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Movement, passion, and nature's agency, 1701-1748

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MOVEMENT, PASSION, AND NATURE'S AGENCY, 1701-1748

by

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We, the undersigned members of the Graduate Faculty of The University of Alabama in Huntsville, certify that we have advised and/or supervised the candidate on the work described in this thesis. We further certify that we have reviewed the thesis manuscript and approve it in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English.

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ABSTRACT
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This thesis explores the ways in which several authors of the eighteenth century—Anne Finch, Alexander Pope, and John Cleland—considered nature as a motivating force that affects women's ability to make choices. The texts studied in the following chapters include "The Spleen," "The Introduction," *The Rape of the Lock*, and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. It may be tempting to interpret these texts through a modern lens in which we debate whether or not women possessed a form of agency during the period, particularly in light of current political discourse on the female image. But authors of the eighteenth century were not considering what we call "agency" directly. As such, my analysis attends to then-contemporary conceptions of nature—particularly the spleen and the passions—as part of a discourse in which writers of the period investigated female unpredictability, motility, and emotional response.

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In memory of my beloved mother, Kathy Ferniany.

Mom, this is for you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the following chapters, I propose that there is a figural logic of texts within the early eighteenth century that indicate how humans are pushed, or motivated, by forces of nature. For most scholars, representations of female agency within literature, whether restrictive or liberating, transcend the boundaries of the modern origins of the term, as it is applied in unlimited contexts. Paula Backscheider, for instance, discusses the agency of certain authors such as Anne Finch and defines agency as "the ability and will to act purposefully, independently, and self-consciously" (22). It may be tempting to interpret eighteenth-century texts through this modern lens, in which we debate whether or not women possessed a form of agency during the period—particularly in light of current political discourse regarding women (e.g. #MeToo and #TimesUp). But such readings overlook the importance of authorial intent as a critical approach through which we can understand how people of a certain period were thinking about specific topics. As such, the guiding question for this project is: modern assumptions notwithstanding, how did authors of the eighteenth century think about the realms of human experience that we call "agency" through the concept of nature?

It is for the sake of a contemporary perspective that I risk becoming an intentionalist and look to complicate our understanding of what we call "female agency"

in the eighteenth century by studying patterns of nature within texts. To do so, this thesis reads and analyzes the use of nature in the works of several prominent authors of the period—Anne Finch, Alexander Pope, and John Cleland. In order to work towards understanding the term nature from a contemporary perspective, this project takes into consideration several texts—including "The Spleen," "The Introduction," *The Rape of the Lock,* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*—of which the publications range from 1701 to 1748. I have chosen these texts for several reasons. These texts simultaneously center around representations of women moved by nature, interrogate the choice-making capabilities of women, and offer a compelling, illuminating intertextuality that speaks to the discourse of nature that was prevalent during the century.

The following chapters will utilize definitions of nature that Raymond Williams articulates in his book, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Williams argues that there are three general areas of meaning attributed to the term "nature": "(i) the essential quality and character *of* something; (ii) the inherent force which directs either the world, or human beings, or both; and (iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings" (219). Typically, modern scholars look at nature as either the physical world, or as a quality, an active will, instead of a force that directs the actions of people. This thesis, however, suggests that eighteenth-century authors were more concerned with nature as an ever-present, powerful force that controls humans. It is for this reason that my analysis will primarily utilize Williams's second definition of nature with a subsidiary focus on the first and third.

The second chapter, following the introduction, examines two of Anne Finch's poems—"The Spleen" (1701) and "The Introduction" (1713). In these poems, the ability to act is inextricably linked to the concept of motility because the ability to act is dependent upon movement and change. In this chapter, I exclusively consider nature with Williams's second definition, as the "inherent force which directs either the world or human beings, or both." This definition, already part of a larger group of century-specific definitions attributed to the term "nature" by Williams, can be collapsed to reveal small branches of a larger whole. This chapter maintains the assumption that Anne Finch used "the spleen" as a synecdoche for nature and in doing so, created representations of nature that suggest it has the ability to limit human motility. I argue that Finch considers nature to be a controlling force of all humans as it directs the course of human passion and emotion. Finch disputes the common assumption that women are more susceptible to forces of nature, such as the spleen, than men and instead looks to culture as the enforcer of female submission.

The third chapter examines Alexander Pope's mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). I have included *The Rape of the Lock* in order to understand how women were viewed as agents by their male contemporaries. Pope is a widely-studied author of the eighteenth century because of his poetic talents as well as his demonstrated proclivity for sharp, witty criticisms of his contemporaries; his most famous, or perhaps infamous, work demonstrating these qualities is *The Dunciad.* In works like these, Pope turns a critical eye toward fellow authors and produces high-quality writing that often critiques

elements of society.[1] These critiques, though often callous, offer a clear insight of eighteenth-century cultural perceptions. Therefore, Pope is an essential author to consider to understand how women were viewed as agents, particularly by influential male figures, in eighteenth-century society because of his close examination of the work of other poets and authors. This chapter posits that Pope views women as completely subject to the power of nature, as forces such as the spleen control their minds and bodies and determine actions.

The first two chapters will examine the capacity for action held by women in the works of Anne Finch in relation to Alexander Pope as representations of early eighteenth-century writing because both "The Spleen" and *The Rape of the Lock* incorporate an ardent search for the cause of human actions and behaviors—or, in modern parlance, a concern for individual "agency"—by exploring nature. Both poems begin with a direct question, or search, about the natural origins of human behavior. Finch begins her poem with, "What art thou Spleen, which ev'ry thing dost ape?" and Pope with, "What dire offence from amorous causes springs, / What mighty contests rise from trivial things" (I.1) (I.1). This search, structurally featured in both poems, is essential to understanding capacities for power because it indicates the presence of a compelling force that guides human action and limits the amount of authority one holds over their own body. Finch and Pope both choose to use the spleen as a synecdoche for the power of nature over human will. At the same time, Finch and Pope suggest that

[1] Sharon Young asserts that "Many of the key theorists of the period had dual roles as poet and arbiter of poetic taste...Dryden and Pope were perhaps the most celebrated of these poet-critics and this may account for the persistence of their reputation compared to those of equally prolific or well-regarded poets, such as Finch or Matthew Prior" (55).

individuals—particularly women—maintain control in one aspect, augmenting their nature. These chapters will closely look at how these poems imagine nature in relation to female will.

The final chapter will examine John Cleland's novel *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748). In this chapter, I make the argument that nature expresses itself in the form of amorous passions. In the course of the novel, Fanny often makes statements about her own nature and what is or is not natural to her. This prompted the question: why is the term nature consistently used in relation to women in *Memoirs*? As such, I chose to view the nature-discourse intertwined with acts of prostitution as a defined pattern that made Cleland's novel distinct from other prostitute narratives of the period. The Cleland chapter carefully considered the terms he uses for human anatomy, such as "machine" and "red-headed champion," and discusses how they are indicative of the relationship between nature and artifice that Cleland attempts to explore in the novel.

CHAPTER TWO

"EDUCATION'S, MORE THAN NATURE'S FOOLS": "THE SPLEEN" AND ANNE FINCH'S "INTRODUCTION" TO AGENCY

In her pindaric ode "The Spleen," a poetic expression of the effects of splenetic affliction, Anne Finch views "the spleen" as a force of nature that is both a destructor and a provider of female will. The spleen provides Finch with a platform for discussing what we now call "female agency" because it optimally demonstrates how humans are moved by nature.[2] Paula Backscheider has viewed "The Spleen" as a "signature poem" that symbolizes Finch's agency as a female poet (73). But how was Finch herself viewing women as "agents," or enactors of their own will, in eighteenth-century society?

In this chapter, I argue that, to Finch, the spleen is about being moved by nature; motility is a key component of the spleen because humans are not totally in control of their own moods, behaviors, or passions. Therefore, approaching Finch's work through nature yields a more skeptical view of Finch's feminism because it suggests how she was thinking about nature as a governing force of women. But, at the same time, Finch asserts that nature is an enforcer of male submission as well. I apply this skepticism in light of the fact that the works of Anne Finch have often been scrutinized as

[2] Coincidentally, it also provides Finch herself with a form of agency because her experience with the spleen gives Finch a topic to write about and benefit financially.

proto-feminist texts.[3] But her reluctance to publish one of her stronger feminist arguments, in "The Introduction," suggests that she was not as willing to openly identify as a champion for women as we might expect. This chapter maintains the claim that Finch's two poems "The Spleen" and "The Introduction" demonstrate a simultaneous, as well as contradictory, willingness and reluctance to consider nature as a controlling force of women. In other words, Finch accepts nature's power over human beings without accepting the submission of women as a natural phenomenon.

Finch's subject matter on nature and female mobility means that she is not only a good example of a female poet from the eighteenth century, but she is also a relevant and significant poet for scholars to study because of her relationship with modern discourse on female agency. As such, scholars such as Paula Backscheider have admirably drawn attention to Anne Finch as a great female poet of the eighteenth century who deserves a place in the literary canon. Finch's poem "The Spleen," published anonymously in 1701, makes thoughtful, personal contributions to eighteenth-century society's understanding of the fashionable illness of spleen; the poem makes a strong argument for the power of the spleen over bodily autonomy as well as Finch's idea of feminine power, or lack thereof. It is for this reason that I have chosen to consider the eighteenth-century conception of the term "nature" as a synonym, or alternative, to the modern idea of agency. I am interested in Finch for answering questions about female agency in the eighteenth-century because of her strong poetic career and published—as well as unpublished—work, as Backscheider calls attention to, but also because of the

[3] On "agency" in the works of Anne Finch, see Paula Backscheider's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency*; Kathryn R. King's *Female Agency and Feminocentric Romance*; Carol Barash's *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714: Politics, Community, and Linguistic Authority*.

complicated features of Finch's poetry that call both nature and culture into question as enforcers of female submission.

"The Spleen" tells us that, perhaps paradoxically, Finch understands the spleen as a destructive force that acts against human will as well as a form of power itself, through the use of "pretence." Katherine Rogers notes that in the eighteenth-century the spleen was "attributed to leisure and luxury on the one hand and refined sensitivity on the other" and therefore it was "naturally seen as an aristocratic disease" (18).[4] The problem for Finch is that the cultural norm of using the spleen as a form of fashion, to make oneself seem more aristocratic, is what limits women from achieving other potential forms of power. To Finch, women who pretend to be affected by nature and the spleen reproduce a perception of themselves in order to gain the ability to choose action. But this same perception they seek is ultimately what limits their capacity to act.

"The Spleen"

Anne Finch's chosen subject for her 1701 poem, "The Spleen," may be unfamiliar to modern audiences, but it was a popular, and fashionable, topic regarding melancholia in the eighteenth century. Melancholia was regarded as one of the four humors of the body. These humors were believed to determine the behavior of all humans at the time the poem was written and published.[5] In the eighteenth century, the spleen was known as

[4] On the fashionable and aristocratic nature of the spleen, see Katherine Rogers "Finch's 'Candid Account' vs. Eighteenth-Century Theories of the Spleen" (especially pages 17-19).

[5] Chantel Lavoie asserts that although Finch often shared her work with friends, "there is no indication in early correspondence that 'The Spleen' was composed before 1701" (108).

a condition "involving lack of emotional control, ranging from normal bad feeling (depression, discontent, ill temper) to madness" (Rogers 18). An affliction with many names, the spleen was also referred to as "the vapors," "hysteria," "hypochondria," and "melancholy," and it was accompanied by both physical and mental symptoms—the latter very similar to modern conceptions of depression, and often overlooked in favor of the physical (Rogers 17). Because it was a fashionable topic, supposedly affecting fashionable people in particular, several notable eighteenth-century authors chose to write about the spleen, but Finch's viewpoint remains unique.

Finch writes about the spleen primarily from a first-person perspective which indicates that she is, at least in part, writing "The Spleen" autobiographically.[6] Katharine Rogers mentions that authors of the century typically represented the spleen in a way that made it seem like "willful deviation from reason" and that Anne Finch herself deviated from her contemporaries by giving a first-hand account of the spleen that was more in line with the ideas of medical doctors of the period (18).[7] Finch does deviate from her contemporaries with her depiction of the spleen; however, there are moments in which Finch, too, becomes skeptical about the amount of performance, or as Rogers terms it "willful deviation," in one's behaviors blamed on the spleen. In these moments, Finch questions exactly how natural the spleen's influence is on human beings and how humans might use nature to their advantage.[8]

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[6] In my own assessment, there are moments in "The Spleen" in which the perspective is unclear.
[7] In a 142 page medical treatise on the spleen, *Of the Spleen*, Dr. William Stukeley included Finch's pindaric ode to enhance his own description of symptoms.
[8] Alexander Pope demonstrates similar conceptions to Finch in the assertion that one has the ability to augment their true nature. In An Essay on Criticism Pope declares that "True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd" (II.297). In other words, to Pope, demonstration of "True Wit" derives from the ability to build

In "The Spleen" Finch imagines the spleen as much more than a bodily organ; she views it as an extension of nature and as an uncontrollable, Protean-like force that rules humans—with a particularly strong influence on women—and therefore guides the motivations that lead to choices and actions. Because of the spleen's influence, the choices and actions of humans become motivated by their passions, limiting the amount of power they hold over their own bodies. The spleen carries the ability to destroy the free will of humans because of its motility; its capacity for metaphysical movement renders people incapable of controlling their own passions, moods, and behaviors, and therefore, bodily autonomy. There are four major categories of movement that Finch attributes to the spleen: the shifting of shapes and forms, literal physical movement, metaphorical movement, and the state or quality of being subject to change.

