

THE AGING MIND AND BODY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE
AND CULTURE, 1680-1830

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ABSTRACT

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Aging Mind and Body offers a literary history of the concept of aging between 1680 and 1830. I trace the interplay between the century's literature and developing medical theories of the human body, revealing the long eighteenth century to be a crucial cultural moment that transformed what aging meant both for writers and for the broader public. While in the early modern period authors predominantly associated aging with wisdom and spiritual growth, Enlightenment science reconceived aging as radically debilitating for both the body and the mind. I argue that this shift spurred significant literary innovations as writers exploited, negotiated, and subverted scientific assumptions about growing old. Excavating the history behind the emergence of derogatory terms for aging such as "senility" and "senescence," I show that the literary portrayal of aging was effectively turned into a contested site for reimagining normative human life and progress. Each of my chapters examines a different supposed problem of aging—rising immobility, mental disability, changing physical appearance, and declining sexuality—as it emerges in the major works of Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Leapor, John Cleland, and Jane Austen. In particular, I undertake a critical re-reading of aging as it intersects with racism, sexism, ableism, and classism. Reading these works in terms of aging, I argue, complicates our traditional story of the long eighteenth century's attention to progress, revealing not simply an ongoing struggle to marginalize the aging mind and body but also an important literary attempt that refigured "decline" as a constitutive and meaningful part of the whole life experience.

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INTRODUCTION. THE HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF AGING, 1680-1830

Curiously, in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689; 1706), John Locke announces that “decrepid old Age” will be left out of his investigation of personal identity (83). Considering Locke’s later works on child education, it is easy to glance over this disclosure as a mere lack of interest in later cycles of human life. But that old age *is* mentioned to be not mentioned is rather peculiar. Why did Locke omit old age, and why did he explicitly note this omission? As a close analysis of his work reveals, Locke actually does not and cannot totally exclude old age. Instead, the concept of old age haunts his discussion of self identity. Here, thus, a more pressing question would be, “What is it about old age that made this deliberate oversight possible—and even necessary?”

The long eighteenth century was an age consumed with the idea of old age and aging. The city of London was packed with a baffling array of goods and publications that promised to reveal the secrets to prolongevity (Turner 203, Yallop *Age and Identity* 11). The figure of a healthy old man like Thomas Parr (who reportedly died at the age of a hundred and fifty-two), Henry Jenkins (aged a hundred and sixty-nine), and Lewis Cornaro (aged a hundred and two) engrossed the public and medical circles. In the seventeenth century, eminent men of science like William Harvey even performed an autopsy on the long-lived Parr per King Charles I’s command in an attempt to explain Parr’s extremely lengthy old age. Taking up this interest, the first half of the eighteenth century saw an outburst of hopeful medical treatises and regimens concerning the aging process. Alongside elixirs and “quack” medicine for healthy old age,¹ the

¹ In his classic volume, *Quacks: Fakers and Charlatans in English Medicine* (2000), Roy Porter points out that during the early modern period, as well as the long eighteenth century, the neat divide between trained physicians and “quacks” did not exist. Particularly focusing on medical practices and methods that were largely not standardized, Porter emphasizes that medicine was a business as much as it was a vocation or a profession during the long eighteenth century. Porter writes that the practice of such medicine often involved bold publicization of trained medical knowledge or dependence on medical authority on the part of un-officialized practices.

famous Dr. George Cheyne wrote *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (1724), John Wesley published *Primitive Physic* (1747) generating at least twenty-four editions before 1800, and William Buchan put together his successful *Domestic Medicine* (1769) which alone sold fifty- to eighty-thousand copies during his lifetime (Beatty 66n12, 104n26, Yallop *Age and Identity* 18). Combined with increasing literacy and the Enlightenment faith in scientific progress, the eighteenth century witnessed a growing health-enthused public that believed that an individual has power over his body and health (Ottaway and Tague ix-xiv). The zest for science, the avid consumers of health-care, and the medical professionals catering to the moneyed audience with a taste for “polite” appearances came together to yield a culture that urged people to be healthy and particularly to take control of their aging mind and body.²

While this optimism around the power of science and health-care engrossed the public, a more nuanced understanding of aging developed throughout the long eighteenth century. The idea of prolongevity along with immortality was challenged as medical experts learned to understand the inevitability of bodily decay. The practice of regimens might delay aging or slow the process down but only to a certain point. As in Dr. Cheyne’s famous words that would be echoed throughout the century, “In spite of all we can do, Time and Age will fix and stiffen our Solids” (*An Essay* 220). As much as one may hope for an ever-young body, there must come a time for aging to have an effect on the mind and body.

² The eighteenth-century medical practice was more patient-driven than theoretical. As scholars such as Porter, David Turner, and Helen Yallop observe, eighteenth-century patients had more power, or “autonomy” as John Wiltshire calls it, in terms of money and diagnosing. Porter writes that eighteenth-century patients “habitually played an active and sometimes a decisive role in interpreting and managing his own state of health,” in contrast to the nineteenth century when the professionalization and organization of “the medical profession” took place (138). See Roy Porter “Lay Medical knowledge in the Eighteenth Century: The Evidence of the Gentleman’s Magazine.” For “politeness” as a key analytical concept to understand the eighteenth-century culture, see Lawrence E. Klein. “Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century.”

But the concern for aging was more than an apprehension for an individual's health. As Locke's "omission" of old age illustrates, the uneasiness around aging is based on the grim possibility that aging unsettles a "human." Instigating an intense debate and wide-ranging implications for the century to come, Locke claims that humans have a superior sensory perception. Reasoning that there are varying degrees of perception, Locke asserts that humans in general have a higher level of senses—delicate, complex, and bright³—and that distinct sensory perception enables man to acquire a distinctive knowledge of the world, retain memory, and ultimately construct his consciousness.⁴ While pointing to this equation between the level of perception and the hierarchy between creatures, Locke apparently hits a baffling moment. There seems to be an inevitable circumstance that undercuts his theory of the human. It is the coming of old age and its bodily and mental effect. "I cannot but think there is some small dull Perception," Locke suspects, "in mankind itself."

Take one, in whom decrepid old Age has blotted out the Memory of his past Knowledge, and clearly wiped out the *Ideas* his Mind was formerly stored with; and has, by destroying his Sight, Hearing, and Smell, quite, and his Taste to a great degree, stopped up almost all the Passages for new ones to enter: or, if there be some of the Inlets yet half open, the Impressions made are scarce perceived, or not at all retained. How far such an one (notwithstanding all that is boasted of Innate Principles) is in his Knowledge, and

³ According to Locke, different degrees and qualities of perception lead to varying reasoning faculties, an idea which in turn allows him to imply that there are different degrees of humanness within humankind. Locke categorizes idiocy and madness as two extreme instances of humans lacking proper speed, activity, and motion of intellectual faculties. For instance, Jonathan Andrews observes that Locke posited idiots as the life form that "occupy the threshold between nature and man" (86).

⁴ In Locke's identity theory, consciousness is the act and ability of perceiving that one perceives himself. In other words, consciousness is both a reasoning faculty and a capacity for reflection. It is the ability that enables one to "consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places" (223) based on perception, memory, and reasoning.

intellectual Faculties, above the Condition of a *Cockle*, or an *Oyster*, I leave to be considered. (84)

As a trained physician himself, Locke's envisioning of old age is characterized by the new scientific discoveries around how the body and the mind are connected. As opposed to the traditional Cartesian mind-body dualism, new Enlightenment theories surrounding the human body highlighted the connection and the reciprocity of the body and the mind with regards to the nervous systems and muscles. This is important because old people, according to Locke, possess a decayed body. The five senses are all broken down in an old body: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. And as the senses are the beginning of a consciousness, and consequently a human, the decayed material body of an old person has far more disturbing ramifications than just a loss of, say, an appetite. Conditioned by the blocked inlets and thwarted journey of the sensory data, "decrepid old Age" leaves the presence of consciousness uncertain in an old man. Moreover, it is not only that he can no longer receive fresh impressions. His once-humanly quality has declined. His memories are "blotted out," "past Knowledge" is erased, and ideas are "wiped out." If one does not sense, remember, form new impressions, is one the same person as before? Even more problematically, not only is it unknown whether an old man has the same consciousness as his younger self, but Locke questions whether or not he is a (proper) human. Characterized by the crudely and clumsily shaped creatures, the decrepit man appears to have no refined delicacy of a human about him. He is a hardened shell. And as Locke so carefully alludes, this "cockling" of a person may be latent in every aging—and seemingly fine—human.⁵

⁵ Locke's theorization of the complications that old age causes is carefully marked as "conjectures." When Locke talks about old age, he employs a rather distant and hesitant stance. Locke writes "I am apt too to *imagine*, that it is perception in the lowest degree of it, which puts the boundaries between animals and the inferior ranks of creature. But this I *mention only* as my *conjecture* by the by; it being *indifferent* to the matter in hand, which way the *learned shall determine* of it" (85, my emphasis). The supposedly lower level of perception is crucial to his theory as it lies at the heart of how he defines the boundary between species. Notwithstanding all these hesitations, however, Locke

Such prejudiced characterizations of old age and the anxieties around aging extended into the literary spheres. The literary scene of the long eighteenth century becomes populated with “decrepid” old people. Starting from the Restoration drama, we see a distinct rise of a parodic cast of aging characters who demonstrate the unpleasing reality of physical decline and mental degeneration. The wrinkled “old maids” and immature “old rakes” increasingly overshadow the once-revered figure of grey-bearded “wise old men.” The attention to the bodily changes and their mental effect, the condemnation for simply being old, and the assumption so extreme as to compare an old person to an insignificant oyster appear in many forms in various avenues of literature.

Aging Mind and Body offers a literary history of the concept of aging between 1680 and 1830. Largely following C. U. M. Smith’s suggestion,⁶ I define the long eighteenth century around important movements in science that begin with publications of scientific philosophies by

does not fail to emphasize perception as the beginning of the definition of humankind. Locke uses such emphasis to allude that the bodily decay which results in lower level of (or extinct) perception quite possibly exclude old people from the category of human. Later in the same work, Locke is meticulous as to analyze the meaning of sleep and forgetfulness as the instances of questionable level of consciousness. For instance, forgetfulness, observes Locke, is a moment of “our Consciousness being interrupted, and we losing the Sight of our past *Selves*” (223). He continues to suggest that “Doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing, i.e. the same Substance, or no” (223). If even the quotidian forgetfulness is a case which risks the stability of a personal identity, the combination of deadened perception, blocked inlets, which all contribute to the “blotted out” memories of old age are assuredly much more problematic for Locke. The repeated qualifications in Locke’s language betray a serious level of anxiety. Though he dilutes this threatening complication of old age with a repeated use of “I wonder,” it does not cancel the possibility that every aging person may become a “cockle.” In the same quote above, Locke carefully states that he will not say more “How far” a decayed old man is different from a cockle. Here, Locke connotes that the question old age brings is not one that can be negated but that it is one of degree. With a defensive parenthesis “(notwithstanding all that is boasted of innate principles),” he further implies that possessing the hailed human quality like reason, ability for associating ideas, capacity for language, or even abstract thinking does not protect an old person with decayed body and mind from being turned into an insignificant oyster.

⁶ C. U. M. Smith outlines—and complicates—four ways to define the long eighteenth century: based on strict calendar dates (from January 1, 1700 to December 31, 1799), by literary movement (from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* to the emergence of first generation of Romantics), by political history (from the Restoration (1660) or the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to the Reform Act of 1832), and by the publications in science and philosophy (from the beginning publications of the so-called New science by Descartes and Newton until roughly the rise of Romantic biology as late as 1810s). As Smith admits, although the beginning of the long eighteenth century largely concurs in 1660 to 1680, the end date is more ambiguous. See Smith “Brain and Mind in the ‘Long’ Eighteenth Century.”

Thomas Willis and John Locke and end with the (rise and) fall of Romantic science in 1830.⁷ I trace the interplay between the century's literature and developing scientific theories of the human body, revealing the long eighteenth century to be a crucial cultural moment that transformed what aging meant for the writers. While in the early modern period authors predominantly associated aging with wisdom and spiritual growth, Enlightenment science reconceived aging as radically debilitating both the body and the mind. Bringing together literary works such as Daniel Defoe's sequels to *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Jonathan Swift's Stella poems (1719-1727), two representative poems by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Leapor, John Cleland's *Memoirs of Fanny Hill* (1749), and Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818), I argue that this shift spurred significant literary innovations as writers exploited, negotiated, and subverted scientific assumptions about growing old. Throughout, I historicize literary portrayals of aging by interweaving key medical texts and lesser-known popular regimens of the period including Cheyne's *Essay on Health and Long Life*, Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human* (1792-1827), and John Gowland's *Epitome of a Manuscript Essay on Cutaneous Diseases* (1794). Reading these works in terms of aging, I argue, complicates our traditional story of the long eighteenth century's attention to progress. It reveals not simply an ongoing struggle to marginalize the aging mind and body but also an important literary attempt that refigured "decline" as a meaningful part of the whole.

⁷ Although Thomas Willis' seminal neuroscientific treatise *Cerebre Anatomi* published in 1664 is often cited as the starting point of the long eighteenth century, this work identifies the long eighteenth century as starting from 1680. This is to clearly signal that this work does not explicitly engage with the Restoration period which is a distinct literary period for literary scholars.

Traditional and Emerging Theories of Aging

There were two competing models of aging in the long eighteenth century. The traditional aging model understood the process of aging as a balancing act between the declining body and the growing mind. Life was a continuous cycle of gains and losses. Each life stage had its own virtuous balance, and old age was a period of lost physical strength which was offset by a spiritual gain. Largely grounded in Cartesian mind-body dualism, it proposed that the passing of time brought with it a spiritual growth or a mental awakening. Under this framework of aging, then, the body and the mind diverge through the natural process of aging. This model, which I call the *divergence* aging model, elevated the stage of old age and the process of physical decline as a sign of a mental maturation, and, in ideal cases, of wisdom.⁸ Distant from the dynamics of the secular world but closer to the ultimate redemption, this distinctive balance of old age claimed ease and wisdom.⁹ Figure 1 and figure 2 below show the typical visualizations of a revered old man. They are depicted with grey beard, upright, and looking directly at the audience with dignity. The usual signs of agedness such as stooped back or toothlessness are absent in these portrayals.

⁸ Jill Campbell identifies the traditional model of aging as a “crude quantitative model” that computes the aging process as simply add or subtract a category of elements in a person’s life. See “Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the ‘Glass Revers’d’ of Female Old Age.” 215.

⁹ Although this wisdom is usually considered as one of peace, it sometimes meant a powerful tool for survival. For instance, Thomas Hobbes writes in *Leviathan* (1651) with great attention to how time changes and destroys the body, that old people gain “prudence” (i.e., experience) which becomes a vital tool for that makes all men equal in the state of war (60-61).

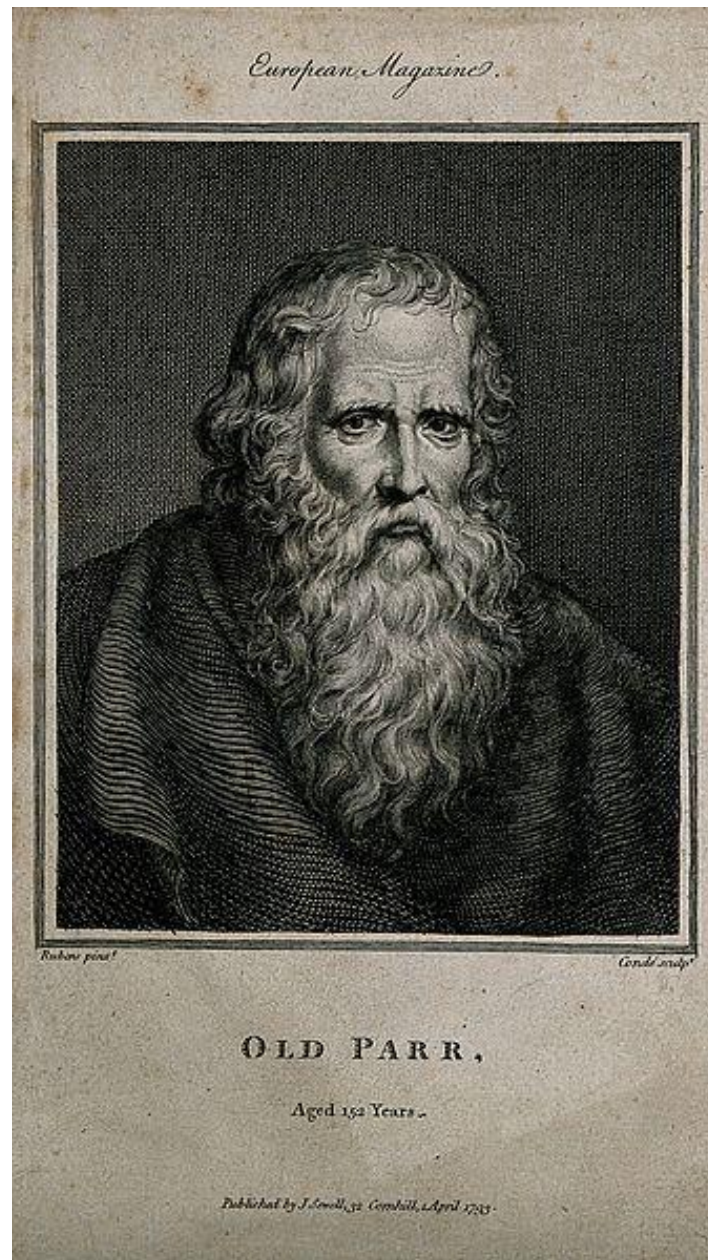


Figure. 2. J. Condé, “Thomas Parr, aged 152. Line engraving by J. Condé, 1793, after Sir P.P. Rubens” (1793).

During the long eighteenth century, however, a more medicalized understanding of aging was on the rise, or rather, new Enlightenment scientific theories of the human body validated a different model of aging that was already common but was overshadowed by the existing

divergence aging model.¹⁰ As seen in Locke's identity theory, it was the idea that aging is a process of decline for both the body and the mind. The aging body was no longer a sign of mental growth. Instead, the aging body signified mental decline that coincides the physical decline. With groundbreaking scientific and medical discoveries around the nerve fibers and the nervous system, the mind and the body existed less as two separate entities. The mind, or the soul in a more conventional sense, was embodied through a complicated network of nerve strands. A person's body was "the material basis of consciousness," the mind (Barker-Benfield 1). I call this model the *convergence* aging model. Under this framework, rather than making up for physical deterioration, the body and the mind of an aging person were converged in their decline (see fig. 3). Thought to be most prominent in a morally depraved old person, aging was sometimes a process of total decrepitude.

The rising convergence aging model had a powerful impact on the language about and the imagination of aging throughout the long eighteenth century. For instance, derogatory terms such as "senility" and "senescence" came into existence in the long eighteenth century. The word "senile" as an adjective was first logged in 1661 by Robert Boyle, a natural philosopher and a scientist, in order to describe how "senile" maturity of judgment compares with youthful energy. As seen in this usage, "senile" was not a pathological or demeaning term at first. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "Belonging to, suited for or incident to old age. Not only of disease, etc.: Peculiar to the aged" ("senile, adj."). But during the end of the eighteenth century and especially by the early- to mid-nineteenth century, "senile" comes to capture strictly negative

¹⁰ Speaking broadly, the emergence of geriatric medicine, in other words, "medicalization" of old age, is traced to between 1850 and 1950. Yet, age studies historians argue that the medicalization of old age began much earlier. For instance, Lynn Botelho argues that it was the seventeenth century that old people were beginning to be seen as "suffering" from aging and that suffering can be relieved from medical attention. See Botelho, "When the Healer becomes the Patient: Old Age and Illness in the Life of Elizabeth Freke, 1641-1714."

associations of old age. By the mid-nineteenth century, “senile” often refers to “Exhibiting the weakness of old age” and even becomes a part of a coined term of “senile dementia”—“a severe form of senile deterioration, in which loss of memory, disorientation in time and space, and inability to cope with everyday life are strongly marked” (“senile, adj.”).¹¹ In 1778 when “senility” was first logged by James Boswell, senility refers to “The condition of being senile; old age or the mental and physical infirmity due to old age” (“senility, n.”). In this instance, the characteristics of old age are not neutral. They are interweaved with “infirmity” of old age, one that particularly emphasizes the frailty of both the body and the mind of an old person.

¹¹ For a historical overview on the term “dementia,” see G.E. Berrios.



Figure. 3. Thomas Rowlandson. “Dotage.”

The two views of aging coexisted throughout the long eighteenth century. In *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) the eponymous hero’s old father is a typical old man of the divergence aging, “a wise and grave Man . . . confined by his Gout” (5). Henry Grove’s letter to *The Spectator* in 1714 observes the convergence aging in mundane life: when “Age advances, every thing seems to wither, the Senses are disgusted . . . and Existence turns flat and insipid” (255). As Pat Thane reminds us, to be sure, there have always been two ways of representing old age: one that idealizes old age and the other that vilifies, victimizes, and wrongs it (“Untiring Zest” 236). But different and specific kinds of anxiety prevailed in the long eighteenth century.

The problem with the convergence aging model for contemporaries was that, first, it was now tied to scientific authority threatening to negate the traditional values attached to aging. If aging brings about a radical debilitation of both the body and the mind and cannot guarantee a growing wisdom and virtue, what is left to value in old age? As Hester Chapone, a well-known conduct book writer of the era asks, “Does the soul (one would be almost tempted to ask) contract and shrivel up with old age, like the body? And can time wither even virtue” (61)?

Such assumed problems with aging were also particularly relevant to the long eighteenth century as a period preoccupied with the notion of sensibility. The eighteenth century was an age that some scholars call “the cult of sensibility” (Barker-Benfield xiv). The discoveries around the human nervous system impelled contemporaries to see the body as a person’s way of responding and existing in the world. The nervous body was the ground for not only consciousness and personality but delicacy and taste. For example, aristocrats were considered to possess a superior kind of sensibility that led them to appreciate the world and address moral issues differently than the common people. A heroine with a fragile body would “naturally” possess a superior morality because she senses more acutely the right and wrongs of the world than her “dull” chambermaid. The makeup of the nervous constitution, it was thus believed, determined the degree of sensibility that largely reflected their social status.¹² The aging body with numbed senses then

¹² This idea of sensibility was highly gendered. Investigating the significance of the nervous disorder in eighteenth-century novels, John Mullan observes that women of the era held a paradoxical position as both the privileged and disturbed subjects of sensibility. With the female body supposedly came feminine sensibility; women were equipped to feel more. And while this logic allowed the female sex to be more responsive and susceptible and thus more “sensible” to the signals that came both from outside their body and inside, it also made them prone to nervous complaints. Because of their sensible body women were also perceived as fragile; their volatile nervous system made it easier for them to lose the control of their senses so to speak. Similar to Mullan, Barker-Benfield also notes the gendered view of the nervous system and its ramification for the subjectivity of women in the eighteenth century. See G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. University of Chicago Press. 1996.

signaled more than a body with stiff figure. As seen in Locke, it potentially connoted declining sensibility and rigid morality.

Even more seriously, this declining sensibility was used as a rationale for detruding old people from the category of “human.” *The Spectator* example cited above attests to the growing prevalence of the convergence aging model. In *The Spectator* No. 626, Grove tells a story about an “old Grannum” he came across one day. Grove watches curiously as this old woman remained totally untouched by a merry scene of a young girl dancing right beside her. Wondering how this old lady could be so, Grove concludes that age is the only obvious reason for her insensibility. “I have been able to resolve it to nothing else but *the Force of Novelty*” (255; vol. 8).

In every Species of Creatures, those who have been least Time in the World, appear best pleased with their Condition: For, besides that to a new Comer the World hath a Freshness on it that strikes the Sense after a most agreeable Manner, *Being* it self, unattended with any great Variety of Enjoyments, excites a Sensation of Pleasure. But as Age advances, every thing seems to wither, the Senses are disgusted with their old Entertainments, and Existence turns flat and insipid. (255)

According to Grove, as opposed to a child who takes everything with a fresh sensation, an old person has seen it all. The most agreeable entertainment would disgust an old person who is inured with stimulations. Although there may be some degree of difference in their withered senses, the writer grants, the general principle is that “the longer we have been in Possession of Being, the less sensible is the Gust we have of it” (255). In addition to the “Decay of the Faculties” (255) aging makes a person dull and bland, indifferent to the world, and finally, a “flat and insipid” being. This state of sensory exhaustion deprives an aging person of their status as human. The numbness makes one callous to desire, delight, love, friendship, and horror. Grove

observes how, for old people, “Monsters, by use, are beheld without loathing, and the most enchanting Beauty without Rapture” (256). The social aspect, art and culture, and abstract aesthetic pleasure are obliterated from an aging body and mind.

The writers this study looks at, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Leapor, John Cleland, and Jane Austen, all show a deep engagement with contesting theories of aging and the ramification of changing life configurations in the long eighteenth century. Each used the tension surrounding fictional representations of aging to explore the afterlife of growth and alternatives to progress. The passion for “novelty” an old adventurer may feel at the age of sixty-one, the numb senses that strip away a capacity for poetry, the imposed ideas of virtue for a physically declining woman, the moral depravity of a hardened insensible body, and a universal withering of beauty are topics that the writers delve into. Writers created an array of aging figures that both modeled and mocked the prescribed notion of aging, spurring significant literary innovations in plot, poetic identity, characterization, and narrative authority.

Age as An Intersectional Identity Category

I use age studies as a framework blending the tools of literary analysis, history of medicine and science, gender and sexuality studies, and disability studies. I interweave a wide-ranging set of scientific treatises, health regimen texts, and popular anti-aging goods with literary portrayals of the aging mind and body. This methodology allows my work to examine aging as not a universal process but a marked one that took different forms for various intersectional

identities in relation to race, gender, sexuality,¹³ and class. A white European male's aging was differently perceived and represented than, say, that of a colonial subject. To appreciate this complexity, I consider four types of aging—*fixed*, *altered*, *variant*, and *resistant*—that demonstrate different expectations and realities of aging. I do not posit that these types of aging are exhaustive or that they existed completely separate from each other. Oftentimes, these types overlap with each other and are found in one subject through a writer's effort to resist and displace the problems of the shifting and unstable meanings of aging. Framing my chapters around each kind of aging, I illustrate how the concept of aging powerfully engages with multiple aspects of human identity as writers negotiated the changing medical and cultural discourses around aging.

The structure of this project emphasizes multiplicity and difference. The chapters are organized to illustrate the friction of divergence and convergence aging models and the various responses from writers of the long eighteenth century for various groups of aging subjects. Despite the growing influence of the convergence aging model, eighteenth-century literature does not show a neat progressive arc of medicalization in its understanding of aging. Sometimes, writers align with medical assessments of the aging mind and body and other times they do not concur. In some instances, they exploit the medical assumptions about growing old, at others, subvert them. But all of them show that the writers were deeply invested in the changing meaning of aging and used such frictions as a creative tool to imagine later life in diverse forms.

¹³ I use this term mindful of what sexuality most frequently and easily refers to. Each of my chapters examines prominent identity markers such as race, gender, and class; and my third chapter calls attention to sexuality. In this work, I use "sexuality" as an umbrella term that subsumes the idea of sexual expression, fertility, sexual identity, as well as sexual abilities. Although the sexuality I investigate is less about "sexual identity" (e.g., LGBTQIA+), sexual abilities I investigate are intricately tied to heterosexual norms and their reproductive sexual capacities as well as heterosexual normative temporality. Furthermore, my use of the term emerges from the belief that sexual expression and sexual abilities/prowess are important aspects of a person's identity and sexuality. Finally, this framing of my third chapter around sexuality is an attempt to push against the idea that old people's sexual abilities/desires are not a part of their "sexuality" or sexual identity which continues to persist in our modern time.

Focusing on the diverse responses writers show to the medical discourse of aging, each chapter illustrates a distinct aspect of aging's intersection with another identity category: race, gender, sexuality, and class.

I begin with *fixed* aging—an exceptional case that depicts usually “young” bodies and minds that seem not to age. Starting with Daniel Defoe’s rarely-discussed “sequels” to *Robinson Crusoe*, I show how some early eighteenth-century novels experimented with various strategies to make a plot out of a protagonist’s aging (or its absence). Unlike the earlier section of the narrative, the later stories of *Crusoe* do not attempt to attach traditional narrative meaning to aging. Rejecting the traditional figure of the wise old grey who is peacefully removed from the bustle of society, the passing of time in *Crusoe*’s old age does not coincide with learned lessons steadily accrued for a spiritual growth. Furthermore, there is no inkling of health complications that seem to deter this man in his sixties and seventies. He is extremely vigorous, physically mobile, and mentally agile. This man in his sixties and seventies is frozen in time, stuck at a certain level of maturity and never allowed to grow “wiser.” Drawing on the hopeful early eighteenth-century medical discourse for prolongevity (i.e. healthy long life), I propose that the increasing challenge to the traditional paradigm of aging and an enthusiasm for a healthy old age prompted Defoe to create a type of protagonist who allows Defoe to experiment with the formal problem of narrativizing old age. By imagining aging not as a run to the point of narrative closure but as a restless continuation of the youthful self, Defoe organized the motley incidents of an old protagonist into a plot. This extraordinary story of an old character, however, is not for everyone in the eighteenth century. I end the chapter investigating how *Crusoe*’s fixed aging relies on the manipulation and erasure of aging on the part of aging colonial subjects. I look at three sub-characters including Xury (whom *Crusoe* sells into slavery), Friday, and Friday’s

father as my prime examples to suggest fixed aging as a privileged type that was limited to a select category of white male British characters.

With a focus on gender, chapter two centers on *altered* aging figures that undergo radical physical and mental changes. Here, I consider the gendered meaning of aging for a male and female poet's poetic identity. This chapter brings together Jonathan Swift's Stella poems and what I call "spectre" poems—a collection of works written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Leapor that utilizes ghost metaphors to depict aging women. I illustrate the complex relationship between aging and a poet's supposed declining worth and waning mental capability. Reading Swift's annual birthday poems, I show how Swift exploits the aging female body as a trope to leave his masculine poetic identity intact, even presenting him as a masterful genius whose intelligence overcomes his debilitating physique. Reacting to a misogynistic view of aging, the female poets reappropriate the idea of aging women as spectres—a ghost of their past—and create extraordinary poetic identities with marked physicality and mental vitality. I highlight the subversive power of these literary creations by setting these poems alongside the era's medical texts which claimed inherent (and gendered) decline in aging.

The satiric portrayal of physically declining but sexually *variant* figures is the core of chapter three. Aging men and women who are overtly sexual and trying to prey on a younger generation is one of the most common themes used in eighteenth-century literature (almost characterizing the era). As these desirous aging characters paraded the literary scenes of the eighteenth century, the scientific discourse of the period theorized that sex differences "collapse" when one grows old enough. Sexually active older figures thus met with scientific dissent as they were thought to deviate from the normative trajectory of aging. They became oddities, the figure of abnormal human forms, and a subject of severe mockery. Analyzing multiple types of

desirous aging figures in John Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, an eighteenth-century erotica with a surprising number of desirous old people, I show how literary imaginations of old people's sexuality both impose on and resist against the era's medical discourse. I underscore the meaning of satire in these portrayals—with the use of humor, irony, and exaggeration—and illustrate how these sexually variant aging figures disrupt the era's ideal of nonsexual old age, simultaneously condemning and celebrating the sexuality of old people.

I end my study with a reading of *Emma* (1816) and *Persuasion* (1818) showing how Jane Austen establishes the authority of young protagonists by depicting immature old characters such as Mr. Woodhouse and Sir Walter Elliot who resist aging by rejecting changes, fantasizing that they can turn back time, or even reverting to second childhood. I call this type of aging *resistant* aging. I argue Austen engages powerfully (and satirically) with the topic of controlling aging, a cultural belief that was at the center of a popular medical culture of the era. As developing scientific and medical knowledge of the human body configured aging more as a pathology than a cosmic fate, an anti-aging and self-care industry thrived by promising ways to treat this illness, to guard against decay, or even to restore youth. I take particular interest in the material artifacts of the anti-aging culture of the era—like the bowl of slow cooked gruel for Mr. Woodhouse and Sir Walter's beloved anti-aging lotion—and show how they work as narrative devices for measuring characters for their mental and moral maturity. The desire to control one's own aging corresponds to a weakening authority, I argue, as these novels present the natural passing of time as an opportunity to experience life and learn. Here, the central issue is that aging gets explicitly entangled with class since the manifestation of aging—most often seen in lower class people as well as reckless aristocrats—now bespeaks a neglect of care. Using Austen's extensive references to medicines for old people, longevity therapy, and an anti-aging beauty product, I

illustrate how the era's anti-aging culture engages with the faltering class system of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, ultimately shedding a light on the unexpected relationship between the anti-aging industry and social mobility in the era.

Methodology

Aging Mind and Body contributes to a growing academic body of work on the literary history of aging, including Devoney Looser's *Women Writers and Old Age in Great Britain, 1750-1850* (Johns Hopkins UP 2008), Andrea Charise's *The Aesthetics of Senescence: Aging, Population, and the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (SUNY Press 2020), Karen Chase's *The Victorians and Old Age* (Oxford UP 2009), the recent special issue of *Age, Culture, Humanities*, "Narratives of Aging in the Nineteenth Century" (2021), Kay Heath's *Aging by the Book: The Emergence of Midlife in Victorian Britain* (SUNY Press 2009), Jacob Jewusiak's *Aging, Duration, and the English Novel: Growing Old from Dickens to Woolf* (Cambridge UP 2019), Sari Edelstein's *Adulthood and Other Fictions: American Literature and the Unmaking of Age* (Oxford UP 2009) in the nineteenth century, and Linda Hess's *Queer Aging in North American Fiction* (Palgrave 2019) of the twentieth and twenty-first century.

Although eighteenth-century Britain has received attention from age historians including Lynn Botelho, Katharine Kittredge, Anne Kugler, Susannah Ottaway, and Pat Thane as a pivotal period in British medicine and population changes,¹⁴ the scope of literary scholarship on the history of aging has primarily focused on the nineteenth century. The Romantic emphasis on childhood and innocence and the controversy surrounding the Malthusian fear of youth as well as

¹⁴ See the Pickering & Chatto series of *History of Old Age in England, 1600-1800*, Eds. Ottaway and Tague (in total eight volumes); *Power and Poverty* edited by Ottaway, Botelho, and Kittredge; Botelho's *Old Age and The English Poor Law*; *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500* edited by Botelho and Thane.

the long-living queen Victoria proved generative grounds for literary criticism.¹⁵ The works of Chase, Charise, Heath, Jewusiak, and the special issue of *Romanticism*, “Romanticism and Ageing” (2019) together explore what age and aging means for a new youth-centered culture of the nineteenth century. In this line of works, the eighteenth century is regarded, rightly, as the “in-between” period when the conceptions, realities, and expectations of aging were fluid, uncertain, and haphazard. In comparison to nineteenth-century Britain when “the invention of the elderly subject” (Chase 276) took place with a much stricter medicalization of health and illnesses and the growing institutionalization of old people, the eighteenth century is when the concept of age and ageing underwent a profound transformation with “such an about-turn in the medical assessment of old age” (Schafer 542). In the context of the history of medical discourse, the long eighteenth century is “an age of transition but not of revolution” (C. U. M. Smith 16). The transitional period, however, and the ways to engage with such incoherent and conflicting ideas does not mean that the period passively exhibits the shift in gradation. The ways eighteenth-century writers and thinkers engage and make sense of the shifting values around old age is just as remarkable.

Rather than considering the long eighteenth century as only exhibiting transitional ideas, this study examines the unique and significant literary experiments that arise from the inconsistencies, multiplicities, and confusion around the ideas of aging. The broad genres of literary texts that I examine, including the novel, poetry, and drama, allow me to demonstrate the

¹⁵ Childhood studies is another field of studies that examines a specific life stage as a cultural and historical formation. In eighteenth-century studies context, childhood studies has gained critical attention through excellent body of works that examine topics such as development, education, and innocence. See Anja Müller’s *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity* (2006), Andrew O’Malley’s *The Making of the Modern Child: Children’s Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (2006), Dror Warhman’s *The Making of Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (2004), Teresa Mangum’s “Little Women: Aging Female Character in Nineteenth-Century Children’s Literature,” *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (1999), and Alan Richardson’s *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (1994).

larger ideological shift around aging that took place during the long eighteenth century but also tease out how the concept of aging structurally engages a specific genre and initiates literary experiments. For instance, my reading of Defoe's sequels to *Robinson Crusoe* shows how Defoe uses the contest between the traditional understanding of aging as gaining wisdom and the new medical discourse for a healthy long life to create a plot out of an old protagonist. My exploration of Swift, Montagu, and Leapor reveals aging as a central trope that establishes the poetic identity of these poets, arguing that sexist medical and cultural notions of female aging frame their poetic creations. I contend that literary portrayals of aging in eighteenth-century literature show a deep awareness and nuanced understanding of the changing meaning of aging which in turn sparked important literary innovations in plot, poetic identity, characterization, and narrative authority.

My second contribution to the field of the literary history of aging is in its methodology. This study is particularly attentive to the intersectional nature of age and aging that I argue set in motion such literary innovations. As the writers this study looks at show, there were as many kinds of aging as living in the long eighteenth century based on race, gender, sexuality, abilities, and class. By highlighting the different shapes and expectations of growing old, this study furthers social age historian's study of aging as "a highly individualized process" (Ottaway *Decline of Life* 4).¹⁶ Moreover, it answers to literary critics' calls to consider age in relation to various forms of social difference and injustice. In her insightful work on age rhetoric around "adulthood" and how it was used to subjugate political and cultural others in nineteenth-century American literature, Edelstein urges that "the meaning of chronological age must be understood

¹⁶ Ottaway writes that before the late eighteenth century and particularly the industrial revolution, there was no definite systemic definition that was used to identify a person as old. A variety of factors contributed to mark one as old including residency, mental and physical health, appearance, economic status, family structure, and gender. See *The Decline of Life*. Also see Thane, "Social Histories of Old Age and Aging."

intersectionally” (145). My study takes up the process of aging itself and addresses how the changing meaning of aging propelled a variety of cultural responses that provided a powerful and compelling way to continue and further existing social injustice towards distinct groups of people in the long eighteenth century. As age scholars emphasize, aging is not a universal process nor is an age-concept (e.g., childhood, adulthood, midlife, old age, etc.) a coherent category invariably dispensed.¹⁷ Each of my chapters undertakes a critical re-reading of aging as it intersects with racism, sexism, ableism, and classism. For instance, my first chapter exemplifies how the white male European’s privilege of aging, demonstrated in Crusoe’s ability to adventure and age into his seventies without any physical or mental disabilities, relies on the manipulation and erasure of such privileged prolongevity on the part of aging colonial subjects. Collectively, my work presents age as an intersectional identity category that allows for multiple critical interventions that address the racialized, gendered, sexualized, and disabled aging mind and body.

I use the concept of intersectionality mindfully, answering to Michael Davidson’s call for “coalitions and intersectional alliances” for disability studies (450). Here, I heed black feminists’ call that the term “intersectionality” refers to intersectional experience and framework in the works of women of color.¹⁸ Although informed by this concept, my work does not specifically engage with writers of women of color of the eighteenth century. My use of this term is with the aim of, first, resisting the temptation to simply add age to the identity categories or examine it as a separate identity category thereby allowing me to further reveal how race, gender, sexuality,

¹⁷ For foundational works of age studies, see Margaret Morganroth Gullette’s *Aged by Culture* (2004) and Stephen Katz’s *Disciplining Old Age and Cultural Aging* (1996).

¹⁸ I owe this insight to Jason Farr’s *Novel Bodies: Disability and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (2019). See Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd’s “Reclaiming Intersectionality in the Social Sciences” and Kimberlè Crenshaw’s “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.”

and class were thought to initiate different kinds of aging in the era, illustrating the historical import of the concept of aging as an intersectional category of human identity. Second, and relatedly, it fleshes out and highlights the embedded and explicit discussions on the significance of aging as an intersectional identity category that previous scholarship on aging suggested.

Previous works on the literary history of aging have been intersectional in nature whether explicitly or implicitly.¹⁹ Under the foundations of the larger field of age studies, scholars examine age as a form of difference that is historically and culturally contingent (Gullette “Age (Aging),” *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory*). Since Looser’s seminal volume that examined the dynamic between age, gender, and creativity, and particularly more so during the last decade or so, literary age studies scholars sustain diligent attention to how divergent realities and expectations of aging arise for women, colonial subjects, people with lived experiences of disability, and sexual minorities. My work joins in the emerging scholarship that directly considers age in relation to (the history of) various forms of social injustice as in Jane Gallop’s *Sexuality, Disability, and Aging: Queer Temporalities of the Phallus* (Duke UP 2018) and particularly that surrounding women of color as seen in Habiba Ibrahim’s *Black Age: Oceanic Lifespans and the Time of Black Life* (NYU Press 2021). Through this intersectional investigation, I thus seek to unravel narratives of aging as both situated within and disrupting the constraint of systems of power in the era.

¹⁹ The first critical attention to age as an intersectional identity category was largely paid by feminist scholars in the new millennium. The once twenty- and thirty-year-old second-wave feminists began to address their experience as “old” women in the 2000s. For example, feminists including scholars like Susan Sontag noted what she calls the double marginality aging women face against sexism and ageism and found texts like Simone de Beauvoir’s 800-page essay on age, *The Coming of Age* (1970) had been somehow passed over. It is now recognized that feminism had limited its focus on the rights of the “daughters” (e.g. reproductive rights and wage equality) but left the “mothers” behind. In other words, these age-conscious feminists diagnose that feminism itself had been entrenched with ageism.

Finally, *Aging Mind and Body* speaks to a broader group of scholars in eighteenth-century studies and disability studies. Ever since Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, the long eighteenth century and particularly the Enlightenment is no more the period that simply contains or is limited to the idea of progress. Despite the excellent scholarly attention to the “dark side” of the Enlightenment such as the era’s attraction for the supernatural and irrational, the other side of the Enlightenment ethos, namely, “decline” or the supposed aftermath of progress, needs further critical engagement. My work brings forward aging as a concept situated within the Enlightenment dynamic. Locke’s awareness of aging as a problematic concept is a great example of how aging and its physical and mental effects complicated the Enlightenment ethos that often points toward progress, development, and even perfection of the human race.²⁰ I foreground literary portrayals of aging because they offer rich and diverse strategies writers deployed to make sense of the shifting meaning of the aging process, and because they also show the problems of such schemes. In particular, *Aging Mind and Body* takes up the growing negative associations that lie behind various types of aging in relation to the larger Enlightenment agenda. Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum remind us in *“Defects”: Engendering the Modern Body* (2000) that one of the larger Enlightenment projects was to categorize, classify, and differentiate

²⁰ Following William Bristow, I take the Enlightenment as a period, loosely organized between the late seventeenth century and the late eighteenth century, with its diverse and respective forces, that, on the whole, diligently centered around the idea of progress and improvement. Especially celebrating the use and power of reason to improve condition of humans, one of the phenomena of the Enlightenment is the belief in perfection of human race, and in a medical context, the extreme prolongevity as seen in the works of Bacon and Priestley. For example, John Priestley, a leading figure of the Enlightenment, wrote to Benjamin Franklin in 1780 that he is delighted with the era’s newly gained “power of man over matter.” Celebrating what he perceived as the unlimited potential power of science, Priestley continues that “All diseases may be sure means be prevented or cured, not excepting even that of old age, and our lives lengthened at pleasure even beyond the antediluvian standard” (Franklin 94). See William Bristow, “Enlightenment.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. For discussions of the manifestations against the rationalization in the Enlightenment period, see Terry Castle’s *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*.

humankind from other species as well as among people.²¹ With a particular radar for what makes a human a “human,” Enlightenment thinkers sought to normalize various forms of “defects.” The eighteenth century’s conceptualization of aging was no exception from this Enlightenment agenda. Even when aging does not necessarily involve “real” disabilities, tropes used for normalizing disabilities are often employed for aging. Old people and the physical and mental effect of aging that Locke so bluntly points to are repeatedly described as anomalies, objects of pity or as “ugliness,” realms of wonder, or even beyond comprehension.²²

In fact, the intersection between age studies and disability studies is increasing. What was previously referred to as “the dearth of critical material” in “ageility studies” (i.e., a theoretical approach that consciously recognizes how disability studies and age studies overlap and diverges) is continuing to be filled by an excellent body of works in both fields including that of Sally Chivers, Jane Gallop, and Erin Lamb (Marshall “Ageility Studies” 21).²³ In the context of eighteenth-century literary studies too, critics such as Jason Farr and James Reeves carry on the pioneering work of Jill Campbell, Lennard Davis, and Jonathan Andrews.²⁴ These scholars

²¹ For further discussion on eighteenth-century’s fascination with the variances and extraordinary, see David Turner’s *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, Janet Todd’s *Imagining Monsters: Miscreations of the Self in Eighteenth-Century England*, and Lorraine Datson and Katherine Park’s *Wonders and Orders of Nature: 1150-1750*.

²² Leni Marshall notes that aged/disabled bodies are like lesbian bodies, in the words of Judith Butler, because they all lose “cultural *legitimacy* and, hence, [are] cast, not outside or prior to culture, but outside cultural legitimacy, still within culture, but culturally ‘out-lawed’” (“Ageility Studies” 23). See Marshall’s *Age Becomes Us* for further discussions.

²³ Many of these scholars highlight how both fields aim to identify and destabilize the imposed social categorization and stereotypical representations and narratives around aging and disabled bodies. For age-disability intersectional works that do not specifically engage literary studies, see *The Aging-Disability Nexus* (2020) edited by Katie Aubrecht et al., Roberta Maierhofer and Ulla Kriebnerneegg’s *The Ages of Life: Living and Aging in Conflict?* (2014), Margaret Cruikshank’s *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging* (2006), Sharon-Dale Stone’s “Disability, Dependence and Old Age: Problematic Constructions,” and *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (1999) edited by Kathleen Woodward.

²⁴ Age as a whole has long been a relatively neglected identity category in disability studies. Old age appears only once in Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s *Extraordinary Bodies* (Marshall “Ageility Studies” 27-28) and David Turner’s otherwise excellent work on disability in eighteenth-century England does not take up age explicitly as an identity that can intersect with disability as it does with gender and class. Turner’s volume, however, shows an attention to how age and disability come together through its inclusion of “old age” in the index. Here, old age is almost exclusively examined in terms of its merged status with disability such as in the cases of charitable old people like “crippled” old poor people.

provide a valuable historical framework for understanding how aging and old (and disabled) people were categorized and represented, and together examine age as a constitutional variable which, along with gender and sexuality, had important implications for the construction of normalcy for the century to come.²⁵ The recent works of Reeves and Farr both center around the power of aging's temporality. Reeves argues that the "temporal incongruity" of aging and disabled bodies in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* shows the curative power of pain, sickness, and aging. Farr concurs in his attention to the subversive temporality of aging and disability. Connecting crip time with the aging body, Farr argues that the two aging characters—Matthew Bramble and Obadiah Lismahago—in Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) revise reproductive futurity through aging and chronically ill bodies.²⁶ Yet these studies largely consider age as a stable factor that can play into the experience and construction of disability as one approaches a certain age and meets the consequential effects of aging. What existing scholarship on age and disability begins to reveal, although not explicitly, is the specific nature of age and the aging process that is not only analogous to but also different from disability. My project moves to further this exploration. I take age as itself an incoherent, polysemic, and independent, although intersectional, identity category with an aim to examine its complexity more fully. In the long eighteenth century, despite its inherent tie with disability, the process of aging sometimes obviously merges with disability and at other times it does not so clearly. To be clear then, I examine aging figures that embody acquired disabilities due to aging as well as those that do not necessarily have physical and mental disabilities. With such a

²⁵ See Deutsch and Nussbaum for the history of the idea of normalcy.

²⁶ Jane Gallop writes that old people are "often, like queers, figured by the cultural imagination as being outside mainstream temporalities and standing in the way of, rather than contributing to, the promise of the future" (10). Because old and queer bodies do not abide by the compulsive futurism and the child that subordinates everything for reproduction and future, they exist in and embody what she terms the "queer temporality," "challenging the sexual life course that privileges reproduction and devalues nonreproductive lives and moments." (8).

strategy, I can draw attention to various forms of aging figures who were indeed considered to exist outside the norm²⁷ such as a figure of a decaying old maid in her thirties or a sexually potent old man.

This leads to my last contribution. Exploring the meaning of aging in the long eighteenth century helps us examine how some writers of the period confronted identity as an inherently unstable concept or tried to secure it as steady. This is important because eighteenth-century literature is believed to show a deliberate neglect over the effect of temporal changes for one's identity. Our traditional story of eighteenth-century fiction is that literature was the venue for writers to defend the stability of identity against the backdrop of the identity revolution. As John Barresi and Raymond Martin write, the debate that Locke prompted "over how to understand ourselves provoked not only intellectual controversy but existential terror" (1) for contemporaries. The "I" was now no more a given stable identity. The slightest interruption in consciousness, for instance, during one's sleep or memory lapse, had the potential to cast doubt on the continuance of an identity. According to Patricia Meyer Spacks, eighteenth-century fiction responds to this anxiety by imagining self as being solid. For instance, Spacks observes there are no essential changes in eighteenth-century characters. The kinds of growth or inner transformation that take place in the *Bildungsroman* of the next century does not come about in eighteenth-century literature. Concerned with securing self as stable identity, writers of the era turned self into an object—a character in a fictional world or a "I" in a story. The attention to aging complicates such a perspective. Rather than wholly disagreeing with existing scholarship on the era's concern for stability of identity, my study reveals various strategies writers created and employed to insure their identity. That is, I argue that the collection of works I examine

²⁷ In that the aging figures without explicit disabilities are considered as lacking something or deviating from the typical and the norm, they could be considered "disabled" both in the sense of a deficit model and social model.

show a serious reflection over the meaning of change and instability of identity that writers considered as profound.

Aging in the long eighteenth century was a complex process that did not simply mean adding on another year to one's age. It involved a change in one's "character" in the "stages of life," often very abruptly. Life, in general, was a combination of various stages of life with distinct periods such as infancy, childhood, adulthood, and old age. Compared to an earlier era when the movement from one life stage to another was considered more or less linear and steady, eighteenth-century literary texts imagined these stages as distinct levels consisting of steps with "tangible breaks and changes in roles" (Yallop *Age and Identity* 136).²⁸ As people proceed in these stages of life, not only were they expected to act according to their age,²⁹ but they were also considered to have changed in their "understanding, reasoning, judgement, memory, inclinations, manners, and instincts" (Yallop *Age and Identity* 129). In particular, old age was considered a life-turning point under the "grand climacteric" scheme.³⁰ And although there were sometimes specific age parameters involved in defining each stage of life, there was no set indicator that decided one as "old" or "aging" for a major part of the eighteenth century. Granted, the calendar year sixty was increasingly becoming a mark for old age by the end of the century. Ottaway writes in her foundational *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England*

²⁸ Anja Müller also observes a revision of the late eighteenth-century's framework of life as a sequence of stages. Müller historicizes the idea of life as stages of life: from middle age to the sixteenth century, it was a cyclical model that saw the beginning and end of life as circular; during the seventeenth century, the stages were considered more as a progression within a linear and horizontal framework; in the eighteenth-century (and after 1780s specifically), the stages were considered as having a hierarchy as if life were a combination of steps/stages that one mounts, reaches apex, and descend. "Envisioning Age," 232-234.

²⁹ For further discussion on "acting one's age," see Yallop's *Age and Identity*, Chapter 6. "Identity Formations: Age and 'Character.'"

³⁰ This grand climacteric year refers to the sixty-third year. In this scheme that largely follows ancient Greek philosophy and astrology, life was divided into stages each consisting of nine years. Looser notes that the scheme applied differently, although ambiguously, for women, making fifty-years-old as the grand climacteric year for the female sex ("The Blues Gone Grey" 101).

(2004) that various historical, economical, and cultural forces combined during the late eighteenth century to turn “the elderly as a parish burden, and the elderly as a clearly definable subset of population” (Ottaway 13).³¹ But for the most part of the eighteenth century and for majority of the population, old age also came upon a person so instantly and imperceptibly. If there is one thing that eighteenth-century scholars concur about aging in the era is that there is a sense of abruptness, surprise, and disjunction, even analogous to losing a limb at a battle in some cases (Reeves 241). In a word, it means that although aging was understood as a natural progression or stage that entails predictable expectations, the experience of aging itself involved profound disruptions in the self. The writers my study looks at examine aging with such a remarkable awareness for how aging changes the self—whether socially, mentally, or physically—playing with and creating literary devices around the expectation of aging.

To analyze the various and changing representation of aging is to acknowledge its historical and cultural formation. Mike Featherstone and Andrew Wernick write that the aging body is not simply “subjected to the imperatives of cellular and organic decline, for as it moves through life it is continuously being inscribed and reinscribed with cultural meanings” (2-3). Tracing the history of aging in the long eighteenth century, *Aging Mind and Body* shows how the conflict between the traditional paradigm of old age and the bleak medical outlook for aging

³¹ While warning against reading for a conclusive shift in understandings old age, Ottaway argues that the systemic categorization of old age was prompted by various social forces of the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century: the industrial revolution allowed for new ways of earning a living which increasingly became a part of the society; the younger generation began to disengage from the traditional patriarchal living arrangements; the generational conflict increased due to the doubling of population that was growing younger due to fewer national and international wars; the price inflation made supporting even what eighteenth-century contemporaries considered as the “deserving poor,” a population of poor people for which the old and infirm made up a large portion, burdensome as a whole (Ottaway *Decline of Life* 6). According to Ottaway, the Enlightenment belief in the progress of humankind encouraged the larger culture to attend to the human condition of people in lower social strata, and this growing concern resulted in parish charity and public relief for the infirm and poor. The prime example of this is the poor relief system which began to recognize a growing need for distinction between the “idle” poor and the “deserving” poor such as disabled veterans. Old people who were not able to work for their living were largely categorized as the deserving poor, and this was critical for the growing prominence of using the calendar year as the indicator of old age. See *The Decline of Life*.

initiated an interrogation into the meaning of the later cycles of human life with literary vibrancy. In doing so, it reveals the powerful ways the biological process came to have meanings for distinct groups of people in the era ultimately illustrating the historical and critical import of the literary history of age.

CHAPTER 1. WITH “NO PROGRESS AT ALL”: FIXED AGING AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN DANIEL DEFOE’S NOVELS

Introduction

When Sir Francis Bacon in *The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (1597) depicts typical early modern aging men, he uses one specific image of “age” to capture the characteristics that set aging men apart.

Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions, embrace more than they can hold; stir more than they can quiet; fly to the end, without consideration of the means and degrees . . . like an unready horse, that will neither stop nor turn. Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success. (148)

Here, men of age are distinct in their lack of mobility and action. Unlike the impetuous young men who would run headlong to chance opportunities to meet their desire, aging men (or, what Bacon calls “men of age”) do not act. As much as Bacon sees the virtue of the old complementing young men’s defects, it is clear that old men do not have the kind of energy, the vigor the young men have to make up the mind, to get up and move, and to explore the world.³² The best—as well as the worst—an old man can do is to keep things the way they are. Far from vicissitude, neither the aging man nor his business moves in a drastic manner. He is *fixed*. He plays it safe, with no exciting variety, giving up potential progress for “mediocrity.” In this respect, aging men would make some ill-fitting protagonists for traditional eighteenth-century novels. Their stubborn preference for the status quo and the distaste for dynamic deny the social

³² Typifying old men in contrast to young men, “Of Youth and Age” as a whole focuses more on the virtue of “age.” In fact, throughout the essay Bacon is rather adamant about the “errors” (148) of youth and the harm youth’s impetuosity can bring. Although Bacon admits that young men have “pre-eminence” to God in a moral sense, equipped with clearer “vision,” when it comes to business and the manner of life, young men’s impulsive actions bring about “the ruin of business” (149, 149, 148). With “much heat, and great and violent desires,” young men’s innate preference for dynamic draws them nearer to failure (147).

and individual possibilities that eighteenth-century British literature is generally said to champion.

