently requires something to be positioned in relation to. His Christianity asserts itself in the context of the cannibals; his domestic virtuosity asserts itself in the context of animals and later "subjects"; his narrative is realized when a reader picks up the book and begins to judge him. In fact, the island itself becomes a physical counterpoint for Crusoe's interiority. The entries themselves recount over and over Crusoe's concern with two states of being, physical and spiritual, that are separate yet linked; often when one fails, so does the other. Although the narrative is often read as self-accounting in the tradition of spiritual autobiography defined by

texts such as Augustine's *Confessions* and Bunyan' *Grace Abounding*, Crusoe's self-accounting

is just as much of the physical as it is of the spiritual, reminding us of seventeenth century

diarists such as Samuel Pepys and John Byrd, whose texts dwell on the physical nature of

identity and how the bodied self interacts with the physical world. The theme of "deliverance"

connects the two; stranded and alone, in Crusoe's text the desire to be delivered is just as much a

physical as a spiritual condition. The two states of being are linked by Crusoe early and often,

beginning with their early disconnect in his narrative, when he "was under no Necessity of

seeking [his] Bread" but still unable to be "very easy and happy in the World" (6). This inability

to reconcile physical and metaphysical states, his father predicted, would bring him to dire

straits, and a little over a page later they do: aboard ship for the first time, he discovers how

codependent his physical and mental well-being are:

> The Ship was no sooner gotten out of the Humber, but the Wind began to blow, and the Seas to rise in a most frightful manner; and as I had necer been at Sea before, I was most inexpressibly sick in Body, and terrif'd in my Mind: I began now seriously to reflect upon what I had done, and how justly I was overtaken by the Judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my Father's House. (7)

The next storm again finds him physically threatened and filled with a "Horror of Mind…that

put me into such a Condition, that I can by no Words describe it" (10). The physical state

compromises completely the spirit. On the island his conversion is tied closely to physical

illness, a trope not uncommon in spiritual autobiography, but that connection continues even

after his moment of struggle. Recalling Lejeune's language, we can identify the physical and the

spiritual state of Crusoe as two major traces that continue intertwined throughout the narrative to

greater or lesser degrees. His acquisitiveness both on and off the island belong to the physical

thread. Crusoe spends a long passage describing his labors toward physical comforts and closes

with his replication of the umbrella, with which he "could walk out in the hottest of the weather

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with greater advantage than I could before in the coolest" (99). Without any bridge, the next passage immediately shifts to from the physical to the mental: "Thus I liv'd mighty comfortably, my Mind being entirely composed by resigning to the Will of God" (99). Later moments in the text bring together the physical and the spiritual without directly accessing religion: when Crusoe escapes from the island, for example, he discovers waiting for him an abundance of wealth and uses it to express benevolence of spirit by bestowing it liberally on old friends and family. Indeed, once Crusoe's physical comfort is no longer threatened, and all of the other external reminders of his early transgressions are gone, his spirituality and much of his interiority disappear; once again we are given lists and summaries that detail what goods he owns and who he interacts with, a shift that, as we have seen, does not sit quite right with readers looking for evidence of his modern individuality. Yet the evidence demonstrates that he has indeed been delivered physically. Tracing Crusoe's intertwined threads of physical and spiritual well-being may not provide a narrative of selfhood that fits the pattern of modern individuality and its attendant interiority, but it does describe the development of a particular selfhood across time. Richard Barney notes the inability of separating private and public, interior and exterior in Crusoe's narrative; in the end the self constituted on Crusoe's island represents less "a unique individual whose private self is the hallmark of his identity," than "the eventual *effacement* of strictly private selfhood in favor of lucidly public and political identity" (252; his emphasis). Rather than effacement, I would argue that the public and political are just as necessary to the self as the private, and are always present is some form; in the case of Crusoe, the externalized identity, rather than the internal one, remains dominant in the text. Many of the "flaws" that Mascuch identifies in the formal features of *Life and Surprising Adventures* actually aid in providing a space for this communal and externalized identity construction.

Robinson Crusoe is already a generically hybrid narrative, since about a fifth of the way into the narrative Crusoe inserts a "faithful" transcription of the diary he kept on the island: "I began to keep my Journal, of which I shall here give you the Copy (tho' in it will be told all these Particulars over again) as long as it lasted, for having no more Ink, I was forc'd to leave it off" (52). He acknowledges that the inclusion of the journal will be repetitive, yet he incorporates it anyway. In an autobiography the retroactive and reflective aspects are important because the author is reaching for, as Mascuch indicates, some kind of final meaning that defines his or her identity in the text. In a journal there is a much greater sense of immediacy, of the moment, which is where Crusoe's emphasis lies. In Crusoe's narrative the journal adds authority as a primary document of the moment, emphasizing record of the situation rather than retroactive reflection about it. If we consider that Crusoe depends on the situational and reactionary narration of traces rather than, or in addition to, reflection to carry the narrative, this serial document contributes to the accuracy and effectiveness of his narrative. In fact, the inclusion of the journal diminishes the function of retrospective reflection to convey experience. McKeon argues that "Robinson's island journal, so far from confirming the events of the framing narrative itself, differs enough in minute detail to complicate the history of both documents," or what he identifies as "the peculiar coexistence of historicity and subjectivity" (402). What I would like to posit is a reversal of the emphasis of importance we usually place in the text: instead of inserting the journal into the narrative, we can read the narrative as a framing mechanism *for the journal*. I would like to push this idea even farther, examining how the conventions of the framing narrative are informed by, and eventually incorporated into, the serial features of the journal, creating a hybrid document that provides Crusoe with an alternative

framework of identity construction not dependent on the conventions and expectations of the modern self.

Crusoe's first person narrative begins with the expectation of retrospective autobiography format, but the narration is already manipulating those conventions. We find out in quick succession about birth, breeding, and parentage, though the usual references to childhood and adolescence are all but absent. The promise at the beginning is of reflexivity, but the journal disrupts that process as well. Crusoe's text does attempt a somewhat linear narrative in terms of simple chronology, but it is constantly interrupted by digression and repetition. The format of beginning, middle and end, as Mascuch points out, is recognizable but not adhered to; Crusoe finds form more flexible and malleable than we tend to think it is in the genre, allowing a narrative that accommodates an identity that is changeable in more than one linear progressive direction.

Crusoe inserts the "journal" as a separate, and therefore distinct, document, but the rest of the text displays undeniable affinity to various journalistic practices. One way in which Crusoe's narrative reflects serial features is its use of repetition, both in the text proper and between the text and the embedded diary. Crusoe's insistence on repeating a sense of "beginning" in his story contributes to a lack of narrative trajectory. There are arguably at least four "beginnings" before we get to the one that the text is most famous for—Crusoe's crash and subsequent stranding on the desert island. The first opens the narrative and introduces us to young Crusoe's desire to "go to Sea," a choice he is subsequently talked out of by his father. He resolves to "settle" into the "Middle State" for which he is destined, but then, suddenly

> being one Day at *Hull*, where I went casually, and without any Purpose of making an Elopement at that time; but I say, being there, and one of my Companions being going by Sea to *London*, in his Father's Ship, and prompting me to go with them, with the common Allurement of Seafaring Men, viz. That it should cost me

nothing for my Passage, I consulted neither Father or Mother anymore, nor so much as sent them Word of it; but leaving them to hear of it as they might, without asking God's Blessing, or my Father's….On the first of September 1651 I went on Board. (7)

This beginning is particularly interesting because he takes pains to indicate that it was not planned, not part of a larger narrative that he meant to enact or tell, but truly a shift, a re-beginning. Consequently he dates it, and lists the parties who should have been made aware— God, Father, Mother, in a similar fashion to listing interested parties at the open of the narrative. This is a lineage of neglect rather than birth, but it functions much in the same way to ground the reader in the parties significant to the opening of this narrative. Included is also the "friend" who led him astray. Not having good luck at sea, Crusoe next points out a beginning that he had opportunity to take: after the ship he is on sinks "had I now had the Sense to have gone back to Hull, and have gone home, I had been happy," but he is instead determined still to be a sailor (12). The momentum of the narrative seems to depend on his ability to start over; at this point he can neither begin again nor go on, and he admits that "in this State of Life [uncertain drifting] however I remained some time, uncertain what Measures to take, and what Course of Life to lead," a condition of mind that leads to a new beginning being chosen for him: the Moors capture his ship and press him into slavery (13). Finally he begins yet again as a plantation owner in Brazil, but still can not bear to continue a single narrative, so that he admits "As I had once done thus in breaking away from my Parents, so I could not be content now, but I must go and leave the happy View I had of being a rich and thriving Man in my new Plantation" (29). This last beginning, one which finds him embarking on a career as a slave trader, leads to another very unhappy one on the island. Each of these shifts makes a clear break with Crusoe's previous circumstances, so that they echo the kind of "trying on" of identity we saw in Pilkington and

Charke's serial narratives, despite the tighter form of Crusoe's text. They also lack any sense of progressive value; Crusoe is continually shifting rather than building on his subject position.

Repeated beginnings that mimic each other in features and make up a larger whole is a familiar convention in a serial genre such as a periodical or a journal. The language that opens and closes individual entries of periodicals like the *Spectator*, for example, is often formulaic. It is worthwhile to look at Crusoe's two most obvious "beginnings" side by side, one from the narrative, the other from the journal:

> I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of York, of a good Family, tho' not of that Country, my Father being a Foreigner of Breman, who settled first at Hull: He got a good Estate by Merchandise, and leaving off his Trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he married my Mother, whose Relations were named Robinson, a very good Family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer, but by the usual Corruption of Words in England, we are now called, nay we call our selves, and write our Name Crusoe. (4)

> September 30, 1659. I poor miserable *Robinson Crusoe*, being shipwreck'd, during a dreadful Storm, in the offing, came on Shore on this dismal unfortunate Island, which I call the *Island of Despair*, all the rest of the Ship's Company being drown'd, and my self almost dead.
> All the rest of that day I spent in afflicting my self at the dismal Circumstances I was brought to, viz. I had neither Food, House, Clothes, Weapon, or Place to Fly to. (52)

Despite introducing two drastically different situations, these passages are remarkably similar in that they fulfill the almost universal expectations of narrative *opening* in life writing: Both passages concern themselves with dating and naming. Both have that beginning quality we expect in a narrative, though one is in the middle of the text. Both are immediately concerned with material situation, and with the people most significant to Crusoe in the moment that they mark, the first being his parents, the second his dead shipmates. While they describe completely different situations, the repetitiveness of Crusoe's narrative strategies is apparent. The use of

serial features produces an effect of circularity rather than privileging the forward momentum of linear narrative.

Crusoe's methods of marking time is relational; instead of depending on linearity to mark the passage of time in the narrative, he traces patterns, including associative linking of events, serial markings of time such as dating, and framing of smaller parts of text in the larger whole. His sense of time in relation to life events is far from regular in either pacing or progression. Although he used his ink "as long as it lasted" to "minute down the Days of the Month on which any remarkable Thing happen'd," the significant pattern he identifies in his narrative is not linear but associative, a "Concurrence of days"

> The same Day that I broke away from my father and friends…the same day afterwards I was taken by the *Sallee* Man of War, and made a slave… The same Day of the of the Year that I escaped out of the wreck of that Ship in Yarmouth Roads, that same Day-Year afterwards I made my escape from Sallee in the boat…The same Day of the Year I was born on (viz.) the 30th of September, that same Day, I had my Life so miraculously saved 26 Year after, when I was cast on Shore in this Island, so that my wicked Life, and my solitary Life begun both on a Day. (97)

Lejeune refers to trace as a "series of dated entries," but those entries do not have to imply linearity (179). Like the repeated beginnings noted above, this emphasis on "same" days and years bespeaks a circularity and repetitiveness that might be better defined by diaristic modes such as trace patterns rather than the linear progress of a retrospectively shaped narrative, yet this practice of linking still implies self-reflection on the part of the subject, though a different kind of self-reflection, one that emphasizes cycles rather than progression, and providence rather than individual action.

This circularity and repetition carries into language and form. Since the narrative drive is largely episodic and situational, many passages start with phrases like "My next." This list-like quality is strongly reminiscent of diaristic modes, and emphasizes movement from moment to

moment rather than in an overarching and preconceived plan; its effect is collective rather than accumulative. Culley explains: "Because diaries are periodic in creation and structure, incremental repetition is an important aspect of the structure…and the dynamic of reading the periodic life-record involves attending to what is repeated" (19). Crusoe's "and then" narrative reads very much like a diary because it replicates the dated entry process and implies a repetition of mini-beginnings (like a new day/date with each entry). Indeed, there is little accumulative value in Crusoe's relation—the multiples "entries" do not generally seem to be building on each other or leading to a larger or more significant value at some future end point, the way we expect a bildungsroman to do, for example, which as Mascuch points out so neatly, is where we encounters problems in terms of our expectations of Crusoe's narrative.[65]

As many critics have pointed out, the text contains similarities to spiritual autobiography's familiar conventions of trial, failure, repentance, and redemption, but instead of completing the cycle the narrative simply restarts, as we saw in the above discussion of multiple beginnings. Crusoe's religion throughout the text is subject to the same rebooting he applies to the rest of his experience: he variously and repeatedly considers himself in the context of Protestantism, Catholicism, Heathenism, and then as the proctor of religious tolerance on the island at the end of the text. Indeed, there are two beginnings right near the end of the first text. The first comes when Crusoe marries and is contained in a single paragraph:

> In the mean time, I in Part settled my self here; for first of all I marry'd, and that not either to my Disadvantage or Dissatisfaction, and had three Children, two Sons and one Daughter: But my Wife dying, and my Nephew coming Home with good Success from a Voyage to *Spain*, my inclination to go Abroad, and His

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[65] Another way to think about Crusoe's organization, offered by Barney, is its "turbulent narrative flow—the sudden occurrence of storms, shipwrecks, or other threatening dangers" (225). Indeed, this might be followed successfully as an alternate trace in Crusoe's narration of himself, and is linked inextricably with those traces that concern themselves with his physical and spiritual well-being. Such a pattern also emphasizes the kind of start and stop repetitive narrative that I am examining here.

Importunity prevailed and engag'd me to go in his Ship, as a private Trader to the *East Indies*: This was in the Year 1694. (219)

Crusoe lives in one short paragraph the life his father advises at the beginning of the text: to "stay and settle at Home" and be content with his middle class inheritance. No introspection accompanies it, no reflection on this return to a life that caused him such conflict early in the narrative. The language he chooses, "I *in Part* settled my self here," itself reflects the episodic way in which he approaches what should have been, according to social expectations, the entirety of his experience. Instead, he already has one foot out the door on the way to his next beginning.

Despite its fragmentariness, there are brief moments in the narrative that invoke for the reader a sense of progression that appear to move toward a larger cohesion, only to resist that finality that a unified self would bring to the text. Once Crusoe is shipwrecked on the island (but before the journal is introduced), the text begins to exhibit something like the narrative progression we expect. It moves forward, one episode building on the other, from his first despair and terror, to his determination to plunder the ship for necessaries, which gives him more confidence, to his establishment of a safe space within the cave.[66] Then, suddenly, Crusoe once again digresses, beginning yet again with the insertion of the journal. If the first part of the narrative prepares us for the journal by borrowing serial features, however, it is just as necessary as framing reference for the document itself. Though a significant portion of the journal is repetitive, it requires more careful interpretation and participation from the reader because many of the entries are condensed and abbreviated, almost encoded, so that to fully understand this inserted text the reader must be in constant negotiation with the prefacing portion. This gives

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[66] This is perhaps at least in part why the portions of the text that narrate the shipwreck and stay on the island are the most often produced; these parts of the narrative reinforce our readings of modern self by excluding that which does not support it.

readers the impression of bearing witness to events they already know occurred; the diary functions as a primary document much in the same way as Pilkington's insertion of letters in the *Memoirs.* For example, in the diary the report of what he retrieves from the ship is comprised in one sentence: From the 1st of October, to the 24th. All these Days entirely spent in many several Voyages to get all I could out of the Ship, which I brought on Shore, every Tide of Flood, upon Rafts" (52). The brevity of the diary keeps it linked to the narrative, obliging readers to continuously look backward for the details during this second narration, so that even the reading process is forced in to a digressive pattern as readers negotiate the two texts.

Since the distinction between journal and the framing narrative breaks down quickly, that negotiation becomes more difficult as the journal progresses and the two genres bleed into each other so that we are eventually unsure what is immediate and what is retrospective. The journal commences with clear demarcation of days and entries, listing first the month and day, followed by a period, and then beginning the entry. Crusoe's language indicates his intention of moving between the two parts; he interrupts the transcription of the journal to comment or reflect on its contents, cuing in the narrative when he does so: "But leaving this Part, I return to my Journal." In fact, Crusoe never indicated that we had left the journal. Because both are written in past tense, the only obvious clue that we have moved from journal back to narrative comes two pages after he begins the entry for June 27: "The growing up of corn, as hinted in my journal…" (66). This digression is Crusoe's first significant spiritual meditation, and it could be argued that this kind of deep introspection is more likely to take place in the frame narrative rather than the journal. Despite this expectation, Crusoe continues to at least attempt to narrate his spiritual awakening in the journal context; the next day, June 28, contains the transcript of a dialogue with his inner self; July 2, 3, 4 continue the theme of religious questioning. On the fourth he leaves

the journal again without indicating where, only cuing us to his return. There is no distinction in language, no shifting in patterns with the exception of the dating. The clear demarcation of entry by day becomes abruptly unclear: we are given the entry for the June 28 as if it is a copy of the journal, a pattern following that established by most of the dates before it: "June 28. Having been somewhat refresh'd with the sleep I had had..." (67). But after several pages, the next entry begins differently, breaking the established pattern of the date stamp: The 30th was my well Day of Course, and I went abroad with my gun…"(70). Following this, he returns to the previous dating pattern for several days, July 2-4. On the fourth he begins to summarize lumps of time— "From the 4th of July to the 14th, I was chiefly employed in walking about"—but it is unclear if this summary is verbatim from the journal or if he is summarizing the journal itself. And then he leaves off dating entirely, becoming increasingly vague: "The next Day, being the 19th;" "About the Beginning of August" (74-5).

The effect of this blurring leaves the reader with an uncertain cense of progression. Crusoe uses the dating mechanism as one organizational feature, but complicates it with other traces that do not depend on dates: the narration of his state of physical and spiritual well-being and the overlay of the retrospective narrative that began the text. Eventually the journal and narrative are irrevocably tangled, and Crusoe's language does not indicate where one ends and the other begins. The journal just stops; he never indicates its conclusion. We know eventually his ink ran out, but there is no clear indication of when this happened: we are merely informed that his ink "had been gone some time" later in the narrative. As such, the specter of the journal haunts the remainder of the text; we are never sure from what distance we are reading; a condition complicated by the narrative's continuous affinity with serial features such as the episodic "and then" relation that continues to act as an overarching organizational mechanism. In

the largest circular iteration of the text, once Crusoe escapes from the island, he returns to his earlier pattern of narration dependent on beginnings and endings marked by physical movement, from the Brazils to England and even back to the island. His narrative ends in essentially the same place it began, promising "10 Years more" of beginnings and endings in the next installment (220).