Finch simultaneously personifies spleen and utilizes the image of Proteus, the sea-god—associated with his propensity to consciously govern his own movement for personal gain—within the first few lines of the poem as a way to establish the spleen's ever-changing and destructive power.[9] Finch's use of imagery leads the reader through the movement of the poem. Her imagery begins with a guiding question that structures the poem by displaying the search for a cause and origin of human behavior. She states, "What art thou, Spleen, which ev'ry thing dost ape?" (I.1). Here, Finch questions the authority of the spleen as well as its origins of power by questioning its very existence. "Ape," here meaning imitate, indicates a power imbalance between the "Spleen" and

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upon one's true nature. Interestingly, both Finch and Pope explore this idea as a distinctly feminine strategy. They imagine women dressing their splenetic affliction, or nature, to maintain some form of power.

[9] The *Blackwell Annotated Anthology* notes that "Proteus is a minor sea-god in Homer's Odyssey, who is able to assume different shapes in order to avoid answering questions" (23).

"ev'ry thing" by positioning the spleen as a model of behaviors, actions, and choices. In other words, the spleen is identified as the source of specific human behaviors that Finch finds problematic and Finch is questioning *why*.

The spleen's ability to direct the course of human action derives from its power of movement and the way in which that movement affects humans, which Finch demonstrates by establishing the spleen's protean qualities. The two entities of Proteus and mankind are assertively compared as Finch refers to the spleen as "Thou *Proteus* to abuse Mankind" (I.2). Here, Finch is not only directly addressing the spleen as "Proteus"—which inherently makes the claim that the spleen is a shapeshifter—but she is also creating a dichotomy between divine beings, such as Proteus, and "mankind" by setting them in opposition to one another. This opposition is demonstrated with the term she chooses to describe the actions of Proteus with, "abuse," because it is an aggressive verb that attributes a form of power to Proteus that mankind lacks, establishing the spleen as a superior, controlling force.

Finch's frustration with the spleen's power is revealed as she ardently examines the cause of this imbalance throughout the poem. Finch claims that the spleen destroys any form of power humans may have by constantly changing and eluding explanation. She makes this claim by stating, "Who never yet thy hidden Cause cou'd find" (I. 3).[10] The use of the term "Cause" here demonstrates Finch's curiosity at the spleen's ability to enact change. Finch qualifies the term "Cause" with the adjective "hidden" as a way to further highlight the mystery of the spleen and connect it to Proteus as an unidentifiable

[10] The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "Cause" is listed as "that which produces an effect; that which gives rise to any action, phenomenon, or condition."

shape-shifter. This mystery is intensified by the spleen's ability to change shape, making its motivations and actions all the more confusing for Finch. Finch's frustration and inability to locate the "cause" of the spleen elevates its power by giving it an advantage over humans, which Finch details with more imagery.

Finch establishes the idea that all humans, not women exclusively, are subject to the power of the spleen by alluding to powerful Roman figures who were "vanquished" by it. She states:

> When *Brutus* (now beneath his Cares opprest,
> And all *Rome's* Fortunes rolling in his Breast,
> Before *Phillipi's* latest Field
> Before his Fate did to *Octavius* yield)
> Was vanquish'd by the *Spleen*. (I. 21-25)

Here, Finch is drawing attention to Brutus's loss at the Battle of Phillipi which drove him to suicide. This passage is used to prove that women are not the only sex afflicted by the spleen. Finch emphasizes this by showing that men, even strong historical or classical figures, have been overcome by the spleen just as Brutus's overwhelming passion from defeat caused his suicide. Finch chooses to use a famous battle, Phillipi, as the reference which accurately depicts the destructive capabilities of the spleen. The battle imagery in these lines is shown through words like "Field," "yield," and "vanquish'd" which reinforces the spleen's war on human emotion. The movement of Brutus's emotions, "rolling in his Breast," cause his action, which demonstrates how spleen rules human emotion.

This movement that Finch depicts within Brutus originates with the spleen. The spleen occupies a state of constant movement through various shifting shapes and forms

which makes it powerful because it is impossible to impede. "The Spleen" capitalizes on the power of movement possessed by the spleen as Finch incorporates images of motility through shape-shifting. Finch laments that none have the ability to "fix thee to remain in one continu'd shape," with "thee" meaning the spleen (I.4). In other words, none can control the spleen, which indicates a power imbalance between the spleen and humanity.

Finch's frustration with the spleen's power is apparent as she continuously references her curiosity at its cause and uses descriptors reminiscent of hysteria so that the poem's diction embodies properties of the spleen. She states, "Still varying thy perplexing Form" as if the only consistency of the spleen is its inconsistency (I.5). Here, the use of the term "perplexing" illustrates that Finch has dedicated a significant amount of thought to an explanation for the spleen's power but has yet to come to a conclusion.[11] "Still" indicates an established, long- term presence of the spleen while "varying" creates a sort of oxymoron because it indicates movement. This oxymoronic pairing of words reflects the confusion and chaos associated with the spleen throughout the rest of the poem and "varying" and "perplexing" indicate an unsettling quickness to change.

Finch employs a metaphor in which the spleen is a storm to further demonstrate this unsettling quickness to change, which establishes the spleen as a force of nature that causes destruction and removes agency. The large range of movement attributed to the spleen is detailed with sweeping imagery: "Now a dead Sea thoul't represent / A Calm of stupid Discontent, / Then dashing on the Rocks wilt rage into a Storm" (I.6-8). Backscheider reads these lines simply as a description of "the moods of the spleen," but

[11] The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers the following definition: "Perplex, v.: transitive. Esp. of something complicated or unexplained: to cause (a person) to feel troubled by deep uncertainty; to puzzle greatly; to baffle, confuse, bewilder. Frequently in passive."

this metaphor is more complex than Backscheider's close reading indicates (74). For instance, these lines exhibit striking imagery that tells the reader the power of the spleen through the use of metaphor. The "dead Sea," a representation of calm and stillness, quickly becomes a "Storm" that forces the waves to "dash" against the "Rocks." The "rocks" metaphorically function as humans that are unable to move as the "storm," or effects of the spleen, rages against them.

Finch is referencing the power of physical nature with this metaphor—"nature" here meaning the material world itself—to demonstrate the effects of the spleen on human emotion; there is a calamitous quality to the words that Finch chooses that renders the spleen a force of destruction. The extent of the spleen's destruction is shown through its personification as a hunter, as Finch addresses the spleen directly and states, "thou dost destroy and prey upon the Mind" (VII. 141). This destruction is rendered intentional as the word "prey" is used. In an interesting use of the concept of nature, "prey" invokes the image of a hunt which is a physical form of destruction. The hunt is a compelling image of power dynamics, in which the armed hunter attacks the defenseless prey.[12] Finch works to strengthen her claim that the spleen, and nature, prey on humans.

Finch details the literal and physical movements caused by the spleen to reinforce the spleen's capacity for action, which renders the spleen's victims helpless in their own mobility. Finch creates a portrait of the effects of the spleen for her reader:

> Trembling sometimes thou dost appear,
> Dissolved into a panic fear;
> On sleep intruding dost thy shadows spread,
> Thy gloomy terrors round the silent bed,
> And crowd with boding dreams the melancholy head;

[12] As I will detail in Chapter 3, John Cleland uses a similar metaphor in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* in which the woman is the defenseless prey as a contrast to the male hunter.

Or, when the midnight hour is told,
And drooping lids thou still dost waking hold,
Thy fond delusions cheat the eyes,
Before them antic specters dance,
Unusual fires their pointed heads advance,
And airy phantoms rise. (I. 9-19)

Finch's use of the word "thou" in the first line adds an extra level of complexity to the poem. She states, "trembling sometimes thou dost appear" (I.9). It would seem that Finch is addressing the spleen again here from her use of the word "thou." But then, why is the spleen "trembling"? More likely, Finch is suggesting that the spleen overpowers her body to the point of merged identity. Therefore her use of the word "thou" references the overwhelming effect of the spleen within the movement of her body that causes her to "tremble." Finch continues this merged identity as the appearance of the spleen "dissolved into a panic fear." It remains unclear here whether Finch is referring to herself or the spleen "dissolving." Nevertheless, the emotions brought on by the spleen affect the body physically as "panic fear" causes trembling.

The timing of the spleen's attack is relevant because it chooses to act when the victim is at their most vulnerable—sleep. The victim becomes surrounded by shadows, unable to move or act as "On sleep intruding dost thy shadows spread." These shadows metaphorically represent the delusions as well as the moods that the spleen imposes on victims. Interestingly, physicians of the eighteenth-century such as John Ball prescribed sleep as a cure for symptoms of the spleen. Ball states that symptoms of spleen can be cured by "proper diet, amusements, and by opiates, especially at bed-time, for composing the mind and procuring sleep" (15). Finch's depiction of the spleen attacking at night

takes on a new level of meaning as sleep, considered to be a remedy for spleen, is when spleen attacks.

This attack requires motility and, for Finch, movement begets movement; she incorporates the movement of the delusions that appear before victims to highlight the helplessness of being subject to nature. The "drooping lids" of the victims set off "fond delusions" that "cheat the eyes" (I.15-16). The movement of the physical body, eyelids, is operated by the spleen which "thou still dost waking hold." Even in sleep the spleen is able to move and occupy space as "On Sleep intruding do'st thy Shadows spread, / Thy gloomy Terrors round the silent Bed, / And crowd with boding Dreams the melancholy Head" (I.11-13). This further highlights the helplessness of victims as the delusions of the spleen creep into "Sleep" and "Dreams." The spleen directs the course of these dreams, and it occupies space as it moves and "spreads." The "gloomy terrors" surround the "silent," unmoving bed and "crowds" the mind with dreams.

Finch incorporates the spleen's occupation of the mind within dreams to detail the extent of its power over humans. The "delusions" use this power by engaging in various movements that torment the victims of the spleen. Finch's use of sleep could also indicate that there is a certain level of control one holds over the spleen's influence when they are awake, as if there is some availability of resistance or willpower. Therefore, the spleen takes advantage of the extra level of vulnerability provided by sleep and strikes at night.

Finch blends literal and metaphorical movement as the spleen creates delusions that move and shift form, which then acts as a catalyst to human emotion and passions.

As "Before them antic specters dance," the victims experience a confusing, incongruous, and grotesque form of movement visually. In other words, the victims experience the Protean-nature of the spleen. Even further, these delusions move and bring forward "unusual fires." These "unusual fires" are violent representations of the passions. Finch repeatedly insists that these delusions are misshapen, intimidating, and even other-worldly by using words like "specters" and "phantoms." Then, their "pointed heads advance," and as a result, "airy phantoms rise." These "airy phantoms" function metaphorically as representations of the rising passions within the victims.

The passions invoked by the spleen wreak havoc on the victims as the senses overcome the brain and destroy human will. As "Now the jonquil o'ercomes the feeble brain; / We faint beneath the aromatic pain, Till some offensive scent thy pow'rs appease, / And pleasure we resign for short and nauseous ease" (II. 40-43). Here, "jonquil" references a type of flower which relates to olfaction, or sense of smell, that "o'ercomes the feeble brain." This reaction in the brain then causes physical symptoms associated with the passions.

Finch subscribes to ideas of humoral theory as she presents the passions, which rise from within and create emotional and physical reactions.[13] She does so in light of the fact that one of the reasons that the spleen was often called "vapours" was due to humoral theory, in which symptoms of melancholy were blamed on "vapors rising from various abdominal organs to the brain" (Rogers 17). Finch shows this by describing physical reactions and symptoms such as fainting, "We faint beneath the aromatic pain," and

[13] Humoral theories were ideas that people of the eighteenth-century widely believed, including doctors.

locates the source of this weakness as "the feeble brain." The spleen is imagined as the source of "pain" as its "powers" are directly referenced.