In fact, from the classic protagonists such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* to Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* to disruptive figures like Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*, young protagonists populate the eighteenth-century literary world. According to Katherine Gustafson, much of youth's presence in eighteenth-century fiction is directly connected to the awareness of young people as key consumers of prose fiction.³³ Gustafson maintains that young readers responded to new types of characters and to the plots that explicitly dealt with the experiences of the young, thereby making eighteenth-century authors tailor "the subject and form of novels" ("Coming of Age" vii). For instance, Richardson's *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) is a novel that specifically caters to young readers. As the front page of the text reads, *Pamela* was created "to cultivate the Principles of virtue and religion in the Minds of the *Youth* of Both Sexes" (italics added). Despite its wide-ranging readership and impact, it is a story about young people for young people. The novel as a genre is largely a study of the experiences of young people rather than of the "mediocre" aging men.

There is one important literary example that foregrounds an aging man as he seeks an alternative vision for old age in the eighteenth century. It is a story of a man who is never content and who refuses to be static in mediocrity, one who decides that there is still more variety in his life. It is no other than Robinson Crusoe himself, the ultimate hero of the eighteenth-century's cultural imagination, now grown to be an old man. Calling sixty years of his life "the first Part of a Life of Fortune and Adventure" (256), Crusoe hints that he still has ten years' worth of story to

³³ Gustafson is particular about the age of the new young readership. She uses the term "youth" to refer the "adolescent" in order to set the young readership in between "children" and "adults," that is, as those who are not yet settled in the world but as beginning to explore it. See "Life Stage Studies."

tell near the end of the famous *Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719).³⁴ Crusoe finishes off this “first Part” with a promise for a further adventure: “All these things, with some very surprising Incidents in some new Adventures of my own, for ten Years more, I may perhaps give a farther Account of hereafter” (258). Indeed, *Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719)³⁵ was published five months after the initial success of the first volume. This lesser-known second series takes the readers through the varieties of Crusoe’s journey again, this time revisiting his island and travelling across a part of Asia and Russia. This old Crusoe now in his sixties is nothing like Bacon’s static dull bunch. He is extremely vigorous and desperate to get out of the comfortable “elderly” zone of the quiet retired life. Crusoe in his old age is physically mobile and mentally acute. And importantly, he rarely allows himself to metaphorically grow older or wiser. Without an inkling of health complication, this old protagonist jumps in for another adventure with no lessons learned, just like he did when he was young.

The third and final series, *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720),³⁶ could be considered as a yet another tale of Crusoe, a story of Crusoe’s “mental voyage” (35) as Maximillian Novak calls it. This text is without a traditional narrative plot. It is a collection of spiritual essays claiming to have been written by Crusoe now settled at home and happy (RC3 18) exploring various topics including solitude, honesty, conversation, and religion. Crusoe justifies his writing as a “proper Business of old Age,” that is, “Reflection upon things past” that can be achieved “in a Season of my Time, when (if ever) a Man may be supposed capable of making just Reflection upon things past, a true Judgement of things present, and tolerable Conclusions of things to come” (RC3 120, RC3 119-120). His

³⁴ I will refer to this text as *RC1* from this point.

³⁵ I will refer to this text as *RC2* from this point.

³⁶ I will refer to this text as *RC3* from this point.

business is to impart his view of the world as a wise old man. Simultaneously, however, Crusoe does not simply sit back and impart his “wisdom.” In the appendix of *RC3*, titled “A Vision of the Angelick World,” Crusoe even goes on an imaginative spiritual adventure to outer space. As one who “had an invincible Inclination to travel,” Crusoe “travelled as sensibly to my understanding, over all the Mazes and Wastes of infinite Space, in Quest of these Things” (*RC3* 26).³⁷ Quite unlike the stale aging men in Bacon’s depiction, this aging Crusoe is still up for the wildest adventures.

My first chapter takes up this unusual figure of aging—*fixed* aging—an exceptional case that depicts “young” bodies and minds in early eighteenth-century British literature. I begin with Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and particularly the rarely discussed “sequels.” Unlike the earlier section of *RC1*, the later stories of Crusoe do not attempt to attach a typical narrative meaning to aging. That is, the passing of time in Crusoe’s old age does not coincide with “learned lessons” accrued for a spiritual growth. I propose that Defoe organized the motley incidents of an older protagonist into a plot by experimenting with various meanings attached to aging and playing with strategies to make a plot out of a protagonist’s aging (or its absence). Drawing on the growing medicalization of aging and hope for prolongevity found in popular health regimens and authoritative scientific treatises, I show that the destabilization of the traditional paradigm of aging prompted Defoe to create a different characterization of aging. I argue that Defoe imagined aging not as a simple run to the narrative closure but as a restless continuation of the self, thereby exploring an alternative possibility for growing old and ultimately, a different model of individuality. In the final section of this chapter, I examine how this fixed aging and Crusoe’s aging life of variety are a privilege that manipulates aging on the part of colonial subjects.

³⁷ Note that the page numbers apply to the appendix. The original edition that I cite in this study has page numbers start anew in the appendix.

Later Stories and The Novel

My reading of the later stories of Robinson Crusoe aims to contribute to a line of literary criticism that brings to fore the much neglected narratives about aging. Feminist literary scholars have made several crucial attempts at reading old and aging protagonists. Critics such as Barbara Waxman and Constance Rooke examined various narratives that depict old age or the process of aging. Largely working with twentieth-century and contemporary texts such as that of Margaret Laurence, May Sarton, Doris Lessing, and Alice Munro, these scholars shed a light on stories about aging that are not really about developments, socialization, or even decline. For example, Waxman coins a term *Reifungsroman*—"novel of ripening"—for a group of works that reconceptualize the story of aging women through an anti-sexist and anti-ageist framework. As the title of Waxman's book suggests, *From Hearth to Open Road*, later life is here a period to which the Bildungsroman logic can be extended, another stage of "adventure, growth, self-discovery, self-affirmation and integration" (Cover copy).³⁸ In a different vein, Rooke's concept of *Vollendungsroman*—"novel of winding up"—foregrounds "the tension between affirmation and regret" in such narratives (Rooke "Hagar's Old Age" 31, "Old Age" 251). Here, aging does not simply entail another form of development; it is also about loss, a process of deconstruction of the ego, and acknowledging the decline. Writing at a time when the novel was on the "rise," Crusoe's later stories present a different paradigm of aging that both utilizes and challenges the stereotypes and expectations of old age and aging.

³⁸ Waxman notes that authors of the genre of *Reifungsroman* express a need to "humanize the elderly and link old age with productivity and futurity" (12) and intend to reclaim old population as "valuable." Despite its pioneering attempt, such strategy risks what Sally Chivers calls "positive ageism" (xxv). In such a criticism, the attempt to "correct" misconceptions of old age by promoting the status of old persons as viable, productive, sexual, and healthy individuals neglects the full meaning of old age and aging. Granted, this effort is necessary to address the wrongs of the stereotypes of old age and make it "visible," but it also leads to not only cultural but theoretical exclusion of old age that can no longer be framed under "healthy," "independent," or "productive." See Stephen Katz's *Disciplining Old Age* for a critique on "active" old age and the productive ideology.

In this section, I situate the later stories of Crusoe within the “history of the novel.” I first begin by surveying the critical history of *RC2* and *RC3* in order to show how the negative critical attitude toward *RC2* and *RC3* reveals our assumptions about what narratives about aging must look like both in content and form. I propose that *RC2* and *RC3* demonstrate the crucial role aging plays in Defoe’s experiment with the form of novel, thereby not only opening a new window onto the meaning of Defoe’s narrativization of old age, but also illustrating the critical value the concept of aging can provide in the history of novel.

The further stories of Crusoe have long suffered scholarly disapproval. In the case of the first volume, that it does not end with Crusoe’s escape from the island has caused much critical lament. Unlike the popular “Robinsonade” version,³⁹ Crusoe does not stop his adventure when he finally gets out of the island. He carries on his travels, this time on foot through Pampeluna and towards Toulouse with Friday who kills a bear and scares a pack of wolves. As early as 1782, Rousseau called these further episodes excessive and demanded that the text be “disencumbered of all its rigmarole, beginning with Robinson’s shipwreck near his island and ending with the arrival of the ship that comes to take him from it” (332). Rousseau, perhaps unmindful of the literary impact of his opinion, here asks for a tight structure and, ultimately, a narrative closure.⁴⁰ Valuing *RC1* as a pedagogical model for self-sufficiency, Rousseau takes

³⁹ “Robinsonade” refers to a model of narrative that imitates Crusoe’s survival in the island and narrativizes the life of a castaway. Robinsonade has been most influential and popularized as a genre of children’s literature while contemporary utilization of the trope has targeted adult audiences as well. See Jill Campbell, “Robinsonades for Young People.”

⁴⁰ Rousseau’s critique of the later part of *RC1* is more focused on the content than the formal elements, albeit the intricate ties between the two. For Rousseau, *RC1* matters because of the message it gives. That is, in Rousseau’s words through the tutor of Emile, *RC1* as “the happiest treatise on natural education” (162). Mary L. Bellhouse notes that how Rousseau interprets the novel shows his “criticism of nascent capitalism and its relation to modern culture” (121). That the later stories of Crusoe include Crusoe’s engagement with what would be considered the realm of civilization and luxury (e.g., Crusoe acquiring the plantation wealth and subsequent capital) deflates the value of its earlier part. Rousseau’s critique of the inadequate conclusion and formal structure is thus more of a critical take on the capitalist characteristics of the character illustrated in later parts of the novel rather than of the structure of the novel. One should also be wary to note “The Robinson Crusoe so admired by Rousseau is, in many ways, *not* the

further stories as superfluous that detract the narrative attention. Rousseau demands that Crusoe's narrative be a progressive run to the final resolution with a single lesson—that is, Crusoe's triumph over the struggle of his surroundings—and end as such. While *RCI* has been diversely interpreted more recently as a story of a capitalist hero, a conflicted prodigal son, or a male plunderer, twentieth-century historians of the early novel still share a similar sentiment regarding the later part of *RCI*. Many critics maintain that the later adventure stories are additions that unnecessarily prolong Crusoe's narrative life. For instance, John Richetti calls them “miscellaneous” (“Travel” 213) and writes that these stories deprive the novel of “a defining purpose, a unifying quest or goal” (“Travel” 222). From this viewpoint, Crusoe's additional stories exemplify the embryonic formal nature of eighteenth-century novels that is yet to develop.

Such criticisms regarding Crusoe's later stories reveal what Betty Schellenberg calls a “teleological focus” of literary history that deems “the nineteenth-century novel as the unconscious goal of eighteenth-century fiction” (3).⁴¹ It is no accident that the dismissal of Crusoe's later stories generally comes from a concern for the form of novels. Defining the formal characteristics of the novel under concepts such as “formal realism,” the attention to the history of the novel often dismisses various narrative elements that do not fit the standard trajectory plotline that achieves its “complete” form in the Bildungsroman. This is problematic because it tends to regard the unique characteristics of early eighteenth-century fiction—particularly

character to be found in Defoe's novel” (Bellhouse 120); it is his interpretation of Crusoe and what he thinks Crusoe represents. In this vein, Lipski also argues that Rousseau's agenda was to make an educational model of “natural man” out of Crusoe and that made Rousseau read *RCI* with “errors” irrespective of what the novel is really about. See Bellhouse; and Lipski, “Setting the Scene for the Polish Robinsonade.”

⁴¹ Schellenberg is not alone in observing the influence of a teleological perspective skewing an understanding of eighteenth-century fiction. Investigating the orphan figure, Cheryl L. Nixon also argues that the understanding of the orphan narratives of the eighteenth-century texts have been limited by taking Victorian bildungsroman texts as what fully achieves a narrative potential. See Nixon. 8.

“unusual” endings and “untidy” formal closures—as those which primarily illustrate the “incipient” formal qualities of earlier novels. Although a part of such characteristics must be the flexibility available for the early form of novels that allowed writers to disregard matters of formal closure, formal aspect of eighteenth-century novels should be contextualized within and read as an eighteenth-century tradition (Hunter 287). Alongside the insightful observations of Margaret Eustace France and J. Paul Hunter, I propose that rather than finding formal immaturity or authorial incompetence, we direct our attention to the culture that allowed and even desired additional stories (Hunter 287-290). Without such an awareness, types of narrative that stray away from the criteria of a “classic” novel become “miscellaneous,” excluded from serious critical engagement as in the case of the Robinson Crusoe sequels.

France and Hunter both point out that the formalist impulse of twentieth-century scholarship on the history of the novel tends to wrongfully assess later stories of Crusoe as inadequate. According to France, the Robinson Crusoe sequels are not some jumbled materials put to publication (12-15). France argues that the seemingly motley episodes in *RC2* and *RC3* have some striking evidence of structure with consistent patterns. Identifying various characteristics *RC2* and *RC3* share with the author’s other literary series—the *Family Instructor*—France suggests that the sequels are a thoughtful literary project with clear structural intention.⁴² In a similar vein, Hunter reevaluates eighteenth-century fiction’s “refusals of novels to end—neatly and unfussily to bring to stasis all the wheels that have been set in motion and provide closure” as a quality that caters to the larger readership culture of the era (Hunter 279).

⁴² According to France, *Family Instructor I* (1715), *II* (1718), and *A New Family Instructor* (1727) have a similar configuration to the Robinson Crusoe series: the first volume is usually composed of a character-driven plot that shows a development of a character, the second volume is more or less mere plot tied together by the presence of a character of the former volume, and the third one delves into the spiritual matters that could not be detailed in the previous volumes.

Hunter argues that eighteenth-century readers were less concerned about the thematic quest of a character or a resolution of a plot; rather, they desired to know what came *after* the end (Hunter 290). Indeed, there are actually many eighteenth-century texts that sought to provide additional narrative to already finished stories besides *Robinson Crusoe*. What happened to David Simple, how Pamela went on after her marriage, the story beyond Tom Jones's domestic settlement, or the "real" ending of Moll Flanders' successful finale in her seventies⁴³ all survived their supposedly finished tale. Richardson wrote *Pamela in her Exalted Condition* (1742) that deals with Pamela's married life beyond the stage of courtship and Sarah Fielding furthered David Simple's story in *Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters of David Simple* (1747) and *The Adventures of David Simple, Volume the Last* (1753). The public also savored further stories that are not even written by the original authors such as various chapbooks and dramatic adaptations of *Moll Flanders* and John Kelly's *Pamela's Conduct in High Life* (1741).⁴⁴ Despite the popularization for more stories, the further stories in general have been read as "secondary" or of "lesser" quality and importance.

Speaking of further stories of Crusoe in *RC2* and the final sequel, they have been deemed almost "unmentionable" in literary studies for their formal inadequacy (France 41). Notwithstanding more recent scholarly efforts to bring the sequels to light,⁴⁵ *RC2* and *RC3* generally have been considered together as a "disposable appendix" (France 39) that are inferior in their literary quality and historical worth to the first volume. Most powerfully, Ian Watt in *The*

⁴³ Many pirated and abridged versions of *Moll Flanders* (often in a chapbook format) extended the life of Moll beyond what the original text had given her. Several chapbook versions tell the allegedly untold "full story" of this once-fortunate lady. For instance, the chapbook published in Aldemary Church Yard (circa 1750) and 1723 version printed by T. Read include the epitaph on the tomb of Moll, and another chapbook printed by William M'Alpine (circa 1773) details an inventive cause of her death as "shortness of breath" (8).

⁴⁴ See Hunter for more examples. 280.

⁴⁵ A few exemplary recent scholars who investigate the sequels include Michael Austin, Robert Markley, Margaret Eustace France, and Melissa Free.

Rise of the Novel calls the second sequel “another lucrative Odyssey” (66) that the mercenary Defoe cranked out. The issue is that there is such a shallow character development (even for an eighteenth-century novel) and a lack of an overarching theme or the “interiority” that Watt would cherish. The third sequel is regarded as a lesser son of a great original, a way to “cash in on the great success of the first part of the trilogy,” a “miscellaneous compilation” of various topics that “cannot . . . be taken seriously as a part of the story” (Watt 89). Watt even confuses the title of the second sequel with *Further Adventures* revealing his apathy for the later narratives.⁴⁶ Paula Backscheider also claims that *RC2* is a “compendium of material” that betrays an indulgence of the author indicating that it is secondary to the first in its structure although amazingly compiled (438).

I suggest there is a cultural supposition that is entwined with what seems to be a strictly formal issue, namely, implicit assumptions of what old age is about. When approaching the later stories of Crusoe (not just the sequels but including the “miscellaneous” parts in *RC1*), we should first call attention to the fact that these are not just “extending” *Robinson Crusoe*, the text, but elongating the life of the protagonist Robinson Crusoe, a key aspect of the narrative, I argue, that prompted criticism and the subsequent neglect. Unlike other “additional” stories of the era, that of Crusoe is unusual in that it portrays a protagonist who is an old man in his sixties. Though very much overlooked in the criticism cited above, as this chapter will demonstrate, the age of Crusoe is a significant aspect of the sequels. Especially in regard to *RC2* which continues the plot of *RC1*, the idea of age and aging not only propels the plot but also works as the ground for the unusual formal structure. The sequels utilize the notion of old age in a way that brings to the fore the “farther” stories as an integral piece of Crusoe’s narrative, and moreover, to Crusoe’s

⁴⁶ Watt spells the second volume as *Further Adventures* and not *Farther Adventures* in the index and notes. This insight is from France. 27.

identity. In other words, the characteristic formal elements of the Robinson Crusoe series (and their meaning) cannot be considered separately from the specificity of the protagonist's age.

In fact, the critical neglect of the later stories of Crusoe is a conceivable consequence of an approach that does not take later years as a legitimate piece of a life and a valuable contribution to the meaning of the whole. It betrays a hegemonic view of life configuration, a notion that life takes the shape of a narrative arc, one that progresses, reaches an apex, and goes downhill. It expects that old age is a time of quiet settlement, learned lessons, and denouement. Often in a search for the modern individual, it is taken for granted that youth and the middle stage of life are the time of vicissitude and identity formation. One explores the world, it seems, experiences society, gains wealth, or achieves individual ambition in their "formative" years. Old age is here conceived as without (narrative) desire, a time when the narrative had come to an end. It is as though the quest of finding identity or discovering purpose in life is only limited to those who are young. This idea holds that there are age-appropriate things for each life stage. In this line of thought, for Crusoe who, purportedly, had adventured *enough*, secured enormous wealth *already*, and *had* become a version of himself, his further desires seem superfluous. When searching for a "complete" form of a novel, his later adventure stories become "additional." To put it another way, Crusoe's later life becomes subsidiary because it stands outside the ideal configuration of not only the novel form *but also* the life model.

The proximity between assumptions about the ideal narrative structure and life formation has been fronted by twentieth-century literary historians who argue that "the history of the novel and history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one and the same" (Armstrong 3). According to such a view, the novel as a new genre in the eighteenth century had a foundational impact on establishing contemporary conceptualizations of what a "self" or "individual" is.

While autobiographies and other forms of writing such as diaries and letters influenced the imagining of the shape and story of this individual, the eighteenth-century novel is said to have had a particular impact on configuring such an individual.⁴⁷ It is, as argued, because of the genre's deep investment in the individual's aspirations for social or personal *changes*. Nancy Armstrong's *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism From 1719-1900* (2005) explains that the novel is a genre developed to express a desire of a new kind of individual. Outlining the history of the novel, Armstrong writes that this new individual is one who "harbor[s] an acute dissatisfaction with his or her assigned position in the social world and feel[s] compelled to find a better one" (4). And the novel chronicles the search of a protagonist to "move out of the hierarchy that initially defines them and into a new field of social possibilities" (5). To go back to Bacon's language, then, the novel is a genre generated to narrate a story of an individual who seeks to grow out of and go beyond the mediocre constructs of men of age. Whereas Armstrong highlights the restless energy that sets the protagonist on the move, other critics emphasize the final product of such a dynamic. Maintaining that the novels are about the competition between individual desires and social responsibility, Richetti makes explicit that a "socially constructed self" (*The English Novel* 3) develops out of the protagonist's restlessness. The protagonist does not, to use Armstrong's language, continue "to grow—over time and successive stages" (*The English Novel* 4) forever. Best expressed in the form of Bildungsroman in the next century, there is a legitimation, consent, or fusion that takes place. There is a time this individual's desire calms down and the narrative comes to an end. The issue is that this is imagined to happen at a certain

⁴⁷ Patricia Spacks in *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* proposes that autobiographies and novels in the eighteenth century "affirm[ed]," "discover[ed]," or "manufacture[d]" identity (1; 16;16). Focusing on the power of the imaginative process of story-telling and of converting the uncertain existence of human beings into an object in a physical piece of paper, Spacks argues that the process of creating, writing, and reading about a human character "constitute the creation" of self (17).

chronological stage of one's life, namely, when one is not "young" anymore. The protagonist turns old by the end of the narrative, not just in terms of calendar years but by letting go of that fierce restlessness that made them "young." They settle down either "balanced (or torn)" (Richetti *The English Novel* 8) now with nostalgic memories of the youthful restlessness. In both Armstrong's and Richetti's world, then, the stereotypical old age and the anti-dynamic aging man has no major part in the construction of an individual.

Franco Moretti's essentialization of youth further marginalizes old age. Reading eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels, Moretti argues that youth is the chosen "material sign" for modernity. Moretti writes that "Modernity . . . can no longer feel represented by maturity and still less by old age" (5). The central point here is that youth is the sole age-form capable of articulating the ideology of modernity. Untainted by corrupt constructs of the existing society, the youth—and only youth—have the potential to institute a change. Whether they are children, adolescents, or wandering young adults,⁴⁸ they illustrate the potential the youth have for confronting the past structures and value systems and for "growing up." And this quality which the process of aging seems to deny renders the youth the privilege of being novelistic subjects. When a protagonist "settles down" or is "grown up," the spirit that made one "young" disappears, and youth effectively ceases. Maturity is to give away that energy, mobility, and possibilities, a "betrayal" of everything youth stands for (8). It is the consequence as well as the antithesis of youth.

Within this contest between youth and maturity, a much-overlooked concept of old age exists—but, primarily, to be rebuffed. Old age is utilized as a point of emphasis that highlights

⁴⁸ Most notably by Nina Auerbach and Lisa Zunshine, orphan studies scholars argue that orphans were chosen as the novelistic subject to question the meaning and boundary of legitimate society. Situated on the margin of the social structure (primarily domestic and familial), orphans help novels define, evaluate, and critique social structures they wished to and eventually become a part of. See Nixon. 13.

the accumulated experiences of the past as “a useless dead-weight” (Moretti 5). As Moretti writes, “Modernity . . . can no longer feel represented by maturity and *still less by old age*” (italics added 5). Defined as a much lesser container for modernity, old age occupies a particular place. It is grouped together with but also distinct from maturity. Without any further explanation, Moretti posits old age as a stage of life that is somehow but distinctly dissociated from the new world. Described elsewhere with adjectives like “benumbed” and “imbecilic,” old age is not even about continuation of that identity youth achieves (Moretti 9, 179).⁴⁹ The conclusion exists in maturity. One already achieves “a stable and ‘final’ identity” (Moretti 8) in the meridian of the life. Imagined as having neither the intention nor the capability to engage in a dynamic of the new world, old age is thus written off from the world of the novel.

The problem with such a conceptualization is that for some prominent eighteenth-century novels old age was *not* excluded. The fact that all of these criticisms use Defoe’s characters and texts (mainly Crusoe but Moll and Roxana very often) betrays the lack of scholarly attention to the later stories and to old age. What these scholars tends to overlook is that Moll Flanders exhibits in all its vivacity how “in the Sixty first Year of my Age, I launch’d out into a new World” (260), Roxana’s downfall occurs sometime in her mid- to late-sixties,⁵⁰ and Crusoe gets to be at least seventy-two at the end. Old age, for these early eighteenth-century protagonists, is

⁴⁹ Throughout his analysis, Moretti uses the term “old age” four times. The first time he uses it to emphasize the potential of youth as is indicated in the passage above (5) and the second time he refers to it as a “benumbed” state (9). The third reference to old age shows how old age is filled with nostalgia about “what were once ‘hopes,’ and are now faded ‘memories’” (179). The final use of “old age” emphasizes the failure of a protagonist’s growth in which maturity becomes “A void, an empty hole between a somewhat vile youth and an imbecilic old age” (179).

⁵⁰ There is yet much debate on the exact age of Roxana. We know from the narrative that she was born in 1673 because she says she was ten years old when she was 1683. But the many “errors” in the time scheme of *Roxana*—including that Charles II, who Roxana alludes she was a mistress to had been already dead—make it hard to draw an exact timeline of her life. In addition to what Sloman calls “pervasive ambiguity” (407), the end of the heroine is also strikingly evasive in terms of time as it does not designate any year to an event that “ruins” her, only referring to the passage of time as “after some years of flourishing” (329). Taking other cues of calendar-year references into account, I project that Roxana must be in her mid- to late-sixties. See Sloman.

not a dull, “benumbed,” or “imbecilic” period. Capable of vicissitude, old age was a major constituent of these protagonists’ stories.⁵¹

Investigating “further” stories does not necessarily disagree with the approaches of “the history of the novel” as a whole. Instead, it builds from the question such scholarship has explored, namely, what the relationship is between the usual plot structure and the modern individual, and asks if and how the notion of old age and aging played a part in thinking up this individual and their story. What did aging into old age mean for the individual and how did it complicate such a notion?

Such questions are essential to understand both Crusoe’s individuality and the narrative construct of the Robinson Crusoe saga. It is undeniable that Crusoe as “the man on the island” is the most enduring in the cultural imagination. However, as Melissa Free asserts, celebrating the famous is different from dismissing the lesser-known (96).⁵² A closer investigation into the publication history of the nineteenth century shows how the second series was read widely and with comprehensive cultural impact up until the twentieth century. Calling out the twentieth-century’s arbitrary canonization of *RC1*, Free shows how *RC1* and *RC2* were often published together and were read as *one* book. Free’s impressive collection of historical evidence attests that the publishers and editors in the nineteenth century often removed the preface written for the second sequel and the readers consumed it as such, that is, two volumes as one text without even

⁵¹ Interestingly, these characters show remarkable vivacity and a decision to continue on the life of variety right around the time of (or rather, just before reaching) their “grand climacteric year.” It may be attributed to the notion that human bodies go through a “real, tangible” change when one becomes sixty-three (Yallop *Age and Identity* 47). Moreover, that these decisions take place in their sixties, and not, say, eighties and nineties, aligns with what Ottaway observes about the year sixty being the designated numerical year of old age for eighteenth-century contemporaries. See *Decline of Life*. 6-9.

⁵² I rephrase Free’s wording here. Free says “I agree with Lovett that (then as now) the Crusoe myth is most prominently “the man on the island” (L, xiv), but prominence is not the same thing as exclusivity.” 96.

a break between the two (Free 94-96).⁵³ In other words, “Robinson Crusoe” was not restricted to a small section of the narrative in the historical past. Although Free does not particularly mention the aging of Crusoe as a result of such a reading, there is no reason to doubt that for at least some readers Crusoe was the young man on the island as well as the old adventurer traveling through China and Russia. The after-stories certainly mattered, and Crusoe did get to be old. To exclude the later years of Crusoe from the study is not only negligent but historically inaccurate.⁵⁴ I propose that attending to the often-neglected old protagonists of eighteenth-century fiction calls for a well-rounded scope of scholarly inquiry, one that yields a more inclusive, and perhaps more accurate, understanding of eighteenth-century fiction.

To situate Crusoe’s aging in the context of early eighteenth-century fiction, the next section examines changing theories of old age and aging. Competing theories regarding the aging human body abounded in the eighteenth century, challenging the traditional paradigm of aging, and by extension, reshaping discourses around the later stages of human life. Reading medical treatises alongside popular health regimen texts, the following sections show how Defoe utilized such changing notions of aging in order to narrativize old age, and perhaps, a different paradigm of life as a whole.

The Inactive and Fixed Body and Mind of Old Age

The eighteenth century was a pivotal era when the concept of old age was subject to much debate. The aging body was a cosmic phenomenon “entwined with God’s design of the universe” (Katz 30) but as the century went on, what Stephen Katz calls “scientificity” (33) was

⁵³ Free points out that there was either no a break at all between volumes or even when offered, it was “only the barest hint of a break—a small space, a swelled rule, the words ‘Part II’” (94).

⁵⁴ In similar vein to France, Free also maintains that it was the twentieth-century critics who effectively limited “Robinson Crusoe” to refer to only the man on the island. 111.

coming to un-layer the polysemic signification of the aging human body.⁵⁵ Eighteenth-century medical and scientific texts posited old age as possessing physical qualities of numbness, decrepitude, and fixity, which all came to influence popular imaginations of aging.

Out of the many physical characteristics that define old age, inactivity or fixity appears as a prominent characteristic in the medical discourse of the period. To some extent, this new medicalized concept of old age affirmed and furthered the traditional concept of old age as a period of inaction. In the traditional divergence aging model, the usual trajectory was that one loses physical capacity as he gains something spiritual. As one conduct book of the era reports, “[old age] claims exemption from the more arduous offices of society, to which its strength is no longer equal . . . Deprived of many active pleasures, it claims an equivalent of ease and repose” (emphasis added *The Female Aegis* 171). Here, old age does denote inactivity in some sense, but such inaction rarely meant spiritual or moral inertia. One may have lost his physical vigor but he gained something non-physical. In this traditional framework of aging, physical inactivity could just as well signify spiritual drive. On the other hand, growing anatomical understanding of the aging human body underscored physical inactivity as the primary quality of old age in a way that does not have to necessarily coincide with a different kind of activity in the mind. If anything, it brings about the lack of action and some sort of fixity in the mind too.

Focusing on the physical and nervous systematic aging of the human body, authoritative medical figures like Dr. George Cheyne connect old age and inactivity. Cheyne writes in *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (1724) that aging first impairs the “natural heat” (221), and in a chain of events, the colder internal physique results in inactive bodily processes. The bodily

⁵⁵ According to Katz, medieval thinkers regarded aging as a cosmic phenomenon. Contextualized as an extension of God’s universe, the aging body was “polysemic, or multiply signed, in its capacity to represent an array of universal forces and moral principles” (30).

juices circulate at a slower speed, and this lower speed induces malnutrition of the nerves resulting in lethargic juices that do not have enough force to deliver necessary things to all parts of the body. Starting from the extremities of the limbs, the body becomes inert. In Cheyne's words, "Age and Time . . . by the turning those Juices into solid Substances, and thereby fixing and hardening these Solids, and depriving them of their due Elasticity, [make] the Fluids circulate with less Velocity and Force" (221). The process of aging is about growing lethargic and becoming hard with time. The result is a fixed and rigid body that has less activity. In short, inactivity brings about old age *and* defines old bodies.

Decades after Cheyne, William Buchan in *Domestic Medicine; or, A Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines* (1769; 1772) also defines old bodies as lacking in some activity and elasticity, but this time, with moral connotations.

In childhood the fibres are lax and soft, the nerves extremely irritable, and the fluids thin; whereas in old age the fibres are rigid, the nerves become almost insensible, and many of the vessels imperviable. These and other peculiarities render the disease of the young and aged very different, and of course they must require a different method of treatment.

(167-168)

Speaking with apparent influence from Cheyne, Buchan proposes that what distinguishes old bodies from the young is again their fixed nature, the rigid quality of their bodies that would not allow typical treatment to take effect. As Buchan explains, old bodies are fixed. In contrast to a young suppleness, old bodies have a physical intransigence to stimuli. And this insensibility of old bodies makes it hard for usual methods to have effect. Although Buchan's language is not intended to be discriminatory, the vocabularies used such as "rigid," "insensible," and "imperviable" suggest an understanding of old age as a state of rather negative placidity.

Given what Roy Porter calls the “health-conscious public spirit” (“Lay Medical Knowledge” 144), that is, a public well-versed in medical contents, enthusiastic about understanding the body, and eager to try out health regimens, the medicalized understanding of old age had a powerful impact on the popular imagination of old age. For instance, Jonathan Andrews argues that the texture of a person’s body signaled more than the feel of a surface skin. Speaking in the context of Augustan satires, Andrew explains that Willis’ groundbreaking achievement in the field of neuroanatomy in the late seventeenth century rendered the texture of a person’s body a culturally charged reference. Specifically concerned with the texture of a brain or the nervous system, an increasing connection between bodily texture and mental abnormality was established. For instance, idiocy was attributed to a “soft” or “dull” brain. Although not so diagnostical and largely figurative, rigidity or “hardness” was referred to specific qualities of the mind.⁵⁶ By the eighteenth century, to denote a person’s intellect or morality through texture was pervasive. Simultaneously, the fictional description of old age became increasingly preoccupied with physical signs of aging such as stiffness and physical rigidity that emphasizes inactivity, fixity, and inflexibility making it easier for contemporaries to associate old people with moral depravity, sexual promiscuity, or failing rationality and creativity.⁵⁷

This perspective on what aging meant in the eighteenth century complicates how we view eighteenth-century subjects in novels. For example, when Armstrong suggests that “we might think of the human body [of the novelistic subjects] much as John Locke thought of the human mind: as a ‘cabinet’ or a ‘storehouse’ emptied of all innate qualities and waiting to be furnished

⁵⁶ It also referred to political tendencies. For instance, Andrews explains that the stupidity of a political party was symbolized through idiocy with its “soft” “dullness.” See Andrews, “Begging the Question of Idiocy: The Definition and Socio-Cultural Meaning of Idiocy in Early Modern Britain: Part 1”; and Gabbard, “From Idiot Beast to Idiot Sublime: Mental Disability in John Cleland’s ‘Fanny Hill.’”

⁵⁷ Chapter 2 examines the relationship between aging and authorial creativity. Chapter 4 discusses memory loss as a consequence of aging.

with information from the world” (3), it must be first noted that such an association applies primarily to the young and their physical and mental condition. The human body existed in various forms and in various ages. The popular assumptions about old age in the eighteenth century did not permit old people to be empty, susceptible vessels. Nor could they now be simply considered as filled with wisdom or active spirituality. Decline was in their body, and doubts were raised that there was an intrinsic imperviousness. In the new medicalized conceptualization of old age, the old body was more like a rundown cabinet, unable to hold, collect, or accrue the experience. The question is, then, can this old, rigid, fixed body and mind become a novelistic subject?

Created at a time when old age was predisposed into confined associations, old Crusoe shows no such prejudice. Or rather, he utilizes such prejudice to his benefit. Through a remarkable and unusual characterization strategy, Defoe’s depiction of Crusoe pushes against both the traditional and the new medical model of aging. Crusoe escapes the traditional model of aging in that he does not become a virtuous, retired, and predominantly spiritual being. He is not a grey-bearded sage who learned a great lesson from his past days, as much as Crusoe tries to put a bow on his life that way. His experiences rarely accumulate to a self that is more “grown.” At the same time, the figure of Crusoe rejects the new medicalized model of aging now beginning to gain much weight in the early eighteenth-century in that he is not a fixed hardened solid. His body is not sluggish. He is healthy, extraordinarily capable and fit. His mind is likewise in good shape, with no sign of mental decline.

Even in the Preface of *RC3*, when Crusoe is suspected to be at least seventy-two or more, Crusoe describes himself as “in perfect and sound Mind and Memory.” He is astute and is extremely interested in seeing the world about him. Crusoe’s physique also seems to be in an

excellent condition through months of travel in *RC2*. Once Crusoe sets sail, there is not one moment of physical ailment throughout the narrative. It would even seem that the “farther” he goes, the more physically vigorous he is. When in China, he is strong enough to fight five “Tartars” as he draws swords—and presumably, recover from the blow of the head and fight-wounds. In addition, as in *RC1*,⁵⁸ old Crusoe has a fellow old man figure beside him, the Portuguese pilot, aka the “old Pilot.” This “never failing old Pilot, the *Portuguese*” is also an exceptionally physically able old man (*RC2* 297). There is a sense of experience in these old men, but it is less a traditional placid wisdom of the Ciceronian old man. Their age-earned capital consists of guts and shrewdness and sometimes great fierceness. For instance, when Crusoe is attacked, the old Pilot displays an extreme physical vigor “with a bold Heart stepped up to the Fellow that struck me, and laying hold of his Arm with one Hand, and pulling him down by main Force . . . shot him into the Head, and laid him dead upon the Spot” (*RC2* 297). They are fierce to the level of cruelty with an attitude that so loudly reflects colonial violence, hitting the enemy with a scimitar, thrashing “the Side of his Head, cut[ting] off the Ears off by the Root, and a great Slice down by the Side of his Face” (*RC2* 297).

Throughout his adventures and with his active, healthy, and non-fixed body, old Crusoe rarely “ages.” Rather, ironically, he is *fixed* in a seemingly perpetual loop of episodes. The next sections show how *RC1* and *RC2* refuse to take the connotation of old age—fixity—as its limitation and utilizes it as an opportunity to imagine a different kind of old age. I focus on the ways the “miscellaneous” experiences of old Crusoe contribute to Crusoe as a whole without making them a progression for a narrative closure that we modern readers are more familiar

⁵⁸ In *RC1*, the Portuguese captain is a moral figure. He saves Crusoe when he escapes from the Moor and takes him to Brazil. Twenty-eight years after their meeting, Crusoe again encounters the captain, this time to learn that his Brazilian investment has been profitable and secure. He proves to be loyal and honest throughout the years, paying debt, refusing to take advantage of Crusoe, and paying generous sums for Crusoe’s cargo in a time of need.

with.⁵⁹ Showing how *RC1* and *RC2* play with, reject, and subvert the medical notion of fixed old age by presenting an old protagonist who relishes the supposed inability to learn and grow, I show how Crusoe's so-called lack of development *makes* the plot—and out of such formal structure comes his unique individuality.

Aging Crusoe

From the moment *RC2* unfolds, a reader gets a sense that it is not tale of a sagacious old man living in an idyllic country house. As the full title of *RC2* suggests, enclosed is *The farther adventures of Robinson Crusoe, being the second and last part of his life, and strange surprising accounts of his travels round three parts of the globe*. On the first two full pages of *RC2*, there is a “map of the World, in which is Delineated the Voyages of Robinson Crusoe,” the only illustration inserted in the first several editions of *RC2* (see fig. 4).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ It is here that old Crusoe is different from Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote. Although both *Don Quixote* and the Robinson Crusoe series feature protagonists who are in their later cycles of life (Don Quixote is in his fifties), bored with the pastoral life, obsessed over the possibility of a new scene of life going through a sequence of events in a more or less picaresque terms, the conclusion and the formal structure of the text that the conclusion adheres to are different. Compared to Don Quixote who, arguably, comes to a realization and learns his lesson, Crusoe does not come to a similar understanding of his life at least to the degree that Don Quixote finishes his adventures with. While acknowledging what some may call the schematic nature of the conclusion, Don Quixote denounces his quixotic dreams and regrets his adventures (regardless of how his contemporaries later take it) as opposed to Crusoe who is not sorry to have left his home. There are moments in *RC2* where Crusoe reflects on his decision for further adventure and wonders about the mighty hands of providence. (For instance, while on the way to China Crusoe has a nightmare and worries that he will be hanged for being mistaken as a pirate after all he has been through. He remembers that he is a sinner in front of God and will obey his rules (*RC2* 165). But even taking his spirituality into account, the “developed” nature of such reflection and the ultimate “growth” are debatable. His adventures remain as a sequence of episodes without a grand lesson or an overarching plot which captures the meaning “behind it all.”

⁶⁰ Many editions of *RC2* in the eighteenth century (that published *RC2* as a separate volume) include the map. The original editions published by W. Taylor, the later editions of 1753 published by T. and T. Longman, and the 1766 publication and the 1772 publication printed by J. Buckland et al. all include the map. The later publications of *RC2* includes more visual texts. For instance, 1753 publication of *RC2* published in London by T. and T. Longman, et al. includes six more illustrations. The 1772 publication printed by J. Buckland, et al. contains five drawings (all of which from the 1753 version except the last drawing titled “R. Crusoe with ye Muscovite Caravan passing ye Desarts are attack'd by ye Tartars.”).

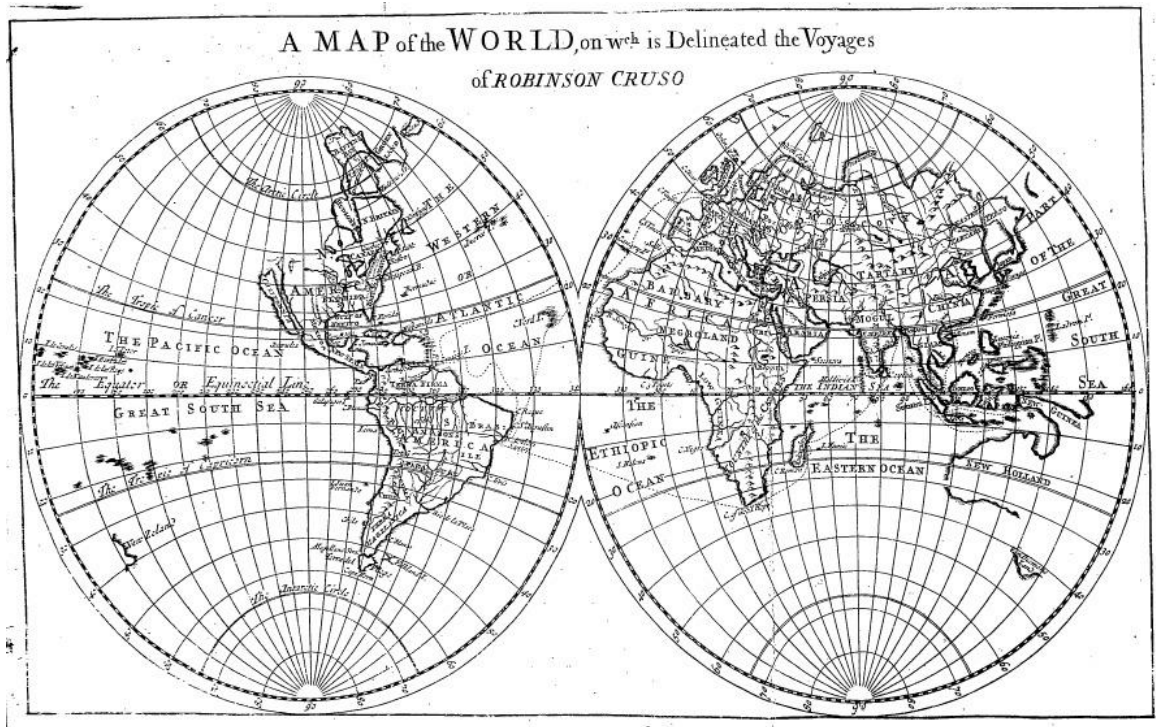


Figure. 4. “Map of the World, in which is Delineated the Voyages of Robinson Crusoe.” *The Farther Adventures of Robison Crusoe* (London: W. Taylor, 1719).

Obviously, Crusoe in old age is neither an archetypal old man distinguished for his peaceful detachment from society nor a stagnating elderly bedridden in decay. Crusoe’s extreme vigor is visibly demonstrated here not only by the length of his travel but also by his broadened scope of the world. Crusoe travels all around, “three parts of the globe” to be specific, revisiting his island and wandering through parts of Russia and China, places he has never gone before. His travel is “farther adventures” both in terms of time and space.

The meaning of all these farther adventures, the preface of *RC2* writes, is entertainment. The preface succinctly summarizes the intention of *RC2* as diversion. “The Second Part,” it says, “is . . . as entertaining as the First, contains as strange and surprising Incidents, and as great a Variety of them; nor is the Application less serious or suitable, and doubtless will, to the sober,

as well as ingenious Reader, be every way as profitable and diverting.” The focus on “the Wisdom of Providence” that *RC1*’s preface was resolute about has disappeared in the sequel. The instructive value of *RC2* is reduced to a “profitable” or no “less serious or suitable” application, and even that seems limited to a sensible and bright reader. Whether such application refers to spiritual affirmation or the undying spirit for adventure is also unclear. In part, this contributes to the lament of the critics that there is rarely a character development. Richetti suggests that the preface’s emphasis on variety bespeaks “what the sequel lacks,” namely, “the clear focus and depth of character development” (“The Farther Adventures” 213). From the moment Crusoe sets sail his days are so filled with dangerous risks, interesting people, and rare sights that he seldom has a moment to think about them. And what he sees and experiences is not a short list. It includes but is not limited to: seeing a ship on fire and distressed people dying of hunger, a visit to his island, meeting with the Spaniards and Friday’s father, working as a “governor,” a conversion of the once incorrigible Will Atkins, performing weddings, scuffles with the natives of Madagascar, the death of Friday, and encounters with “pagans.” But nothing “comes out,” so to speak, of all the things he experiences. There is no “process of his inner development,” as Richetti describes it, and all the episodes seem to be tied together in a “miscellaneous fashion as a loose string of adventures” (Richetti “The Farther Adventures” 214, 213). Crusoe “rambles along as a picaresque without the internal insight of the first novel” (France 25).

As the only illustration, then, the map actually captures well the spirit of *RC2*, a “Life of infinite Variety” (*RC2* 347). The inner workings of the protagonist or his developing interiority is not the primary concern of this sequel. The six drawings included in the tenth edition of *RC2* that was published in 1753 by T. and T. Longman, et al., also suggest it. Notably, in all the six

drawings, we do not really see Crusoe. Crusoe is present, but he is reduced to an unidentifiable character among many other persons in the illustrations (see fig. 5 and fig. 6).

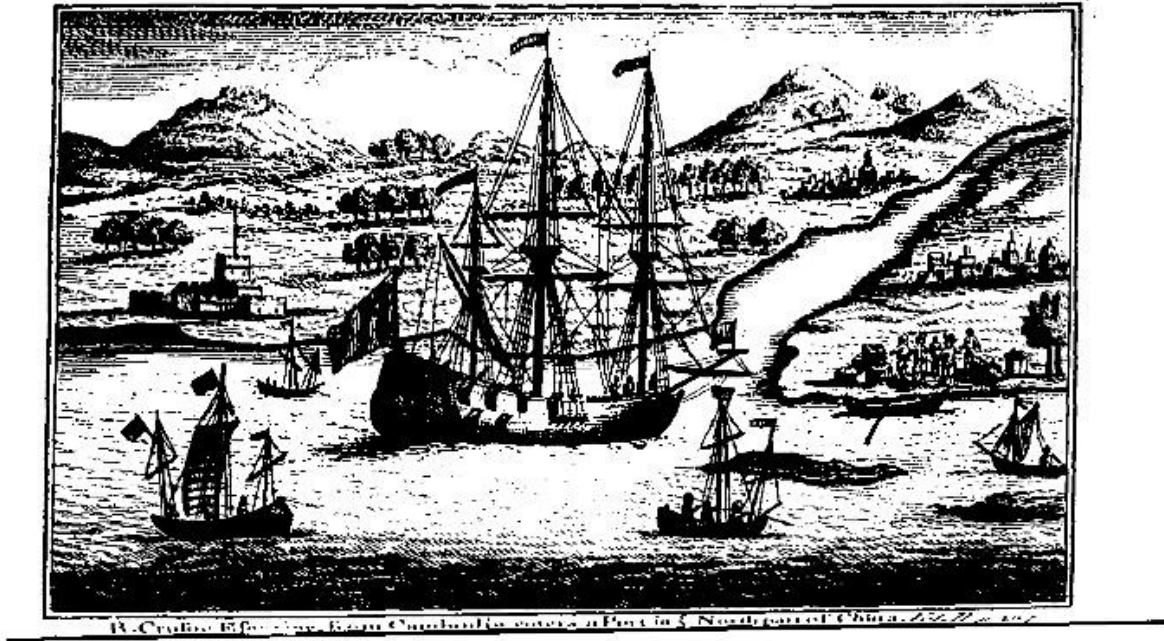


Figure. 5. “Crusoe from Cambodia enters a Port in & North part of China,” *The Farther Adventures of Robison Crusoe* (London: T. and T. Longman et al., 1753).

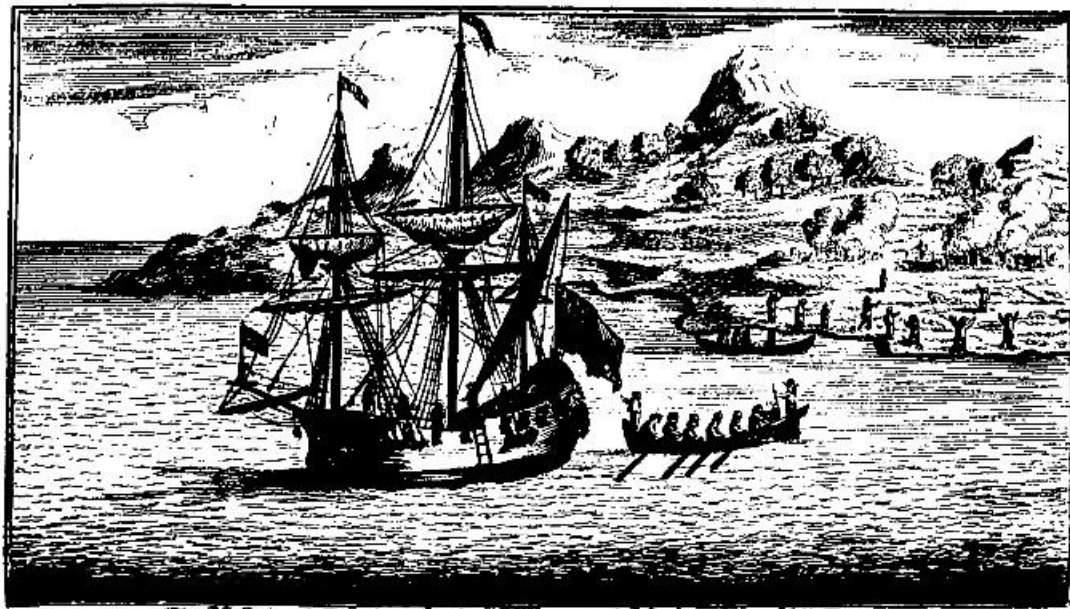


Figure. 6. “The Massacre & Burning the two Villages at Madagascar.” RC2 (London: T. and T. Longman et al., 1753).

In the drawings that picture Crusoe traveling with the caravan, one may venture to guess who Crusoe is by the enlarged size of the figure or by a distinguished attire (a long robe Crusoe wears and a hat which is never mentioned as a particularly of Crusoe’s in the narrative) (see fig. 7).⁶¹ But the focus of the drawings is evidently not on Crusoe. These drawings portray an event of a plot such as the “Burning [of] the two Villages at Madagascar,” Crusoe “entering a Port in & North part of China,” or Crusoe “with the Muscovite Caravan passing the Chinese Wall from Pecking.” In the instance of the last drawing, while it directs the viewers’ eyes to the large-sized Crusoe, the attention is yet divided by the interesting-looking buildings, the Chinese wall that

⁶¹ Crusoe describes his clothes as the following: “I had much to do to bear any clothes on my back, and never made any fire but without doors, which was necessary for dressing my food, &c. Now I had three good vests, with large robes or gowns over them, to hang down to the feet, and button close to the wrists; and all these lined with furs, to make them sufficiently warm” (RC2 325).

seems to go on forever, and the attack of the Tartars at a near distance. In these drawings, Crusoe is a part of a crew, a piece of a scenery. Crusoe's state of mind is simply not visible.

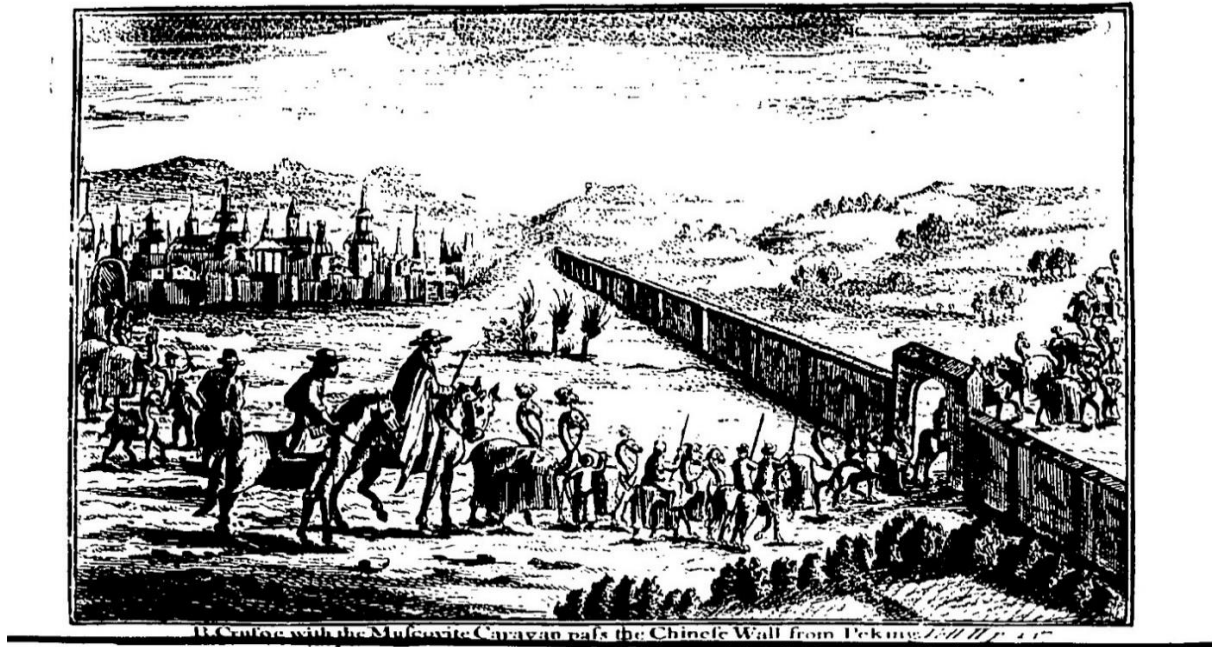


Figure. 7. “R. Crusoe with the Muscovite Caravan pass the Chinese Wall from Pecking,” *The Farther Adventures of Robison Crusoe* (London: T. and T. Longman et al., 1753).

Compared to *RC2*'s illustrations which use Crusoe as *a* character existing within a plot, the frontispiece of *RC1* features the protagonist as *the* character who experiences. The original editions of *RC1* present the famous illustration of Robinson Crusoe, and significantly, not a map. Here, Crusoe is the focal point. He stands on the island, plainly as a leading figure. And importantly, he is not situated within an episode. Crusoe is here rather an allegorical figure, fixed in time, neither young nor old, just occupying a place. The various events Crusoe goes through in

RCI such as the enclosure and unknown ship are the background materials of the drawing.⁶²

Moreover, the details of the illustration echo the great attention paid to Crusoe as a character in *RCI*. Much mindfulness is devoted to making Crusoe's physical and mental presence fascinating and curious (see fig. 8). Standing on an exotic land highlighted by an odd-looking plant, equipped with his weird habit and a cap made of a goat's skin as in the text, Crusoe is described as a man perhaps middle-aged. He looks not exactly intimidated yet also not so comfortable with both of his hands on the gun but not firmly grabbing. One foot is barely touching the ground. From the texture of his deep eyes that look inward and curiously averting the sea, the ambiguous facial expression, and even to the ambivalent curl of his lip, the elements of this drawing denote some complex inner workings of the character. A viewer wonders what he must be thinking. Here, Crusoe is unmistakably the central subject of investigation.⁶³

⁶² According to David Blewett, the ship presented in the illustration cannot be any of the ships that appear in the text (neither the one that initially deserts Crusoe, the one that ultimately rescues him, nor the one he believes he saw during his stay on the island that appear in the text) timewise. Blewett suggests that the ship is instead a representation of Crusoe's imagination possibly hoping for a rescue. Blewett also interprets the original frontispiece as a figurative piece—with Crusoe as “a timeless figure—the castaway” (161)—as opposed to a more realistic illustration that replaces the original one starting from the sixth edition in 1722. 160-161.

