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# Mourning and Material Culture in Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*

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Eliza Haywood's mid-eighteenth-century novel, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, made its appearance at a time when the gloom and sepulchral melancholy of the Graveyard Poets suffused the literary marketplace.<sup>1</sup> In 1751, the year of the novel's publication, Gray's "Elegy" was first published and then reissued no fewer than eight times, thus fostering a culture of mourning that continued to flourish throughout the decade.<sup>2</sup> Haywood's novel was not exempt from this trend and owes more to its cultural moment than is often acknowledged. Ostensibly written in a more serious vein than her earlier

1 Eliza Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, ed. Christine Blouch (1751; Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1998). References are to this edition.

2 The English Short Title Catalogue presents an ample bibliographic record attesting to the mid-century preoccupation with funerary literature; at least fourteen editions of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" were published between 1751 and 1759. Armando Petrucci observes that in mid-eighteenth-century England, "where the coexistence of inhabited centers, churches, and graveyards was already an established fact, the forms of death and burial that were to shape the culture of the century were ... mediated and spread by some outstandingly successful literary products that show a considerable awareness of funerary writing." Petrucci, *Writing the Dead: Death and Writing Strategies in the Western Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 105. For a treatment of the "large and influential literature, particularly in the 1740s and 1750s, devoted to meditations on tombs which ... influenced the forms of monuments," see David Bindman and Malcolm Baker, *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument: Sculpture as Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 8.

novels and in conformity with the didactic tendencies and “domestic ideology”<sup>3</sup> prevalent in the works of the period, *Betsy Thoughtless* presents a bizarre co-mingling of the grave and the comic. In the midst of carelessly collecting lovers, a walking blank slate of a young woman loses her most eligible suitor (Mr Truworth) along the way and settles for a more mundane runner-up (the aptly named Mr Munden). Evidently an unsatisfactory state of affairs, albeit instructive from a didactic standpoint, this romantic impasse is inevitably surmounted only through the intervention of an obliging *deus ex machina*. The narrative thus relies extensively upon death as an organizing principle; death neatly disposes of cumbersome characters and restores the romance trajectory of the novel, enabling lovers pulled asunder by marriage to reunite as widow and widower.<sup>4</sup> Integral to the narrative economy of this novel as death is, however, it also registers as an excess, as Haywood introduces a character in the form of the amorphous Mrs Blanchfield (yet another admirer of Mr Truworth), whose sole purpose in the story is to die and to be commemorated by her idol, thus providing an additional exemplum of the hero’s *true worth*. But this detail is not as superfluous as it might seem, since it affords yet another occasion for the work of mourning that figures so prominently in Haywood’s scripting of female consciousness.

If *Betsy Thoughtless* is first and foremost a novel about the development of a female mind and its triumph over a consumerist environment, the representation of material things that are not quite so uncomplicatedly tied up in the growth of consciousness must inevitably introduce some interpretative difficulties. For the work of mourning,

- 3 Many critics share this view, including Mary Anne Schofield, who argues that, in this late Haywood work, “sensational material has given way to moralistic reporting.” Schofield, *Eliza Haywood* (Boston: Twayne, 1985), 102. Recently, revisionist readings have attempted to restore the notoriety that Haywood gained early in her career for her erotic, sensational material, by arguing that “although Haywood wrote explicitly for the new market of didactic fiction, *Betsy Thoughtless* is not a work of moral didacticism.” Deborah Nestor, “Virtue Rarely Rewarded: Ideological Subversion and Narrative Form in Haywood’s Later Fiction” *SEL* 34 (1994): 288. Meanwhile, Beth Fowkes Tobin affirms that Haywood exploits the “reformed coquette” plot to criticize masculine authority.” Tobin, introduction to *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, by Eliza Haywood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), xxxiii. While claims for the subversiveness of Haywood’s text are somewhat overstated by scholars anxious to prove that she did not, in the end, simply capitulate to “moral bourgeois codes,” these arguments nonetheless do more justice to the complexity of the work, which, as a close reading reveals, was attuned to the culture both of the mind and of matter that was prevalent in the period.
- 4 This tidy conclusion has incurred the censure of many critics, including Nestor, who objects to the “deliberately arbitrary quality in the plot’s happy resolution, since Munden’s sudden death conveniently frees Betsy to accept the affections of Truworth, whose wife has also unexpectedly died” (28).