Finch's disdain for the power of the spleen is apparent in her language and her use of metaphor. The spleen controls passions, which Finch demonstrates metaphorically, as they move throughout the body like a storm. She states,

> Which from o'er-heated Passions rise
> In clouds to the attractive Brain,
> Until descending thence again
> Thro' the o'er-cast and show'ring Eyes. (III.54-57)

Here, the passions manifest with tears and the "show'ring Eyes" of the victims.[14] These passions move up through the body, into the brain, and down through tears. The emphasis is on passions that "rise" from within. These passions head directly to the brain to limit any choice-making capacity or rationality of victims. So, whereas the spleen can grant agency, or motility, to its human, it also seems to take that same motility away intentionally as the passions rise to the brain and remove rationality. Additionally, the passions are characterized as a storm, with clouds and overcast skies. By connecting the passions to the movements of a storm, Finch demonstrates the motility of the spleen through the motility of the passions.

The state or quality of being subject to change, which limits capacity for action through malleability, is addressed in the poem as another form of power possessed by the spleen. Finch states "New are thy Motions and thy Dress, / In every one thou dost possess" (III. 44-45). These lines hold some ambiguity in meaning but they adequately demonstrate how the spleen's victims are subject to change. Finch is articulating that the

[14] Pope uses similar imagery in *The Rape of the Lock* as Belinda falls victim to her emotions and "Her eyes half-languishing, half-drowned in tears" (line 144).

"motions" of the spleen are "new" to all who are afflicted by it. This tells us that the power of the spleen is continuously changing form and the victims are unable to foresee its attacks. In addition, Finch intentionally uses "Motions" instead of "emotions" here to feature how people are moved to action by the spleen. The victims are "possessed" by the spleen and not in control of the movement of their own bodies.

The movement in the poem is not restricted to the lines; Finch incorporates a fluidity in form that reflects the subject of spleen's motility. Backscheider describes this well: "*The Spleen* spirals around the topic, building the reader's understanding and emotional appreciation, yet with a steady movement toward its sobering conclusion" (78). The poem undeniably comes to a "sobering conclusion" in which Finch admits herself "prisn'er" and "thy acknowledged slave" to the spleen (VII.145). It seems as though Finch is ending her inquiry into the power of the spleen and submitting herself to it. Her final lines become metaphorical as she sinks into the earth, obedient to the power of nature, "And sunk beneath thy chain to a lamented grave" (VII.146).

As mentioned before, this destruction brought on by the spleen acts against human will, but it also provides women with a platform for enacting a small amount of will by pretending to be affected by it. Although a destructor, the spleen also functions as a provider of free will by allowing women to openly act on their passions, a specific power of nature, and use the spleen as a sort of scapegoat for their behavior. The passage that comprehensively embodies this viewpoint is:

> When the Coquet whom every Fool admires,
> Wou'd in variety be fair,
> And shifting hastily the Scene,
> From light impertinent and vain,
> Assumes a soft and melancholy Air,

> And of her Eyes rebates the wand'ring Fires,
> The careless Posture, and the Head reclin'd;
> The thoughtful and composed Face
> Proclaiming the withdrawn and absent Mind,
> Allows the Fop more liberty to gaze;
> Who gently for the tender Cause enquires:
> The Cause indeed is a defect in Sense;
> But still the *Spleen's* alledg'd, and still the dull Pretence. (V. 99-111)

From this passage, we are able to infer that Finch is imagining a female coquette through the use of the pronoun "her." The first line sets up a dichotomy between "coquets" and "Fools" in which one holds power over the other because the "coquet" has the ability to attract "Fools" with pretense. In addition to claiming they lack judgment or sense by terming them "Fools," Finch sets herself up in a rational position by detecting what "Fools" admire. She also claims a higher mental capacity for herself by suggesting that people who are truly affected by the spleen are "Wits." She states, "The Fool, to imitate the Wits / Complains of thy pretended fits," which echoes the opening lines of the poem by suggesting imitation of the spleen (IV. 64-65). Therefore, if the "Fool" is pretending to "imitate the Wits" who are truly affected by the spleen, then Finch's first-hand experience with the spleen situates her within the "wits."

Finch's unwillingness to consider nature as a controlling force of women, and not men, is demonstrated through this imitation of wits; nature is not solely a controlling force of women, as women are able to imitate the spleen, an act of self-absorption, to attain some form of power. As mentioned earlier in this section, Finch references the "jonquil," which is a "species of Narcissus" ("jonquil, n.").[15] This reference, although brief, offers insight into Finch's understanding of the spleen because it associates the

[15] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "jonquil" as "A species of Narcissus (N. Jonquilla), having long linear leaves and spikes of fragrant white and yellow flowers; the rush-leaved Daffodil."

spleen with narcissism. This connection between the spleen and Narcissus, the character of mythology associated with excessive interest in physical appearance, suggests that some aspect of the spleen derives from self-absorption rather than actual physical causation. This aspect, according to Finch, is pretense. This works to demonstrate Finch's criticism of the use of spleen for personal gain through pretense.

Pretense for Finch is closely connected to the spleen because it utilizes the ability to occupy a false image or fluid identity; Finch has already established early on in the poem that the ability to change shape and form is a source of power; therefore, pretense holds a power of its own. This passage is reminiscent of Pope's statement in *An Essay on Man* in which he states, "True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd" because it shows the coquette arranging, or dressing, herself in such a way that might attract a "Foolish" man. Finch's word for this, "Pretence," is less encouraging than Pope's use of the word "wit" but the same concept applies.

Finch establishes the meaning of "pretence" by applying language that is specific to acting, pretending, and constructing appearances. The word "Scene" in the line "shifting hastily the Scene" indicates the performative quality of the coquette's behaviors (V. 101). This movement is quick as they "shift hastily" in an effort to establish affliction of the spleen. The coquette pretends to be delicate and gloomy as she "assumes a soft and melancholy Air" (V. 103). Here, the definition of "Air" means "a person's demeanour, bearing, or appearance; movement of the body expressing feelings" ("air, n.1"). In other words, the movements of the coquette indicate that he or she is

"melancholy;" they purposefully take on physical attributes that denote sadness in order to manipulate the fool.

The coquette pretends a natural affliction of the spleen without actually submitting to it; coquettes pretend that they are unable to control their moods, behaviors, and passions and escape blame by assuming the physical symptoms of the spleen, with "careless Posture, and the Head reclin'd" (V.105).[16] The coquet's ability to change her posture indicates her physical power to move. This is also Finch's way of demonstrating how women can be influenced by nature without their submission being natural.

While the coquette pretends affliction of the spleen without submitting to it, the "fop" becomes subject to it, demonstrating how Finch is willing to accept nature's power over humans but unwilling to accept female submission as a product of nature. Again, Finch refers back to the cause of the spleen as the "Fop" succumbs to the pretense of the spleen and "the tender Cause enquires" (V.109). But this time the cause is questioned, and Finch offers an answer as she states, "The Cause indeed is a defect in Sense" (V.110). This "Cause" is ambiguous as the "defect in Sense" could be attributed to the coquette for pretending affliction of the spleen or the fool for being deceived.

Finch alludes to the influence the spleen has over women, in particular, while also describing the effects of passions and making a clear connection in the poem between images of power and the influence of passions on the female body. The power of the spleen is given in specific detail as:

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[16] A similar experience is described in *The Rape of the Lock* in which Belinda, overcome by emotion, "On her heaved bosom hung her drooping head" (See line 145).

In the Imperious[17] Wife thou Vapours art,
Which from o'erheated Passions rise
In Clouds to the attractive Brain,
Until descending thence again,
Thro' the o'er-cast, and show'ring Eyes,
Upon her Husband's soften'd Heart,
He the disputed Point must yield,
Something resign of the contested Field;
Till Lordly Man, born to Imperial Sway,
Compounds for Peace, to make that Right away,
And Woman, arm'd with Spleen, do's servilely Obey. (III. 52-63)

Backscheider also reads this moment as a utilization of the spleen for personal gain and power. But even more so, Backscheider notes that Finch "attaches 'vapors' to an 'imperious wife' and describes the o'erheated passions' that are associated both with humours and with hysterical and manic behavior" (74). What Backscheider does not bring attention to, however, is the interesting language of obedience and battle between the sexes. The language of obedience and battle—demonstrated in terms such as "yield," "field," "arm'd"—employed in this section is similar to the earlier passage that references Brutus. This use of battle imagery in this passage, though, is unexpected because it occurs between husband and wife.

The willingness and unwillingness to consider nature as a controlling force of women is demonstrated through the shifting dynamics of power between husband and wife. First, the "show'ring Eyes" of the wife move the husband to compassion with a "soften'd Heart" and he "yields," or surrenders, the "Point." Then, "Lordly man" reassumes power and "Compounds for Peace." Finally, as a result of the Man's

[17] Several years after "The Spleen" was published, Bernard Mandeville would go on to use the phrase "imperious women" in his own description of the female experience of spleen in his work titled *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Diseases* (1711).

reassumption of power, the Woman, "arm'd with spleen do's servilely Obey." Here, we can see the progression of movement within the effects of nature and the spleen.

Finch chooses to associate the spleen with the feminine by noting the "Vapours" of the "Imperious Wife" which attaches symptoms of the spleen to wives, specifically. Heather Meek views the use of "Husband" and "Wife" as another example of how "theorists of eighteenth-century hysteria, whether physicians or female sufferers, frequently look to the institution of marriage in their elaboration of symptoms, causes, and treatments" (117). This is a valid point because physicians of the eighteenth-century, including John Ball, even went so far as to prescribe marriage as a cure for melancholic symptoms.[18] Ball states, "if the patient be single, and of a proper age, the advice of Hippocrates should be followed, who wisely says, that a *woman's best remedy is to marry, and bear children*" (15). Finch draws attention to the relationship between husband and wife in order to highlight power imbalances and also to establish how the spleen is usually associated with women, but she is also demonstrating that marriage is not a suitable remedy. The line "And Woman, arm'd with Spleen, do's servilely Obey" tells us that the spleen is a form of power, since the woman is "arm'd" with it, but it also tells us that, as a contradiction, the woman is expected to "obey" her husband while she is "arm'd" with spleen.

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[18] See Ball's *The female physician: or, every woman her own doctress. Wherein is summarily comprised, all that is necessary to be known in the cure of the several disorders to which the fair sex are liable; together with prescriptions in English of the respective Medicines proper to be given in each Case. Delivered in a Manner so concise, familiar, and intelligible, that every Woman of common Capacity may be able, upon most Occasions, to relieve Herself, by the Method and Remedies herein contained. A Work of great Utility to young Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries. By John Ball, M.D. Author of the Modern Practice of Physic, and the New Practical Dispensatory, &c...*London, (1770).

Finch incorporates public image in her work by discussing the spleen in a way that suggests that people can feign the affliction. She claims firsthand experience with the spleen and her authority on the subject derives from her direct experience. But, if we assume that there is always an element of pretense to writing, and, as Finch herself notes, the spleen, there is no way to trust her credibility. She declares herself overcome by the spleen and states "O'er me alas! thou dost too much prevail: / I feel thy force, whilst I against thee rail; / I feel my verse decay, and my cramped numbers fail" (IV.74-76). She utilizes all of her previous descriptions of the spleen in these lines but at the same time, she has established that by feigning the spleen women are able to assume power. Therefore, she leaves it up to her readers to decide whether her own claims are genuine or pretended.

"The Introduction"

"The Introduction" is complicated beyond its subject matter; at its simplest, it's a criticism of poetic culture. But there is a lot more substance to "The Introduction" that has not gained much attention from scholars,[19] such as Finch's skeptical view of nature as an enforcer of female submission. Just as "The Spleen" demonstrates Finch's complicated views of nature and motility, so too does "The Introduction," in that she chose not to publish the poem even after writing it. Finch makes the claim that "nature" is

[19] Scholars such as Sharon Young have focused on this aspect of "The Introduction" in order to gain a thorough understanding of poetic culture of the eighteenth century. See her article, "The Critick and the Writer of Fables: Anne Finch and the Critical Debates, 1690-1720."

blamed for the submission of women because of the fall in which Eve is considered responsible for the original sin. In this section, I argue that Finch agrees that the fall is the cause of the power nature holds over humans, but she refuses to allow this power to enforce female subservience. She proves this in two ways: first, by detailing the unfairness of women's role in society to prove that culture is, in fact, the true enforcer of female submission and second by alluding to a Biblical event in which a woman becomes a powerful leader.

Finch engaged in public discussions about female subservience by writing about nature. Sharon Young argues that by not publishing "The Introduction," Finch actively distanced herself from "direct engagement" with critical debates, but Young fails to account for the moments in which Finch did choose to participate in these debates by engaging in discourse with other authors, like Pope (55). Stephen Greenblatt states that due to a dramatic increase of literacy within the population of eighteenth-century Britain "much of the reading public began to consist of women" (2589). Subsequently, women were able to "enter the literary marketplace in ever-greater numbers" (Kairoff 157). As such, the discourse on the role of women in society, which dominates the vast majority of "The Introduction," became increasingly apparent as the eighteenth-century advanced. The public discussions about women, and their role as social agents, gained traction through authors such as Anne Finch and Alexander Pope who engaged in dialogue with one another's writing while debating the capabilities of female "wit."