⁶³ The pirated abridged versions and later editions of *RCI* that were distributed across England and Edinburgh also include revised, often crude, illustrations. Although many “cheap” versions do not imitate the complex expression of Crusoe's face, they still use the same figure of Crusoe looking at least middle-aged or above, with two guns, bare footed with a sword on his hip, as well as the exotic plant, enclosure, and the ship in the background.



Figure. 8. Frontispiece of the first series of *Robinson Crusoe*. Etching by Clark and John Pine (London: W. Taylor, 1719).

On the other hand, *RC2* refuses such a textual and visual engagement with Crusoe. Along with the map and drawings that foreground the string of events, the text also contains many long

pages of other characters' stories. The life stories of the island inhabitants, a missionary, Will Atkins, as well as a Czar often take over Crusoe's own voice occupying a major space in the narrative. Especially nearing the end, Crusoe seem to be an "alert observer who simply happens to be around when more or less interesting things happen" (Richetti "Travel" 222). He sees, listens, and experiences, but these experiences rarely propel something more profound. Where one would "progress," Crusoe just rambles on.⁶⁴ Calling these episodes boring and puzzling (for modern readers), Richetti ascribes them to a rather incompetent narrative formulation that tries to "stretch" Crusoe ("Travel" 214). *RC2*, for Richetti, is a repetition of an already affirmed individuality, a failed attempt of a narrative that lives off of a character that has already been "fully-formed" ("Travel" 214).

I propose *RC2*'s so-called lack of character development configures a different kind of life story that regards a specific type of self-development as not really necessary for his individuality. In fact, even if Crusoe has a "fully-formed" identity and wishes to "maintain" himself, Crusoe simply cannot. *RC2* shows how age(ing) risks dissociating his individuality from him. Presenting an aging man in such a predicament, thereby problematizing aging, *RC2* poses a series of radical questions that had seldom been posed. Namely, it asks what happens to the rest

⁶⁴ It is here that old Crusoe is different from Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote. Although both *Don Quixote* and the Robinson Crusoe series feature protagonists who are in their later cycles of life (Don Quixote is in his fifties), bored with the pastoral life, obsessed with the possibility of a new scene of life going through a sequence of events in a more or less picaresque terms, the conclusion and the formal structure of the text that the conclusion adheres to are different. Compared to Don Quixote who, arguably, comes to a realization and learns his lesson, Crusoe does not attain that understanding of his life at least to the degree that Don Quixote finishes his adventures with. While acknowledging what some may call schematic nature of the conclusion, Don Quixote denounces his quixotic dreams and regrets his adventures (regardless of how his contemporaries later take it) as opposed to Crusoe who is not sorry to have left his home. There are moments in *RC2* where Crusoe reflects on his decision for further adventure and wonders about the mighty hands of providence. (For instance, while on the way to China Crusoe has a nightmare and worries that he will be hanged for being mistaken as a pirate after all he has been through. He remembers that he is a sinner in front of God and will obey by his rules (*RC2* 165). But even taking his spirituality into account, the "developed" nature of such reflection and the ultimate "growth" are debatable. His adventures remain as a combination of a sequence of episodes without a grad lesson nor an overarching plot which captures the meaning "behind it all."

of the life. Does one stop becoming an individual in old age? What does aging mean when it does not (have to) get “totaled” up to a fully-formed self? Quite unlike a typical old person who is assumed to be “fixed,” Crusoe exists and even thrives in the mere string of events. And through this seemingly static existence, Crusoe denies experiences will accrue to be a resource for his growth. To put it differently, as an aging person who rarely learns, Crusoe goes through the narrative ends to thwart the most basic assumptions that underpin the supposed narrative arc, one that critics like Richetti imposes upon the text, that is, the assumption that progression to something is what sets the pattern for individuality. Crusoe exists with the map, with the scenery, and with the miscellaneous variety. In such a way, *RC2* urges us to imagine the afterlife of a character, and further, invites us to take aging into consideration in figuring an individual.

As a point of comparison, the aging of Crusoe is relatively incidental in *RC1*. A consideration for aging is present in the text, but it does not propel the narrative nor present an obvious threat. During his twenty-eight years two months and nineteen days on the island, Crusoe keeps a journal, counts how much time he has spent alone on the island, and contemplates how his established settlement will serve him in and through old age on occasions. But the reflection on old age always seems rather fleeting, and his hopeful ideas for the future superficial and flimsy.

For instance, early in the narrative, Crusoe draws out the good and the evil of his isolation on the island. Here, Crusoe writes that he has necessary things that will “either supply my Wants, or enable me to supply my self even as long as I live” (*RC1* 58). It is notable in that, firstly, Crusoe is thinking about old age, and secondly, he lets himself to be insubstantial with regards to the matters of survival. In fact, the supplies he has at this moment are not enough to keep him alive as long as he lives. Although he is now equipped with some remnants of

civilization that he finds in the wrecked ship, this is much earlier than Crusoe starts growing corn (ten years before to be exact), about a year before he domesticates animals or has his “Bower.”

At this stage, he has made what he calls a “Fence or Fortress” that is like a large tent and serves as an initial store for his ammunitions and provisions, and he killed his first game by hunting. He does have a relatively “tollerable View” (*RCI* 55) in this new settlement, but he is in no place to be confident about his chance of growing old in the island let alone surviving the possible decline of his health. Without much evidence, Crusoe simply affirms that he can subsist “without any Want as long as I liv’d . . . even after my Health or Strength should decay” (*RCI* 55).⁶⁵

Although factual errors and inconsistency of time schemes are not new to *RCI*,⁶⁶ that consideration for old age is one of such unstable seams of the narrative is interesting. It shows that regardless of how (mistakenly) Crusoe takes it and brushes it off, aging is not extraneous to the plot.

In another juncture of *RCI*, we actually get a glimpse of concern for aging. In his fifteenth year of the island, Crusoe hits a moment of anxiety that will last at least for the next two years. He sees a footprint on a beach that clearly cannot be his. Out of his mind that some cannibal savage is around in the island, Crusoe imagines he sees figures in every bush and every tree. While facing such an immanent fear for his life, the narrative suddenly directs Crusoe to enter into a large cave.

⁶⁵ Following this hopeful prospect is the episode of Crusoe’s first sickness which lasts for an entire month. Although this episode is remarkable for its psychological depth, it is also striking that Crusoe does not let himself to think twice about complications that aging might bring to his survival on the island. Crusoe notes how terrified he was “of my sad condition—to be sick, and no help” (*RCI* 74) and how difficult it was to drag a she-goat he had killed because he was so weak. This may be a prime moment to think about how an age-related illness or a simple decline of health and strength will impact him as just a brief moment ago, he had imagined what will come to pass when he grows old. But it seems that Crusoe does not contemplate it.

⁶⁶ For instance, there are many wrong dates and miscalculated years as well as inconsistency as to Crusoe’s recount of his behavior and action. See Thomas Keymer, “Introduction.” *Robinson Crusoe*.

I saw two broad shining eyes of some creature, whether devil or man I knew not, which twinkled like two stars; the dim Light from the Cave's Mouth shining directly in and making the Reflection . . . I heard a very loud sigh, like that of a man in some pain, and it was followed by a broken noise, *as if* words half express'd, . . . was indeed struck with such a surprise that it put me into a cold sweat, . . . I saw lying on the ground a monstrous, frightful old he-goat, just making his will, as we say, and gasping for life, and, dying, indeed, of mere old age. (*RCI* 150)

Out of the unknown darkness, two eyes shine out looking onto Crusoe and his fear. As it turns out, it is an old he-goat dying of, as Crusoe calls it, "mere old age." It is not another inhabitant of the island nor a carnivorous beast that could end Crusoe right at the moment. Deep down in Crusoe's island, out of the way, hidden from the sight, Crusoe here faces the dread as yet unarticulated: the reality of aging and the possibility of old age. Even if he survives everything he fears, and even if he somehow lives undetected from that scary cannibal, this goat seems to show him, Crusoe will grow old and die alone. Mere old age will kill him. Of course, the old goat seems nothing like Crusoe at the moment. Unlike Crusoe who is doing everything he can to survive, the goat seems to have acquiesced to his declining fate. But there is *something* in the agony of the loud sigh, some words almost detectable, something in the twinkling eyes, some devil or man that shines back at Crusoe. As the narrative alludes, it is nothing but Crusoe himself. Crusoe's stare is met with a "Reflection" of himself, aging, miserable and alone, and in the same plight as that dying old goat. In the midst of the frenzy to survive the "savages," in the

digression from the main narrative and off the road, the reality of aging silently but firmly confronts him.⁶⁷

This profound moment, however, is not fully examined by Crusoe. The old goat “had frightened” him, but it is only to the point as it would have been for anybody who stumbles upon a creature in a dark cave. He does not drag the goat out into the light, as he reports, due to the circumstances (i.e., its smell and heavy weight). He buries it. For such an emotionally powerful and narratively engaging moment, indeed, there is no follow-up. He just drops the subject and continues to search the cave.

But although Crusoe seems to have moved on from the goat episode without any unsettling contemplation, the image of the dying old creature continues with Crusoe—just not on the surface. It is notable in that respect, that the next narrative task Crusoe embarks on is to list all the pleasure of his life in the island. Right after the cave episode, Crusoe protests that he has now accepted and became so familiar to his manner of life that if it were without the worries about “savages,” he “could have been content to have capitulated for spending the rest of my time there, even to the last moment, till I had laid me down and died, like the old goat in the cave” (*RCI* 152). Considering that the death of the old he-goat was not a peaceful one filled with aching moans and gasping for life, Crusoe’s positive take on the goat episode is rather peculiar. The terrifying sigh of the old goat was there only five paragraphs above.⁶⁸ It seems either the event was not significant enough so that Crusoe forgot what actually happened (which seems

⁶⁷ Scholars have interpreted this eerie episode as Crusoe facing his unconsciousness, the unknown, or god, something he cannot or will not process. It is worth noting that the term “old goat” was also used to refer to a lecherous old man in the eighteenth century. For discussions, see David Marshall’s “Autobiographical Acts in *Robinson Crusoe*,” Geoffrey M. Sill’s “Crusoe in the Cave: Defoe and the Semiotics of Desire,” and Carol Houlihan Flynn’s *The Body in Swift and Defoe*.

⁶⁸ Narrative-wise, there is a large gap in time. After Crusoe’s cave exploration, seven years pass by. Crusoe simply relates that “I was now in the twenty-third year of my residence” (*RCI* 152) without much detail about what happened during those years.

unlikely as *RC3* includes the encounter with the old goat as one of the significant events in the preface)⁶⁹ or he is simply misconstruing the event. We never get a satisfying answer whether it is the inaccuracy of Crusoe's memory or his insincerity that led to such a mistaken evaluation. Nevertheless, the old goat appears in the narrative again as an oddly—yet obviously—ill-matched reference to illustrate Crusoe's supposed satisfaction in the life of the island that may, as he explicitly says, continue throughout his old age.

Despite his positive take on the island and “forgetfulness” about the possible reality of aging and old age, the idea of aging is with Crusoe, if not before then now. Most of the pleasurable elements he catalogues turns out to be specifically connected to death or old age.

I had also arrived to some little diversions and amusements, which made the time pass a great deal more pleasantly with me than it did before—first, I had taught my Poll, . . . and he lived with me no less than six-and-twenty years. How long he might have lived afterwards I know not, though I know they have a notion in the Brazils that they live a hundred years. My dog was a pleasant and loving companion to me for no less than sixteen years of my time, and then died of mere old age. As for my cats, they multiplied, . . . the two old ones I brought with me were gone . . . and these were part of my family. (*RC1* 152)

His dog died of old age. His cats, the first original two, again, die of old age. Granted, Crusoe mentions their death and aging in a rather mechanical way. There is no apparent sadness or profound reflection on the idea of aging as a whole. As with the goat, it is always “mere old age.” Facing the fear of savages and other unnatural accidents in this life of variety, to die of old

⁶⁹ In trying to rebuff the claim that *RC* series is all bogus, the preface assures all are real. It says, “Thus the Fright and Fancies which succeeded the Story of the Print of a Man's Foot, and Surprise of the old Goat, and the Thing rolling on my Bed, and my jumping out in a Fright, are all Histories and real Stories.” Preface, *RC2*.

age seems uneventful. He may even seem condescending and cold to the effects of mere old age. But it exists. And it exists right before his eyes, ridding him of his “Society,” of the “little Family” (*RC1* 125) who “sit down to Dinner” with him. All of them die of old age. Old age is there to be found, albeit tucked away and only surfacing in a seemingly prosaic manner. It is there in the narrative disrupting the flow of Crusoe’s attempt to take a positive turn on his life and betraying the blind spot of his worry for living in the moment.

Compared to the rather nuanced aging of Crusoe in *RC1*, *RC2* is *about* aging and what it means for a protagonist to have aged. From the start of *RC2*, it begins orbiting around this question: what is aging to an individual?

Old Crusoe with “no Progress at all”

Crusoe is sixty-one at the start of *RC2* and seems to be acutely aware of that fact. He has all that makes his later years an ideal picture of a traditional old age: a loving wife, a blissful domestic life in the country, and enough money to need no further care. Crusoe says, “I had nothing to seek: if I had gained ten thousand Pounds I had been no richer; for I had already sufficient for me, and for those I had to leave it to; and what I had was visibly increasing” (*RC2* 2). He could not spend more than what he already has, and since he has a small family—a wife and two children—and is not accustomed to a grand style of life, money is hardly a problem and it is never going to be. Crusoe “had nothing, indeed, to do but to sit still, and fully enjoy what [he] had got, and see it increase daily upon my Hands” (*RC2* 2). It seems Crusoe has reached a happy conclusion of his life, settled, and as far as others can see, peacefully aged without any reason for trying for more.

Without any apparent issue to disturb this quite retired life, however, Crusoe is afflicted. The narrative starts right off to tell us that it is because he is still himself, Robinson Crusoe.

THAT homely Proverb, used on so many Occasions in *England*, viz. *That what is bred in the Bone will not go out of the Flesh*, was never more verify'd than in the Story of my Life. Any one would think that after thirty-five Years' Affliction, and a Variety of unhappy Circumstances, which few Men, if any, ever went thro' before, and after near seven years of Peace and Enjoyment in the fulness of all Things; grown old, and when, *if ever*, it might be allowed me to have had Experience of every State of middle Life, and to know which was most adapted to make a Man compleatly happy; I say, after all this, any one would have thought that the native Propensity to Rambling which I gave an Account of in my first Setting out in the World to have been so predominant in my Thoughts, should be worn out, the volatile Part be fully evacuated, or at least condens'd, and I might, at sixty one Years of Age, have been a little inclined to stay at Home, and have done venturing Life and Fortune any more. (RC2 1-2)

From the very start of the narrative, old Crusoe brings attention to this category of identity—age—hitherto neglected. The first words of RC2 are about Crusoe's age and the conflict between who he should be as a traditional old man and who he actually is. Centering his calendar year, Crusoe's description of himself is here intermixed with what is expected of his age. Crusoe defines himself as "grown old," "sixty one years of age," a person who had his share of fortunes and misfortunes in the past, and thus, who should be a happy retired old man. He uses phrases like "Any one would think that" and "any one would have thought that" to suggest he is aware of what society expects of him as an old man. But they only highlight how Crusoe is different. There is something in Crusoe that age cannot dispel. He has this dire desire for "venturing life

and fortune.” In his bones is the “native Propensity to Rambling” that does not age out of his body. The “Wandering Disposition,” is “born in [Crusoe’s] very Blood” (RC2 15). Relying on a proverb, Crusoe confesses that he cannot help being the same Crusoe he always has been. His inclination to go out in the world did not age out of him. Though he is old, has had the experiences, and now is equipped with ideal circumstances, Crusoe is certainly not done being himself. Precisely where Crusoe would be thought to have seen “closure,” he *starts*.

Crusoe’s struggle with his identity and the psychological turmoil he goes through as he tries to accept the socially assigned role of an old man is more profound than critics admit. Crusoe spends much time foregrounding the ailing mismatch of his age and desires. Caught between the traditional idea of old age and who he is, Crusoe nearly has a mental breakdown early in the narrative. Despite all the elements that could make an ideal traditional old age, Crusoe “had no Enjoyment of [his] Life, no pleasant Hours, no agreeable Diversion” (RC2 4). The ideal old age is just not for him. He even calls attention to the oppressive social expectation of old age saying that he had “nothing to do but to saunter about like an idle Person, of whom it may be said he is perfectly useless in God’s Creation, and it is not one Farthing’s Matter to the rest of his Kind whether he be dead or alive” (RC2 9). Reminding the reader that he is a person who “had been all my Days used to an active Life” (RC2 9), Crusoe characterizes old age as a (forced) state of idleness, a stage he explicitly calls “*the very Dregs of Life*” (RC2 9).⁷⁰

The age-prescribed identity forced on Crusoe makes him ill. Day and night, he thinks about going abroad, dreams about his island, and is incapable of talking about anything else besides the world that is beyond this “happy and easy” life (RC2 5). Crusoe writes that all the

⁷⁰ Crusoe’s idea of what “active” life and idleness means has an uncanny resemblance to the neoliberal understanding of old age as “unproductive” (and even “counterproductive”). See Katz for the discussion on “productivity” and old age; see Chivers for “positive ageism.”

ideal aspects of his life “had no Effect upon me, or at least not enough to resist the strong Inclination I had to go abroad again, which hung about me like a chronic Distemper” (*RC2* 10). He refers to his aspirations as “Distemper” three times in the first several pages of the narrative. He writes, “I dreamed of it all Night, and my Imagination ran upon it all Day: it was uppermost in all my Thoughts, and my Fancy worked so steadily and strongly upon it that I talked of it in my Sleep; in short, nothing could remove it out of my Mind: it even broke so violently into all my Discourses that it made my Conversation tiresome, for I could talk of nothing else; all my Discourse ran into it, even to impertinence; and I saw it myself” (*RC2* 2). Crusoe is not well, metaphorically, because it is ill-fitting for his aged body to hold such a vision, and also literally because this desire consumes him. It comes to such a point that Crusoe actually thinks he is at his old castle on the island. He fancies that those who are on the island are right in front of him, and even begins to talk to them during the day. All “this I did till I often frightened myself with the Images my fancy represented to me” (*RC2* 3), he says. Trapped in the prescribed identity for old age, his mind finds escape in hallucination.

Crusoe’s young wife expresses most strongly the limiting age confines of who gets to be an “individual.” As the symbol of the domestic and peaceful middle station of life—the role that Crusoe’s father once played⁷¹—she tells Crusoe that “it [is] a most preposterous Thing for one of your Years, and in your Condition” (*RC2* 5) to go on an adventure. During the conversation with Crusoe, the wife puts her foot down and says that she would rather go with him to wherever he chooses to go than see him leave, unless God decides it otherwise and takes her away. Although

⁷¹ Women characters in *RC2* are usually the ones who represent the conventional way of life. Not only his wife but the widow also attempts to prevent Crusoe from going abroad. They base their argument in the domestic values and fatherly responsibilities Crusoe has. On the other hand, male figures including his nephew (who proposes to take Crusoe to his island) are more flexible to the idea of an old man traveling—but not particularly because they are open to the idea of an old adventurer but usually because they value adventures that will be economically profitable. See Christine Owen for a discussion on Crusoe’s navigation through the intricate association between the feminine and luxury and trade.

the wife was only suggesting that as an option Crusoe must deny, he is ready to catch the first hint of her approval. When she says “if I thought fit and resolved [for you] to go-----,” Crusoe instantly replies, “are you willing I should go?” (*RC2* 5). As evidenced by the long dashes that tellingly suggests Crusoe’s excitement for the slightest sign for a possible adventure (as well as his apathy to the wife’s emotion),⁷² Crusoe is already over this placid life. As Crusoe had defied his father once, Crusoe refuses to the traditional idea of what his life should be like. As much as young Crusoe moved out of the traditional way of things to become an individual, this old Crusoe wants to move out of the socially assigned role.

The similar structure of old Crusoe’s onset of adventure serves to highlight how the meaning of adventure is not exclusive to youth. Adventure means breaking away from the family and the familiar, and as *RC2* shows, so it does for an old person. Just like young Crusoe who set sail against his wise grave father, “the middle Station of Life” (*RC1* 9), and the old way of things, old Crusoe must too first confront his wife, the “sage Counsellor” (*RC2* 9), and “the middle state of Life” she represents (*RC2* 15). The difference is that youth is rather expected to take risks and reject the old way of life. As a symbolic refusal against the cultural, moral, and economic past of the existing constructs, young Crusoe’s wanderlust could be easily attributed to “the common Temper of Mankind . . . especially of Youth” (*RC1* 9).⁷³ In contrast, old person is

⁷² *RC2* inserts a long dash right before explaining the wife’s reaction to underscore how excited Crusoe is at the possibility of travels. It not only emphasizes Crusoe’s earnest desire but also the emotional state his wife must be at and how Crusoe is insensitive to it. This is the only time *RC2* uses long dash to stop narration to present a different point of view. It is as if the long dash suggests that the wife’s response, for Crusoe, is a digression to the main narrative. The original edition uses a very long dash, per custom, and the later editions use a usual dash (“—”). *RC2* narrates, “-----here she found me very intent upon her Words, and that I looked very earnestly at her, so that it a little disordered her, and she stopped. I asked her why she did not go on, and say out what she was going to say? But I perceived that her Heart was too full, and some Tears stood in her Eyes: Speak out my Dear, said I, Are you willing I should go?” 5.

⁷³ The earlier part of the first volume is indeed intent on portraying young Crusoe’s urge to break away from the family and to make something for his own exclusive to youth. The contrast between the tempestuous youth and the easy and comfortable “Father” echoes throughout the first part of Crusoe’s adventure. It is not only Crusoe’s biological father but other older figures who works to emphasize Crusoe’s inclination for adventures are that of a

not expected to challenge the world. Crusoe who seeks “Farther Adventures” must first and continuously defy an additional socio-cultural value that was yet hidden and very much entrenched, that is, the expectation of what old age is about and how its story goes.

Through such a struggle, the narrative destabilizes the indivisible tie between age (youth) and individualism.

what Business I had after threescore Years, and after such a Life of tedious Sufferings and Disasters, and closed in so happy and easy a Manner; I, say, what Business had I to rush into new hazards, and put myself upon Adventures fit only for Youth and Poverty to run into? (*RC2* 5)

With no monetary or social incentive on his mind, as he claims, Crusoe in his “threescore years” runs into adventures.⁷⁴ As Crusoe tries to reason with himself, there is no reason to go on an adventure. It is simply his restlessness that takes Crusoe on the adventure. It does not matter that there is absolutely no reason to travel. Rather, the narrative establishes Crusoe’s travel as one without “probable” cause. *RC2* is very keen on emphasizing that Crusoe’s “second part” is not

youth. A “Father” of Crusoe’s acquaintance also exhorts Crusoe to stay away from the seafaring life—by saying that he should “go back to [your] Father” (15). The conversation between them is depicted as a typical collision between youth and age. Grave and wise in his words, this older figure is identical in his tone and image and continuously calls Crusoe “young Man.” 14-15.

⁷⁴ Narrative-wise, and conveniently enough for Crusoe, God decides to make him a widower. This is done in a way that does not touch upon his age or his circumstances—the two reasons mentioned for the inappropriateness of Crusoe’s desires so that it still remains Crusoe’s journey as an old man’s adventure. By eliminating only his marital obligation, the narrative establishes that Crusoe is rich and old as much as before. It should also be mentioned that Crusoe demonstrates an awareness of his fatherly responsibility although it only takes a moment for Crusoe to deal with it. As his good friend, the widow, who formerly took care of all Crusoe’s businesses during his long absence in *RC1*, reminds him, there are three remaining aspects that should still deny him future adventures even after his wife’s death: his age, economic status, and fatherly responsibility (*RC2* 12). “But it was all to no Purpose, I had an irresistible desire for the Voyage” (*RC2* 12). He thus succinctly writes a will, “and settled the Estate I had in such a Manner for my Children, and place in such Hands, that I was perfectly easy and satisfied they would have Justice done them” (*RC2* 12). Apparently, making his will for his children is enough for his fatherly responsibility and so he gets rid of more reason to stay as a happy old man who indulges himself in “a deep Relapse of the wandering Disposition” (*RC2* 7). His economic status and his age remain the same; he is an old man all-in for the unnecessary vicissitude. The fatherly responsibility that Crusoe continuously slacks in his old age (as opposed to the surrogate father role he takes on for Will Atkins and the inhabitants of the Island) remains a topic that has not been fully investigated. See France for discussion on Crusoe’s domestic responsibility. 36, 86.

even about money or accruing wealth. When his business partner suggests that they should stay on with their current routine (traveling from Sumatra and Siam to Suskan and Bengal) rather than to travel to new sites because they would profit a lot from it, Crusoe thinks,

I got so much Money by my first Adventure, and such an Insight into the method of getting more, that had I been twenty Years younger, I should have been tempted to have stayed here, and sought no farther for making my Fortune; but what was all this to a man upwards of threescore, that was rich enough, and came abroad more in obedience to a restless Desire of seeing the World than a covetous Desire of gaining by it? A restless Desire it really was, for when I was at Home I was restless to go abroad; and when I was abroad I was restless to be at home. I say, what was this gain to me? I was rich enough already, nor had I any uneasy Desires about getting more Money; therefore the Profit of the Voyage to me was of no great Force for the prompting me forward to further Undertakings. Hence, I thought that by this Voyage I had made no Progress at all, because I was come back, as I might call it, to the Place from whence I came, as to a Home: whereas, my Eye, like that which Solomon speaks of, was never satisfied with seeing. (*RC2* 232-233)

The matter of “gain” is of less concern to Crusoe. As Crusoe acknowledges, a younger version of himself might have been tempted to stay in order to profit from the journey, but more money does not mean much to him now in his “threescore” years. His age (along with his comfortable situation with money) makes his adventure not about money. Although Crusoe’s professed propensity for curiosity for new variety turns out to be so conveniently overlapping with economic gain, at least for Crusoe, he is not in it for the money at the outset.

Crusoe is driven by “the Notion of a mad, rambling Boy, that never cares to see a Thing twice over” *RC2* 233). He is “like a Ship without a Pilot, that could only run afore the Wind” (*RC2* 9). When the crew with whom Crusoe travels has a brief respite, Crusoe turns down various opportunities for “advantages” and finally chooses the one that will guarantee him to see the “new world.” This time, it is the Eastern globe.⁷⁵ When presented with this opportunity, the matter-of-fact tone of the narrative alters to an overtly emotional one showing Crusoe having “scarce Power to speak . . . for some time” (*RC2* 285) because he is too overcome with happiness for just another episode of his travel. During his travel, Crusoe is even forced to pay a fine and ask pardon to his traveling company because he was too busy with seeing “odd sight” of China and had digressed from his group. Indeed, Crusoe is “possessed with a wandering Spirit, and scorn’d all Advantages” (*RC2* 219-20). He is constantly on the move, without a moment’s reflection as critics lament, just for the sake of continuing on. And for the second half of *RC2*, Crusoe wanders off, moving from episode to episode, scene to scene, from Madagascar and China through Siberia and Russia. As Crusoe admits, he “made no Progress at all.”

In a few instances, Crusoe displays a rather mature quality of an old person. For instance, early in the narrative Crusoe plays this generous, experienced, and wise old figure. When Crusoe’s crew encounter a vessel in distress, Crusoe quickly decides to save the refugees. Reminding himself the time he was rescued by a Portuguese captain and how fortunate he had been, Crusoe even refuses to take their money and valued goods. Here, Crusoe uses his past experiences for better judgment. He seems to have “grown” to some extent, perhaps not too selfish or materialistic. When Crusoe arrives in his island, he also plays the father figure: he

⁷⁵ When Crusoe leaves his island, and after some incidents with the crew members that leave Crusoe without a boat or a specific plan to go back to England, he rejects all proposals that could have been good opportunities to capitalize on while taking him home. The one project he considers is to travel to China, a place he has never been to.

leads the inhabitants through several battles using his past knowledge about the natives and geography. Although Crusoe seems to relish that he is this “Monarch or a great Conqueror” (*RC2* 40) to the inhabitants of the island or “Governor” (*RC2* 40) as they called him, the primary plotline takes the reader through how Crusoe was “a Father to them” (*RC2* 126) standing at the altar in a marriage and advising life lessons. Crusoe’s involvement in the conversion of Will Atkins, with whom Crusoe reflects on their disobedience to the Father in a sincere manner, takes a good portion of the whole of *RC2*. Moreover, *RC2* also shows a quite mature attitude to the colonial other compared to that of *RC1*, an aspect that supposedly is to configure old Crusoe as a more righteous character.⁷⁶

Just when Crusoe seems to have reached a point of change, however, he escapes “progress” or some kind of development. In a surprising turn of events, Crusoe very suddenly abandons his responsibility to the inhabitants of the island and leaves. He simply lapses into another episode. Crusoe solemnly acknowledges he never grows up, but does that also very briskly. He concisely asks the reader not to think about the island. He is done: “I have now done with the Island, and all Manner of Discourse about it: and whoever reads the rest of my Memorandums would do well to turn his Thoughts entirely from it, and expect to read of the Follies of an old Man” (*RC2* 208). The people Crusoe had left in the island “begged . . . to think of the Promise” (*RC2* 201) he made to take them back to their homeland, but it means nothing to Crusoe. For another variety, he simply leaves, leaving as well the possibility for development and progress.

⁷⁶ Although the primary colonial attitude of Crusoe—including “civilizing” the natives teaching them to become Christians, tame wife, and good worker—remains the same, *RC2* demonstrates a different approach in dealing with various groups of subjects. Not only does Crusoe “civilize” an English man, Will Atkins, he also shows a rather humanitarian attitude to the killings of the natives especially for those in Madagascar as opposed to the Chinese toward whom Crusoe is very much condescending and brutal. See note 30 in this chapter.

This, in fact, is precisely the point of this sequel. The elements of *RC2* that critics regret—no reflection, lack of development, the loosely connected events without a unified purpose—are what makes *RC2* remarkable. It is an exploration of a different model of individuality. Where he would “progress,” Crusoe rambles on. And importantly, Crusoe is aware of what he lacks. “Be it, I had Business or no Business, away I went. ‘Tis is no Time now to enlarge any farther upon the Reason or Absurdity of my own Conduct, but to come to the history. I was embarked for the Voyage, and the Voyage I went” (*RC2* 202). He would rather not dwell on how rational or reckless his actions are. His story is a “*Wild-Goose Chase*” (*RC2* 201). And this haphazard repetition of episodes is his story. That is, Crusoe exists in mere sequence of “tick, tick, tick,” as Stuart Sherman would put it, in the simple successiveness of the middle. Crusoe has no sense of “tick-tock,” a sense of closure.⁷⁷ *RC2* reconfigures the narrative arc of Crusoe’s life as one that cannot be explained within a lineal story of a “lesson learned.” It is a continuous going. In this respect, old age for Crusoe is not situated further away from the conclusion as Moretti would see it. Crusoe’s later stories reject the assumed cultural notion of old age as the time of decaying conclusion, a fixed time, and by doing so they show a remarkable disinclination toward the progress-and-decline ideal. Revealing the arbitrary impositions of age, Crusoe urges the reader to rethink him as an aging being, an old man, and still Crusoe.

Taken together, as much as Crusoe is a continuation of his former self, *RC2* is not a mere repetition of *RC1* just capitalizing on the popularity of its previous series. Rather, *RC2*’s Crusoe *undoes* the original plot. As France puts it, just the existence of the “sequels impl[ies] that the original ending was not necessarily what the narrative had worked towards all along” (12-13). A

⁷⁷ In *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Forms, 1666-1785*, Stuart Sherman argues that the eighteenth-century contemporaries had no sense of “tick-tock” as a sequence of time. According to Sherman, the innovation of plot in the era works to turn Chronos into Kairos (46), recounting a mere successive passing of time as a beginning and an end as it acquires the meaning of the past and future.

sequel is an outcome of an active decision of the author himself who is now aging into his sixties, to add more plot, which “must have involved a wholly new way of thinking about story and a different notion of what its outlines and implications were” (France 280). The sequel thus calls into question whether the story was ever really complete (France 15). In other words, *RC2* demands the reader to rethink what we normally assume about Crusoe’s intention, and further, his identity. This old Crusoe is not a “stretch” of a “fully-formed” individual. He is an individual still in the process of being himself. As much as Crusoe tries to escape it, age is an indelible part of him. And as I have shown, age makes him go on the adventure in the way he does.

Problematizing the age of a protagonist and imagining what happens *after* their so-called conclusions or settlements, Crusoe’s later adventures reimagine Crusoe as a whole. *RC2*’s inclusion of old age and its explicit way of narrativization of an old protagonist’s stories are thus an active challenge to the traditional image of old age. He is not wise, retired, declined, immobile, fixed nor is his story already concluded. In their seemingly pointless rambling, Crusoe’s later stories reconfigures the whole narrative and the whole of Crusoe’s identity. He shows that the previous narrative was a section of a whole. As Crusoe advises, “Let no wise Man flatter himself with the Strength of his own Judgement, as if he was able to chuse any particular Station of Life for himself. Man is a short-sighted Creature, sees but a very little Way before him” (*RC2* 202). The conclusion of the original, *RC2* shows, was a mere convenience, an arbitrary and relative end as Hunter calls it (290-291). Crusoe goes through the narrative ends to reject the supposed arc of life and the suppositions about *fixed* old age.

Crusoe acknowledges himself as an anomaly, a peculiar old man who has this inappropriate desire as opposed to what “Any one would think.” But that proverb the narrative started with—*That what is bred in the Bone will not go out of the Flesh*—also suggest that the

supposedly singular case of his individuality may be an example of a possibly larger pattern. Crusoe hints that it may be more general to be the same self with enduring personal traits in old age. One simply continues to be who he is—because, as “used on so many occasions,” “what is bred in the bone will not go out of the flesh.” As much as Crusoe is exceptional, we should note that he is also an ordinary man, a prototype who articulates the possibility of a new type of individual through his exceptionality (Armstrong 5). Writing about his old age, this exceptional yet exemplary character is then not only complicating the archetypal old man figure who has done with everything. But he is also presenting a possible individuality of an old man who can be a proper subject of a narrative in his later years.

In the vivacity of old Crusoe that has no grand purpose, we find a different narrative possibility and an articulation of a different model of individualism. The so-called lack of inner development makes *RC2*, and in its lack Crusoe exists. All the miscellaneous variety that rarely propels “growth” shows that Crusoe, without progress, is yet Crusoe. He is an individual in the process of being himself—not in spite of, but *with* aging.

Fixed Aging as a Privilege

Crusoe’s way of aging is made possible with various privileges allowed only to a select category of individual. Or to put it another way, privilege is written into the way Crusoe ages. The exceptional mobility, to travel at a whim, and to age with vivacity and without concerns for their aging body are for those whose aging is, more or less, at their control.

Time—and aging—primarily work to Crusoe’s advantage. Indeed, the passing of time is crucial for Crusoe’s colonial capital. The Brazilian plantation that Crusoe had once bought and left due to being stranded on an island grows over time with extraordinary productivity: “every

Year the Income considerably increased” (*RCI* 237) resulting in goods that Crusoe is too scrupulous to not detail—“viz. Tobacco in Roll, and Sugar in Chests, besides Rum, Molasses, &c., which is the Consequence of a Sugar Work” (*RCI* 237). It is not simply his travel and the things he acquired but time that made Crusoe “now [a] Master, all on a Sudden, of above 5000 *l. Sterling* in Money, and had an Estate, as I might well call it in the *Brasils*, of above a thousand Pounds a Year” (*RCI* 240).

The colonial spaces such as Brazil support Crusoe’s fixed aging—one without decline or growth. They are places of infinite resource and, in fact, of life. Sometimes, it seems that such places do not even age. Even Crusoe’s parrot, Poll, is speculated to have lived to a hundred in its native place of Brazil (*RCI* 152). Brazil provides an abundance of materials to support the inhabitants of Crusoe’s island and continue on his legacy. In the brief moment that Crusoe stays in Brazil, he sends the people of the island many things of necessity. From Brazil,

I sent a Bark, which I bought there, with more People to the Island; and in it, besides other Supplies, I sent seven Women, being such as I found proper for Service, or for Wives to such as would take them . . . I sent them, also, from the *Brasils*, five Cows, three of them being big with Calf, some Sheep, and some Hogs, which when I came again were considerably increased. (*RCI* 257).

The colonial space always lucratively young. Even the cows are “big with Calf” and the seven women are for the purpose of becoming wives, as if Crusoe cannot easily envision them in any other role.⁷⁸ Shrewd Crusoe knows that it is not just food or plants but also livestock and women that can perpetuate colonialization. And all such necessities are shipped from Brazil, “bought” to

⁷⁸ In explaining “Man” (“Homme”), *Encyclopédie* writes that “It is even said that in Brazil entire nations perpetuate themselves in which not a single woman has experienced the monthly cycle.” Here, Diderot illustrates a belief that colonial others have a different kind of bodily process especially in terms of aging and reproductivity.

be sure, but with the money that the space itself generated for him. Moreover, it must be remembered that Crusoe left “his” people in the island and broke his promise to their people to continue his adventures and “be himself.” And this is his way of making reparations—with colonial capital that is supposedly flourishing forever. His desire for another adventure and his energetic old age is held up by Brazil, a real place imagined to be serving him with endless resources. In short, Brazil and its supposed youth underwrite both the futurity of his island and his privileged aging.

Xury and Friday too do not get to grow old. Instead of aging, they are suddenly removed from the narrative. Interestingly, in their cases, it is the sea where this effacing of the colonial subject’s aging takes place. For Crusoe, maritime space holds infinite possibility even for an old man. He can be “a Ship without a Pilot,” anchorless and mobile, enjoying haphazard variety that, as it turns out, proves profitable. There, he is far from the limiting confines and expectations about aging. In fact, once Crusoe sets sail and travels, there are only a handful references to his age. And even those references are used to mostly present Crusoe as a righteous, benevolent, or exceptionally adventurous figure who knows what to do and how to handle a crisis. But that positive vision of the sea is that of a middle-class white man. Crusoe’s colonial subjects would hardly share such a sentiment. Xury is bargained into slavery while on a ship. For Friday too, the sea is where he dies defending his “master” on board. The sea does not hold a promise of healthy old age for these characters.

Xury is the young nonwhite boy that Crusoe escapes with from Africa where he was enslaved. But despite their companionship, as many postcolonial critics have pointed out, Crusoe takes it for granted that he is Xury’s superior. When they finally escape successfully, Crusoe strikes a bargain with a Portuguese captain and “gives” Xury to him with a promise that if he

turns Christian, he will be freed in ten years. Would Xury have grown old once freed? The life expectancy of a slave was not long in the eighteenth century.⁷⁹ Friday, the one who Crusoe “so entirely lov’d and valu’d, and who indeed so well deserv’d it” (*RC2* 194) also does not grow old. However “civilized,” “Christian,” and helpful one is, a colonial subject is not granted the time of old age. Friday dies pierced by one of the arrows of the “savages” of All-Saints in Brazil (*RC2* 193). Crusoe describes that he was “the most disconsolate Creature alive, for want of my Man *Friday*” (*RC2* 195). Angered and devastated, Crusoe kills many inhabitants there, so many that he cannot tell the number of (*RC2* 194). But the death of Friday does not make Crusoe reflect on the future that Friday could have had. At this time of grief, Crusoe casually remarks that he “would have been very glad to have gone back to the Island, to have taken one of the rest from thence for my Occasion, but it could not be; so we went on” (*RC2* 195). As much as he loves and “values” Friday, Friday is more or less replaceable. As much as Crusoe’s aging represents an exciting challenge to the medical understanding of the decaying self, this is a fantasy enabled by Friday’s death protecting Crusoe’s chance to age.

⁷⁹ Because evidence regarding exact life expectancy of a slave in the eighteenth century is scanty, one may venture to apply data from the nineteenth century. The estimated life expectancy of a slave at birth is still much in debate but some consensus exists among scholars that malnutrition had a devastating impact on the average lifespan of slaves overall. Although studies differ in their estimates as much as by ten years, many speculate that the life expectancy of enslaved people for the decade 1850-1860 in American South was around thirty-two (Meeker 20) to thirty-six years old (Fogel and Engerman 125, 154). In their archeological findings, Jennifer Olsen Kelley and J. Lawrence Angel specifies “life stressors” that could have impacted the life expectancy of enslaved people during the late seventeenth century to the nineteenth century by examining the remains of the skeletons. They note that that there was a gender difference in longevity particularly due to that male enslaved received better status in terms of their reaction to nutritional indicators. Rao estimates the life expectancy of “nonwhite male” at birth to be around thirty-three years old in 1900-1902. See Hodges for the reality of old age for the enslaved. (482). And the situation in the Caribbean, Dutch Guiana, and Brazil are presumed worse (Mintz). Notwithstanding that Xury survived infancy (which means he has a good chance of aging beyond the life expectancy age which is skewed by high infant mortality rate), evidence also suggests that many enslaved people did not survive long enough to be old. Engerman suggests that almost one-third of imported enslaved people died within the first three years since their arrival to new places (272). Xury is described already as a “boy” who can lift loaded boxes. Adding a ten-year labor contract, Xury’s old age remains much in doubt.

Friday's aging is in fact very much on the horizon, or it must have been. When Crusoe and Friday revisit the island they left behind, they meet Friday's father (who is usually referred to as the "old Man" from then on). When they approach the island, Friday seems despondent a little because he believes that his father must have died due to old age (*RC2* 36). Finding out that he is alive, Friday jumps off the boat and flies to him. As Crusoe recalls, "It would have made any Man have shed Tears in Spight of the firmest Resolution, to have seen the first Transports of this poor Fellow's Joy when he came to his Father" (*RC2* 37). But despite their joy at the reunion, they do not get to say goodbye, or at least the narrative does not dwell on it. Just as Crusoe decides to leave the island, Friday is granted to come with Crusoe and we no longer hear about Friday's father. During his presence, however, he proves useful for Crusoe. Friday's father is very old but not decrepit. He is like Friday only older. Versed in Spanish and English, he is an exploitable resource to spread Christianity; he is resourceful for his years of native knowledge; furthermore, he is a willingly helpful and never cumbersome man. He translates between Crusoe and the natives of the island who is taken as captives comforting the captives that they are in the hands of Christian who abhors eating human. Through such a peaceful translation act, this old man even brings about such a joyful agreement from the captives to be the servants. They even dance in happiness and "willingly" agrees to work for the people, the narrative says, who saved their lives (*RC2* 81-82). Perhaps this is what Friday would be like in his old age. Friday does not have the privilege to grow old, search for his true calling, or disregard age and family responsibility at his will like Crusoe did.

Crusoe's counting of the age of the newly slaved natives and their bodily shape and health further shows how aging had a very different meaning for them. Crusoe describes how these new slaved people had "Well shap'd, strait and fair Limbs, about thirty to thirty five Years

of Age; and five Women, whereof two might be from thirty to forty, two more not above four or five and twenty, and the fifth, a tall comely Maiden about sixteen or seventeen” (RC2 80). His attention to their calendar year age is combined with their ablebodiedness for obvious reasons of exploitative labor. For women, it is subcategorized into just labor but sexual reproduction too. Obviously, their aging is understood and evaluated from a different perspective—a economic and exploitative one—from how Crusoe would see his own aging process.

When broadening the perspective to other colonial or racial subjects such as Olaudah Equiano or Phillis Wheatley who present their own narratives for their lives in the colonial eighteenth-century Britain, there is a lesser sense of aging or a serious consideration of the implications of old age. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, a cursory reading of their literary works suggests that there was little room for decline or debility both in a literal sense and figuratively; Wheatley died at the age of thirty-one, and Equiano remained a strong Christian man in his writings. In Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (1789) too, it is interesting that he describes the many “elders” of his original home (5) but do not refer to any old black man in Britain. Perhaps there were none that he could call to due to a lacking population of old black people, or more likely, perhaps it was not his immediate concern. In a sense, to worry about what comes later was a privilege when one survives daily. Sari Edelstein, in nineteenth-century American context, argues that “adulthood” was a fictional age norm that was excluded from the slaves whose aging were distorted by the exploitive system of the slavery.⁸⁰ It seems to me that the racial others of the eighteenth century

⁸⁰ In the American context, Sari Edelstein investigates “adulthood” as a fictional age category of the nineteenth century. According to Edelstein, adulthood is specifically a narrative construct that serves a capitalist and nationalist agenda of then-growing notion of America. Edelstein suggests that aging and maturation are not synonymous for various categories of people including women and slaves. Chapter two specifically examines how slavery system distorts the process of aging (especially by corrupting childhood) and excludes slaves from owning adulthood.

were also deprived of old age, not only adulthood. To configure oneself as a perfectly educated and civilized citizen, and a model Christian, thus worthy of freedom and human rights, Wheatley and Equiano not only could not simply wait to “grow up” nor could they decline, become debilitated, or disabled. Simultaneously, in the mental world of a privileged middle-class white colonial man, Friday and Xury, remain as perpetual young ones, always “innocent” and oftentimes immature however “civilized” they become. For Crusoe, they do not and cannot grow old.

Without the familiar solemnness that is imagined to accompany old age, Crusoe’s later stories challenge the usual attempt to understand life as a comfortable lineal progress. As a story of an old protagonist who just continues on without progress and without decline, *RC2* resists our temptation to read the familiar arc of human life, to link age with wisdom and final accruelement of knowledge, to an ultimate point of closure. Crusoe would never be the dying old he-goat, miserable and alone, immobile and aching, nor would he go out as a “better” version of himself. Crusoe finishes *RC2* thus: “And here resolving to harass myself no more, I am preparing for a longer Journey than all these, having liv’d 72 Years of Life of infinite Variety, and learned sufficiently to know the Value of Retirement, and the Blessing of ending our Days in Peace” (348). But again, *RC2* is not the second and last part of his story. He goes on in *RC3* replacing his physical wandering to a literary rambling (France 89), thereby never really giving in to a sense of closure. The further stories of Crusoe are not mere extra, slipshod rambling additions to the “complete” “original” story; they are a new exploration into the meaning of aging, an ultimate question to the meaning of life that simultaneously shows what such an exploration took for granted at the expense of colonial others.

CHAPTER 2. “‘TIS THINE TO CHARM US BY SUBLIME WAYS”: ALTERED AGING AND GENDERED POETIC IDENTITY IN JONATHAN SWIFT, MARY LEAPOR, AND LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

Introduction

The female body had a specific meaning in the tradition of long eighteenth-century British male poetry. Situated within the sexual power discourses that shaped traditional Western art and culture, the female body was a “*locus* of sexuality, [a] site of visual pleasure, or [a] lure of the gaze” (De Lauretis 37). From the works of Edward Spenser, John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Robert Herrick to Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, the female body was a ubiquitous poetic object serving the male creation, waiting to be probed.⁸¹ The coy bloom, the mystic secret, and even the dangerous sexuality “inspired” men to exert their poetic power. But no mistake should be made. It was the *young* female body that was the usual object of desire in traditional British poetry. When the female body ages and decays, as male poets insisted it would, it was exiled out of the realm of the poetic. Charming for only a deceptively short moment, the beauty that the female body holds was considered a “very transitory Thing, that is subject to Changes, and may be easily lost” (Le Camus 7). The female body was an avatar for change, always on the verge of slipping away and thus more titillating as an object of desire.

The aging female body seldom inspired poetic creation in eighteenth-century poetry. While the poetic world was filled with exaltations of youth and the beauty of the female body, the aging female body was rarely a topic discussed except when used as a point of threat or

⁸¹ At the same time the female body was subjected to being objectified in poetry, its sexuality also rendered it a “dangerous” active subject—a paradoxical duality the female corporeality embodied which male poets often utilized in their poetic creation. Page Ann duBois argues that Renaissance male poets display an ambivalent attitude to the female body: that of fascination and fear/disgust. Expanding duBois’s argument to a broader Renaissance male poetic tradition, Moira P. Baker argues that the way traditional male poets like Herrick, Phillip Sydney, and Fulke Greville treat the female body “conceals a desire for unthinking sensuality” (15).

lesson for human mortality.⁸² In the context of drama and novels of the long eighteenth century, the aging female body and its physicality were a persistent trope. Compared to Elizabethan theater, Restoration drama was almost obsessed with representing the physical decay of old people (Mignon 4)⁸³ and eighteenth-century novelists showed special interest in the material effects of aging on female bodies. From Tobias Smollett's Mrs. Tabitha, an old maid who is "shrivelled into a thousand wrinkles" (Smollett 70) to Francis Burney's Madame Duval who is outrightly called "the *old French hag*" (55; original emphases), unseemly aging female bodies populated the fictional and theatrical world of the eighteenth century. Although with less frequency, eighteenth-century poetry primarily utilized aging female bodies as a point of mockery. The adorned old ladies in Pope's world playing cards in the background and the vain mothers who clutch on their diamond pendants with a trembling hand in Thomas Parnell's poem unwittingly evince the temporality of beauty and the futility of trying to hold on to it.

But in some works of eighteenth-century poetry the aging female body *is* the leading figure. Quite unlike those aging women who can be flattened down to a single characteristic of age-bitter vanity, the aging female body in these poems is infused with complexity that impels a poet to take a deep dive in exploring the meaning of changing physicality and its ramifications.

⁸² As a classic example, in Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" (1633), a suitor succinctly summarizes, "Time's winged Chariot" hurries on her and "Thy Beauty shall no more be found" (Marvell 56). This importuning suitor points out the threatening temporal materiality of female beauty without making much reference to the aging female body itself. In fact, there is no aging female body present in the poem. It is hidden between the stark contrast between life and death. From a beautiful young maid to a corpse, the mistress is suddenly imagined as dead. There is no middle. The vivid imagery of her decaying body in a coffin is there (Marvell 56), perhaps to remind the mistress that her aging body is not that different from a dead body; but in any case, the bodily decline and its effects are skipped. The speaker wishes the woman would refuse being languished in time's "slow-chapp'd Pow'r" (Marvell 56). As he lyricizes, "Rather at once our Time devour" the body (Marvell 56). Per his request, the aging body is left out in this male imagination. It hovers somewhere in the unspoken territory silently intimidating the woman of her grim future.

⁸³ Mignon does not specifically remark on the gender differences in Restoration drama's attention to physical decay. Surveying the works of William Wycherley, John Dryden, Aphra Behn, William Congreve to name a few, Mignon observes a rather broad denigration of old people. See Chapter Three for more discussions on eighteenth-century's understanding and cultural representations of aging male body.

With a focus on gender, Chapter two centers on eighteenth-century poetry that foregrounds aging female bodies that are imagined to undergo radical physical alterations and mental changes. This chapter brings together Jonathan Swift's Stella poems, written between 1718 and 1726, which concern Swift's aging process, with what I call "spectre" poems, a collection of works written by women poets such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Leapor that utilize ghost metaphors to depict aging women. Comparing how portrayals of altered aging female bodies differ in Swift and these women poets, I demonstrate the import of how the female body (and mind) serving to construct specific poetic identities for aging male and female poets.

I begin with examining the history of gendered aging in the larger eighteenth-century's medico-scientific and cultural context in order to show how Swift, Leapor, and Montagu utilize the gendered framework of aging to construct their poetic identity. In the following section, I read Swift's Stella poems and demonstrate how Swift's creation of an aging poetic identity hinges on the way the aging female body is represented.

Altered Aging Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Medical Culture

The process of aging was constructed as gendered in the eighteenth century. The onset of old age and the scientific perception of the aging process were quite different for men and women in general. The female body had a female-specific aging process with a different temporality, processes (i.e., menstruation), and meanings.

To start, women's aging was imagined to have a different temporality. It was a long-held belief that aging comes at a faster speed for women. One of the popular ways of conceptualizing life was to look at it as consisting of various stages. As a prime example, Shakespeare's Jacques

had illustrated that there are seven “acts” to a man’s life⁸⁴—infancy, schoolboy, love-sick teenager, soldiering young man, experienced middle-age, old age, and extreme old age—and Samuel Johnson often referred to old age as “winter” comparing life to annual cycle of four seasons.⁸⁵ For women, the basic framework of life as a progress through several stages was similar, but each stage of her life involved fewer years. A woman was to go through infancy and childhood earlier and to quickly arrive at adulthood. According to Mary Dove, records of seventeenth-century English law show that early modern contemporaries reckoned “a woman has already lived through six ages [out of seven stages] by the time she reaches twenty-one” (23). This faster temporality of female aging was believed to leave women to an earlier period of old age with a longer duration—one that, it is claimed, could start at twenty-one. The entry on “Woman” in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences* (1751) notes that “The youth of women is shorter and more brilliant than that of men; their old age is more unfortunate and long.” As the use of the word “unfortunate” (or “annoying” or “bitter” as can be translated by the original word “fâcheuse”) suggests, a woman’s advanced years did not gain her much acclaim. This faster aging process was misfortune for women because it took away their “brilliant” days and left them at an extended “winter.”

The medical and scientific approaches to the human body in the long eighteenth century naturalized such traditional views on gendered (and often sexist) aging and further produced a newly authoritative perspective on the gendered differences in aging bodies. Women’s aging bodies were not really treated as an absolutely different species, but they were regarded as a distinct subset of human with their own aging process. For both Bernard Lynch and William

⁸⁴ See Mary Dove for the meaning and history of the seven stages of man’s life. 10-12.

⁸⁵ For instance, in *The Rambler* No. 50, Johnson writes that “It is a hopeless endeavour to unite the contrarieties of spring and winter” (131; vol. 2) arguing that old people give up the youthful levity and pleasures they once indulged in.

Buchan, women's bodies were inherently different. In *A Guide to Health Through the Various Stages of Life* (1744), Lynch writes that

As to what regards the Sexes, the Female, generally speaking, grows old sooner than the Male . . . [Women] are sooner old, on account of the weakness of their Bodies, and their manner of living. Weakness hastens their Growth, and brings them likewise sooner to old Age. (8)

For Lynch, a woman's body was naturally subject to a different speed of aging. Citing Hippocrates' study of premature female babies, Lynch remarks that "*The females . . . are later in forming and growing in the Womb than the Males,*" but once they are born, they grow faster arriving to an "*earlier Understanding*" and "*Perfection*" (8). From the moment of their conception, women and men have different aging processes. Extending this different temporality throughout human life, Lynch singles out a few reproductive functions of female bodies as further evidence for a distinctly gendered aging process. Namely, he claims that the whole process of childbirth necessitates a different bodily progress for women: "Women are naturally colder than Men, too much Heat being supposed to consume and vitiate the tender Nourishment of Infants" (10). Although Lynch is not clear whether this "natural" constitution applies to women who do not go through pregnancy and childbirth, Lynch understands it to be the norm—even "natural"—that women exhaust their bodily heat in the process of child birth and come to inhabit a cold and dry body sooner than the male. All in all, aging was distinctly gendered in Lynch's account.

Buchan's popular work that sold thousands of copies during his lifetime, *Domestic Medicine: or a Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicine*, also shows the female body as having a particular aging system. Echoing a familiar

idea of gendered nerves,⁸⁶ Buchan claims that a female “nervous system [is] more irritable in them than in men” (168). As Buchan writes, “FEMALES are liable to many diseases which do not afflict the other sex” (168). Adding to these sensitive nerves, female bodies have one crucial function that renders women’s aging different. In a separate chapter titled “Diseases of Women,” Buchan picks out one bodily phenomenon, menstruation, as a life event that essentially makes aging a gendered process. Buchan writes that a woman’s body is seriously altered two times throughout her years. He divides women’s lives into “two periods [that are] the most critical of their lives” (648), that is, the beginning and cessation of menstruation. And this distinctly female bodily function was to open them up for various “sources for calamity” (648) such as dropsy or consumption. It is suggested that the beginning of menopause around the years of forty-five or fifty is the most vulnerable period for women and the various illnesses in this time are “very difficult to cure” (648). Specifically, when a woman begins menstruation, around the age of fifteen, Buchan claims that her bodily “constitution undergoes a very considerable change, generally indeed for the better, though sometimes for the worse” (648). But around the age of fifty “THAT period of life at which the menses cease to flow . . . is sufficient to disorder to whole frame, and often to destroy life itself” (656).