as Haywood presents it, brings death firmly within the purview of the eighteenth-century marketplace.<sup>5</sup> It has long been recognized that “commodity culture also cultivates melancholia,”<sup>6</sup> but the role of mourning as a catalyst for consumption has attracted significantly less attention. In *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton urges the English to “work harder and control consumption,”<sup>7</sup> while the physician George Cheyne, in his treatise *The English Malady* (1733), explicitly acknowledges the deep-seated connections between melancholy and consumption, which he regards as an inevitable by-product of economic prosperity.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Burton, Cheyne prescribes a treatment for the nervous disorder without necessarily denigrating the economic factors that play a central role in the production of the disease. As an apologist of sorts for a consumption-induced melancholia, Cheyne anticipates the arguments elaborated by David Hume

- 5 The flourishing of consumer culture in the eighteenth century has been discussed and documented extensively by John Brewer and Roy Porter in their work on practices of consumption and leisure activities of the period. Brewer argues that culture itself becomes a commodity during the period, just as the body—specifically the dead body—undergoes a process of commodification as well. See John Brewer, *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (London: Europa, 1982); and Roy Porter and John Brewer, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Haywood’s novel betrays a considerable interest in the activity of shopping, but at the time of each purchase, it takes pains to reveal that characters are induced to buy despite entertaining no intentions of doing so before entering the shops: “Mrs Munden thought, after the obliging entertainment she had received, she could do no less than become a purchaser of something ... though at the time she had not the least occasion for it, nor on her coming into the shop had any intention to increase her wardrobe” (534). Later on, after a chance meeting between Betsy and an estranged friend, the narrator states that “though both these ladies were much more taken up with each other than with examining the trifles they came to see, yet neither of them would quit the shop without becoming customers” (563). Both of these instances highlight the seductive aspect of the consumer experience with its imperative to spend apparently accepted and internalized by the female subjects, who, as Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace has observed, “were constituted in relation to consumption” by the dominant ideology of the period. Wallace, *Consuming Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 158. More intimately bound up in the world of goods, women might also be expected to participate more actively in the “mourning industry” that prospered during the eighteenth century, but Haywood’s text defeats any such expectations.
- 6 Guinn Batten, *Orphaned Imagination: Melancholy and Commodity Culture in English Romanticism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 5.
- 7 Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner et al., 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989–2000), 1:182.
- 8 George Cheyne, *The English Malady*, ed. Roy Porter (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991). The general consensus is that the free expression of grief emerged as a central concern in the seventeenth century, an event that Ralph Houlbrooke ascribes, at least partially, to “the intense interest in melancholy and the melancholic personality which England had inherited from the Italian Renaissance.” Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 253. The English adoption of this “cult of melancholy” proved so complete that it became known as the “English Malady,” and the physician Cheyne, taking his cue from Burton’s earlier work, appropriated the term for the title of his book on the subject of English nervous disorders.

and Adam Smith for the paradoxical benefits of luxury. But Haywood uniquely appears to question the typical understanding according to which melancholia is tied up with commodity culture, and by opposing melancholia to the practice of mourning, she reveals the latter category to be more properly aligned with the material culture of her day. Several characters in the narrative appear to advocate grieving less by producing more, but Haywood endeavours to retrieve melancholia from its associations with luxury and rampant consumerism by esteeming a melancholic reflection that dwells upon the past as preferable to the vapid sensibility that easily jettisons memory in order to avoid unpleasant sensation.