Finch chose to engage in public dialogue because her work was called into question by other authors—a reaction to the common ideology that deemed women

incapable of producing valuable writing. Soon after Anne Finch published "The Spleen," it was parodied by Pope in his mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock.* The public largely considered Pope's parody as a personal attack on Finch, which motivated him to write the poem "Impromptu to Lady Winchilsea: Occasioned by Four Satirical Verses on Women Wits, in *Rape of the Lock*" in which he praised the talents and "wits" of Finch—which Finch claims in "The Spleen"—as an exception to the wits of women in general (2596). Naturally, Finch responded with another poem "The Answer (To Pope's *Impromptu*)," rigorously challenging Pope's assertion about women and defending the talents of her sex.

In order to urge readers to question what is *natural* about female submission and what is not, Finch considers the idea of women being imagined as public actors and contributors to society in direct juxtaposition with the fall, the transitional moment of Christianity. In other words, nature is the culprit of human submission. Culture, built from misconceptions of nature, is the enforcer. Finch actively participates in emerging philosophical debates on nature by detailing the influence of culture on conceptions of nature. Finch's poetry demonstrates that she is particularly drawn to the origin of both nature and culture and she often alludes to or directly references the moment of the fall in order to question them conjointly.

"The Introduction" exhibits a similar conception of nature to "The Spleen" in that they both imagine nature as a powerful force; however, instead of using the poem as a commentary on a particular force of nature (i.e. the spleen), "The Introduction" questions whether or not nature is the true cause of female subordination. In a defining moment for

the poem, Finch boldly questions, "How are we fall'n, fall'n by mistaken rules? / And education's, more than nature's fools" (51-52). In addition to the blasphemous nature of this question, these lines clearly reference the fall through repetition of the term "fall'n." The "mistaken rules" references rules declared by culture. Here, Finch is positing that the fall was the cause of "mistaken rules" that in turn led to female subordination. She pushes this idea further and asserts that educational culture supports the submission of women, rendering them "fools," more so than "nature." The culture that restricts women is referenced as "mistaken rules" and indicates that rather than being a natural phenomenon, women's lack of education derives from their inability to access it. In the line that follows "education's, more than nature's fools," Finch states that women are "Debarr'd from all improve-ments of the mind" to establish that female wit is not inferior naturally (53). Instead, Finch suggests that women are "debarr'd," or prohibited, from education, or "improvements of the mind" unlike their male counterparts, who are encouraged to attend school and whose social status is a direct reflection of their education.

Even though Finch's real-life motility was restricted because of her sex, she is able to infuse "The Introduction" with lines of movement, similarly to "The Spleen," that guide the reader with lists of descriptors and actions that contribute to flow, movement, and progression of the poem. She begins,

> Did I, my lines intend for public view,
> How many censures, would their faults pursue,
> Some would, because such words they do affect,
> Cry they're insipid, empty, uncorrect. (1-4)

The poem's acerbic opening lines, are riddled with irony to convey contempt. Finch immediately challenges the male-dominated society and literary scene of the eighteenth century with these first few lines. Here, Finch is proclaiming the difficulties of publishing written work, as well as introducing work to the "public," as a woman. She does so by saying that had she intended to publish her poem, it would have been ravaged by critics. This poem articulates the "conservative ideology governing notions of femininity" and insists upon verifying that women are "more than nature's fools" (Kairoff 157). In doing so, Finch subverts the dominant ideology that strictly limited women to domestic pursuits by proving her ability as a poet.

She continues the list of descriptors by asserting the expected role of women and says "They tell us, we mistake our sex and way; / Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play / Are the accomplishments we shou'd desire" (13-15). These lines demonstrate an interesting use of the word "way." By arguing that women "mistake" their "way," Finch indicates that there is some kind of established, predetermined path that women should follow. These lines are signals of Finch's primary question guiding the poem: are the roles of the sexes constructions of nature or culture? Finch seems to think that these roles are constructions of culture based on her use of the word "should." This tells us that women "should" do what is expected of them instead of what they wish to pursue.

The particular line "Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play" demonstrate how Finch imagines female motility within a strictly limited, narrow domain of pretense

and perfunctory activities.[20] She articulates more of these activities in "The Spleen" as she states,

> My hand delights to trace unusual things,
> And deviates from the known and common way;
> Nor will in fading silks compose
> Faintly th' inimitable rose,
> Fill up an ill-drawn bird, or paint on glass. (III.83-87)

Here, Finch depicts the movement of her physical body as she performs as a female author and "traces unusual things." The word "unusual" is meant to highlight that authorship was not deemed an acceptable activity for women. Therefore as she writes, or "traces unusual things," she deviates from "the known and common way." She offers a few activities,such as embroidery and painting, in the place of writing poetry that illustrate the superficiality of the domain that Finch suggests women are restricted to.

She continues this prescribed idea of femininity and states, "To write, or read, or think, or to enquire / Wou'd cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time / And interrupt the Conquests of our prime" (16-18). "To write, or read, or think" are all actions that require thought and substance. By stating that a common objection to women's education is that it "wou'd cloud our beauty" Finch is pointing out a cultural assumption that female value lies within their outward appearance. Finch specifically addresses the ornamental activities of "breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play" in order to highlight the superficial nature of activities deemed acceptable for women (Hellegers 209). Further, she criticizes the reason that beauty is valued and states that it might "interrupt the Conquests of our prime." In other words, education might interfere with the ability of

[20] In fact, activities like these were prescribed to women affected by the spleen as a remedy. John Ball states, "in regard to amusements, the mind ought to be diverted and kept as easy and cheerful as possible" (15).

men to assume control, or "conquest," the "prime" of female beauty. These reasons for a lack of female education, as Finch brings attention to, are not related to nature but cultural creations.

Finch not only mentions the lack of education available to women as a result of culture, but she also sharply criticizes the mental capacities of men and states, "And many have attained, dull and untaught, / The name of wit only by finding fault" (5-6). In other words, the men who hold the rights to an education have only achieved "wit" by criticizing the works of others and in reality, are "dull and untaught." Finch indicates that the "Fault" that these authors find are primarily in the works of female authors, and she does so by taking on a faux-critical point of view and exaggerating the faults of women writers.

Finch feigns exasperation at female authors and states, "Alas! a woman that attempts the pen, / Such an intruder on the rights of men" (9-10). Here, "attempts" suggests an effort to succeed but does not suggest success. This statement is made with contempt as Finch takes on the point of view of someone who opposes female authorship. Finch uses the word "intruder" to highlight the absurd notion that women are not allowed entrance into the realm of published work and poetic culture.

She makes a counter-argument in response to claims that say women are lesser by nature by proving that women are governed by nature to a certain extent, but this is a human weakness and not distinct to women. She offers the story of Deborah as an example of great feminine power and states:

> A woman here, leads fainting Israel on,
> She fights, she wins, she triumphs with a song,
> Devout, majestic, for the subject fit,

And far above her arms, exalts her wit;
Then, to the peaceful, shady palm withdraws,
And rules the rescued nation, with her laws (45-50)[21]

This is Finch's shining example of how women can be powerful leaders. The repetitive use of the word "she" in listing Deborah's actions aggressively highlight the fact that she is a woman. Even more, she is "devout" and "majestic," which establishes Deborah's character as one that does not "intrude" on the "rights of Men" (10). Instead of allowing herself to become subdued, she "Exalts her wit" and celebrates it. Then "to the peaceful, shady palms withdraws / And rules the rescued nation, with her laws" (49-50). In this instance, Deborah, a woman, is able to "Rule" a "nation" from her position as a woman which is characterized by the "shady palms." This Biblical reference refutes any ideas that female subservience is natural.

Finch ends the poem with the definitive lines, "Be dark enough thy shades, and be thou there content" (64). This ends the poem in a stagnant moment. She states "be thou there content" as a final thought that ceases the movement of the poem. This connects to Finch's idea that movement grants power to those who are able to utilize it. Here, she is suggesting that women are limited in their motility, and therefore power, as they must rest "content" outside of the public eye.

Seemingly, Pope references this moment of "The Introduction" in his poem *An Essay on Man* in which he states, "Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made / Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade?" (39-40).[22] Assuming that Pope is imagining men as "oaks" and women as "weeds," this passage could be read as Pope's attempt to argue for

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[21] Judges 4-5.
[22] Pope's *Essay on Man* was published in 1733.

the submission of women in which it is natural for women to defer to men and remain in the "Shades." In contrast to Finch, he tells readers to question "mother earth," or nature, instead of culture.

Finch's two poems "The Spleen" and "The Introduction" tell us that discourses regarding female agency in the early eighteenth-century were more indirect than direct because Finch indirectly explores nature through the spleen and its effects on the bodily autonomy of women. Further, Finch's poems tell us that eighteenth-century discourses of nature happened within larger philosophical debates masked as an exploration of female behavior—such as in "The Spleen"—or simply because they went unpublished—like Finch's poem, "The Introduction."

The complexities of discussing female agency are clear and can be difficult to define. "The Spleen" tells us that humans, and especially women, are affected, or controlled, by the power of the spleen. Finch shows that the bodily organ not only causes certain moods and actions, but takes away the ability to make choices and can afflict an illness that renders the human immobile, at least temporarily. However, to complicate this discussion of agency further, the spleen also gives women agency by allowing them to claim an illness caused by the spleen. This can give them motility within society, as the spleen typically affected the upper class. As a result, the nature of women seems to be, at least according to Finch, controlled by the spleen, a natural phenomenon.

"The Introduction" also complicates discussions of female agency and motility. The poem, which details the nature of women as witty and often subjugated to culture rather than nature, clearly demonstrates Finch's struggle with female agency and how that

interacts with man-made culture. Finch states that women are subjugated to the will of culture by writing that even if she published the poem she spent so long writing, it would still be censured and dismissed by culture. As a result, female nature, which is witty and intelligent, is curtailed by men and by society. Agency, then, is limited. Finch, a successful poet of the eighteenth century, writes about being afraid to publish a poem because of the backlash she knows she will receive. While these two poems discuss agency through female nature in different ways, they both demonstrate the complex theories and discussions of nature that were a part of eighteenth-century culture. In examining "The Spleen" and "The Introduction" this way, we gain a better understanding of these discussions, and we can begin to understand more the agency, or lack thereof, of women in the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER THREE

"HERE STOOD ILL-NATURE LIKE AN ANCIENT MAID": NATURE-INDUCED PASSIONS AND FEMALE POWER IN *THE RAPE OF THE LOCK*

Alexander Pope's mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock*, a work cemented within the eighteenth-century literary canon, incorporates important conceptions of both nature and culture through the exploration of human passion. From a modern perspective, the poem is rife with examples of the objectification of women and a lack of female "agency" because of the prominence of an objectified female character, Belinda. As such, many scholars have chosen to read the text as an example of the objectification of women of the period.[23] But such a reading overlooks the importance of the spleen in understanding eighteenth-century conceptions of nature and its influence over human will through its control of passions. Furthermore, these readings neglect to acknowledge the importance of the Cave of Spleen as anything more than a satirical episode that parodies the fashionable illness.[24]

In looking to advance our understanding of eighteenth-century conceptions of nature and culture as enforcers of female submission, I will focus on the scenes of *The Rape of the Lock* that concern human passion and emotion. Human passion and emotion,

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[23] On "agency" in *The Rape of the Lock*, see Glenn Storey's *Belinda, Thalestris, Clarissa...Queen Anne?: Failures of Female Agency in The Rape of the Lock*; and Tita Chico's *The Arts of Beauty: Women's Cosmetics and Pope's Ekphrasis*.

[24] The Cave of Spleen appears in The Rape of the Lock in Canto IV when a sprite descends to Belinda's spleen and encounters a "Goddess" who reigns over the emotions of all women.

in particular, are important concepts because they move the primary characters, Belinda and the Baron, to action. To do so, I will examine several instances in the poem that provide valuable insight into eighteenth-century notions of both nature and culture, including the Cave of Spleen, Belinda's dressing scene, and Clarissa's speech. With these scenes, I will argue that Pope imagines women as subject to the power of nature and natural forces, such as the spleen—which maintains control over the female mind and body. Therefore, the choices that the female characters make are motivated by natural passions caused by the spleen, indicating a lack of true "agency," in the modern sense of the term.[25] At the same time and in the same scenes in which he imagines women as subject to the power of nature and natural forces, Pope uses sylphs to satirize and question the culture that circulates a limited image of women and exploits their nature.

Readings of the text that focus solely on the presence of agency overlook the importance of female emotionality, and its source in the spleen, in the poem. The opening line highlights the important role of emotions and references the power of those emotions as it states, "What dire offence from amorous causes springs, / What mighty contests rise from trivial things" (I.1-2). Here, "amorous causes," or passions, have induced a "dire offence" which emphasizes the role of the passions in influencing the actions of female characters. The passions in women are produced in stark contrast to the rationality that Pope associates with men.