Buchan was not alone in singling out menopause as a particular milestone in female aging. Despite that the term “menopause” had not come into daily vocabularies in eighteenth-century Britain, the “cessation of the menses” was indeed considered a phenomenon that needed proper management in general. In 1774, John Fothergill published a foundational medical text

⁸⁶ It was rather a common theory to believe that women had finer, softer, and more delicate nerves. For traditional discussions on the belief that women were more sensible and therefore also more prone to nervous breakdowns such as hysteria due to their sensitive bodies, see John Mullan’s *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in Eighteenth Century*. Clarendon Press, 1990, Chapter 5. For the production of this sexed body, see Dror Wahrman, *The Making of Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*. Yale University Press, 2004.

entitled “Of the Management of Proper at the Cessation of the Menses.” Fothergill starts this rather respectful document by pointing out that “There is a period in the life of females to which, for the most part, they are taught to look with some degree of anxiety” (442). As Michael Stolberg observes for the early modern period, menopause was either imagined to make women sluggish in their bodily constitution because it made women hold vile humors (that used to be discharged) in their bodies, or it was believed to render the female body excessively irritable and her temper tumultuous (425-426) possibly making it vulnerable to particular diseases and illnesses. Regardless of the changing theories of menopause, medical discourses insisted that women had a distinct aging process and that brought with it a different, *altered*, aging body.

This interest in the female aging process was a continuation of early modern medical practice that acknowledged the aging body as gendered. Wendy D. Churchill’s study of female patients in early modern Britain observes that practical treatment and diagnoses of the era were very conscious about matters regarding patients’ sex and age (or more frequently, as it was typical in the era, the life cycle a patient was in rather than specific calendar age). Surveying medical notes and dosage prescriptions of various groups of medical practitioners including physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, Churchill argues that “There was an awareness amongst practitioners that the female body possessed unique physiological functions, in particular vaginal discharge, menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation, which provided unique opportunities to monitor, and alter, medical treatment” (Churchill 35-36). Patients with the same illness were treated differently according to their “different ages, marital status, and socio-economic” level (Churchill 6). For instance, an old woman patient with gout were treated like a man because she was thought to have lost her female bodily characteristics (Churchill 165). Age and gender were

an indispensable combination that decided not only the bodily constitution but also consequent treatment methods for early modern medical practitioners.

In short, eighteenth-century medical texts presented aging as a gendered process. Yet their views were more nuanced than this summary might suggest. While seen as significant, gender was neither the only nor the overriding factor in an individual's experience of aging. Emphasizing the importance of complex layers of identity, age historians such as Susannah Ottaway and Pat Thane argue that aging was an individualized process in which gender played *a* part. A variety of factors including health, appearance, class, residence, and occupation all played an important role in deciding who was "old." Underscoring the importance of diverse experiences of aging, Thane too calls into question the prevailing idea that gender was a dominant element in one's encounter with old age ("Untiring Zest" 235). Thane's primary concern is to show that gender does not guarantee a unified experience of aging. Thane's survey of wide-ranging images and self-images of old women in the period demonstrates that "for women as for men, old age was perceived more subjectively, in relation to social power and/or physical activity, appearance, and capacity for work, rather than with some abstract conception of old age" ("Untiring Zest" 236). In any given period and culture, various conceptions of how one becomes old and what that means exist simultaneously.

Experiences of aging were not universally decided based on gender and gender was not an unmarked category. Even so, gender was indispensable in the reality of aging. While I agree with Thane that there is no "single, simple category" of "old women" and that there is certainly no unified experience of old age that applies to all old people ("Untiring Zest" 236), I concur with Looser's contention that "there is at the same time evidence that 'abstract conceptions of old age' were themselves rather powerful" (*Women Writers* 10). The medical perception of

women having a distinct life cycle and the idea that postmenopausal woman possessed a different aged body appear in the way aging women are portrayed and represent themselves in literature.⁸⁷ In particular, ideas about beauty as embodied in the young female body are repeated in women's descriptions of the negative impacts of the aging process. Marchioness de Lambert writes that "Every one is a Loser in approaching to Age, and the Women greatly more so than the Men, because their chief Advantages consist in exterior Charms, and Time ever unmercifully destroys these, and leaves them at length wholly divested of them" (Courcelles 105). Compared to men whose existence is not chiefly associated with their "exterior Charms," a woman loses a lot with aging. The kinds of favors, advantages, the bright and comfortable days last only "the same Duration with their Beauty" (Courcelles 105), and there is no lenience in aging destroying female beauty. As Ottaway points out, even the supposedly gender-less signs of aging—wrinkles, gray hairs, stooped back, etc.—were seen to be gained by the female body much earlier (*Decline of Life* 44), and I propose, with more serious consequences. However, as this chapter will illustrate, some women writers of the period were able to play off of those consequences to explore new creative possibilities that express joy, triumph and tranquility in the face of aging.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Leapor engage directly in their work with the scientific idea of an altered female body as well as the (pseudo-)scientific discourse concerning

⁸⁷ Devoney Looser's study of old women writers makes a case for the importance of gender in the aging process in the context of the publishing culture of 1750 to 1850. Looser shows that old women writers worked under stereotypical characteristics of "old woman" such as "garrulity, trifling qualities, querulousness, and virtuousness" (170). These stereotypes demanded aging women writers to situate their published works and themselves. As Looser observes, some writers like Catharine Macaulay defied prescribed cultural notions of old woman angry at the "'waning' laurels" she received, some like Maria Edgeworth found grace and even success in them, and others like Anna Letitia Barbauld ventured a different avenue as a writer/editor (28, 27-29). Being an old woman did not result in a universal response for these women writers. But those responses seldom existed outside gendered experiences of aging in the eighteenth century. The form and degree of treatment they expected and requested still came from "abstract conceptions of old age." The varied responses to aging were rarely free from gender-specific perceptions. The biographical records of women authors as well as reviews of their "late works" that were largely produced by male contemporaries demonstrate the widespread ageism targeting women. The works of women authors and the receptions for them were intricately tied into the perception of old women and how they were conscious of it too.

how to take care of aging beauty. As the last section of this chapter will show, they powerfully comment on the so-called scientific knowledge about the aging process and reveal the failure of its methods and supposed efficacy. By setting their poems alongside the era's gendered medical treatises which proposed inevitable decay and abrupt changes in a female body, I further highlight the meaning of these poetic creations that work to make sense of a woman's own aging body and mind and see in them new poetic potential.

“To your decays adapts my sight”: An Aging Poet and An Aging Woman

An Aging Poet

In “Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift” (1739),⁸⁸ Swift diverts himself in a bitterly humorous, slightly egotistical, and totally Swiftian imagination. He pictures the town of London gossiping about his final decline and the death. Within a year of his death, Swift projects, he and his poetry will have become outdated. When a random country squire comes asking about Swift's work, Mr. Lintot, a celebrated publisher of the era, succinctly spurns the inquiry saying “His way of Writing now is past; / The Town hath got a better Taste” (15). Mr. Lintot brushes off Swift and his work and remarks “I keep no antiquated Stuff, / But Spick and Span I have enough” (15).⁸⁹ He advises the squire that he “may find them in *Duck Lane*” (15), a mean and ignoble place where old and common works were sold, but whether Swift's work will be even kept there is not certain. The celebrated Dean of St Patrick's at Dublin has obviously “now lost distinction” (Johnson *The Lives* 480).

⁸⁸ I will refer to this text as “Death” from this point.

⁸⁹ The so-called “spick and span” is composed of the poetic works of Colley Cibber and Stephen Duck who, according to Swift's perspective, represented the inferior side of the literary circle in the era. Even though Swift posits his work as being outdated in a bitterly humorous manner, he is showing his work's relative worth.

In fact, even before his death Swift seems to be reckoned an already bygone poet in this imaginary world. The reason is clear: he is simply too old (and ill).

“For Poetry he’s past his Prime:

He takes an Hour to find a Rhime;

His Fire is out, his Wit decay’d,

His Fancy sunk, his Muse a Jade.

I’d have him throw away his Pen;--

But there’s no talking to some Men!” (“Death” 7-8)

Swift’s friends grumble that “He’s older than he would be reckon’d / And well remembers *Charles the Second*” (8; original emphasis). Even though old age is used as a fond excuse for all the nuisance he causes, his declining body and mind are certainly an issue. On a daily basis, “his Memory decays: / He recollects not what he says”, he forgets the names of his friend and where he dined (7), and he “plies you” with the same lengthy hackneyed story telling it fifty times over (7). And the memory loss and slower mental capabilities that his friends complain about are not simply a daily nuisance. Swift associates his aging directly with his literary abilities. The tattlers of the London society cry “How does he fancy we can sit / To hear his out-of-fashion Wit?” (7). His kind of wit is antiquated and his fancy is a wreck. This aged Dr. Swift had better quit his pen. Obviously, his poetic abilities have declined. Aging failed his poetry.

For Swift, this future was more than a speculative wondering. At least from the end of 1723, Swift suffered from various illnesses resulting from vertigo.⁹⁰ According to remaining

⁹⁰ Harold Williams notes that “Toward the close of 1723, and during 1724, Swift suffered severely from attacks of vertigo. In November, 1723, Arbuthnot wrote advising a course of the Spa waters . . . In the earlier half of 1724 his letters were few and short. Between 28 Feb. and 9 June only two have been preserved. He was evidently in no state to take a general interest in affairs.” 754-755. n4.

biographical records,⁹¹ Swift experienced memory impairment, language disorder, personality change, as well as deafness and blindness to some extent in the later years of his life.⁹² And from the year 1737 when a serious fit took Swift by surprise, this grand figure of a literary man, now aged seventy, was definitely declining—“the Dean begins to break! / Poor Gentleman, he droops apace!” (“Death” 6-7)—showing signs of what twentieth- and twenty-first-century medical professionals retrospectively diagnose as Alzheimer’s disease, arteriosclerotic dementia, Pick’s disease (all known to affect the older population frequently), and/or aphasia (Lorch 3128-3134). Although “none of Swift’s biographers attributed his perceived changes in behaviours simply to ageing” (Lorch 3136),⁹³ Swift certainly worried about his declining. As is the case for his imaginary towners, aging was not separate from a perceived failure of poetic abilities and masculine authorial authority. That bold demand to do away with his *pen*—with its not-so-subtle sexual implication—is one example of how Swift sees the vigor of his poetic creation and his masculine stamina affirmed as one, and dismissed.

Of course, aging was not always solely associated with decline—especially for some privileged white male writers in the eighteenth century. Focusing on the relationship between old

⁹¹ For the biographical record concerning Swift’s illnesses and final years, this chapter consults the works and letters of John Boyle, Deane Swift, and Samuel Johnson as well as Swift’s own letters to acquaintances including John Radcliffe, and John Arbuthnot. There is no official medical record written by a physician that attests to Swift’s condition. See Lorch for a detailed survey of the history of modern physicians retrospectively diagnosing Swift from the early 1990s to the 2000s.

⁹² According to John Boyle, the Earl of Orrery, “The total deprivation of Dr Swift’s senses came upon him by degrees . . . his memory gradually grew worse and worse; and as that decreased and was impaired, he appeared every day more fretful and impatient. From the year *thirty nine* to the latter end of the year *forty one*, his friends found his passions so violent and ungovernable, his memory so decayed, and his reason so depraved, that they took the utmost precautions to keep all strangers from approaching him; . . . the small remains of his understanding became entirely confused, and the violence of his rage increased absolutely to a degree of madness. In this miserable state, he seemed to be appointed as the first proper inhabitant for his own hospital: especially, as from an outrageous lunatic, he sunk afterwards into a quiet, speechless idiot” (Boyle 245-247).

⁹³ The many biographies of Swift attest that eighteenth-century medical professionals saw what they termed as a “fit” as the primary cause rather than the effect of the growing physical and mental disabilities of Swift. While more research is needed, there is a connection between “fit” and old age. A “fit” often meant more of an illness-related episode that was often associated with old adults than what modern readers would understand as some type of epileptic fits.

age and authorship, Devoney Looser notes that “there was a sense that old age brought increased powers of writing” (*Women Writers* 18) for men. Samuel Johnson enjoyed the height of his fame in his seventies (Looser *Women Writers* 18), and Sir Richard Bulstrode proudly averred that “I can with Truth affirm, that the Poems I have made since my Age of Seventy, have more Force and Spirit, than those I had written some Years before” (382). The prospect of declining health was a source of deep anxiety for many, but aging also came with prerogatives of authority and respect for those selected men. Moreover, unlike feminine beauty that was permitted for only a very short period of time, eighteenth-century masculinity was an age-flexible concept on the whole. Helen Yallop’s study of masculinity concludes that compared to what she terms “Victorian manliness” which was exclusive to specific age groups, eighteenth-century masculinity was a set of abstract qualities that were rarely affected by temporality (“Representing” 192-193). Best described as “polite gentlemanliness,” a rather static set of qualities such as good breeding, manners, conversation, civility, and sociability were thought to constitute masculinity in the eighteenth century (Yallop “Representing” 192). As such, an aging man who possessed these attributes could continue to be the “man” that he was despite his age.

Yet the reality of aging was often more problematic as it was for Swift. At the same time that the more traditional and religious model of aging projected old age as a period of wisdom and spirituality which contributed to the authority old men often possessed, the developing anatomical understanding of the human body in the eighteenth century established a proximity between the aging mind and body that rendered aging as a process a threat to the integrity of the self. With the rise of nervous-systemic understanding of human body which *converged* the mind and the body, the material decline of the body meant more than a mere decaying vessel. Because the human body was seen as the ground and a gateway to human intellect, virtue, and selfhood,

aging of the body could mean disturbing the fundamental subjectivity of an individual. Theoretically, a delicate maid with an exquisite sensibility could turn into a “blank” with no sense of refinement as her body declines, and a brilliant genius could become senile as the bodily channels of sensory input decay. Simply put, aging was a declining process for both the body *and* the mind. This new *convergence* model of aging reframed the process as one that could potentially disintegrate the mind and the self. As much as the era’s gendered attitude to aging presented distinct realities for men and women, the corporeality of bodily aging was a serious matter for men too. This model of aging also rendered that continued masculinity was possible *if* an aging man could continue to be a “polite gentleman.” What happens if the aging body changes his manners? What about some growing disability such as deafness that may hinder polite conversations or radically alter his sociability? What if his declining physical health affects his mind? Men did not have to equate their existence to “youthful bloom” as their female counterparts did, but the aging male physique was a legitimate concern.

Such queries were threateningly pertinent to Swift. The physical conditions of his illnesses were altering his sociability, conversations, mental capabilities as well as poetic creations. He was not the most “sociable” person to begin with, but frequent mood swings, forgetfulness, and language disorders were affecting this poet as he was well aware. The Earl of Orrery, an intimate friend of Swift, writes in a letter to his son that Swift’s

frequent attacks of giddiness, and his manifest defect of memory gave room for such apprehension. I have often heard him lament the state of childhood, and idiotism, to which some of the greatest men of this nation were reduced before their death. He mentioned, as examples within his own time, the Duke of MARLBOROUGH, and Lord SOMERS: and when he cited these melancholy instances, it was always with a heavy

sigh, and with gestures that shewed great uneasiness, as if he felt an impulse of what was to happen to him before he died. (Boyle 248-249)

Although Orrery shifts the focus to the irony of Swift's so-called self-aware madness, the reference to the Duke of Marlborough (whose later life was infamously identified as "dotage" by Samuel Johnson later in the era)⁹⁴ indicates that Swift interpreted his state as largely having to do with aging and was concerned about how the expected disabilities of it would "reduce" him in his later years. Referred to as "the state of childhood, and idiotism," Swift saw aging chipping away his mental capabilities and masculine independence.

As a matter of fact, even before the fit in 1737, Swift's anxieties about aging were already deep seated. Swift wrote to Alexander Pope that "When I was of your age [forty-five], I thought every day of Death, but now [at sixty-six], every minute" (Swift, *Dr. Jonathan Swift* 138)⁹⁵. Every minute of the passing of time is memento mori for Swift. Importantly, such musings on daily mortality are not just about death but the process of nearing death, that is, how he is aging into "the state of childhood, and idiotism." As Swift continues, all human beings "must expect to decline every month, like one who lives upon his principal sum which must lessen every day" (Swift, *Dr. Jonathan Swift* 174). Aging, for Swift, was decline in essence, a process of some integral "lessening" and bankruptcy.

A debilitating poetic power was one such "lessening" that concerned Swift. While aging could grant some sense of authority for a selected group of male writers, at least in the poetic realm, it was also considered as a negative influence on a poet and his creative energy. Even the

⁹⁴ In "The Vanity of Human Wishes" (1749), Johnson describes the Duke of Marlborough and Swift as each having being in their dotage and acting as a fool: "From *Marlb'rough's* Eyes the Streams of Dotage flows, / And *Swift* expires a Driv'ler and a Show" (25). Colin J. Horne argues that Marlborough and Swift functions "less as objects of satire than as memento mori" of the "misery and degradation" of the last years of great men who Johnson was forced to identify himself with to some extent (283).

⁹⁵ I will refer to this text as *Dr. Jonathan Swift* from this point.

proudly old poet Bulstrode cited above did not forget to remark how unusual it is to possess poetic vigor in old age.⁹⁶ When he stated that his poetry is more powerful in his seventies, Bulstrode also noted that “The Poetick Fire, which is usually soonest extinct in Men, I have found by Experience in my self, hath lasted much beyond that Period, of which I could give modern Proof” (382). Here, Bulstrode shows how aging is *not* a usual resource for strengthening the ability as a poet. Rather, except some exceptional cases, poetic force is lost with age—the first one to be gone in fact. His masterful poetry in old age is thus not simply a counterevidence but an exception. Explaining how he still possesses unusual poetic power, Bulstrode writes that poetic fire in old age is a “particular Grace of God, it being very unusual in the Generality, and very hard for Men to seem young when they’re old, and much more strange to be so” (382). Although Bulstrode does not explain what he means by “young” in a poetic sense specifically,⁹⁷ he still defines great poetry as one that “seem young” and dissociates great poetic power from old age.

Except in the context of poetic abilities, Bulstrode claims, old age has great advantages in life. Old age “put[s] an End to his Desires” (383) and equips men with “the longest Time to improve themselves . . . [to] be the wisest Men” (387). His “Judgements are more exact, . . . [and] the Mind is most discerning, and furnisht [sic] with the best Materials for Wisdom” (387). Aligning with the traditional beliefs about the virtues of old age, Bulstrode lists spiritual and mental sharpness as the qualities that accompany an old man. Interestingly, however, these qualities are not linked to what Bulstrode calls the “Poetick Fire.” He uses them as the general reasons to respect old men (383-389). While a reader may connect those qualities to a great

⁹⁶ Looser notes this tension in Bulstrode’s view on his late life poetic talent. *Women Writers*, Intro. n.75.

⁹⁷ In this context, Bulstrode gives an example of a great old Roman poet Cicero, who Bulstrode refers to as Tully, as a poet who remain “young” in their creations during old age. Bulstrode assesses Cicero’s late work, *Philippicks* (BC 44-43), as having a “Rhetorick [that] is more correct and moving than in his younger Orations” (382).

poetic power, as Bulstrode subtly gestures to do so, even those good attributes of old age are not for all old men. Bulstrode is rather emphatic about how age does not inherently come with benefits—and as one may assume, especially not those of creative power—and that it is possible only if one continues to take good care of oneself throughout the years.⁹⁸ In the end, to possess poetic force in old age remains a “strange” happening. It is not impossible but it is a feat of accomplishment that heaven grants “very unusually.” All in all, old age itself is rarely conducive for poetic vitality.

In one particular collection of poems—“Birthday Poems” or “Stella Poems” as they often called⁹⁹—Swift dives into thinking about the meaning of aging and his supposedly declining poetic power as an aging poet. Writing an annual tribute to his lifelong friend “Stella” Esther Johnson, Swift witnesses the inevitable changes in her. As Swift regrets to see, she grows old with “lessening” physical charms as she ages into her late thirties and forties. But throughout the course of the eight years in which these poems were devised, Swift becomes more involved with exploring Stella’s aging female body and its meaning for him. As he realizes, simultaneous with Stella’s aging, Swift was aging too. Would his sharp wit and intellectual finesse become soon “extinct” like Stella’s declining female beauty? The following sections examine Swift’s portrayal

⁹⁸ The earlier part of the essay focuses on the need to “play the good Husband early enough” (Bulstrode 371), that is, to be temperate and moderate in one’s actions and desires.

⁹⁹ There are many poems that were addressed to Stella. By “Stella Poems,” I refer to eleven poems that either directly cite or mention Stella in the title. This include seven poems that were specifically written on Stella’s birthday, often called “Birthday poems to Stella”: “Stella’s Birth-Day, 1718,” “Stella’s Birth-Day, 1720,” “To Stella on Her Birthday; Written AD 1721-2,” “Stella’s Birth-Day, A Great Bottle of Wine, Long Buried, Being that Day Dug Up, 1722,” “To Stella, Written on the day of her birth. But not on the Subject, When I was sick in bed,” “Stella’s Birth-Day, 1724,” and “Stella’s Birth-Day, March 13. 1726.” In addition, there are five poems that were written to Stella with a direct mention of her name in the title: “To Stella, Visiting Me in My Sickness, October 1727,” “To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed His Poems,” “Stella at Wood-Park” (a poem that the initial version included “Stella’s Distress on the 3d fatal day of October” as a part of the poem but was later learned to be a separate one), and “A Receipt to Restore Stella’s Youth.” For the title of the poems, I follow the 1757 edition of *The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick’s Dublin*, vol. 6. published in Edinburgh by G. Hamilton et al. For the two poems (“To Stella on Her Birthday; Written AD 1721-2” and “To Stella, Written on the day of her birth. But not on the Subject, When I was sick in bed”) that is not included in this volume, I follow Pat Rogers’ version in *Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems* (1983).

of Stella's aging with an attention to the way the alteration of Stella's female body comes to reflect and distinguish Swift's aging. I highlight how Swift attends to aging female beauty and the aging poetic ability by utilizing two contesting aging models—divergence and convergence aging models—in order to show how Swift constructs through these poems a distinctly gendered aging process. I argue that, in the end, Stella's declining female body becomes a ground for Swift to prove how his aging and disabilities are not detrimental to his poetry, turning his aging into a propitious resource that serves to create a masterful poetic identity whose intelligence overcomes his debilitating physique.

Aging Stella

Nearly every year starting in 1718, Swift wrote birthday poems to Stella. Half-mocking, half-sincere, and always adoring, Swift had a lot to say to Stella on her birthdays. On the whole, each poem is a piece of life advice from Swift, "her tutor" (Swift *The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift vol.6* 187)¹⁰⁰ advising his pupil on the true meaning of aging. In the first poem of the series, "Stella's Birthday; Written in the year 1718[9]," Swift starts out comforting Stella that she need not worry about her changing body. Swift protests that he does not take Stella as a figure who is lessening in a demeaning way.

Stella this day is thirty-four,
(We shan't dispute a year or more):
However, Stella, be not troubled,
Altho' thy size and years are doubled
Since first I saw thee at sixteen,

¹⁰⁰ I will refer to this text as *The Works* from this point.

The brightest virgin on the green;
So little is thy form declined;
Made up so largely in thy mind. (*The Works* 118)

The narrator plays with numbers and mathematics calling out the calendar years of Stella, how she has doubled since she was sixteen,¹⁰¹ and how the cumulation and subtraction of her mental gains and physical charms balance out her existence. Obviously, Stella is not the “brightest virgin on the green,” the sixteen-year-old maid she once was. Writing more from a playful admiration than mocking intentions, this speaker tells Stella that the physical decline should mean little for her. There is that inevitable loss of beauty as hinted by her doubled size and year, but aging is not simply to be despaired about. There is more to aging: the mind is much richer. Her declining body is surely compensated for, Swift claims, by her mind.

Swift here demonstrates what I term *divergence* aging model: an understanding of aging as a splitting of the mind and the body. Despite differences, this divergence model shares its basic framework with traditional Cartesian mind-body dualism in that it believes that mind and body are distinct and separate matters. Under the framework of divergence aging, the mind and the body were thought to diverge during the later stages of one’s life. When understood in a mostly positive manner, the process of aging involved a mind that remained intact separately but alongside a weakening body. Or often, the mind was imagined to grow fuller as the body decayed. The mind was something spiritual, moral, and transcending the physical body; the failing body in fact was a good reminder that one should make little of secular desires and vain conquests. And this divergence aging model is what Swift apparently projects onto Stella’s aging

¹⁰¹ Rogers notes that the use of age sixteen might allude to the fact that “Stella had suffered from poor health until the age of sixteen,” the chronological year for Stella from which Swift remarks she blossomed into a beauty. 686.

in the 1718/19 poem. The decline applies, it seems, only to her body. Though she has now declined into a double-size figure of a woman, Stella gains much in her mind.

Attending to how Swift portrays Stella's aging—rather than the idea of “life and death”—brings a new perspective to these poems. Reading into the fact that Stella died about nine years after Swift wrote the first birthday poem, John Irwin Fischer interprets the Stella poems as “an encouraging attempt to reconcile her to her mortality” (“Faith” 124). By dividing her mind from her declining body, Fischer argues, Swift revalues aging as that which can teach Stella of the ultimate lesson of life with a hopeful attitude (“Faith” 125). Fischer appreciates how the “chief end of all the poems Swift wrote for Stella is to inculcate” in her the ultimate meaning of aging, namely, how bodily “alterations can be truly good if one has faith enough to make them so” (“Faith” 128). Even so, the focus on the material alteration of the female body is remarkable—so persistent, I argue, that it almost overwhelms the supposed value of the compensatory mind and the positive outlook on mortality. For one, even when Swift calls her physical change “little,” he also juxtaposes its littleness by defining her form as now “doubled.” The second half of the poem continues,

Oh, would it please the Gods to split
Thy Beauty, Size, and Years, and Wit!
No Age could furnish out a Pair
Of Nymphs so Graceful, Wise, and fair;
With half the Lustre of Your Eyes,
With half your Wit, your Years, and Size.
And then, before it grew too late,
How should I beg of gentle Fate,

(That either Nymph might have her Swain,)

To split my Worship too in twain. (Swift *The Works* 118-119)

Although couched in admiring sentiments, the narrator further suggests something quite radical. Claiming that his love would be too much when Stella and her qualities continue to grow with her years, he wishes to “split” Stella “in twain.” As it turns out, the doubled beauty, size, years, and wit would actually belong well to a pair of young nymphs. Stella’s admirable qualities are adequate *when* divided in half. One needs only half of the luster of her eyes, half the years, and half the size. Although the “Wit” included here suggests that there is perhaps more than the material essence of Stella, it is worth noting that even her wit is viewed here as quantifiable rather than qualitative. Rather than deepening or gaining complexity, it “doubles” with her years.

Here, Stella is figured as a woman of material—and particularly numerical—essence. However “little” Swift protests the decline is, the visual shape of her body exists in a quantitative reality. She has a doubled size body with doubled weight. This doubleness culminates in Stella now reaching to too much of the physicality that ironically constitute her decline. At this moment, in her present body, those doubled qualities are not doubly firm grounds of her beauty but signs of “thy form declined.” The inclusion of “No Age” continues to connote that Stella has reached a pivotal moment in a woman’s life. If Stella continues to grow without such dividing, that is, if she ages further, it would then be “too late.” Perhaps beyond the year of thirty-six, even the split nymphs with half of Stella’s physicality would each have too much. Swift’s love note concludes as he discharges Stella to a pair of young swains who may each take half of the aged woman, that is, the young nymphs each with the appropriate amount of beauty, years, wisdom, wit, and size.

The fact is, as Swift shrewdly plays with it, the narrator cannot really split her in half even figuratively. Swift is emphatic that Stella's aging involves more than doubled physicality. Stella's body has more than doubled and her form declined still more so. First, as many Swift scholars have noted, Stella was not thirty-four as the speaker of this poem claims her to be. She was thirty-eight years old at the time of writing. Swift obviously knew this when he added in a parenthesis "(We shan't dispute a year or more)." Past studies have interpreted it as a mistake of "gallantry," a simple error, or an "imaginative and comic" attempt trying to put a smile on Stella (Palumbo 434). While I shall come back to Stella's own reaction to this "mistake" later in the section, Stella is here imagined as a figure who is aged and is still aging with a body that is more than doubled. The numerical correspondence is all mixed up but in a way that consistently emphasizes the agedness and plumpness of Stella's body. Stella is not even thirty-two (a double of sixteen). Her size, beauty, years, and wit would not be divided into two equal halves of nymphs. Something physical and material lingers. Although the poem is being figurative, playful, and even "comical" as Fischer notes ("Faith" 124), we should think about with what Swift plays to achieve this so-called comical effect and what purpose it serves. The focus on the doubled body and the "fun" take on Stella's aging body are devised, I argue, to render Stella's aging a particularly physical process even within the frame of a divergence model.

Moreover, the balance between the mind and the body in the divergence model is very much disproportionate. As it is written, the "little" decline of Stella's physical decay is "made up so largely" in her mind as if the bodily decline in her female body needs much compensation. In fact, the mind is not precisely portrayed as growing or gaining something as opposed to the declining body. A closer scrutiny of the rhyme of the poem suggests that Stella's mind has actually declined. As Palumbo has observed, the coupling between the "declin'd" and "mind"

indicate that Swift sees the mind as also somewhat decayed (435). The narrator is indeed rather vague as to what actually makes up for her physical decline. There is no mention of virtue or some sort of integrity that would be easily associated with the mind but just that her mind is “made up.” Whether aging has actually caused some kind of increase in her mind is questionable at best. The supposedly reassuring divergence aging model is thus already imbalanced. Swift does not really “make light of her weightiest infirmities” (“Faith” 127). He makes them doubled or covertly significant.

Swift furthers this faltering divergence aging model in the second birthday poem of the series, “Stella’s Birthday; Written in the year 1720-21.” Stella is here a physical object, this time a building—of course, with cracks. Stella is likened to an old “Angel Inn” where “the painting grows decay’d” (*The Works* 119) and is in competition with a shiny new establishment next door. The speaker repeats his consolation for Stella that aging would mean little for her. Stella, the old inn, “will never lose its trade” (*The Works* 119):

Now this is Stella’s case in fact,
An *angel*’s face a little crack’d.
(Could poets or could painters fix
How *angels* look at thirty-six):
This drew us in at first to find
In such a form an angel’s mind;
And every virtue now supplies
The fainting rays of Stella’s eyes.
See, at her levee crowding swains,
Whom Stella freely entertains

With breeding, humour, wit, and sense,
And puts them to so small expense;
Their minds so plentifully fills,
And makes such reasonable bills,
So little gets for what she gives,
We really wonder how she lives!
And had her stock been less, no doubt
She must have long ago run out. (119-120)

At first glance, the poem is another tribute to Stella's virtuous mind that is not impacted by her aging. Any sensible man would come falling at Stella's feet for her mind which is filled with a virtuous "stock." Playing with additions and subtractions once more, the speaker again employs an understanding of aging that figures the mind as diverging in opposition to her declining body. As the narrator lyricizes, "virtue now supplies / The fainting rays of Stella's eyes." The artful appearances of another woman (i.e., the new inn) must have nothing on her as Stella's "angel's mind" supports her fading beauty. Nevertheless, the persona does not forget to establish that Stella's physical attractiveness is declining. She is "fainting" and damaged. The doubled luster of her eyes that was present in the previous birthday poem is missing in this verse. The narrator wonders how poets or painters could "fix" (describe or decide on) how an old angel of thirty-six years old would look like and hints at the difficulty of making an old woman an object of art. So, he decides to talk of "an angel's mind" instead.

As such, the speaker draws attention to her angelic mind. Yet how Stella would look at thirty-six haunts the poem in its half-presence of a parenthesis never really leaving the audience to not think about it. In fact, the poem presents the angel's face with not much detail except that

her face is “a little crack’d.” The idea of a poet or a painter “fixing” an aged angel further makes his intentions ambiguous. The “fixing” of Stella could be asking for a halting of her aging—as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines, “To secure from change, vacillation or wandering; to give stability or constancy to” (“fix” n.2)—or to mend and repair her supposed decay. By aligning poets with painters, the attention is again paid to the outwardly appearance of this angel. The last stanza of the poem draws to a close, although as a protest against recognizing Stella’s agedness, projecting that the time will come “When Stella’s locks must all be gray, / When age must print a furrow’d trace / On every feature of her face” (*The Works* 120). Designating Stella as an angel with physical damage that will continue to accrue with time, Swift emphasizes the physical alterations of this woman’s aging.

Although dismissive, Swift’s acknowledgement of time’s effects in a woman’s body can be appreciated in the context of eighteenth-century poetry that typically idealized the female body. Margaret Doody values how Swift recognizes Stella as a “physical human being, subject to pain and age” (83). Doody notes that Swift’s understanding of Stella and her abilities are for “real human qualities, with all the credit of being exerted in the circumstances of life’s constraints” (83). Reading the Stella poems alongside Swift’s “excremental” poems like “A Lady’s Dressing Room,” Felicity A. Nussbaum too sees Swift’s “real” portrayal of the women as an attempt to call out the folly of a specific way of idealizing women. For Swift, Nussbaum and Doody argue, Stella is not a “marmoreal” figure. Instead, Stella is a “fat, grey, and ill” woman who is an “alert companion who delights her friend because of her humanity” (Nussbaum *The Brink* 115). David M. Palumbo’s recent reading of the Stella poems follows this line of interpretation. Focusing on how Swift’s theory of rhetoric is infused in the representation of Stella, Palumbo writes that Swift’s description of Stella’s physical alteration reflects the

awareness that his “language” (i.e., poetry) cannot entirely grasp the object of his work. For Swift, Stella’s physical decline “heightens the irony of a body whose value lies in its ability to translate its physical deterioration into a textual experience” (Palumbo 432-433). In other words, Stella exists in the instability of material alteration, and her female body is meaningful for that inconsistency.

Focusing on the gendered portrayals of aging adds nuance to these criticisms on the ground that Stella’s decaying/inconsistent body is utilized primarily to illustrate a point about aging of not only the body *but also* the mind of a woman. The so-called “real” representation of the female body subtly directs the focus to her mind which, importantly, does not compensate for her declining beauty as opposed to what he seemingly argues. She is a human figure with damages and faults in her body. But, Swift puts forward, her mind-virtue should be whole—an ideal that Stella does not reach. Time and aging would become problematic for Stella. Swift again portrays Stella as a sum of some qualities and approaching a certain age limit. As the above poem imagines, Stella’s mind is a storage filled with “stocks” of decent birth, education, humor, wit, and sense. The substantial assets of it are hardly emptying, but she *is* spending them. At this moment, “every virtue now supplies / The fainting rays of Stella’s eyes,” but perhaps, just perhaps, when it is “too late,” she would have little to supply for her already fainting rays. Stella is continuously “lessening” her stock.

Considering that Swift was about thirteen years older than Stella the apparent lack of self-reflection in the first two Stella poems can be read as sexist. Fischer advocates that Swift was focusing on the “truth of Stella’s aging, or her growing decrepitude, or her imminent death” (124), that is, Stella’s growing illness that would take her life in nine years. Perhaps Swift was not suffering from the threat of “imminent death” like Stella but according to his own philosophy

of mortality, Swift must have been thinking about his growing decrepitude often. Jill Campbell argues that a larger misogynistic framework of aging is at work here. Campbell writes that eighteenth-century contemporaries rendered aging as a particularly “female problem” (“Lady Mary Wortley” 225). It is as if aging does not impact men. Through a “gleefully horrified rejection of the figure of the aging woman” (Campbell “Lady Mary Wortley” 213), eighteenth-century men dismissed aging and the serious ramifications it had on the notion of “self” as a women’s issue. With the changing medico-philosophical understanding of the “self,” bodily aging had a theoretical possibility to result in a hampered learning capacity, fading memories, and essentially some sort of ruin of the “self.” Swift’s many works including the Stella poems do exhibit such tendencies to focus on the physical changes in female bodies and to displace the meaning of aging to Stella.

However, Swift’s rejection of aging comes to be more complex. Although Swift does exhibit such a misogynistic attitude, in this specific poem series—and especially as it progresses—he projects himself as suffering decline alongside Stella as an old poet. The everyday experience of mortality is not exclusive to Stella and her aging body in Swift’s later poems. Rather than simply being amused by the decaying female body like other male contemporaries, Swift identifies himself with it, reflecting on his growing decrepitude and aging realities. But again, he gets to distance himself from aging because he is a man and, importantly, a poet. With a focus on the portrayed similarities and differences with the aging subject of his poems, the next section demonstrates how Swift frames his *own* aging body and mind. He does not deny aging as a whole; rather, he uses aging and the expected decline as a rhetoric that foregrounds his vigorous poetic vitality. Unlike Stella whose aging is equaled to a lessening

body and mind, Swift's aging does not really lessen him. He surpasses his bodily decline through the ultimate act of writing poetry.

An Aging Poet Dancing in Decline

Poetry concerns Swift, the aging poet. In at least three Stella poems ("To Stella on Her Birthday; Written AD 1721-2," "Stella's Birth-Day, A Great Bottle of Wine, Long Buried, Being that Day Dug Up, 1722," and "To Stella, Written on the day of her birth. But not on the Subject, When I was sick in bed,") he makes explicit remarks on the genre of poetry and his identity as a poet. According to Swift, poetry is the genre that requires mental sharpness, wit, and keen intelligence in a manner that is superior to prose. Swift, of course, was not alone in that evaluation. According to *A new and complete dictionary of arts and sciences* published by Society of Gentlemen in 1754,

The qualification then necessary for poetry, or those which form a good poet, are seldom found united in one person: he must have an extraordinary genius, great natural gifts, a wit just, piercing, solid, and universal; an understanding clear and distinct; an imagination neat and pleasant; an elevation of soul that depends not on art, or study, and which is purely a gift of heaven, and must be sustained by a lively sense and vivacity, a great judgement to consider wisely of things, and a vivacity to express them with that grace and abundance which gives them beauty. In fine, to accomplish a poet, is required a temperature of wit and fancy, of strength and sweetness, of penetration and delicacy; but above all, he must have a sovereign eloquence, and a profound capacity. (2478; vol. 2)

Obviously, not everyone could be a poet. An extraordinary sensitivity, sharp observation, discerning judgement, superb understanding, and above all, an absolute language skill and some

“profound capacity” were required.¹⁰² In other words, poetry was not a mere “art” but a higher form of a specifically intellectual art—one that Bulstrode would argue is hard to achieve during one’s old age.

As early as in “To Stella on Her Birthday; Written AD 1721-2,” Swift begins to express concerns for how his aging is impacting his poetry. His annual birthday poem is suffering from what he later refers to as “poetic strain” (*Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems* 267).

If I perform this task with pain,
Let me of partial fate complain;
You every year the debt enlarge,
I grow less equal to the charge:
In you each virtue brighter shines,
But my poetic vein declines;
My harp will soon in vain be strung,

And all your virtues left unsung. (*Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems* 241)

The issue for his poetic creation is obviously aging, that is, of both the poet and his poetic subject. In the case of Stella, as we have seen, the problem is that her aging accompanies an “enlarging,” a pun that captures both the growing size of Stella’s body and virtue. In the same aging temporality, interestingly, there exists a poet too. As Stella ages, the poet declines “equal”

¹⁰² As a point of comparison, “essays,” for instance, are associated with no attributes of such mental power. *A new and complete dictionary of arts and sciences*, defines the essay as “a peculiar kind of composition, the character whereof is to be free, easy, and natural; not tied to strict order or method, nor worked up and finished like a formal system” (1122; vol. 2). An essay consists of “occasional reflections, . . . as the thoughts happen to occur to the mind” (1122; vol. 2). There is hardly an act of great mentality at work. Although the dictionary goes on to list Montaigne, Bacon, and Locke, the genre itself is not associated with the higher workings of the mind. Whereas the definition of poetry takes up more than a page and half with associative derivatives like “poet” which has its own separate entry, only fifteen lines are invested to illustrating the nature essays. Just a cursory study of this dictionary shows that poetry was a genre that has much focus on the author, a platform to demonstrate a superior intellectual skill and artistry. But “letters” have no entry in this particular dictionary, apparently as they are not part of the “arts and sciences.”

to her enlarging. Compared to enlarging Stella and her virtue, this poet grows smaller with his declining abilities. His “poetic vein declines” and his “stock of wit [grows] decay’d” (*Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems* 241). Aging do not grant him a mastery of poetry nor a proficiency, it would seem. Despite his complaint, however, the poet plucks the string of his poetic harp and completes the task this year.

Swift continues with the theme of the aging poet in the 1722 birthday poem. He again imagines a playful poetic world where a poet is having trouble with his wit and rhyme. It is Stella’s birthday again but apparently this poet cannot find the right word to sing for her. The “pain” of this poetic performance has grown even more detailed and visual. He bites his nails, scratches his head, “But found my wit and fancy fled; / Or if, with more than usual pain, / A thought came slowly from my brain, / It cost me Lord knows how much time / To shape it into sense and rhyme” (*The Works* 121). The poetic abilities have escaped his now numb brain. The poetic inspiration and the poet used to be like “hand and glove” (*The Works* 121). But the ingenuity of his poetic creation is now a thing of the past. Worried that he may not be able to devise a poem for Stella’s birthday, he goes to seek help from the gods Apollo and Phoebus. He waits at Apollo’s shrine and whines how he would be ashamed if he does not produce a great poem for Stella’s birthday. Despite his plea, unfortunately, the gods find him old, or as they say, “so dull and dry” (*The Works* 121), a typical reference to old age and its qualities. Too bad, but this old bard lost the “poetic license” (*The Works* 121).

If these two earlier poems show Swift rather lightly questioning his poetic abilities, the poet of 1724 becomes more existential. Here, the jolly poet and the teasing gods have disappeared. A solemn poet takes over the stage and explores a rather bleak reality of aging. He asks: can an old man be a poet? What is aging to a poet?

As when a beauteous nymph decays,
We say she's past her dancing days;
So poets lose their feet by time,
And can no longer dance in rhyme.
Your annual bard had rather chose
To celebrate your birth in prose: (*The Works* 123)

This poet has more in common with Stella than he had realized before. The poet is no more a cheeky teacher who coaches Stella to fortify herself against the loss of beauty and find delight in the growing mind. Stella and Swift are no longer as separate as a declining maid and an observer who stands in distance unaffected by time. A nymph decays, and so does a poet. Like the female beauty that is fleeting and disappearing, the poet is also losing his “feet” by time. Indeed, the speaker makes an explicit remark about how not only the poet is living in the same temporal plane as Stella—growing “equally” lessening—but the two are almost one. As a pair of dejected country dancers both past their dancing days, the distance between the tutor and the pupil becomes muddled with mirrored physicality, proximity, and reflections. The poet’s poetic feet are mirrored in the dancing feet of the nymph, mired in his subject’s decay and loss. As the poet aches to realize, this birthday is now about Swift and his aging as much as it is about Stella.

Importantly, however, even with their shared fate, aging affects them differently—as a man and a woman and as a poet and his subject. He continues:

Beauty and wit, too sad a truth!
Have always been confined to youth;
The god of wit and beauty’s queen,
He twenty-one and she fifteen,

No poet ever sweetly sung,
Unless he were, like Phoebus, young;
Nor ever nymph inspired to rhyme,
Unless, like Venus, in her prime.
At fifty-six, if this be true,
Am I a poet fit for you?
Or, at the age of forty-three,
Are you a subject fit for me?
Adieu! bright wit, and radiant eyes!

You must be grave and I be wise. (*The Works* 123-124)

Although it may seem merely rhetorical, it is important to note that Swift figures himself as a poet and Stella a nymph and that he defines them as each possessing wit and beauty as integral to their existence. This is crucial because it emphasizes the gendered significance of aging—and because it provides a way out of this dismal aging for the poet. While aging destabilizes the nymph on an existential level, an old poet persists. A nymph, by definition, simply cannot be old. She is a young fairy, light and airy. When she grows old and heavy, as he diligently indicates repeatedly, she can no longer be a nymph. On the contrary, being old—while it may take away some fresh sparkles of his poetry—does not stop a poet from being a poet. As the poet reckons, being wise must replace his wit; yet, this wisdom would not necessarily remove “bright wit” from the poet the way “graveness” deprives the nymph of its lightness. Although subtly indicated, this speaker can be a poet, just not “a poet *fit for*” Stella. He can still sing a tune though not as “sweetly.” In contrast, Stella not fit for Swift loses her meaning. There are no qualifying phrases like “sweetly” for her existence. A nymph simply does not inspire when she is

not in her prime. And if Stella is not a fit subject for this poet, no other poets can sing for her. Without this poet, her “virtue [will be] left unsung” and her worth will be secret to the world (*Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems* 241). In essence, the speaker’s identity as a poet does not collapse with his decay the way Stella’s aging body corrodes and impacts her identity. A poet may be old in fact.

The question of whether he can be a poet at fifty-six is already null in the form of this work. This poem itself is a powerful demonstration that the poet has the rhyme, the wit, and the ability. The “Muse” had denied help. His abilities are dwindling. It ultimately comes down to the poet to turn that un-inspiring old woman into a poetic subject. As seen in this poem, it is the remarkable aging poet who overcomes the double challenge of a poetic creation. Despite his old age *and* the declining poetic subject who cannot be a proper inspiration, he composes a masterful poem. So despite the poet’s repeated assertions to do away with poetry, he thus continues with the genre. In the 1724 birthday poem, Swift continues that

Our fate in vain we would oppose:

But I’ll be still your friend in prose:

Esteem and friendship to express,

Will not require poetic dress;

And if the Muse deny her aid

To have them *sung*, they may be *said*. (*The Works* 123-124)

The poet argues that if poetry requires the poet and its subject to be young, they can just defy the genre. They do not need the “poetic dress” for their love. If poetry would deny him to sing his love notes for her, “they may be *said*.” The poet would be a prose-writer, and supposedly, Stella may be an older woman to whom the form of a prose would allow. (When Swift says “prose,” it

is likely that he was talking about letters as he often wrote letters to her.) But the speaker's protest that his love for Stella outweighs a specific genre has to be considered beyond face-value.

Suddenly, the speaker protests that Stella may always be young to him.

But, Stella, say, what evil tongue
Reports you are no longer young;
That *Time* sits with his scythe to mow
Where erst sat Cupid with his bow;
That half your locks are turn'd to gray?
I'll ne'er believe a word they say.
'Tis true, but let it not be known,
My eyes are somewhat dimmish grown;
For nature, always in the right,
To your decays adapts my sight;
And wrinkles undistinguished pass,
For I'm ashamed to use a glass:
And till I see them with these eyes,
Whoever says you have them, lies.

No length of time can make you quit
Honour and virtue, sense and wit;
Thus you may still be young to me,
While I can better *hear* than *see*.
O ne'er may Fortune show her spite,

To make me deaf, and mend my *sight*! (*The Works* 124)

Rather than to let his eyes reflect the deteriorating nymph, thus jeopardizing the poetic creation, the speaker chooses to not see the reality. He does not “fix” his eyesight by using a glass.¹⁰³

Feisty to the worldly perception of Stella’s fading beauty, the speaker refuses to acknowledge how time has wrinkled Stella’s face and whitened her hair. He does not really deny the reality of Stella’s physical decay. The wrinkles are there and he recognizes that. As he says, they “undistinguished pass” *for* the speaker. What matters in this poetic world is how *he* sees her, how he imagines her, and how he represents her. So he declares that until he sees Stella’s aging the so-called reality of her aging will be a lie. In fact, from the very first poem of this series, Stella’s aging was manipulated (or misrepresented) to serve Swift’s poetic purposes. She was given the calendar year that Swift sees as appropriate in his poems—one that is younger and never older—and one that always rhymes well (“thirty-four / more,” “fix / thirty-six”). Swift adheres to that given age as his (and Stella’s) reality. In this poem again, the poet refuses to take Stella as her “real” self and says he will never “believe” what they say. The real reality will “not be known” in this poetic space. He does not see them because he is neither a mirror nor a mere observer of the world. He is a poet.

Swift’s physical decay and visual impairment are thus utilized to achieve a task that seemed challenging. He writes a poem as an old poet about an aging subject. The failing sight of this aging poet is a blessing. In the specific space of poetry, his aging disabilities enable the vile sight of Stella’s fading beauty to remain un-reflected. Thanks to his aging eyes, Stella, aged forty-three, “may still be young.” Rather than withering his ability as a poet, his aging allows

¹⁰³ This decision to not wear glasses inspired numerous rumors of Swift’s “sanity” for the contemporaries. Veronica Kelly examines the focused attention of Swift’s biographer on this decision and how it was used to illustrate a so-called “nod to the forces of passion and irrationality” (70).

him to overlook Stella's agedness. His physical decay becomes the source of his poetic virtuosity. In the space of poetry, Swift theorizes a different mode of aging, one that both utilizes and manipulates two common aging models—divergence and convergence models. The poet swiftly dances in rhyme. Swift proudly asserts, "Once more the Dean supplies their place" with "A pair to make a country-dance," (*The Works* 123)!

Aging Stella to Aging Dr. Swift

There is not much known about Stella, the woman whose "special friendship" with Jonathan Swift has provoked an endless curiosity (Barnett 34).¹⁰⁴ As Hermann Josef Real reminds us, "we know next to nothing [about Stella]. After two hundred and fifty years, we are still in the dark about her parentage, her childhood, and her removal to Ireland, as well as about the nature of her relationship with Jonathan Swift" (109). The information scholars gather about her is largely from Swift's own letter (either to her or to his acquaintances) inevitably influenced by his interest and perspectives (Barnett 32). But through a few surviving poems written by Stella, we get a glimpse into her world.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, all of Stella's poems, that we know of, are a response to Swift's particular lessons on the meaning of aging.

In 1721, as a respectful answer to her tutor Swift's birthday poem, Stella devised a celebratory poem for Swift's birthday. Titled "Stella to Dr. Swift on his birth-day, Nov. 30.

¹⁰⁴ There has been much discussion about the two's relationship in terms of their conjugal state—and particularly, whether their marriage was consummated or not. While "Swift's earliest biographers—Orrery, Delany, Deane Swift, and Sheridan—all told a similar story: that in 1716 Swift and Stella were secretly married by St. George Ashe, the bishop of Clogher" (Barnett 40)—Barnett argues that their relationship was not sexual. For instance, there is counterevidence that indicates their non-conjugal relationship such as Stella signing her will as "Esther Johnson, spinster" (40).

¹⁰⁵ I have found two poems written by Stella in *Dr. Jonathan Swift*: "Stella to Dr. Swift, On his Birth-Day, Nov. 30, 1721" and an 8-line poem titled "Verses by Stella."

1721,” in this 58-line poem, Stella discusses how she is in such a better position than that of other women who did not have a wise teacher like Swift in their earlier days.

Behold that beauty just decay'd,
Invoking art to nature's aid:
Forsook by her admiring train,
She spreads her tatter'd nets in vain;
Short was her part upon the stage;
Went smoothly on for half a page;
Her bloom was gone, she wanted art,
As the scene changed, to change her part;
She, whom no lover could resist,
Before the second act was hiss'd.
Such is the fate of female race
With no endowments but a face;
Before the thirtieth year of life,
A maid forlorn, or hated wife. (*Dr. Jonathan Swift 237-238*)

Stella here describes what she terms “the fate of female race.” Echoing much of the familiar image of the reality of aging for women—losing beauty, arriving at old age very fast, and being despised so violently—Stella illustrates how this unfortunate progress is what women fall into. Unlike Swift who had compared their aging fate as sharing a same temporality, Stella highlights the faster pace of female aging and the sudden change in a woman's position. The most important thing is beauty for women. Her worth is interwoven with beauty and when beauty

goes, what remains is only an existence that is altered, changed, and hated by the world. But Stella is proud that she is not one of those “senseless tribe” (*The Works* 120) of women.

Stella to you, her tutor, owes
That she has ne’er resembled those:
Nor was a burden to mankind
With half her course of years behind.
You taught how I might youth prolong,
By knowing what was right and wrong;
How from my heart to bring supplies
Of lustre to my fading eyes;
How soon a beauteous mind repairs
The loss of changed or falling hairs;
How wit and virtue from within
Send out a smoothness o’er the skin:
Your lectures could my fancy fix,
And I can please at thirty-six.
The sight of Chloe at fifteen,
Coquetting, gives not me the spleen; (*Dr. Jonathan Swift* 238)

Per Swift’s lesson, Stella knows that her mind will compensate for her failing beauty. Illustrating herself as a dedicated companion of Swift, Stella makes much reference to the birthday poems that were written to her. She calls on Swift’s line when she explains how her heart will make up for the fading rays of her eyes (“And every virtue now supplies / The fainting rays of Stella’s eyes”), locks of hair that turn new shades (“When Stella’s locks must all be gray”). Her wit and

virtue that is inside her—rather than expressed through her physical beauty—will fix her physical decays. Chloe who would spread rumors about the cracked “Angel’s Inn” (“Stella’s Birth-Day, 1719/20”), does not bother her. Swift’s early tutelage taught her better.

Interestingly, Stella here summarizes Swift’s teaching as instructing her how she might in “youth prolong.” The poem does not elaborate on what role an aging woman would play in this theater of life where her short act of beauty is finished within half a page. Rather, Stella focuses more on “repairing” and “fixing” her aged appearance and making her young. Although physical beauty here may be a metaphor for not being one of those senseless old women that Stella apparently dismisses, it is important that all her mind-virtue is virtually the resource for an ultimately youthful body. Her heart and mind are always used to smooth out the failings of her skin. Rather than having their own virtue, they are valued for what they make amends for. And Stella specifies this, though rhetorically, as the gist of Swift’s lesson for aging.

This mode of aging and the divide between the mind and the body is taking a different turn from the way that Swift projects Stella’s aging will be manifested. For Swift, Stella’s growing virtue compensates for her declining beauty. In alignment with the traditional divergence aging model, Swift recognizes her loss of physical beauty and takes comfort in her growing mind-virtue. But in Stella’s version, the bodily decline, though metaphorically, does not really take place. She is fixed, repaired, and can be prolonging her youthful beauty. She delays the time of dismissal—either as a hateful wife or senseless aging women. Her beautiful mind “repairs / The loss of changed or falling hairs.” At the end, she continues as a young beautiful maid and thus prolongs her role as that in the theater of her life. And importantly, this is what Stella says Swift is teaching.

Though subtle, as this poem reaches its end, Stella presents a challenging subversion to Swift's model of female aging. She reveals that she is not deluded into thinking that she can "in youth prolong." Swift once protested that the debilitated "Angel's Inn" could win over men when compared with Chloe at fifteen (*The Works* 120). But here, in her poetic world, Stella checks herself to say that seeing a coquetting young maid like Chloe would not make her jealous. Her mind and heart have less to do with winning men over. Her care for her mind is not really about repairing the growing faults of her body. And unlike Swift's (self-professed and only seemingly) declining mental abilities, Stella does not decline in her mind. She cares for it, and that is positively effective throughout her aging.

This does not mean that Stella was not uneasy about her aging body or that she adhered to this idea of female aging. In another poem titled "Verses by Stella," Stella demands some acquisition of mental virtue as a compensation for her physical decline as Swift did for her.

If it be true, celestial powers,

That you have form'd me fair,

And yet, in all my vainest hours,

My mind has been my care:

Then, in return, I beg this grace,

As you were ever kind,

What envious Time takes from my face

Bestow upon my mind! (*Dr. Jonathan Swift* 249)

There is more anxiety and frustration about aging than what Swift would allow ("Stella, be not troubled.") As much as Stella is intent on caring for her virtuous mind, the aging beauty concerns her. She beseeches the holy spirits to compensate her mind for the ruin aging has caused. Time

and aging had taken away something from her face. And suffering from such a loss and change, she asks for something in return. The heightened tone of this poem culminating in the last exclamation point further indicates that Stella demands an enrichment of her mind rather than expects it as a part of the process of aging.