The mythology of the individual depends on various categories: Nationalism, capitalism, Protestantism, industrialism, individualism, and self-promotion: are all implicated in Western definitions of the modern self. Certainly it can be argued that Crusoe does indeed engage with these discourses; this discussion, however, indicates that he does so on terms that are less rigid than we often allow. Certainly, as I have argued, he begins the text looking for absolution from the reader, but that absolution finally seems not to access his accumulation of character so much as his accumulation of experiences and their narration. His generic idiosyncrasies, read in a context of seriality, become reflections of self that resists notions of linearity and progression, belying an emphasis on selfhood as only successfully expressed through a sense of completion or finality grounded in some preconceived point of meaning. Rather than pursuing a singular complete and unified self with his narrative, he takes up and exploits multiple subject positions in the convenience of the moment. Brought together, the threads of those subject positions do create a continuous narrative, if not a unified self.

Chapter IV: Fits and Starts: Ben Franklin's Serially Autobiographical Self

A historical and cultural artifact that readers across the last two centuries have accepted as a model for the way we tell, and live, the story of our lives, Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* is not perhaps not an obvious text to follow Robinson Crusoe's *Adventures,* or to find in a discussion of texts that seeks to challenge and expand the conventions of life writing. It *is* an Autobiography, we might argue; it says so in the title. Yet to call it a performance of self using the narrative and aesthetic conventions of autobiography outlined by Mascuch is problematic right out of the gate.[67] This chapter positions the *Autobiography* in the context of the seriality that we have been discussing, putting aside the fact that the text was of course not technically published serially, though parts of it have been published alone and/or edited together.[68] The text as a whole has only a modest unity in the action of the plot, and it is generally broken by publishers into parts that coincide with the dates of composition rather than linear coherence in the life being told.[69] In fact, Franklin's mode of production invokes seriality since the text was written at different times and then pieced together. The four parts are produced over the course of eighteen years, where Franklin had a free week here and there, and as many critics have pointed out, they are not symmetrical or balanced as we expect in formal autobiography, which has a generally accepted purpose of being written late in life as a kind of

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[67] See Chapter 3.

[68] The first American Edition was published in 1818, but this included onl the first "part" addressed to his son. The full text was not published until 1868.

[69] Composition information comes from J.A. Leo Lemay and P.M. Zall's Norton Edition. They break down the writing of the distinctive parts as follows: "Part One (87 ms. Pages) was written between Tuesday, July 30, and Tuesday, August 13, 1771….Sometime in 1784, during his excessively busy years in France, he spent a few days writing the twelve pages that comprise Part Two. Part Three (119 ms. Pages) was begun in August, 1788, while Franklin was at home in Philadelphia, age 82…Part Four (7 ms. Pages) was written sometime after Nover 13, 1789, and before Franklin's death on April 17, 1790" (xiv).

retrospective self-analyzing exercise. Though in places the *Autobiography* undeniably fulfills this requirement of retrospective musing, the purposes identifiable in Franklin's text are much more dynamic and complex both within and between parts, and the changing form as well as the unstable relationship between narrator, narrated selves, and various audiences can tell us much about textual selfhood beyond or outside the tenets of the modern self that were already coalescing by the time Franklin began writing. The various parts of the text, both individually and as a whole, engage with the features and conventions of serial life narrative. Franklin's emphasis on method and structure mimics that of serial structure with its privileging of process rather than product in the text, which is in turn related to serial genres of autobiography rather than straightforward retrospective autobiography, the latter carrying the finalizing expectations of self as "product," while the former is, as Lejeune points out, an "act" of self (181). We will discover that Franklin's *Autobiography* demonstrates the ways in which serial features foster productive relationships between an individual and the communities he participates in the endeavor of producing a textual selfhood that is patchworked and hybrid rather than singular and unified. Mascuch criticizes Crusoe's text for its lack of a final gesture toward "meaning" and "discovery"—essentially claiming Crusoe neglects to sum up his life. Franklin's text, on the other hand, abounds in summing up; we are given an anecdote, a moral, a process, an edict of identity on what seems like every other page. In fact, the value of self created in the Autobiography is not at all in some momentous endpoint, but in the gathering together of as many like and unlike experiences from as many sources and references as possible. Franklin's text and its modes of production challenge the very definition of progressive autobiography.

Placing diary in the context of community, and Franklin in the context of diary, is not as unlikely as we might think. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, diaries and journals, and

even letters, were not necessarily the "private" documents we think of today even when they represented an individual. They were often passed around and written with one or more particular readers in mind. James Boswell sent his *London Journal* in installments to William Temple, who is an implied reader of the text, as well as sharing at least portions of it among Samuel Johnson and his circle. This image is a stark contrast to the one Abbott identifies as the historically iconic representation of the diarist, the isolated room (15). Granted, this image is ingrained in the way we think about the self represented by the genre of diary, and it was reinforced in gendered terms by Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" in the nineteenth century. But this image has all but obscured the one Boswell represents, which has just as much historical precedent. In addition, the eighteenth century saw the printing of previously unpublished genres such as journals and letters becoming more and more common, blurring the lines between public and private textual spaces. This question of public and private is often predicated on intention and assumes the diary is dominated by the kind of evacuation and self-reflection that dictate our modern concept of the diary; this view is strongly influenced by a tradition of spiritual autobiography, the puritan diary.[70] Yet this is only one recognizable purpose for diary keeping. Seventeenth century diarists were much more concerned with evaluation than evacuation, and that evaluation generally involved another, whether God, or community. In this sense, practice of journal sharing allows our focus in the diary to shift from self-scrutiny and self-accounting as exclusively interior to these practices in the context of the larger community.[71] Some critics see a clear distinction in these types of journal keeping; for example, Lynn Bloom separates diaries into two categories: "truly private diaries" and "private diaries as public

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[70] See Abbott, H. Porter. *Diary Fiction: Writing as Action*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984.
[71] I am not arguing that we have misread the diary for all these years, and of course I acknowledge that it is a vehicle for self-reflection and self-evaluation. I am simply trying to see if we have privileged individuality by emphasizing isolation in these genres.

documents." The categories she examines in this process are helpful in thinking about the conventions and aspects of diaries and journals and how those conventions might be usefully explored in the context of other "public" documents that offer means of constructing/performing self. She does a particularly helpful analysis of the audience related features of the diary, and her argument largely uses the presence or absence of those particular features to gauge how "public" the diary was meant to be. I would argue, however, that even the most "private" diary engages with the author's public self, and so could be read as a document of public and collaborative self-construction. Pepys' report of his public movements and interactions, for example, were not meant to be read by anyone but him, but they provide a way for us to understand how self-construction is a communal function.

Early diary and journals were often not only individual but meant to represent groups or communities. Franklin writes his *Autobiography* in a rich history of journals and other documents in the early American colonies that served as a serial history of the community: William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1630-1650) and John Winthrop's *Journal* (1630-1649), published as *The History of New England* were individually authored but serially produced texts that featured collective and individual stories of the members of a community. Cotton Mather's Magnalia *Christi Americana*, published in London in1702, includes in a serial and hybrid form descriptions of the founding of New England, lives of governors, lives of famous divines, a history of Harvard College, and an impressive record of "illustrious or wonderous" events witnessed in New England. It is essentially the serialized history of a fledgling society, and it reads very much like the diary of a new community. Almanacs, a genre Franklin himself adopted, also served as a diaristic space of recording in both England and the colonies, everything from poems and chronological tables to records of natural events, deaths,

attacks, and banishments.[72] Ship's logs and seafaring journals are another example of a space in which the self represented is predominantly a communal rather than an individual one. In Cook's *Journals*, for example, the self narrated by the famous Captain is a complex and dynamic entity that depends on interactions and exchanges with both the ship's crew and the peoples indigenous to the places he visits, as well as the multiple readerships that include his superiors and the general public.

A major goal of the *Autobiography*, as stated by Franklin himself, is to provide an example to readers of how to live—essentially, how to be a "self." Such a goal itself bespeaks Franklin's investment in identity as an essentially social and communal construct rather than one seated in the modern elements of interiority, uniqueness, and separation. In an attempt to distance Franklin from the idea of modern autobiography, Arch redubs Franklin's narrative the "*History of My Life,* rather than *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*" in order to "call attention to the unmodern or not-modern aspects" of the narrative (9-10). As he points out, Franklin himself refers to the text as "the Account of my Life,' 'this History,' and 'this Relation'" (10). The very idea of self Franklin projects is collective, according to Arch: "These 'self-biographies' were written by individual authors about themselves, but the self they wrote about was always, in some fashion, depersonalized, unselfed. In self-biography, the self is imagined as a type or a kind or a representative example, not as a unique and original entity," which is a key component of modern selfhood, generally produced through the reflection of a progressive autobiography (xi). Much like the sentimental projection of interiority, "knowing one's own heart," the reflective, narrating version of the autobiographical "I" has access to and can identity the self through memory and past experience. What Arch is trying to get at here is the fact that Franklin's reflective "I," rather than being turned inward, is most productive through

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[72] Almanacs also access periodical convention.

dynamic interaction with the communities around him. While calling Franklin "unselfed" is rather extreme, the concept of Franklin as a representative self is an interesting one; it implies a submersion in the public, in the community, that could benefit from further examination.

Since Franklin's *Autobiography* is written in distinct parts across time, he (re)approaches the text from a perspective that is distanced, even displaced, from the previous narrative. It is common practice for diarists to "reread" before beginning the next entry, which may or may not continue the contents of earlier installments; Franklin does much the same with the "parts" of his narrative.[73] This part production creates a document in which the audience, goals and style shift more or less in each part; what holds the parts together is more subtle than just stylistic features and chronological movement. It is instead repetition of theme in the sections, much like the traces of a diary. Franklin's mode of production references other practices of seriality as well; he never spent very long producing original text, and often did so entirely from memory, the way one would sit down and write an account of one's day. Critics also note that the tenor of each part is dictated by where he was and how he felt while he was writing it—a sense of the moment similar to a diary. For example, when he wrote the first part in 1771, he was rusticating in England with friends, and therefore on good terms with the country, while subsequent parts were written in the face of increasing unrest in the American colonies in regards to their relationship with Britain (Sayre 17). As we saw with both Pilkington and Charke, serial writing is in tone and content much more reflective of the immediate moment, the needs and interactions of the self currently narrating the text. Rather than narrating a unified subject, Franklin identifies in each section a specific audience for whom he is writing and shifts his subject position accordingly. In fact, as the narrative progresses, outward reference becomes increasingly integral to Franklin's representation of selfhood in the text; that is, rather than becoming more interior and self-

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[73] See Lejeune, Culley on rereading diary entries.

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reflexive as the text proceeds, Franklin actually exteriorizes his selfhood, depending on the target

audience. The first part of the *Autobiography*, for example, is addressed by Franklin to his son,

allowing him the focused audience and intimate tone engendered by the epistolary genre. The

first paragraph is concerned with the justification of writing one's own life, and Franklin touches

on most of the major reasons offered throughout the history of life-writing, from being a model

for others to the joys of recollection and even an admission of vanity. The very first line,

however, offers a reading that allows some space to think about the text outside the confines of

retrospective autobiography:

> I have ever had a Pleasure in obtaining any little Anecdotes of my
> Ancestors…Now imagining it may be equally agreeable to you to know the
> Circumstances of my Life, many of which you are yet unacquainted with; and
> expecting a Week's uninterrupted Leisure in my present Country Retirement, I sit
> down to write them for you. (1)[74]

Several language choices in this opening merit attention. First, Franklin chooses to identify the

narrative as anecdotal, indicating that the main thrust of the narrative is serial and episodic rather

than progressive. This early text is full of serial-like multiple beginnings reminiscent of Crusoe's

early narrative: when he lands in Philadelphia, when he voyages to London, and when he gives

up printing for "mercantile business," as he tells the reader, "as I thought, for ever" (40). There

are also distinctive endings in the this first part, movements from one phase in Franklin's life to

the next, which, coupled together with their respective beginnings could be read very much like

diary entries, or periodical installments. "Thus I spent about 18 Months in London" ends the last

paragraph of what we might think of as the last London entry (40). "We sail'd from Gravesend

on the 23$^{\text{d}}$ of July 1726," begins the next paragraph, starting the next entry. Not all of these

entries begin and end by marking a significant voyage as these do, but like Crusoe, much of

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[74]This and all subsequent quotations from the text are from Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography, Ed. J.A. Lemay
and P.M. Zall. N.Y.: Norton, 1986.

Franklin's ordering is marked by movement and association, whether great or small. A sense the serial's immediacy and momentariness also emerge when he notes that he writes in a "week's uninterrupted leisure," as if he is merely filling time. This is not an exploration of selfhood driven by Protestant self-examination, but the history of a social self, written in the context of family, or more broadly, the society in which it is constructed.[75]

At the end of part one Franklin writes, clearly retrospectively, a "memo" that attempts to explain his shift from part one to part two:

> Thus far was written with the Intention express'd in the Beginning and therefore contains several little family Anecdotes of no Importance to others. What follows was written many Years after in compliance with the Advice contained in these Letters, and accordingly intended for the Public. The Affairs of the Revolution occasion'd the Interruption. (57)

And in fact, a note from Franklin at the time indicates that his purpose has shifted significantly. When he stopped writing in 1771, he noted that his next section would be "my manner of acting to engage People in this and future Undertakings [of public works such as the subscription library he was describing when he left off]" (57 note). This is reflective of diary writing, where the writer can leave either for a short or for an extended period of time, return, and choose not pick up the thread of the narrative directly where it was left off. In Franklin's case, the trace remains, but the audience and purpose have shifted significantly from a small, close community comprised of family to a much larger national context.

The letters that begin Part Two are a framing mechanism more common than not in the eighteenth century, though they would usually be found at the beginning of the text rather than in the middle, another gesture toward the serial quality of the text. Also significant is the fact that Franklin not only frames this second part with letters from other individuals, but even identifies them as an impetus for writing the document, a textual manifestation of the interactive quality of

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[75] Journals and diaries often functioned as documents of family history

his narration that we have seen in texts of consciously serial production. The third part, like the second, opens not with an immediate continuation of narrative, but with a voice from outside the narrative. Unlike the letters, however, which were penned by associates of Franklin who had been granted a reading of Part One in manuscript, the textual insertion that opens the third part is Franklin's own text, "Observations on my Reading," dated May 9, 1731. The insertion of this document picks up the traces dropped in the second part, specifically publishing and public works. Also included in this third part is the transcript of his *advertisement* for wagons and horses for use in the *French and Indian War.* As the third part continues, the listing and language become reminiscent of the sort found in ship and military logs: a single voice representing a record of a community with a common goal and enforced proximity rather than that of an individual. The self projected by Franklin is absorbed into the militaristic community around him:

> It was the beginning of January when we set out upon this business of building Forts. I sent one Detachment towards the Minisinks, with Instructions to erect one [fort] for the Security of that upper Part of the Country; and another to the lower Part, with similar Instructions. And I concluded to go myself with the rest of my Force to Gnadenhut, where a Fort was thought more immediately necessary. (124)

Having moved very far from a direct address to his son, the "I" here is entirely external, submerged in the community of soldiers Franklin commands. A quick glimpse at the beginnings of the next several paragraphs bears out this pattern: "The next Day being fair, we continu'd our March and arriv'd at the desolated Gnadenhut" (125). And the next: "This gave me occasion to observe, that when Men are employ'd they are best contented" (126). Following this are paragraphs describing the fort, the chaplain, and "the Practices of the Moravians" and how they compared to Franklin and his reader's own understanding of how the world works (127). The glimpses we get of Franklin himself, as the subject of the narrative, come mostly from his

interaction with this community, as when the "Officers of [his] Regiment took it into their heads that it would be proper for them to escort [him] out of town," an honor not paid to officials much higher than Franklin (129). This similarity in both content and form of this section to travel and sea journals such as those of Captain Cook, or even Crusoe's fictional accounts, is striking, whether in the episodic like reporting of daily movement, the exhaustive listing of supplies, or the anthropologic interest in the "practices" of other peoples.

The formatting of the text as hybrid could in fact be considered a trace that carries though the Autobiography. Long before these late sections Franklin's narrative, much like Crusoe's, depends significantly on the formal feature of listing, a practice that associates much more closely to serial forms of life writing than others.[76] These lists show up in the text early and often, sometimes in paragraph form, such as the report of Franklin's early reading, and later in columns and rows and tables and numbering, formatting that interrupts the familiar flow of narrative prose. The outline or "plan" for the text that Franklin composed between the writing of the first and second parts is just one long paragraph of random minutia. Sayre points out that it is "absolutely shapeless, is in fact "not an outline at all; it is a mere list" (15). Not even a list so much as what we might today consider a free-write, it consists of roughly chronological thoughts that Franklin intends to develop into a narrative. The short thoughts—or perhaps we might think of them as entries—are separated by punctuation and vary in length and specificity. Toward the middle we find

> Propose and establish a Philosophical Society. War. Electricity. My first knowledge of it. Partnership with D Hall &c. Dispute in Assembly upon Defence. Projct for it. Plain Truth. Its success. 10.000 Men raised and Disciplined. Lotteries. Battery Built. New Castle. My Influence in the Council. Colours, Devices, and Motto's.—Ladies. Military Watch. Quakers. (171)

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[76] Indeed, some more abbreviated diaries are little but lists—lists of events, daily tasks, births and deaths, etc.

Some of these are clear: "propose and establish a Philosophical Society" needs little explanation. Others are more cryptic: does "Ladies" and "Quakers" connect to the previous reference to Franklin's influence, or to "Devices, and Motto's," or are they vaguer, more self-contained entries. Some of this can be deduced from the narrative, of course, but much is left unexplained. Other than the loose chronology, the list has, as Sayre points out, no indications that allow the writer "to weight the events, to frame and compare them, or to design chapters" (15). The personal mingles with the professional, the factual ("my Landlady") with the subjective ("her character"). He notes to give the "character" of his future wife in much the same way as that of his landlady, with no indication of differing significance between the two. Perhaps most striking, however, is the externality of the list. Its driving force is interaction with the various communities of which he finds himself a part. There are very few entries in the list that gesture towards interiority, toward an attempt at externalizing Franklin's thoughts and feelings.

Sayre accounts for the outline, and by extension the *Autobiography's*, lack of design by asserting that the "writer of the outline had no clear picture of himself," that Franklin lacked a "fixed and permanent notion of the story he wished to tell and of the character he wished to present" (15). Considering the narrative from the viewpoint of serial conventions, however, allows us to bypass the assumption that a self must be "fixed and permanent" in order to be presented to the public. Instead, Franklin's design can be traced by following the subject positions he takes up in various threads of the narrative. One of the most famous is certainly Franklin's accounting of his "errata," which begins in part one, and his attempts to achieve moral virtue, which dominates much of part two. This struggle for self-improvement is not itself that foreign to narrations of modern selfhood, but Franklin's depiction of it in the text certainly is. Even in the second part, when he attempts to externalize morality, it is a universal morality that

he aims at, not an individual one. This short second section departs strikingly from patterns of prose narrative, including a lengthy list of numbered virtues, several charts and graphs depicting Franklin's attempts at meeting those virtues, and excerpts of prayers and mottos from literature. The identity narrating the text depends on generalized models just as much as, or perhaps even more than, personal reflection. The effect is one that emphasizes process over product: "I made a little book;" "I determined to give a Week's strict Attention to each of the Virtues;" "I enter'd upon the Execution of this Plan for Self-examination, and continu'd it with occasional Intermissions for some time" (70-1). The text is itself part of the process, rather than a retrospective reporting of the self produced at the end:

> To avoid the trouble of renewing now and then my little Book, which by scraping out the marks on the Paper of old Faults to make room for news Ones in a new Course, became full of Holes: I transferr'd my Tables and Precepts to the Ivory Leaves of a Memorandum Book, on which the Lines were drawn with red Ink…and on those Lines I mark'd my Faults with a black Lead Pencil, which Marks I could easily wipe out with a wet Sponge. (71)

This constant restarting bespeaks a serial approach to identity, in which Franklin follows faults much like traces, starting and stopping by wiping away old traces and following new ones. No sense of finality stems from this process, since he reports no completion in relation to the project of tracing his faults, and in fact "omitted them entirely" after several years, though he emphasizes its continued presence in his life: "I always carried my little Book with me." This image of an unfinished self is striking, and in a serial context, rather than a defect of form, it becomes a subject position Franklin retains but chooses not to foreground in the consecutive parts of the text.