The Rape of the Lock initially questions the "motives" of the Baron who cuts a lock of hair from Belinda's head. Pope writes, "Say what strange motive, Goddess! could

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[25] The *Oxford English Dictionary's* second definition of "agency" ("the ability or capacity to act or exert power") indicates a willful enactment of change ("agency, n.").

compel / A well-bred lord t' assault a gentle belle?" (I. 7-8).[26] Pope's question, directed to the yet unidentified "Goddess," implies that the Baron willfully enacts change as the Baron is asked what "motive" compelled him to act and "assault a gentle belle" (I.8). Pope continues this line with, "Oh say what stranger cause yet unexplored, / Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?" (I. 8-9). In this line, Pope suggests that an even "stranger cause" motivated a "gentle belle," Belinda, to reject a lord, the Baron. Pope's description of this moment demonstrates not only his understanding of motivations behind actions but an implied awareness that actions are directed by what he calls a "strange motive" or "stranger cause," which could also be described as an internal force. In this chapter, I argue that the "strange" force that Pope alludes to, in this passage and throughout the entire poem, is nature. Pope's distinction between the actions of men and women in this passage is key to the poem as a whole. The "motive" is used to describe the Baron, indicating that his actions are willful and calculated; but the "cause" is questioned for Belinda, which alludes to a lack of willing participation. Here, both characters are referred to more generally, as "belles" and "lords," which tells us that Pope is making claims about all women and all men as he discusses "motives" and "causes."

The Rape of the Lock is a beneficial counterpart to Anne Finch's "The Spleen" because of its satirically feigned female perspective. Whereas Finch uses her firsthand experience to show how she is less willing to accept female submission as a natural phenomenon, Pope instead willingly imagines women as subject to nature. In comparison to Finch, Pope imagines the spleen less seriously, and views it as a female

[26] This echoes Finch's guiding question in "The Spleen," "What art thou, Spleen, which ev'ry thing dost ape?" (I.1).

stereotype in which the passions govern the female body.[27] We know that this stereotype of women ruled by their passions was common in the eighteenth-century because of physicians such as John Ball, who writes, "Nervous or hysteric diseases, from a concealed or disappointed passion, are better cured by the enjoyment of the object" (15). As I will discuss in more detail later, Pope's poem demonstrates this "concealed passion" as an issue for Belinda when the sylphs discover that she has an "An earthly lover lurking at her heart" (III. 144).

Pope assigns emotionality to women by taking on a female perspective and investigating passions in particular. In a sense, Pope continues Finch's exploration of the idea that nature moves passions, and he reaches this conclusion in the same way as Finch—through the spleen. But even though he questions the "motives" of men, such as the Baron, Pope's representation of spleen is distinctly female because of the scene in which Umbriel descends into Belinda's spleen, which is ruled by a "goddess."

Nature, The Body, and Emotion

A concept crucial to understanding *The Rape of the Lock* is Pope's understanding of culture as something that builds on, or enhances, nature. In other words, nature forms the basis of all cultural creations and assumptions. Courtney Weiss Smith argues that to Pope, "nature is an agent two times over" ("Political Individuals . . ." 618). Smith says

[27] The spleen in women was viewed as related to "time-worn stereotypes of female inconstancy and uncontrollable passion" (Rogers 19).

this in reaction to a passage from Pope's *An Essay on Man* in which Pope writes from the perspective of nature itself and states:

> Learn from the birds what food the thickets yield;
> Learn from the beasts the physic of the field;
> Thy arts of building from the bee receive;
> Learn of the mole to plow, the worm to weave;
> Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
> Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.
> Here too all forms of social union find,
> And hence let Reason, late, instruct Mankind:
> Here subterranean works and cities see;
> There towns aerial on the waving tree.
> Learn each small People's genius, policies,
> The Ant's republic, and the realm of Bees;
> How those in common all their wealth bestow,
> And Anarchy without confusion know;
> And these for ever, tho' a Monarch reign,
> Their sep'rate cells and properties maintain (3.173–88)

This passage tells us that "arts" is a construction to Pope. The bees build "arts" upon nature and form a "realm," or a culture. Pope's assumption of Nature's perspective allows him to express his understanding of nature as a pre-existing structure that he urges readers to "learn from." Pope's "voice of Nature" specifies that "the complex ways that creation bespeaks its creator's will" (Smith 618). And although Smith does not directly consider *The Rape of the Lock*, the general concept seen in this passage transfers in the way that the body is a conduit for nature. Smith argues that "Nature's monologue expresses the central idea that nature directs and humans approximate" (618). If, as Smith claims, Nature directs, then Pope's imagining of the spleen ruled by a Goddess makes sense. The Goddess "rules" the sex and directs the course of female emotions.

We know that Pope was thinking about the spleen as an extension of nature because he only actually uses the term "nature" once in the poem, and he does so in reference to a handmaid of the Goddess of Spleen. He states,

> Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient maid,
> Her wrinkled form in black and white arrayed;
> With store of prayers, for mornings, nights, and noons,
> Her hand is filled; her bosom with lampoons (IV. 27-30)

There is a certain disdain for this character demonstrated in the use of the term "ill" to qualify "nature," and "ill" tells us that the negative aspects of nature are, in particular, associated with the spleen. "Ill-nature" is not figured favorably in this passage. She is "wrinkled" and she is armed with "lampoons," which indicates that she is ready to wreak havoc on Belinda's emotions at the command of the queen. "Ill-nature" is an "ancient maid," which means that she is an established aspect, or natural predisposition, of the female body. Here, Pope is indicating that forces of nature, such as the Goddess of spleen and her attendants, are the cause of female emotionality. "Ill-nature" is stripped down to her true nature as her beauty has diminished, because she is "ancient." She is associated with the spleen as an attendant to its "Goddess," indicating that her presence is necessary to support the functions of the spleen. But the Goddess is in need of another handmaid as well—"Affectation."

Pope, in a more humorous fashion than with the grim "Ill-nature," addresses the performative aspects of the spleen with the second handmaid, "Affectation," in order to maintain the idea that natural forces influence behavior. The second handmaid is described as,

> Affectation, with a sickly mien,
> Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,

Practised to lisp, and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapped in a gown, for sickness, and for show. (IV.31-36)

This depiction of "Affectation" is reminiscent of Finch's portrait of the coquette, who uses pretense to attract fools. Here, the second handmaid to the Goddess of spleen, "Affectation," purposefully takes on physical attributes that denote sadness and a "sickly" manner. "Affectation" performs physical symptoms of spleen by hanging her "head aside" and fainting "into airs." She also "languishes with pride" indicating that her own ego is the cause of her misfortunes. This moment of satire criticizes women who pretend to be affected by the spleen, and Pope was not wrong to consider the spleen in such a satirical way. Katharine Rogers notes that "upper-class women, in particular, were almost expected to suffer its symptoms, which also provided a convenient excuse for visiting fashionable spas" (18). This aspect is mocked in the next line that states "Affectation" is "wrapped in a gown, for sickness, and for show." Here, Pope is clearly making a statement about the same performative aspect of the spleen that Finch criticizes. Pope figures the handmaids of the Goddess negatively to further demonstrate that they are an unwelcome, almost menacing, presence within the female body.

The presence of the spleen within the female body is made known through natural imagery as Belinda's locks are cut and "then flashed the living lightning from her eyes, / And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies" (III.55-56). We see a glimpse of Belinda's true nature as "lightning" flashes from her eyes in response to her ravished locks. Her emotions of "horror"—dictated by the spleen—are demonstrated through a "scream" that violently tears at the "skies." Pope ensures that the power of emotions are

understood as natural phenomena. The feminine body is packed full of emotionality—from the spleen—that renders female movement involuntary.

If female movement is rendered involuntary because of emotions, women are left with very little power. Ralph Cohen argues against this idea to assert that women are figured with more power than men in the poem. He details what he calls "feminine characteristics" to describe the male characters, and all of these "characteristics" derive from bodily and emotional weaknesses. In his attempt to prove the dominance of female characters over male characters, Cohen makes a generalization on "feminine" identity as he maintains that male characters are given "such 'feminine' qualities as weakness, cowardice, vanity, and romantic sentimentality" (Cohen, "The Reversal of Gender…" 56). This position does one of two things; it either makes unflattering, and unfounded, generalizations about feminine characteristics or it posits a concept of how femininity was conceived during the century. But either way, whether intentional or not, it also brings attention to the feminine association with emotionality that is integral to the poem. He does so by providing descriptors and labeling them "feminine." "Weakness" is a defect of the body and the other descriptors he provides, "cowardice," "vanity," and "sentimentality," are all emotional tendencies and passions. The emotionality that Cohen picks up on influences the movement of characters like Belinda as passions such as "rage" come to the surface in the form of physical reactions.

These passions that resurface physically are ever-present within the female body as we are told that "in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage" (I.12). Pope seizes on the belief common amongst eighteenth-century physicians that there was a connection

between the passions in women and the spleen in order to create another level for his satire. In 1733, a physician named Thomas Dover documented that "the fair sex" are "of a much finer texture of body than men, they are more subject to the passions of the mind, which have often been the cause of this distemper" (14).[28] John Mullan references physicians like Dover and argues that "For the eighteenth-century practitioner of 'Physick,' the female body is construed … as that which might bespeak a dangerous opacity of passion and imagination" (157). In other words, Mullan suggests that in the eighteenth century, female passions were consistently perceived as attached to the female body and these passions were always already a focus for the physicians of the period. Pope imagines this same danger in the passions and depicts them accordingly.

The natural force of Belinda's passions, that is physically attached to her body according to Pope and physicians like Dover, controls her body to the point where the passions manifest themselves in a physical reaction of sound. The women in Canto V, similarly to Cohen's generalization, are described as acting from passionate motivations. Belinda "cries" out the phrase "restore the lock!" to which "the vaulted roofs rebound" (103). The "vaulted roofs" of Hampton Court Palace, the setting of the poem, are mentioned in order to establish the effect of Belinda's emotions. Her emotional presence is large enough to cause a difference in a large hall with "vaulted" roofs. This passionate form of power, however, still does not contribute to Belinda's capacity to act or enact change. Pope makes it evident that Belinda does not control these passions; these passions are instead controlled by the Goddess of spleen.

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[28] For more on this perspective, see *The ancient physician's legacy to his country. Being what he has collected himself in forty-nine years practice: ...* London, 1733.

The "Goddess" of Spleen

The strongest force that moves Belinda to action in *The Rape of the Lock* is the Goddess of spleen because of her control over Belinda's passions and emotions. Pope exploits his reader's understanding of humoral theory by using imagery to create a symbolic space for the spleen in which psychological temperaments are controlled by a "Goddess." The powers attributed to the Goddess, as well as the sprite Umbriel, are indicative of Belinda's lack of power over her own mind and body; that is, Belinda is subject to nature.

The "Goddess of spleen" serves as a general representation of the female passions that make women mercurial. The sprite, Umbriel, enters the "gloomy Cave of Spleen" and addresses the "Goddess" as a "wayward Queen" (IV.57). He states,

> 'Hail wayward Queen!
> Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen:
> Parent of vapours and of female wit,
> Who give th' hysteric, or poetic fit…' (IV.57-60).

Umbriel qualifies the title of "Queen" with the adjective "wayward," indicating her capricious inclinations. These two words combined, "wayward queen," are conceptually oxymoronic. The two words hold different connotations; using the word "wayward" to describe a queen holds negative connotations because the queen is supposed to, positively, represent a steadfast fixture of a monarchical society. Umbriel also uses the qualification that the Goddess "rules" the sex to "fifty from fifteen," which determines the extent of her power (58). The use of the word "sex," here used to denote gender, is

further indication that the entirety of female kind is ruled by the passions produced by the spleen and thus represented by the Goddess. This establishes the idea that Belinda serves as a representation of all women, collectively, because the poem makes it clear that Belinda is heavily influenced by the spleen, which is ruled by a female figure—the goddess.

As the spleen, which "rule[s] the sex," directs the course of emotional reactions, it maintains power over Belinda. The goddess collects "sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues" indicating several forms of agency (IV. 84). First, "sighs" and "sobs" are a physical expression of emotion, typically melancholy emotion, through breath and verbal exclamations. In other words, Belinda's countenance is altered by the spleen as she presents herself as melancholy with sighs and sobs. Next, the poem lists the "passions" in order to demonstrate that the spleen controls not only the physical reactions but also the motivation behind those physical reactions. Lastly, "the war of tongues" indicates Belinda's ability to participate in verbal discussion. More specifically, the use of the word "war" indicates that the discussion is motivated by disagreement, an argument. This relates back to the mercurial nature of women highlighted by the term "wayward" as they are characterized by argumentative tendencies. As Belinda is a representation of all women, this characterization reduces her agency by suggesting that her conversation, "war of tongues," is motivated by emotions instead of intentional, rational discussion ability.