Stella is not a happy student of Swift taking all his lessons of aging passively. Even correcting Swift's "mistake" by affirming "thirty-six" as her correct age, in the 1721 poem, Stella declares her attitude toward aging and her declining beauty: "The idol now of every fool / Till time shall make their passion cool; / Then tumbling down Time's steepy hill, / While Stella holds her station still" (*The Works* 188). Youth and beauty of a woman will fall along with its devotees as Stella holds her station still. She is going down the steep hills of aging, with an aging body that she embraces, and as she hopes, with a yet-to-come virtuous mind. Stella finds a way to not falter. Alluding to the failure of Swift's ideal aging model for her, though subtly, Stella devises another mode of women's aging. This one acknowledges her aging female body as it is and even takes in the faster temporality of female aging. Without denying the culturally gendered framework for aging, Stella grants herself a position after the "second act" of a woman's life as a stable and proud figure who, by demanding and cultivating it, acquired a growing mind.

"A frightful spectre, to myself unknown!": The Aging Female Body and Her Poetic Persona

The Once Beautiful Woman

In "A treatise on Old Age," Marchioness de Lambert, a celebrated conduct book author of the era, preaches, "Our Thoughts, our affections, and with these our Conduct, ought to be different from what they were in Youth" (Courcelles 111). An old woman is and should be a

different creature than she was in her youth. As Stella would say, she must enter the “second act” and what comes after as a totally different character. And some eighteenth-century women apparently were to take this “unhappy Fate” (Courcelles 105) harder than others. Not all women were the same. De Lambert divides women into two groups: the gay and gallant and the grave and virtuous. The first group has “much more to lose as they grow old” (Courcelles 107). It goes as thus: a fair maid becomes used to the “mutual Partiality of the Men for them, and of them for the Men” (Courcelles 108); she puts her trust in all the wrong things like exterior charms and public pleasures; wrongfully, she identifies her selfhood with her beauty; she is led to believe that the favors and advantages she receives for her beauty are of permanent nature as if beauty belongs to her, or rather, as if it *is* her; at the end, she realizes too late that “the Reign of Beauty is short and transient” (Courcelles 126). Beauty leaves her to her altered body and a changed social situation. When that happens, this kind of woman has “an infinite Lots to suffer” (Courcelles 108). With aging, she loses what was most integral to her selfhood.

Alternatively, an aging woman could adhere to a divergence aging model in a traditional sense i.e., be a virtuous woman with a superior mind despite her declining beauty as it was with the case of Stella under Swift’s consolatory tutelage. Yet in the specific realm of poetry where youthful physical beauty held prestige and where a woman was inextricably identified with her body, the growing mind rarely signified integral selfhood and worth. Reacting to the misogynistic view of the aging female self, Mary Leapor and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu reappropriate the gendered and sexist ideas about aging in their poems. Leapor and Montagu project a different scenario, one that is filled with dejection, confusion, or anger. The aging women in these women authors’ poetic world are those who would be the target of de Lambert’s conduct book. Once beautiful, proud, and perhaps even narcissistic, the aging women Leapor and

Montagu picture are textbook cases of those on the “vain” side. While some women put their trust in friendship, virtue, and a sense of duty and thus accept the so-called realities of aging, these women had attached themselves to exterior charms while young. And now faced with their altered female body and changed social status, they ache to realize that they are no longer their youthful selves. Their beauty is now a thing of the past, a ghost of the yesterday. Required to abandon all youthful pursuits and exit the world, the aging women in these poems learn, all of a sudden, one has become an “old lady.”

In this section, I read Leapor’s “Dorinda at her Glass” (1748) and Montagu’s “Town Eclogues” (1758), two often cited poems that take altered female body as their primary topic of investigation. Interestingly, these poems both respond to famous literary men’s poetry and their descriptions of female aging. Infusing a direct female voice into the poems, Leapor and Montagu take on that neglected topic of female aging and tell their story of aging from a (mediated) first-person perspective. Making the aging process of reproachable “gay and gallant” women the focal point of their investigation, they highlight the complexity of the aging female body and the disorienting experience of embodying such a change. Compared to the male perspective on female aging that still presents women as an object of poetic observation as was the case with Swift and Stella, these women poets show aging women themselves striving to embrace their aging body, defying the misogynist cultural notion of female aging, and making a meaning out of the whole process. Sometimes they seem to succeed, and other times they do not. Nevertheless, female aging is utilized to create powerful poems thereby allowing female poets—who are aging themselves—to insert themselves into the masculine tradition of eighteenth-century poetry. I argue that female aging becomes a critical tool for these poets to not only challenge the harsh realities of divergence model imposed on female aging but refigure their aging poetic identities.

Aging Women in Eighteenth-Century Poetry: A Ghost?

There was no categorical standard that decides when a woman is “old.” Being an old woman was a complicated matter that was impacted by various intersections of her identities and also relatively subjective because a lot depended on her physical charms. As Lynn Botelho aptly summarizes, in the early modern era “a woman became old when she looked old” (“Old Age and Menopause” 53). Despite a growing attempt to categorize age groups, a woman can, almost at any time, become “old.” In de Lambert’s essay too, there is no further explanation for the definition of old age for women except that aging destroys exterior charms (Courcelles 105). It is simply stated that in a short while, the time will come to make one wrinkled: “Old Age must come to furrow your yet smooth Cheek with Wrinkles, and however young you are, consider that that which makes such incessant Haste, will soon overtake you” (Courcelles 106). The threat of old age was at large and for all women at every age.

In addition to the onset of old age being vague, aging was considered to overtake women in an instant. According to the understanding of female beauty as that which is “snatch’d each day, each hour” (Johnson *The Rambler* 8; vol. 4), a woman did not grow old bit by bit.¹⁰⁶ Instead, she became old suddenly with that uncertainly scheduled “soon.” It is as if a woman does not go through the process of aging taking its due course but abruptly becomes old. A series of changes were denied to take place through time on a female body.¹⁰⁷ There seems no middle or, as Campbell calls it, a process of “unfolding” (“Lady Mary Wortley” 223). A woman becomes an altered figure with “a sudden snap of discontinuity” (Campbell “Lady Mary

¹⁰⁶ The quote used here is from Johnson’s *The Rambler*, vol. 4. In No. 130, Saturday, June 15, 1751, Johnson includes a quote from Seneca but edition I work with include translations. 264.

¹⁰⁷ Age historians of eighteenth-century Britain noted that early eighteenth-century contemporaries understood aging as a sequence of various stages on a broader level. For instance, Anja Müller’s study of iconography of human life observes that the traditional “Wheel of Life” model which imagined human life as a continuous cyclical process of birth and death gave place to a new model that framed life as a lineal sequence of various stages/steps.

Wortley” 223). And the altered body decides who she is, namely, not who she used to be. Or, as eighteenth-century male poets would say, aged women become ghosts of their former selves.

The metaphor of ghost comes up repetitively both as an image to figure the aging woman and as a demeaning framework that casually described a woman’s life. This literary trope of aging women as ghosts was a traditionally masculine practice. Most notably, Alexander Pope writes in “Epistle II: To a Lady; of the Characters of Women” (1743) that old women are “Ghosts of Beauty” (12). As Pope imagines, old women have no significance in themselves. They are mere shadows of their past, and importantly, of their beauty. So there is no explicit physical agedness in this poem that usually accompanied descriptions of aging women in eighteenth-century novels or dramas. Because aging women metaphorically have no weight in this poetic world, they seem to have escaped the usual scrutiny of their exterior charms.

Asham’d to own they gave delight before,
Reduc’d to feign it, when they give no more.
As Hags hold Sabbaths, less for joy than spight,
So these their merry, miserable Night;
Still round and round the Ghosts of Beauty glide,
And haunt the Places where their Honour dy’d. (Pope 12)

The changes and the lack of bodily beauty are suggested: they are called “Hags,” ghosts of beauty who are “old and friendless grown” (Pope 12) and portrayed as giving no visual pleasure. But their aging body has little tangible agedness to it, or rather, Pope decides to not attend to it. There is hardly a description of their physical agedness. There is no grey hair or a drier skin, the typical signs of aging in the eighteenth century. Leaving such visuals to a reader’s imagination, these women are imagined as not really decayed but rather threadbare, “Worn out” (Pope 12).

The aging female body is a nebulous image that hardly has any weight to it. Her existence is so thin people see through her. “Still round and round the Ghosts of Beauty glide” (12) without making noise, flowing in and through the people, never really seen. She is a ghost. Rather than aging and changing, the aging female body fades away when its physical essence—youth and beauty—is “gone.”

The metaphor of ghost obviously caught on with women writers of the era. Leapor’s Dorinda describes herself as a horrible “Spectre” when she sees a mirrored reflection of her wrinkled face (*Poems Upon Several Occasions* 18)¹⁰⁸, and Flavia in Montagu’s “Town Eclogues” (1758) cries that she has become “A frightful Spectre to myself unknown” when she lost her beauty to smallpox (*Poems by Eminent Ladies* 169).¹⁰⁹ But when a woman aged in reality, as these women poets demonstrate, she did not really just disappear. She continued to be and, much to everyone’s chagrin, aged with her aging body. Indeed, the agedness of the female body was something that would need much effort to be disregarded. As one beauty regimen of the era puts it, “it is a duty we owe to society, as well as ourselves, to endeavor to be mutually agreeable; and to prevent or correct every thing shocking and disgusting” (Physician 3). Faced with this urge to cultivate beauty as a social responsibility an aging woman like Dorinda cannot escape the “Detested Wrinkles” (18) of her face nor look past the “fading Roses” (17) of her cheeks. The aging female body cannot disappear into the background nor can it be seen through. And it is precisely this unmissable physical aspect of a woman’s aging that Leapor and Montagu highlight. Compared to male writers who typically use the theme of female aging for mocking or “moral” purposes, their poems attend to the hidden yet disrupting effects aging bodies have on woman’s selfhood.

¹⁰⁸ I will refer to this text as *Poems* from this point.

¹⁰⁹ I will refer to this text as *Eminent Ladies* from this point.

Rather than coming from a wise, mature, been-there-done-that matron's position that female essayist of the era often utilized,¹¹⁰ Leapor and Montagu detail the difficulty of learning to age and living with an altered body that does not feel like one's. Although these poems too sometimes rely on the familiar trope of past mistakes and maturity as a whole, aging female personae themselves do not always triumph over their lost beauty with a renewed and more mature sense of selfhood. They show ambivalent and often paradoxical attitudes regarding how to take their aging female body that together, as I will show, construct their poetic identity.

For these women poets, the aging female personae are more than characters they devised. As women aging themselves, the aging female personae reflect the poets' contemplation on how to live with their aging bodies in a way that reflects their beliefs and philosophy. They use poetry as a vehicle for a particular kind of self-creation infused with a complex intimacy between the

¹¹⁰ Women authors in mid-eighteenth century brilliantly appropriated the identity of aging women for their authorial persona in prose. For instance, there is Frances Brooke's *The Old Maid by Mary Singleton, Spinster*, a periodical using the identity of "old" woman as a persona. Published between 1755 and 1756, *The Old Maid* begins its first issue by recognizing the "worthlessness" of old maids: "an old maid is, in my opinion, except an old batchelor [sic], the most useless and insignificant of all God's creatures; and as I am so unhappy as to be one of those very worthless animals, I think it incumbent upon me some way or other to be of service to the community" (Brooke 2). According to Devoney Looser's study of old Bluestocking writers, old women writers often employed what Looser terms "infirmity of age topos" ("The Blues Gone Gray" 111), a rhetoric exercised to acquire a softer review from the public. Usually in introductions or prefaces, old women authors apologized for their "garrulity" and "lack of mental acuity" to excuse their "inferior" writing (Looser "The Blues Gone Gray" 111-112). Although we should note that Brooke's Mary Singleton is a fictional persona created by a rather "young" author (thirty-two years old), Brooke has this old maid employ a similar tactic of excusing the "insignificance" of her old maid existence. Importantly, this essayist persona uses this stereotype against old maids not merely to apologize for her writing; she makes it her reasons for speaking her mind. Describing herself as an old maid who has nothing to offer to society and is unhappy to be of no service, she argues that she is finding a way to make herself valuable, that is, by writing. And in doing so, she affirms that her writing will be "of service to the community" early in the work. Although the identity of old women invited judgments and stereotypical attacks, as Mary Singleton shows, it had its own virtue. The humble position becomes the reason for her to write. In addition, Eliza Haywood's *The Female Spectator* (1744-1746) is more forthright about taking a positive twist on her identity as old woman. Laying out from the start that she "never was a Beauty, and now very far from being young" (2) Haywood's persona claims that her years of follies and vanities in the past serve as this writer's asset. She confesses that her young days was spent rather imprudently; "Dress, Equipage, and Flattery, were the Idols of my Heart" (2). But now she has learned from her years. That hard-won experiences "which otherwise I had been ignorant of" (3) as a young maid are a valuable resource which equips her to talk about usual errors of the female sex with authority. "WITH this Experience," the Female Spectator writes, "I flattered myself that it might be in my Power to be in some measure both useful and entertaining" (3). As a more mature self who is furnished with lived knowledge, this persona has the wisdom to advise her fellow sisters how to live their lives.

author and the persona. This is not to argue that these poems were transparent reports of the poet's autobiographical experiences concerning aging.¹¹¹ As much as any other "fictional" genres of literature, poems are created through a literary process that may or may not filter the author's authentic experiences (Goulding 70-73). Especially for women writers, whose works some feminist critics argue have been disproportionately read under categories such as "authenticity" or "accuracy,"¹¹² we must acknowledge that their poetic persona can be manipulative and multilayered. It is not my intention to treat women poets' personae as "self-portraits" of each poet. Rather, following such critics as Claudia Newel Thomas, Carolyn Heilbrun, and Susan Goulding, the following section pays attention to the way Leapor and Montagu manipulate their experience to create a literary voice.

The unique position of poetry as the pinnacle of the language-art meant that it was particularly challenging and even more subversive for women to participate. As Margaret Doody observes, women voice in poetry was an act of intervention itself because it was interfering into what was perceived as a primarily masculine genre (75). Although women poets sometimes had to pay the price "for the privilege of writing in these genres," that is, to adopt specific "masculine" styles like iambic metric or a rhythmic scheme or even assume a deferential position (Thomas 181), the genre also gave women poets power: power to assume an authorial voice and

¹¹¹ Reading Leapor's usage of her lived experiences to situate herself as a poet and to create her own poetic voice, Goulding teases out that reading the strategy Leapor employs is different from reading biography in her poem (71-73). Thomas also argues that "Every poetic persona is to some extent a disguise" (171) emphasizing the important "public" (as opposed to "private" or "authentic") aspect of poems of women writers.

¹¹² Scholars such as Carolyn Heilbrun argues that historically, the works of women writers were often confused with their biological information. Following Heilbrun, Susan Goulding warns against the tendency to overshadow textual analysis with biography and says that one should consider genre, authorial abilities, as well as "narrative and power" in reading women texts. Goulding brings to attention that Roger Lonsdale's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (Oxford University Press, 1990) includes headnotes for biographical information in reading women poets whereas he does not for *Eighteenth-Century Verse* (of male poets) (Oxford University Press 1984). According to Goulding, this attests to how biography "has been more 'intrusive'—for good and for ill—where the works of women writers are concerned" (70). See Goulding n.2.

to speak to a largely masculine audience.¹¹³ Responding to the male idea of “ghosts of beauty,” the poets I consider here not only speak up about their own aging body but turn a typically disregarded object into a source of a woman’s poetic voice and an intelligent work of art. They do not shy away from what would be ridiculed and neglected in traditional poetry, that is, an aging female body. Considering the misogynistic poetic world where women could be either young beautiful nymphs or a ghost, the next section shows how the voices of these aging personae achieve a meaningful subversion of the gender dynamics of poetry. Observing how the lived experiences of female bodily aging are used to gain a poetic advantage, I argue the aging female body ultimately becomes a site of self-creation through which these poets reconfigured the bodily aging as an integral part of their poetic identity.¹¹⁴

The Altered Aging Female Body and a Specter in Leapor’s “Dorinda at her Glass”

For a familiar reader of Leapor, that “Dorinda at her Glass” explicitly calls out to Pope’s images of aging women by recasting his “Ghosts of Beauty” would be hardly surprising. The intertextuality of eighteenth-century literature as well as an arguably “feminine” Pope who afforded “easy” entrance to poetry prompted women writers to utilize this male author’s literary devices and references (Goulding 72). But Leapor seems to have had a particular connection to Pope and his works. Leapor was known to her close literary friends the “successor of Pope”

¹¹³ Claudia Newel Thomas observes that poetry gave women a space to show her talent, intellectual competence, as well as her perspective of the world to and against a primarily masculine audience, paradoxically, through the masculine tradition of poetry. Thomas writes that women writers who chose to write in poetry were making “opportunities to speak as authorities and as friends [of the male writers] . . . The price each paid for the privilege of writing in these genres was disguise within a persona sufficiently ‘manly’ to justify her confident speech” (181).

¹¹⁴ The confusion and anger did not always all fall on women’s so-called vanity, however. The lack of education and little guidance was blamed for leaving many eighteenth-century women ill-prepared for aging. Notwithstanding the intent to normalize unacceptable behavior for aging women, de Lambert delineates the causes of the suffering old woman’s fate: “In her Youth her Education is too slightly regarded; there is no Care taken of her for the rest of her Life, and no Defence [sic] or Rule even for her Conduct in Old Age” (104). Being a graceful old woman was not natural. It would need care and education to know and adopt a new—and less thrilling—role for her life.

(Goulding 73). As a working-class woman poet, Leapor was uneasy about her position. She was the “alienated insider” as Valerie Rumbold calls it, both in her real life and as a poet. She was a kitchen maid (who belongs to the family but is usually not a part of the family) and a poet who was dismissed as “the poor” or the “stranger” (Rumbold 66). Reading into the uneasiness scholars suspect Leapor felt, Betty Rizzo and Caryn Chaden read the use of Pope in Leapor’s work as very much strategic. Goulding argues that relying on male literary figures of the era like Pope or Swift was one primary way for Leapor to attach herself to the literary world and prove her worth. Indeed, Leapor devised “An Epistle to a Lady” with the same title as that of Pope, wrote “Mira’s Will” which arguably resembles “Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift,” and even has a poem titled “On Discontent. To Stella.” But Leapor uses the works of male authors as a springboard to then acquire and affirm her poetic voice. As Goulding cautions “Leapor seems more specifically a ‘successor’ than a follower: a successor takes over” (73). An aging woman’s body is one site for such a taking over. Although a respectful response to Pope, Leapor’s “Dorinda at her Glass” lends an eye to the lived experiences of the “Ghosts of Beauty.” Not using the term “ghost” but paraphrasing it as phantom, mimic shape, and specter, Leapor presents her own female narrative for this figure.

From the very start of “Dorinda at her Glass” (1748), Leapor takes the readers to a changed Dorinda facing her own altered body.

DORINDA, once the fairest of the Train,
Toast of the Town, and Triumph of the Plain;
Whose shining Eyes a thousand Hearts alarm'd,
Whose Wit inspired, and whose Follies charm'd:
Who, with Invention, rack'd her careful Breast

To find new Graces to insult the rest,
Now sees her Temples take a swarthy Hue,
And the dark Veins resign their beauteous Blue;
While on her Cheeks the fading Roses die,
And the last Sparkles tremble in her Eye. (*Poems* 1)

Dorinda was once a fair, charming, and proud maid. As the repeated light t-sound of the first two lines indicates, her past days were bright and cheerful. She was the celebrated beauty of the town and she seems to have enjoyed it. She took care to highlight her feature, even coming up with a new way to display her superior beauty. However, as not so subtly alluded to by the use of “once,” her days of beauty were brief. Reflecting the shortness of a woman’s youth and the fast temporality of female aging, the poem devotes only six lines out of a hundred and thirty-five to describe Dorinda’s past and even those six lines are told retrospectively. The constant past tense that follows the description of the “once fairest” Dorinda (such as “alarmed” “rack’d” “inspired” “charmed”) reminds the audience how much she is not what she had been before. Just after line six, in the first stanza, we are introduced to Dorinda “Now” who is swarthy, dark, fading, and trembling.

In this first stanza, there is no specific indication of what had actually happened to her. It seems there was no scandal, accident, or illness. As the poem progresses, it reveals the truth by directing the reader to follow what the narrator and Dorinda see in the glass—a changed reflection. Simply, it is aging. The narrator takes her time inspecting each feature of her former glory. From her eyes, breasts, hair, skin, lips, cheeks, forehead, and shoulder, her body exudes almost nothing but agedness. Her face reminds her of the cold dry “northern Storm” (*Poems* 3); her lips lack that “gay Vermilion glow” (*Poems* 3); her cheeks are “pale and hollow” (*Poems* 3);

her stare is “meager” (*Poems* 3). Her blooms are faded and her inner body is filled with some dark fluid that echoes the familiar medical perception of the aging constitution. All these metaphors indicate that “The sad effect of Time’s revolving Wheel” is to blame. (*Poems* 5).

Forlorn, this aged Dorinda sits alone in front of a mirror. She is at the private space of her toilette, and significantly, not at a party like those old women in Pope’s imagination. The buzz of society, the talks, the town had disappeared from the scene. Unlike Pope’s imagined aging women, Dorinda is not that “vain” women. In fact, she follows the rules set by the society—perhaps a bit too rigidly. “In Silence wrap’d, and curtain’d from the Day, / On her sad Pillow lost Dorinda lay; / To Mirth a Stranger, and the like to Ease” (*Poems* 2). She has withdrawn from society and all its pleasure. She even “left the Toilet for the Chimney Side” (*Poems* 2), though reluctantly, like an old lady should. Thus describing Dorinda who had moved to a “proper” place for an aging woman, the poem reveals the unseen side of an aging woman who is indeed trying follow her age-appropriate norms. And as she shows, it is not filled with grace or peace.

Deceitful Beauty—false as thou art gay,
And is it thus thy Vot’ries find their Pay;
This the Reward of many careful Years,
Of Morning Labours, and of Noon-day Fears,
The Gloves anointed, and the bathing Hour,
And soft Cosmetick’s more prevailing Pow’r;
Yet to thy Worship still the fair Ones run,
And hail thy Temples with the rising Sun;
Still the brown Damsels to thy Alters pay
Sweet-scented Unguents, and the Dews of May;

Sempronia smooths her wrinkled Brows with Care,
And *Isabella* curls her grisled Hair: (*Poems* 4)

Her life had been one obsessed with exterior charms, but Dorinda shows that it had to do with something more than an individual proclivity to vanity. Here, Dorinda critiques not only the idea of lasting beauty as false but the larger society—and beauty industry to be specific—that entices women to be devotees of the false idea. A larger cultural and social compulsion for female beauty and the pressure entrapped women into such a lifestyle. A woman is led to believe that she had to manage her looks *and* that she can.

With the rise of medical culture that is often termed “medical individualism,” the eighteenth century was fascinated with the idea that an individual had power over their own body. If the gentleman of the eighteenth century had general health medical texts to hand, women had practical beauty regimens. Often attached to cookery recipes and kitchen manuals, myriads of beauty regimen texts detailed the so-called easy and simple ways to be beautiful. And to get rid of various signs of aging was one principal aspect of such managements of beauty. *The Accomplished Ladies Rich Closet of Rarities* (1687) argued that it puts “into your hands an opportunity to render your selves more beautiful,” that is, to “preserve what you have, at least from the ruins of time or unfortunate accident” (52). Some explicitly labeled their texts as guaranteeing to entirely “Remove the Appearance of OLD AGE AND DECAY” (Physician), and a sundry collection of skin therapies were more modest in promising “a great Measure to delay the Ravages of Time on the Features of the Fair Sex” (Chambers). While differing in the nature of its effects—to preserve beauty or to remove or to delay aging—the art of caring for beauty was premised on the assurance that the “creeping Old-Age, that ploughs the smoothest

Face, shall have no Power over yours” (Le Camus 8).¹¹⁵ As much as female beauty was a complex notion that was often thought of as inborn with other superior qualities of a privileged class, for eighteenth-century contemporaries, it was also something that needed to be cared for. The morning labors, application of lotions, proper baths that Dorinda cites were all supposed to prevent the “Ravages of Time.”

But it has no effect at all. Dorinda was a dedicated follower of the beauty regimens of the era. But she is still a weeping woman with detested wrinkles. The regimen gave her a false sense of control. She has no power to either stall or reverse the effects of the passage of time. Dorinda might have been vain, but she shows that her preoccupation with her physical charms is inseparable from (or perhaps derived from) the sociocultural impulse that led women to constantly monitor of their bodies. The problem is not on one individual. Narrating the personal story of her aging, Dorinda thus calls out the larger cultural belief and practices about controlling aging looks for women. In this way, Dorinda protests the dominant narrative that Pope projects on old women—one that assumed that old women were foolishly conceited, vain to no point, ridiculous for not letting go of their attachment to their youthful bloom. Giving names to the formerly unidentified bunch of “Ghosts of Beauty”—Sempronia, Isabella, Augusta, Silvia, and Celia—Dorinda demonstrates how a woman becomes that so-called vain old woman. She lives

¹¹⁵ Both the old women who endeavored to obtain “true bloom” and those who let their oldness lie were scorned. The former were sneered for their “vanity” and the latter were despised for their “insufferable indolence” (Physician 3-4) to their bodies. In terms of self-care, speaking broadly, old women were not allowed to devote their time to caring for their beauty as it was considered a sin of “vanity.” In this respect, old women were at once a part of the target audience as well as the anti-model of the ideal. First, they were not allowed the same “youthful” occupations such as dresses, cosmetics, dancing, etc. In medical-advice literature too, old women and aging women who have aged looks exist as a background foil, not particularly invited to participate in this self-care. But they were condemned for their decay. In a similar way that some old men were reproached for their agedness as it was considered a result of reckless life, old women who were considered to be not possessing a certain level of grace were thus criticized. Self-beauty-care thus gave women some degree of agency, but it also contributed to the era’s sexist demand that women look young.

with the pressure for and obsession about her youthful body. She may be spiteful in her old age as Pope suggested, but there is more to that anger than a simple spleen.

This personal narrative of aging further provides a female perspective on her body. Namely, it reveals what goes on behind a seemingly proud and even natural display of a beautiful female body. The list of “labours” laid out by Dorinda demonstrates a serious amount of effort for her body that the male poet fails to recognize. As detailed by Dorinda, from sunrise, she puts on face-creams, anoints her glove, bathes, exchanging beautiful spring morning for her meticulous routines. As the reward for her labor, she should be getting a sense of relief, perhaps some security for a beautiful body. But a woman is yet nervous. By the time the day reaches noon, on a daily basis, she is afraid. Although young Dorinda may have seemed spontaneous, haughty, and proud for her beauty to those around her, she was never free from the threats of aging.

And all her fears came true. Betrayed by all her labors, Dorinda would not know who this thinning, dark, gloomy, “alter’d Shade” is. Dorinda sees a wandering horror in the mirror.

At length all trembling, of herself afraid,
To her lov’d Glass repair’d the weeping Maid,
And with a Sigh address’d the alter’d Shade.
Say, what art thou, that wear’st a gloomy Form,
With low’ring Forehead, like a northern Storm;
Cheeks pale and hollow, as the Face of Woe,
And Lips that with no gay Vermilion glow?
Where is that Form which this false Mirror told
Bloom’d like the Morn, and shou’d for Ages hold;

But now a Spectre in its room appears,
All scar'd with Furrows, and defac'd with Tears;
Say, com'st thou from the Regions of Despair,
To shake my Senses with a meagre Stare?
Some stragg'ling Horror may thy Phantom be,
But surely not the mimick Shape of me. (*Poems* 3)

What she sees is a “weeping maid,” “All scar'd with Furrows, defac'd with Tears.” Refusing to believe that it is her, Dorinda asks what this reflection is. It appears as a thing in a gloomy form, an estranged image. Inch by inch, her cheeks, face, lips, eyes, and her form have changed. Like Pope's aged matrons who are conceived as shadows of their previous beauty, Dorinda's aged self appears as a mockery of what she once was. She is now a “wither'd Shrine” (3) and a “mimick Shape of me” (3). She is a “Phantom.”

As much as Dorinda calls herself a “Spectre,” however, she cannot really be a specter. The ghostliness of her body is in her materiality.¹¹⁶ Dorinda is a ghost because of how a woman's selfhood is equated with her material body. Without youthful beauty, it is as if she does not exist. But the focused survey of her body and her preoccupation with her skin, its color, the tightness, and its substantial “weight” make her body too real. Her agedness is too visible to be transparent. In other words, the aging body does not allow her to lose her. The speaker does not necessarily disagree that aged Dorinda is a ghost or that she is now “deformed.” But simultaneous to rendering that insignificant erosion of skin to be seen as herself being

¹¹⁶ Amelia DeFalco and Simone de Beauvoir theorize the uncanniness of the mirrored image of an aging woman in similar terms. DeFalco argues that when it comes to aging, “the uncanny most often describes the disconcerting newness of the old body and how the subject experiences the body's image as strange” (10). A woman's body in her old age, particularly that of her face, is “frightful” because it reminds her of her past. In her mirror, a woman sees the disturbing version of herself. In a similar vein, Beauvoir writes that “Within me it is the Other—that is to say the person I am for the outsider—who is old: and that Other is myself” (316).

“furrowed,” the poem also establishes her as present. The details of her aging body remind her that she is not an aerial being nor an angel but a human being with both her feet on the ground. Pope’s portrayal of aging women was, in a way, neglecting the body of aging woman by refusing to attend to her actual physical decline. The signs of aging ever so visible in this poem, then, not only contribute to giving a different story to an aging woman, but also to presenting a counter-portrayal and finally subverting the trope. Leapor utilizes the figure of the specter to reappropriate the association between female body/beauty and selfhood in a way that ultimately questions whether an aged woman is really a ghost. All in all, an aging woman is not a ghost at all.

In addition, Leapor confronts the image of the aging woman as ghost by highlighting *where* the ghost is by confirming that the altered body is in the mirror. Dorinda is “at her glass,” as the title emphasizes. The poem is in fact very careful to note that it is her perception of her own body, a reflected image, that generates the ghost. As much as Dorinda must be aging, her agedness is perceived through what she calls the “false Mirror.” The decayed body that Dorinda sees is not an inhabited one. As the line subtly suggests, when she “close[s] her weary Lids . . . Detested Wrinkles swim before her Eyes.” Leapor deliberately places Dorinda far from any kind of society. There is no other who verifies the reality of her aging. Only the “*Glass* repair’d the weeping Maid” (my emphasis). In fact, Leapor couches Dorinda’s glorious years in the first six lines as a modifier to show that it is Dorinda herself who sees an aged woman: “Dorinda . . . Now sees her Temple a swarthy Hue, And the dark Veins resign their beauteous Blue.” Although Dorinda’s perception of herself is heavily influenced by others, the poem strongly suggests that the ghost is nowhere but in the glass. Dorinda’s beauty had been perceived by the reaction of

others—she “alarm’d,” “inspired,” “charm’d,” and was the “Toast of the Town” —and Dorinda now has no one to reflect back to her what she looks like. Only she has the power to see herself.

The poem actually indicates that Dorinda may not be really “old,” or rather, much of that “oldness” is subjective. When the speaker describes Dorinda’s oldness in phrases like “Her careless Locks upon her Shoulders lay / Uncurl’d, alas! Because they half were Gray” (*Poems* 2), the half gray hairs leave one to at least question the actual agedness of her looks. Obviously, Dorinda may be “fading”; but she is also not yet totally “gray.” Whether it is the amount or the gradation of the changing colors of her hair, half of her is “young.” Although certain eighteenth-century contemporaries could have argued Dorinda is an old woman even when she has only a few gray hairs, she does not have that society with her now. What bothers Dorinda are her internalized social expectations and cultural standards. The poem hints at her vitality. She has not arrived at her “autumn” yet (“Thy Spring is past, thy Summer Sun declin’d, / See Autumn next, and Winter stalks behind” (5). Although “now she twinkles in a fainter Ray,” she sparkles. On a first glance, one sees a fading aging woman. Closely, one sees sparkles, bright small flashes of light and spirit.

Starting from the fourth stanza, the speaker takes over Dorinda’s soliloquy. Now it is a monologue, a speech directed to an imagined audience of fellow “Sisters” (*Poems* 5). The speaker first adopts a familiar mode of censuring vain aging women. There are “sublime ways” to be charming for aging women. Reproaching against gay outfits and “vain Desires, not subdued by Time” (*Poems* 6), the speaker exhorts,

But hear, my Sisters---- Hear an ancient Maid,
Too long by Folly, and her Arts betray’d;
From these light Trifles turn your partial Eyes,

'Tis sad *Dorinda* prays you to be wise;
And thou *Celinda*, though must shortly feel
The sad Effect of Time's revolving Wheel;
Thy Spring is past, thy Summer Sun decli'd,
See Autumn next, and Winter stalks behind:
But let not Reason with thy Beauties fly,
Nor place thy Merit in a brilliant Eye;
'Tis thine to charm us by sublime ways (*Poems* 5)

"Who would not burst with Laughter" (*Poems* 6) at a sight of an aging woman, the speaker writes, who "hobbles in a Rigadoon" showing "her swell'd Ancles from Rheumatick Pain" (*Poems* 6). They must be "wise."

Hear this, ye fair Ones, that survive your Charms,
Nor reach at Folly with your aged Arms;
Thus *Pope* has sung, thus let *Dorinda* sing;
"Virtue, brave Boys, -- 'tis Virtue makes a King:"
Why not a Queen? Fair Virtue is the same
In the rough Hero, and the smiling Dame:
Dorinda's Soul her Beauties shall pursue,
Tho' late I see her, and embrace her too:
Come, ye blest Graces, that are sure to please,
The Smile of Friendship, and the careless Ease;
The Breast of Candour, the relenting Ear,
The Hands of Bounty, and the Hearts sincere:

May these the Twilight of my Days attend,
And may that Ev'ning never want a Friend
To smooth my Passage to the silent Gloom,
And give a Tear to grace the mournful Tomb. (*Poems* 7-8)

Interestingly, unlike the rather vague idea of an old woman gaining more “virtue,” the speaker adds something that is rarely seen as a virtue of an old woman, “Friendship.” Pope had characterized old women as “Beauties, like Tyrants, old and friendless grown.” A typical negative representation of an old woman was exactly that: secluded and without any who visit or, surrounded by adulating people but without one who really cares. This possibility of friendship in old age revises that usual stereotypical aging woman. Here, a dame is smiling. She has a friend who would embrace the other’s pain. This friend has a “relenting Ear” that may perhaps sympathize with that disorienting experience of seeing an aging body. In “ESSAY on FRIENDSHIP,” Leapor expands her belief on friendship: friends share “Our free-born Nature [that] hates to be confin’d, / Where State and Power check the speaking Mind” (*Poems* 77). With a generous heart and a spirit to challenge the confines of female kind a friend lets a woman speak. It is a female community created through frustration, oppression, and finally, mutual understanding. The poem thus suggests an alternative mode of aging for a woman. Her virtue and wisdom are not really in the domestic realm, nor do they exist in relation to men. Here, an aging woman is a queen, a “smiling Dame” as strong as a “rough Hero” who supports another.

While presenting this powerful alternative reality of aging women’s community, Leapor does not diminish a woman’s emotional distress. The friendship is not a palliative or a cure to the devastation Dorinda feels about her aging body. Although leaving much to interpretation, the poem suggests that Dorinda may never really have learned her lesson. Although the voices of

Dorinda and the speaker often overlap and are, in fact, hard to separate, from the fourth stanza, the third-person, who is not Dorinda and calls herself “an ancient Maid” steps in and leads the narrative. Dorinda serves as a cautionary tale for fellow sisters and the speaker suggests that Dorinda shall follow more graceful pursuits: “Dorinda’s Soul her Beauties shall pursue.” But the state of Dorinda’s action—“shall”—leaves it uncertain whether the speaker is expressing an instruction or a future state. “‘Tis sad Dorinda prays you to be wise” but she is yet “sad.” For Dorinda, the benefits of virtue and friendship are presented as a possibility, but importantly, not as a certainty. Perhaps it is a wish, connected with a repeated “may.” Compared to a woman who “*must* shortly feel / The *sad* Effect of Time’s revolving Wheel,” these hopes are relatively fragile. Dorinda does not stand tall away from her aging body nor can she divide herself from the body. At the same time the poem asks women to find power in separating themselves from their physical decline and connecting through friendship, we are also left with Dorinda who may still be confused, perhaps yet sitting “at her Glass.”

Playing with the giant literary figure of Pope, Leapor makes it a task for her poetic persona to further and comment on the male imagination of the aging female body. In this female poetic world, an aging woman is not a soundless smoke of an existence. Rather than seeing past physical declines, Leapor’s creation provides a space for the aging woman herself to survey and reflect in much detail the possibly displeasing bodily alteration and its impact on her selfhood. The “aftermath” of beauty as well as the feelings of loss male poets casually dismiss are all accepted in Leapor’s poetic world. Indeed, the specific female experience of physical decline becomes a powerful poetic source. The ghost reclaims her altered body.

Montagu's "Town Eclogues": The Angry Woman and Her Altered Body

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's relationship with her own aging body was complex. She was keen on aging and what it means for a woman.¹¹⁷ Living to her seventy-fourth year, Montagu's aging was a conspicuously public process. As a spirited lady of a wife of a British ambassador, Montagu was a literary celebrity who corresponded with John Gay, Alexander Pope, Mary Astell, and Sarah Churchill, and the Duchess of Marlborough to name a few. Her *Turkish Embassy Letters* that describe her voyage through the Ottoman Empire inspired female travel narratives, and the episode of Montagu laughing off Pope's love for her and the consequent attack that Pope launched toward her in his *Dunciad* were in the limelight of their literary circle. As that once desirous, proud, and courtly woman, Montagu's aging was not a private matter. As Helen Deutsch notes, her aging body was for her contemporaries "a sign of the abjection of having lived past youth and beauty" ("This once was me" 340). Montagu's writings, and especially those of "later" letters, indeed express concern about and interest in the meaning of bodily aging.

It seems that Montagu's approach to the bodily ramifications of aging was largely refusal. In a letter that is now well known to modern scholars, Montagu writes to her daughter, Countess of Bute, that "It is eleven years since I have seen my figure in a glass. The last reflexion I saw there was so disagreeable, I resolved to spare myself such mortifications for the future, and shall

¹¹⁷ As I bring in biographical reference to Montagu, I heed what feminist criticism cautions about connecting the women author with her persona. As criticized by feminist scholars, the tendency to read "authentic" or "honest" representations in women's work has been disproportionately strong compared to that of male writers—and with for good reasons. Women writer's work has been "recuperated" by feminist criticism that showed how the "life circumstances of women writers affected what and how they wrote" (Goulding 70). The biographical narrative of a woman author helps define the process and meaning behind her work. I agree with Goulding that "we must not stop at 'notice': critical attention should rightly turn at this point to the more complex discussions of the strategies authors used in their literary works" (71). By bringing in Montagu's biographical information, I neither intend to see Flavia as a fictional "self-portrait" nor aim to separate her works from her life. Following Goulding's approach, I argue that biographical information about a writer should rightly provide context for her creation while not eliding that her persona can be just as strategic, fictional, and manipulative as that of her male counterparts.

continue that resolution to my life's end" (*The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Montagu* 312). Montagu was in her late sixties by the time she was writing this letter and it would seem that she had continued this practice since she was in her late fifties. Seeing the "disagreeable" consequence of her aging, Montagu not only rejects looking at her altered current self but refuses to realize its temporality, that is, how her body will continue to change with time. For feminist critics, Montagu's decision to not look at herself is a defiance. For Deutsch and Sarah Brophy, it is an expression of "the estrangement of the self from its image" ("This once was me" 340) that claims how she is more than her material body. In splitting her "real" self from her body, Montagu seems to protest, she is not just what time can alter. For all her bold resistance, however, the anxiety is palpable. Montagu demonstrates an ambivalent attitude toward her aging body. As Brophy argues, Montagu was also very much concerned about the social prestige she might lose due to her changing and declining beauty. Rejecting to acknowledge her aging body illustrates how she chooses to ignore the identification of her identity with her beauty rather than to tackle it. In a word, Montagu cannot and does not bring herself to accept that the changed physical figure is herself because she cares too much about her looks.

This complex attitude toward the altered female body is the exact topic of Montagu's "Town Eclogues."¹¹⁸ This section of this chapter reads the story of Flavia, the last persona of this poem, who very much like Montagu in her later years refuses to reconcile with her altered body. My aim is to situate Flavia's reaction to aging in comparison to both the male imagination of

¹¹⁸ The edition printed for M. Cooper in Pater-Noster-Row in London (1747) titles the poem as "Six Town Eclogues" whereas the version I am citing published in 1755 (printed for R. Baldwin, at the Rose, in Pater-Noster Row in London), titles it "Town Eclogues." My research through *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* suggests that the later publications of the poem during the late eighteenth century refer to it as "Town Eclogues" more often. To name a few, the editions published in 1768 by J. Williams, the one published in 1781 by J. Tonson, et al in London, and the one published in 1784 by T. Cadell at all in Fleet-Street London all use "Town Eclogues" as the title. In the 1768 edition, the editors credit only four poems to Montagu with a note "Of these six Eclogues, four only were written by Lady Mary Wortley Montague. Thursday the BASSETTE TABLE, and Friday the TOILETTE, being the Productions of Mr. Pope and Mr. Gay" (209).

female aging and Leapor's. Flavia is a fascinatingly different, while similar, character who could easily be identified as another version of Dorinda. Although decades apart,¹¹⁹ the two aging women—Dorinda and Flavia—share many things in common. Both have been those “vain” women in their youth and feel the wounds of losing beauty deeply. But unlike Leapor's third-person poetic persona who attempts to provide a wise take on the altered female body (all the while hinting at possible failures of that approach), Montagu's Flavia does not even try. Flavia makes no effort to move past her declining body and there are no pretensions at having surpassed the feeling of loss. Montagu zeros in on the devastating impact of aging for women with indignation. Interestingly, much like Dorinda, Flavia also condemns the medical discourse of the era and particularly the increasingly medicalized beauty industry that proves futile for her. I argue that Flavia's “emotional” reaction to her altered body not only allows the audience to gain access to the possible reality of aging for women but also defies the larger cultural aging model that was imposed on aging women to grow virtuous with age.

When Dorinda sits in front of a “false Mirror” dejected by her altered face, Montagu's Flavia lies on her couch with a “faithless” “glass revers'd in her right hand” (*Eminent Ladies* 169). She is on the verge of a breakdown. The effects smallpox has on her face are the issue. They have changed her.

The wretched *Flavia* on her couch reclin'd.

Thus breath'd the anguish of a wounded mind;

A glass revers'd in her right hand she bore,

For now she shun'd the face she sought before.

¹¹⁹ Although Montagu was a known subscriber to Leapor's posthumous work *Poems upon Several Occasion* which included “Dorinda at her Glass,” Montagu had already created Flavia, scholars suspect, around 1715-1716 which was even before Leapor's birth. Unlike some other eclogues which were published in 1716, “Saturday. The Small-Pox” was not published until 1747, a year earlier than Leapor's first publication.

“How am I chang’d! alas! How am I grown
“A frightful spectre, to myself unknown!
“Where’s my complexion? Where my radiant bloom,
“That promis’d happiness for years to come? (*Eminent Ladies* 169)

As it was for aging Dorinda, a sharp contrast between the youthful and beautiful self and the present Flavia devastates her. Flavia’s face is “disfigure[d]” and has “lost resemblance” to her past self (*Eminent Ladies* 177). Her beautiful complexion and youthful bloom have vanished, and with them, as she cries, her future has disappeared too. In yesteryears, she was the idol of many suitors. Many “opera-tickets [were] pour’d before my feet,” precious spring cherries were all hers, and she would refuse them all (*Eminent Ladies* 170). She would even be piqued at some bold gentlemen making advances at her who, according to her, were so obviously out of their league. Not only men but she too was fascinated with her beauty. The mirrored reflection of Flavia used to be the adored object of her own. Days and hours were spent in her toilette discussing every minute details of her looks. Her ““hours unheeded pass’d in deep debate, / ‘How curls should fall, or where a patch to place, / ‘If blue or scarlet best became my face”” (*Eminent Ladies* 171). But much like Dorinda’s last charms, all were pointless. Suddenly, she was robbed of her beauty and with it, her life.

Despite that Flavia is not specifically talking about aging but the ravaging effects of smallpox, the language used for describing the ramification of it is strikingly similar to that of aging. In fact, it is described in a specific way that reminds the reader of a much larger population of women, namely, those experiencing bodily alteration due to her aging. Except the suggestion of the section title, “Saturday. The Small-Pox,” there is no specific detail that points to the disease. Flavia is described as a just another woman devastated by her suddenly altered

figure. Considering that smallpox had, in severe cases, some distinct symptoms, Flavia's (lack of) representation of smallpox is interesting. The usual disfigurement of a nose or what was termed "pockmarks" or "pitted" scars, a kind of facial scarring that the contemporaries were preoccupied with as the effects of smallpox, are not here. As a comparison, Sara Coleridge documented an upsetting condition of a smallpox on her son with a visceral reference to how the disease causes blindness, clogged nose, mangled gums and tongue that make "*a horrid noise in his throat* which when I dozed for a minute I always heard in my dreams" (quoted Shuttleton *Smallpox* 7). But Flavia's smallpox alludes to no such graphic details. It largely has to do with how she is changed and how her identity has been affected. Smallpox is about her losing her beauty and in consequence, losing her identity—just like an aging woman.¹²⁰

The typical story of an unhappy aging woman is all here in this smallpox story: her past obsession with beautiful looks, the changed body, the bleak reality that is hard to accept, as well as her futile attempts at the art of beauty to recover the loss. Her complexion is gone and her "bloom" had disappeared. The effects of smallpox have made her not merely a disfigured woman but an old lady. Flavia affirms in her words that "youth," the most precious gift gods bestowed on her, is useless to her ("Ev'n youth itself, to me is useless now" (*Eminent Ladies* 169)). Flavia may be still technically young in years, but she is not "young." Even the image of listless Flavia reclining on her couch recalls the lack of strength and spirit in an aging woman's body. In fact, for eighteenth century contemporaries it mattered less whether it was an accident, an illness, or the "natural deform" (N.H. 162) of the aging process that perished female beauty. Signs of aging were often considered along the line of various other physical "unfortunate" instances such as

¹²⁰ In *Smallpox and Literary Imagination*, 1660-1820, Shuttleton argues that while there were male patients and survivors of smallpox for whom disfigurement and possible other complications such as blindness or amputation were dreadful as well (6-7), "smallpox was over-determined in relation to femininity" (4).

smallpox as that which should be guarded against and taken care of. For instance, when *The Ladies Dictionary* (1796) lists a number of types of people with aesthetic anomalies, aging figures are one of them. Those “‘scar’d’ by the smallpox or by battle wounds, and those who became naturally deformed by the marks of the aging body, such as wrinkles’ were all thought to need some sort of intervention that “‘apparently robbed the body of perfection” (Turner 27).

As such, Flavia’s body is designed to capture more than just smallpox. Although Flavia’s attention to her altered body is great, it lacks the detail that Dorinda obsesses over. The changes and decay of her body are supposedly so visible that Flavia has to have her mirror reversed. Yet with her glass “revers’d,” the audience does not get much information about her altered shape. Her complexion has gone and she describes herself as “A frightful spectre” who is so “chang’d” as to be unknown to herself, but no particular feature of her body is described. The attention to her physical appearance is scattered across the poem with Flavia crying how her face is “disfigure[d]” (*Eminent Ladies* 170) and how her beauty is now “ruin[ed]” and has “fled.” The gravity of the alteration is suggested by a list of privileges that she now has to let go—opera, presents, admirations, and adornments—rather than through detailed descriptions of physical changes.

This fitful reference to her altered body without much detail further subverts the deliberate male gaze on the female body. According to Dianne Hunter, men exerted power over this corporeality with the act of the “gaze.” The male gaze scrutinizes, controls, and defines the female body as he sees it. Men established the position of dominance with their gaze that objectifies and fetishizes the female body (Hunter 2). Following a similar line of thought, Norman Bryson argues that this activity of the “gaze” is always of “a certain violence (penetrating, piercing, fixing)” (93). In the case of aging female bodies, this violent male scrutiny

exerts its extreme power by, ironically, neglecting to “gaze” upon them. As was the case in Pope, the male eye fails to recognize the aging female body while tenaciously noticing it as not worth observation. An aging woman is a ghost—a non-material, nebulous image—to men. The eyes just pass through her as if she does not exist. Depriving the poem of the detailed description of an aged face, Flavia mirrors such a neglect. But her confused disorderly glance highlights the materiality of her changed figure. Without surveying her body—as Dorinda did—Flavia shows how she has become a “frightful spectre.”

The lack of scrutiny of her body helps direct the attention to Flavia and her emotional reaction. The poem as a whole is Flavia’s vehement outcry. It is composed of ninety-two lines of Flavia’s emotional speech in addition to four lines at the start that set up the scene. Flavia’s speech is full of questions, imperative sentences, and exclamations all delivering the emotive overtone of her psyche. She repeatedly requests to know (rhetorically) why her beauty has left (“Where’s my complexion? Where my radiant bloom” ““Could no pomatums save a trembling maid?” (*Eminent Ladies* 169, 171)), make demands (“Ah! faithless glass, my wonted bloom restore,” “Ye meaner beauties, I permit ye shine; / Go, triumph in the hearts that once were mine” “Cease, hapless maid, no more thy tale pursue” (*Eminent Ladies* 169, 171, 172)), and exclaims (“How am I chang’d! alas!” “Alas! I rave, that bloom is now no more” “Forsake mankind, and bid the world adieu!” “Plays, operas, circles, I no more must view!” (*Eminent Ladies* 169, 169, 172, 172)). When Flavia meets with the same disappointment that Dorinda faced about futile beauty regimens, Flavia is much more dramatic. Condemning the uselessness of beauty regimens and supposed cures for her looks, she condemns “Ye cruel chymists, what with-held your aid! / ‘Could no pomatums save a trembling maid? / ‘How false and trifling is that art ye boast! / ‘No art can give me back my beauty lost” (*Eminent Ladies* 171). Rather than

blaming herself as being too superficial—as many aging female literary personae resort to—Flavia is angry. Compared to Dorinda who was dejected by and afraid of her aging body, the “specter” hardly scares her but infuriates her. When Dorinda was simmering with exasperation for her changed status, Flavia is bursting with anger.

The extreme level of Flavia’s frustration is a significant intervention that challenges the normative ideals of aging women. By foregrounding the hurtful yet inexorable association of the female self with the body/beauty, Montagu disrupts the ideal aging narratives of a virtuous woman. The divergence aging model makes no sense for her. It is demanded but it is not natural for Flavia. She cares about her body and disinterested in her virtue/mind. For Flavia, smallpox came to her without her knowing or agreeing to it very much like aging. And suddenly having to let things go does not make sense for her. Perhaps it may be even natural to hold on to aspects that are cherished and even imperative to do so, Flavia advocates.

In a letter to her husband, Montagu, sixty-two years old, directly mentions how the imposed divergence aging model is not realistic. As long as one is a human being, Montagu protests, there is no escape from embodied experience even when one is an old lady.

At my time of life I ought to be detached from a world which I am soon to leave; to be totally so is a vain endeavour, and perhaps there is vanity in that endeavour: while we are human, we must submit to human infirmities, and suffer them in mind as well as body.

All that reflection and experience can do is to mitigate, we can never extinguish, our passions. (*The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Montagu* 204)

Montagu asserts that she, although grown old, is still a human being with feelings. Beauty and the altered female body matter to her because they generate feelings. Writing about the pain she feels about her son (who was at that time being imprisoned in Paris from a disreputable charge of

gambling debts), Montagu expresses that the attachment she has in this world and its inevitable consequences—passion—are only natural. The years of experience or the fact that she will soon die may work to alleviate her desire and agony. And maybe it should, she conjectures. But aging does not take out the nature of a human being as a whole. She is a person, a human being with emotion, still living in this world with attachments. However excessive, vain, or unreasonable her passions are considered to be as an old lady, she cannot go beyond them. To be that ideal old person who has no attachment to the world is an impossible task for her. Perhaps it may be even natural to hold on to aspects that are cherished. It is even vain, Montagu challenges, to attempt to grow old and wise and assume one can arrive at that state of mind.

Pointing out the arrogance as well as futility of sanctioned behaviors for old persons, Montagu speaks against normative age ideals that demand old people be “wise,” detached, and tranquil. And as an aging woman, Flavia shows how she struggles to be a “good” aging woman. A woman’s beauty (whether wrongfully or not) constitutes her selfhood her whole young years. While it was believed, with usual derision, that when a woman’s “Beauty [is] gone, ‘tis easier to be wise” (Parnell 131), it was not so easy. Montagu’s narrativization of Flavia and her journey of losing beauty validates how it is difficult for women to suddenly channel their devotion to mind. The wisdom or virtue a woman earns does not come naturally corresponding to her bodily decay.

In the end, Flavia does not offer a way to triumph over the loss of female beauty. Her decaying body does not lead to a wise mind or end with a grand lesson for “graceful” aging. The passionate outcry persists. The true essence of her was in her beauty, and as far as this Flavia is concerned, it still is in her physical charms. This woman’s selfhood cannot be separated from her body. Hateful to the world that drove her to “some deserted place” (*Eminent Ladies* 172), her last words echo her yet fond objects—“Ye operas, circles, I no more must view! / My toilette,

patches, all the world adieu!” (*Eminent Ladies* 172). She bids goodbye to the world hatefully lamenting her position as a reluctant recluse. This rejection to participate in the world as an altered woman, that no doubt is based on the supposed privileged status of her situation, is the conclusion of the poem. Her final words are hardly those of wisdom. The soul, virtue, or friendship that Leapor gestures toward are absent.

Flavia’s vision for female community is rather bleak. Displacing aging to other women, Flavia’s companies of women are not composed through genuine sympathy nor comfort. She is spiteful like Pope’s imagination of “Ghosts of Beauty.” While she has her friends beside her, for Flavia, they are not good sources for solace. Flavia cries that these women take her once-rightful throne of beauty’s queen. “‘Tis to my ruin all your charms ye owe” (*Eminent Ladies* 171).

Unlike Dorinda who imparted “wisdom” to her fellow sisters, Flavia hatefully reminds the rest of the women that “‘midst your triumphs with confusion know, / ‘Tis my ruin all your arms ye owe” (*Eminent Ladies* 171). The next generation of women still crowd over the throne of beauty. They do not “learn” from Flavia’s case nor does Flavia advise that. They become another Flavia obsessed with their beauty. What Flavia thus shows is that there is no “easy” way out of the devastation a woman feels about her altered body. She does not reconcile with society and accede to be a “wiser” woman, nor does she put forward a radical manifesto urging fellow women to abandon the standards of beauty altogether.

But the dramatic grievance that lists all that she had, lost, was, in addition to the altered female body allows her to find her voice. The overwhelming insertion of “I,” “mine,” “my,” and “me” totaling fifty times in the poem does not let the audience to dismiss her and her pain for one moment. It is “*my* complexion,” “*my* radiant bloom,” “*My* beauty” that has left Flavia. Her altered body is yet hers as it relates “For *me*.” That distinctly dismissed experience of being an

“old” woman forces Flavia to claim what is hers and who she believes she is. Compared to Swift who argued for his perception of Stella outweighing the reality or how the “world” sees her, Flavia grounds herself—painfully—at the reality and the outwardly perception of her body. The tight link between her appearance and her identity has led her to this pessimistic self-expulsion where she feels that she has lost all the power, the meaning of life, and herself. But there is no uncertainty for the reader who Flavia is. Despite Flavia’s confusion, the reader gets a vivid sense of this persona: a powerful, spirited, and passionate woman. Precisely where a woman would become a non-material existence, a specter, she gains voice—and a loud one at that. Although the overall story of Flavia may be a tale of a ruined woman, Flavia’s passion and confusion establish her as a fiercely living woman. In other words, the materiality of her body and the pain she perceives from it is the very source of a distinctly female poetic persona. The shallow see-through ghosts gain depth and complexity with her story, her past, and her emotions. Her physical alteration—however poignantly perceived—is not equal to a dissolution of her existence in this poetic space. Flavia finds a way of being.