Externalized and framed in the revisionist possibilities of the trace, this unfinished self is able to access others' accounting of him. When a Quaker friend tells him he is proud, he uses the opinion of another to alter public perception and ends up perhaps altering more than the external:

My list of Virtues contain'd at first but twelve; But a Quaker Friend having kindly inform'd me that I was generally thought proud; that my Pride show'd itself frequently in Conversation; that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any Point, but was overbearing and rather insolent; of which he convinc'd me by mentioning several Instances. (75)

Franklin's Quaker friend is participating quite literally in the process of self-construction here, causing Franklin to revise his previous text. In identifying alternative ways to chart Franklin's narrative, one of the most obvious is by those he interacts with in the text. Rather than reflection of himself as an individual, Franklin uses reflection of his relationships and interactions with others to drive the narrative. From the printers he worked for to his companions at any given time to those he came into contact with even briefly, name after name fills the text and drives home the importance of the community to self-construction. This moment with the Quaker seems exceptional, though, because we see the actual effect of interaction on the text.

Franklin's subject position is most fully externalized in his emphasis on interaction and public cooperation. His emphasis on public projects and public works has been well documented.[77] The Junto Club, for the "mutual Improvement" of its members, the public lending library, the Philosophical Society—this emphasis on collective identification is in constant tension with the primacy of individuality. Franklin accesses this alternative process of identity construction early in the text, when as a young man he met with his "chief Acquaintances at this time…Charles Osbourne, Joseph Watson, and James Ralph" to "read to one another and confer on what [they] read" (29-30). Franklin encountered this external model of dialogue and exchange

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[77] Franklin's emphasis on public projects has been read in a multitude of different ways, but critics generally agree that it is an integral part of his text. For examples, see Arch, Stephen Carl. *After Franklin: The Emergence of Autobiography in Post-Revolutionary America 1780-1830*. Hanover: Universtiy Press of New England, 2001; Sayre, Robert F. *The Examined Self: Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, Henry James.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1964; Still, Geoffrey. "Myths of Modern Individualism: Defoe, Franklin, and Whitman." *Approaches to Teaching Defoe's Robinson Crusoe.* Eds. Maximillian E. Novak and Carl Fisher. New York: MLA, 2005; and Weinberger, Jerry. *Benjamin Franklin Unmasked: On the Unity of his Moral, Religious, and Political Thought.* Lawrence, Kansas, University of Kansas Press, 2005.

during his first trip to London, where he "took part in the socially and intellectually vibrant life of London's coffeehouses and taverns" (Houston 13). At times, he actively subsumes his individuality in a collective persona:

> The Objections, and Reluctances I met with in Soliciting the Subscriptions, made me soon feel the Impropriety of presenting oneself as the Proposer of any useful Project that might be suppos'd to raise one's Reputation in the smallest degree above that of one's Neighbors, when one has need of their Assistance to accomplish that Project. I therefore put myself as much as I could out of sight, and stated it as a Scheme of a *Number of Friends*, who had requested me to go about and propose it. (64)

Arch argues that Franklin's text "posits a self that is imitative and emulative, but not invented" and that identity "is a found thing, discovered in previous models." (47). This creation of a pseudo-collaborative voice is not all that unusual particularly in serialized periodical literature such as the *Spectator.* Indeed, Franklin refers to the Spectator early in the narrative as one of his stylistic models: "About this time I met with an odd Volume of the Spectator. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, red it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the Writing excellent, and wish'd if possible to imitate it" (11). Franklin's early publications in newspapers (such as that of Silence Dogood) are often cited for their influence from the *Spectator*. Perhaps the collaborative posturing of the text influenced him as well. His willingness to abdicate individuality underscores the importance in the text of creating a self that emphasizes the contexts of social and communal interaction rather than interiority and unique individuality.

In fact, Franklin's text shares more than a passing affinity with the periodical. Not only did he produce his own periodical literature, but Houston comments that Franklin "delighted in the construction of dramatic personae," so much so that readers have been attempting for years to pin him down:

> Scholars have found it difficult to agree on Franklin's identity. In scores of monographs he has been variously cast as Puritan, Deist, and atheist; as

Newtonian empiricist and Enlightenment rationalist; as democratic populist and liberal individualist; as petit bourgeois and protocapitalist; as principled pragmatist and opportunistic scoundrel" (2).

All of these attempts to get to the essential Franklin are revealing: they implicate once again our desire for a life narrative that we can "sum up" in some definitive manner. Perhaps the key to understanding the *Autobiography* is reconsidering the stress we put on interiority and individuality when we think about the modern self; Franklin, despite being a lasting model for American individualism, at least in a mythological sense, is actually much less interested in conveying the interior constructions we have come to associate with individuality and selfhood. Instead, Franklin is much more concerned with creating a self against and among others: his family, his competitors, his colleagues and friends—to put it simply, Franklin is much more concerned with living in the society around him than in his own mind. He was in fact a careful crafter of both text and self who knew all too well that his "character" was a construction of public as well as private concern:

> In order to secure my Credit and Character as a Tradesman, I took care not only to be in *Reality* Industrious and frugal, but to avoid all *Appearances* on the Contrary. I dressed plainly; I was seen at no Places of idle Diversion; I never went out a-fishing or shooting; a Book, indeed, sometimes debauch'd me from my Work; but that was seldom, snug, and gave no Scandal: and to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the Paper I purchas'd at the Stores, thro' the Streets on a Wheelbarrow. Thus being esteem'd a thriving, industrious young Man… (54)

Indeed, this does read much like one of Addison and Steele's *Spectator* personas. Or one of Charke's. Notable here is that the self Franklin wishes to create in the text, both narrated and narrating, is highly dependent on this notion of him as a "thriving, industrious young Man" inwardly and outwardly; the persona being represented in this anecdote is not only internal or external, but both. And in fact, it seems that the communal identity can take the forefront, since reading, an activity identified as "snug" and without scandal, presumably because one can do it

in the privacy of one's home, is deemed to have less weight than those activities that participate

in public life.

Franklin's text is titled as an autobiography, though when discussing it he often called it

his memoirs (Sayre 4). Much critical discussion has centered on the generic labeling of the text,

particularly since it is often drafted into service as one of the first "American" autobiographies.[78]

Attempting pin it down in a generic sense, though, limits the possibilities in the Franklin that the

text conveys. Sayre rather eloquently points out that Franklin himself was a textual creature by

nature:

> The fact that he conducted such a large amount of his business by writing—letters, reports, scientific papers, pamphlets, proposals, propaganda pieces—is interesting in this respect because the printed page was obviously the medium through which he learned many of the gestures and postures of his multiple lives. (23)

"Multiple lives" represented by multiple texts, and it is not until we allow that the *Autobiography*

itself is a hybrid text, that we are able to begin to understand how Franklin's self is so

successfully projected through text that it has become an iconic representation not only of

Americanness, but of humanness. In addition to being broken into four very uneven and

fragmented parts, the text offers other challenges to in assigning it to a single category of life

writing. Of course, neither is it much like a diary in that it lacks individuating "entries" (except

for the four distinctly written parts, which are arguably in some ways similar to diary entries).

But the text does share some material similarities with the broad category of the serial.

Patchworked and interactive, the *Autobiography* challenges the singularly voiced interiority we

have come to expect of the modern self. Instead of a singular, interior, progressive voice of

narrative selfhood, the Franklin in the text is a heterogeneous mixture of lists, documents,

quotations, notes, and other voices. Often recognized as the author of the first "secular" spiritual

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[78] Critics who identify him as an American autobiographer, and a quick summary of the autobiography/memoir discussion from source

autobiography, as a historical figure Franklin is paradoxically identified as both the secular

model of individual selfhood based on self-refection and accounting and an elusive and masked

figure always playing a role based on audience expectations.[79] These two positions seem

irreconcilable, but in the context of the hybrid possibilities we have identified through an affinity

with serial features and effects, Franklin's *Autobiography* reveals the fluidity and codependency

of individual and communal identities and allows us to reread without the rigid category of

staunch individualist or the negative connation that the slipperiness of masks and hiding infers.

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[79] Much of this commentary is based on both the *Autobiography* but also BF's other publications, such as the *Silence Dogood* papers and *Poor Richard's Almanac*. See Jerry Weinberger, *Benjamin Franklin Unmasked*, 2005. Among those who identify Franklin's character as elusive: John WilliamWard, Walter Issacson, Gordon Wood.

Chapter V: Serially Domestic Identity in the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*

Frances Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* portrays a fictional life that, like so many others in the eighteenth century, adopts for its framework the serial genes of letter and diary. Its sentimental heroine keeps this diary/letter hybrid record of her life to share with her "dear and ever-beloved Cecelia," the childhood friend who has gone off with her family on a grand tour. Sidney's story is one of familial, romantic, and conjugal relations and has been read and studied in conduct, courtship, and domestic critical contexts.[80] Studies of eighteenth-century domestic novels focused on courtship and marriage are a common trying ground for identifying and understanding the development of the modern self, especially in terms of gender.[81] In the past few decades, scholars have begun to think about how female identity has access to strategies of self-representation that depend on alternative forms and conventions of narrative.[82] I include Sheridan's text in this discussion because it utilizes serial formats in conjunction with the sentimental narrative that characterizes the late eighteenth century.

Reading the *Memoirs of Sidney Bidulph* through the conventions and effects of diary, this chapter examines how theories of seriality might inform our understanding of sentiment and identity. Specifically, I argue that Sidney consciously participates in narrative conventions that allow her to portray multiple or serial selves by manipulating her families' and Cecelia's

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[80] This and all subsequent quotations from the text are from *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph,* Eds. Patricia Koster and Jean Coates Cleary. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.
[81] I will discussion this relationship between the modern self and sentiment in more detail below. For the purposes of this discussion I am bring together the terms "domestic" novel and "courtship" novel. *The Memoirs of Sidney Bidulph* could arguably fall into either category.
[82] See, for example, Herbert, Amanda E. "Gender and the Spa: Space, Sociability, and Self at British Health Spas, 1640-1714," Journal of Social History (winter 2009); and Hurley, Alison E. "A Conversation of Their Own: Watering-Place Correspondence Among the Bluestockings." *Eighteenth-Century Studies 40.1*.

expectations. These versions of self manifest in the spaces between transaction with others and the reporting of that transaction in the diary, and are contingent on an acknowledgment of communal definitions of identity. The diary form allows us to separate *what* Sidney is reporting to Cecelia and *how* she reports it. The serial form also allows those versions, or we might think of them as threads, of self to emerge or submerge in the narrative.

Sidney's choice of a letter/journal hybrid resists the impulse toward cumulative narrative. For our purposes we will focus primarily on the journal aspects, because since Cecelia does not reply to the entries, the text does conform more to diary convention. The journal's repetitiveness, fragmented irregular narrative, and immediacy of voice are apparent in Sidney's narrative, despite Cecelia's attempts to impose on the narrative the expectations of a "continued" story:

> I have from those papers [she tells us in the introduction] selected the most material parts of her history, and connected them so as to make one continued narrative. There were long intervals of time between many of the most important incidents of her life; but as the passages that intervened were either too foreign to the main scope of her story, or too trivial to be recorded, in copying her papers they were omitted. (9)

Collaboration is not always defined by a positive and friendly relationship between parties, either inside or outside the text; an author's purpose does not necessarily coincide with an editor's or publisher's.[83] Cecelia invokes what we have come to accept as the standard expectation of a life narrative; she seeks to create one continuous narrative" with few "foreign" or digressive entries as possible and a "main scope" designed to deliver a specific moral lesson based on Sidney's experience—namely, the depiction of "the unhappy fate of a lady…of most exemplary virtue [who] was, through the course of her whole life, persecuted by a variety of strange misfortunes" (7). An argument could be made for reading Sheridan's own voice in Cecelia's framing of the narrative, as the novel was dedicated to Richardson and clearly engaged with the debate about

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[83] Certainly we have seen the tension between Pilkington and Swift in Pilkington's *Memoirs*, for example.

"poetic justice" he raises in the Postscript to *Clarissa* (1747). Indeed, Sidney's inherent virtue and artlessness went unquestioned by her contemporary critics and has not really been disrupted by modern readings. My reading focuses not on Cecelia's desired narrative trajectory, but Sidney's lack of one, arguing that the diary itself, separated from its imposed narrative frame, reveals a more fragmented and provisional sentimental self, one that both deals in and is usurped by the tropes of sentiment produced in the narrative.

Since the diary doubles as an epistolary correspondence (a common practice in the eighteenth century), it is less interior and fragmented than we would expect from a diary kept for personal use—these more public diaries, because they are written for readers who have not experienced the events, have a stronger narrative thread and more detail and explication. Her declared audience is "the sister of her heart," her childhood friend Cecelia. Sidney's carefully and thoroughly narrated placement of herself within and against her overlapping communities informs and facilitates her representation of self in the text. Schellenberg is concerned with "Sheridan's space—defined as the professional communities within which she moved—and language—the gestures of professional, political, and moral alignment that she makes in her novel" (25). I am concerned with the space and language of Sidney herself as a first person narrator. Reading the novel as a fictional example of a life writing genre, I explore what Sidney's interaction with the communities around her and her language in depicting herself in those communities reveal about the process of sentimental self-construction. In the following sections, I first briefly outline how Sidney has been approached as a sentimental heroine in past and present scholarship. Then I identify how Sidney uses the audience and narrative expectations and communal identity to control her self-representation and how the layering of narrative provides Sidney with the means of trying many different identities. Finally, I explore different kinds of

communal identity in the text: how gendered relationships both encourage and thwart self-representation, and what happens to personal identity when community is absent.

Historically, criticism of the *Memoirs,* like that of many eighteenth century sentimental novels centered on courtship and marriage, has tended to read its heroine as a cipher for marginalized feminine identity in the eighteenth century, focusing on issues of power and agency in relation to gender and issues of public and private.[84] Betty A. Schellenberg points out that the *Memoirs* are generally found to be "an easy fit within a 'private' and 'feminized' tradition of the domestic and sentimental" (24).[85] In her "Introduction" to the *Memoirs*, Jean Coates Cleary locates the novel in the context of the eighteenth century's "great obsession with—and anxiety about—the conduct of women and their changing relationship to their sexual and volitional energies" (xvii). She turns to conduct books as textual spaces where such anxiety manifests, and reads the *Memoirs* in the context of those instructive texts. Conduct books become pivotal in the mid eighteenth century, she claims, because "the system of constraints based on biblical authority and religious-moral tradition was being challenged by the new ideas about human ethics and morality generated by the Enlightenment" (xvii). These kinds of critical readings based on developing enlightenment values often lead us to focus on the main character of narratives such as the *Memoirs* as examples (whether successful or not) of the modern construction of self ushered in by Enlightenment thought throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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[84] On Sidney as an inactive figure, see Kathleen Oliver, James R. Foster, Jean Coates Cleary, Patricia Meyer Spacks. Margaret Ann Doody and Janet Todd read Sidney as having power only in reaction. Also, in her discussion of Sidney Bidulph and Magdalen House Narratives, Pam Lieske recognizes that critics tend to focus on the forces around Sidney rather than the agency of the character herself.

[85] See Betty Schellenburg for an overview of Sheridan's relegation to the private sphere through assessment as feminine writing.

More recently, a shift has emerged in the critical approach to the novel from reading

Sidney as a heroine that represents private and domestic gendered identity to one that embodies

sentimental individuality, or "knowing your own heart."[86] According to some critics, the heart

represents that unique and unknowable core of the individual, and is therefore the essence of the

modern interior self. For Cleary and others, this self is grounded and gendered with the language

of sentiment; she is interested in how "as a theory of moral sentiments, the valorizing of the heart

as an organ of higher consciousness and the new ethic this implied could not help but lend new

validity to female agency" (xviii). The *Memoir's* engagement with other works of feeling is

undeniable, but participation in the language and conventions of sentiment requires exterior as

well as interior motion. Sidney's journal highlights the ways in which a writer's identity, even

steeped in sentimentalism, depends on interaction and external identification. The language of

sentiment is often identified as self-limiting, a function of the private sphere that cannot breach

the public. Marta Kvande claims that Sidney's sentimental language "defines [her] as a private

agent, confined to limited action, and she withdraws from the possibility of presenting herself as

a political agent" (164). Sidney's relationship with sentiment is complicated and more self-aware

than she has been given credit for. "The novel's main narrator, Sidney Bidulph, does not claim

that public authority herself. Instead she conceives the right to tell her story as intensely private

and as centered in the heart" (161). Patricia Meyer Spacks points out the "curious aggressiveness

of the novel's sentimentalism" (134) claiming that "Sidney, in her goodness, possesses no power.

Because others do, her sensitivity, her high principles, her impulse toward alliance ultimately

achieve nothing but harm" (138). Yet Sidney is clearly aware of her own participation in the

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[86] The sentimental novel is often connected to the development of the individual; the "heart," knowing one's own heart, is tantamount to the concept of the unique, unreachable individual.

language of sentiment, and uses it to produce particular responses from the other characters in the narrative and from her reader(s).

Other critics have begun to move beyond Sidney's stifling sentimentalism. Cleary claims that *Memoirs of Sidney Bidulph* "dramatically subverts, even as it supports," the tenants of conduct found in popular eighteenth century conduct literature, claiming that "even from within its own pious framework Sidney Bidulph finally deconstructs its overt premises. As a novel, it is both conduct book and anti-conduct book" (xxx). In a similar fashion, I am interested in how the *Memoirs* calls into question the very version of modern selfhood it seems to support in its Preface. Pam Lieske argues that sentiment obscures other critics' treatment of Sidney: "They never question her motives or behaviors, suspect that she is complicit in the novel's strange turn of events, or even wonder if she is as good as she seems. Immune to critical inquiry, Sidney's pristine nature…remains intact" (105). Carol Stewart points out Sidney's ability for "dissimulation," which is apparent in the narrative as she shifts between communities and audiences. Her knowledge of narrative expectation comes into play here, not only in defining others, but in defining herself against and through others. As Stewart explains, "Though the heroine [Sidney] has some suspicions of Miss Burchell, she construes her demeanour in terms of a narrative of wounded and passive innocence" (125). Janet Todd, in *Sign of Angellica*, finds "advantages" to the "conformity and constriction in subject matter" of the *Memoirs*, indicating that it "allows the author…to concentrate on and investigate the limited material of consciousness, existing within social constraints" (164).