A convenient emblem of the melancholic sensibility of the period, the monument plays a crucial role within Haywood's narrative. Partially constructed as a satiric response to the mid-century mania for graveyard literature, Betsy's excursion through an urban churchyard tacitly mocks both the rhetoric of contemporary poets and the insensibility of the heroine, who consistently privileges the material over the spiritual. *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* grounds itself "in specific details of material culture," as Catherine Ingrassia has observed, and the particular attention that this work devotes to the representation of monuments is also worth considering.<sup>9</sup> Most notably, two episodes in the novel demand scrutiny; the first of these scenes features Betsy Thoughtless's frolic among the tombstones of Westminster Abbey (156), while the second episode represents her former suitor's erection of "a very curious monument of white marble" over the remains of Mrs Blanchfield, an expired lover (464). Far from existing as mere ornamentation in the landscape, these monuments betray the preoccupation with mortality that dominates this narrative of self-awareness,<sup>10</sup> even while suggesting the extent to which this concern is mediated through the material realm. Subjectivities (and particularly that of Betsy Thoughtless) are formed through the contemplation of objects, which in turn

9 Catherine Ingrassia, *Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 129.

10 As both Haywood's title and her constant use of "empiricist terminology" suggest, this work reads "primarily as the progress of a female consciousness, rendered interesting by its very lack of content." Christopher Flint, *Family Fictions: Narrative and Domestic Relations in Britain, 1688–1798* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 208. Richard Barney notes that "the narrator of the story ... consistently employs the empiricist terminology typical of education treatises when she distinguishes between Betsy's proclivity to luxuriate in sensations of emotional stimulus and her periodic improvement of her 'power of reflection.'" Barney, *Plots of Enlightenment: Education and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 287.

adapt the *memento mori* tradition still being observed at this time. Haywood's treatment of monuments as fetish objects, items of luxury, and repositories of cast-off memory both recognizes the profound connection between objects and consciousness and condemns the encroachment of the marketplace upon the interior space of the individual. In her indictment of the commodification of mourning, Haywood appears to validate a melancholic subjectivity as one conducive to reflection and altogether dislocated from the continuum of circulation and exchange. Although she does not exactly "rehabilitate" melancholia,<sup>11</sup> Haywood nonetheless presents it as an alternative to a mourning practice rooted in commodity culture and tests the feasibility of this notion through the representational space afforded by the novel in its simulation of subjectivity. Ultimately, the text endorses a melancholic attachment to objects that is supposedly intended to compensate for the emptiness of commodity culture.

Haywood's association of the tomb with mourning and reflection suggests that she, like John Locke, recognized the general utility of this trope. In the second book of his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke observes that "the ideas as well as children of our youth often die before us; and our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching; where, though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time and imagery moulders away."<sup>12</sup> Locke's analogy presents the tomb as a symbol of decay and suggests the aporetic nature of cognition itself.<sup>13</sup> Although Locke's metaphor has been eclipsed by the familiar image of the "sheet of white paper" and is omitted altogether in many abridged versions of the text, it holds considerable relevance for any consideration of the

11 Sigmund Freud's pathologization of melancholia and his distinctions between "normal" and "abnormal" grief have come under attack by theorists such as Julia Kristeva, who sees mourning as a kind of betrayal, embracing melancholia as a more authentic condition. See Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). For a critique of this postmodern tendency to rehabilitate melancholia, see Greg Forter, "Against Melancholia: Contemporary Mourning Theory, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and the Politics of Unfinished Grief," *Differences* 14, no. 2 (2003): 134–70.

12 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. John Yolton (London: Everyman, 1993), 85.

13 Peter Walmsley provides the following succinct explanation of this passage: "Where innatist discourse assumed God to have printed his central truths permanently on the mind, the effaced lettering on Locke's tomb, all the more potent for its burden of melancholy associations, reminds us that the understanding is as subject to the ravages of time as is the hardest marble. Instead of clear and compelling innate ideas to be grasped intuitively by the consciousness, the memory offers us ideas in a state of decay, ideas that at best demand careful scrutiny and interpretation and at worst evade us altogether." Walmsley, *Locke's "Essay" and the Rhetoric of Science* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003), 112.