Montagu utilizes the devastating meaning of aging for women without dismissing it. Although Montagu does not give a wholly new meaning to an altered female body, in this poetic space, a particular kind of self-creation happens. Flavia does not really “recreate” herself. She does not give other significance to the altered female body. Unlike Leapor’s persona, she does not reclaim aging as resources for a lesson or a “wiser” version of herself. The altered body is an uncanny specter still. What she does is to recreate the meaning of specter. The specter—a weirdly nonmaterial existence that is (seemingly) without much material weight to hold her down—becomes very physical through her changed body and rage. The altered aging female

body is the source for creating a particularly material-based yet mentally vital poetic persona, replacing the shallow superficiality with complex depth.

CHAPTER 3. “[A] RATIONAL PLEASURIST”: VARIANT AGING AND THE SEXUALITY OF OLD PEOPLE IN *FANNY HILL*

Introduction

There is an old man who takes a pretty young maid for his wife. The clear age difference between the couple makes the old man possessive and jealous. The young wife is fidgety. She seeks something other than a superannuated husband, wanting the life of a flirt and a tease. Before too long, a handsome young rake comes onto the scene and takes a stab at winning over the young wife. This young man makes various sexual advances to the young woman behind the back of—or often, right under the nose of—the old husband. With ingenious tricks like pretending to be impotent so that he can safely be around women, the young man dupes the old man. Even without such a stratagem, the old man is incredibly gullible and oblivious to all that is going on. Inevitably, the old husband gets cuckolded. Even if the old man finds out about the infidelity, he cannot find means to outwit the clever young rake and the adulteress. With all the taunts and jeers of other characters and those of the audience, the old man is left cheated, scammed, and bewildered.

And there you have one type of narrative that is a conventional plot in Restoration comedy. The description above is an adapted plot of William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675), the witty, farcical, and bawdy comedy of manners that is comic at the old person’s expense. The specific details in such stories are flexible: the old man can be a jealous secret admirer and not a husband, as in William Congreve’s *The Old Bachelor* (1693), or the old person can be an old woman, although this was a much less frequent occurrence, as it is the case of Lady Wishfort in Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (1700). In one way or another, the old person is always the one who pursues a young lover as their desperate grasps are mocked by the younger generation.

Restoration drama makes age a particular theme that playwrights of the era comfortably exploited. Elizabeth Mignon in *Crabbed Age and Youth* (1947) observes that compared to Elizabethan and Jacobian comedy, Restoration comedy makes age and “age alone, as it never was in Shakespeare, both the major and the decisive factor” of the comic scheme (11). Of course, neither the rivalry between the old and the young nor the theme of despicable old age was anything new. But before 1660, Mignon argues, there had been some balance in the characterization of old age. Wisdom and reverence were often associated with old age as much as there were instances of risible old age. After 1660, however, old age came to signal immorality and ugliness in theater. In a myriad of Restoration comedies including those of George Etherege, John Dryden, William Wycherley, Thomas Shadwell, and Aphra Behn, the senile folly of old age seems to exclude all the other aspects of an old character (Mignon 7-10). The intensity, the frequency, and the rigorously formulaic aspect of treating old age with “untampered hostility” which often involved verbal and physical abuse of old characters is remarkable (Mignon 3-4). Although Mignon claims that old age regains its dignity in theater after 1700,¹²¹ this theme of comical old age and the unkind attitude toward old people continues to be a familiar tune played throughout the literature of the long eighteenth century, especially in fiction.

Eighteenth-century fiction is populated with foolish, absurd, and vile old men and women. There are many examples. There is Tabitha, an overtly sexual old maid in Tobias Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* (1771) described as a “wild-cat,” an ogling “fantastical animal” (18,

¹²¹ Whether this is the case in eighteenth-century drama needs further rigorous scholarly examination. Mignon points to post-war reaction as one of the historical reasons for the cruelty toward old characters in Restoration comedy. According to Mignon, old age was often associated with past belief systems that were largely considered as corrupt or outmoded throughout the Restoration period. “The writers of the Restoration period reflect a new generation in the process of flagellating their predecessors, men who were out of tune with the spirit of the new age. The relaxing of the social conscience under Charles II brought with it the denial of an outmoded code and (4) the ridiculing of its champions. It is this denial which hardens and intensifies the rivalry between generations (5).”

12); we also have Lismahago, Tabitha's soon-to-be husband, an antiquated lieutenant who, with a clear allusion to his expiring sexuality, carries "two large trunks and a long deal box not unlike a coffin" (385); there is Madame Duval, Evelina's vain grandmother in Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), who is relentlessly derided by the whole company for her desire for "dancing"; and of course, one cannot forget the lustful sixty-year-old gentleman with a "yellow cadaverous hue" in *Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748-49)¹²² who attempts to rape a young protagonist and fails to do so because of his untimely eruption of desire.



Figure. 9. Thomas Rowlandson. "An Old Ewe Drest in Lamb Fashion" (London: T. Tegg, 1810).

¹²² I will refer to this text as *Fanny Hill* from this point. The edition I use is published by Clio Press in 1991.



Figure. 10. Thomas Rowlandson. "On an Ugly Old Woman in the Dark".



Figure. 11 Thomas Rowlandson. "Old Beans".

Despite a long literary tradition of mockable old characters, there are some distinct characteristics in the old characters in eighteenth-century fiction: they are filled with “inappropriate” desires, and they are comic for it. For instance, the satiric caricatures above by Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), the celebrated artist and caricaturist of the Georgian era illustrate the attitude toward some old people (see fig. 9, fig. 10, and fig. 11). These illustrations show that old women and men who seek after young lovers were particular targets of satire in the period in general. These old people were usually imagined as securing what they want (e.g., love, sex, and influence) either by deception or through the means of wealth and power. Many times, they are mocked for their “eccentric exterior” and “ugliness” that are often highlighted by their too thin or too large figures and facial wrinkles. The quotation on fig. 9 reads, “Walking fast and far to overtake a woman whose shape and air as viewed *en derrière* you have decided that her face is angelic, till, on eager turning round as you pass her, you are petrified by a Gorgon.” In literature, often presented in a farcical form, their sexuality makes them ill, sickly, or at least unnatural.¹²³ Some, like the old rapist in *Fanny Hill*, show signs of serious illness as his overt sexuality seeps through his body reeking of smells of death and sickness. Others, like Tabitha or Madame Duval, are not exactly ill but their sexual body is described as something other than healthy. Whether they are in good health or not, that rarely seems to matter. If an old character has a puny physique, the residues of sexuality, of whatever level of intensity, are described as at odds with his too weak body, as with Lismahago. The energetic sexual body of an old person, on the other hand, would be too potent, leading the old person to unbridled, inhuman, and perverted

¹²³ Many old characters in mid eighteenth-century novels are sick. This is the case even for those who hold some degree of authority and are not subject to sheer mockery for their sexuality. A few examples include Reverend Villars in Frances Burney’s *Evelina*, Mr. Bramble in *Humphry Clinker*, and Mr. Allworthy in Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749).

sexual vigor. All in all, in eighteenth-century fiction, old people's sexuality, whatever shape it takes, is characterized as somehow deviant.

Analyzing the morbid language that contemporary fiction writers used to describe the sexuality of old people, this chapter takes up satiric portrayals of sexually vivified aging figures in mid-eighteenth-century fiction. I call the type of aging represented in these characters *variant* aging to highlight how the presence of sexuality in old age was thought to depart from conventional beliefs about aging. I begin with examining what was considered a natural or normalized aging process in this period by tracing the conflict between the traditional framework of aging (i.e., divergence aging model) and the rising medicalized model of aging (i.e., convergence aging model). Specifically, I focus on the theme of sexuality in old age, the complexity of which, I propose, raised key questions about the ideal representations of divergence aging. Teasing out incoherent characterizations regarding sexual old bodies in medical advice literature, I show that eighteenth-century fiction explored the chasms in changing beliefs about aging and experimented with various forms of sexuality in old age. Alongside several popular medical advice texts, I use *Fanny Hill: or, the Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, the erotic text by John Cleland, as my primary case study. Throughout, I underscore the modes of satire (e.g., the use of humor, irony, and exaggeration) and show how fictional descriptions of the sexuality of old people reveal the era's anxiety about what sexuality means in an old body.

Normative Aging and The Problems of Sexuality in Old Age

Old age and the process of aging were often associated with moral failures in the long eighteenth century. With the rise of the convergence aging model, the aging body was no longer a sign of mental growth. Instead, the aging body signified mental or moral decline that coincided

with the declining physique. Of course, the convergence aging model was not the only framework. In everyday life and for more general audiences, the divergence aging model which reserved some amount of respect for old people and the aging process was still important. As much as some medical and scientific professionals and their medical discoveries were supporting the convergence aging model, various genres of personal writing such as life writing, religious confessions, and diaries show that understanding aging as a process of gaining something intangible provided a familiar and comforting rhetoric for many.¹²⁴ A quick browse through a few popular conduct books also shows that the divergence aging model was a conventional norm of aging for the larger audience of the era. For instance, Marja van Tilburg's reading of one seventeenth-century Dutch conduct book, *Houwelick* (1625) suggests that it was commonly assumed in the early modern period that mind grows stronger with age as body declines. As one of the blessings of old age, the pacific mind of an old person counters the bleak prospect and reality of declining body and brings about tranquility, wisdom, and a new perspective on the world (Tilburg 373). Reiterations and revised versions of this ideal image of the divergence aging model continued to prevail in various cultural texts of the long eighteenth century.

But this divergence aging model also worked to regulate the behaviors and identities of aging people. In particular, medical advice literature such as health regimen texts and prolongevity treatises was a critical platform that promoted the divergence aging model. Casually mixing scientific and medical information with moralistic imperatives, the "how to take care of the aging body" part normalized and policed certain identities and behaviors of old

¹²⁴ *The History of Old Age in England, 1600-1800* series includes memoirs and diaries that were written between 1600 and 1800 that show some general similarities in terms of their largely spiritual responses old age. In volume 8, Ottaway and Tague, the editors of the volume, writes that "Religious devotion, . . . appears to have taken on some particular overtones in old age amongst many of our diarists" (viii). Although one must be mindful of the fact, as Ottaway and Tague caution, that the majority of the diarists during this era (and especially those remaining to be studied by modern scholars) are church attendees, "our writers all highlight the ways in which ageing most deeply affected their health and spirituality" (vii).

people. Compared to earlier periods, eighteenth-century medical advice texts were largely written by educated physicians who were up to date with new and developing scientific discourses of the era. Although pseudoscientific methods and what we now may call folk therapy still found their way into—or were often entangled with—the more medicalized writing of these physicians, their works were distinctive for their authority. The writings involved “quite sophisticated descriptions of how the body works, and how treatments brought about their effects” (Yallop *Age and Identity* 12) interweaving well-founded scientific principles of the body into the medical advice they were prescribing. The behaviors of old age prescribed as “age-appropriate” in these texts were thus more imposing.

The so-called medically age-appropriate behaviors typically involved strong moral claims that shored up the conventional image of old age and the ideal of divergence aging. For example, a typical prescription would go as such: the bodily constitution of an old person is cold and dry, so it is important to cover oneself up in old age and stay away from the cold weather. As a consequence, it would be “wrong” for an old woman, say, to dress herself in the same manner as those young belles with light linens. As repeated in *The Spectator*, a popular periodical of the era, an old woman should be “perswaded [sic] to wear warm Night-caps” (34; vol. 4), to stay home, and perhaps to cultivate her mind instead of going about the town in vain pursuits. As an old person, she was to care less about her looks and focus on her virtue. This example shows the typical rhetoric for policing behaviors of old people in the era. The censure for the old woman’s revealing dress (seemingly) originates from the concern for her health but it arrives at disapproving her behaviors, making the normative behavior of an old person a matter of not only health but morality.

The strong prescriptive rhetoric of divergence aging thus proliferated beyond medical literature and to broader cultural texts. Yet such an interweaving of health and morality raised questions—questions that, ironically, came to challenge the idea of divergence aging as the norm. To put it roughly, the self-help nature of medical advice literature brought to the fore that it may *not* be so natural to grow old as the divergence aging model suggests.

The premise of medical advice texts of the era was essentially grounded on the collective belief that an individual could manage, to a great degree, his body and control the aging process. As Roy Porter aptly puts it, the issues of health in old age in the long eighteenth century were not so much about God's will but a manifestation of what was under management and an individual's temperance ("Lay Medical Knowledge" 147-150). While contemporaries show some comprehension that some aspects of aging cannot be helped, they easily defaulted into holding an individual accountable for their unhealthiness in old age. Quite often, an old person's ailment or signs of aging were seen as evidence of ill-management on the individual's part. In numerous medical advice texts, following Cheyne's famous essays on health and longevity, a luxurious lifestyle (mostly untampered eating habits), immoderate drinking (although some quantity of "wine is milk for old people" (Hufeland 274)), or debauchery during a person's younger days was found to be at fault. According to the rhetoric of these texts, what brought about that ill old age was primarily the individual's actions.

Such an emphasis on the role of individuals and self-care is crucial because it means that without good care, it is possible and perhaps even natural that one grows decrepit both in the body and the mind. Neither the moderately healthy/sick aging body nor the wisdom in old age was a natural product of the aging process. Indeed, they were rewards of life-long effort, continuous management, and conscious choices. With the rising convergence aging model that

further challenged the ideal expectations of old age as well as the strong censure toward ill-behaving old people which put on the map the many forms of old people deviating from the divergence aging model all suggested the possibility that the reality of old age may be different from the ideal expectation that divergence aging puts forward. All in all, the conventional meaning of aging as gaining wisdom and the ideal image of old age as a period of peace and spiritual growth were becoming threatened.

The theme of sexuality in old age enters here when aging was possibly losing its traditional significance. It seems that the tension between the two aging models finds an easy common ground when pinning sexual old people as immoral and reproaching them for (choosing to be) deviating from the norm. Under the divergence aging model, the credo was that aging turns an animal into a rational being. Clearly “imbued with a Ciceronian sense of spiritual ‘progress from sensual to intellectual enjoyment’” (Yallop *Age and Identity* 116), an old person was believed to age out of his former attention to the bodily pleasures. With a supposedly growing mentality that values something non-material, sexual drives were expected to season out of an aging body. *Houwelick* too specifies asexuality as a virtue of old age. *Houwelick* claims that a different kind of love is awakened in old age: it is “loyalty”—a partnership that is not like the physical and fiery love of the young but that is nonsexual, spiritual, and calm (Tilburg 373). As such, sexuality in old age would be something that preempts this virtue of old age. In the convergence aging model too, technically speaking, the body should decline with the mind. The hardness of the bodily nerves as well as the dull aging mind would be hardly equipped for sexual pleasures. Along with various bodily functions such as physical movement and internal organic capabilities, sexual desire and potency were definitely believed to decline in old age. In this respect, old people with sexuality do not fit in with either of the models.

But sexuality is tricky. It exists in the liminal space between the mind and the body and in both of them. Sexuality could be associated with either the body or the mind. It could be the body and its bodily condition that affect sexual urges and performance, as much as it could be the mind that governs them. Moreover, the complex nature of the “mind” makes situating old people’s sexuality complicated. The “mind” in the eighteenth century incorporated various aspects of the intellectual and the mental.¹²⁵ Mental activities that we now understand as cognitive as well as passion, spirituality, and morality were often referred to by the concept of the “mind.” As a consequence, the decline of the mind could imply the failing of cognitive abilities as much as falling morality. In fact, except in a few cases in the early- to mid-eighteenth century,¹²⁶ contemporary discussions on the ramification of the convergence aging model seem to focus on the declining morality of old people until philosophers and medical theorists of the mind such as Stewart Dugald began to delve into the question of cognitive decline in old age in the late eighteenth century. To be morally depraved is, then, a natural consequence of convergence aging. In this case, old people become bound to moral depravity. With their declining body and depraved mind, they may as well be sexually corrupt. What then, was normative for old people’s sexuality? Whether it was medically possible that old people become corrupt and sexual or not, the presence or an expression of sexuality in old age was highly rebuked. Sarah Toulalan observes that the attitude toward “old bodies, their sexual abilities, desirability and behaviours were thus remarkably consistent throughout [the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century] and were thoroughly informed by the understanding that they were

¹²⁵ For the complex layers of the “mind” in the long eighteenth century especially concerning the self and personal identity philosophy, see John Barresi and Raymond Martin.

¹²⁶ There were a few theorists like John Locke, David Hartley, Thomas Reid, and Dugald Stewart who examined cognitive mental decline as a primary aspect of aging. But in the larger cultural landscape and even in these thinkers’ writings too, the question of morality was often the key element of the decline of the mind.

inevitably infertile bodies” (358). Yet, as will be discussed in detail in the next section, the framework for understanding sexuality in old age was distinctly incoherent. In particular, discussions surrounding exactly when the absence of sexuality happens and what form it takes were unclear.

Incoherent Conceptions of Sexuality in Old Age

The sexuality of old age was a troublesome matter for medical writers and the general public of the eighteenth century. Despite the general perception that old people should not be sexual and that sexual old people are variants detracting from the norm, it was hardly spelled out under what medical principles old age brings about asexuality. Even the very idea of asexuality was confusing because there was hardly a consensus on exactly what that asexuality means in an old body. Are they simply unable to procreate? Do they remain sexually active? And can they be sexually appealing? There were many incoherent and ambiguous ideas about the sexuality of old age, some in accordance with each other, others not. In this section, I present the incoherent ideas from medical and scientific discourses of the era surrounding the so-called “collapse” of the sexes in old age—i.e., how sexual differences and sexuality break down in aging old bodies.

Throughout the early modern period, it was generally believed that various sexual differences between men and women age out of a body when one grows old enough.¹²⁷ Speaking of the eighteenth century specifically, Yallop notes that aging old bodies were described as just human rather than as gendered bodies in medical and science texts. According to Yallop, the medical professionals were “not actually concerned with issues of sex or gender at all [for patients in their old age]” because there was simply no need for such distinctions

¹²⁷ See Toulalan.

("Representing" 205).¹²⁸ It is as if after a certain point in the aging process, "sex ceased to be important" ("Representing" 205). When such sexed differences were remarked, Yallop continues, they highlighted how representations of old age tend to "collapse rather than affirm differences of sex" ("Representing" 205). Even Hermann Boerhaave's *Institutions in Physick* (1715) and Albrech von Haller's *First Lines of Physiology* (1751), the two most strictly "scientific" texts of the era, show no interest in presenting old bodies as gendered or sexually distinct.

While not explicitly discussing sexuality, the way the traditional humoral theory conceptualized old age supports the idea of the "collapse" of the sexes in old age. It was usually believed that men are hot and dry and women are cold and moist, and the process of aging alters the constitution of a person's body. Although there were numerous discussions and derivative versions as to how several stages of life impact a person's constitution, notably, in general, infancy and old age were two stages of life where the humors of men and women *combine* to make a specific humoral characteristic. John Crawford succinctly writes in his *Cursus Medicinae Or a Complete Theory of Physic* (1724) that

Age alters constitutions, according to several stages and periods there of; thus infants and children are hot and moist, youth more temperate, men and full grown persons hot and dry; whereas in old age the Heat decreases, and nourishment is dry'd up for want of its usual Supplies. (11)

Here, infants and children are characterized as possessing a bodily constitution that combines womanly (moist) and manly (hot) humors, but it is not as unusual because, in general, they are

¹²⁸ Yallop argues that the medical advice literature of the era took both aging women and men as their target audience. Although the contents of such discourse might have assumed the aging body was a male body unless explicitly noted otherwise, it is Yallop's contention that aging bodies were taken as without gender and so were treated as such. "Representing," 194-195.

considered as yet to have as concrete sexual distinctions as the body of an adult.¹²⁹ But in old age, that a man becomes cold and dry is notable because he now possesses the womanly (cold) and the manly (dry). It is as if the old body circles back to its original constitution before puberty, or, rather, becomes an inverted version of infancy now all over and done with its sexual phase.¹³⁰

As for old women, their stopped menses made their bodies more masculine.¹³¹ Lynn Botelho writes in the context of the early modern period that an aging woman's body "became hotter and drier, and generally much harder [than her younger self]," all in all, becoming capable of assuming distinct male characteristics (Botelho "Images of Old Age" 236). In a similar vein, other historians also observe that in early modern views older women were imagined to be "approximat[ing] the condition of men" (Pelling 83). Sometimes a woman was thought to be even healthier in old age because her body now possessed some masculine essence (Thane *Old Age in English History* 54). In short, whether it was the collapsing of sexual differences that obviated the need for a gendered treatment or a unique combination of humors that made a

¹²⁹ Childhood sexuality was largely denounced in the eighteenth century. Sterling Fisherman writes that during the eighteenth century, "medical moralists began to condemn childhood sexual activity as either sinful and/or physically harmful, or as a pathological problem" (270). As far as infancy is concerned, the above-mentioned *Encyclopedia* claims that, for male infants, the sexual organ is yet to manifest itself or its power. It writes that "there is sometimes only one testicle in the scrotum, and sometimes none at all; they are retained in the abdomen or trapped in muscle fiber; but with time, they overcome the obstacles before them and fall into place."

¹³⁰ The lack of independence that is often referred to as "helplessness" in eighteenth-century texts were also one of the reasons for the coupling of childhood and old age. See Chapter 4. Also, see Yallop, *Identity*. 115-116; Müller "Envisioning Age"; and Mangum 59-61.

¹³¹ It must be noted that the term "old maid" sometimes overlapped with old women and sometimes did not. As scholars such as Devoney Looser and more recently Susan Matthews observe, "old maid" referred to not just old women. It most often designated a very specific type of old women regarding her marital and social status. An "old maid" could have been a woman in her thirties or forties who is unwed, but this term could be applied more largely and loosely. William Hayley's *Essay on Old Maids* (1785) takes it as its task to "define" what and who an old maid is. For further discussion of old maids in the era, see Matthews.

peculiar bodily characteristic, old bodies were, in general, considered to have no significant gendered sexuality or to have a kind of sexuality that was not normative.¹³²

¹³² In this respect, old age presents a complication to what Thomas Laqueur calls two-sex model of the era. In *The Making of the Modern Body* (1987), Laqueur argues that unlike the previous era when the humoral scheme explained the female body as an inverted or imperfect version of the male body, late eighteenth-century contemporaries began to see the female body and male body as essentially different. For the first time, there was an investigation of the “female skeleton” treating female bodies as essentially different from male bodies with their own schemes and natures. According to Laqueur, this new sexed model replaced the previous “metaphysics of hierarchy” which understood the female body as an inferior or lacking version of the male body and framed the female body as having a “physiology of incommensurability” (Laqueur *Making Sex* 6). The idea that aging erases sexual differences provides an interesting complication to this framework. The so-called essential difference between the male and the female collapses in old age leaving old bodies as something other than sexed bodies. Many scholars have challenged the two-sex model in terms of its claims for simplistic transition as well as progressive lineal narrative. For such criticism in relation to early modern era, see Wendy D. Churchill, *Female Patients in Early Modern Britain: Gender, Diagnosis, and Treatment*. Ashgate, 2012.

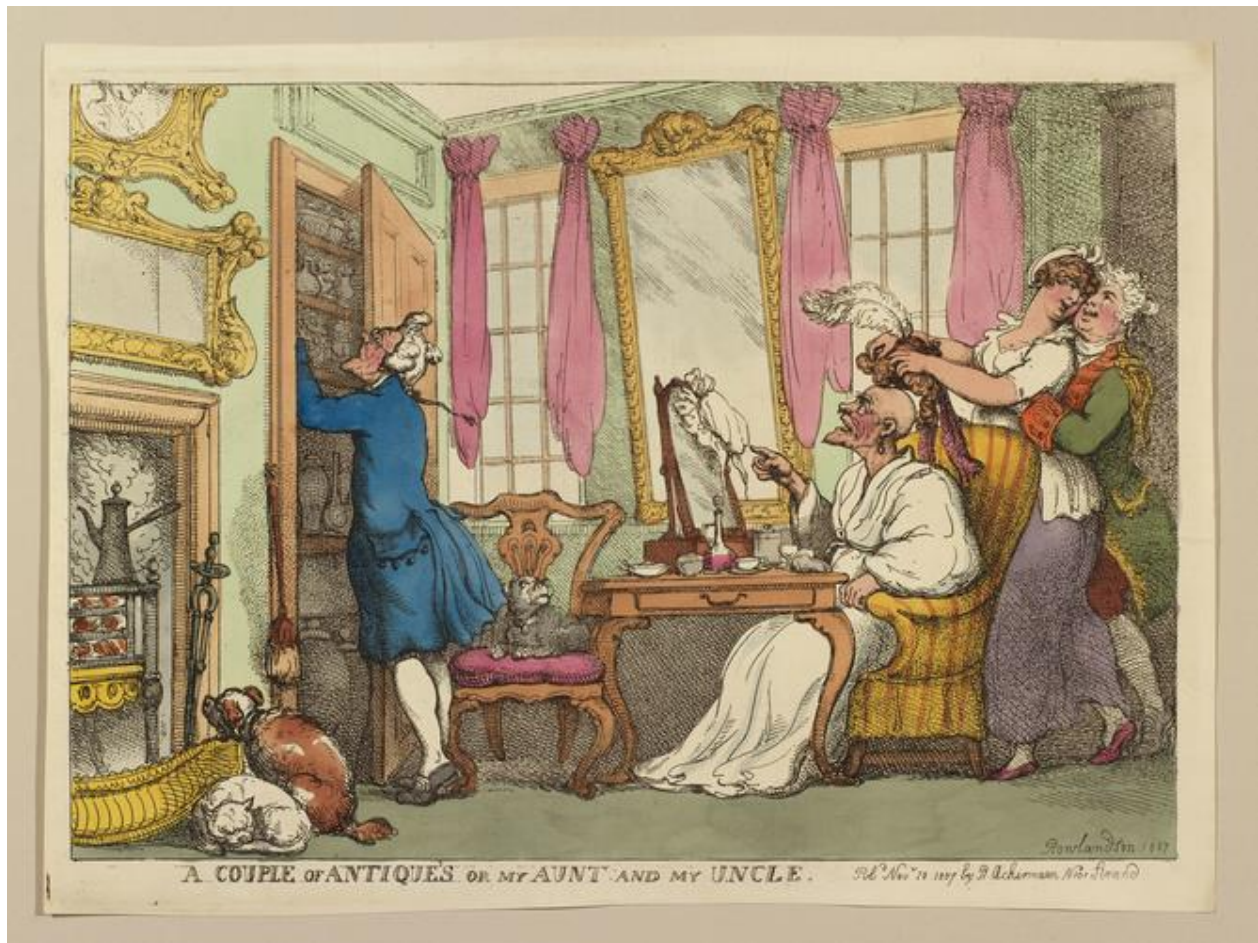


Figure. 12. Thomas Rowlandson. “A couple of Antiques or my Aunt and my Uncle” (R. Ackermann, 1807).

The above illustration by Rowlandson demonstrates contemporaries’ attitude toward old people’s sexuality (see fig. 12). The older couple is a clear demonstration of the popular belief that aging bodies lose their sexual distinctions along with their sexual charms. The old woman is trying to look desirable but her masculine body counteracts her endeavours. Embellishing herself with loads of beauty products and a conspicuous feather, she has to manufacture artificial femininity. She is depicted as having no natural femininity about her: she is bald, is wrinkled, has nostril hairs protruding out, and even has a black mustache that is highlighted by the white

wall. The three mirrors in the room, all reflecting nothing, suggest that the old woman is maybe seeing herself in a different way. Her male counterpart is thin with a frail tail-looking hair jutting out of his body, and he looks as if he is not finding whatever it is that he wants. Perhaps he is not hearing the woman right or perhaps he has difficulty seeing what is in front of him. The physical size of the old couple also suggests the gender dynamic between this old couple is “off.” The old woman is bigger than the old man obviously ordering him around. The juxtaposition between the boiling water and the vigorless dogs—one of which is interested in the feather of the old woman’s head moving as the young couple’s frivolity continues—suggests the two very different things happening in the scene. The old couple are so preoccupied with activities of their own that they are blinded to the sexual encounter that is happening right under their noses. These old people are described as not really capable of sexuality due to their physical dysfunctionality (e.g., hearing, seeing, sexual potency, etc.), and even if they were, they were not what the larger public found as titillating.¹³³

While this larger framework for perceiving old bodies as beyond acceptable sexuality prevailed throughout the century, how this framework applied to specific elements that together make up the concept of sexuality was much more complicated. There were different interpretations of what aging old bodies were capable of in terms of fertility or sexual abilities. As a prime example, the issue of old people’s fertility was a tricky matter. Many medical texts create the impression that old age has no sexuality—or that sexuality has no business in old age—by simply not including any mention of sexuality in their discussion of old age. Bearing a child and impregnating a woman are designated for an earlier stage like manhood. When

¹³³ Signs of aging were to be hidden, avoided, or reverted if one were to be taken as attractive or even “polite.” Cohen writes that politeness was a distinctive eighteenth-century concept that not only referred to a social performance but an attribute of identity and a social virtue. 314.

reproductive ability in old age is examined, however, the matter is proved indeterminate in fact contradicting the conventional belief that old bodies are not sexual in terms of their sexual potency. Denis Diderot's *Encyclopedia: or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts, by a Company of Persons of Letters* (1765) explains that

The object of marriage is to produce children; but this is not always possible: sterility is more common in women than in men. See *Impotence* and *Sterility*. However, it sometimes happens that conception occurs before the signs of puberty are apparent; some women become mothers before having had the discharge natural to their sex. . . . the cessation of menses which ordinarily happens at the age of forty or fifty, does not keep women from conceiving; there are those who have conceived at sixty, at seventy, and even later. Ordinarily, women are not able to conceive until after their first menses, and the cessation of this discharge in middle age renders them sterile.

The age at which *man* can beget children is not so limited; it begins between the ages of twelve and eighteen; it ceases between sixty and seventy; there are however examples of elderly men who have begotten children up to eighty and ninety years of age, and examples of boys who have reproduced at nine, ten, and eleven years, and girls who have conceived at seven, eight, and nine. ("Man")

In this text, not only are there sexual differences but sexual virility in old bodies. First, as defined by this encyclopedia, aging female bodies are a different variety of species with their own distinct life cycles and bodily processes. The unique reproductive characteristics of female bodies extend to their old age and generate a different timeframe for fertility. In addition, there is a clear indeterminacy regarding old people's sterility. Although occasional, the large window for

sexual reproducibility that extends to the later cycle of life, at the very least, calls the expectation of asexual old age into question. For women, to be sexually reproductive after the end of menses or during old age is described as atypical but surely not as odd. While “ordinarily” women can become pregnant during the years of their menses, this principle is not absolute. The examples of women conceiving “at sixty, at seventy, and even later” are described as a fact and without the rhetoric for the “extraordinary” that was often used in the eighteenth century.¹³⁴

Aging male bodies make the idea of asexual old age even more problematic. Their sexuality and sexual potency are extensive. The standard itself is that “The age at which *man* can beget children is not so limited.” The usual age limit of male potency is somewhere between sixty and seventy. The atypical cases of aging men’s sexual fertility extend one and two decades further into old age than the case of women, up to eighty and ninety years of age, suggesting that it is feasible and even ordinary for a man in his seventies (which would be considered “old” even according to the rather flexible age categorization of the era) to be sexual. In another entry “Impotence,” it is even defined that “Old age is never reputed to be a cause of impotence, nor an impediment to marriage” (Diderot *Encyclopédie*).¹³⁵ Considering that “marriage” strongly connoted the responsibility and need for procreating, it is clear that in some contexts, old men were conceived of as sexual.

¹³⁴ For the rhetoric of “extraordinary” that bespeaks the other side of the so-called Enlightenment’s dedication to the rational and explainable, see Fleming’s *The Dark Side of the Enlightenment: Wizards, Alchemist, and The Spirit Seekers in the Age of Reason* (2013).

¹³⁵ It seems that the word “Impotence” was usually attributed to male bodies whereas “Sterile” was associated with female body in the eighteenth century, at least in French context. See *Encyclopédie*, “STÉRILITÉ” and “IMPOISSANCE.” This translation is mine.

The Problems of Powerful Sexuality in Old Age

The issue of fertility and the presence of sexuality in old age was a complex matter filled with incoherence, contradictions, and serious ramifications. The presence of sexuality in old age was a serious issue that extended beyond an individual's health or marriage as it upset the generational, gender, and sexual dynamic often involving some sort of power struggle.

First, speaking more generally, the impotent yet lustful body challenges the equation between sexual expression and reproduction. Namely, it unsettles the idea that sexual performance should only be associated with child-bearing. In these sexual old bodies whose supposed impotence renders their sexual activities as irrelevant to the purpose of reproduction, the link between marriage and the sexual act becomes challenged. The lack of fertility does not limit either an aging body's sexual expression or its abilities. In *Sexuality, Disability, and Aging* (2019), Jane Gallop notes that the subversive power of sexuality in old age lies in the way it debunks the connection between sexuality and what she calls the promise of futurity. What Gallop highlights is the paradox that already exists in the idea of sexuality in old age. Old people and their sexuality cannot contribute to the promise of future (as Gallop acutely notes, just like the way queers are conceived).¹³⁶ They are imagined "as being outside mainstream temporalities and standing in the way of, rather than contributing to, the promise of the future" (10). Gallop writes that old people's sexuality that deviates from "paradigmatic markers" of marriage and reproduction "challeng[es] the sexual life course that privileges reproduction and devalues nonreproductive lives and moments" (8). In a similar way, the alleged meaningless and silly

¹³⁶ Gallop locates the power of old people's sexuality in the way it contests a heterosexual reproductive life progress model similar to a queer temporality perspective. Gallop writes that "It is in particular the place of marriage and reproduction on this list of "paradigmatic markers" that queer temporality contests, challenging the sexual life course that privileges reproduction and devalues nonreproductive lives and moments. The addition of a temporal dimension to the queer critique of reproductivity could mean not just the reclaiming of queer lives outside of marriage-and-children but also the reclaiming of nonreproductive moments like postmenopausal sexuality" (8).

sexuality of old people in the eighteenth century highlights the possibility of not simply sexual looseness but the possibility of detracting from the norms of heterosexual life progress. The very existence of sexual desires and sexual expressions in old age was threatening.

For eighteenth-century contemporaries specifically, the proliferation of prolongevity culture which propagated the idea that stalling old age and restoring youth were possible rendered the association between old age and asexuality even more unstable. In alignment with the hopes of resisting decline, it seems, old people in this era did not relinquish their power or quit the scene and “go out” easy.¹³⁷ Speaking for those who already had power and authority to lose to begin with (that is, mostly, white upper middle-class men), old people in the early eighteenth century were imagined to be *too* powerful.¹³⁸ Susannah R. Ottaway in *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* argues that it was not until the late eighteenth century that old people came to be defined as a rather passive demographic. With growing industrialization and a new social order based on new labor types in the early nineteenth century, Ottaway demonstrates, old people came to be a “clearly definable subset of the population” (*Decline of Life* 13) conceived to be dependent on other age groups.¹³⁹ But most of the eighteenth century, and especially until the late eighteenth century, old people were not yet seen to be a group that was a social burden, moving away from the traditional image of frail but wise. They were often seen as powerful and resourceful.

¹³⁷ A familiar phrase that was used in the eighteenth century when referring to an aging person. It was a classical Aristotelian idea that aging is due to decreasing body heat that continued to influence the contemporary imagination of old age. While this idea was largely replaced by humoral and nervous-systemic framework of understanding the human body, the phrase “go out” (i.e., to be extinguished) was still in use. Many medical texts and cultural texts referred to the aging body as a candle that is being extinguished or a fire that is beginning to be put out. See Niebyl.

¹³⁸ For studies on how class and different social status resulted in different experiences of aging in the early modern period, see Botelho’s *Old Age and The English Poor Law, 1500-1700*.

¹³⁹ Ottaway also notes that the shifting mode of production, political upheavals, the changing roles of parish in poor relief system, as well as the changing demographics of society all contributed to the new attitude toward the old people as a whole. *Decline of Life*. 11-13.

The evidence of powerful old age and the questions it raised about the stereotypical image of a nonsexual or asexual old person, however, hardly meant that contemporaries began to embrace the sexuality of old people. If anything, as discussed in the above section, the censure against certain sexual behaviors of old people became even more harsh. The divergence aging model persisted as something achievable and natural. A healthy and even sexually potent old age disrupted the normative life progress presenting a considerable threat to the social dynamic.

Many contemporary periodicals, essays, and literary texts demonstrate a strong sense of hostility to the image of vigorous old age, particularly focusing on the middle and upper middle classes and aristocrats. Samuel Johnson, for instance, published dozens of essays concerning what he saw as the undue influence and authority of old people. The point of censure for Johnson was that old people in his days so often transgressed the limit of what is appropriate for their age. According to Johnson, old people were to move off the stage, retire, and give their place to young people. Instead, as Johnson observes, greedy old men and self-absorbed women continue to control the young with the means of their power, primarily through wealth. On No. 50, Saturday of September 8 in 1750, Johnson exhorts that

it is absolutely that they [old people] give themselves up to the duties of declining years; and contently resign to youth its levity, its pleasures, its frolicks, and its fopperies. It is a hopeless endeavour to unite the contrarieties of spring and winter; it is unjust to claim the privileges of age, and retain the playthings of childhood. The young always form magnificent ideas of the wisdom and gravity of men, whom they consider as placed at a distance from them in the ranks of existence, and naturally look on those whom they find trifling with long beards, with contempt and indignation, like that which women feel at the effeminacy of men. (*The Rambler* 140; vol. 2)

The conflict Johnson focuses on is not between the young and the matured, but specifically between youth and old age. While he is not making a particular distinction between middle age and old age, his description of “the old” as “dotards” with “crippled limbs,” “faultering voices,” and “ghastliness of disease” (*The Rambler* 131-132; vol. 2) reveals that he is indeed targeting those old people who have gone beyond the meridian of their years. And in these declining years, Johnson claims, do not go well with frivolous fun like going to theater, galivanting around town, or indulging in flirtation with the opposite sex. The wisdom and gravity seem to only spring from staying away from the matters that the young generation wants to take charge of. Most strikingly, Johnson compares unduly powerful old people to an effeminate man. The ill-match between what one is supposed to be (i.e., a manly man or a “wise” nonthreatening old person) and what one is (i.e., an unmanly man or a greedy powerful old person) fulfills the comparison. Bringing the notion of masculinity into the mix, Johnson strives to warn old people what the consequence of not conforming to the conventional identity of a retired old person is, that is, becoming a less of a man, a woman-like man. Although Johnson may argue that old people “will be hooted away” by their “successful rivals” (i.e., the young people), the strong hostility and prescription signals that some old people were indeed a threat to the young (Johnson *The Rambler* 132; vol. 2).

Johnson is not alone in particularizing the resistance old people have to letting go of their “younger” lifestyles, power, or wealth. In presenting “a table of probable life duration,” the above-mentioned *Encyclopedia* detracts from the matter-of-fact tone of the genre and ventures to ask those who have aged beyond the year of fifty, “Oh you, who have worked until the age of fifty, who enjoy ease, who still have health and strength, what are you waiting for to rest! Until when will you say, *tomorrow, tomorrow?*” (“Man”), urging men to take on a lifestyle of an old

man. In literature of the long eighteenth-century literature, old people are often portrayed as the ones who try to “trespass on the superior rights of the young ones” (Mignon 4). Many eighteenth-century literary scenes are certainly fixed on the idea of the old (upper middle class or aristocrats) who are greedy and inappropriate, frustrating, although unsuccessfully, the young who now legitimately deserve the power (wealth, women, and love). In such scenes, old people who are “age-inappropriate” are portrayed as inane for their secular aspirations, and their existence is a pesky roadblock to the successful resolution of the final romance. These old people, these texts connote, have no business in budding romances.

Importantly, the antagonism toward old people is almost exclusively expressed through the trope of the silly sexuality of old age. The excessive attention to the sexuality of old people and their exaggerated sexuality in fiction of the period is, I propose, a reaction to the era’s anxiety about incoherent ideas for the sexuality within the changing meanings of aging. The uncertainties surrounding the sexuality of old age and the potential threat that old people’s sexuality posed were all reduced through easy mockery of sexualized old people. Writers of the era did not hesitate to say that old people are not sexually attractive and their sexual expression pleases no one but themselves. In fact, the complexities and uncertainties of what sexuality means in an old body is replaced by the unanimous aversion to old people’s sexuality. Sexual old people in these typically satiric literary portrayals are an unsightly, unnatural, and immoral deviation from normal life progress. Few old sexualized characters are portrayed in a favorable manner.

Fanny Hill also follows this tradition of treating sexuality in old people as silly and ridiculous. The ugly lecherous old man and horny old woman often parade around in sexually charged ways but to no point. At the same time, however, the text also experiments with

uncertainties surrounding sexuality in old age playing with stereotypes, exaggerating negative images of old sexuality, and even presenting a positive new type of sexuality in old age. And through its exploration into sexually variant forms in old age, *Fanny Hill* finds something intriguing. It is the *pleasure* that those sexuality active old bodies create. In the next section, I close-read three sexual old people—the old abbess, Mr. Crofts, and the “rational pleasurer”—and show how *Fanny Hill* revels in the positive potential of the sexuality of old age.

The Plurality of Sexuality in Old Age in *Fanny Hill*

Written in his forties,¹⁴⁰ John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill; or the Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is the first known English prose pornographic text and one of the most censored books in English history.¹⁴¹ Framed as a first-person retrospective cautionary tale for young women, it tells a familiar journey of a once innocent maiden, Fanny, a simple country girl who unknowingly gets involved in prostitution in London. It describes her quick fascination with the raptures of sexuality. As a pornographic narrative, *Fanny Hill*’s explicit advocacy for sexual pleasure has been valorized in many previous readings. In eighteenth-century studies, the text’s emphasis on the body and how it engages with the dominant ideology of the Age of Reason makes it a crucial piece of literature of the era; in literary genre studies, it is read as a secret erotic twin of Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*; in sexuality studies and queer theory, it holds its

¹⁴⁰ Cleland’s exact date of birth is yet unknown. Records suggest that Cleland was baptized in 1709 which suggests that he was about (or at least) forty-years old when he wrote Cleland in 1748. The *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1789 published an obituary of Cleland and designated him as eighty-years old. 180.

¹⁴¹ Nicholas D. Nace writes that “The history of formal literary censorship in the United States begins and ends with Cleland’s 1749 *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*” (1) accounting for the fact that *Fanny Hill* was the first book that was put on trial for its obscenity in 1821 and later was ruled to be freely publishable in 1966. For further information on the history of censorship on *Fanny Hill*, see Gladfelder’s “Obscenity, Censorship, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel: The Case of John Cleland.”

place as a critical historical text.¹⁴² But despite all the unreserved celebrations *Fanny Hill* invites for its open treatment of sexuality, there is a group that seems hardly acclaimed in the narrative: old people's sexual bodies. The extraordinary appreciation of bodily pleasures and sexual deviancy that are crucial in *Fanny Hill* do not easily apply to old aging bodies. Much of their sexual desire and sexual acts are portrayed as farcical and repulsive.

Fanny Hill is filled with sexualized aging figures. Out of fifteen or so sex scenes that Fanny herself is involved in,¹⁴³ three are with old characters. If we include old characters who emanate sexual energies toward Fanny and whose sexual performance Fanny witnesses without being directly involved herself, there are five characters in total who are described as either old or are at sixty-years of age.¹⁴⁴ Fanny's sexual encounters with old people are also distributed throughout two sections of the narrative playing both significant and trivial roles. Sometimes these stories are episodic. It takes Fanny only a few sentences to remark on them. Other times, the stories provide crucial narrative momentum.

The many episodes that feature the sexuality of old people may not be surprising considering that the genre of this narrative is an erotic novel. In fact, it could be that *Fanny Hill* is a fitting space to discuss the sexuality of old age. It offers a world full of violation of moral boundaries and takes as its topic various sexual subjects including, but not limited to, homosexuality, lesbianism, gay sex, group sex, voyeurism, fetishes, sadism, and masochism. So why not old people and their sexuality? In the context of eighteenth-century erotica specifically,

¹⁴² For previous readings of *Fanny Hill*, see Peter Sabor's "From Sexual Liberation to Gender Trouble: Reading 'Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure' from the 1960s to the 1990s." pp. 561-578. *Eighteenth-Century Life* published a special issue on *Fanny Hill* and John Cleland in 2019 that summarizes and presents new readings. See Nicholas D. Nace's "*Fanny Hill* Now: A Half Century of Liberty" in the issue.

¹⁴³ In total, there are thirty-nine erotic episodes in *Fanny Hill*. This includes the ones that Fanny watches and is told of by other characters.

¹⁴⁴ These include Mrs. Brown who is described as "the old woman" (Cleland 60), Mr. Crofts who attempts to rape Fanny, the "mother abbess," the "elderly gentleman" who only wants to bite off Fanny's gloves and brush her hair, and finally, the "rational pleurist," an elderly gentleman whom Fanny has a long stable relationship with.

sexual aging bodies were a frequent presence. From erotic poems, to “catalogues of whores” in London,¹⁴⁵ to multiple derivatives of “whore biography” like Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, lecherous old men and women often make an appearance in the literary scenes of the era.¹⁴⁶ In this respect, the use of old sexual characters in *Fanny Hill* is a continuation¹⁴⁷ of that literary convention. Both John Atkins in *Sex in Literature: High Noon* (1982) and Peter Wagner in his classic text on eighteenth-century erotica, *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (1988) argue that *Fanny Hill* is typical and even “orthodox” (Atkins 143) for its familiar plot lines and tropes. Although these scholars pay less attention to the role of old age as they comment on how the text captures eighteenth-century bourgeois ideology, the satiric attitude toward sexual old age and the typical roles old people play are one of the aspects that make *Fanny Hill* conventional.¹⁴⁸

Even so, that *Fanny Hill* dedicates much of the narrative to old people’s sexual expression is interesting. And it is not simply about the number of sexual old characters. It is about the way the narrative presents sexuality in old age and the level of intensity it allows old bodies to produce. There is something so wickedly powerful in sexual old bodies’ deviancy—

¹⁴⁵ These so-called catalogues gave out descriptions, specific traits, and sensational stories around “real” prostitutes in London. For instance, *Genuine List of Sporting Ladies* writes as follows: “Peg Simpson, an old stage-player, her dam had the honour of parading through the streets of this town . . . Her movements are according to price; kindly palm her hand with gold, an if you have the vigour of a stallion, the lechery of a goat, the continuance of a boar, or the repetition of a sparrow, she will always meet you with the same energetic exstasy; standing or falling . . . Ten shilling.” This entry shows that sexual old men—referred to as “a goat”—indeed makes an appearance in these texts. Wagner. 143.

¹⁴⁶ The English tradition of erotica was heavily influenced by French literary experiments. In terms of long eighteenth-century French erotica’s use of old people, Marquis de Sade’s *120 Days* (1904) tells a story of an old lecher” and a young “masculine fouetteuse,” a male crossdresser, on day 18.

¹⁴⁷ Wagner claims that a pornographic novel like *Fanny Hill* is not just a continuation but “the final stage of fully developed version of erotic genre in eighteenth century” (Wagner 228-229).

¹⁴⁸ According to Wagner, *Fanny Hill* is a typical text in its “fusion of natural sexuality acceptable to a middle-class audience and an aesthetic framework incorporating the current of sentimentalism” (243). For instance, the beginning and the progress of the plot is, Wagner argues, almost identical to Hogarth’s *Harlot’s Progress*. The aging women working as pimps, the old lechers who are gullible enough to be paying hundred pounds for a sham virginity, the lesbian episode, a scene of slander on Catholics with fornicating religious figures are all good examples. See Wagner. 140-142.

both in positive and negative senses—that it comes to be more than an object of satire. Some sexual old bodies in *Fanny Hill* do serve the formulaic roles; yet, even when the narrative presents them with satiric intentions, it captures old people’s sexuality *in action* with vivid detail and great vivacity that, I argue, altogether illustrates the power of the variant sexuality of old people in a new light.

In the next section, I demonstrate how *Fanny Hill* approaches the issue of sexuality of old age in a nuanced manner, both censuring and celebrating its deviancy. I look at the plurality of sexuality in old age expressed in *Fanny Hill* by reading three sexually variant aging figures in the narrative, each demonstrating a different sort of sexuality of old age: the ravenous sexual old woman, the awful ugly old man, and an alternative new image of ideal sexual old age. These three sexual old characters illustrate the pleasures that rise from old people’s sexuality. Ultimately, I argue that the hyper-visible presence of the sexuality of old age in *Fanny Hill* demands that the sexuality of old age to be acknowledged in this erotic space, inviting the reader to rethink their conventionally supposed unpleasantness and comical aspect.

Beautiful Young Sexual Body and “that fat clumsy figure”

Fanny Hill is unusually detailed and forthright about the age of its characters. Unlike many other eighteenth-century novels that give out the year of birth of the character and the years passed (i.e., the reader has to calculate if she wants to know the exact age), when a character is introduced in *Fanny Hill*, a quite specific age accompanies the description, usually within the first few sentences. If the character’s age is unknown or rather questionable, Fanny, our narrator, remarks it and offers to give a correct age: Mr. Barville, a patron of Fanny, appears as “no more than twenty at most, though he was three years older than what my conjectures gave

him” (174-175); Phoebe is “about five and twenty, by her most suspicious account, in which, according to all appearances, she must have sunk at least ten good years” (13). Even for a minor character like Polly Phillips who lives in the same house as Fanny, the narrative notes her age to say that “This girl could not be above eighteen” (36).

Giving specific information regarding age is important in the narrative because, in most cases, it signifies the kind of sexuality right away. In general, old age connotes some sort of sexual deviation and youth indicates innocence and beauty. Granted, this binary between the sexual deviancy in old age and the beautiful sexual expression of youth comes to falter as Fanny begins to question the meaning of innocence and corruption throughout the narrative. Yet in general, sexuality is portrayed as “right” in a young body and deviant in an old body. The sexuality of old people is mostly comic because it shows how the young wins over the old by their natural beauty, and the sight of an intercourse of an old person (or even an attempt at that) is ridiculous compared to the beautiful synchrony of young bodies. On the whole, the sexual old body is an object of satire. However, through all the mockery, there is something powerful—although not always commendable—in old people’s supposed farcical sexuality.

In some cases, sexuality in old age is presented as so perverted that it is evil. As Fanny settles in her first brothel house of Mrs. Brown’s, she is introduced to Mr. Crofts, a man sixty years old or older, eager to take action.

Imagine to yourself a man rather past threescore, short and ill made, with a yellow cadaverous hue, great goggling eyes that stared as if he was strangled; an out-mouth from two more properly tushes than teeth, livid lips, and a breath like a jakes. *Then* he had a peculiar ghastliness in his grin that made him perfectly frightful, if not dangerous to

women with child; yet, made as he was thus in mock of man, he was so blind to his own staring deformities . . . (20)

The language used to visualize this character is strikingly ominous. His tone is corpse-like, his deformities are ghoulish, and his kisses are “pestilential” (23). Obviously, there is something sick about this man. The particular vocabulary Fanny uses signals something internal that is off. It suggests that the repulsiveness stems from his internal grisliness—some kind of disease—that is immanent in this aged body. He is yellow, livid, dark, smelling defecated, wreaking something morbid out of his body. The rhetorical insistence that focuses on the putrid peculiarity of this gentleman renders his sexuality pathological. But as will be the case with the old abbess, this old man is not decrepit or declining in ways that diminish his sexual abilities. If anything, he is formidable, a dangerous monster with aggressive sexual presence.

The sexual force of this old man is nothing worth a salute. Fanny has no idea that Mrs. Brown had sold Fanny’s virginity for fifty guineas (with the promise of a hundred more when the deed is complete).

. . . the monster squatted down by me on the settee, and without farther ceremony or preamble, flings his arms about my neck, and drawing me pretty forcibly towards him, obliged me to receive, in spite of my struggles to disengage from him, his pestilential kisses, which quite overcame me. Finding me then next to senseless, and unresisting, he tears off my neck handkerchief, and laid all open there, to his eyes and hands: . . . he was now under the dominion of desire he could not bridle, but snorting and foaming with lust and rage, he renews his attack, seizes me, . . . he was unbuttoned, both waistcoat and breeches, yet I only felt the weight of his body upon me, whilst I lay struggling with indignation, and dying with terrors; but he stopped all of a sudden, and got off, panting,

blowing, cursing, and repeating “old and ugly!” for so I had very naturally called him in the heat of my defence [sic]. (23-24)

Like a beast under its own animalistic thrust, sexual thirst overtakes Mr. Crofts. He seems to have no rational control over his bodily desire. There is no quiet appreciation of the beauty of the body that fills sexual encounters between young men and women. He snorts, foams, and attacks. The swift switch to the present tense when Fanny describes his attack delivers the feeling of emergency and desperation this young girl feels at this attempted rape. While acknowledging the inhumanity of this old man—and as Fanny writes, that Fanny blurted it out in “the heat of [her] defence”—it is interesting that Fanny summarizes all her contempt and horror into a concise cry, “old and ugly!” The hatred for the atrocity of this action is vented through a language that resents his age and unattractiveness. Fanny associates his immorality with his old age, noting how unnatural his sexual drive is. He is an animal, a monster, evil for his rape *and* for his age (and ugliness). It is as if as a man of his age, he should have been wise and without such sexual thirst. On the whole, by using this typical trope of the lecherous old man, *Fanny Hill* joins in the familiar censure of old people’s sexuality.

In the end, the sickening old body of Mr. Crofts seems to fall short of doing the harm it intended. That bestial sexuality ends up eliciting humor as this old man fails to consummate the sexual act.

The brute had, it seems, as I afterwards understood, brought on, by his eagerness and struggle, the ultimate period of his hot fit of lust, which his power was too short-lived to carry him through the full execution of; of which my thighs and linen received the effusion. (24)

The narrative detracts the (evil) sexual potency of this old man by making him ultimately ineffectual. This old man's sexuality is an example of the wrong kind that essentially elicits no positive pleasure for Fanny.

But whether he is impotent or incapable of sexual pleasure is a different matter. Although his premature climax can be perceived as a symbolic sign of impotency, there is no indication that he is unable to reproduce. After they conclude this unfortunate encounter and as Fanny sits all despondent, "the villain's lust began, I suppose, to be again in flow, at the sight of all that bloom of youth which presented itself to his view, a bloom yet unenjoyed" (25). The problem with this old sexual body is not that its sexuality is futile or pointless, but that it is targeting a wrong (i.e., unwilling) object and that it has too much sexuality.

A few days after this appalling incident, Fanny witnesses for the first time a sexual intercourse between man and woman. Interestingly, it is one between an old lady, "the venerable mother Abbess," and a young horse-grenadier for whom "every girl of the house fell" (33).

Droll was it to see that clumsy fat figure of her's [sic] flop down on the foot of the bed, opposite to the closet door so that I had a full front view of all her charms.