Reading the novel through a lens of seriality allows us to make a space for it outside of sentimental expectations. Frail recognizes Sidney outside the context of sentiment, but cannot find a means of reconciling its dissimilar discourses: "Sheridan's novel offers a poignant

example of a heroine who never becomes coexistent with the text because the complementary

modes of discourse—private consciousness and collective action—are not bound by an

identifiable system of reference" (93). A system of reference based on communal identity

creation not completely separate from what Frail calls "private consciousness," or what we might

think of modern selfhood is what this argument seeks to identify. To do so, it is necessary to

examine Sidney's use of relational identification in the context of the novel's form, essentially

bringing together to bring together subject and vehicle. The serial form is more sympathetic to

the features that relegate the text to the status of an "anomaly." Leading into her discussion of

Sidney Bidulph, Spacks discusses the "formal anomalies of eighteenth-century sentimental

fiction," arguing that "these fictions reject orderly movement from introduction through climax

to conclusion," a pattern more closely allied with fiction but that resonates with genres that

reflect modern selfhood:

> The novels by Sterne, Brook, and Mackenzie deny the effective presence of a
> separate shaping intelligence sufficiently single and powerful to ordain coherence.
> Such denial of power amounts to a denial of self understood as unified and
> unifying consciousness, of self as constituted by what Freud would call
> *ego*….Yorick's mind, as rendered by Sterne's novel, works by emotional
> associations….In *The Man of Feeling*, external circumstances account for
> documentary incoherence, but that incoherence corresponds to the protagonist's
> ever-shifting responsiveness. *The Fool of Quality* relies on the trope of repetition,
> repudiating more complicated formal principles. (128)

In identifying and prioritizing narrative strategy, Spacks draws attention to the strong

relationship these sentimental texts have with life-writing genres. Instead of considering them

less complicated, however, we can use this affinity to think about these texts from a point of

view that favors different kinds of complexity. Strategies such as repetition and association,

while not generally preferred in genres that privilege progressive plots, such as the novel, are an

integral part of many serial life-writing genres, such as diary and letters.[87] What is unusual in the

novels noted above is much less out of place in a text that borrows diary or epistolary form.

Sidney's narrative possibilities are not without complex possibilities: repetition, fragmentations,

interruption, focus on situation, and multiple voices all lend themselves to Sidney's self-

production.

One of the dangers inherent in over-identifying Sidney as a sentimental heroine is that

such categorization relegates her authority of self-representation to that of resistance. Frail

argues that "Sidney…represents the Lacanian thesis that the articulation of powerful feelings is

just as important as having them. Her compulsion to repeat is a way to offset self-effacement;

thus, writing as righting becomes an effort to resist oppression and to protest her vulnerability.

She avoids all opportunities for outside editing. Self-editing is the equivalent of underestimating

emotion before it becomes subversive" (95). But Sidney's self-effacement is always in tension

with her engagement with others and their stories, which she incorporates into her own narrative.

It is Sidney's impulse toward alliance that allows her control over her own representation; her

authority over her self-representation is not abdicated by but redirected through those around

her.[88] This reading attempts to put pressure on the notion of Sidney as both an example of

feminine private domestic identity and an example of private interior modern selfhood by

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[87] Though one can see that even this comment is problematic; we find an incredible amount of repetition in other texts read as "novels": in this discussion, *Robinson Crusoe* is a perfect example. See Spacks for a more detailed discussion of plot shifts in the mid eighteenth century.

[88] Other critics have recently begun to read Sidney as participating more in her own destiny, if not necessarily narrative, which is my focus here. Fitzer: "Suggesting that, taken together, the rake and the heroine forge a kind of hybrid femininity leads me to think further in this paper about how the novel is concerned, not only with female helplessness and desire, but also with the way in which the supposedly passive heroine is herself actively engaging in her own masquerade" (41). Kathleen Oliver: "While it may seem that Lady Bidulph is solely responsible for the suppression of Faulkland's language and story, Sidney also participates, both passively and actively, in his silencing" (691). But she goes on to argue that "only through her relationship with Faulkland…does Sidney obtain and accrue power. This relationship must always exist at a precise level of tension, with him always desiring her and her always denying him, for power to remain on Sidney's side. Despite—or because of her marriage to Mr. Arnold—Sidney continues to enact the role of young, marriageable, and desirable woman" (696-7).

thinking about how the construction of the individual "I" in this first person narrative depends

almost entirely on shared and therefore at least nominally public identity formation.

I say "nominally public" because for Sidney, like many other sentimental heroines, public

is a relative term. Sidney's family acts as her most immediate and accessible community. Many

critics of the eighteenth-century read familial relationships in courtship/marriage novels as at

best problematic and at worst dangerous and destructive.[89] If present in the text, families are

generally some combination of domineering, insensitive, manipulative, unaware or ineffective to

the heroine's needs and desires as an individual; that is, what individuality she possesses is

determined within and against the family dynamic. Whether we call these texts courtship,

marriage, or domestic novels, they are also undeniably novels of family, and as such, can be read

for ways to understand the dynamic between family and individual. These courtship novels, so

often cited as vehicles for the development of the modern enlightenment individual across the

eighteenth century, are just as much about the problem of crafting an identity among and against

the communities in which one participates—in the case of most these novels, those communities

are most often familial and marital, although they can and often do stand in as ciphers for larger

social and cultural paradigms. In *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, the tension between

communal and individual identity is especially prominent because Sidney's first person narrative

is repeatedly dependent on her own narration of her interaction with other members of her

family, demonstrating how the representation of the individual—even in a genre dominated by

the individuating "I"—is in fact communally constructed.

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[89] See Richardson's *Clarrisa, Pamela,* Burney's *Evelina,* Cleland's *Fanny Hill,* Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless*, just to name a few texts where families, particularly parents, are either offensive, ineffective, or just missing. Austen continues this theme into the late eighteenth century. Often as metaphors for other ideological concerns, such as foreign or domestic political situations.

Criticism of the novel often points to Sidney's subjugation in her familial communities—she accepts the man her brother brings home to be her husband, and just as quickly rejects him when her mother (strongly) suggests that she do so—as problematic for locating agency in the narrative. Certainly the sequence of events in the novel allow no doubt as to both Sidney's lack of control over her own life and her frustration at that lack. Rather than object to this position, I am trying to point out that merely identifying and isolating her oppression as a character (daughter, sister, woman) is an oversimplification, because she herself is reporting her own circumstances, and is therefore narratively complicit in her own self-representation. Looking closely at those portions of the text where she does narrate her exchanges with her family and others around her, it is possible to see that Sidney is in fact using various relationships and interactions to craft and control her own identity in the narrative, and that she uses shifting communal expectations to construct her identity in the text.

Early in the text there are many moments where Sidney seemingly cedes her voice and authority to others: her mother and brother, Cecelia, even a generalized societal belief in something (such as sentimentalism). In fact, she uses situation to posit hypothetical dialogue, to interact with perceptions outside herself. Her voice shifts to answer expectation:

> You are unkind, Cecelia, and do not do justice to my sincerity, when you say, *you are sure I am in love with Mr Faulkland*. If I were, can you conceive it possible that I would deny it to you? Ah! my sister, must I suspect *you* of wanting candour by your making a charge of disingenuity against your friend? Indeed, Cecelia, if I *am* in love with him, I do not *yet* know it myself. (27)

Of course the reader, right along with Cecelia, is asking the same question, and Sidney's rebuttal and gentle chastisement acknowledge her awareness of the collaborative nature of self-construction, of the impossibility of an isolated iteration of self. By acknowledging Cecelia's (and the reader's) own interpretation of her text, she is able to subtly resituate her representation

as much less constricting: the italics in the sentence are particularly telling in regards to where the flexibility lies: If I *am* in love with him (and I may or may not be), I do not *yet* know it myself (but I will soon).

One might argue that Sidney's community is quite narrow, consisting, as it does, of her immediate family. But that family is in miniature a model of communal identity—individuals who make up a larger group that shares space, purpose, goals, values, etc. The narrative compensates for this limitation by bringing in alternative sites for interaction both external to the narrative (such as Cecelia and to a lesser extent, Faulkland) and internally in the narrative (the stories of others experiences). In reality, when examined, at the beginning of the novel Sidney's frame of reference and possibility for self-construction based on interaction with others is considerable. And most importantly, it is the interaction—often the negative interaction—with all of those individuals that allows Sidney the narrative capability of defining and redefining herself as an individual. Sidney carefully situates herself by narrating her participation in communal decisions, whether it is her brother bringing home husband or the suitability of suitors. She opens the conversation that introduces Mr Faulkland: "I asked Sir George jocosely, what had he brought me home? He answered, perhaps a good husband.—My mother catched up the word—" (13). Over and over Sidney represents herself as a calculated watcher and a responder in familial discussions, so that her silence does not necessarily indicate passivity, but her own level and kind of participation:

> "An admirable character indeed, said my mother. So thought I too, but I wanted to know a little more of him" (14).
> "I looked silly, as if I had been disappointed, but I said nothing. Then he is above our reach, Sidney, answered my mother. I made no reply" (15).
> "My mother resumed her pleased countenance. Where is he? Let us see him. I forced a smile, though I did not feel myself quite satisfied" (15).
> "I bore no great part in the conversation, but was not, however, quite overlooked by Mr Faulkland. He referred to me in discourse now-and-then, and seemed

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pleased with me; at least I fancied so. My brother endeavoured to draw me out, as he said afterwards. The intention was kind, but poor Sir George is not delicate enough in these matters; I should have done better if he had let me alone" (19).

These self-aware descriptions imply careful consideration of how she appears in the context of the familial community. Silence doesn't seem here to indicate disinterest or even a sense of helplessness in the decisions being made around and about her, but rather strategy. She is constantly describing herself and her behavior in the context of the situation and the others taking part in it—so set against her mother she narrates a Sidney that is respectful and deferential, against Sir George she is teasing and scornful, and against Faulkland she is modest and maidenly, and all of these are narrated to Cecelia conscious iterations of self in response to those around her. Indeed, the number of Sidney's that exist in the text and their rapid shifting is sometimes dizzying. Her descriptors are particularly telling in this shifting allegiance, as when she narrates the scene in which she tells Sir George she will not have Faulkland:

> Dear brother, I cry'd, I beg you will spare me on this subject; my mother has given me leave to judge for myself; she has repeated all that you have said, and all that Mr Faulkland has been able to urge on the occasion; and I am sorry to tell you, that I think myself bound to never to have any farther correspondence with him; therefore you must excuse me for not seeing him. And so the match is borke off, cry'd Sir George. It is, my mother said peremptorily. It is, echoed I faintly. (51)

Just in this exchange of a few lines, we have in sequence first an outraged Sidney who upbraids her brother and seems to defer in complete accord with her mother. And then suddenly Mrs. Bidulph is peremptory, and Sidney's voice fades to merely "faint," which cues the reader that perhaps her deference is not so complete after all. Sidney's relationship with her mother is an integral part of her own self construction; the two women are often conflated. After Mrs. Bidulph's first visit to Miss Burchell, Sidney reports: "I have set down this whole conversation, with every particular, exactly as my mother related it. She, who has a most circumstantial

memory, repeated it word for word; and I, from a custom of throwing upon paper every thing that occurs to me, have habituated myself to retain the minutest things" (103). Here Sidney is combining her and her mother's voices, seemingly without either taking precedence. But she also carefully defines herself against her mother.

Sidney's narrative consistently accesses the experiences of her family to counteract the somewhat limited experience of its heroine. In a working community, knowledge and experience are shared among the members, and Sir George's knowledge of Faulkland as well as Sidney's mother's experiences as a young woman inform and affect Sidney's decisions. Thus, when she must narrate her reaction to the terrible news about Faulkland's indiscretion, she already has her mother's prior experience in a similar situation to use as a point of interaction. In response to Sir George's criticism of Sidney's silence above, Sidney's mother again brings in her own experience and behavior: "I am sure, when I married Sir Robert, he had never heard me speak twenty sentences" (20). Sidney herself again reports that she settles the argument by not taking part in it, but still choosing to identify with a side: "I did not interfere in the debate, only said, I was very glad to have my mother's approbation of my conduct" (20). She also dis-identifies, or uses the actions of the community to distance her own narrated self. The description of Faulkland she puts in to the mouth of Sir George is almost certainly a bit tongue in cheek: "Nature, says Sir George, never formed a temper so gentle, so humane, so benevolent as his…No hero in a romance ever went beyond him" (17). The distance provided by her mockery is as much a function of communal identity formation as Sidney's positive interaction and identification with her mother; Sir George's espousing of the social expectations of a courtship hero and her reaction to them allows her to construct an identity that resists those expectations—her use of community allows her claim of difference, or individuality. And one might argue that the

concept of community here becomes flexible and, extending from practical (family) to ideological (society/readers) through the mouth of Sir George, who becomes a stand in for the larger community of readers who come to the text with sentimental expectations.

A similar construction takes place in her exchanges with her dear friend and declared reader. Sidney extends her concept of communal interaction in her relationship with Cecelia as well, who expects Sidney to profess her love for Mr Faulkland and questions why she has not done so: "Indeed, Cecelia," Sidney writes, "if I am in love with him, I do not yet know it myself" (27). She uses Cecelia to set up communal expectations—in this case the expectation that Sidney will confide in Cecelia something she might withhold from her family, and expectation that the heart of the heroine immediately succumbs to the hero, and by resisting those expectations claims a kind of singularity. Sidney's positioning of herself in the narrative consistently depends on the role she plays in her immediate community, her family. But in a broader sense her narrative identity also depends on the audience's communal understandings of the way in which these matters of the heart should play out. Sometimes she doesn't resist them. Let us consider, for example, Sidney's narration of Faulkland's proposal:

> Mr Faulkland, in lover-like phrase, demanded from me the time of his destined happiness: I referred him to my mother. She, good and delicate as she is, referred him to Sir George. George blurted out some sudden day that startled us both, when Mr Faulkland reported it to us. I stammered out something; my mother hesitated; Sir George came in, and blundered at us all. (32)

Her masterfully theatrical narration of this proposal scene indicates more than just her familiarity with the conventions of romance and sentiment—she has embedded herself in those conventions, and recognizes that when she narrates the scene she can control them, rather than them controlling her. Upon reporting this exchange, in which everyone behaves as their identity and position would warrant, to Cecelia, she then shifts her positioning to accommodate a less

sentimental audience, whom she suspects will object to the short engagement: "And full soon enough, says my Cecelia: you have known the man but about six weeks" (33). Sidney's interiority is in such cases merely a function of shared sentimental discourse—she *knows* she should "know her own heart" because her audience expects it.

This interaction with the language of sentiment reveals how Sidney's very identity depends in part on her interaction with popular thought. She suffers because of social strictures, both real and imagined by those around her, particularly her mother. Stewart claims that we can read Sidney's suffering not as a representation of the ineffability of Providence, nor as offering an exemplar of feminine stoicism, but rather as the darkest of satires on the duty of obedience" (122). Stewart refers to Sheridan, but I would argue that in memoir, a first person genre of self-narration that allows no authorial interjection, such satire becomes Sidney's as well Sheridan's, an integral part of the identity she is crafting. Sidney makes comments on social institutions such as marriage and gender rights; Stewart notes, "Running through the novel…is an acknowledgement that marriage is necessary primarily as a means of ensuring the legitimate inheritance of property. Women, and women's sexuality, are linked to sums of money, or equated with money" (127). This is certainly Sidney's acknowledgement rather than Sheridan's however, as she exclaims against her brother speaking in a "bargaining way" of her possible match with Faulkland.

Sidney also has opinions on the education of women: When Mr. Arnold happens upon Sidney reading Horace and suggests that needlepoint might be a better use of her time, Sidney's response is confused: "You are so lovely [says Arnold], madam, that nothing you can do needs an apology. An apology, I'll assure you! Did this not look, my dear, as if the man thought I ought to beg his pardon for understanding Latin? (80). Though Sidney goes on to claim that the

understanding of Latin for a woman is a trivial accomplishment, her engagement with the topic is itself complicated, as she espouses what might be the socially acceptable opinion of educating women even as she portrays Mr. Arnold as less than admirable for holding that opinion himself. The inconsistency of her responses indicates her awareness of how her self-representation is dependent upon her association with particular beliefs held by particular communities, rather than individually derived. Her inability to make a decision based solely on private consciousness is nowhere more clear than in the struggle between her mother and brother over the nature of Faulkland's indiscretion with Miss Burchell. Upon learning of it, her first answer, "dictated perhaps by female pride" and contrary to the feelings of her heart, is that she never again wishes to see Mr. Faulkland. But at the beginning of the very next paragraph, her indecision begins: "The honest pride that *my mother endeavored to inspire me with*, had good effect, and kept up my spirits *for a time*" (49; emphasis mine). When Sir George presents his own opinion on the subject, Sidney's voice grows "faint" behind that of her mother, and only Cecelia and the reader are witness to even greater uncertainty: "Poor Mr. Faulkland! *Poor* do I call him? for shame Sidney—but let the word go; I will not blot it" (53). If indeed "poor Mr. Faulkland" is a representation of the interior Sidney's heart, that version of self is in undeniable and irreconcilable tension with the expected responses from those around; her mother, brother, Cecelia, and the various communal opinions of a man who disgraces a young woman—and she knows it. Her instability exemplifies how dependent her self-construction is on engagement with those around her.

These examples demonstrate how Sidney's journal engages repeatedly in communal discussions of social, moral and philosophical thought circulating in contemporary texts. Kvande argues that

> when Sidney uses this language [of sentiment], then, she defines herself as a private agent, confined to limited action, and she withdraws from the possibility of presenting herself as a political agent. Furthermore the emphasis on emotion contrasts sharply with the ideal of reason demanded by the bourgeois public sphere. The rhetoric with which she establishes her power to write makes clear that her authority does not belong to the bourgeois sphere of public discussion. (164).

Yet this insistence on separate spaces for sentiment and politics is problematic, as other recent critics have argued. Such a distinction limits how we read Sidney's interaction with the communities around her, her ability to bring them into the text. She actively engages in other kinds of public discussions, including social, philosophical and literary, often accessing the political slyly by way of sentiment or epistolary practice. These brief forays into social ideology are not unusual in the domestic novel; as Stewart points out, "Sarah Fielding, Charlotte Lennox and Frances Sheridan all participate in the debate about ethics, either questioning the validity of self-interest as a basis for moral or social order (102). Sheridan is herself engaged in a moral debate about literature. When brought together, these instances offer a broader example of how the domestic novel exceeds the boundaries of the familial community. Sidney, even as a writer in a supposedly "private" space, cannot help but pull the public into that space. It is a deceptively simple point, but one that is often neglected in the light of a focus on the individual and on lines of public and private. In her awareness of these circulating conversations, and her inability to construct an identity, even in a space considered as private as a journal, without referencing them, Sidney demonstrates how dependent self-construction is on interaction with community.