changing mourning practices in the eighteenth century in which the tomb (or funerary monument) was inevitably highly implicated. Locke's theory, as represented metaphorically through the tomb, insists upon memory's ephemerality and radical instability. His insistence that memories can perish irrevocably refuses to accommodate the notion of a trace entertained by alternative models of memory and suggests that the work of mourning can achieve completion through ultimate severance from the object that has been lost. Locke's use of the tomb as a metaphor for the decay of memory proves quite apt, given that the work of mourning is generally deemed to have achieved its goal when it has wholly evacuated memory, according to simplified readings of early Freudian theory. In this consideration, Locke's use of the tomb for a model of memory takes on an even more interesting dimension in that it exists as the ultimate product of the labour of mourning. As James Young asserts, "It is as if once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember,"<sup>14</sup> and I would argue that the monumental form of grieving presented by Locke's *Essay* accomplishes precisely this end.

If we accept the Lockean paradigm as a basis for character construction in the novel, the representation of mourning in *Betsy Thoughtless* presents a formidable dilemma. Given that Locke views memory as foundational to identity and inextricably linked to character development, one would expect him to endorse melancholia, which advocates "a continued and open relation to the past."<sup>15</sup> Yet, by distinguishing between "normal" and "abnormal" grief, he seems to look forward to Sigmund Freud's pathologization of the condition of melancholia. In the fourth edition of the *Essay* Locke provides a sketch of the "failed mourner" or melancholic:

The death of a child that was the daily delight of its mother's eyes, and a joy of her soul, rends from her heart the whole comfort of her life, and gives her all the torment imaginable. ... Till time has by disuse separated the sense of that enjoyment and its loss, from the idea of the child returning to her memory, all representations, though ever so reasonable, are in vain; and therefore some in whom the union between these ideas is never dissolved, spend their lives in mourning, and carry an incurable sorrow to their graves.<sup>16</sup>

14 James Young, "Against Redemption," in *Symbolic Loss: The Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at Century's End*, ed. Peter Homans (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 127.

15 David Eng and David Kazanjian, "Mourning Remains," introduction to *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. Eng and Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4.

16 Locke, 532.

In this passage, Locke presents the “incurable sorrow” of a mother grieving the loss of a child as a supplementary example of a “wrong connexion of ideas” that holds memory responsible for melancholia. Although Cathy Caruth finds in this example of uninterrupted grief an anticipation of Freud’s distinction between melancholia and mourning,<sup>17</sup> Anselm Haverkamp argues that “Locke’s associationist philosophy does not anticipate psychoanalysis but rather heightens its explanatory effects.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the fact that Freud appropriates his basic understanding of melancholy from the archaic theory of the humours would seem to preclude any concern that it is hopelessly anachronistic to consider his work on the subject alongside Locke’s more casual speculations.<sup>19</sup> Giorgio Agamben has remarked upon the “extraordinary stability over time of the melancholy constellation,”<sup>20</sup> and ahistorical and acultural as Freud’s writings undoubtedly are, they nonetheless draw upon work that is itself rooted in historical understandings of the condition.

Locke’s account of the role enacted by memory in the work of mourning differs significantly from the role that Freud assigns to the practice in his own writing. Although in the essay “Mourning and Melancholia” (1916/17) Freud represents mourning as a work with a terminus, characterized by finality and closure, his notion of memory as elaborated in such works as “The Mystic Writing Pad” (1925) nonetheless insists upon the ineradicability of ideas and impressions, with the result that “Even after a ‘proper mourning,’ a sense of self may be fully infected by the residues and memories of the lost object.”<sup>21</sup> In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud suggests that the “painful disorder of melancholia,” in its tendency to incorporate the lost object into the ego, “actually makes an essential contribution towards building up what is called [the] ‘character’ [of the ego].”<sup>22</sup>

17 Cathy Caruth, *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 34.

18 Anselm Haverkamp, *Leaves of Mourning* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 107.

19 E.L. McCallum points to the ahistorical and acultural nature of Freud’s discourse in *Object Lessons: How to Do Things with Fetishism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 122.

20 Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 19.