The earlier pairing of the words "wayward" and "queen" is intended to be outlandish and hyperbolic in order to mock the idea that one area of the body is able to

dictate control over an entire gender; however, the spleen is not the only organ that the goddess is able to control. Another title given to the goddess of spleen by Umbriel is "parent of vapours and of female wit" which illustrates that the spleen has further power over the mind and physical reactions of women (59). The goddess is characterized as the "parent," which indicates that the goddess, and ultimately the spleen, produces both "vapours" and "wit." Here, the term "vapours" is used to describe the psychological temperament of depression as dictated by humoral theory. This means that the goddess has the agency to create, or initiate, feelings of melancholy. Subsequently, "wit" indicates the possession of mental sharpness and acuity. Umbriel very specifically clarifies that the "wit" he is referencing is distinctly "female," which limits agency by generalizing the capabilities of the minds of women. Thus, "female" wit, or abilities of the mind, is entirely attributed to the goddesses' ability to control fits of passion.

The scene in which Umbriel explores the "Cave of Spleen" represents the role of the humors within women's passions, but it is also indicative of the ability of men to control women's tempers as it shows a male figure as the agent of spleen exploration. As Umbriel relinquishes his "gifts" from the goddess onto Belinda, the text states, "But Umbriel, hateful gnome! forbears not so; / He breaks the vial whence the sorrows flow. / Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears, / Her eyes half-languishing, half-drowned in tears;/ On her heaved bosom hung her drooping head" (141-145). Umbriel is described here as a "hateful gnome" because of his intent to use the goddesses gifts on Belinda to evoke negative emotional responses. In addition, the language indicating Belinda's passions and emotional responses are strong in this passage.

Umbriel "breaks" the vial which causes the "sorrows" to flow from Belinda. Belinda is left in "beauteous grief," a state she is wholly unable to control. Her "heaved bosom" indicates that she is physically impacted through a loss of breath. And her head droops from the emotional strain. These images are meant to demonstrate the ability nature has to wreak havoc on the female body through its control of emotions.

Beauty and Culture in Belinda's Dressing Scene

In this poem, Pope often contrasts the superficial with the serious to hyperbolize female superficiality and to critique the influence of culture, all while emphasizing that beauty derives from nature but is augmented by culture. For example, he lists some "dire disasters" including the possibility that Belinda might "stain her honour, or her new brocade" (II.107). Here, jewelry is afforded the same importance as "honour" similarly to how the title of the poem equates loss of hair with "rape." This form of mockery extends to the form and structure of the poem in its use of heroic couplets, and the trivial event of Belinda's hair loss becomes a parody of heroic literature.[29] Pope declares this as his intent in the dedication preceding his poem and states, "for the ancient poets are in one respect like many modern ladies; let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance" (32). The allegorical presence in the poem strengthens its function as a satirical work by attributing levels of deep meaning to the trivial situation that Pope attempts to mock.[30] In this poem, Pope intertwines

[29] Pope also translated Homer's *Iliad* into heroic couplets.
[30] *The Rape of the Lock* satirizes a real event that transpired between Lord Petre and Arabella Fermor.

language of commercial beauty with language of heroic grandeur and the ritualized triviality of women, and perhaps society, is critiqued by framing the episode of hair loss as an epic. The most prominent example of this is in Canto I—Belinda's dressing scene.

The dressing scene has a long standing history of criticism from scholars due to its extravagant satire of the female image. Belinda's beauty plays an important role in the poem, and accordingly, at one point, Belinda is described as "the nymph in her beauteous grief," an objectification of her grief. Even further, the Baron lusts after Belinda's hair and "to the Prize aspir'd," an objectification that reduces Belinda's value to a lock of her hair (IV.143, II.30). Belinda's objectification, therefore, contributes to her lack of "agency" as she functions as an object rather than a subject (Chico 2). Scholars like Glenn Storey have often considered these moments of Belinda's objectification and lack of agency as cultural markers of the eighteenth century. Tita Chico, on the other hand, interprets these moments as indicators of the presence of female "agency" through the power of beauty. I would take Chico's argument a little bit further to say that the artificial act of dressing one's nature to advantage grants women a limited amount of power.

Pope, too, it would seem conceptualizes female power through their beauty, which he demonstrates through Belinda's dressing scene. As Belinda prepares herself at the dressing table, the poem states that "first, robed in white, the nymph intent adores, / With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers" (I. 123-124). She is "robed in white" as an indicator of her innocence, which attributes more power to her as an object. But the key terms here lie within the phrase "cosmetic powers." Here, Pope is attributing Belinda's

power to her use of "puffs, powders, patches" and other "glittering spoil" (I.138, 132). Chico views moments like this one from Belinda's dressing-room scene as Pope's management of both character and beauty (3). Rightly so, but I would extend this argument to say that the power given to Belinda—through her own physical beauty—is not hers to control. This means that even though she is beautiful, a characteristic that should give her power in her society because her society placed such a high value on beauty, she does not have the ability to willfully enact change. Her character is instead "managed" by the cultural expectations of beauty.

Although society values Belinda's beauty, and even though she does not have control over it, her beauty is criticized. At one point in the poem, the management of Belinda's beauty is criticized as a marker of her impurity. Thalestris casts several questions to Belinda and states,

> 'O wretched maid!' she spread her hands, and cried,
> (While Hampton's echoes, 'wretched maid!' replied)
> 'Was it for this you took such constant care
> The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?
> For this your locks in paper durance bound,
> For this with torturing irons wreathed around?
> For this with fillets strained your tender head,
> And bravely bore the double loads of lead? (IV. 95-102)

By asking these questions and employing anaphora in these lines, Thalestris suggests the possibility that Belinda took "such constant care" in order to encourage the Baron's advances and therefore forfeit her purity. Thalestris highlights the pains of beauty to assert that cosmetic constructions are unnatural. These cosmetic constructions are simply nature dressed to advantage. Belinda is punished for her use of "bodkin, comb, and essence" because it elevates her nature and results in lust from the Baron.

Pope satirizes the beauty of Belinda and demonstrates female submission to culture through religious imagery. Pope describes the act of Belinda's dressing and states, "A heavenly image in the glass appears,/ To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears" (I. 125-126). The use of religious imagery in this passage is stark. The "heavenly image" that appears in the mirror causes a physical reaction from Belinda that is rife with religious connotation. She literally "bends" and "rears" at the sheer force of her own beauty in a similar manner to a religious ritual. Belinda praises the force of her own "heavenly" image by bending to it, as one would at an altar. The image of beauty that culture has constructed for Belinda causes literal physical submission as she "bends" to it. Here, Pope critiques the culture which praises the beauty of women. He contrasts religion with the trivial image "in the glass" to mock the significance placed on female image by society.

The literal reflection of Belinda's beauty, in "the glass," also transfers to a metaphorical reflection as it is compared to natural images, in order to emphasize how culture builds on nature. Cohen suggests that the power of Belinda's beauty is initially introduced in the poem with an image of the sun in order to imply that her beauty transcends the outside world. However, the same force that directs the outside world also directs Belinda's beauty (Cohen, "Transformation" 208). As Belinda wakes in the morning the text states, "Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray, / And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day" (I.13-14). The sun, considered a symbol of the natural world, wakes Belinda as she opens her eyes. In Cohen's reading of this moment, her eyes "eclipse the day," which suggests that Belinda's eyes hold more beauty than the sun

(208). But instead, Pope makes this comparison to emphasize the presence of nature within Belinda's beauty.

The sylphs function as aids in enhancing Belinda's beauty, and Pope exhibits how the sylphs exploit her nature by emphasizing she is not the owner of her beauty, but rather a reflection of it.

> Sees by degrees a purer blush arise.
> And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
> The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
> These set the head, and those divide the hair,
> Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
> And Betty's praised for labours not her own. (I. 143-148)

Here, the "purer blush" of Belinda's features emerge as a result of the sylphs' labors. In other words, her natural "blush" becomes more apparent as the sylphs, culture, builds on the pre-existing nature of Belinda's complexion. Then, we see a glimpse of Belinda's true nature beneath the labors of the sylphs as "keener lightnings quicken in her eyes." The sylphs determine the way in which to arrange Belinda's beauty as they "set the head," "fold the sleeve," "plait the gown," and "divide the hair." These are all external elements, deemed beautiful by culture, that function solely to enhance Belinda's natural beauty.

Pope further critiques culture as Belinda's beauty is personified and Belinda shows her wit by dressing her own nature to advantage.[31] Belinda's dressing routine is described as:

> Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
> The fair each moment rises in her charms,
> Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
> And calls forth all the wonders of her face (I. 139-142)

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[31] In *An Essay on Criticism* Pope declares that "True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd" (II.297).

"Awful beauty" is personified as a warrior that prepares for battle and "puts on all its arms." The use of the term "awful" here is meant in the positive sense of the term in which it means "awe-inspiring" ("awful, adj."). This highlights that beauty is clearly figured as an agent of its own because of its personification. Even more so, it is established as something separate from nature. The beauty acts on Belinda as it "repairs her smiles" and "awakens every grace." It holds control as it is able to "call forth all the wonders of her face." In other words, Pope is emphasizing that culture has the ability to highlight natural "wonders," and "call" them "forth," but not create them.

The Power of the Sylphs

The sylphs seen in *The Rape of the Lock* are representative of cultural influences that act upon nature. The "place" of the sylphs is provided in detail to encourage this metaphorical reading throughout the poem. At one point, we are told that "sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race, / Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place" (III.35-36). Pope is associating sylphs with women, in particular, and at the same time asserting that women and sylphs are both "fond of place." The term "place" takes on two meanings here, first the literal place of the sylphs in their protection of Belinda, and second the place of women in society based on their conformity to cultural expectations. In Pope's dedicatory letter to Arabella Fermor, he explains the origins of the sylphs and says, "they are the best conditioned creatures imaginable. For they say, any mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle spirits, upon a condition very easy

to all true adepts, an inviolate preservation of chastity" (32). Pope's careful use of the term "conditioned," or trained, provides a context for understanding the function of the sylphs, that is, the maintenance of purity.

The poem completes this description of the sylphs as protectors of female chastity and enforcers of culture by dictating who is allotted their protection. Pope states, "Know farther yet; whoever fair and chaste / Rejects mankind, is by some sylph embraced" (I. 67-68). This attributes the ability to reject men completely to "some sylph" that has "embraced" a woman. Therefore, the power of female choice is attributed to the sylphs that act on Belinda and sylphs can only control whoever is "fair and chaste," which implies that their influence is limited to women.

This same power is referenced in another instance in which the sylphs are charged with various tasks by Ariel that protect the external factors that enhance Belinda's beauty. Ariel refers to the duties of sylphs and states, "Others on earth o'er human race preside, / Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide" (II. 87-88). Aside from the disturbing portrait of constant surveillance from the sylphs that we can glean from this passage, Ariel is tasking the sylphs with guiding the actions of humans, collectively. Ariel further directs the sylphs to perform specific assignments that protect Belinda's beauty and chastity. He orders,

> Haste then, ye spirits! to your charge repair:
> The fluttering fan be Zephyretta's care;
> The drops to thee, Brilliante, we consign;
> And Momentilla, let the watch be thine;
> Do thou, Crispissa, tend her favorite lock;
> Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.
> To fifty chosen sylphs, of special note,
> We trust th' important charge, the petticoat (II. 111-118)

This moment mocks the seriousness with which culture protects the beauty of women. The sylphs are assigned to trivial things that enhance Belinda's beauty, like her "favorite lock" of hair and her "fluttering fan" in order to demonstrate that the sylphs are representative of culture. Ariel tells the sylphs that the "important charge" is the protection of Belinda's "petticoat," which turns a relatively unimportant assignment into something more serious. Pope is mocking the values of society by emphasizing how culture seeks to protect beauty. The sylphs, representing culture, hold power over Belinda, but their power becomes problematic when the sylphs attempt to act against nature.

Belinda's natural passions interfere with the ability of the sylphs to guide her actions and act upon her nature. As Ariel tries to protect Belinda from her rape, "Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art, / An earthly lover lurking at her heart. / Amazed, confused, he found his power expired" (III. 143-45). In spite of Belinda's "art"—like the bees in the earlier quoted passage from *An Essay on Man*—Ariel notices an "earthly lover" in Belinda's heart which causes Ariel's power to "expire," meaning he is no longer able to control or protect her. Belinda's passions that "laboured in her breast" overcome the ability of the sylphs to use any form of power that they may hold over her (IV. 2). This further demonstrates how the passions induced by forces of nature are stronger than the influence of the sylphs, or culture, and render Belinda's actions involuntary.