The *Memoirs* is presented in a layered frame narrative, edited first by Cecelia and then published by an invisible editor who frames his own discovery of the text as a story of visiting with friends and relatives. The text includes the retelling by Sidney to Cecelia of numerous other characters' stories: Mrs. Vere, Miss Burchell, Mrs. Bidulph, Mrs. Gerrarde, the doctor and his

lady. The layering of narrative, the incorporation of others' stories in the *Memoirs* is a common

convention in sentimental novels; the hero or heroine's response to the (usually tragic) narrative

repeated to him or her acts as a conduit for the reader's response. As Frail points out, however,

the stories also act as an echo of the larger narrative:

> The total effect of this use of novelistic repetitiveness and echoing devices is
> tantamount to 'mise en abime' with its illusion of infinite regress. Repeated
> voices duplicate the larger structure, setting up an unending metonymic series.
> The *Memoirs* reveal numerous strategies of duplication by analogy as well as
> recurrence of blended events and images—a 'superabundance of emotion,' that
> Raymond Williams refers to as the emergent structure of feeling in novels in
> which ideology is implicit. (95)

Periodical literature also makes use of individual narratives that repeat themes and threads.[90] The

parallel stories make the text seem digressive and regressive—rambling—rather than cumulative

and progressive. Like a diary, the text repeats a very few threads, only through multiple

characters instead of just one individual. As Frail notes above, the imbedded narratives

"duplicate the larger structure" in some aspects, but in others there are important deviations from

Sidney's own story. The text keeps returning to the same situations, but the outcomes are

changed. Since the larger text is a representation of Sidney, these other characters become

complicit in her identity; we see them as separate from her, but also as a means for her to explore

multiple possibilities for the same situations she is exposed to in her own narrative. For

example, in the story of her mother's first love, the Faulkland equivalent, driven to admit his

prior attachment, "ended in absolute madness …confined for the remainder of his life" (31). The

young woman he had been involved with (Miss Burchell in Sidney's own version of the story)

also died, while Mrs. Bidulph was disappointed but "bore it with becoming resolution" (31). The

story of Mrs. Vere offers a different kind of alternative, one in which the young lady in question

marries against her mother's wishes. In light of Mrs. Bidulph's comment that if Sidney "marries

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[90] See the discussion of *Spectator* and *Female Spectator* in the next section.

to please" her, she might add to her daughter's fortune, the fate of Mrs. Vere—to be cut off from her family both financially and emotionally when she marries for herself rather than for her mother, is not an impossible scenario for Sidney. Sidney's construction of self in relation to her mother, as we have already seen above, is complicated. Certainly she wishes to seem the dutiful daughter prescribed by the conduct books. Yet this persona slips in her letters to her bosom friend, as might be expected. At times, it is in only narrative choices, such as the allowing of her mother's voice to override hers; at others she shifts identification more obviously: "My mother, dear literal woman! (as I often call her to you) took everything seriously" (25). The myriad mothers or mother-figures occupying the text—Mrs. Bidulph, Lady Grimstone, and Mrs. Gerrarde, Miss Burchell, Sidney herself—make up yet another trace as Sidney explores the difference between good and bad parenting.

The second volume is dominated by "other voices" that are brought in by Sidney verbatim as she transcribes letters to Cecelia, particularly Mr. Faulkland's. The entries that relate Mr. Faulkland's letters explaining his actions regarding Mrs. Gerrarde run to above sixty pages, and Mrs. Gerrade's letter is submerged in Faulkland's letter, so that at one point in the narrative we are two layers beyond Sidney's own voice. Sidney's identity becomes dependent on so many other accounts in the text, pages of the journal where the narrative is completely taken over by someone other voices. Indeed, the Faulkland letter is so long that Sidney does not even follow it up with a comment on the same day, but ends the entry with Faulkland's voice and only returns with her own in the next entries. This creates the effect of a communal document rather than one that represents an individual. The absence of any other significant material in Sidney's narrative is marked not only by Cecelia, who omits any entries in between Faulkland's narration, but also by Sidney herself, who comments on "what sorry stuff" the interval between Faulkland's letters

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has "been filled up with" (190). Sidney even gives over the keeping of the journal to her maid

Patty when the sameness of experience becomes narratively challenging. "All our motions here

as regular as the clock," Sidney complains to Cecelia:

> You cannot expect, in a house such as this, my dear, that I can be furnished with materials to give you much variety. Indeed, these last four days have been so exactly the same in every particular, excepting that the dishes at dinner and super were changed, that I had resolved to hang up my pen till I quitted Grimston-hall, or at least resign it to Patty. (63)

Her willingness to adopt Patty as her amanuensis is often seen by critics as a loss of authority,

but it is an active choice—a willingness to ascribe a sense of communal property to her textual

self. In other words, Patty, as part of her immediate situation, is qualified to take Sidney's pen

and carry on with the journal, and when she does, she "has given…to the full, as good an account

of matters and things as I could" (64). Kvande argues that "by explicitly empowering Patty to

write for her, Sidney shows that her privacy is more public than it first appears. If others can

express her feelings, perhaps they are neither as private nor as individual as she claims" (166).

Indeed, it is not just her feelings that Patty can express, but the minutia that makes up the self on

the page: "how the wind blew such a day; what sort of mantua lady Grimston had on such a day

(though by the way it is always the same, always ash coloured tissue); what the great dog barked

at, at such an hour, and what the old parrot said at such a time" (63). Here is the momentariness,

the immediacy, the repetition, and the description of everyday life; Sidney doesn't separate her

own identity in the journal from the "matters and things" around her. She isn't moving forward

in a narrative of self-fulfillment; she's standing still. When something in the narrative finally

causes her move again, it is Mrs. Vere's story, not her own.

Reading Sidney's self-construction through communal processes demonstrates that those

processes are slippery—unstable and constantly fluctuating. Binhammer finds Sidney Bidulph's

narrative ultimately problematic and unresolved: "Sheridan's message remains ambiguous in the end and her novel never tells the tale of either seduction or the place of erotic and affective agency in marriage" (75). The same kind of ambiguity begins to develop in her narration of herself as the novel progresses. In contrast to the earlier example of Faulkland's proposal, in which she masterfully controlled the scene and her participation in it, the passage that introduces her engagement to Mr Arnold noticeably lacks personal first person pronouns and is devoid of any hint of her own participation; she is no longer engaged with the community that is constructing her identity:

> Mr Arnold has so many advocates here, that his interest cannot fail of being promoted. Mrs Vere admires him; the Dean commends him; my mother praises him; lady Grimston extols him to the skies…Things are now gone so far, that my mother and Lady Grimston talked to-day of settlements…All preliminaries are settled. There has been a fuss with parchments this week past. (93-4)

Once she marries Arnold, the narrative "I" weakens and then begins to drop out of the text altogether—instead she uses shortened or abbreviated grammar that excludes the expression of self completely from its syntax—"Visitors still in abundance"; "Once more returned to London in very good spirits" (98-9). There are also fewer direct references to Cecelia. When she becomes a mother, her voice disappears from the narrative completely—instead a small notation is inserted "writ in the hand of the lady who gave the editor these papers" that "nothing material to her story occurred but the birth of her daughter" (116). The movement from her parents' home to her husband's contracts rather than expands Sidney's narrative possibilities. In the context of the journal this alteration is not so much an indictment of Sidney's passiveness as it is an indication that as an individual Sidney's story cannot move forward. The communal subject she has constructed in the early pages of the text needs to narrate through other individuals:

> "I flew to my mother, to tell her the joyful news" (246).

"Dear Lady V—, said I, excuse me; my heart is really so softened with sorrow, that I cannot command my tears" (246).
"My mother now expects the advances toward a reconciliation should be on his side. I would I were rid of the suspense" (page).

The absence of an articulated self in the second half of the journal coincides with Sidney's marriage; hence, one might assume that the most functional and dependable communal relationships for Sidney would be those with other women, be it her addressee Cecelia, her mother, or other women encountered in the text. In reality, the gendered communities represented in the text by Sidney are complex and varied, as is her relationship to them in regards to representing herself. This discussion diverges from previous readings of women's communal self-construction in that it does not recognize communal interaction, particularly gendered community but other types as well, as necessarily a positive force in Sidney's self-construction. The *Memoirs* indicate that certain kinds of communal identification can negatively affect or even entirely repress self-construction. We overlap here with family, since Sidney's portrayal of herself depends so heavily on her interaction with her mother, but we also come into contact with a variety of other women, all of whom represent a different kind of engagement Sidney uses to narrate herself.

That is not to say the text provides a straightforward or uncomplicated reading of gender relationships; it certainly offers us moments of female solidarity from which Sidney is able to produce identity, as in the ones above with her mother and Lady V. Patty, as we also saw above, is identified as an amanuensis, essentially an extension of Sidney by right of sharing her experiences. But the utter failure of connection between women can be just as viable for the narrator's purposes, as when she distances herself from her mother or Lady Grimston. Interaction with other women can leave her in a void, unable to represent herself in the context of those around her. But a lack of interaction can be just as harmful: Mrs. Gerrarde usurps not only

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Sidney's husband but the narrative; through her association, Sidney is in danger of losing control of her own self-construction. When Mr. Arnold orders Sidney to leave the house without her children, isolated from her primary association as wife and mother, and unable to reach out to family for fear that the situation will "break her mother's heart," Sidney for a time loses entirely any sense of self: "I have passed two days and two nights I know not how; in silence and without food, Patty tells me. But I think I am a little recovered. I will write to my mother, and beg of her to open her arms to receive her miserable child. I am collected enough, and know what to say" (146). When she revives, it is because she is ready to reach out to her mother, to a community where she was able to ground her identity in the past. Yet she also adapts, drawing on other culturally familiar identities: "I am waiting here like a poor criminal, in expectation of appearing before my judge" (144). She claims she has been not only "suspected," but "accused" (145).

What makes this text particularly complicated is that sometimes these moments are very close together—even responding to the same situation. Rather than representing any kind of gendered solidarity, Sidney's use of this unstable female community varies; at times she identifies herself strongly as part of it, and at other times she distances herself from the women around her and the female perspective, depending on the kind of self-identity she is trying to create. What is important to notice is Sidney's own acknowledgement of her narrative strategies. That acknowledgement indicates a kind of agency of self-representation that is not normally ascribed to Sidney and many of her fellow sentimental heroines.[91]

We do get an example of idealized communal identity in the introduction to the text. Cecelia, as the addressee of the journal-letters, is the first female Sidney brings into the text, and

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[91] In examining the relationship between sentimental heroines and their foils, Anna Fitzer identifies Miss Burchell, Sidney's rival for Faulkland's affection, as a "figure who challenges the neat categorization of the tender sex in accordance with either their exemplary, and essentially desexualized, virtue or 'innocence seduced' or 'unnatural passion'" (40).

she is represented as the bosom friend. Cecelia's interaction in her community is defined by non-exchange; that is, everyone is so completely the same that there is no way to construct individuality: her brother is "the darling of his parents," her mother is "as fond of her as her father was of his son" and "perfectly affectionate to her father," who "perfectly loved her mother" (8). Then they all went off to the continent together, seemingly as one. This perfect family found in the introduction may offer an example of the social ideal, but it lacks the kind of dynamic communal interaction that makes Sidney's self-distinction in the context of others possible. Sidney's much more developed identity depends on interaction, exchange, contrast, even conflict. Cecelia, in the introduction, has not this capability; in fact, we never hear her voice directly in the text; instead, we get only Sidney quoting her letters.

All of these examples of how Sidney constructs an identity in her journal in relation—in relation to family, community, other individuals, ideology do not add up to a single sum, that much is obvious. And it has not been my purpose here to argue that the only way to view Sidney is through a lens of community; rather that such a lens makes richer our ideas about how self manifests in texts, and specifically, eighteenth century texts that are often read through narrower ideological lenses of gender and identity expectations or genre expectations. In this chapter I attempt to move beyond the limitations of femaleness, of journal writing, of individuality, and capture a more capacious picture of the possibilities available for creating identity in text. I would to return to the issue of these novels as a genre, thinking of the *Memoirs* as broadly representative. This first person narration, especially reported from only one end of an epistolary exchange as the *Memoirs* primarily are, should support the ultimate version of the Enlightened modern self: narrative, the purpose of personal letters is generally, narrative, self-reflexive, singular in voice. Yet the *Memoirs* are not alone, indeed are very much the norm, in the inclusion

of other voices—mostly in the form of letters by other individuals-- in the narrative, a hybridity we have linked previously with serial forms of production and publication. It voluntarily allows other voices to control the narrative in a firsthand fashion, and though the inclusions are usually prefaced and followed up by Sidney's voice, this kind of communal narration indicates that Sidney feels the need to situate her own voice among that of others. There are also places later in the narrative, it must be noted, where Sidney's voice disappears completely and other voices take over for her—not only does Cecelia begin and end the story with a fellow editor, Patty fills in for Sidney when her mistress becomes too bored or ill to write. This easy handing over of the narrative calls into question the stability and independence of the narrating "I" as a bastion of modern Enlightened selfhood. Early in the text, the identity of heroine develops in constantly shifting semi-public (in the sense of not being interior/private personal) collaborative framework. The presence of constant tension between individual and collective identities seems to indicate that we need to think more about how identity is constructed communally as well as individually in the eighteenth century, and about how the modern self is and developed as a communal as well as individual construct. If we think about these modern female individuals as drawing identity primarily from larger overlapping identity groups (not only ideological but also practical) how does that change the way we read them and their actions in the novels, and how does that inform the way they narrate themselves and their experience?

Sidney's constant revisioning of herself is perhaps not so unusual as we might think: if we return to Kietzman's theory of "serial subjectivity," which identifies a process by which women continued to revise their life stories in response to changing circumstance:

> a viable mode of self-fashioning in which the conventional opposition between the public and private the unconscious and the conscious, the personal/unknowable and the universal/comprehensible, is displaced and re-

anchored in a new concept of situation or context as both psychic and historical. (678)

Kietzman is helpful in trying to rethink the ways in which self is constructed in the eighteenth century, but her argument might be in danger of creating a new binary: one of accepted practice and resistance, or deviant practice, and her argument thus implies that there is something exceptional about the way these criminal women, these "majority of indicted female subjects," are able to use seriality to create and perform life narratives. In fact, in this reading Sidney Bidulph might have more in common with a Moll Flanders or a Roxana than she does with her contemporary domestic heroines, offering us a new way to approach the domestic novel. Her ability to use convention and situation together, to make the one work in the service of the other, offers a new way to reread the domestic novel in the mid-eighteenth century. The sentiment that Sidney uses to access her audiences is undeniable, but it is complicated by the strategies available to her in serial life writing convention.

Part Three: Periodicals, Public Space, and Collaborative Identity

My interest in this final section is the effects of putting attributes of modern selfhood into dialogue with texts that themselves have forms that foreground interaction, collaboration, and hybridity. These are also texts that are public in ways that our previous texts have not been— they address the public as a collective readership rather than an individual reader and are meant to be consumed by the public in public spaces.[92] In thinking about modern selfhood our tendency is to assign its formation to what we critically consider private or individual spaces, whether they are physical, metaphysical, or textual—the home, the mind, the heart, the soul, the diary, the letter, the novel. The chapters in this final section instead focus on shared spaces: physical spaces such as the coffeehouse and textual spaces such as the periodical.

Invoking the term public in association with the eighteenth century raises a rich critical history that accesses all kinds of critical and theoretical questions—questions about public and private, questions about domestic and foreign, questions about gender, politics, power. Autobiographical criticism tells us that the ways in which we define ourselves and the choices we make are affected by our interaction with others. My driving question in these chapters is how might practices of self-construction that have been previously defined as private, interior, and singular be carried out in public spaces among other individuals?

In *Spaces of Modernity*, Miles Ogborn takes a geographic approach to understanding the sometimes perplexing multiplicities of modernity by arguing that so-called modern "processes like individualization, commodification, and bureaucratisation need to be examined in the

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[92] This makes them more akin to the texts in the first part than the second, though there is a sense of shared ownership in these periodicals that was not present in the serial lives of the first section.

particular places and spaces that they make and that make them" (19). Ogborn's theory posits a

modernity that is less homogenous and progressive, more unstable, and most importantly, never

created in isolation:

> Modernity's geographies are not, therefore, place-specific in any singular sense. These differentiated geographies are made in the relationships between places and across spaces. Again, this has tended to be understood as the 'exportation' of modernity from center to periphery, for both metropole and empire and city and country. This conceptualisation, however, ignores the crucial ways in which these geographies of connection are moments in the making of modernities rather than matters of their transfer or imposition. (19)

Ogborn's emphasis on particular places and spaces and the links between them offers a way to

make the problematically slippery term *public sphere* more manageable: in examining a specific

public *place* or *space* for the purposes of this discussion, I set aside much of the critical baggage

associated with the term public sphere. If we were to think about the making of the modern self

in such a context, how might that modify our understanding of it? Are those private spaces the

only ones in which self is created? Focusing our attention on specific sites of identity creation

allows us to think about individual public spaces where the self might come into contact with

formation causing or modifying stimuli. Further, an examination of how self in public spaces

will help us to understand whether the practices that we usually associate with the modern self

are possible in a public setting.

Public spaces are places of interaction, exchange and collaboration. Ogborn is interested

in how modern identities are created in physical spaces. George Justice argues that it is printed

spaces rather than physical ones that allow our modern sense of public identity to develop (18).

Similarly, I would like to move now from physical public spaces to textual ones, keeping in mind

the ways in which the coffeehouse model speaks to the construction of self identity in public

spaces. Since periodicals already have an established relationship with the coffeehouse, and we

have discussed how periodicals were read in those spaces, it seems the next logical movement to explore if and how collaborative identity manifests in periodicals as public spaces. While the extent to which these periodical publications were actually collaborative is questionable, the salient point is that they model and make available collaborative identity construction.

Theories of relationality in life writing studies examine the relationship of the "I," in the textual self with that of "others."[93] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson outline the kinds of interactions found most often in life writing, pointing out that almost always, "one's story is bound up with another," or many others, which suggests "that the boundaries of an 'I' [or a self] are often shifting and flexible" (64). Consequently, "the routing of a self known through its relational others undermines the understanding of life narrative as a bounded story of the unique, individuating narrative subject," and in this section I build on that notion by examining how the modern subject is generated in physical and textual public spaces, specifically, coffeehouses and periodicals (67). As I read the *Tatler, Spectator* and *Female Spectator*, I posit the physical self, the self occupying the space of the coffeehouse or spa, and the reading self, consuming and interacting with public documents, as texts that are continuously crafted through interaction. The result might be modern identity as a continuously collaborative product.

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[93] I'm using *others* in a non specific sense here, representative of a whole spectrum of kinds of others, from family and friends to particular groups associated by social markers like class, race, etc.

Chapter VI:

The Coffeehouse Club and the Spectator Diary: Making the 'Self' in Public Spaces

Our understanding of social politics in the eighteenth century has become more nuanced over the last several decades of scholarship as the canon has expanded to included previously overlooked works by an ever increasingly diverse population. It is because of these texts that we understand both the limitations and the complexity of eighteenth century social relationships. For example, to say that women were generally excluded from many parts of the early eighteenth century public sphere is certainly not an overstatement, but to imply that they had no relationship with those sites of exclusion is an oversimplification of subtle and important social relations. It is these kinds of nuances that I hope to focus on in this chapter as I examine how identity manifests and transforms in public spaces, these small interactions that might reveal how identity is formed through collaboration and interaction with others. This chapter focuses on two periodical texts, the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, that have also long been a marginal part of the eighteenth-century literary and cultural canons, but have recently begun to be approached in novel and recuperative ways. Periodicals have primarily been consigned to the realm of the political in eighteenth century criticism; this discussion seeks to enlist them in the work of identity studies in an attempt to explore the relationship between selfhood and public spaces. I use recent critical work on coffeehouse culture to move from physical to textual space, because both provide sites that model interaction and collaboration between public and private identities. The periodical's serial features function in similar ways to those of the serial life writing genres we have examined in

previous chapters, allowing it to depict features of modern individuality as a product of public collaboration.