21 As Susette Min has recently argued, Freud’s model introduces a “region of memory-traces” that “complicates the temporality of melancholia’s relationship with mourning.” Min, “Remains to Be Seen,” in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, 234.

22 Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989), 639.

Hence we find that one condition shades into another until Judith Butler's extrapolation that "melancholia makes mourning possible" transforms the pathology into a labour of self-understanding and character formation.<sup>23</sup> According to this paradigm, melancholia increasingly resembles conscious work rather than unreflective automatism, and it is precisely this mode of reflection that eventually repairs the "internal defects of the mind" of Haywood's heroine (224). At this point I would like to clarify that I do not intend to pursue a psychoanalytic reading of *Betsy Thoughtless*, but I will offer an exploration of the text's intersecting concerns with commodity culture and reflexivity that is merely reinforced by a psychoanalytic understanding of the categories of mourning and melancholia implicit in Lockean psychology.



That Eliza Haywood was conversant with Locke is evidenced by frequent allusions to his epistemology,<sup>24</sup> particularly early in the narrative where the narrator appears intent upon establishing that Betsy has lost "the very power of reflection ... amidst the giddy whirl" of "publick diversions" (36–37). A disposition such as Betsy's would presumably make her impervious to the onset of melancholia, which,

23 See Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 170.

24 Certainly the title invites us to consider the narrative as a writing of Betsy Thoughtless's mind. The text repeatedly condemns Betsy's materialism, yet also demonstrates how deeply and inextricably involved the development of the mind is with material things. In this sense, like much other eighteenth-century fiction, the text implements what Deidre Lynch describes as "Locke's model of the self-made consciousness, which aligns the acquisition of knowledge with the acquisition of property." Lynch, *The Economy of Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 85. Moreover, at one juncture Haywood explicitly applies Locke's famed metaphor of the "sheet of white paper" to the "character of women." In the midst of a misogynistic meditation occasioned by his disillusionment with "that sex," Mr Trueworth mistakenly attributes to Shakespeare the assertion that women "all are white,—a sheet / Of spotless paper, when they first are born; / But they are to be scrawl'd upon, and blotted / By every goose-quill" (463). Obviously a reference to Locke (and perhaps also to Pope's "Epistle to a Lady"), this assertion ventures a step further by denying that women have any agency in the composition of their identities, thus highlighting the passivity inhering in Locke's model, even while exposing the extent to which a sense of "alterity" informs Locke's conception of subjectivity. Despite its emphasis on individualism and the cultivation of a private sphere of interiority, Locke's epistemology nonetheless relies upon a sense of the other, and in Haywood's text even the "other" who has passed into death exerts an influence on the shaping of her heroine's mind. The characters' exposures to mortality are invariably mediated through the signifying systems of letters and funerary tombs, both of which assert a palpable presence in the novel.

as Michel Foucault notes, was ascribed to the “irregular agitation of the spirits” during the eighteenth century, with the proposed therapy consisting of imposing mobility upon the lethargic patient.<sup>25</sup> Haywood’s narrative operates on quite a different principle, however, since it strives to circumscribe its protagonist’s hectic movements and subdue her carefree temperament. In this sense, rather than diagnosing melancholy as a disease, Haywood prescribes it as a remedy for Betsy’s thoughtlessness.

Almost immediately, the text establishes Betsy’s inability to mourn as one of the central defects of her character, with the death of her father producing only “as much grief as it was possible for a heart so young and gay as hers to be capable of” (33). Moreover, the narrator explicitly describes Betsy as a “fair machine” (32) that is “too volatile for reflection” (31), while her excursion to Westminster Abbey suggests how thoughtless Haywood’s heroine is as she flits from one monument to another, before pausing to “look on the fine tomb, erected to the memory of Mr Secretary Craggs” (156). When told that the fine figure of the “effigy” she contemplates is renowned largely for “the favours he received from the ladies,” Betsy declares that “’twere too much then to bestow them on him both alive and dead” (156) and promptly passes on to another monument. Her flippant attitude differs sharply from that of journalist James Ralph, who praises this same monument copiously within his imaginative tour of the Abbey in *A Critical Review of the Publick Buildings, Statues and Ornaments in, and about London and Westminster* (1734). Interestingly enough, the route of Ralph’s tour bears strong resemblance to that pursued independently by Betsy Thoughtless in an episode characterized by sustained attention to the movement through space:

We must now strike down to the end of the fourth isle; and there we shall be somewhat better entertained: the monument of Mr Craggs, is in a very simple and elegant taste: there appears much judgment in setting his statue upright, because it fills the vista, with great harmony, and looks advantageously even at the greatest distance; the attitude of it is delicate and fine; the thought of resting it on an urn, pathetic and judicious, and if the face and head had been more finish’d, the whole had been without blemish: the architecture is alike plain, and the embellishments few, and well chosen. In a word, many tombs have more beauties, none fewer faults.<sup>26</sup>

25 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1973), 172.

26 James Ralph, *A Critical Review of the Publick Buildings, Statues and Ornaments in, and about London and Westminster* (1734; Westmead: Gregg International Publishers, 1971), 73.

Ralph's effusively favourable appraisal of the monument's aesthetic value differs considerably from the particular interest that Betsy directs its way during her perusal. Betsy's verbal exchange assigns an erotic quality to the monument, which is incompatible with the air of dignity and the pose of "restful contemplation rather than stylish display" assigned to it by some art critics.<sup>27</sup> But this response typifies Betsy's thinking, which focuses primarily and almost exclusively upon the erotic properties of bodies. Even in death, the represented body still belongs to the continuum of flirtation and intrigue that dominates Betsy's social relations in the first half of the novel.

The insult offered by Betsy and her companions could, of course, stem from the personal animus that Haywood bore towards Craggs's friend Alexander Pope, who composed the epitaph in English heroic couplets appearing on the base of the monument.<sup>28</sup> Pope's grotesque personal insult in *The Dunciad*, which was once erroneously held responsible for Haywood's diminished output in the decades following the attack, perhaps motivated in part the singular treatment of the artifact by her character;<sup>29</sup> or the "aesthetic ambiguity" that Ronald Paulson attributes to the "cross legged" statue might also have elicited this response.<sup>30</sup> Whatever her motives for this singular attention, Haywood succeeds both in diminishing the historical significance of this public figure and in holding it up as an object of satire, thus exposing the complex valency of the monument that in this context represents not "the material structure around which collective

27 Brian Kemp, *English Church Monuments* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1980), 133.

28 As Katharine Esdaile notes, "You may follow every stage of the work in Pope's Letters, may note the interest with which he watched its progress, the anxiety with which he records the sculptor Guelfi's illness, the care he lavished on the very lettering, when, owing to the illness aforesaid, the cutting of the epitaph had to be entrusted to another hand. The work is the memorial of a great man's love for his friend, a love which spared no care for that friend's tomb." Esdaile, *English Monumental Sculpture since the Renaissance* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1927), 161.

29 Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad* (2.157–64), in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (London: Methuen, 1968). The notion that Pope's insult affected Haywood's publishing career adversely has been challenged recently by critics such as Christine Blouch, who observes that "Although the exact impact of Pope on Haywood is difficult to specify, it is possible to speculate that he had not so much destroyed Haywood's reputation as traded on it, and that critical inattention, not Pope, accounts for what has been described as her subsequent disappearance." Blouch, "Eliza Haywood and the Romance of Obscurity," *SEL* 31 (1991): 540–41.

30 Ronald Paulson, *Breaking and Remaking: Aesthetic Practice in England, 1700–1820* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 208. Paulson refers to the difficulty inherent in determining whether the statuary figure actually represents the mourner or the mourned. His study is indispensable for its discussion of Roubiliac's monuments in relation to the "iconoclast" aesthetics of mid-eighteenth-century England.

mourning traditionally takes place,<sup>31</sup> but an entertaining, eroticized spectacle for the consumption of an irreverent public. Moreover, the passage's focus upon Craggs's private rather than public life suggests Haywood's recognition of the monument's "complex sign systems" that construct it as a "dialogical space ... that facilitates the 'finding' of meanings that are personal and contextual."<sup>32</sup> When stripped of its memorializing function, the monument is thus easily rendered a fetish object that is subject to Betsy's gaze, which persistently "misrecognizes" the use value of the sepulchral statue.