Her paramour sat down by her: he seemed to be a man of very few words, and a great stomach; for proceeding instantly to essentials, he gave her some hearty smacks, and thrusting his hands into her breasts, disengaged them from her stays, in scorn of whose confinement they broke loose, and sagged down, navel-low at least. A more enormous pair did my eyes never behold, nor of a worse colour, flagging, soft, and most lovingly contiguous: yet such as they were, this great beef-eater seemed to paw them with a most unenviable lust, seeking in vain to confine or cover one of them with a hand scarce less than a shoulder of mutton. . . . As he stood on one side, unbuttoning his

waistcoat and breeches, her fat brawny thighs hung down, and the whole greasy landscape lay fairly open to my view; a wide open mouthed gap, overshadowed with a grizzly bush, seemed held out like a beggar's wallet for its provision. (30)

This old lady, as portrayed, is a huge lump of meat, “beef” to be exact—one whose body even this Herculean young man is hardly a match for. The obscenity of this scene is not solely due to its explicit language nor is it simply because it describes a religious figure in salacious details.¹⁴⁹ In addition to the language and the content, the fact that the scene involves the sexual performance of an unattractive old woman makes it lewd. In a way, she is a female counterpart of Mr. Crofts, ugly and aroused. In a mixture of awe, condescension, mockery, and strange excitement, the narrative surveys the aging woman's body. Starting from a focused study of her breast to a full-frontal overview, the old woman's body receives an unfavorable examination. Her body is ravenous, her enormous flagging breasts are out of control, her thighs are “fat [and] brawny.” She weirdly possesses the soft, the forceful, the lax, and the masculine. Her genitalia, described with a Swiftian disgust, is squalid—“greasy” and grimy—and also peculiarly masculine—“brawny” and “grizzly.” Although the young man is not particularly described as supremely attractive in the sex scene itself, and is rather animalistic than beautiful, Fanny's mockery targets the mother abbess's body and her prodigious sexuality and not the young man's.

¹⁴⁹ John Atkins in *Sex in Literature: High Noon: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1982) calls tropes like mother abbess's “anti-cleric erotica.” Atkins writes that anti-cleric erotica increased in the 17th and 18th centuries as contemporaries questioned various kinds of religious doctrines. There are several noticeable themes—although not of which applies to mother abbess in *Fanny Hill*—that run through anti-cleric erotica such as demonic possession, “Mary Katherine Cadière” (a young girl deceived by a priest), “Maria Monk” (nuns being exploited by monks), and “The Confessional” (priests taking advantage of confessions). These erotic tropes express Protestant hostility against papist values (265-290). Peter Wagner in *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (1988) emphasizes the continuity and popularity of stereotypes that originate well before the eighteenth century. Wagner suggests that while the sexually deviant Catholic clerics are certainly central to eighteenth-century erotica, the “era did not, however, invent them, but merely made them more popular” (86). See Wagner. 47-86.

In fact, the narrative strives not to severely mock the sexuality of a young man for being involved with an old woman. As much as the man is described as a man with great stomach with a satiric hint, the reference to his appetites mainly works to highlight his vigorous sexual energy rather than to make his sexual body repulsive. In addition to calling him a fine strapping man who would be “the choice of the most experienced dame, in those affairs, in all London” (30), the narrative excuses the young man’s involvement with the old lady. Namely, the old abbess pays the young soldier and he does his part without giving her real love. His attitude toward the old woman is “unenviable” while passionate. There is no recorded verbal communication between the two. He receives her with “an air of indifference and coolness” (32), and the narrative is quick to remark that. Confirming over and over that the youth is not attracted to her in any romantic sense, the narrative defines the sex between the two as an animalistic encounter facilitated by a financial agreement. In the end, the young man is the one with whom every girl in the brothel wants to have sex, a “study stallion” of a “naked, stiff and erect . . . wonderful machine,” a desirable figure. Even in this episode, *Fanny Hill* is careful to not lose that association between sexual beauty and youth.

And old bodies are utilized to make that point. A few scenes later, Fanny again witnesses an intercourse between young Polly and an Italian gentleman who “by Phoebe’s guess, was about two and twenty” (37). It is full of praises for young sexual bodies. The whole scene is described in stark contrast to that of the old abbess:

[Polly had a] face regular and sweet featured, her shape exquisite; nor could I help envying her two ripe enchanting breasts, finely plumped out in flesh, but withal so round, so firm, that they sustained themselves, in scorn of any stay: then their nipples, pointing different ways, marked their pleasing separation; beneath them lay the delicious tract of

the belly, which terminated in a parting of rift scarce discerning, that modesty seemed to retire downward, and seek shelter between two plump fleshy thighs: the curling hair that overspread its delightful front, clothed it with the richest sable fur in the universe: in short, she was evidently a subject for the painters to court her, sitting to them for a pattern female beauty, in all the true pride and pomp of nakedness. (36)

The young couple's intercourse is filled with kisses and admiration. It is a display of an enviable love, Fanny might say, as opposed to the cold, distant, and beastly sex of the mother abbess.

Polly's young sexual body as depicted through her breasts, thighs, and genitals—the three elements that were also the exact focus of Fanny's observation in the old abbess—encapsulates the beauty of young sexuality. The essence of her beautiful sexuality is “modesty.” It is of the right size, of the right amount, and it stays in place. The stays were scorned in the old woman, because the sheer force of the sagging lumps of her breasts overwhelm them so easily. The old woman's breasts “broke loose” as if they are invading, making disorder. Here, in a young woman's body, the stays are scorned because they have no purpose. The plump, ripe, firm breasts of the youth need no restraint.¹⁵⁰ They are so delicate that they are at the cusp of lacking something. Polly's female part too expresses itself only so much that it is “scarce discerning” unlike the old woman's “wide open mouthed gap.” The old woman's sexual body overflows. It breaks loose, flops down, and mocks the attempt to control its parts as the sheer volume of it inundates the male grasp. The old lady's body and her sexuality are simply too much.

Rather than declining, then, this old abbess's body is thriving. Granted, her body may be “declining” in terms of her feminine charms. But as far as her sexuality is concerned, it is more

¹⁵⁰ In fact, the narrative is almost compulsive in describing the breasts of young women. In addition to Polly's, the breasts of Fanny, Louisa, Emily, and Harriet, and almost all the young prostitutes Fanny meets and becomes friends with, are worshipped with profuse details as the epitome of female beauty.

than capable. She is “with all the vigour of youth” (32). And this sexual prowess is a different sort than the heinous kind of Mr. Crofts that harms the other. This one is characterized by vivacity and pleasure. By the virtue of her experience and with a little help from an aphrodisiac, the old woman secures sexual pleasure for herself and possibly, for her partner too.

The young fellow had just dismounted, when the old lady immediately sprung up, with all the vigour of youth, derived, no doubt, from her late refreshment; and making him sit down, began in her turn to kiss him, to pat and pinch his cheeks, and play with his hair: all which he received with an air of indifference and coolness that showed him to be much altered from what he was when he first went on to the breach.

My pious governess, however, not being above calling in auxiliaries, unlocks a little case of cordials that stood near the bed, and made him pledge her in a very plentiful dram: after which, and a little amorous parley . . . she, with the greatest effrontery imaginable, unbuttons his breeches, and removing his shirt, draws out his affair, so shrunk and diminished, that I could not but remember the difference, now crest-fallen, or just faintly lifting its head: but our experience’d matron very soon, by chaffing it with her hands, brought it to swell to that size and erection I had before seen it up to. (32)

This “old lady” may not have what it takes to be in competition with the young sexual body when it comes to her feminine beauty, but she has resources and the skills to further her sexual desire. As Fanny assures the reader again, the young male counterpart is detached and lacks true passion for the mother abbess. Yet this “indifference” of the young man also makes the old woman the active agent of their sexual relationship. She is ready to use all aids to compensate for her old body that may be impeding a more “natural” sexual arousal. And importantly, she

succeeds. She is the one who gets to satiate herself with an attractive youth. She is not “above calling in auxiliaries” and she is not afraid to do so. She has a different kind of sexual potency, unsightly but curiously overwhelming. In the end, she absorbs the youthful energy as her “refreshment” and “immediately spr[ings] up” to a second task.¹⁵¹ The sexuality of this old woman is undoubtedly fierce. As such, this old lady is not completely displeasing when it comes to sexual matters. However financially driven and without real love it is, the intercourse she initiates elicits sexual desire in both parties.

This aspect—an old woman who is sexually satisfying for her partner—is unique to *Fanny Hill*. The old abbess possesses the combined characteristics of various existing stereotypical old women such as the widow and the witch. Old widows were a familiar figure. Although not as usual as lecherous as old men, an “oversexed” old woman or widow who, once married, cuckholds a husband through her uncontrollable sexuality also appears in the long eighteenth-century.¹⁵² In addition to their bodily condition already assuming male characteristics—due to the “collapse of the sexes”—their existence itself was threatening because of their masculine energy, status, and sexuality. Their social status violated the hierarchy of England’s patriarchal order. An old widow was outside of conventional female duty—i.e.,

¹⁵¹ The idea that old people become healthier by absorbing the energy of a younger person seems to be a rather familiar idea in the period. For instance, Johann Heinrich Cohausen’s *Hermippus Redivivus: Or, the Sage’s Triumph over Old Age and the Grave. Wherein a Method is laid down for Prolonging the Life and Vigour of Man* (1744) includes a section on the effect of young virgin’s breath. It argues that the air is “strongly tinctured with the Particles of that Body through which it has passed” (19-20). Surrounding himself with young people and thereby taking in great air that contains particles of the young bodies “may defend a Person against old Age, who, by Temperance and Moderation, defends himself against Diseases” (37).

¹⁵² Investigating archetypes and tropes of eighteenth-century erotica, Wagner also observes that sexual old women and widows sometimes appear as cuckolding an old husband. For instance, in *The Folly, Sin, and Danger of Marrying Widows, and Old Women in General*, an anonymous “True Penitent,” an old man who married an old woman, testifies that “My wife, tho’ sixty-five years old, still preserved a lusty, warm, and vigorous constitution, and had not the least aversion to the pleasures of youth. But as for me, my habit of body was weakly and cold, and the fretting and vexation which I daily endured . . . had worn me to a skeleton. Hence it naturally followed, that I did not give unto such conjugal exercises, as some married folks, who are better matched, possibly may; and, as it seems, my amiable consort wished I should” (26). This text was attacked by a “Lady” in another pamphlet titled *The Characters of the Widows, And Old Women in General Vindicated*. See Wagner. 155-156.

bearing and raising children—by virtue of her age, and she could be more “wanton” than she was before without a husband, worrying less about a reputation that would decide her future, and with a less chance of being pregnant (Botelho “Images of Old Age” 234-235). The figure of “witches” was a familiar one throughout the early modern period too. As an “antithesis of the desired female body, the maternal body,” witches were imagined to be decrepit, bearded and ugly, disorderly old women (Botelho “Images of Old Age” 236). In *Fanny Hill*, the old mother abbess possesses characteristics of both but is reborn as a rogue religious figure. This mother abbess has the unsightly witch-like body which is possibly postmenopausal and has the financial upper-hand of a widow. But importantly, unlike other old women figures, this old abbess both receives and gives sexual pleasure from and to the young man.

Moreover, it is a stimulating sight not just for the abbess and the young man but one that is enough to give our protagonist sexual pleasure. Fanny describes the effect that watching the intercourse had on her as follows: “the sound and sight of which thrilled to the very soul of me, and made every vein of my body circulate liquid fires: the emotion grew so violent that it almost intercepted my respiration” (31). Despite Fanny’s insistence on how “Droll” and unattractive the sexuality of this old woman is, it is indeed an arousing episode. Of course, Fanny seeks to credit the young man for her arousal. She writes in a definitive manner that she was inflamed for a single cause: “all pointed strongly to their pole: man” (33), redirecting attention to the “wonderful machine” (i.e., penis). But this does not cancel out the presence of the old woman. Her sexual old body reinforces rather than interrupts the sexual energy of the scene.



Figure. 13. An illustration of the old abbess in *Fanny Hill* published in London under the title *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure. From the Original Corrected Edition. With a Set of Elegant Engravings* (1766).

Some illustrations of *Fanny Hill* elucidate this point as well. Both the 1766 edition that publicizes “a set of elegant engravings”¹⁵³ and the edition that was published in French in 1776¹⁵⁴ include an image of the old abbess’s scene.¹⁵⁵ Considering that the 1776 edition has

¹⁵³ Full title of the text is *Memoirs of a woman of pleasure. From the original corrected edition. With a set of elegant engravings.*

¹⁵⁴ Full title of this text is *La fille de joie, par M. Cleland, contenant les mémoires de Mademoiselle Fanny, écrits par elle-même.*

¹⁵⁵ There were at least three versions of *Fanny Hill* with illustrations that feature this scene. In addition to the two editions that I include, there is a version titled *Nouvelle traduction de Woman of pleaur [sic] ou fille de joye de M. Cleland contenant les mémoires de Mlle: Fanny écrits par elle-même. Avec XV. planches en taille douce* published in 1770 by Chez G. Fenton. The illustration from this edition is almost identical to the 1766 edition with possibly

illustrations for only about half of the sex scenes in the narrative, the fact that the old abbess's scene made the cut is telling (see fig. 13). It is one of the significant erotic moments of the narrative. Although other illustrations highlight male genital with bolder lines, this particular illustration in fig. 13, centers the old woman and her body. Compared to the narrative that strives to pin down Fanny's sexual excitement to the man's "wonderful machine," this engraving focuses on the irrepressible sexual body of the old woman. The young man's body is fairly covered and of a darker shade further highlighting the "fat brawny thighs" of the old woman. Most noticeable, however, are her breasts. Accentuated by the bright etching, her body seems larger than the male with the left bottom of her body hidden by the male counterpart connoting its size through the protruding foot on the right side of the panel. It is rather hard to tell whether the man is young or not from a quick glance. But in addition to the way the old abbess is portrayed, the large two large moles or beauty marks that adorn her face further signal some sexual disease or aging, clearly showing that this is a sex scene of an old woman.

What Fanny witnesses is indeed "that supreme pleasure . . . [of] the meeting of those parts so admirably fitted for each other" (31), a scene of pleasure of a sexual old body. The normative and beautiful sexuality may belong to the young body, but this old body and her unbridled sexuality are powerful and also pleasurable.

The "infinitely diversified": Multiple Forms of Sexuality in Old Age

Halfway through its story, *Fanny Hill* makes an interesting attempt to justify various kinds of sexual deviancy by using sexual old bodies as its rationale. This episode concerns Mr.

cruder engravings but does visualize male genitalia. Notably, this illustration presented in text chooses to focus on the body of the old woman rather than the young man's body parts. In comparison, the 1776 French version features the "wonderful machine."

Barville, a young sickly gentleman who “was under the tyranny of a cruel taste” (172), meaning he would want to be whipped and do the same for his partner for sexual pleasure. Reflecting on the principles of sexual performance, our protagonist reports that it is such a “strange fancy” (172) for a young man to need that stimulation.

. . . it generally attacks, it seems, such as are, through age, obliged to have recourse to this experiment for quickening the circulation of their sluggish juices, and determining a conflux of the spirits of pleasure towards those flagging shrivelly parts that rise to life only by virtue of those titillating ardours created by the discipline of their opposites, with which they have so surprising a consent. (172-173)

Fanny’s understanding of the sexual performance of old bodies is grounded on the familiar medical and scientific take on aging bodies of the era. As Dr. Cheyne observes, “In spite of all we can do, Time and Age will fix and stiffen our Solids. [...] Age and Time, by weakening the Concoctions, impairing the natural Heat, . . . thereby fixing and hardening these Solids, and depriving them of their due Elasticity, the Fluids circulate with less Velocity and Force . . . all these [are] unavoidable and irremediable” (*An Essay on Health and Long Life* 221). The old bodies, both male and female, were expected to become dry, stiff, sluggish, and blocked-up. *Fanny Hill* applies this familiar medical theory and expands it to aging bodies and their sexuality. Specifying the effect of the slow circulation to the “flagging shrivelly parts,” Fanny comes to a rather logical interpretation that old bodies have somewhat hampered conditions for sexual performance. Old bodies become “flagging” and that prohibits them from performing sexual activities as naturally as, say, a young body with quick and clear bodily juices.

As much as this bodily principle concurs with the prescriptive notion of declining sexuality in old age, what Fanny makes clear here is also the possibility of a different kind of

sexuality in old age. In other words, when the slowness of old people's body works to thwart their sexual performance, Fanny writes casually, old people find other means. "[O]bliged to have recourse" for their sexuality, they find ways to counteract such "flagging." The medical and scientific literature of the era typically prescribed old people to care for their health by staying warm. Just like that, the sexual health of old people can be managed with practices that brings about warmth in their cold lethargic body. In this specific instance, it is flagellation that quickens the slow circulation, brings heat, and renders the aged bodies to "rise to life." There is no evidence, to my knowledge, that flagellation was one of the treatments that the medical experts imagined the old people would take. But in *Fanny Hill*, in this specific erotic world, sexual deviancy does the trick. Their sexuality does not naturally decline gently into being a "rational being." They simply find a different way for their sexuality. It just needs a different stimulant. And as Fanny tells us, the old bodies "have so surprising a consent" to that experiment. The old abbess had her skills, experiences, and her "little case of cordials," and an old man may have his "recourse." The narrative thus not only acknowledges the different sexual nature of the old bodies but utilizes the medical discourse of the era to imagine a different facilitation and manifestation of sexuality in old age.

As this episode continues on, Mrs. Cole, who procures Fanny her customers, shares with Fanny her belief that there is no right form of sexuality.

. . . she considered pleasure, of one sort or other, as the universal port of destination, and every wind that blew thither a good one, provided it blew nobody any harm; that she rather compassionated, than blamed those unhappy persons, who are under a subjection they cannot shake off, to those arbitrary tastes that rule their appetites of pleasures with an unaccountable control: tastes too, as infinitely diversified, as superior to, and

independent of all reasoning as the different relishes or palates of mankind in their viands, some delicate stomach nauseating plain meats, and finding no savour but in highseasoned, luxurious dishes, whilst others again pique themselves upon detesting them. (173-174)

Whatever shape it takes and whatever means it requires, as long as it does not wrong the other person, it is a form of sexuality. There is no “oddity” or “strange taste” as Fanny calls it, but different appetites (172). The diversity of tastes in sexuality is as universal as in the case of gustatory tastes. Whether it is a young body or an old body, the tastes are “as infinitely diversified.” In an old body, specifically, it has to take a different form.

The fact that this justification of sexual deviancy comes from Mrs. Cole further indicates how the narrative presents this idea. Mrs. Cole is a surrogate mother figure for Fanny, a wise aging woman with “hip gout” and “growing infirmities,” who is “no longer fit for personal service” in prostitution, manages girls in a most motherly and protective manner (206). This rather tamed yet direct explanation of how variant sexuality works invites the reader to justify or even normalize various “strange fancy” in an old body. The sluggish juices and the lack of elasticity in an old body become more of a motivation for a variety of sexuality than a cause for its demise. To this extent, *Fanny Hill* is making a more profound argument, although implicit, that sexual deviancy in old age is natural. I would not argue that this argument applies to all sexual old bodies in *Fanny Hill*. Yet the multitude of old people’s sexuality that *Fanny Hill* presents does resist the prescriptive “medical” understanding of the decline of sexuality in old age and show how old bodies are not impotent.

Perhaps because of this new lesson, when Fanny encounters another “elderly gentleman” with a “peculiar humour” (184), she is more or less nonchalant about it. While keeping her other

patrons, on the side, Fanny entertains a “grave, staid, solemn, elderly gentleman” (184). This old gentleman is a nice “by-job” (184) for her because all he does is to come to Fanny’s toilet hours and satisfy his “silly appetite” (184). He does nothing but play with her hair and hand-gloves.

. . . he would keep me an hour or more in play with it [i.e., Fanny’s hair], drawing the comb through it, winding the curls round his fingers, even kissing it as he smoothed it; and all this led to no other use of my person, or any other liberties whatever, any more than if a distinction of sexes had not existed.

Another peculiarity of taste he had, which was to present me with a dozen pairs of the whitest kid gloves at a time: these he would divert himself with drawing on me, and then biting off their finger ends; all which fooleries of a silly appetite, the old gentleman paid more liberally for, than most others did for more essential favours. This lasted till a violent cough, seizing and laying him up, delivered me from this most innocent and insipid trifler, for I never heard more of him after his first retreat. (184)

Just a brief reading of Fanny’s description of this old man’s sexual expression shows how the narrative still insists on what a proper sexuality should look like. This old man’s fetish, to Fanny’s understanding, is some “fooleries.” Because it does not involve “essential favours,” that is, sexual intercourse, this is defined as “most innocent and insipid trifler.” He does not provide any threat like the attempted rapist nor does he excite Fanny as the old mother abbess did. This brief episode does not give Fanny any sexual pleasure as “if a distinction of sexes had not existed.” Fanny humors him and clearly recounts how insignificant it was for her. The added mystery of this old man’s whereabouts following the “violent cough” further makes this old man’s sexual acts comic. The frailty of this old man and his trivial sexual expression is indeed the target of satire, but it is not severe nor violent. “You may be sure a by-job of this sort

interfered with no other pursuit, or plan of life,” Fanny writes. It is an “appetite,” another form of sexuality.

A “rational pleasurer”: An Ideal Sexuality in Old Age

Fanny Hill idealizes the sexuality of old age by the time Fanny is ready to settle down. In addition to presenting weird and distasteful yet powerful sexual characters, it presents an old man who is an epitome of well-balanced sexuality in old age. Besides the love of Fanny’s life, Charles—her first lover who is suddenly taken away from her by his cheating father who is after the family money—this is the only other character who presents Fanny with a true sense of security. When Fanny retires from the city of London, by chance, she discovers a “plain well dressed elderly gentleman” almost dying of a violent fit of coughing (207). He is “an old bachelor, turned of sixty,” Fanny tells the reader (208). The next few paragraphs are filled with descriptions of his character that elicits what she Fanny calls “sincere regard and esteem for him” (210). Born from honest but poor parents, he is a self-made man with immense fortune. He is a humble, refined, and wise man who does not flaunt his wealth. He is “pleased to enjoy life . . . flowed his days in all the ease of opulence, without the least parade of it; and rather studying the concealment than the shew of a fortune, looked down on a world he perfectly knew himself, to his wish, unknown and unmarked by” (208). Furthermore, he is “of a fresh vigorous complexion, insomuch that he scarce marked five and forty” (208).

Fanny’s relationship with this humble old man begins innocent and becomes “unplatonian” (209).

I shall, in this, transiently touch on no more than may serve, as mortar, to cement, or form the connection of my history . . . I shall only here acquaint you, that as age had not

subdued his tenderness for our sex, neither had it robbed him of the power of pleasing, since whatever he wanted in the bewitching charms of youth, he atoned for, or supplemented with the advantages of experience, the sweetness of his manners, and above all, his flattering address in touching the heart, by an application to the understanding. . . . he it was, who first taught me to be sensible that the pleasures of the mind were superior to those of the body; at the same time, that they were so far from obnoxious to, or, incompatible with each other, that, besides the sweetness in the variety and transition, the one served to exalt and perfect the taste of the other, to a degree that the senses alone can never arrive at. (208-209)

Fanny writes that because she is devoting this “letter”—meaning the narrative itself—to giving all the particulars of her life, she will include this “memorable friend,” almost defending the lack of explicit contents regarding this old gentleman. Indeed, shying away from giving explicit details of the sexual encounter in a manner that is quite unlike her, Fanny briefly accounts their sexual relationship as respectful, sweet, but also pleasing. The lack of charms of youth in an old body is made up by the advantages of his age—his experience, manners, and importantly, the way he helps Fanny learn the pleasures of the “mind.” Curiously, Fanny does not really elaborate further on what that is. Fanny talks about refinement of taste and “cultivation” without much detail. But it is clear that this old gentleman has taught, for the first time, what the unity between the pleasures of the body and the mind can elicit.

As a figure of wise old man, this old man brings to Fanny what she cannot get from young men.

Himself a rational pleasurer; as being much too wise to be ashamed of the pleasures of humanity, loved me indeed, but loved me with dignity; in a mean equally removed from

the sourness, of forwardness, by which age is unpleasingly characterized, and from that childish silly dotage that so often disgraces it, and which he himself used to turn into ridicule, and compare to an old goat affecting the frisk of a young kid. (209)

Fanny spends a good deal of time explaining what he is not. He is not a despicable old man taking advantage of Fanny; he is not a sensualist who can only please; he is, overall, not the object of satire. He is wise, kind, has good tastes, and is pleasing for both her mind and body. Interestingly, Fanny defines love—“pleasures of humanity”—which, as Fanny defines it, involves both respectful partnership as well as sexual pleasure, as something that a wise man possess. Being a “rational pleasurer,” this wise old man is sage enough not to be ashamed of his need and capability for (sexual) love. In contrast to the familiar idea that age and wisdom of an old person should make him asexual, in this specific erotic world of Fanny’s, wisdom becomes the grounds for sexuality in old age.

Not only advocating sexuality in old age as an aspect of “wisdom,” Fanny goes as far to generalize what she observes in this old man to old sexual people.

In short, every thing that is generally unamiable in his season of life, was, in him, repaired by so many advantages, that he existed a proof, manifest at least to me, that it is not out of the power of age to please, if it lays out to please, and if, making just allowance, those in that class do not forget, that it must cost them more pains and attention, than what youth, the natural spring-time of joy, stands in need of: as fruits out of season require proportionally more skill and cultivation, to force them. (209-210)

This wise and sexual old man is the living proof of pleasing sexuality in old age. Old bodies can bring pleasure, old people can enjoy sexuality, and sexuality in old age is a skillful and cultivated kind. Of course, again, Fanny does not forget that old people have a lot to make up for and

emphasizes that old people themselves should not forget that. But with “skill and cultivation,” there are “so many advantages” that old bodies bring. The sexuality in old age thus takes a different form but it is valid and even a sign of “wisdom.”

In this way, this ideal old sexuality is moralizing. In alignment with divergence aging model, it is specifically mentioned that he does not let his sensuality overcome him and is wise with a growing and peaceful mind. Moreover, he presents no real threat to the young people. He is not in competition with a young man nor is he overwhelming Fanny with his sexuality as other typical lecherous old characters do. Indeed, this “rational pleasurer” is the last person Fanny has a relationship with before she returns to Charles for one last time. *Fanny Hill* concludes with the typical happy ending. The wise old man dies of a sudden death and leaves Fanny an enormous sum of money. And as she grieves the old man, Fanny, rather abruptly, is overcome with her love for Charles. Now in “the full bloom and pride of youth (for I was not yet nineteen), actually at the head of so large a fortune,” she feels deeply one and only lack in her life, her true love. By some mere chance, she meets her long lost first lover, Charles, and she puts an end to her adventure. Her reunion with Charles is met with an elaborate and specific appreciation of his young—now more mature—sexual body. The emphasis on the beauty of youth and its delicate but strong sexual power fills the narrative yet again in a passionate manner that is quite unlike the restrained attitude Fanny showed regarding the old man. In this respect, the old man is also crucially enabling. As the plot sets it up, without the encounter with the rational pleasurer, her young love and the expected romantic end would not be possible. Yet how Fanny treats sexual pleasure as a part of wisdom of old age is still exceptional. It unsettles the divide between the body and the mind and the negative association between old age and sexuality. This “rational pleasurer” is an alternative figure of aging sexuality—nonthreatening and pleasing.

The portrayals of sexuality in old age in *Fanny Hill* are not simply a caricature of the futile ribaldry of senile lust that was typical in the era. *Fanny Hill* furnishes its erotic space with old people playing with multiple types of sexuality and even experimenting with an alternative one who is “ideal.” It presents the reader the absolute wrong kind of old sexuality of Mr. Crofts, the unconventional “silly” sexual appetite, and the ideal wise and sexual elderly gentleman. Along with satiric figures, *Fanny Hill* shows the powerful, overwhelming, and positively erotic sexual old bodies through multiple sexually variant forms, ultimately challenging and endorsing the meaning of sexuality in old age and even celebrating its variance.

CHAPTER 4. “[H]ATING CHANGE OF EVERY KIND”: RESISTANT AGING AND ANTI-AGING CULTURE IN JANE AUSTEN

Introduction

In the world of Jane Austen, there are many aging and old characters whose bodies or minds are described as not healthy. Or, at least they think they need extensive anti-aging care.¹⁵⁶ These aging characters are extremely concerned about their aging bodies or compulsively adhere to various selfcare practices to the point where they become the target of sarcasm. In fact, their anxiety about the aging body is almost always caricatured, not taken seriously, and many times considered to be a nuisance.

Anti-aging care routines play a crucial role in establishing aging characters as frivolous. In the case of *Emma* (1816) and *Persuasion* (1818), Mr. Woodhouse and Sir Walter Elliot are particularly obsessive about taking care of their aging bodies. Defined very early in the narrative, Mr. Woodhouse is a “valetudinarian” who needs “ceaseless attention on his daughter’s side” with regards to his aging body (*Emma* 9, 395). He is very aware of how the weather affects one’s body and extremely meticulous about food. He grieves and worries about the temperature of the air on all occasions, so much so that sometimes even Emma who loves her dear papa cannot take it. Then, we have Sir Walter in *Persuasion* who is a narcissistic anti-aging beauty care devotee obsessed with youthful looks. He surrounds himself with a number of looking glasses and bemoans that he has to look at aged faces of the common people. The greying hairs and the crow’s feet of his close acquaintances are a source of great distress to him. In both novels, Mr. Woodhouse and Sir Walter are so consumed with anti-aging healthcare or beauty routines that it

¹⁵⁶ I use “anti-aging” in a broad sense to indicate a concept or practice that seeks to resist the natural process of aging, including prolongation of life (which was the most commonplace term used in the eighteenth century), extension of the so-called “green” old age, a stalling the onset of old age, preservation of health, and restoration of youth. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “anti-aging” (or “anti-ageing”) was introduced in the early twentieth century.

is as if their lives revolve around them. Interestingly, however, such regimens seem to have absolutely no effects. Although no one outright denies their efficacy, the narratives do not leave room to allow readers to think otherwise. Mr. Woodhouse's fear for the wrong kind of food, air, wind, or walk does not result in a betterment of anybody including himself, and despite the claims of younger-looking skin, the narrative is skeptical at best about the effects.

This chapter shows that Austen uses anti-aging culture as an essential narrative contrivance to establish the authority of her protagonists. Here, I pay attention to the way aging characters' subscription to anti-aging culture represents their immaturity or even regression especially in terms of their incapability and unwillingness to adapt to change. I call this type of aging *resistant* aging. I begin by reading various signs of cognitive aging in Mr. Woodhouse and the daily anti-aging practices he abides by in *Emma*. Alongside a few key medical texts that study aging's effect on the mind, I show that Austen portrays Mr. Woodhouse's aging as demonstrating a "second childhood," a rather popular characterization of old age in the era. I highlight the ways Mr. Woodhouse's infantilized old age manifests a rather benign form of convergence aging which is allowed by various privileges of his circumstances. Next, I move on to *Persuasion* to more closely look at how resistant aging was class-bound. In this case, resistant aging is explicitly tied to a desire to refuse and even relapse into a mentality of the past. Taking Gowland's Lotion, a famous material artifact of the era, as an analytical subject, I show that Sir Walter's aversion to physical changes stands for his aristocratic class mentality. I argue that *Persuasion* powerfully engages with the era's anti-aging culture to establish its protagonists' authority, playing with the democratizing implications and class tensions of daily subscriptions to anti-aging products to expose the dynamics of class mobility in Britain in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries.

The “Gentle” Aging Mind and Resistant Aging in *Emma*

Emma opens and ends with scenes of change. It begins with the marriage of Miss Taylor, an event that means so much perturbation for Mr. Woodhouse. Miss Taylor, the former governess of Emma, will no longer be at Highbury, the residence of the Woodhouses. To meet her, Mr. Woodhouse thinks, they will have to travel a distance that is too short for a carriage ride and long enough that the shocking thought of walking is unreasonable. “’Tis a sad business,” Mr. Woodhouse laments (11). At the end of the narrative, Mr. Woodhouse must confront another significant change, that is, the marriage of Emma and Mr. Knightley. He remains resistant to such a change of scene, although his resistance has little weight. Clearly, Mr. Woodhouse is not a man who adapts easily. In general, he is “without activity of mind or body” “hating change of every kind” (9, 9). He likes to keep things the way they are as they have been in his youth (25). His resistance to change is so powerful that it is tied to his life. As Emma worries about the location of her new married life, “While her father lived, any change of condition must be impossible for her . . . such a transplantation [i.e., moving] would be a risk of her father’s comfort, perhaps even of his life” (419). Indeed, his resistance is not limited to locations or circumstances. It extends to—or is rather particularized through—the fear for his aging and declining body.

Interestingly, despite Mr. Woodhouse’s claimed fears of physical illness, his aging is actually manifested through his mental or cognitive functions. The majority of Mr. Woodhouse’s scenes exhibit many symptoms of his cognitive aging. Throughout the narrative, he runs into various moments of mild cognitive malfunctioning such as memory loss, inability to pick up social cues, and lack of attention to surroundings. Although such symptoms can be associated with conditions that are not related to aging such as ordinary distraction, the narrative relates

them to his aging conditions. When he cannot recollect a poem he once loved, he wishes he had his departed young wife's memory capabilities; when he does not remember the age of Mr. Churchill, a nice bachelor who was supposed to visit Highbury but never has done so far, he grieves over the time passed and his declined memory. When Emma corrects Mr. Woodhouse's mistake, he remarks "Three-and-twenty!—is he indeed?—Well, I could not have thought it—and he was but two years old when he lost his poor mother! Well, time does fly indeed!—and my memory is very bad" (92). In addition to the memory loss, Mr. Woodhouse is also described as lacking in understanding in a number of episodes. Many times, it has to do with him not being aware of social cues and failing to accurately read the situation.

Even if these episodes might be attributed to his "gentle selfishness," which prevents him from being interested beyond himself, it appears that his mental capacity is limited in general. This leads to Mr. Woodhouse's weakened sociability. He entertains guests, is amiable, and is able to converse. Yet he hardly keeps up with conversations, sometimes to Emma's pain. Emma even has to explain jokes to him. For example, at the beginning of the story, there is an episode that exposes the character dynamics, notably in relation to Mr. Woodhouse. Here, Emma playfully teases Mr. Knightley by saying that one of the people living in Highbury, meaning herself, is "a fanciful, troublesome creature," showing her sense of wit and close friendship with Mr. Knightley (12). Mr. Woodhouse is unable to participate in this playful moment while seated in the same space. He mistakes it to mean that Emma is referring him as a troublesome one. He sadly remarks with a sigh that he indeed is such a one (12). Emma has to explain it all to him: what the joke is, what the situation is, and why she said such a thing. Emma says, "My dearest papa! You do not think I could mean *you*, or suppose Mr. Knightley to mean *you*. What a horrible idea! Oh no! I meant only myself. Mr. Knightley loves to find fault with me, you

know—in a joke—it is all a joke. We always say what we like to one another” (12). In another instance too, Mr. Woodhouse does not fully comprehend the situation. This is a more crucial moment for the rest of the narrative as this is when Mr. Knightley reproaches Emma for thinking that she has made a successful match between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston, a precedent that will lead to a series of broken hearts. He says to Emma that “You are more likely to have done harm to yourself, than good to them, by interference” (14). But to this criticism, Mr. Woodhouse jumps in and replies “Emma never thinks of herself, if she can do good to others,” as the narrative adds, “understanding but in part” (14). Obviously, Mr. Woodhouse either only heard bits of Mr. Knightley’s words or listened to them fully but totally missed the point. It is not clear whether it was caused by the lack of attention or some other ordinary lapses of cognitive abilities. Still, it is clear that Mr. Woodhouse lacks some apprehension in these moments and it is not a mistake that rarely occurs. It is a mundane happening. His mistaken comments are not even followed by a correction.

At times, Mr. Woodhouse is described as having inferior cognitive processes. When Emma completed her writing, it is remarked that she read to him “just as he liked to have any thing read, slowly and distinctly, and two or three times over, with explanations of every part as she proceeded—and he was very much pleased, and, as she had foreseen, especially struck with the complimentary conclusion” (76). The narrative particularly mentions the necessary repetition and the speed of her reading—slow—connoting his aging cognitive reception and processing speed. It further notes the “distinction” of her reading to suggest his impaired hearing abilities. Again, this is not a one-time incident. It has been a habit between Emma and Mr. Woodhouse to read slowly and repetitively, at least it seems for a while. Moreover, Mr. Woodhouse’s declining cognitive function is highlighted by the fact that this writing is a charade, a type of literary genre

that would require a distinct set of cognitive skills such as imagination and inference. Only when read multiple times, with detailed explanations of what every line means, and how those work to make it a charade, is Mr. Woodhouse able to grasp it. He is not an intellectual equal to Emma. At Highbury, Emma is “in great danger of suffering from intellectual solitude. She dearly loved her father, but he was no companion for her. He could not meet her in conversation, rational or playful” (8).

Memory loss and declining cognitive abilities were common symptoms attributed to aging in eighteenth-century medical literature. Dugald Stewart writes in *Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind* (1792-1827) that memory loss is a “necessary consequence of a physical change in the constitution” (407).

These effects [of aging] are widely diversified in different cases. In some it would seem that the memory is impaired in consequence of a diminution of the power of attention; in others, that the power of recollection is disturbed, in consequence of a derangement of that part of the constitution on which the association of ideas depends. The decay of memory which is the common effect of age, seems to arise from the former of those causes. It is probable, that, as we advance in years, the capacity of attention is weakened by some physical change in the constitution . . . (407)

Stewart understands memory loss as a more common consequence of aging rather than a symptom of an irrevocable case of some unfortunate old people. Although it comes in many forms and from different reasons, and is certainly preventable, Stewart writes, it comes “As we advance in years.”¹⁵⁷ Stewart further compares memory loss to the “decay of our sensibility, and

¹⁵⁷ Stewart writes that “active scenes of life” largely mean participating in businesses may contribute to “ward[ing] off” memory loss. He even suggests that a revival of memory is possible. Giving examples of old people who have clear memories, he says that it is “undoubtedly owing partly to the effects which the pursuits of business must

the extinction of our passions . . . which we feel in the common occurrences of life” (407) noting the ordinariness of cognitive decline. For Stewart, “no derangement takes place, in ordinary cases” (407-408) of memory loss in an old person. Published four decades earlier than Stewart, David Hartley’s *Observations on man, his frame, his duty, and his expectations* (1749) also sees cognitive decline—memory loss in addition to other cognitive malfunctions—as more of a normal part of aging, even when it progresses to a pathology. Dedicating a section titled “Of Dotage,” Hartley posits, “We see that, in old persons, all the parts . . . grow less. Why may not this happen to the brain, the origin of all” (232)? Cognitive malfunction is a natural consequence of the convergence aging model taking its effect. The mind declines with the body.

Sometimes, such cognitive aging presented a great threat. As a point of comparison, Bernard Lynch in *A Guide to Health* (1744) associates memory loss to the very last stage of old age describing it with a bleak outlook. Categorizing the progression of aging as following the three stages of “verdant,” “second,” and “decrepit” old age, Lynch writes that in “decrepit” old age, there is “nothing but Pains and Grief; for all the Faculties of the Soul and Body are weaken’d, the Sentiments dull and heavy, the Memory lost, the Judgement defective” (4).¹⁵⁸ Although Lynch does not discuss further the cognitive effects of aging, he does assign mental decline and specifically memory loss to the “decrepit” old age as a symptom of what he perceives as the miserable last stage of life.¹⁵⁹ Samuel Johnson’s rather spiteful evaluation of

necessarily have, in keeping alive the power of attention. But it is probably owing also to new habits of arrangement, which the mind gradually and insensibly forms, from the experience of its growing infirmities. The apparent revival of memory in old men, after a temporary decline, (which is a case that happens not unfrequently) seems to favor this supposition” (409).

¹⁵⁸ As early as 1672, Thomas Willis observes some aspects of the mental effect of aging. In *Concerning the Soul of Brutes*, Willis writes, “some, at first crafty and ingenious, become by degrees dull and at length foolish, by a mere declining of age” (211).

¹⁵⁹ Lynch includes a very interesting poem that compares the condition of “the last Stage of Man’s life” to a house (5). Here, he specifically discusses “decrepit old age” in terms of how their “Hands and Arms,” “Legs,” “Teeth,” “Eyes,” mouth and digestive system, sleep routines, “Voice,” and “Legs” grow weak which may be read to allude to memory loss but he does not explicitly connect them to mental or cognitive decline. 5-6.

Jonathan Swift's "dotage" is also described with a mental decline that is quite disturbing. First, Johnson traces Swift's dotage to his declining eyesight and hearing claiming that such declining physical sensibility made conversations and study challenging (Johnson *The Lives* 479-480). Johnson continues that with such blocked channels for sensory input and impaired memory, Swift's mind is left "vacant" and finally driven into madness (Johnson *The Lives* 480). In this case, rather than simply declining into a quiet insensitive existence, Swift's old age exhibits a "violent . . . madness [that] was compounded of rage and fatuity" (*The Lives* 480). For Lynch and Johnson, then, memory loss, lack of sensory input, and cognitive malfunctions are early signals of future pains and grief or violent madness.¹⁶⁰

In *Emma*, the declining mind of Mr. Woodhouse does not drive him to madness. The declining mental faculty is made light of through other's indulgence and the patience of the narrator. His aging hardly alerts others of the ominous fate of decline that may await them. The puzzling episode when Mr. Woodhouse forgets the line of his favorite poem "Kitty, a fair but frozen maid" (76) illustrates this point well. Following Emma having to read her writing to Mr. Woodhouse with extensive explanations, Mr. Woodhouse says Emma takes after her mother's wit. "After thinking a little, and a very tender sigh," he suddenly claims that he wishes he had his wife's memory (her capacity to remember things well) and attempts to recite a favorite poem for the second time (76). He recollects the first five lines but cannot remember the remaining part. Showing another sign of cognitive limitation such as a serious limited topic of interest, he regrets how he cannot remember all the "clever riddles as there used to be when he was young," and as the narrative remarks, ends his speech that "always ended in 'Kitty, a fair but frozen maid'" (68). Many Austen scholars such as Fiona Stafford and Susan Allen Ford decode this puzzling episode

¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, Johnson's imagination of Swift's dotage assumes that the last stage of this condition is "idiocy." As opposed to "madness," this condition "idiocy" connotes a sense of lethargy, softness, and inaction.

to be playing on sexual innuendo by pointing out that the original poem hints at topics related to what were considered sexual mischiefs in the era such as syphilis and sodomy. While some scholars such as David Selwyn assume that Austen was perhaps confused (199), Ford argues that Austen intended to have Mr. Woodhouse forget the rest of the poem to make “a joke at his expense” (xxiv). Especially considering that it is claimed to be his favorite poem, this scene could be further read as suggesting Mr. Woodhouse’s libertine youth. In this case, Austen uses the typical health-care rhetoric of the era that blames an individual for their sickness in old age in order to connect his memory loss to an individual matter. Mr. Woodhouse’s memory loss is then less a threatening sign of old age than a result of his rakish past. The violent and disruptive consequences of mental aging that Lynch or Johnson suggest do not come to Austen’s world. Aging is certainly not a process of accrued wisdom, and it is also not one that prompts the reader to ponder, as Locke did, if a person becomes a “cockle” in old age.

All in all, Mr. Woodhouse’s aging demonstrates convergence aging in a safe form. As much as both his body and mind decline, this debilitation is not really ominous. As discussed in the introduction, the danger of the aging body in the convergence aging model lies in its power to decay not only the mind but morality, sensibility, and possibly a self as a hardened and blocked up body leads to a numb existence where one is unable to communicate with the world in a normal sense.

Perhaps Mrs. Bates is alluding to that possibility. As a deaf old woman, there is more attention to her deficits than to Mr. Woodhouse’s. Mrs. Bates is a “very old lady” (22) (although we do not know how much older she is than Mr. Woodhouse), who has lost many of her physical capabilities. “My mother does not hear; she is a little deaf you know” (148) Miss Bates says, and the readers do not hear her voice once in the narrative unless it is reflected through—or rather

overcome by—the verbosity of Miss Bates, her daughter. Mrs. Bates usually sits quiet and still beside Miss Bates who translates her mother’s thoughts and emotions. The narrative suggests that she retains her likes and dislikes (such as her love for asparagus) but again, it is not certain whether that is really an opinion from Mrs. Bates or what Miss Bates assumes for her. It must be noted that Mrs. Bates is not as old as how others treat her. She is described as “almost past every thing but tea and quadrille” (22) but the addition of “almost” reveals something more than a quiet and blocked up old person. In Miss Bates’ unending sentences, we get a sense that Mrs. Bates indeed has conversations with her daughter often, so, it is not that “she does not hear” at all (147). The fact that she is not yet past dancing also shows she still is physically able to move, coordinate her movement, and even listen to music (or at least look at movements well enough to participate in the group dance). In fact, one of the images of Mrs. Bates as quietly sitting and knitting (146) also shows that her eyesight is functioning and she can be dexterous with her hands. But the attitude that all the characters show around her assumes so much of her deficit. Comments about her inability to hear or participate in group activities and thus not knowing how to bear certain emotions or situations are all throughout the narrative. Despite her not so extreme aging conditions, she is “a very old lady” who cannot speak for herself.

Mr. Woodhouse’s aging is more subtle. His aging is definitely less about a radical debilitation of self, a state where an aging person’s thoughts even have to be translated through another person. One cannot convincingly argue that Mr. Woodhouse has lost his self identity, though it is true that Emma speaks for him to the point that she injects her opinions to him. But his aging conditions and authority are characterized with and through his privileges and particular circumstances. Rather than becoming a “cockle,” supported by his wealth, rank, and others’ humoring, Mr. Woodhouse becomes a child.

Declining Authority and The “Second Childhood”

Mr. Woodhouse’s aging is particularized by the emphasis on his untimely regression.¹⁶¹ To some extent, Mr. Woodhouse demonstrates stereotypical ideas about old men in the era. He is a hypochondriac, he is melancholic, and he possibly has been a libertine in his youth. But he is unique in that he exhibits a sense of helplessness that was associated with extreme old age. Compared to other old men in the literary scene of the era such as Mr. Bramble in Tobias Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* or Mr. Villars in Frances Burney’s *Evelina* who both undergo declining health issues yet remain very much authoritative, Mr. Woodhouse is desperately dependent.

When Mr. Woodhouse’s whole party is at risk of being stuck at Randalls (the residence of the newlywed Miss Taylor) because of heavy snow, all that the consternated Mr. Woodhouse can say is “‘What is to be done, my dear Emma?—what is to be done?’” (120). The narrative continues to emphasize Mr. Woodhouse’s total reliance on his daughter: “To her he looked for comfort; and her assurances of safety, her representation of the excellence of the horses, and of James, and of their having so many friends about them, revived him a little” (120). It is not that Mr. Woodhouse is seriously ill or physically incapable of staying at their house. Or, at least, that is how the story describes the situation. The list of particular things that Emma has to assure him of and the repeated “and” connote the indulgence required on Emma’s part. To her he looks for comfort and direction.

¹⁶¹ Reading the characters that represent “vagaries” of human aging in Sarah Scott’s *Millenium Hall*, Reeves argues that eighteenth-century Britain was particularly interested in the idea of “untimely” old age. Bodies that have grown old and disabled when it was not their time fascinated contemporaries as another instance of the “extraordinary.” Compared to other writers who projected aging bodies in a negative light, Reeves maintains, Scott saw them as being capable of realizing the timeless divine.

This dependent behavior of Mr. Woodhouse expresses a common belief about old age in the era. During the long eighteenth century, old age was often associated (and contrasted) with childhood for many of the similarities in a “lack” of independence, physical power, and productivity (Müller “Envisioning Age” 234-237). In such cases, the association largely had to do with a total physical incapacity and the necessity of extreme old age, unlike what Mr. Woodhouse is exhibiting. The debility of extreme old age was thought to necessitate a care and a relationship between an old person (usually a man) and a caretaker (always a woman).¹⁶² In fig. 14 which visualizes Shakespeare’s idea of seven ages of men, the last stage of extreme of old age is visualized with an old man being cared by a female figure. He is depicted as obviously having no physical vigor with a stooped back and almost drooping from the chair. There is a female caretaker figure feeding him. This is the only age other than infancy that is imagined as requiring the care of a female figure. And it is portrayed as necessary for his physical condition. John Hill in *The Old Man’s Guide to Health and Longer Life* (1750) even writes that it is “only in the extreme of age that men become children again” further noting that their mind may remain much more dependent as opposed to “their bodily faculties [which] approach this condition [of childhood] sooner” (12). In this case, the dependence was largely necessitated by physical debilitation associated with extreme old age.

¹⁶² Müller’s article includes another print that visualizes Shakespeare’s seven ages that was published in 1972 by J. C. Gear. The last stage of men here is illustrated in a very similar way with an old man sitting and wrapped up in clothes being fed by a female figure. It is also the one of the two stages where a caretaker female figure appears. “Envisioning Age,” 233.



Figure. 14. George Wilson, “The Female Seven Ages” (London: Ashton & Co., 1797).

Calling extreme old age a “second childhood,” Benjamin Rush in an article titled “On Old Age” (1789) discusses how physical conditions create regression and further lead to dependence. The first two reasons Rush gives relate to explicit physical conditions of old people that are similar to children. This can be seen

1. In the marks which slight contusions or impressions leave upon their skins. 2. In their being soon fatigued by walking or exercise, and in being as soon refreshed by rest. 3. In their disposition, like children, to detail immediately every thing they see and hear. And 4. In their aptitude to shed tears; hence they are unable to tell a story that is in any degree distressing without weeping. (351)

Rush discusses the skin as lacking resilience and the physical fatigue of old people as obvious features that show how old people are like children in their physical conditions. Interestingly, although he does not explicitly detail how the vulnerable skin of an old person and their easily-

tired bodies make them cognitively and emotionally childlike, for Rush, such physical conditions allow him to further his discussion on why other old people behave the way they do in conversations and emotional situations. In fact, Rush continues to identify how some old people “descend still lower” to exhibit marks of “second infancy, by such a total decay of her mental faculties as to lose all consciousness,” demonstrating a yet another stage of total helplessness with an example of losing excretory control (351).

Compared to the dependence that is largely framed as a necessary consequence of physical debilitation, Mr. Woodhouse’s dependence is, the narrative maintains, a result of infantilism and privilege. Granted that we do not really know the exact state of Mr. Woodhouse’s physical condition, the attitude that the majority of the characters show toward his concerns for his health implies rather strongly that he is not yet in the stage of extreme old age. Indeed, the narrative tells the reader that “he was a much older man in ways than in years” (9). A large part of caring for Mr. Woodhouse is humoring him rather than assisting him with his physical deterioration. Mr. Woodhouse’s regression involves his mind and mentality. His “second childhood” does not threaten the dignity of the human species as Rush observed; it is a result of years of mollicoddling.

And his helplessness easily translates into more power for Emma. Although she is in no way forceful, Emma thinks for Mr. Woodhouse. With a hint of superiority and a great sense of filial love, Emma instructs her father. When the guests come to Highbury, knowing full well how her father will lead the conversation—perhaps with more worries for the weather and demands for particular food—“Emma allowed her father to talk—but supplied her visitors in a much more satisfactory style” (25). Emma has no trouble speaking for Mr. Woodhouse. This point becomes clear by the end of the narrative when Emma decides to marry Mr. Knightley.

Poor man!—it was at first a considerable shock to him, and he tried earnestly to dissuade her from it. . . . But it would not do. Emma hung about him affectionately, and smiled, and said it must be so; . . . she should be always there; she was introducing no change in their numbers or their comforts but for the better; and she was very sure that he would be a great deal the happier for having Mr. Knightley always at hand, when he were once got used to the idea.—Did not he love Mr. Knightley very much?—He would not deny that he did, she was sure.—Whom did he ever want to consult on business but Mr. Knightley? Who was so useful to him, who so ready to write his letters, who so glad to assist him?—Who so cheerful, so attentive, so attached to him?—Would he not like to have him always on the spot?—Yes. That was all very true. Mr. Knightley could not be there too often; he should be glad to see him every day;—but they did see him every day as it was.—Why could not they go on as they had done? / Mr. Woodhouse could not be soon reconciled; but the worst was overcome, the idea was given; time and continual repetition must do the rest. (476)

Austen's free-indirect discourse style is used to its full extent to show how Emma instills her thoughts in Mr. Woodhouse. Here, Emma thinks for Mr. Woodhouse assuming what he must feel and deciding what is appropriate. She is "sure" and "very sure" how Mr. Woodhouse will be. His protest and disagreement simply "would not do." The definitive sense of a decision already made—"the idea was given"—and Emma's indulging rhetoric straddle the line between imposing and patronizing. Moreover, unlike Emma who has made such a decision based on her moral "growth," the change of situation does not impel something in Mr. Woodhouse besides his "fullest dependence" (453). Mr. Woodhouse's effort to resist changes and aging does little to

keep the situation as is. It rather demonstrates his childish obsession and the need for pampering and finally resulting in a reversal of roles in their parent-child relationship.

Mr. Woodhouse's anti-aging practices have no effect. These practices represent the ineffective mentality of his ways. That is, the mentality of an old person, inflexible and averse to change. They represent what the young protagonists reject. To be sure, they are not powerful enough to be the source of serious conflict for the protagonist from the start of the narrative. For Emma, Mr. Woodhouse and his ways of life are more of a gentle nuisance than a major roadblock to her future. Emma already protests her father's anti-aging routines with her knowing smiles and gentle silence. But they are still what the protagonist discards and moves forward from, learning a lesson and growing and changing for the better. They set up the authority and power of the protagonist through contrasting his stasis and resistance with Emma's growth. Despite Mr. Woodhouse's resistance and extreme cautions, he cannot help but grow old—if it is not the body, it must be the mind—and the world keeps changing. In his wish to stay the same, he declines, and in his effort to relapse to a former state, he even regresses.

The Privileges of Class

Mr. Woodhouse's resistant aging and particularly his regressive features are sustained by his privileges. He has the privilege to manage his cognitive decline (such as a woman to care for him), financial resources to indulge in his medical views on food and health and even to afford a resident medical practitioner, Mr. Perry, to attend to his needs. He also has freedom to impose these views on aging women around him like Miss Bates and Mrs. Bates. His money and class enable him to make detailed recommendations for what food to take (both for himself and others). He directs what his diet should be based on his understanding of the humors of the

ingredients and even controls, say, how hard an egg should be cooked. Moreover, he imposes his views on others by ordering around what they should eat too. Sarah Emsley observes that the different kinds of food Mr. Woodhouse orders were following basic fundamentals of the balance of the four humors which food was supposed to influence. The “small basin of thin gruel” he gets for himself, an apple pie he offers to Miss Bates, a middle-aged woman, or that one egg for Mrs. Bates, an old woman, were all done with an awareness of the traditional humoral system and based on “ideas about the science of nutrition” (Emsley). His impositions are of course made with good intentions but “being never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself” (*Emma* 9).

The Bates family, sunken from what they used to be in terms of their rank and finances, provides a sharp contrast for what aging means for people in a different circumstance. Mrs. Bates was married to the vicar of Highbury. With his death and Miss Bates not finding a husband, the family is going downhill. For these aging women, as Mr. Knightley points out, aging is troublesome. The prospect of aging is bleak because Mrs. Bates is poor: “She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more” (351). Unlike Mr. Woodhouse who has the luxury to worry about his diet as well as others’, Mrs. Bates does not have a say in what she gets for her aging body. The incident when Mr. Woodhouse charged the food to be taken out regardless of other’s feelings illustrates this point well. Miss Bates relates the incident:

There was a little disappointment.—The baked apples and biscuits, excellent in their way, you know; but there was a delicate fricassee of sweetbread and some asparagus brought in at first, and good Mr. Woodhouse, not thinking the asparagus quite boiled enough, sent it all out again. Now there is nothing grandmama loves better than sweetbread and

asparagus—so she was rather disappointed, but we agreed we would not speak of it to any body . . . (308-309)

The apples and biscuits are called “excellent in their way,” suggesting that perhaps Miss Bates and Mrs. Bates did not really enjoy them especially compared to how the sweetbread and asparagus are described. The “little” disappointment Miss Bates relates to Mr. Woodhouse’s obsession for age-appropriate food and health-conscious practices shows that people do not see eye to eye with him. His higher rank and economic status make people assume that he has good intentions. Surely, Mr. Woodhouse is sweet and kind—but in his own way. What Mr. Knightley says to Emma about their sunken status should apply to how Mr. Woodhouse treats them. With their lower status, being in the company with the Woodhouses is their chance to have a little more authority, respect, and sometimes, good food. And Mr. Woodhouse’s meticulous health practices that he abides by at other’s discomfort, although slight, exhibit just how privileged Mr. Woodhouse’s resistant aging is.