Satire and Clarissa

Pope renders female nature in a complex way that poses as simple satire so that we may imagine the episode of spleen as hyperbolic. However, Pope's work has multiple complex layers that speak to his understanding of female nature in a more convoluted way. For example, the protagonist of *The Rape of the Lock*, Belinda, is seemingly unable to control her choices and actions because they are purely motivated by the spleen. Pope details this with vivid imagery and the conceptualization of a strange "other-worldly" visit to the "Cave of Spleen" in which a goddess rules the passions. But then, Pope also includes characters like Clarissa who seems to own her own actions and possess enough self-acuity to provide a moralistic speech about the fickle nature of beauty and the effect of this nature on women.

Clarissa, in her moralistic speech of Canto V, reinforces the idea of nature as a superior force to beauty as she boldly makes the claim,

> But since, alas! frail beauty must decay,
> Curled or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey;
> Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
> And she who scorns a man, must die a maid;
> What then remains but well our power to use,
> And keep good-humour still whate'er we lose? (V. 29-30)

Clarissa alludes to the temporary nature of beauty as she states "all shall fade." She points out the inevitable change of the physical features to focus on the importance of women's "good-humour" as it is the only choice women have the ability to make once their beauty has faded.

The "decay" of beauty that Clarissa discusses is indicative of Pope's understanding of nature as a controlling force of the body as it changes appearance. John Trimble interprets this moment as Clarissa's instinctive opportunism. He states, "what she says here is that beauty is a fine advantage since it is a form of power...and it would suffice—suffice quite well in fact—were it not subject to the inexorable law of nature ('all shall fade')" (683). Trimble makes an apt assessment of Clarissa's speech here. What he does not address, however, is the importance of the term he is using to describe the decay of beauty mentioned in Clarissa's speech—nature.

Although nature remains unsaid in Clarissa's speech, the concept is ever-present, as we can see nature directing the course of human life and—in the words of Courtney Weiss Smith—"nature is an agent two times over" (618). Clarissa point out that the "locks" of women inevitably "turn to grey" and "all shall fade," indicating the presence of a force much larger than the culture that promotes certain ideals of beauty.

Pope alludes to this moment in Clarissa's speech in Canto I and indirectly references nature in the same way. He states, "For when the fair in all their pride expire, / To their first elements their souls retire" (I. 57-58). The use of the phrase "first elements" here is suggestive of some kind of originary, or natural, state. This process of transforming back into "their first elements" is the "inexorable law of nature" that Trimble proposes (683). Clarissa more or less makes the same argument that there is no real power in beauty because it fades and falls subject to nature.[32]

[32] This is reminiscent of Finch's closing lines of "The Spleen" in which she claims to be "Retained thy pris'ner, thy acknowledged slave, / And sunk beneath thy chain to a lamented grave" (VII.146).

But Pope's representations of female agency vary ambiguously for Clarissa because she is granted a sense of agency, or "will," when she provides the Baron with scissors, prior to delivering her speech on morals. The actual "rape" of the lock occurs as,

> But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
> How soon they find fit instruments of ill?
> Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
> A two-edged weapon from her shining case:
> So ladies in romance assist their knight,
> Present the spear, and arm him for the fight. (III. 125-130)

This moment is imagined in terms of battle as Clarissa presents the weapon, "spear," to "arm him for the fight." It is unclear whether or not Clarissa and the Baron have planned for the execution of the lock, but we are told that Clarissa draws the scissors from her "shining case."

Just as with the confusing message Pope conveys with Clarissa and the scissors, the nature of the satire often complicates readings of *The Rape of the Lock.* But the examination of nature within this text is key to the success of our understandings of female agency in the eighteenth century. Pope concludes the poem by stating "This lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame, / And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name" (V.149-150). Here, he dictates the prize for Belinda's pains, her hair becomes as star and her name lives forever inscribed in "the stars." Pope's conclusion is much less sobering than the conclusion of Finch's "The Spleen" in which she sinks beneath the "chain" of spleen "to a lamented grave" (VII.145). However, similarly to Finch, Pope also leaves it up to his readers to decide whether his own claims are genuine or pretended.

The Rape of the Lock is widely regarded as an important text to study from the eighteenth-century literary canon but it can also tell us how influential male authors, such as Alexander Pope, were thinking about female agency through its exploration of nature. Pope clearly elaborates on how he imagines the choice-making capabilities of women and how women in particular are ruled by their passions. He provides a portrait of the inner-workings of nature and the female body that suggests women have little to no control over their emotions. Pope critiques women's use of pretense to gain agency and dismisses it through his use of satire.

CHAPTER FOUR

"A SPIRIT NOT NATURAL TO ME": NATURAL MOTILITY IN JOHN CLELAND'S *MEMOIRS OF A WOMAN OF PLEASURE*

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, two prominent authors of the early eighteenth century—Anne Finch and Alexander Pope—were considering nature as an influencer of female will, which impacts our modern understandings of female agency in the early eighteenth century. Pope's engagement with "amorous causes" in *The Rape of the Lock* is continued in the writing of the middle of the century by John Cleland in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748) as his protagonist, Fanny Hill, repeatedly falls into experiences that allow her to act on her amorous passions and ultimately engage in prostitution. In this chapter, I will analyze the natural language of *Memoirs* in order to determine the relationship between nature and artificial constructs that Cleland attempts to explore, as a way to help readers navigate Cleland's pornographic work. I argue that an analysis of *Memoirs* reveals that Cleland imagines nature as a force that motivates women to act on amorous passions. Cleland deviates from the previous authors by ignoring the spleen completely, and in his interpretation, the spleen departs from representations of nature and amorousness comes to displace spleen as a defining feature of natural motility.

In the works of Finch and Pope, nature is an implicit concept, but Cleland's use of nature is much more explicit. *Memoirs* questions the notions of the relationship between what is inherent in character and what is created by artifice by contrasting acts of prostitution with natural desires and instincts. As expected from the title, the natural desires and instincts of the novel almost always result in "pleasure." The term is used in the novel two-hundred and forty-two times total. But "pleasure" is not the only term foundational to Cleland's text. Cleland explicitly uses the term "nature" in the novel a substantial one-hundred and seventeen times, "natural" sixty-seven times, and "naturally" twenty-five times—a large number considering that *Memoirs* is only one-hundred and eighty-eight pages total—which tells us that nature was an essential term in Cleland's depiction of pleasure, particularly the pleasure experienced by women.

Cleland employs all three of Raymond Williams's definitions of "nature" throughout the novel, but the idea of nature in *Memoirs* that most closely adheres to the explorations of Finch and Pope is nature as an inherent force that directs the world and human beings—this chapter will address this conception of nature first. Nature is imagined as a force in several meaningful ways: nature provides pleasure and relief, instructs or guides humans, and limits the abilities of the mind while moving the body. Next, I will address how Cleland also introduces two new ideas of nature: one that Fanny uses as an explanation for her own attributes and characteristics, and one that describes women in terms of the natural world, often in relation to sex. Finally, this chapter will discuss Cleland's conceptions of art—in dressing and undressing—as it builds on nature, through his masquerades, frequent discussions of Fanny's body, and exploitation of

natural relationships, in which he uses terms for human anatomy such as "flower," "machine," and "champion."

Nature as a Force that Provides Pleasure

In *Memoirs*, natural motility is defined through pleasure that originates from amorous passions. In contrast to Finch and Pope's depictions, in which Finch and Belinda are controlled by nature, Cleland demonstrates how nature emerges through passions, which Fanny is subject to. Fanny states, "But, alas! this was no merit in me, for I was drove to it by a passion too impetuous for me to resist, and, I did what I did, because I could not help it" (38). Here, "passion" is the motivating force that moves Fanny to action. She is unable to resist running away from her mistress, Mrs. Brown because her prompt to run away, with her lover Charles, is a result of her passion. Further, she "could not help it" meaning that her mental faculties are rendered useless by the "passions" that drive her actions.

Pleasure and the passions that induce it, central to the novel as a whole, are products of nature. Fanny states, "This is I own, too much, too strong of self-praise; but should I not be ungrateful to nature, and to a form to which I owe such singular blessings of pleasure and fortune, were I to suppress, through an affectation of modesty, the mention of such valuable gifts?" (15). The "gratefulness" that Fanny refers to is a response to nature's gift of "pleasure and fortune." The "affectation of modesty" is an element of pretense that suppresses Fanny's true nature. Here, we can see a difference

between Cleland's novel and the works of Finch and Pope. To Fanny, the use of pretense would not be to feign natural affliction, but to instead suppress it. She posits that to utilize pretense in this way would make her "ungrateful to nature." Fanny views her own natural inclinations towards passion and pleasure as "valuable gifts," and therefore, she is unwilling to attempt to affect modesty to reduce her sensitivity to those passions.

Fanny's awareness and responsiveness towards pleasure is attributed to her personal "constitution" or state of being. She states, "and with my taste for pleasure, a taste strongly constitutional to me; the talent of pleasing, with which nature has endow'd a handsome person, form'd to me the greatest of all merits" (80). Her "taste for pleasure" is a natural part of her identity, as it is "constitutional" to her. Nature, here personified, provides a "handsome person" and physical attractiveness which is the only "merit" that Fanny requires in her judgement. Fanny undermines the hierarchy of class by looking for meaning in pleasure rather than social status (Levin 335). Fanny's judgement is strictly limited to attractive physical features that incite her passions.

The personal constitution that dictates Fanny's nature and "taste for pleasure" is also figured as an instinct that guides and instructs her choices and actions. She states,

> . . . and which, for the interest my own seat of pleasure began to take furiously in it, I stared at with all the eyes I had: however, my senses were too much flurried, too much concentered in that now burning spot of mine, to observe anything more than in general the make and turn of that instrument; from which the instinct of nature . . . I was to expect that supreme pleasure. (25)

The presence of amorous emotions causes Fanny's "senses" to "flurry." This depiction is reminiscent of Finch's "The Spleen" in which Finch experiences senses that overcome the brain and destroy her sense of will. Cleland's depiction departs from Finch, though,

as Fanny expects pleasure as an outcome of her lost senses, and she says that she "was to expect that supreme pleasure." Nature informs Fanny that she should expect this pleasure through her "instinct." In other words, her understanding that she will gain pleasure from this interaction comes from her natural instincts. Fanny is still controlled by her nature, like Finch, but with a pleasurable and desirable outcome.

Nature is imagined as a gifting entity that holds the ability to provide Fanny with pleasure, but also with pain. In detailing a sexual encounter, Fanny states, " . . . yet not without pain too did I deflower myself as far as it could reach; proceeding with such a fury of passion, in this solitary and last shift of pleasure, as extended me at length breathless on the bed in an amorous melting trance" (107). In this passage, Fanny discusses her "deflowering" as a product of her own amorous passions. The pain that Fanny feels is almost like an offering to nature. In a "fury" fueled by passion, Fanny engages in an autoerotic sexual experience that results in an "amorous melting trance." In order to reach this passionate conclusion, Fanny has to experience a form of pain.

Fanny describes being affected by "violent emotions" that function as amorous passions—which have been awakened, or "stir'd,"—which tells us that these passions are natural to Fanny. She states,

> I fell asleep, through pure weariness, from the violent emotions I had been led into, when nature (which had been to warmly stir'd, and fermented to subside without allaying by some means or other) relieved me by one of those luscious dreams, the transports of which are scarce inferior to those of waking, real action. (13)

She is "led into" extreme emotions which cause physical distress in the form of "weariness." Fanny indicates that nature resides within her body and responds to

emotions as it is awakened, or "stir'd," from its resting place. The dreams that occur to "relieve" Fanny happen as a result of her nature. These amorous passions are not without physical exertion; they leave her breathless and she "melts" with relief.

Nature as a Force that Provides Relief

More than just a gifting entity that incites an amorous trance, though, pleasure originates in nature which provides relief. Fanny tells us that during a sexual encounter, "presently he guided my hand lower, to that part in which nature, and pleasure keep their stores in concert" (46). Here, Fanny is suggesting that nature and pleasure reside in one part of the body together, indicating that they are linked. Paradoxically, the pleasure that Fanny feels by acting on her amorous passions is described as a form of relief from nature, which indicates that nature is taxing on the bodies of humans. In the longer passage quoted in the previous section, Fanny is left weary from her interaction with "violent emotions" that have caused a physical reaction within her body. She was "led into" these emotions, Fanny claims, seemingly with no aspect of personal will involved. Nature is the force that intervenes during her emotional experience and "relieves" her of the "violent emotions." Fanny qualifies her experience with nature in the parentheticals in which she imagines nature within herself "warmly" stirring and moving as a result of amorous emotions.

The "violent emotions," or amorous passions, described by Fanny run parallel with the descriptions of Finch and Pope through the emergence of physical reactions.