In the midst of her perusal of Craggs's monument, Betsy is accosted by an acquaintance who expresses his surprise at finding her "alone ... and contemplating these mementos of mortality!" Her contention that she is rather "contemplating the mementos of great actions" elicits the sarcastic reply that she is "at the wrong end of the cathedral for that." This exchange obliquely refers to the substance of Pope's epitaph, which in its opening couplet hails James Craggs as a "Statesman, yet friend to truth! of soul sincere, / In action faithful, and in honour clear!" A passing reference to other "epitaphs, some of which were flattering enough" (156) later in the same episode reinforces the suggested disjunction between the claims of the epitaph and the reality of the biography. This incongruity would likely have been recognized by a contemporary familiar with Craggs's implication in the scandal of the South Sea Bubble affair.<sup>33</sup> Yet, this passage makes no explicit reference to the epitaph featured on the monument, an oversight arguably calculated to accentuate the "fluid and problematic" relationship "between the statue and its message" since, as Michael North observes, "it is so easy to strip the message from the sculpture that monuments often function as images of mute mystery."<sup>34</sup> Haywood's neglecting to mention the inscription in either this episode or the one featuring Mr Trueworth's ordering of an elaborate monument designed by his own hand raises the question regarding the feasibility of understanding sculpture as text. This point was debated over the course of the century by Joseph Addison and Edward Gibbon, among others, who disagreed regarding the ability of "a

31 Peter Homans, introduction to *Symbolic Loss*, 22.

32 Anne Kuchler, "The Place of Memory," in *The Art of Forgetting*, ed. Adrian Forty and Anne Kuchler (New York: Berg, 1999), 10.

33 Malcolm Balen, *A Very English Deceit: The Secret History of the South Sea Bubble and the First Great Financial Scandal* (London: Fourth Estate, 2002), 85–86.

34 Michael North, *The Final Sculpture: Public Monuments and Modern Poets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 25.

represented figure alone [to] express ideas or even personal character,”<sup>35</sup> with Addison affirming the self-explanatory expressive power of the image and Gibbon questioning whether that “power might be retained over time without additional text.”<sup>36</sup> In what Ralph Houlbrooke has named the “age of the Epitaph,”<sup>37</sup> Haywood’s suppression of the inscription in reference to both this monument and the one that Mr Truworth later erects cannot be accidental, given the level of detail accorded to each description. It is plausible that Haywood recognized that, even in the presence of epitaphs, sculptures may remain essentially mute and inexpressive, a concern shared by contemporaries such as James Ralph, who called for greater intelligibility among the monuments of Westminster Abbey.<sup>38</sup> If collective mourning organized itself around the symbol of the monument during this period, then Haywood’s emphasis upon the tomb’s capacity to mislead and its susceptibility to *be* misread arguably expresses a scepticism regarding the feasibility of group mourning. Locke’s metaphor of the tomb in this context seems relevant because, in his view, the importance of the monument diminishes once its epitaph has been effaced, rendering it no more than an “empty signifier” open to multiple interpretations and constructions. For Locke, the signifying power of the monument collapses into its epitaph, and the sculpture’s sheer presence is inadequate to convey meaning. The identification of the essentially anti-mnemonic structure of the tomb with the mind, which Locke conceives of as an essentially “private arena,”<sup>39</sup> would thus seem to deny the potential for any legitimate form of collective mourning.

Betsy Thoughtless resolutely resists the elegists’ tendency to romanticize the monument as a *memento mori*. Although she does not necessarily reject the sentimentality of these poets even in her most jocosely irreverent moments, she does appear to question whether the tomb serves as an appropriate focal point for the work of mourning, at least within an urban setting. Earlier in the century Addison had recommended the “gloominess of the place [Westminster Abbey]” as “apt to fill the mind with a kind of melancholy, or rather thoughtfulness, that

35 Bruce Haley, *Living Forms: Romanticism and the Monumental Figure* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 4.