An eighteenth century periodical, much like an eighteenth century coffeehouse, had something of a hodgepodge identity.[94] Addison and Steele's own Bickerstaff, the persona behind the *Tatler*, connects coffeehouse and periodical as physical and textual spaces that can contain and represent many things simultaneously:

> All Accounts of Gallentry, Pleasure, and Entertainment shall be under the article of White's Chocolate House: Poetry, under that of Will's Coffee-House; Learning under the title of Grecian; Foreign and Domestic News, you will have from St James's Coffee-House, and what else I have to offer on any other subject, shall be dated from my own apartment. (No.1 April12 1709)[95]

The paper is not, its author informs us in this first number, concerned with "mere Drudges of Business" and will not make up its quotas with "musty Foreign Edicts or dull Proclamations." Instead, the focus will be on "Relation of the Passages which occur in Action or Discourse throughout this town." And indeed, despite Bickerstaff's inclusion of news from St James, the *Tatler* was not really a news provider, and the *Spectator* was even less so.[96] At the outset the *Tatler* did include reports of foreign and domestic happenings, but "such reporting became rarer as the paper came to rely ever more heavily on its moral and critical essays" (Mackie 28). The *Spectator* all but abandons any overt interest in political and state matters except as they pertain

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[94] Erin Mackie notes that "coffeehouse society and *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* are alike in their inclusivity, in the sheer range of human pursuits and types they encompass" (45).

[95] This and all subsequent quotations from the text are from *Addison and Steele: Selections from the Tatler and The Spectator*. Ed. Robert J. Allen. Fort Worth: Holt, 1970.

[96] Despite this fact, the periodicals received a good amount of criticism for lacking validity as news sources, and critics were wont to accuse the authors of "news-mongering" in reviews of the papers. Cowan cites the negative reception of early periodicals: "Early eighteenth-century serial publications were associated with the ephemeral, satirical, deeply partisan, and highly unreliable news and propaganda products of the seventeenth-century civil war and Restoration crisis of authority. The periodical was a genre akin to the scandalous and disreputable libel, and periodical prose writers were highly suspect and controversial figures. See also Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) and Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641-1649* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996)

to social issues.[97] Instead the *Spectator* focuses on the lives of its readers, engaging them with the most prevalent eighteenth-century processes of identity creation: scandal, gossip, sharing, telling, and it does so in a format that shares many features with serial life writing genres.

The relationship between the periodical and the diary is more than one of similar format. Samual Pepys' *Diary* references almost one hundred visits to a coffeehouse in the decade beginning with 1660 (Ellis page). These visits and Pepys' careful recording of them in a private document indicate the extent to which public space could be exploited to craft personal identity. That so many men recorded their visits to these establishments with a genre historically linked with construction of self identity cannot be completely coincidental. Coffeehouses offer rich sites of inquiry in identity studies; much work has been done in the last few years on the rise of the coffeehouse in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly by scholars of political, social, and book history. If the eighteenth century can in some sense claim the birth of the "public sphere" as we now tend to think of it, then the coffeehouse is certainly the most visible and concrete representation of that sphere in scholarship of the period.[98]. Certainly one of the reasons so much work has been done on the eighteenth century coffeehouse is because of the wealth of references available in diaries and journals of the period. Pepys not only visits the coffeehouse, he appropriates it as a trace in his diary to craft a self through meanings assigned to particular public spaces. Ellis explains:

> Pepys' coffee-house visits had become regular just after he stopped going so frequently to pubs and taverns. Throughout 1662 his *Diary* shows him resolving repeatedly to work hard, live frugally and apply himself to the office, entertaining dreams of wealth and station…From this period he deliberately altered the way he socialised with other men, abstaining from the loutish interactions of the public house: not only because drinking made him unfit for business, but because he

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[97] Brian Cowan argues that there is in fact a political agenda behind the papers in "Mr *Spectator* and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere," Eighteenth-Century Studies 37.3 (2004): 345-366.
[98] Despite its limitation in certain areas—those of class and gender especially—the coffeehouse might in many ways be taken as a model of public space for collaborative identity.

realised that while pubs were appropriate for a young man at the start of his career, they were not the place great men socialised. (57)

Coffeehouses were sites of conversation and, according to Pepys' *Diary*, places where the company was heterogeneous and complex: "I find much pleasure," he writes, "through the diversity of company—and discourse" (Ellis 57). His use of the words *diversity* and *discourse* is startlingly modern. This diversity fostered lively discussion that might even be called disagreement and contention, as evidenced by the recurring criticism of the coffeehouse crowd. But disagreement does not preclude collaboration, and identity can grow out of negative experience as well as positive. Participation in conversation can happen at multiple levels: "[In coffee-houses] a Man, of my Temper, is in his Element; for, if he cannot talk, he can still be more agreeable to his Company, as well as pleased in himself, in being only an Hearer" (*Spectator* no. 49). In this way exchange and interaction could be demonstrably passive, and one or more parties could even be unaware of the collaboration. Pepys maximizes the value of the coffeehouse in his identity construction by collaborating both within the public space and also within the text with the identity markes available to him through his narration of himself in that space.

Diaries also reveal how coffeehouses changed the kinds of movement that occupied public spaces. Coffeehouses offered a "more spontaneous and less rigidly ritualized" alternative to social visits to great houses and private cabinets (Cowen 102). And these visits encouraged multiplicity and spontaneity in public exchanges: "one could visit a coffeehouse, or several of them, either daily as part of a regularized routine or spontaneously without much forethought or effort" (Cowen 104). Because they were open to the public, the formal procedures of entrance required for private houses did not apply to coffeehouses, which meant that access and exchange

were more readily available to a larger set of visitors.[99] Also, the patron of the coffeehouse was not attached to only one public space, but could move from house to house, actively seeking the kind of collaborative moment or exchange in which he was interested or invested. *The Diary of James Brydges*, Cowen notes, "documents some 280 visits to various coffeehouses between 8 February 1697 and 12 December 1702. This count does not include visits to more than one coffeehouse in a single day, and on some days Brydges might visit three or more" (109). In tracing the patterns of various coffeehouse regulars over the course of the eighteenth century, Cowen notes that often a patron's "use of the coffeehouse as a social institution was quite straightforward; he knew which houses were likely to attract interesting company and potential patrons, so he made it a point to become a regular customer at those institutions" (109). Such planning and premeditation indicates active, persistent use of collaborative strategies, as does the frequency in which the references appear in personal journals. Tellingly, Cowen and Ellis both use the term "socializing" to describe what happens in coffeehouse culture, though neither applies any critical press to the word. Socializing comprises a combination of personal, political and professional networking, such as job seeking or health queries, and entertainment seeking, such as storytelling (or hearing) and reading. If we are to assume that public space influences the identity of the individual, then these moments of "socializing" become ripe for analysis of identity formation. Because these moments all happen in exchange, either positive or negative, either accidental or contrived either potential or realized, it seems inevitable that identity formation in these public spaces should engage with collaborative practices.

One of the primary modes of socializing in the coffeehouse involved reading. The collections of text in these spaces indicate a cohabitation of ideas and kinds; Ellis notes the

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[99] Though there were clubs that met in the coffeehouses that required subscription. Pepys made use of these as well: On January 9 1660 he writes: "I went with Muddiman to the Coffee-house, and gave 18d to be entered of the club" (5). This was "The Rota Club, established for political debate" (Latham 5 *note*).

diversity in one coffeehouse collection, citing the over "100 different printers, booksellers, and combinations" (25). The texts were read by patrons and then discussed in open debate, encouraging verbal exchange of ideas between individuals. Coffeehouses subscribed to periodicals as well as other kinds of texts; certainly, as we saw in the opening of this chapter, periodicals felt at home in the domain of the coffeehouse. It is virtually impossible to engage in a discussion about the eighteenth-century coffeehouse without invoking its most vocal champions—and critics—Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, the primary authors of *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Guardian*.[100] The *Spectator* did indeed betray concern about the multiplicity of people found in the coffee house, which indicates that although it was not the ideal democratic space of equality it is sometimes represented as, its customers embody a more diverse section of the population than we might think.[101] Many other contemporaneous social critics thought that the coffee house's unmonitored public space was a dangerously negative social influence: Cowan cites critics who worried about the "relative openness" of the coffee house: "A 1661 tract complained that since coffeehouse conversation proceeded with 'neither moderators, nor rules' it was like 'a school without a master'" (100). In a sense, then, the concern about the hybrid space of the coffeehouse provides an impetus for the interactive and hybrid identity creating in the textual space of the periodical.

The essays in the *Tatler* and *Spectator* are "improving" in the way we might think of conduct books to be—they encourage a whole range of physical, mental and emotional traits that

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[100] Though in reality they were not the most vocal or the most critical, but they are certainly the best remembered, thanks to their canonical status. The *Tatler* ran from, the *Spectator* from, etc (short publishing history). Other people contributed (Defoe)

[101] Their very insistence on reform, what Ellis calls an "imaginary space,…a vision of a civil Utopia," implies that the "ideal man" was not the reality of the public space offered by coffee house culture (198). But Cowan argues that Addison and Steele's vision was an exclusive rather than inclusive one for the coffeehouse. Certainly the language surrounding this idea connotes differently now than it would have to contemporaries—democracy was for the owners of property—but we shouldn't completely discount the coffeehouses' ability to disrupt fixed identity markers. The anxiousness apparent in many of the discussions about the coffeehouse's position and purpose in society indicates that public identities were not as stable as we might assume.

are desirable in human nature. [102] The emphasis for this discussion is that they believe those traits

can be acquired, at least by a selection of the population, through interaction in public spaces:

"urban life, and coffee-houses especially [for Addison and Steele], brought people into close

proximity, where they might be rubbed and jostled together, smoothing rough edges and

polishing manners" (Ellis 186). Ellis' image of physicality is apt for this discussion: along with

elbows and edges, it does not seem so unlikely that manners and habits, beliefs and values,

knowledge, speech, and experience—indicators of identity—were exchanged between the

patrons of the coffeehouse, just as they were exchanged, at least representatively, in the

periodical papers. Many arguments have been made about the didactic and moralizing nature of

the *Spectator*. The papers are highly prescriptive in regards to both personal and social behavior.

But as Mackie points out, "the success of the project depended on making the papers attractive to

readers," so the moralizing nature had to be tempered by narrative that encouraged readers to feel

like they were part of a discussion, rather than just the receivers of information or instruction (3).

Mackie compares the approach of the *Tatler* and Specator to other reformative writing, noting

the difference in strategy:

> *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* approach readers…by speaking in the congenial
> tones of conversation. One characteristic strategy of both was to include actual
> and fictitious letters from readers; Steele was particularly fond of this device. *The
> Tatler* and *The Spectator,* then, do not simply hand down corrective moral
> prescriptions to an "inferior," "depraved" audience; they amicably, if sometimes
> ironically, engage that audience as equals in the discussion. As participants in the
> ongoing conversation, the audience is understood to take part in forming those
> standards of conduct and taste the papers champion. (5)

Of course such strategies still prescribe behavior, and from one perspective may be labeled

persuasion, or even manipulation. Brian Cowan argues that the papers have a coercive political

purpose—to "shift the discussion away from the contentious issues" and provide "the

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[102] Ellis notes that Addison and Steele's periodicals are "at the forefront of what historians have called the 'culture
of improvement', which championed a new paradigm of politeness and civility in literature and society" (186).

foundations for a view of Whiggery as moderate, progressive, and polite" (358). Certainly the

periodical functions on many levels as a part of eighteenth-century culture, both social and

political. I am interested, however, in the remainder of this discussion, in investigating how it

functions in the realm of personal identity when we factor in the agency of the reader and

explore its relationship to life writing practices. I argue that the periodical moves beyond mere

didacticism or persuasion and manipulation and becomes both a site for and a model of

collaborative identity making that can be brought to bear on the concept of individual selfhood.

But that individual selfhood is only possible in exchange with, in this example, the periodicals,

their authors, and their other readers. Further, the exchange or interaction does not have to be

concrete—aspects of self identity formulated in a subject's own perception within, alongside, or

against either the papers or perceived others connected to the papers is still a collaborative

endeavor.[103] Selfhood is always constructed in an imagined community, and the periodical, like

the coffeehouse, provides a public space in which an individual can imagine interaction and

involvement. Such spaces also allow for flexibility and fluidity in audience and individual,

because exchange and interaction are inherently dynamic.[104]

     The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* model interactive and collective identity in multiple ways.

Some of these are more readily apparent—for example, the "club" laid out by Addison and

Steele in the second installment of the *Spectator*. Other features are less obvious but linked to

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[103] I am working with a definition of "imagined communities" based on and developed from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), in which a nation is "an imagined political community…inherently limited and sovereign" though arguably with permeable boundaries, and a conception of community as a "deep, horizontal" connection between its members.

[104] Discussions of mobility and permeability between classes, genders, and other social markers of identity always need to be approached and tempered with an understanding of historical and geographical contexts. It is not my intention to imply that a kind of idealized identity was available to everyone, or even anyone, in these public sites and texts. Rather, I'm attempting to explore these sites for indications of small possibilities of movement in identification available due to the sharing of these spaces and interaction with others in them. To do so requires us to accept the premise that perhaps social identity markers were not quite as fixed and calcified as we tend to assume when we draw a "big picture" of eighteenth-century identities.

practices and conventions of self construction in other genres: similarities to serial life writing genres are recognizable in both voice and in form.

The traits we use to define the modern self –personal responsibility, internal compass of right and wrong, ability to empathize with others—overlap and intersect with the human principles taken up by the periodical, indicating that markers of self can be developed collaboratively as well as individually. The *Spectator* is a document of collaborative self accounting, a diary of shared identity among authors and readers. Calhoun Winton emphasizes the dynamic nature of the periodical and its relationship to its readers: "*The Tatler*…was both a cultural object and a cultural agent: the paper was a manifestation of the changing print culture, and itself changed that culture" (23). Similarly, the *Spectator* both represented the practices of identity formation in the public sphere, and acted as a site for the constant evolution of those practices. Mackie, in her 1998 "Introduction" to the papers, argues that a clear shift in class identification is apparent in the periodical: readers of the *Spectator* "depend not on the conventional prestige markers of wealth and title, but on the less socially exclusive, more generally human principles of modesty, decorum, moderation, generosity, common sense, and good taste. These standards of identification could consequently be adopted by a broad range of classes" (8). And they could be used to create and reinforce identity for members of those classes collaboratively in a public document like the *Spectator*—Mackie's use of the term "human principles" emphasizes the close relationship these papers had with the burgeoning modern identity of its audience. in contrast to The importance to modern selfhood of self-accounting had an uneasy relationship with the rapidly growing material and commercial influence in the lives of eighteenth-century Britons. The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* provide a more desirable, and in some cases more accessible, space of identification "outside the commercial marketplace… As they

conceptualize and represent this place… [they] go far in articulating the modern realm of culture: an aesthetic and ethical arena for the improvement of human nature responsive to criteria other than status, wealth, and fashionability" (Mackie 31). In its articulation of the intangible, the *Spectator* provids a public space in which internal values associated with self could be made external through discussion and collaboration. Mackie draws this comparison as one between a concrete external space—"a commercialized realm of superficial and ephemeral vanity"—and a figurative internal space, an "ethical and esthetic arena of internal and permanent value" (31). Yet that internal space could be created and occupied collaboratively, and it moved beyond the figurative in the physical text of the periodicals.

Both papers have a clearly recognizable and well developed persona and narrating "I" that allows readers to engage with the voice of the text on a personal level. The intimacy of the first person point of view enables the narrator's involvement and interest in the shared subject matter to be transferred to the reader. Phrases such as "It is my custom," "I must confess," and "I was resolved" create a textual atmosphere of familiarity and sharing, and in such an atmosphere, the "I" is easily transferable from speaker to listener, or narrator to reader. The anonymity of the *Spectator* makes the narrator even more easily identifiable to readers; the lack of specific identity makes his role more easily assumable. As a narrative persona, Mr. *Spectator* may be detached, but the audience's introduction to him invokes familiarity: "I have observed, that a Reader seldom peruses a Book with Pleasure, 'till he knows whether the Writer of it be a black or a fair Man, of a mild or cholerick Disposition, Married or a Bachelor, with other Particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right understanding of an Author" (No.1). Steele acknowledges that it is "natural to a Reader" to have curiosity about and want to identify with the writer of a text, and so he opens the first number with the narrator's "own history," to be

followed by "some Account…of the several Persons who are engaged in this Work" (No. 1). The first person narrative and the opening history both invoke the narrative strategies of autobiography. The use of "I" fosters an intimacy between audience and narrator, and personal details (despite the fact that they are fictitious) imply a relationship of openness and equality that belies the moral superiority implied in the reform project. Mr. *Spectator* follows, albeit with irony, the pattern of individual autobiography to the letter, beginning with birth, moving on to infancy and then adulthood. His characterizing of himself is ridiculously conventional, which functions doubly to connect him to his audience. His blatant calling out of that rote biographical narrative acknowledges that it is at the same time everyone and no one, reinforcing the idea of individuality through both association and defamiliarization. The reader is able to connect with the narrator, exchanging and comparing stories from multiple points of identity.

In his "Introduction" (1970) to selections from the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, Robert J Allen discusses the use of multiple characters in the periodicals to add interest: "In method, as well as intention, the originality of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* consisted in their skillful fusion of the practices of other writers. Much of the vividness and immediacy of the papers resulted from what may be called their dramatic quality. They are full of characters" (vi). The "club" approach works to create identification with readers in several ways. As Allen points out, the "characters" that Addison and Steele give voice "supplied a kind of narrative interest which gave a structure to the periodical as a whole" (xii). The named characters represent various lifestyles, and their interaction with one another in the pages of the *Spectator* models the kind of civilized, idealized environment that Addison an Steele posit for the coffeehouse, while still maintaining a satirical edge. The sense of the ridiculous in each character is controlled by the lens of Mr. *Spectator*'s detached gaze, keeping the characters just real enough to be relatable, and potentially

conversable. As Allen points out, a testament to the audience's potential relationship to these characters is the fact that Addison and Steele were careful to end the periodical by reporting what became of each of them (xii).

Positing the authorship of the periodical as a collaborative endeavor by these individuals emphasizes the conversational aspect of the paper, which in turn stresses the sense of progressiveness in the paper's content. With multiple voices in play, finality is less likely to close down a subject. Readers are also more likely to feel as if they can become part of the "club," either through association with one of the fictional members, or simply because a group is much easier to assert one's voice into than a one to one relationship (as with a single author) since it removes focus and pressure from respondents. This in turn encourages conversation to continue outside and around the papers: Knight describes how the periodical encourages community building:

> The conversational reading of *The Spectator* engages various voices (the voices of Mr. *Spectator* and his club, the voices of correspondents and contributors, and the voices of readers discussing the essay itself), and it forms them into a community that sees itself as governed by common values. Thus *The Spectator* plays a medial role joining the speech within the text to the speech about the text and the speech that replicates the text in other contexts. It is a literary manifestation of the public sphere that unites individual voices in a discourse of general significance" (52).