Emma’s famous speech on being an “old maid” explicitly notes that the difference in class and wealth produces different futures: “I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! . . . but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else” (83).¹⁶³ This sharp observation on the meaning of class and wealth for aging seems to extend to an aging bachelor. But in Mr. Woodhouse, we see something else. Even with all the money and class

¹⁶³ Austen’s rather uncharitable attitude toward old maids and spinster figures has been well examined by previous Austen scholarship. For instance, Devoney Looser notes that Austen’s depiction of old maids and aging women repeats much of the stereotypical images that were prevalent in the era. Qualities such as “garrulity, trifling qualities, querulousness, and virtuousness” (*Women Writers* 170) indeed sum up Miss Bates very well. In a different vein, scholars such as Breanna Neubauer argue that the figure of old maid or spinsters in Austen’s novels, although perhaps not generous, gives voice to women to depict a “spectrum of realistic spinster and spinster-type characters” (137). Reading how Miss Bates and her social situation such as her unmarried status and her role as a caretaker of her elderly mother “wakes” Emma up of her privileges and self-centeredness, Neubauer values how Austen closely portrays middle-class women’s lives.

privilege, aging can also make one less sociable. Emma claims that “a very narrow income has a tendency to contract the mind, and sour the temper. Those who can barely live, and who live perforce in a very small, and generally very inferior, society, may well be illiberal and cross” (83). For Mr. Woodhouse, it is not his lack of income nor the closed society. It is his aging mind and more importantly, his privileges that render him less genuinely sociable.

In the next section of this chapter, I continue investigating the theme of privileged aging with regard to class. I read *Persuasion* and look at how Austen dives into anti-aging culture more deeply to comment on class mobility, playing with the implications of resistant aging. Here, what was embedded in Mr. Woodhouse’s privileged resistant aging, that is, the fact that his class rank does not require him to work, is more explicitly examined through the aging faces of the people who must work for their living.

Aging Faces in *Persuasion*: “an object of disgust”

Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* is a narrative rich with aging metaphors. Published six months before Austen’s death, it features characters intent on the idea of aging. From a melancholic heroine Anne Elliot, whose “bloom had vanished early,” to Elizabeth who is feeling the “years of danger” approaching in her twenty-ninth year, to Sir Walter Elliot “blooming as ever,” the concepts of aging, decline, and bloom permeate the narrative (11-12). Beginning with the protagonist who sees “the declining year, with declining happiness, and the images of youth and hope, and spring, all gone together” (72) and ending with a rekindled—and mature—love, *Persuasion* plays with the concept of aging structurally and thematically.

Persuasion has one character indeed obsessed with the concept of aging. This person is Sir Walter Elliot, the blessed baronet of Kellynch Hall, a mirror-addicted narcissist. He is

infamous for his spiteful “vanity of person and situation” (10) and—though less recognized—his particular hatred against aged looks. Sir Walter believes in essential congruities between physical appearance and rank. Having been endowed with both traits from birth, “person and situation” mirror each other for him. While there may be a hierarchy between the two—“the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy” (10)—looks and titles cannot be thought of without the other. As if entitled blood shapes the body, the superior quality of one’s heritage exteriorizes itself through personal charms in the same manner that inferior births are expressed through ugly agedness.

For Sir Walter, naval men best exemplify the despicable side of this association by demonstrating how wretchedly their lowliness is embodied in their physical appearance. Quite emphatically for Sir Walter, the sailors are not just disagreeable-looking; they are *aged*, blatantly aged with their weathered faces.

The most deplorable-looking personage you can imagine; his face the colour of mahogany, rough and rugged to the last degree; all lines and wrinkles, nine grey hairs of a side, ... “In the name of heaven, who is that old fellow?” ... I never saw quite so wretched an example of what a sea-faring life can do; but to a degree, I know it is the same with them all: they are all knocked about, and exposed to every climate, and every weather, till they are not fit to be seen. (22)

This comment is Sir Walter’s description of Admiral Baldwin, a “certain” (22) navy officer of obscure birth. Though he is mentioned only once, he makes an impression. As the representative of “all” men in the navy, he demonstrates a sailor’s way of life. Having to make a living for oneself, laboring on board, toiling through corrosive weather, it is a life that leaves a shockingly rugged face robbed of “a man’s youth and vigour most horribly” (22). Looking like “Sixty ... or

perhaps, sixty-two” when he is only “Forty!,” Admiral Baldwin is a specimen of what coming from lower on the social ladder (and trying to work your way up) does: it ages you into “an object of disgust” (22).

As far as Sir Walter can see, this aged face reveals the humble struggle of all those with obscure names. The ugly tussle one had to go through to rise in society is visible on the body. This is also to say that the aged face bespeaks a possibility that at the heavy price of youth, an obscure person may earn an “undue” (22) distinction. An aged face is, then, the evidence of possible class mobility. It is this reality, the horrible fluidity of class, that Sir Walter takes as a personal insult. His fundamental disdain deeply rooted in their plain heritage, Sir Walter sees the base inner nature that would never change in an aged face. Indeed, going beyond his fixated contempt for naval officers, Sir Walter perceives signs of aging as visible markers of inborn inferiority. From a poor widow whom he persistently imagines to be an “old lady” (128) to Mrs. Clay, a woman far beneath him in terms of rank and finance, with her abominably mottled face, Sir Walter’s obsession with youthful beauty, resistant to marks of aging, and contempt for agedness are symptomatic of his insistence on aristocratic value.

During the long eighteenth century, there existed opposed views on how lower-class people age. On the one hand, the aging of the lower class was idealized. Largely around those who lead a pastoral life, it was believed that their honest work and their lifestyle that was without the vile of the city prompt prolongevity. Especially in the earlier era when the idea of prolongevity was a major conversational topic for the learned, the example of Thomas Parr who was a farmer and allegedly had a scanty diet promoted this ideal image of lower-class people and their way of aging. On the other hand, some believed that the lifestyle of the working class prompted earlier aging. For instance, Rush’s “Old Age” indicates that “The marks of old age

appear earlier, and are more numerous in persons who have combined with hard labour, a vegetable or scanty diet, than in persons who have lived under opposite circumstances” (349). Focusing on the qualities of food and their nutritional condition, some considered the lower class as exhibiting earlier and distinct signs of aging. Mary Leapor’s “Corydon. Phillario. Or, Mira’s Picture. A Pastoral” (1751) also alerts the audience of the reality of aging for a working-class woman living in pastoral scenes.¹⁶⁴ According to Leapor, these women have disheveled looks from their labor and have with teeth “decay’d with Posset” (Farier and Gerrard 393). They are not innocent nymphs playing in the fields. And such marks of aging are what Sir Walter hates to see in the sailor’s aged face: the marks of their lower rank.

In his obsession with youthful looks, however, Sir Walter betrays a rather curious faith in the improvement of such class-determined looks. His trust in anti-aging routines and beauty products allows a surprising flexibility in appearances he would not happily approve in class. Sir Walter scorns the idea of those with vulgar surnames defying their social fate and rising in the world. But that an individual can counter the physical sign of supposedly inherent lowliness does not seem to offend him as much as it should. In fact, his trust in one particular beauty product—Gowland’s Lotion—reveals his faith in an individual’s agency over his body, looks, and beauty that should have been a manifestation of one’s class. When it comes to matters of aging, Sir Walter sanctions the threatening class mobility mentality ingrained in believing in the effectiveness of skincare products.

¹⁶⁴ Kathryn Woods notes that “working men and women generally displayed darker complexions than members of the aristocracy, gentry and merchant and professional classes. This was because, unlike the elite, working people spent a large amount of time outdoors, exposed to the sun” (59).

Aging Skin and the “Art of Preserving Beauty”

Current scholarship on skincare—especially by Restoration and Regency scholars—often examines the implication of “paint” from a gendered perspective and observes how women’s desire for more youthful looks pulled them away from female virtue to model the sin of vanity.¹⁶⁵ Popular beauty regimens and advertised skincare products demonstrate, however, that the art of resisting aging did not simply lie in using makeup powder to cover up wrinkles. Moreover, this skincare industry was not just for women. Men were also crucial participants who employed anti-aging regimens to defy the natural force of aging. Promising ways to preserve and restore health and beauty against the temporal materiality of aging, popular health regimens and skincare products spurred the hope of an individual’s control over the aging body for both sexes of wider ranks.

The anti-aging beauty industry of the late eighteenth century was situated within a larger cultural phenomenon that asked for an individual to exert their agency over the aging process. Historians including Roy Porter, Susannah Ottaway, and Ingrid Tague have observed how the Enlightenment faith in scientific progress in understanding the human body generated a health-enthused public that believed in its agency over physical well-being (Ottaway and Tague ix-xiv). A thriving industry for regulating the aging body was created. The public passion for medical knowledge and newly literate and moneyed customers with a penchant for taking care of the body provided great grounds for a flourishing market. An expectation of “green” old age¹⁶⁶ was commercialized into products such as special diet texts, sundry medicines, and easy elixirs. With all the help now within the reach of one’s hand, healthy aging became more a matter of practical

¹⁶⁵ See Martin, Snook, Chico 107-31, Reichardt, Kowaleski-Wallace.

¹⁶⁶ Pat Thane observes that there were two types of old age in the early modern period: 1. green old age, in which one is still physically and mentally capable, and 2. decrepit old age, in which one has lost that capability. See *Thane Old Age in English History*. 4.

investment by an enlightened individual than, say, a cosmic fate.¹⁶⁷ By the late eighteenth century, the aging body was a commodity, “a fashionable site for management” (Yallop *Age and Identity* 13), a matter subject to one’s intention. Supported by the authority of science, to control or manage the aging body was an ability that could be purchased or learned by engaging in contemporary medical discourse.

While the public was immersed in this optimism about the power of healthcare, a more nuanced knowledge of aging emerged in the eighteenth century. As medical specialists came to comprehend the inevitability of physiological deterioration, it became important to note, along with the promises of resisting and checking signs of aging, how the anti-aging cares will only delay rather than completely block the process out. To note this inevitable hardening of the body was part of a rhetoric deployed to authenticate the validity of authoritative measures against what was perceived as all sorts of quackeries that proliferated in the era. The “valid” manuals professed that aging was unavoidable, “Mechanical and Necessary” (Cheyne 221). They were largely future-oriented theories that argued one’s mindful action at this present moment would impact health in later years. To restore or to cure an already age-ill body was a different question. As one popular regimen writes, “Old mens diseases are hard to cure, but they are easily prevented” (Hill 4) was the idea. Granted, the distinction between preserving health by continuous care and acknowledging the irrevocability of an aging body was often crude and many times incoherent.¹⁶⁸ But in general, popular medical regimens were careful to admit or, at the very least, note the inevitable decline of life, nevertheless.

¹⁶⁷ Although the eighteenth century is often characterized as the age of scientific progress with its more “scientific” approaches to the human body, including investigation in anatomy and neurology, the era was a transitional period where old theories were being gradually replaced by new schemes. See Katz 27-39.

¹⁶⁸ For discussions of the era’s understanding of aging itself as an illness—i.e. aging as beyond nature, against nature, and often avoidable and curable—as opposed to the contesting theory of aging as a natural process, see Schafer.

On the other hand, popular beauty regimens and skincare products operated on the basis of manipulating such inevitable decay. They professed to check signs of aging as well as to improve or cure decayed looks.¹⁶⁹ The preservation and restoration of beauty was the core promise of the beauty regimen industry. In fact, “the art of preserving beauty” was a common enough phrase that its usage designated beauty manuals as a whole. From cookbooks to more medicalized beauty regimens, a range of texts summoned this art that sought to arrest, and at times, reverse the effect of time. Elizabeth Price, for instance, added a section to her cookbook that promised to divulge the secret of the “Art of preserving and improving Beauty,” in which she included at-home manuals for clear and glowing—and in essence, youthful—skin (1). Antoine Le Camus’s *Abdeker: or, the Art of Preserving Beauty* claims “to remove all those Defects that may render the Body deform’d” (7) such as skin disorders. Amelia Chambers’ regimen is specific to skincare and includes guides “To preserve the Complexion, and restore such as are decayed” (154), “To take away Wrinkles” (155), and “To make a Water for giving the Countenance a most beautiful blooming Colour” (154). As indicated by vocabularies such as “preserve,” “restore,” “decayed,” “wrinkles,” or “blooming colour,” what framed these formulas was the idea of decay. Often referred to as deformities, the blemishes of the human frame, or “Ravages of Time” (Chambers 2), signs of aging were something to correct, improve, and guard against.

What needed special attention in this art was the “bloom”—an amorphous concept incorporating youth, health, and beauty—that could never be expressed by the skin of a sick, aged body. Bloom was, above all, a sign of health and youth which were the prerequisites of

¹⁶⁹ Unlike the broader popular medical discourse of the era, beauty regimens do not show an effective differentiation between the concept of preservation and restoration. As the following examples show, “preserving,” “improving,” “restoring,” and “removing” were most often used to indicate beauty rules and these were used almost interchangeably.

beauty. Neatly stated in a popular beauty regimen text, it was admitted as “an incontrovertible maxim, that beauty can never exist without perfect health; healthful constitution ... is the very ground-work of beauty” (Physician 167). Skincare products and beauty manuals that promised to preserve and restore bloom were thus, in a way, claiming to care for declining health—and preserve and restore youth. Many skincare practices were less about simulating health but more about working to provide explanations and a solution for the decaying body itself.

Utilizing the medical textualization of the aging body, beauty regimens and skincare products established the ideal skin condition as young, healthy, clear, elastic, and “blooming,” in opposition to the old, sick, opaque, and stiff skin of a declining body. While recent studies have brought critical attention to skin as a theoretical concept ingrained with gender and racial dynamics, that skin was an integral signifier of age has been largely undertheorized.¹⁷⁰ The concept of aging, and particularly the medical understanding of the aging process, informed the era’s theorization of skin and undergirded the fundamentals of the skincare market.

Popular medical texts explained aging as a decaying process that changed the *texture* of the body. It was believed that aging brought about a gluey, dried, and hardened bodily frame that was visible on the surface of the skin. And such textures of the body were defined as intrinsic qualities of the aging process and old bodies. For example, Cheyne described aging as a mechanical process of “becom[ing] firm and hard” (221). When the time comes, he declared, a body becomes dry “Solids wanting Elasticity” (206). While Cheyne used tactual imageries more broadly, the reality of aging was distinctly tactile. Combined with developing medical discussions around dermis, skin was where the materiality of aging was visibly embodied. New scientific discourse identified skin as not just a layer but a transparent organ that signaled what is

¹⁷⁰ See Rosenthal, Senior, and Woods.

underneath (Woods 51-53). A clear healthy skin denoted youth whereas the dry, stiff, and opaque exterior displayed the viscid inside of an aged body. Contemporaries saw health in a youth's glowing skin as well as declining health in a wrinkled face. Although there were other visible signs of aging that were marked by contemporaries, such as grey hairs, altered body postures, or the way one dressed (Ottaway *Decline of Life* 44), skin was a prominent body organ that manifested one's agedness.

While the majority of the skincare manuals and beauty products were dedicated to the female sex, men were also active participants in the market.¹⁷¹ Corporeal management was perceived as a social responsibility of a "polite" individual of both sexes, although with different kinds of exaction for men.¹⁷² At the same time that women were pressured to take care of their youthfulness, the health-concerned culture also expected men to be attentive regarding their bodily well-being and look the part. Men's bodies and appearances also had "social currency, a great visual immediacy" (Yallop *Age and Identity* 11). Being too keen on physical appearances (such as wearing a wig or powdering the head) had the risk of being effeminate (Withey 229). Yet caring for the aging body or aspiring to youthfulness was not under the same kind of censure. Rather, with aging perceived as a matter of personal choice, to *not* care for the aging body was equivalent to being socially neglectful. According to one manual, "Personal negligence not only implies an insufferable indolence, but an indifference whether we please or not" (Physician 3-4). Premature aging or evident signs of aging signaled a lack of social awareness and an absence of principle in a man. Anti-aging regimens and beauty products were, therefore, crucial sites of cultural engagement for both sexes.

¹⁷¹ The male sex participated in the anti-aging industry both as consumers and producers. See Martin for how male contemporaries were providers of medicalized beauty products; see Withey for an examination of men's shaving activity as a part of a larger cultural engagement with the "cult of youth."

¹⁷² For the gendered expectations of male politeness, see Cohen.

Not everyone had the opportunity to relish the promise of the anti-aging goods and manuals. Despite a plethora of beauty regimens and popular skincare products that could, in theory, be applied by anyone, they were not accessible to all. Some simply did not have access to the goods, the money to purchase, or the time to care. In *Persuasion*, in response to Sir Walter's violent contempt against the sailor's aged face, Mrs. Clay, an opportunistic family companion of a lower status, protests.

“Nay, Sir Walter,” cried Mrs Clay, “this is being severe indeed. Have a little mercy on the poor men. We are not all born to be handsome. . . . it is only the lot of those who are not obliged to follow any, who can live in a regular way, in the country, choosing their own hours, following their own pursuits, and living on their own property, without the torment of trying for more; it is only their lot, I say, to hold the blessings of health and a good appearance to the utmost: I know no other set of men but what lose something of their personableness when they cease to be quite young.” (22-23)

Mrs. Clay points out that sailors gain aged faces because they are not aristocrats. They “lose something of their personableness” because they are not born with privileges—one that make blooming looks ready to be expressed. Time and money are spent on living in not “regular ways,” perhaps in the city, going about their job, spending hours following others' demands, paying rents, with all the “torment of trying for more.” Mrs. Clay goes on to explain how it is the same with other professions including soldiers, clergyman, physicians, and lawyers. They are all careworn with “a toil and a labour of the mind, if not of the body, which seldom leaves a man's looks to the natural effect of time” (22-23). They age, decay faster, and unwillingly and perhaps unknowingly, let go of their youth. “When they cease to be quite young,” they in fact stop looking young.

Sir Walter Elliot with all the gifts of beauty and dignity, far away from the torment of surviving the world, is “blooming as ever.” Unlike the ravaged agedness of the commoners, he believes his privileged blood gives him immunity from the havoc of time. Critics have noted how Sir Walter is a character who resists the idea of temporal change. Pam Morris, for instance, takes note of how “Sir Walter’s denial of time and change within his own mental world, [is] expressed by him as contempt for those unable to resist the material depredations of empirical temporality” (139). He not only refuses to acknowledge the social changes taking place (e.g. a naval officer, Mr. Crofts, literally replacing him, the baronet, and his family estate) and regards class mobility as “offensive” (22), but also resists the temporality of physical change. Presumably dotting on beauty products, admiring his fine features in a room of looking-glasses, Sir Walter, aged fifty-four, stays “blooming” amidst the wrecks of aging. But this is *not* just because of his superiority, Austen suggests.

As witnessed in his scathing remarks on the admiral’s weather-beaten face, Sir Walter seems to judge everyone (regardless of class) who does not make an effort to maintain blooming looks. The next section examines the irony of Sir Walter’s investment in the beauty industry and demonstrates how the anti-aging skincare market exercises the notion of class in order to appeal to the aspiring individuals of different classes. Taking Gowland’s Lotion as a prime example, I first show that the skincare market was underpinned by faith in an individual’s control over his classed body, while resting on a class-bound framework at the same time.

Gowland’s Lotion: A Superior Skin for All

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Robert Dickinson and Thomas Vincent published multiple essays on the success and value of an exalted beauty product of the era, Gowland’s

Lotion.¹⁷³ A celebrated “appendage to every Toilet of fashion” (*Epitome* 4) and a personal favorite of Sir Walter, Gowland’s Lotion was sold for 10 shillings and 6 pence (roughly equivalent to £330)¹⁷⁴ per quart bottle in Grosvenor Square Street, London in 1790 (W. Bacon 13). This exorbitantly priced face lotion was vouched for by more than twenty persons of quality (see fig. 15),¹⁷⁵ made its inventor John Gowland a royal apothecary, and even spurred a foul family feud over the “original” recipe.¹⁷⁶ Publicized as “an universal cleanser and clearer of the skin, and an improver of the common complexion” (*Cutaneous Diseases* 54), it promised to clear all kinds of skin malfunctions including dryness, freckles, eruptions, coarseness, paleness, redness, shingles, and scurvy among others, and to restore the ever-vague “bloom.” Moneyed customers plagued Gowland and flurried over to the shop all day, Dickinson reports, to purchase this promise that came in a little bottle. Combined with the fact that the devastating side effects caused by mercury and lead that were contained in the lotion were soon to discredit its

¹⁷³ It is believed that John Gowland, the original inventor of Gowland’s Lotion, was disinclined to publicly advertise the product in the press. The product nevertheless gained much popularity by the mid-century. After Gowland’s death, Thomas Vincent, a close friend of Gowland, took over the business of Gowland’s lotion with his son-in-law Robert Dickinson who worked with Vincent and later owned the business. Following a public fight over the “genuine recipe,” essays written in the 1790s almost worked like an advertisement but not precisely. Starting with the 1792 publication of *An Account of the Nature and Effects of Gowland’s Lotion*, Dickinson and Vincent published essays for the next decade, both together and separately, including *On the Power and Effect of Gowland’s Lotion* (1793) and *Epitome of a Manuscript Essay on Cutaneous Diseases, and Impurities of the Skin* (1794) that purportedly explain the workings of the lotion. After Vincent’s death, Dickinson published solely from 1800. See Corley.

¹⁷⁴ Approximately calculated with reference to John J. McCusker’s computation system that converts past currency into modern monetary value. Because McCusker’s system is developed out of American data, not British, and as much heated debate around this model continues, the resulted conversion remains a rough conjecture. Combined with a similar result (£320.95, if converted from 1830s into 2000 currency) from Merris and Gaskins’ calculation system, the converted monetary sum provides a rough idea of how expensive Gowland’s Lotion was.

¹⁷⁵ The testimonies for Gowland’s Lotion, which worked like a modern-day customer review, were first published in 1792 in the later pages of *An Account*. Later, *Epitome of a Manuscript* also published what was called “Cases” and “Testimonials” including no less than twenty-three customers vouching for the efficacy and safety of the product. *An Essay on Cutaneous Diseases* (1800) follows this format and lists a number of letters of recommendation adding new testimonies.

¹⁷⁶ Vincent’s wife, Maria Elizabeth, attempted to create her own recipe for commercial purposes under the name of Mrs. Vincent and fought with Vincent publicly about whose product had the effective superiority. See Corley.

achievements,¹⁷⁷ Gowland's Lotion is just the artifact Austen will have Sir Walter believe in. It is fashionable, expensive, and a sham.

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only, and I have given proofs of the truth of this assertion; I have said, that the mode of treating them, ought to be local; and both authority, facts, and reasoning, have confirmed what I have advanced.

But whatever opinion may be entertained of this hypothesis, whatever notion the afflicted may have of the cause of their complaint, they may be completely assured, that every cutaneous disorder, from the slightest to the most distressing, will be effectually removed by this Lotion.

I confidently assert, that my Lotion is a specific for these eruptions; and I appeal to those who have experienced its efficacy, after they had been disappointed by internal means.

The following cases are selected from a number too large for the limits of this pamphlet; and several of them are published at the particular request of the parties; and their testimony, if the reader thinks proper personally to apply to them, will remove every scruple that incredulity itself could retain.

CASES.

The respectability of the following Names must, of course, supersede the necessity of any further remark; they cannot fail of bringing conviction to the minds of all who are open to conviction, and must at once establish the credit and efficacy of the Lotion. They are the testimonies of persons whose characters and situation place them far above the possible suspicion of their having sent them merely to favour the Proprietor, and at the expence of honour, truth, and justice, to impose upon mankind.

They are not taken from obscure or distant situations, but come from persons well known on the spot, and (more than willing) they desire to be applied to.

TESTIMONIALS

Of the Use and Efficacy of the GENUINE GOWLAND'S LOTION, prepared by ROBERT DICKINSON, Son in-law to Mr. THOMAS VINCENT, No. 55, LONG-ACRE.

THE FOLLOWING VERY LIBERAL NOTE IS JUST RECEIVED FROM THE MUCH ADMIRER MRS. CROUCH, OF THE THEATRE ROYAL.

"MRS. CROUCH's compliments to Mr. Dickinson, begs his acceptance of the inclosed note, as a small acknowledgment for his good-natured attention in recommending to her his Gowland's Lotion, which she has the pleasure to tell him has perfectly cured her face."

May 18, 1793, No. 20, Suffolk-street,

To

[22]

To Mr. VINCENT.

"SIR,

"HAVING got some bottles of your Gowland's Wash from Mr. Elder, of Edinburgh, and it being near finished, I will esteem it as a favour, if you will send me down to Bristol, four bottles, pints, at 5s. 3d. each, of the genuine Gowland's Wash.

"I have found it a great cleanser and clearer of the skin, though at first it is esteemed rather an alarming scurf.

"Let them be carefully packed, and sent by James Sartain James's flying waggon, for Mrs. Patterson Anstruther, at Mr. Calder's, Apothecary, Downy Square, Hot-Wells, Bristol.

Hot Wells, Bristol,
Jan. 5, 1793.

I am, &c.
A. P. W. ANSTRUTHER."

This lady is sister-in-law to Mr. ANSTRUTHER, the Member of Parliament, and one of the Welch Judges, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

Mr. DICKINSON, No. 55, Long-Acre.

"SIR,

"I do freely permit you the use of my name in your pamphlets; and also, if you think proper, in the Hull Packet. I have a satisfaction in allowing you this privilege, as it must convince the world that my complaint proceeded neither from a foul contaminated habit, or from drinking;—a conclusion that must always be drawn from a cure's being obtained by your medicine. This accounts for the readiness with which such respectable persons grant you the use of their names, as it is a circumstance even flattering to themselves.

"For nine years I was afflicted with a very violent, painful, and disgusting eruption, which almost covered my face. During this time, I was almost constantly taking the different medicines in use for such complaints, but without any other effect than to injure my general health: I also visited Harrogate, Scarborough, and the other watering-places, with as little success: fortunately I at length heard of your Gowland's Lotion; three bottles of it have entirely cured me; the alternate itching and burning have subsided, and my face has become perfectly smooth, cool, and comfortable, and free from any disease whatever.

"This you are at liberty to publish, both for the reasons above stated, as well as to beget a confidence in the public mind, from which they themselves may eventually benefit.

"I am your's, &c.
Hull, Dec. 12, 1793.
High street, corner of Scale-lane.

"FRANCIS STANTON."

"SIR,

"So far from having any objection to your adding my name to your list, I think, with Mr. Stanton, that you are doing me a favour. I have been esteemed a drunkard, from the single circumstance of a red nose, and eruptive face; your Lotion, in curing the latter, has also freed me from the imputation of the former. Independent of this, I really wish to serve your medicine, as from the benefit I have received, I believe it a good one, and fully competent to the uses for which you recommend it.

"I am your's, &c.
Dec. 1793.

"SAMUEL DAVIES.
"Proprietor of the King's Head Inn, Beverley."

"SIR,

"HAVING received very great benefit from the use of your Gowland's Lotion, I cannot help taking this method to acknowledge: and assure you, I shall

Figure. 15. First two pages of "Cases" from *Epitome of a Manuscript* (1794) transcribing letters written by customers vouching for the effect of Gowland's Lotion.

¹⁷⁷ Though there is no physical evidence that Austen knew about Gowland's Lotion, by the time she was writing *Persuasion*, the harmful side effects of Gowland's Lotion were publicly known. See Correy 45 and Thomas 662.

Sir Walter's particular trust in Gowland's Lotion is expressed when the heroine of *Persuasion*, Anne, his least favorite daughter, appears with "greatly improved" (118) looks. He sees her "less thin in her person, in her cheeks; her skin, her complexion, greatly improved; clearer, fresher" (118). Curious about how Anne managed to have "the bloom and freshness of youth restored," he asks "Had she been using any thing in particular?" (87, 118). He is not only convinced that a beauty regimen is behind this restored youth but also takes for granted that she must be using some kind of beauty product. When Anne answers that she is not using anything at all, he immediately responds "Merely Gowland" (118). "Merely Gowland" not because the product is insignificant but because subscribing to Gowland's Lotion is such a basic routine that it does not count for a special measure for Sir Walter. He is genuinely surprised—"Ha!" (118)—when Anne confirms she is not using the lotion at all. Still convinced of its power, Sir Walter insists on his recommendation to Anne, "Gowland, the constant use of Gowland" (118), revealing his faith in this fashionable skincare product.¹⁷⁸

Sir Walter, as an exigent practitioner of evergreen "bloom," apparently has codes for resisting aging: he subscribes to daily application of Gowland's Lotion during the time of his financial retrenchment and, as shown by his sometimes passionate and sometimes blasé comments on the physical beauty or lack of it in others, he subscribes to anti-aging beauty practices that are derived from prolongevity principles. One of the repeated rules he mentions is to stay out of sharp winds and cold frosts. Fussing over his youngest daughter Mary's red nose, he says that he would have sent her a new hat and pelisse "If I thought it would not tempt her to

¹⁷⁸ It might not have been unusual to see male consumers of Gowland's Lotion. An essay written to promote it enlists many male consumers who attest to the lotion's efficacy. These men comment on their own experiences with the effect of the lotion, how they recommended it to other male contemporaries as well as to female companions, and how they will stay devoted to the lotion (Dickinson 54-59). Another promotional essay for Gowland's Lotion includes a section on the benefits of the lotion for gentlemen under the act of shaving (*Epitome* 2).

go out in sharp winds, and grow coarse” (116). Here, Sir Walter particularizes “sharp winds” as a cause of aging, revealing his active participation in anti-aging discourse. It was a relatively widespread idea that a certain quality of air or weather ages a person.¹⁷⁹ But for Sir Walter to name wind as the external cause for aging Mary is problematic. Not simply because it is wrong—as the prudent Anne seems to suggest—but because by acknowledging the power of an outside force, he is accepting a belief that acquired qualities could override inborn heritage in the matters of aging.

It is no coincidence that wind is picked out as the cause for aging Mary. Just like the sailors whose encounter with “every climate, and every weather” aged them, Sir Walter’s youngest daughter with his own privileged blood running through her veins is growing haggard because of harsh wind. Despite Sir Walter’s cruel evaluation of his daughter as having only an “inferior value” (11) because she merely married a country gentleman, Mary should not exhibit the same lowliness as sailors. As much as he would like to believe the opposite, there is plenty of evidence that superior blood may not result in a superior “person.” Indeed, to his greatest misfortune, the horrid agedness exists at home: “he could plainly see how old all the rest of his family and acquaintances were growing. Anne haggard, Mary coarse, every face in the neighbourhood worsting, and the rapid increase of the crow’s foot about Lady Russell’s temples had long been a distress to him” (12). In the aging faces of the worthier people, the dichotomy between rugged common faces and superior bloom becomes unstable. An aging face is indeed an unreliable marker of class inferiority.

¹⁷⁹ The long-held belief in Galenic six non-naturals (diet, sleep, evacuation, air, exercise, and passion) was very much revived in the eighteenth-century’s self-care regimens. This traditional theory argued that various factors of an individual’s immediate environment swayed the condition of their health, and prescribed ways to balance the humoral harmony of the vital fluids.

It is ironic, therefore, that Sir Walter believes in cultivating youthful looks. The irony of his investment in skincare is that it seems precious aristocratic blood is insufficient to keep away the careworn signs of aging. In his faith in Gowland's Lotion, he subscribes to a belief that the aging body is a responsive entity subject to an individual's management, a concept that might be at odds with his essential belief in the congruity between "person and situation." Taking the gist of the Enlightenment tenet of "mind over matter" (i.e. the power of an individual's will over physical substance), beauty regimens and skincare products promoted the idea that a youthful face/body was more than ever a product of cultivation. Beauty regimens guaranteed they "may be used at any time without the least danger, ... having never been known to fail of success" (Chambers v). They often promised to "Remove the Appearance of OLD AGE AND DECAY" (Physician) and restore youthful looks for all consumers who applied proper care. Although the idea of beauty as a gift was a consistent creed, under this self-care mantra, youthful looks were effectively a physical result of an agent's awareness and control. The aging body was to be constantly cared for and monitored regardless of class. Those born superior, even those as superior as Sir Walter, were to take care of their aging appearances and avoid irritation and external stimulus like the sharp winds. As seen in Sir Walter's love for Gowland's Lotion, social elites purchased their way into the cultural ideal, as did the rest of the society. Furthered by the simultaneous consumer revolution "making all markers of distinction available to anybody for a price" and thus "threatening to undermine—even annihilate—familiar categories of distinction and identification" (Wahrman 203, 204), a "blooming" skin, a physical sign of superiority, was now a cultural achievement, an earned reward of goods and care.

This is what Gowland's Lotion promise: to display that badge of social distinction and cultural refinement, that is, a clear, blooming skin.¹⁸⁰ With Gowland's Lotion, anyone who could afford it could express the look of the superior and reject the "common complexion." It was an even more subversive disruption of the markers of class than wearing luxurious clothes because it supposedly changed the body itself. It promised to alter the look of the "common" and to have any consumer embody a sign of superiority. To incorporate this highly sensitive claim, the promotional essays of Gowland's Lotion devised an interesting tactic.

Gowland's Lotion is first situated as a valid skincare product that supports an existing class mentality. Robert Dickinson, the successive proprietor of the lotion, published *An Essay on Cutaneous Diseases, and Impurities o[f] the Skin* (1800),¹⁸¹ a two-part essay based on a text allegedly written by Gowland himself before his death. Dickinson announced that because the hype about this beauty product was generating "spurious compositions" (3), he publishes this essay, despite his professed disinclination for public advertisement, in order to explain how Gowland's Lotion works legitimately. He recommended Gowland's Lotion for a range of cutaneous malfunctions alongside highly medicalized explanations of the anatomy of skin. While promoting the benefits of the lotion in scientific terms, *Cutaneous Diseases* targets the soft spot of the fashionable wannabees. The first section of Part II begins:

It is to be lamented, and indeed is rather hard that those very persons whose skins are most delicate, and naturally best calculated to exhibit a superior degree of brilliancy and

¹⁸⁰ Gowland's Lotion was specifically advertised for treating scurvy which was known to affect eighteenth-century sailors most widely. The promotional essays make explicit points about the product being useful for scurvy and *Cutaneous Diseases* even has a dedicated section for scurvy titled "Of the Real Scurvy," 38-41. In *An Account of Several Valuable and Excellent Genuine Patent and Public Medicines*, Bacon refers to the product as an effective cure for scorbutic disturbances for men and women (13). *Persuasion* does not particularly refer Gowland's Lotion to sailors. Instead, much scholarship on Gowland's Lotion examines its usage for treating venereal disease (especially syphilis) and how Mrs. Clay's application of the product insinuates her moral depravity. The fact that Sir Walter recommends it to his own daughter makes such an argument rather doubtful.

¹⁸¹ I will refer to this text as *Cutaneous Diseases* from this point.

lustre, are most subject to be affected from being least competent to bear those fluctuating changes of the weather, to which in this country, we are so constantly exposed. It is, however, some consolation to know, that a very short use of the Lotion will presently display the superiority they actually possess, and which they are naturally so well intitled to exhibit. (53-54)

While mainly appealing to the female sex by summoning the “delicate” part of society, this text establishes the necessity of Gowland’s Lotion on the inborn “superiority” of possible consumers. And it strategically brings contemporary nerve theory into work. As scholars including John Mullan and Roy Porter have well established, the idea of nerves and the degree of nervous delicacy were cultural notions that reflected existing concepts of social distinction.¹⁸² Delicate nerves were considered an essential part of socially elite bodies, associated with an elevated sense of one’s surroundings and consequently a supreme intelligence and morality. This heightened sensibility, however, was said to make those with finer bodily frames more susceptible to various nervous disorders. *Cutaneous Diseases* applies this paradoxical nature of supreme nerves to skin and identifies delicate skin as both a gift and a curse. As Dickinson claims, although superior people may have finer, more delicate skin, that excellency makes them “least competent to bear” the many stimuli of the world. As such, “superior” people must work to restore and preserve that superior skin.

Without seemingly upsetting the class structure and even endorsing it at times, Gowland’s Lotion democratized skincare and encouraged an individual’s control over his bodily fate. And at its center exists the concept of aging. The text shrewdly frames cutaneous malfunctions in highly analogous terms to the aging process and highlights the universality of the

¹⁸² See Beatty, Cheyne xxx, Churchill, and Mullan’s *Sentiment and Sociability*, 201-40.

human body. When the promotional essays address bloom, they indicate that having (or losing) bloom works “ALIKE IN ALL PERSONS; [because] its parts are universally the same in every individual” (*Cutaneous Diseases* 57). Bloom is here conceived as a matter of health status, a physical outcome of a healthy bodily process rather than an expression of inborn superiority. Paleness—the opposite of bloom—is likewise defined as a result of blocked circulations (*Cutaneous Diseases* 57-58), a dysfunctional bodily process that may occur to any and all bodies.

In fact, *Cutaneous Diseases* considers all skin malfunctions as the material result that comes from an obstructed perspiration, an operation that very much resembles the process of aging.

This Lotion, by a gently stimulating quality re-opens the pores, dissolves the condensed perspirable matter, and excites the action of the skin to a discharge of its stagnated contents. Restores and continues its natural functions, and thereby renders, and preserves it THIN, TRANSPARENT, SOFT, and ELASTIC. (54)

Cutaneous Diseases explains that Gowland’s Lotion helps treat skin disorders as it discharges the blockage which hinders the normal cutaneous operation. The text contends that skin disorders are essentially due to the condensation of pores and capillary arteries that are filled with “perspirable matter.” It further notes that this arises from a want of energy that is used to fight off the many disturbances experienced under normal circumstances and stagnated matters get lodged up on the surface layer of the body. The skin, then, “becomes indurated, thickened, and opaque” (*Cutaneous Diseases* 54) with ensuing disruptions. Gowland’s Lotion tends to this operation directly, it claims. As Gowland explained, “Its Principle of Action,” was that “it opens the pores of the skin, excites the languid vessels to their proper action, thereby relieves

obstructed perspiration” (*Epitome* 4). The secret of the lotion is in its ability to eliminate the “thick and turgid virus” that will “clog and thicken” the vessels and glands (*Epitome* 4).

Considering the lay medical culture consisted of “well-informed, public-spirited, and responsible layman” (Porter, “Lay Medical Knowledge” 163) attuned to the languages of prolongevity self-care, Georgian contemporaries would have seen an aged body in these descriptions of malfunctioning skin. The taxonomies chosen to characterize the status of skin disorders strongly invoked the popular medical characterization of the aging process. Indeed, obstructed perspiration and its tactile consequences were the essential medical characteristics of all old bodies. Cheyne identified old bodies as “unelastick, ... their Perspiration little” (207), underscoring the lacking perspiration and its hardening effects. Robert James in *A Medical Dictionary* (1743-1745) also defined aging as a process of damming pores. He says that “when old age begins to approach, ... the Pores are shut up, and the Vessels are too full,” and then, “the cutaneous Pores are obstructed, the several Excretion must of course be retarded” (“The Regimen for Old Age”), utilizing almost the exact terms and framework as that of the cutaneous disorders. The workings of Gowland’s Lotion also called upon the fundamental anti-aging mechanism of purging¹⁸³—a process of discharging stagnated contents to stimulate circulations and perspirations—as it employed “purification” as its method of cure. The product’s motto to keep the skin “THIN, TRANSPARENT, SOFT, and ELASTIC” is identical to anti-aging regimens’ prescript for retaining health. Although it was considered impossible to perfectly clean and dilute (i.e. purge) the body, endeavoring to make the bodily juices “a thin, clear, insipid Fluid” (Cheyne 225) as much as possible was the grand lesson of prolongevity regimens.

¹⁸³ Although Gowland uses this idea of purging to explain the workings of the lotion, he argues against the traditional treatment of purging like bloodletting or various methods for correcting the imbalance of the fluid. Gowland’s essay as a whole is a defense for a local remedy and a direct rebuke against the humoral therapy.

Such rhetoric of the aging process rendered the cutaneous malfunctions something that all persons of every class could experience. By utilizing the decaying materiality of the aging bodies as a reference point for skin disorders, the text emphasized not only the universally negative effects of aging on the human body, but also the possibility of fixing such undesirable looks by applying this lotion. While there may be differing degrees of vulnerability for skin disorders, the basic operation of the cure functions in the same way. Just as the concept of aging applies to all human bodies, this beauty product works the same for everyone, benefiting all bodies of various classes. As Dickinson protests, “persons of every description and of every rank in life” will see the results of Gowland’s Lotion (*Cutaneous Diseases* 4), if its extortionate price were not an issue.

Gowland’s Lotion was thus an item for *general* use.¹⁸⁴ It was an “improver of the common complexion,” a “general cleanser and clearer of the skin” (*Cutaneous Diseases* 12). The common looks such as coarseness, dryness, agedness, or darkness—the typical characteristics of the working class—could be “purged.” Those other than the aristocracy could very well reject the look of the common and display the look of the superior. Gowland’s Lotion, in essence, was a beauty product that spurred the hopes of an individual’s control over his class-determined bodily fate.

Introducing Gowland’s Lotion as a favorite skincare item of a vain aristocrat Sir Walter, *Persuasion* demonstrates how his essentialist belief in class-determined looks is debunked by his obsession with youthful—and superior—looks. Austen’s *Persuasion*, particularly the repeated

¹⁸⁴ The collection of essays for Gowland’s Lotion investigated in this article is curiously rather timid about addressing cutaneous signs of aging as its focal point. While they take bloom as the evidence of youthful health and the lack of it as pathological, they rarely make explicit comments about signs of aging that would appear on the skin of the face such as wrinkles. Perhaps it was a strategy devised to appeal to the larger population of younger customers, or, as implied in the exaggerated emphasis on the product’s scientific validity, it could be that it was to avoid being branded as a quackish item promising evergreen youth.

references to Gowland's Lotion by Sir Walter Elliot, offers insight into how the era's investment in daily anti-aging skincare practices were a discursive process that fueled the democratization of the body. And through exposing the irony of Sir Walter's subscription to the anti-aging culture—one that he is too inflexible to recognize—Austen takes away the authority he and his way of life once had. As the aging process became a manageable product commodified under promising regimens and rosy beauty products, to read class distinction in the body was already invalid. Sir Walter's anti-aging practices as well as his resistance to aging demonstrate, perhaps to his surprise and to Austen's point, that the promises of skincare products—i.e. preservation and restoration of blooming skin—are disruptive to the existing social distinctions of class.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ This section is a modified version of "Aging Faces and Gowland's Lotion in Austen's *Persuasion*" published in the special issue, "Narratives of Ageing in the Nineteenth Century," of *Age, Culture, Humanities* 2021 and has been reproduced here with the permission of the copyright holder.

CODA

The Aging Mind and Body charts long eighteenth-century British literature's engagement with the concept of aging. I have shown how many writers of the era interacted with the friction between the traditional divergence aging model and the rising convergence aging model, revealing the diverse ways distinct aspects of aging were identified, relegated, and neglected for different intersectional groups, underscoring the privileges and marginalization in literary imaginations of aging.

I began by considering Robinson Crusoe's adventures in old age. For Crusoe, aging was *fixed* in that it allowed him to continue on with his identity without being summed up to a final lesson of wisdom—a type of aging I argue is based on his white privilege. For Jonathan Swift, the increasing assumption that aging brings with it an *altered* body and the mind concerned him. Turning his physical and mental decline into an opportunity for demonstrating his virtuosity, and by relegating the more undesirable effects of aging to woman, Swift reclaims aging to his benefit. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Leapor remind us of the male privileges of such a poetic tactic by revealing how a woman's aging takes a different shape because of the intricate tie between her body and identity. In their confusion and indignation for the altered and aging female body, Montagu and Leapor show the gendered reality of aging that cannot be escaped. Surveying their altered and aging female body from a female perspective, they expose the failure of the beauty regimen and utilize the explicitly gendered medical understanding of aging to their poetic creativity. These aging poets do not wish to “free” themselves from the negative associations of aging. On the contrary, they explore the supposedly negative aspects of aging to see what challenges they raise and use those challenges to their poetic advantage. My third chapter addressed the unsettling power of *variant* hetero-sexuality in old age. In *Fanny Hill*, we

see the dangerous potency as well as the incredible liberation of sexually desirous old people as it plays with the contesting medical notions regarding sexuality in old age. The final chapter examined another form of privileged aging in Austen's works; in the ways Mr. Woodhouse and Sir Walter are *resistant* to aging, Austen shows how their failure to accept their aging is intricately tied to their class mentality. By examining the multiple types of aging, I reveal not only the innovative and powerful ways eighteenth-century writers made sense of aging but the imposed prejudice and privileges in such measures. In closing, I want to pose some questions that my project further invites in this respect in the order of my chapters.

Intersectional Reading that Accounts for Age and Aging

Age studies has come a long way. Compared to the time when Amelia DeFalco noted the serious lack of scholarly attention to age in major identity politics discussion in 2010 (xv), age is no longer an easily neglected identity category. The seminal and continued works of Margaret Morganroth Gullett and Devoney Looser as well as the recent contributions from Andrea Charise, James Farr, and Habiba Ibrahim are filling the silence in humanities and literary studies about the cultural and ethical issues of age and aging. Where we need yet more is scholarship on the intersectional nature of age and aging.

In an effort to continue the scholarly scrutiny that illustrates the historical import of the racialized aging that Edelstein and Ibrahim initiated, my first chapter attended to the colonial implications in Crusoe's vigorous aging. Such an exploration, however, needs to be expanded to include Asian subjects and nationality. For example, while my dissertation has focused on societal views of aging and how they impacted ideas of the self and individual identity in Britain,

a focused reading of Asian aging in *RC2* would suggest that theories of aging influenced eighteenth-century understandings of the progress of nations on a global scale.

Analyzing Crusoe's description of China through the lens of aging offers a new way of reading his Eurocentric perspective that privileges certain kinds of civilization. In *RC2*, Crusoe adventures through multiple Asian countries including Bengal, Sumatra (a part of Indonesia), and China. The way he treats them are quite different from how he approaches the more familiar—for Crusoe and for eighteenth-century readers—colonial subjects from places such as Madagascar and the Caribbean. As a prime example, the cruel and dismissive attitude Crusoe shows to Chinese people in the second half of *RC2* is incomparably harsh. He is angry and vehement to a level the reader is not familiar with. In the name of “saving” the Pagans from their barbarity, Crusoe kills people, destroys the “Log of an Idol” (*RC2* 307) that the Chinese worship; his hatred toward China is so strong he claims he does not want to stay there any longer. As much as he is hesitant to reflect whether his action guards the glory of God, he still continues to bomb the native idol and even ties the people up to watch their idol get destroyed.

As a point of comparison, in one moment when Crusoe witnesses a burning of a village in Madagascar, Crusoe describes it with such a horror and indignation, one is tempted to think that Crusoe has evolved from a self-centered colonial settler mentality. Crusoe shows a humanitarian attitude to the people of Madagascar, acknowledging that the Europeans (his crew members) had little to attack them. There is a genuine horror in Crusoe's description of the manslaughter done by his crewmembers. The bombing of the village, the killing of women and children, the insane craze of murder are reported in gory details that make Crusoe's “very Soul shrunk within me, and . . . Blood ran chill in my Veins” (*RC2* 218). He describes the action of the European crewmembers as “Instances of Rage, altogether barbarous, and of a Fury

something beyond what was human, that we thought it impossible our Men could be guilty of it” (*RC2* 217). He writes “I looked upon all the Blood they shed that Night to be Murder in them” (*RC2* 222). Crusoe is so abhorred by the pillage—he shouts “‘Barbarous Dog!’ said I, ‘What are you doing! I won’t have one Creature touched more, upon Pain of Death; I charge you, upon your Life, to stop your Hands, and stand still here, or you are a dead Man this Minute’” (*RC2* 219-20)—that he gets into trouble and finally gets kicked out of the ship. It seems Crusoe, perhaps mindful of contemporary debates taking place in England on proper action against the “savages,” is here figured as a wise old “savior.”

Compared to such a focus on a humanitarian attitude and his claimed hatred for violence against innocent people, Crusoe is merciless toward China. Most importantly, he is so emphatic about characterizing China as a curious combination of civilization and immature savagery. His concern, it seems, comes from the fact that China has a long history that, for Crusoe, cannot be equated with wisdom or civilization that usually comes with a longer history of a nation. He accepts that China is an ancient country. He tells the reader how orderly the buildings are and how conveniently the city is laid out, but then he claims that he refuses to write about their lifestyle, ruling system, religion, or wealth due to their lack of worth (*RC2* 275-276). When he does mention such subjects his own judgment about how the civilization of China is of inferior quality fills the description. “It is very observable,” he writes,

that we wonder at the Grandeur, the Riches, the Pomp, the Ceremonies, the Government, the Manufacturers, the Commerce, and the Conduct of these People; not that it is to be wonder’d at, or indeed in the least to be regarded; but because, having first a true Notion of the Barbarity of those Countries, the Rudeness and the Ignorance that prevails there, we do not expect to find any such Things so far off. (*RC2* 276)

Defining China as “a barbarous Nation of Pagans, little better than savages” (*RC2* 276), Crusoe rationalizes his assessment by analyzing a list of fields such as their manner, religion, and commerce system.

In fact, much of his insistence on the “barbarity” of China comes from first, their religion and second, the commerce system. It is important to note that in the eighteenth-century, notably argued by Sir Bacon or Stewart Dugald, what is now referred to as “conjectural history” prevailed. It was an idea that the progress of nation follows a strict and unilineal evolution of hunting, pasture, agriculture, and commerce. Could China, a country with an established commerce system and an undeniably long national history, be said to be in the same “stage” or “age” as in European nations? Obviously, not for Crusoe. Crusoe remarks again and again how their commerce system and trade industry are of such insignificant size and carried out in a boorish manner. He mentions the size of the ship that is smaller compared to Europe, inferior navigation technique, and what he considers as a “short-sighted” knowledge of mathematics and astronomy. Crusoe depicts the commerce system of China as significantly coarse for a reason. The long history of China and the stage of commerce it seems to have reached must not result in China reaching the same stage as European nations. Crusoe, the shrewd colonialist, is fully conscious of the “age” of China.

This short reading of *RC2* shows the value of an intersectional reading that accounts for the concept of aging. The difficulty some Asian countries of long history presented and the disruptive power they had against the idea that Europe was the most developed, ethical, and,

well-aged country help us shed a new light on the rhetoric eighteenth-century contemporaries utilized to look at certain cultures.¹⁸⁶

There are more representations of intersectional aging that need to be further examined in the eighteenth-century context. My reading of multiple *variant* forms of sexuality in old age in *Fanny Hill* focused on how the simple existence of sexuality in an old body was considered, in general, abnormal as characters stray away from the supposed normative heterosexual life and sexual progress that prioritizes reproduction. There is limited historical study on how aging was sexualized in the setting of the eighteenth century for LGBTQAI+ people and their older bodies. Considering that their bodies were regarded as already variant from a heterosexual life, did the aging of LGBTQAI+ and their sexual life imagined to take on a different shape and course in contemporary discourse? Did what contemporaries understand as the “collapse of the sexes” in aging bodies—i.e., losing sexual distinction as well as sexual desire—make all aging bodies “queer?”

There is also much to be explored in sexual old bodies that do not need young bodies. The texts that I looked at such as *Fanny Hill*, Restoration dramas, and even Sade’s *The 120 Days of Sodom* portray an old person’s sexuality as variant by focusing on its inappropriate desire for a young body.¹⁸⁷ In this respect, the suggested matrimonial sex between Tabitha and Lismahago in *Humphry Clinker* deserves more study. Tabitha who is “rather fulsome in signifying her approbation of the captain’s love” (338), and Lismahago who “in order to shew how little vigour

¹⁸⁶ This has further implications for understanding the eighteenth century, particularly on how aging was used as a theme to understand various cultures with regards to “civilization.” Simultaneous to the Romantic attitude which condemned the vileness of civilization (e.g., luxury, debauchery, greed, gluttony, etc.), there was a medical discourse that argued that civilization makes for a younger lifestyle. It was believed that a lack of stimulus results in an earlier old age. In 1789, the American writer Benjamin Rush claims that the marks of old age are “more common among the inhabitants of country places, than of cities and still more so among the Indians of North America, than among the inhabitants of civilized countries” (349). As much as colonial places were imagined to be equipped with a lucrative vitality and forever-reproductive youth, they were also sometimes considered to be old, aged, and numbed.

¹⁸⁷ See Chapter 3, note 27.

was impaired by the fatigues of the preceding day,” dances a number and “leaped so high” (338), and the sexual satisfaction of both parties of aging bodies still wait to be studied under a larger historical and theoretical context.

Another lacuna lies in how the eighteenth century discussed senile dementia for different intersectional groups of people. Understandably, much of the scholarship on senile dementia attends to the nineteenth century when institutionalization, the creation of the discipline of gerontology, and formal professionalism of medical practices were initiated. However, the scandal of Jonathan Swift’s “madness” and his contemporaries’ confusion and shock at the difficulty of categorizing his cognitive decline either as madness or idiocy reveal that there is still much to learn about how cognitive aging was understood in the era. Considering that the distinction between idiocy and madness was crucial for distinguishing between humanity and animality for Enlightenment contemporaries, there is much scholarly gain in examining the history of senile dementia for a variety of intersectional categories. Finally, this nexus between disability and aging would benefit a discourse on intersectional caregiving. As in the case of *Emma*, the different ways increasing disabilities that some forms of aging bring about make it necessary that we discuss multiple forms of caregiving in the historical past.

This project contributes to a history of intersectional age and aging by attending to the privilege, marginalization, and complexity of different types of aging. It encourages us to see the privileges that are legible in the way people imagine aging and how literary portrayals of aging become a tool for different intersectional groups to confront and challenge injustices in eighteenth-century Britain. It is my hope that this project will reach out to a wide range of academics including literary critics, medical historians, gerontologists, and critical race and gender theorists, to remind them not only of age as an integral and intersectional category of

human identity but also of the crucial role the history of literary representation of aging plays in our modern time. As Helen Yallop reminds us, “History won’t help us solve the problems we face in our own aging society, but it does show us what is so historical about the problems we face and the questions we ask” (*Age and Identity* 149). Amidst the adultification of black children,¹⁸⁸ a 50-billion-dollar anti-aging industry, and the horrendous disregard for the death of older people dying of Covid-19, this is an awareness that is crucial to square up to and denaturalize the racist, sexist, and ableist ageism we inhabit today.

¹⁸⁸ A growing scholarly work is seen in the intersection between race studies and age studies. On February 5, 2021, engAGE center with Concordia’s Black Perspectives Office hosted a talk titled “Adultified Children of Colour: Intersections of Age and Race.” Here, Yasmin Jiwani and Kisha McPherson discussed the racial prejudice concerning adultification bias where children of color are considered as more like an adult, resulting in various biases in judicial and educational systems.

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Being Reduc'd, and Turning Thief; Her Taking Some Plate from an House on Fire; Her Turning Informer; Her Robbing in Man's Clothes; A Singular Adventure That Happen'd to Her at Bartholomew-Fair; Her Being Apprehended, Committed to Newgate, Try'd, and Cast for Her Life; Her Obtaining Transportation; Her Meeting with Her Quality-Husband in the Same Condition; Her Being Transported with Him; Her Second Settlement, and Happy Success in Virginia, and Settlement in Ireland; Her Estate, Penitence, Age, Death, Burial, Elegy, and Epitaph. printed and sold by T. Read, behind the Sun Tavern in Fleetstreet, 1723. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, link-gale-com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/apps/doc/CW0109411198/ECCO?u=msu_main&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=87e904cf&pg=1. Accessed 6 May 2022.

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