Fanny claims that, "Violent passions seldom last long, and those of women least of any. A dead still calm succeeded this storm, which ended in a profuse shower of tears" (60). This line from *Memoirs* echoes the metaphor employed by Finch in "The Spleen" in which she states, "Now a dead Sea thoul't represent / A Calm of stupid Discontent, / Then dashing on the Rocks wilt rage into a Storm" (I.6-8). There are several common terms used in both of these descriptions, "dead," "calm," and "storm." Both uses of imagery demonstrate the passions moving through the body and manifesting physically through tears. However, Cleland more explicitly details Fanny's amorous situation that Finch and Pope only ever allude to, such as when Pope suggests that Belinda has "An earthly lover lurking at her heart" (III. 144). In this way, we can see how Cleland's depiction of nature is more optimistic.

Nature Instructs and Guides Humans

Amorous passions are important to Cleland's portraiture of sex, and these passions often move Fanny to action. As quoted earlier in this chapter, Fanny states, "yet not without pain too did I deflower myself as far as it could reach; proceeding with such a fury of passion, in this solitary and last shift of pleasure, as extended me at length breathless on the bed in an amorous melting trance" (107). The "shift of pleasure" that Fanny details here is an example of the motility that Cleland uses to define nature. Fanny holds the ability to move independently in order to take pleasurable action.

Nature instructs and guides the body toward actions that lead to pleasurable physical sensations through manipulation of the amorous parts of the body. Fanny tells her readers,

> . . . by this time, the young fellow . . . ventured, under the stronger impulse, and instructive promptership of nature alone, to slip his hands, trembling with eager impetuous desires, under my petticoats; and seeing, I suppose, nothing extremely severe in my looks, to stop or dash him, he feels out, and seizes, gently, the center spot of his ardours. (73)

Fanny experiments with and "ventures" into sexual experiences under the guiding hand of nature as it prompts her actions. The "instructive promptership" that Fanny attributes to nature indicates how nature functions as a motivator of female passions. Even more so, it is characterized as a "stronger impulse" or a sudden desire to act. The physicality of passions are described here too, as Fanny's sexual partner "trembles" with "eager impetuous desires." In this passage, Fanny determines the role of her looks and facial expressions in the prompting of sexual interactions which extends our understanding of pretense by incorporating sexual practices. She modifies her features to prompt her partner in the same way that nature prompts his hands to "seize" the "center spot of his ardours."

The amorous passions become one with the body as Cleland imagines them coursing through the veins and manifesting physically. As Fanny discusses her initiation into sexual practices, she states,

> Hitherto I had been indebted only to the girls of the house for the corruption of my innocence: their luscious talk, in which modesty was far from respected, their description of their engagements with men, had given me a tolerable insight into the nature and mysteries of their profession, at the same time that they highly provoked an itch of florid warm-spirited blood through every vein: but above all, my bedfellow Phoebe, whose pupil I more immediately was, exerted her talents in giving me the first tinctures of pleasure: whilst nature, now warmed and wantoned

> with discoveries so interesting, piqued a curiosity which Phoebe artfully whetted, and leading me from question to question of her own suggestion, explained to me all the mysteries of Venus. (23)

Aside from the significant choice of words that suggest the presence of monetary value in sexual practices, Fanny offers a picture of what she imagines taking place within her body as she experiences new passions. Again, nature prompts movement. The "warm-spirited blood" flows which "warms" nature and incites the progress of passions.

Nature Limits the Mind and Moves the Body

Another similarity to Finch's depiction of the spleen seen in *Memoirs* lies within the quickly changing passions, which establishes them as forces of nature that work against human intention. To Finch, this quickness to change renders nature as a force of destruction and Fanny's interpretation does not stray far from this idea. Fanny states, "how quick is the shift of passions from one extreme to another! and how little are they acquainted with the human heart who dispute it!" (103). Finch describes the spleen in similar terms and claims that it "shifts hastily" (V. 101). Aside from the quickness of shifting passions, Fanny claims that the "human heart" resists these passions in vain which indicates that there is a lack of control within human action when the passions are involved. Fanny does not always figure the passions as undesirable, though. As stated earlier, she also imagines the passions favorably as gifts from nature.

Nature limits abilities of the mind by overwhelming the senses. Fanny states, "Feelings so new were too much for me; my heated and alarm'd senses were in a tumult

that robb'd me of all liberty of thought; tears of pleasure gush'd from my eyes, and somewhat assuaged the fire that rag'd all over me" (12). The passions that Fanny considers natural manifest in the same way as those depicted in the works of Finch and Pope. Fanny is overcome as the feelings become "too much" and her senses are in a state of "tumult." This limits her choice-making capacity as it takes away her "liberty of thought." Her body is affected too as tears "gush" from her eyes and move to "assuage the fire" caused by her passion.

Nature as Character

Fanny uses nature as an explanation for her own attributes and characteristics which tells us how nature further instructively prompts the actions of women by simply functioning as an inherent force. Fanny introduces the idea of innocence as an absence of vice within the first few pages of the novel and quickly establishes the male and female dynamic that the novel explores. She states,

> And then all my foundation in virtue was no other than a total ignorance of vice, and the shy timidity general to our sex, in the tender stage of life, when objects alarm, or frighten more by their novelty, than anything else: but then this is a fear too often cured at the expense of innocence, when Miss, by degrees, begins no longer to look on man as a creature of prey that will eat her. (2)

This statement provides several important distinctions: first, virtue has its foundation with "a total ignorance of vice." Second, Fanny provides a generalization that renders her own sex as "timid." Third, she tells us that this timidity has consequences in both its presence and absence. Fanny makes the claim that with the presence of timidity, in "the tender

stage of life," women are easily "alarmed" or "frightened" by new or unusual objects. But even in the absence of this timidity, women are robbed of their "innocence"—detailed as an exchange of goods. Fourth, and finally, this passage tells us that women perceive men as "creatures of prey" with the intent of devouring the women they hunt.

Nature as the Natural World

Cleland follows medieval tradition as female characters are consistently described with terms of nature and natural imagery in contrast to the "machines" and "champions" attributed to men.[33] Cleland uses metaphors that figure nature as female in order to create a juxtaposition between the sexes. Nature becomes associated with women and artificial creations are associated with men. This is especially applicable to the common hunter and prey metaphor that Cleland utilizes to describe sexual interaction. Fanny frequently employs this metaphor before detailing heterosexual relationships. At one point, Fanny notices that Mrs. Brown has dressed her with the intent of making her desirable and says, "Well then, dress'd I was, and little did it then enter into my head that all this gay attire was no more than decking the victim out for sacrifice" (15). Here, we begin to see the idea that dress, or "attire," has the ability to transform humans. In this case, Fanny has been physically groomed for sexual encounters and she implies the ephemeral quality of women, who are "decked out" only for their own "sacrifice." She also suggests that

[33] George Economou notes that the figuring of nature as a female is a common assessment from scholars of medieval literature.

innocence is victimized within heterosexual practices. The word "sacrifice," too, indicates a comparison of women to animals. In saying that Fanny was dressed for sacrifice indicates that she is surrendered for possession during her sexual encounters.

Language analogizing male and female relationships with a hunt associates women with nature and men with artificial constructs, indicating that women are naturally subordinated. Margaret Mitchell argues that the metaphors used by Cleland indicate a "biologically determined submission of woman to man" (305) For example, as Fanny is witnessing the sexual interaction between the "young Italian" and Polly, she states "his eager eyes devour'd her" and his hands "wander'd, on the hunt of pleasure" (30). This metaphor renders the Italian the hunter, and Polly as the prey. Cleland is exploiting sexual relationships by creating imagery in which the woman is a helpless animal that is hunted.

In an even more obscene description, Fanny states that he "splits the tender victim" with "his weapon" in reference to the interaction between their physical anatomy (31). This is an interesting use of imagery and metaphor in the detailing of what is meant to be a pleasurable interaction. Here, men become the "weapon" or the "machine" which seeks out and destroys the vulnerable, or "tender," female prey. In this instance, the natural act of sex is taken advantage of by victimizing the female and taking away her agency within sexual interactions.

Interestingly though, the hunting metaphor is not limited to female victimization which suggests that the prey is more of a representation of innocence and a natural state

than of the feminine. Fanny articulates this in her description of the country boy, Will, and says:

> His hair trimly dress'd, clean linnen and above all, a hale, ruddy, wholesome country look, made him out as pretty a piece of woman's meat as you should see, and I should have thought any one much out of taste, that could not have made a hearty meal of such a morsel as nature seem'd to have design'd for the highest diet of pleasure. (80)

She describes his physical appearance in a way that creates an image of innocence, he wears "clean linnen [*sic*]" suggesting purity. His "wholesome country look" is indicative of the association between the country and innocence—he has not yet been corrupted by the city. Fanny continues the hunting metaphor by considering him "woman's meat" which is something raw and innocent to be ravaged by the superior being. The terms "taste," "hearty meal," and "morsel" all support this image of the hunt. Nature is given agency here as an entity that creates and provides for pleasure. Pleasure also becomes personified as the hunter that nature "designs" for the "highest diet of pleasure."

Artificial Constructs

Man-made or artificial constructs, it would seem, to Cleland are restrictors of nature. Fanny first tells us that, "Truth! Stark naked truth, is the word, and I will not so much as take the pains to bestow the strip of a gauze-wrapper on it, but paint situations such as they actually rose to me in nature, careless of violating those laws of decency, that were never made for such unreserved intimacies as ours" (1). "Gauze-wrapper" becomes problematic to Fanny when it manipulates nature. The artifice in what Fanny

calls "laws of decency" violate the natural experience of passion that Fanny produces and seeks with prostitution.

At one point in the novel, we are able to see that Fanny has become so restricted by the artifice of prostitution that her natural impulses are subdued. Fanny reflects on her innocence as a product of her "total ignorance of vice" (2). However, it is implied multiple times throughout the novel that Fanny's innocence is compared to an animal's lack of training suggested some sort of natural state. After the attempted rape scene with Mr. Crofts, Fanny states "I was so thoroughly, as they call it, brought over, so tame to their whistle, that, had my cage-door been set open, I had no idea that I ought to fly anywhere" (23). Here, Fanny is creating a metaphor for her own situation in which she is the animal and Mrs. Brown is her trainer. She is "tame" to the direction, or "whistle," of Mrs. Brown and ignores the natural impulse to seek freedom. This metaphor implies that artificial constructs are superior to natural motivation. Fanny considers the "loftier qualifications of birth, fortune, and sense" to be products of training that restrain her agency (80). It also produces an image of obligation as a confining enclosure, a "cage," that serves the purpose of restraining humanity from natural impulses.

Early in the novel, Fanny begins to encounter situations in which her lack of cultural experience, or her innocence, suggests she lacks a certain agency; furthermore, prostitution is detailed as an entrapment for nature, or the natural, when Fanny is first brought to Mrs. Brown's home. Fanny demonstrates a self-reflective awareness and states that Martha "whistles" to her so as to make her gratified with her cage and "blind to its wires" (9). Mrs. Brown, and by extension, Martha, treat Fanny as a "young filly" in her

state of innocence. She is brought into the cultural world by means of subdual and training as prostitution takes advantage of natural passions for financial gain. In this language Fanny metaphorically becomes an animal—a metaphor that is generously applied throughout the novel.

The natural feelings, or sensibility, that Fanny experiences are valued above the artificial values of society. By detailing pleasure instead of the procreative functions of sex Cleland exploits the relationship between man and woman. Sensibility is a strong characteristic of Fanny in her sexual experiences because she tends to rank her interactions in degree of natural pleasures, such as feeling and gratification, instead of cultural pleasures, such as social rank or wealth. Fanny's seduction of the country boy, Will, is embraced by Cleland and not criticized because it is characterized as "an aristocracy of pleasure" (Levin 335). In other words, Fanny's judgement of character through pleasure is celebrated and exploited by Cleland. Levin suggests that this is because "in her (Fanny's) system of 'natural philosophy,' beauty and pleasure without distinction of birth or station undermine class hierarchies by exposing them as manmade" (335).

Human Anatomy

One poetic convention Cleland heavily relies on in *Memoirs* is that of analogizing human anatomy with seemingly incompatible man-made creations. The "machine" is used as a metaphor for male anatomy and indicates something constructed, material, or manmade. This term, "machine," becomes synonymous with male anatomy. Similarly to

the hunting metaphor, the male becomes something to be feared by females. Fanny states, "I thought of what innovation that tender soft system of mine might have sustain'd from the shock of a machine so siz'd for its destruction" (79). Fanny's anatomy is described as "tender" and "soft" in relation to the "machine" of man that is supposedly made for Fanny's "destruction."

The common metaphor of "machine" utilized by Cleland in reference to male genitalia contrasts with how the sexual body is aestheticized in the metaphor used for female virginity, "the virgin-flower" (40). The imagery created by the term "machine" is very different from the imagery of a flower. This stark contrast is meant to convey the delicate nature of women, as flowers, as opposed to the harsh, methodical machine attributed to men.

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