This combination of the individual and the general is a key feature of how the periodicals manage to provide a public space for the crafting personal identity. The topics broached by the periodical are general enough to discuss in a public space, but personal enough to become internalized as markers of self. The periodicals bridge the general and the personal by modeling collaboration for its readers with a conversational style that is inclusive as well as instructive; their ability to be inclusive hinges on content that is "engaged in ongoing conversations about themselves and their everyday world of gossip and news, literature and the theater, courtship and

marriage, personalities and social events" (Mackie 27). Based on the strong "connection between the day's essay and a topic that was, or in the opinion of the authors ought to be, on the tongues of the town," Allen compares the periodicals to contemporary newspapers. He cites their issue at regular intervals, running title and dateline, and double-sided, single-paged format, concluding that "the more the papers are studied in connection with the day to day events of their time, the clearer their journalistic nature becomes (vii). Many of these formal characteristics, however, also overlap with life writing genres that depend heavily on experience and have a strong link to the development of personal identity.

The focus on the immediate and everyday experience—the experience of the moment—is an important aspect of identity creation. When we are looking for texts that allow access to and development of self, one of the most common is record keeping genres—diaries and journals. Although there are various subgenres among diaries and journals, most share several common characteristics. They have a clear narrating "I," they are simultaneously fragmented (usually in some temporal fashion) and cohesive, in that some or all of the fragments can be read as a single narrative, they often carry more than one narrative thread at a time, and their content is dictated by two kinds of experience—daily, or "everyday" experience, and remarkable, or singular experience. The use of the narrating "I" we have discussed above; below we will examine how the periodical mirrors the diary and journal format in other formal features.

Similar to the form of record-keeping life writing genres like journal or diary entries, the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* essays are at once fragments and finished documents, self-contained but also part of a continuous narrative. Each entry or essay is self-contained, with a beginning, middle and end, but also shares purpose and intention with a larger whole. Charles Knight, in his essay "The *Spectator*'s Generalizing Discourse," explores how the underlying political discourse

of the essays move through space and time, but his analysis of the ways in which the essay form

is working in the *Spectator* is suggestive for thinking about how it might contribute to identity

formation as well. He argues that as the "essays move horizontally through time they move

vertically among the levels of abstraction and generality appropriate to their topics and their

audiences…[and this vertical movement] not only organizes individual essays but identifies

groups of essays and establishes themes characteristic of the series as a whole" (45).[105] The

individual essays of the *Spectator* often open with an example that "strives to justify discussion

of a topic by making a comparative statement" (46). That comparative statement, Knight

explains, is often social or personal, which "appeals to the personal experience and priorities of

the author or reader, it alludes to shared knowledge or rests frankly on the authority of the

essayist, and it avoids definition as a means of fixing ideas by giving topics relative rather than

absolute importance" (47). That relativity mimics a key component of diary and journal narrative

convention. Diary and journal entries that are self-reflexive explore issues and experience as they

are relative to the identity of the self constructed in the entries.[106] By beginning each entry with

"accessible experience" (and here we return also to the compelling and intimate nature of the

"I"), "the author's movement from specific to general will parallel a similar movement by the

reader" (45). In other words, when successful, the experience of reading the periodical could be

much like the experience of reading some else's diary entries—and not just any someone else,

but someone who shares communal ties with the reader.[107]

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[105] Knight is borrowing theories of abstraction and generality from S.I. Hayakawa's *Language in Thought and Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949)

[106] It is important to note that this self is not necessarily the same as the writer of the entry—the self constructed on the page is a collaboration based on relativity, but not a direct reflection of the actual (or historical) self.

[107] And in fact, it was a fairly common practice in the eighteenth century for personal journals and diaries to be unofficially circulated in manuscript among reading circles. James Boswell and Fanny Burney, for example, both shared their journals with select readers and even read portions of them to gatherings.

Bound together, the periodical essays resemble diary form—" folio half-sheets separated the individual essays, placing them at discrete moments." Diary and journal entries are also marked temporally, and usually have some sort of address to an other (whether another iteration of the historical self or an imagined other). Knight argues that in the periodical's original formatting of daily installments, "time so weakens spatial organization that the reader has difficulty comprehending the periodical as a complete unit and finds it hard to refer across the structure of the work…it can be perceived as neither a unified work of art nor as a collection of unrelated papers" (50). What Knight is describing here speaks to theories of reading diaries and journals—they too can be difficult to read as "complete" texts using the conventions of narrative generally applied to other prose genres such as short story or novel, or even nonfiction genres such as retrospective autobiography. But diaries and journals have other inherent narrative unifiers, and we find evidence of those in the periodicals as well. Both genres are self-referential—constantly aware of and referencing both themselves as a whole and past entries. Diaries and journals often support multiple and unconnected narrative threads and depend recurring characters or experience, much the same as "the *Spectator* encourages readers to group its material in units transcending the single paper. Its organizing identity is partly expressed by the fictional figures of Mr. *Spectator* and his club, and its fictional personality suggests that it is more than its unconnected parts" (50). The fictional identities of the papers hold together as a unit the distinct essays of the periodical in much the same way the constructed identity of a diary holds together its entries. For readers, this elasticity meant that the narrative of the *Spectator* could be bent without breaking, making it even more available as a site of identity manipulation: "The periodicity of the *Spectator*'s folio half-sheets emphasized the separation of essays, but this loose format also allowed readers considerable flexibility in organizing the periodical's

numbers" (50). Readers could literally take apart the periodical and reconstruct it to suit their own identification purposes. This flexibility is in some manner reminiscent of the collections found in coffeehouses. We can locate various levels of collecting in the papers: collections narrative sets inside the larger narrative of the *Spectator*; collections of various characters and voices that make up a constantly shifting narrative "I"; collections of genre: letters, poetry, puns, ballads, literary excerpts. All of these indicate the fluidity of the document and its ability to be maneuvered by an individual reader.

The extensive use of narrative, both first and third person, both distinguishes the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* from most contemporary periodicals and speaks to the story-telling quality of much life narrative. Our perception of ourselves is deeply ingrained in narrative conventions of direct experience, cause and effect, action and reaction, and self-reflection and correction, so narrative in any genre lends itself to identity formation. We see these patterns in nonfiction genres such as biography and autobiography, and history, and in fictional genres as well. Much critical work has been done on the eighteenth century novel's tendency to borrow life writing genres (diaries, journals, letters) to tell story of an individual's selfhood (or coming to selfhood). These novels function much like the *Spectator*, albeit in greater scope. They emphasize self-reflexivity and personal accounting in a private space (the space of the journal or diary) or a semi-private space (letters).[108] The periodical essays too are self reflective—like the novels and many record-keeping documents—though the self in question is a collective social self represented by individual experiences rather than an actual individual. We can liken them to diary entries and letters; we can liken them to novels of the period that also borrow from these genres. The moralizing bears a strong resemblance to the kind of self accounting that is critically

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[108] It seems worth mentioning again that diaries and journals were not as private in the eighteenth century as we think of them now, which blurs the distinctions between public and private in these genres even further.

traced back through Bunyan to Augustine in readings of spiritual autobiography, making the

Spectator in some ways a public manifestation of the Protestant interiority used to trace the

development of the modern self.[109]

These periodicals are teeming with possibilities for collaborative identity making both

real and fictional. The manner and location of the collaboration and collectivity changes easily

and often—from *Tatler* to *Spectator*, from coffeehouse to country house, from literary essay to

moralizing fable, from multiple locations to multiple authors (192 Ellis). Indeed, trying to locate

a stable identity for the papers themselves seems impossible. Of course the most obvious act of

collaboration is that of the *Spectator's* actual authors, Addison and Steele. Perhaps the blending

of their voices, the conversations we don't hear behind the essays, imbue a sense of flexibility

and relativity into the final product that empowers its readers' own sense of self. Addison

certainly recognized the appeal of the collaborative model:

> In his subsequent journal the *Guardian*, published daily from March to October
> 1713, Addison proposed that the coffee-house customers themselves might
> furnish their own material for the journal. In the coffee room of Button's Coffee-
> House in Covent Garden, which he promoted as the place of the wits, Addison
> installed a large letter box in the shape of a Lion's head, "holding its paws under
> the chin." "This head," he said in The Guardian, no. 114 (22 July 1713), "is to
> open a most wide and voracious mouth, which shall take in such letters and
> papers as are conveyed to me by my Correspondents….Whatever the Lion
> swallows I shall digest for the Use of the Publick." (Ellis 192)

The articulation of this letterbox concept gestures toward an even more global collaborative

effort as the next step after the *Spectator*. Addison's language is exceedingly evocative of an

identity that is inclusive (the "wide and voratious" mouth) and collaborative (he will "digest" the

individual contributions for the good of the collective).[110] And the box itself was in a coffee

house, once again linking physical and textual public spaces. In the last chapter, we will explore

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[109] For connections between spiritual autobiography and the modern self, see Introduction and Chapter 2.

[110] One could argue here that Addison is controlling rather collecting identity with this metaphor, but the important point is that he chose to model this kind of inclusiveness in the first place.

how Eliza Haywood takes this same metaphor even further to not only model but embody

collaborative identity and self creation in a public space.

The Spectator had also consciously modeled itself as an interactive and collaborative

document by printing "correspondence"—the first paper ends with an invitation to those

who have a mind to correspond" with the narrator to "direct their letters *To the Spectator*, at Mr.

Buckley's in *Little Britain*" (105). Whether or which letters were written by actual

"correspondents" or by Addison and Steele is less important here than the fact that the paper was

advertised as collaborative, empowering readers to feel as if they could be part of a larger and

larger conversation about what it meant to be human, to have a self. The desire to share and

discuss the *Spectator* ensured that it was an instant success. In the tenth issue, Addison remarks

"with much Satisfaction" on its immediate popularity: "My Publisher tells me, that there are

already Three Thousand of them distributed every Day: So that if I allow Twenty Readers to

every Paper, which I look upon as a modest computation, I may reckon about Threescore

thousand Disciples" (116). Even if Addison's reckoning is somewhat optimistic, as Allen

suggests, this comment is telling in regards to the mobility of papers. That they moved from hand

to hand and space to space is key to thinking about how ideas about self-construction traveled

both literally and figuratively. The papers themselves traveled in letters, a genre closely attached

to textual self construction. Cowan describes the popularity and mobility of the *Spectator*:

> Copies of the *Spectator* papers also circulated well outside metropolitan London.
> They were often enclosed in letters from metropolitan readers to their
> correspondents in the countryside. Within the first year of its publication,
> provincial societies had sprung up in order to encourage the reading of the
> *Spectator*. With the approval of both Addison and Steele, a "Gentleman's
> Society" was founded on 3 November 1711 in which a group of Spectorial
> aficionados would gather together at Younger's Coffeehouse in Spalding to read
> the paper and to discuss the moral lessons contained in each issue's essay. (346)

The *Spectator* was itself was a collaborative document and it contributed to collaboration in and between public spaces and individuals. The movement of bodies and texts in public spaces, to use Mr. *Spectator*'s own words, such as "Clubs and Assemblies, Tea-Tables and Coffee-Houses," provided opportunities for discussion, exchange, and interaction among a diversity of readers attempting to establish and project a viable version of self.

Chapter VII: Gendered Embodiment and Collaborative Identity in the *Female Spectator*

The model of the coffeehouse as a shared public space is available in the eighteenth

century, but it is undeniably masculine. With few exceptions, most critical conversations about

public space in the eighteenth century exclude the feminine: coffeehouses, pubs, and taverns,

politics, and even most intellectual public spaces are dominated by male patrons. But critics have

begun in recent years to locate and examine obviously feminine public spaces as texts:

specifically spas and resorts and commercial spaces such as shops are the domain of the

female.[111] There are shared spaces as well: the ballroom, the public gardens, and even

intellectual spaces such as readings, presentations, and organized debates, if not shared, at least

began to be accessible to women, even if they had to recreate their own models.[112] This chapter

moves from the *Spectator* published early in the eighteenth century to Eliza Haywood's *Female*

Spectator, published from 1744 to 1746. There were multiple imitators of the periodical in the

decades and even centuries following the *Spectator*.[113] Haywood takes up the model of textual

collaborative space and adapts it to accommodate the particular relationships between eighteenth

century women and masculine public spaces. The narrative voice of the periodical is, like the

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[111] As opposed to private, or domestic space, such as the teatable, which is historically labeled feminine, also this too has begun to be complicated in recent criticism. And indeed, even Addison and Steele complicate notions of gender essentialism in the *Spectator*, identifying the blurring of feminine and masculine qualities:

[112] See, for example, Herbert, Amanda E. "Gender and the Spa: Space, Sociability, and Self at British Health Spas, 1640-1714," Journal of Social History (winter 2009); and Hurley, Alison E. "A Conversation of Their Own: Watering-Place Correspondence Among the Bluestockings." *Eighteenth-Century Studies 40.1*.

[113] The *Spectator* was not only a wide and instant success in its own time. Critics are still trying to figure out why it was reprinted so often in the following century (Allen xiv-xv). Speculations about literary superiority and moral timeliness aside, perhaps the *Spectator* was reproduced, imitated, and adapted so frequently because it was such a successful model/vehicle for the creation of collaborative identity; readers were drawn to the periodical because it helped them to create and reinforce a stable sense of self. Also, Mackie cites the *Spectator* as a model for novel writers (25).

Spectator's, a collection of voices brought together; unlike its male counterpart's "club," though, the collection becomes a collective, brought together in the text by a single female narrator. Also like the *Spectator*, the text models itself as hybrid and discursive, containing a larger frame narrative in that single voice, smaller self-contained narratives, and letters from readers to the *Female Spectator* and her responses, though Patricia Meyer Spacks points out in her introduction to the Oxford edition, "Haywood probably wrote all, or virtually all, of these essays." Still, the collaborative project she proposes indicates that Haywood also sees the periodical form as an available textual space for self-construction—a kind of imagined community of female voices that can engage masculine public space and its attendant issues in ways female bodies could not. In fact, the *Female Spectator* eventually proposes a *hybridly gendered* paper that reflects an identity made up of the voices of both women and men. This gesture invokes text as a space where gendered identity is more fluid than physical space allows.

Haywood's decision to model her text on the *Spectator's* club but then adapt that model by integrating the various voices into one speaking identity raises interesting questions about how identity is constructed from marginalized subject positions. Cynthia Huff, in her introduction to *Women's Life Writing and Imagined Communities* (2005), theorizes a form of women's writing that works within mainstream discourses not so much resisting as

> creating a collage of cultures by borrowing elements from the main [dominant] culture yet using them to form new imagined communities, all the while constantly allowing their writing to move among them imaginatively, physically, and through time. This birthing allows these writers to negotiate the complexities of their positioning as poised between, yet a part of conflicting belief systems and also foregrounds issues of memory, identity, and positionality. (7-8) [114]

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[114] In recent years, critics building on Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and especially scholars focusing on the work of women and minorities, have expanded Anderson's focus on the nation as an imagined community that privileges only dominant, mainstream, (male) culture and ignores or suppresses possible counter cultures and their texts and discourses. In addition to artificially homogenizing the concept of nation, privileging mainstream discourse forces alternate voices into a position of resistance, which limits their viability in the community and keeps them in the position of (marginalized) "other." Huff and many others have challenged Anderson's focus on

Arguing that the mainstream discourse of nation forms an imagined community that marginalizes the voice of the "other," Huff's move from resistance to creation opens a space to read the "cultural artifacts" of those marginalized populations not through resistance, but alternate forms of agency. Discussing later eighteenth century female authors, Leanne Maunu takes up imagined community in similar ways, by asserting that women "appropriated the model of collectivity posed by nation, mimicking a national imagined community" (17). This discussion takes up this theory of "reimagined" imagined communities in an effort to examine how Haywood's *Female Spectator* might foster such community identity, paying particular interest to the fluid relationship between individual and collaborative selves in the public space of the text. Experience and memory are at the heart of Locke's theories about what it means to have a self. The recounting of experiences tallied up together in whole or in part then makes up a life whole or in part. Spacks points out in her introduction to the text that "the governing idea of the *Female Spectator* is the urgency of experience for middle-class women": "Haywood set out to provide a combination of fiction, information, and didacticism that would convey a realistic impression of women's lives yet make the possibilities of such lives interesting despite social restriction" (x111-iv). Accessing conventions of life writing genres in ways similar to her predecessor, the *Spectator*, Haywood's papers use collaboration and interaction between individuals to create an identity community in a public space that is not only accessible to women, but also attempts to be inclusive beyond gender limitations.

The *Female Spectator's* female voice differs markedly from others in Haywood's writing. The heroine of *Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze* (1725), Haywood's most well-known early novella, is for most of the text utterly without female companionship. When we are

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the nation because it privileges dominant, mainstream, (male) culture that ignores or suppresses possible counter cultures and their texts and discourses. I use "discourse" simply as the language privileged by any given community.

introduced to her, she is "young, a Stranger to the World, and consequently to the Dangers of it,; and having no Body in Town, at that Time, to whom she was oblig'd to be accountable for her Actions, did in every Thing as her Inclinations or Humours render'd most agreeable to her" (41). There are in fact only two other women in Fantomina's text, aside from the anonymous "Ladies" at the theater and the Courtesans she decides to imitate: her Aunt, who allows Fantomina to go off by herself with servants to "visit a Relation in the Country," and her mother, who doesn't show up until the very end, at which point Faqntomina's voice ceases entirely and her mother's takes over the narrative. This absence of female companionship doesn't seem to disturb the young heroine, who has "an Aversion…to any Confidants in her Affairs" (60). Yet having no opportunities for gendered interaction, the heroine tries to fill this lack by populating the novella with versions of herself, adapting her identity from society miss to country girl to grieving widow to woman of mystery. Fantomina has one body that attempts to represent many voices; the ambiguous end she comes to leaves us with the sense that perhaps such a project is not possible for a woman alone in the eighteenth century. The heroine of *Betsy Thoughtless* is similarly without much opportunity to cultivate female community, and that which is available, such as the company of the aptly named Miss Forward, leads her to be inclined to keep secrets that get her into all kinds of mischief. It is not just the benefits of community, but a particular kind of balanced interaction between individuals, that the *Female Spectator* models.

The first issue of the *Female Spectator* dwells considerably on how the text will be constructed, and I would like to respond to that care Haywood takes to define the parameters of her project by spending some time examining how Haywood offers her text to the public. She opens with the question of authorship, linking the author to the text:

> I, for my own part, love to get as well acquainted as I can with an Author, before I run the risqué of losing my Time in perusing his Work; and as I doubt not but

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> most People are of this way of thinking, I shall, in imitation of my learned Brother of ever precious Memory, give some account of what I am, and those concerned with me in this undertaking. (7)[115]

Rather than alienate a book from its author, Haywood immediately positions text as an embodiment of the writer; a disembodied text, one without an physical body behind it, is not only a waste of time, but can potentially harm, or as Haywood puts it, "deceive" the reader by not offering "improving, as well as agreeable Amusements" (7). In drawing the "Lines" of herself as an author, the first image she produces is a physical one: "for my own Part I never was a Beauty, and am now very far from being young" (8). She then adds that she has "a Genius tolerably extensive, and an Education more liberal than is ordinarily allowed" to women (9). This insistence on the physical body behind the text on the body's experience as well as the mind's, challenges notions of gender differentiation based on physical and intellectual. The *Female Spectator* is both an experienced body and an educated mind.

Having begun by impressing upon her audience the importance of the identity of the author behind the text, Haywood turns to the collaborative model she borrows from the *Spectator*. The authority of the periodical is derived not from a single author, but from its hybridity, its capacity for interaction and community consensus, represented by many kinds of female experience. Her initial structure consists of four women (including herself) that form a collective voice that accesses women from different vantage points of experience and social background. Haywood explicitly points to the inadequacies of a single authorship:

> I commenced Author, by setting down many Things, which, being pleasing to myself, I imagined would be so to others; but on examining them the next Day, I found an infinite Deficiency both in Matter and Stile, and that there was an absolute Necessity for me to call in to my Assistance such of my Acquaintance as were qualified for that purpose. (9)

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[115]This and all subsequent quotations from the text are from Selections from *The Female Spectator*. Ed. Patricia Meyer Spacks. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

The purpose of the periodical cannot be met by an individual, but requires a collective collaborative voice. Taking her *Spectator* "brother," Addison and Steele, as a model and feminizing him, she constructs an authorship that reflects the upper levels of the socioeconomic hierarchy in Britain: Her first choice is a Happily married lady—she must be happily married because this means there is nothing to "ruffle the composure of her soul" which offers her as a model for the focus in the essays on domestic harmony. The widow of Quality, who can speak to both marriage and peerage; the Daughter (young) of a wealthy merchant, who is an "Angel"; and of course Haywood herself, who "has run through so many Scenes of Vanity and Folly as the greatest Coquet of them all (8). Of course, it is clear that Haywood is constructing not only an authorial voice for her narrative, but also a potential readership. Still, this construction tells us much about how Haywood might conceive an imagined community of female writers and readers, and makes available an entry point of identification to the members of that community.

Having crafted this collaborative female voice, Haywood is faced with the challenge of locating it in the physicality of the author that she invokes at the start of the issue. Here her perception of collaborative authorship begins to diverge from that of the male *Spectator*. Addison and Steele use one narrative voice, but that voice remains fractured; the *Spectator* represents and refers to each character individually in the essays. Even though Haywood has created distinct identities and even named her collaborators, she chooses to represent them not only in, but also as, a single voice. She accomplishes this by embodying the text with a sole female figure:

> Whatever Productions I shall be favoured with from these Ladies, or any others I may hereafter correspond with, will be exhibited under the general title The Female *Spectator*; and how Contributors soever there may happen to be to the Work, they are to be considered only as several members of one Body, of which I am the Mouth. (10)

Haywood's "I" in the earlier pages is absorbed here into a collective of The Female *Spectator*. We saw the beginnings of this in Steele's example of the Lion in the coffeehouse—the lion was the "mouth" that would take in the contributions from collaborators, and Steele himself would "digest" them. Haywood develops the metaphor more completely, allowing the collaborative relationship to become fully embodied by the text. The "several members of one Body" can be read in two ways. First, in the eighteenth century could indicate "the main portion of a collection or company; the majority," as in, for example, the body of Parliament (OED). This usage lends itself to the positing of Haywood's female collective. But body can also, of course, refer to physicality and materiality. It is possible to read Haywood as establishing the text in the material female body as the definitive author, investing it with the authority of multiple experiences. But drawing attention only to the mouth of the material body, she grounds language, and the text, in the physical female body. And though the writers of the text are initially differentiated by socioeconomic position, this collapse of identities into a collaborative voice leaves no recognizable social category except female. The "Reader," too, is instructed to reject those other social categories, since Haywood expects that she "will not be interested from which Quarter" any given essay comes (10). She also opens the possibility of "others," which allows fluidity between the women who are writing the text and the women who are reading, opening up the collaborative possibilities and imagining the female body as a space where an exchange of ideas and texts can take place.

In the masculine world of periodical writing, this exchange takes places in a public social space as well as in the textual space of the periodical. As we discussed above, for Addison and Steele's *Spectator* that public social space is located in the coffeehouse. The *Spectator* associates his social identity with coffeehouses in the first number: "Sometimes I am seen thrusting my

Head into a Round of Politicians at Will's…Sometimes I smoak a Pipe at Child's…I appear on Sunday nights at St. James Coffee-House" (103). The *Spectator* frequents these coffeehouses to "Listen with great Attention" and "over-hear the Conversation of every Table in the Room" (103). He "extends his social experience by visiting coffeehouses," and they become "important to periodical circulation, to the character of the editor, and to his conversational style" (Knight 165). In fact, coffeehouses become a physical representation of not just the *Spectator*, but his social criticism: "In these periodicals, the coffeehouse appeared as a site for conversable sociability conducive to the improvement of society as a whole" (Klein 4). The *Spectator* himself posits the coffeehouse as "an idealized version of urban life"—the ultimate public forum. The coffeehouse both creates and embodies the figure of the *Spectator* and his texts, providing a public—but also masculine—space that represents the community around the periodical.

Coffeehouses occasionally appear in the *Female Spectator* too, but they are clearly gendered as places where "Men loitering away so many hours" sit in their "windows, meerly to make their Observations, and ridicule every one that passes by" (208). More important is the absence of what the Coffeehouse represents for the *Spectator*: a public space that serves as a physical manifestation of the text's community. Instead of linking itself to a public forum that generates and embodies the text, the *Female Spectator* must depend on covert sources: "Spies are placed not only in all the places of Resort in and about this great Metropolis, but at *Bath, Tunbridge*, and the *Spaw*" (10). In contemporaneous writing, these public resort spaces historically carry a negative connotation, identified in a largely male discourse as spaces of frivolity and libertinism.[116] Much like coffeehouses, these were spaces that engendered anxiety

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[116] Patricia Meyer Spacks, who edited the Oxford edition of *The Female Spectator*, notes that that Bath, Tunbridge and Spaw are "fashionable resorts" (note 3, page 10). Amanda Herbert examines further their negative associations: "In cheap print literature and in sardonic poems written by libertine males like Rochester, spas thus were portrayed

about interaction in public space. But using the diaries and correspondence of women, Amanda

Herbert argues that "spa towns, despite their relatively small size, had visible and authoritative

female populations and catered to homosocial activities and priorities" (362). Despite, or perhaps

because of the anxiety-producing nature, is this authority derived from interaction in a public

space that the narrator accesses in the *Female Spectator*. Embodying collective authorship in the

female figure and female spaces, Haywood fosters another kind of community in the public

sphere; one that will reflect the multiple voices of women and embody the female figure itself,

which the text can then stand in for, much like the *Spectator*'s text stands in for the coffeehouse

society.

Haywood's use of spying is in one sense simply a rhetorical device borrowed from her

brother *Spectator*; yet spying carries a much different connotation than listening or even

overhearing—it too is almost transgressive. The function of the spy allows the *Female Spectator*

to both invoke the authority of female public space but also distance herself from its critic. This

distance pervades Haywood's "courtesy book" concern about female behavior, a topic that

dominates many of the essays. If the material woman is going to represent female voices in the

public sphere and become, as the *Spectator* calls the coffeehouse, an "idealized version of urban

life," or perhaps we might say an "idealized representative of urban life," she must do so inside

the normative social categories. Haywood wants to put the female figure in the public sphere, but

that female figure must be both morally irreproachable and representative of the female nation.

Her figuring of this embodied community, then, "work[s] within the existing system, which she

takes for granted almost as though it constituted part of the natural order" (Spacks xix). To the

extent that we could extend community identity to national identity, we might then consider

as places of entertainment as arenas for males to practice their heterosexual activities with complete authority,
whether under the auspices of hedonism or the physician's gown" (361).

Haywood's practical advice to women as not just advice about social conduct, but about creating

a kind of imagined national public identity among members who are interdependent, who make

decisions together and correct one another and help one another. It is this kind of female

community that is glaringly absent from *Fantomina,* but Haywood models it in the essays by the

Female Spectator, especially in instances of public representation of the female body:

> It is by Encouragement that Stories, derogatory to the Honour of the Person's
> mention'd, gather Strength; and in my Opinion, those who give Attention to them
> are equally culpable to the Relators.—What then must it be to repeat them? to
> take Pleasure in sounding the Trumpet of Infamy, and exulting that fallen Virtue,
> we should rather commiserate, and use our best Endeavours to retrieve? O there
> are no Words to Paint a Disposition so barbarous, so inconsistent with the
> Character of Womanhood! (140-41)

Not only does Haywood attack rumor mongering here (though she does do that, clear enough),

but she also lays out the responsibility inherent in a female community. It is not enough to keep

the rumor; it is not enough, even, to "commiserate" with your unfortunate fellow woman;

Haywood calls for retrieval—a community protects its own, and protects the female body that

the text represents--this, for Haywood, indicates the "Character of Womanhood." The text also

claims that the community is responsible for the actions of the individual, and it is not only

unwomanly, but even "inhuman…to expose such a one [who has erred],…since nothing is more

common, than when a woman finds her Reputation is entirely ruin'd by the Discovery of one

Fault, she makes no Scruple to commit more" (141). The community and the individual are

dependent upon each other in Haywood's collective model; if the text embodies the physical

female form, then one woman's destruction affects the entire collaborative enterprise.

Haywood's collaborative model ultimately allows her situate her imagined community in

public discourse by claiming an authority through public modes of critique generally assigned to

masculine spaces: discussion and debate on current social issues. The printed pages of the

periodical allow feminine conversation to shift from the tea table and the drawing room to those

public places, such as the coffeehouse, where texts are consumed and discussed.[117] Many critics

have pointed out that the *Female Spectator* eschews politics and focuses only on the domestic;[118]

however, such a focus does not preclude her participation in public conversations that concerned

British identity. Leanne Maunu argues in *Women Writing the Nation* that "when women writers

use their gender as a way to be heard, they demonstrate that gender identity is often stronger

than, or at least as strong as, national identity" (19). I am less concerned with identifying

Haywood as either situated in the domestic or the political, and more concerned with how her

imagined community allows her to elide the two spheres. The text is full of "letters" to the

female *Spectator* from women readers who both praise and censure her, and many of the letters

extend the experience on which the female *Spectator* authorial authority is based: "As I perceive

you intersperse your moral Reflections with such Adventures as promise either Instruction or

Entertainment to your Readers, I take the Liberty of enclosing a little Narrative, which I can

answer is a recent Transaction, and the Truth of it known to a great many others as well as

myself" (155). One readers' story is thus told outside the confines of private space via the

periodical: Haywood prints this "little narrative" from "Elismonda" in full. Even though, as

Spacks, points out, it is likely that Haywood wrote many or most of these letters herself, her use

of them to model an increasingly diverse discourse expands the initial community embodied by

the text.

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[117] I can find no evidence for or against the *Female Spectator's* presence in the coffeehouse, but Spacks in her introduction comments of the wide and cross gendered readership of its immediate models, the *Spectator* and the *Tatler*. The coffeehouses' tendency to provide a wide and varied selection of reading materials to its patrons, as well as the portability of periodicals, and Haywood's engagement with the public space of the coffeehouse, all seem to indicate that its presence there is at least possible.
[118] Though it is not directly related to my argument here, it may be worthwhile to point out that there are varying degrees of opinion among critics about how "domestic" or "political" Haywood is.

As the text progresses, Haywood begins to test the gendered terms of the collaboration; the "Female" in *Female Spectator* becomes both subject to scrutiny in terms of the value of contribution and at the same time increasingly permeable in regards to its gendered nature. Participation in the communal identity is not derived unquestioningly by gender. The *Female Spectator* privileges interaction through her inclusivity, but those voices that take part must do so through proper participation by contributing only that which is valuable to the larger whole. In Book XV the *Female Spectator* reports that "a letter [from a female reader] has been left for us at our Publisher's…but we do not think it proper to insert this, because the Contents can be of no Manner of Service to the Public" (203). Even more telling, not all of the letters that the *Female Spectator* chooses to include are from women. Male voices, both positive and negative, are also represented; indeed, after one such letter she expresses a wish that

> the Character this Gentleman has given us, under the name of *Lysetta*, might not be ascribed to a great number of our sex; and that the Impartiality the Female *Spectator* has promised to observe, would have permitted us to have stifled, under the Pretense of its being a personal Reflection, a piece of Satire, which we fear will be looked upon as but too general. (240)

Here the *Female Spectator's* inclusivity manifests as problematic for creating a feminine ideal, but since that has not been the goal of the periodical, the "Gentleman's" letter is incorporated into the conversation, even given ultimate authority: Our Correspondent…has summed up every thing that can be said on this Head" (241). Rather than seeing male voices as challenging Haywood's construction of a female imagined community, however, we might consider their presence as an example of the flexibility of the text, an engagement with the larger community, made possible by the very embodied nature of the text itself. Certainly inclusivity is not without its risks. At this point the male voice is kept distinct, and her pronoun usage does not include him. But the "body" and the "mouth" of the *Female Spectator* provides a physical space where

conversation is possible not only among but between genders, and it brings the public forum closer to the domestic space since it incorporates male voices into this text embodied by the female figure.

The end of the text gestures at the possibility of an even closer collaboration between the sexes. The inclusion of male voices never disrupts the gendered collective, since male contributors are always clearly marked in the text. Haywood maintains the image of the female collective through the last issue, where in explaining why the *Female Spectator* must retire, she remarks that "Close as we endeavoured to keep the Mystery of our little Cabal, some Gentlemen have at last found means to make a full discovery of it" (313). The insertion of the female body into public spaces, even in text, is still marked as a secret and uncertain undertaking; we are reminded of the earlier necessity for using spies to obtain intelligence that seemed to come easily to Addison and Steele's *Spectator*. The discovery is not framed as one of rejection, but desire for inclusion:

> They needs will have us take up the Pen again, and promise to furnish us with a variety of Topics yet untouched upon, with this Condition, that we admit them as Members, and not pretend to the World, that what shall be hereafter produced, is wholly of the *Feminine* Gender. (313)

To some extent we can read this as a compulsion for control that challenges Haywood's project. If the collective identity embodied in *The Female Spectator* allows the "*Feminine* Gender" to take part in larger social and political discourses by providing an embodied public space that parallels spaces that women cannot enter (like the coffeehouse), to "admit as Members" the male voices would challenge the community that Haywood constructs; with male members, the "body" and the "mouth" would change. Yet Haywood's response is telling: she chooses to "drop the Shape we have worn these two Years" but hints at a future collaborative textual space in which the function of collaborative identity does not have to be gendered: the above proposition

of gendered inclusivity is not summarily dismissed: "We have not yet quite agreed on the Preliminaries of this League, but are very apt to believe we shall not differ with them on Trifles, especially as one of them is the Husband of Mira" (313). Marriage, the *Female Spectator* told us early in the text, is "the Band which unites not only two Persons, but whole Families in one common inseparable Interest" (25), so it is not surprising that she might pose it, however loosely, as a metaphor for a textual collaboration between genders.

Haywood's text deals with issues that, as critics point out, are situated primarily in the sphere of the social and domestic. Yet many of the entries duplicate those issues that Addison and Steele took up in the *Spectator*: fashion, marriage, gender critique, education, and parenting, just to touch on few. But like the coffeehouse, the space of the periodical excludes women's voices, at least in direct engagement. The *Female Spectator* provides a public space for an embodied female voice to engage in those issues by modeling a feminine identity not often found in other eighteenth-century published texts. In Haywood's fiction, and in even in the examples provided in the stories of the *Female Spectator*, solitariness is unable to support female identity in either the public or private, and can even be destructive to the individual. The textual space of the *Female Spectator* offers an alternative for public gendered identity: one that is supportive and collaborative and can engage the right way in the discourses of public space. And it posits, at least hypothetically, the possibility of a periodical to offer a public space that exceeds, or at least elides gender in public discourse.

Afterword

As I look back over the pieces of this project and attempt to write a conclusion, that place in the text that sums up, that figures what whole the parts add up to, it occurs to me that this very practice is antithetical to the thrust of the discussion. That 'concluding' reflex represents what I have been pushing against for the last two hundred pages; the compulsion ingrained in us to look back over anything, a life, a story, a relationship, an encounter with a stranger on the street, and try to finish it, to imbue in it a sense of meaning through finality and progression into something else. This, my project argues, is not really how anything—relationships, narrative, life—works; we don't really just shut up experience in a box and tuck into its place in a row. It recurs; it bubbles up when we least expect it, or when we most do: Laetitia Pilkington at the end of her second volume preempts her critics by usurping their role and "accusing" her own work and its faults (252). Our perspective has to be readjusted according to new experience, the subject's expression of value in regards to positioning shifted by some occurrence, as when Charlotte Charke received the letter she sent her father unopened and decided she was no longer open to being judged. The critical juncture where eighteenth–century studies and life writing theories meet, as I have explored here, offers a rich opportunity for understanding how heterogeneous experienced was lived and translated into text during the period to which we assign the birth of the modern self. A focus on seriality and its features is especially timely in light of the recent rise of periodical studies brought about in part by the development of digital archives and the wider availability of texts. Digitization projects such as the *Proceedings of the Old Baily* and the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* provide opportunities for reading eighteenth

century texts in wider and more flexible frameworks. These documents, much like the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, fall outside expected life writing genres, but the approach I frame above allows provides one possible model to rethink the historical relationship between self and genre.

No matter the genre, most of the writers discussed in this project allude in some way or other to one of the main difficulties in writing a life; the life is going to continue and the text is not. So Pilkington and Defoe both promise us "further adventures" in volumes yet to be written and published; Addison and Steele's Spectator promises to "Print myself out, if possible, before I die" (page). At least one life writing genre acknowledges this tension between content and form: diary, Lejeuene reminds us, is a text only completed upon death, or rather incomplete upon death, depending on how we approach it. The diary, and also, I argue, the serial, allow deferral to become a defining quality of textual self-construction, challenging the primacy of the modern individual by undercutting many of its key features. Completion to some extent implies an embodiment of textual perfection, a state in which the text and the life it represents has fulfilled all of the requirements of a particular contract. But Jerome McGann reminds us that such expectations are impossible once the text enters the public sphere: "The textual condition's only immutable law is the law of change" (9). McGann's focus is on the text over time as it interacts with various readers and external conditions, but he identifies possibilities for the mutability in the text itself:

> Do not imagine that these variations are a simple function of differentials that
> reside 'in the readers": in personal differences, or in differences of class, gender,
> social, and geographical circumstances. The differences arise from both sides of
> the textual transaction: "in" the texts themselves, and "in" the readers of the

texts…Various readers and audiences are hidden in our texts, and the *traces* of

their multiple presence are scripted at the most material levels. (10; italics mine)

It is those variants "in" the text, in the self it conveys, that this argument focuses on, not only

over time after the text is published, but during it actual production. Completion and perfection,

as well as many of the other elements of an autobiographical text representing the modern self

such as progression, unity, retrospection, are momentary functions of the text that can be over-

ridden by McGann's law of change, as we have seen, even as the text is being produced. Seriality

is merely one process by which we can make this mutability visible. A focus on serial

subjectivity allows us to read these subjects as actively and positively reconstituting themselves

in multiple and repeating patterns that converge and diverge over the course of the text.

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