36 Edward Gibbon, *Gibbon’s Journey from Geneva to Rome*, ed. Georges A. Bonnard (London: Thomas Nelson, 1961), 28.

37 Houlbrooke, 92.

38 Ralph, 54.

39 Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 297.

is not disagreeable.”<sup>40</sup> Addison’s self-correcting qualifier at once equates melancholy with absorption in thought, even while appearing to privilege the latter category of reflection. The contrast between Addison’s thoughtfulness and the thoughtlessness that is nominally built into Haywood’s character is striking. In Haywood’s novel, Betsy’s immunity to this “pleasing melancholy” arises not only from the flaw in her character’s moral design, but also from the crowded and public nature of mourning that stands as an obstacle to genuine reflection. No longer a “fine and private place,” the grave permits little space for introspection or interiority. Guidebooks in circulation at the time claimed to make visits to the Abbey worthwhile by “enabling the unlearned to converse with the dead with the same pleasure as the learned,”<sup>41</sup> paradoxically encouraging private conversation while creating precisely the conditions that would preclude such intimacy. Mourning in the eighteenth century was still a community-oriented system, but in *Betsy Thoughtless* collective mourning entails not so much reverence for the deceased as a diversion at the expense of the individual commemorated. Although Esther Schor describes the “Enlightenment concept of mourning as a process that generates, perpetuates, and moralizes social relations among individuals,”<sup>42</sup> Betsy’s visit to the Abbey reveals that mourning rather *consolidates* the relations between people and things, a tendency most often identified with melancholia as opposed to mourning.



Studies of melancholia were fully embroiled in the discussion of the ill effects of luxury that reached its climax in the middle of the eighteenth century. In a treatise published contemporaneously with Haywood’s novel, Henry Fielding deplores “the vast torrent of luxury ... that has almost totally changed the manners, customs, and habits of the People,”<sup>43</sup> while in the following year, Hume aligns himself, in his essay “On Luxury” (1752), with the Mandevillean tradition of

40 Joseph Addison, *Spectator*, no. 26 (30 March 1711), in *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 1:108–9.

41 Cited in Bindman and Baker, 43.

42 Esther Schor, *Bearing the Dead: The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 4.

43 Henry Fielding, *Enquiry into the Cause of the Late Increase of Robbers*, ed. Malvin Zirker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 3. For an analysis of this tract, see John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 89–90.

recognizing luxury as a necessary ingredient in a civilized society and dissociating it from the tradition of “sensory gratification.”<sup>44</sup> Haywood articulates her stance on this issue unequivocally in the *Female Spectator* (1744–46), where she declares her chief ambition is to “check the enormous growth of luxury, to reform the morals, and improve the manners of an age.”<sup>45</sup> She further admonishes in the same periodical that the “encouragement these later times afford to luxury of every kind can never be too much guarded against by those ... charged with the forming of the mind,”<sup>46</sup> as she adopts this as a principle in her “novel of female development.” Presenting what John Richetti has called “a heroine whose only fault is that consumerist curiosity for new pleasures and objects of desire,”<sup>47</sup> *Betsy Thoughtless* continues Haywood’s campaign against luxury. Accordingly, one might interpret the “very curious monument of white marble” that Truworth erects later in the novel as an exemplum of his excessive materialism rather than of his *true worth*. The monument ostensibly serves to “testify his gratitude and respect” to Mrs Blanchfield, the woman whose advances Truworth had rejected, but who nonetheless names him the chief heir in her will. Truworth’s monument is hence conceived on the grandest scale, designed by his own hand “after one he had seen in Italy,” which, we are told, “was much admired by all judges of architecture and sculpture” (464). This terse statement effectively conveys a sense of the grandeur of a piece of statuary that could excite such universal admiration. As David Bindman observes, “monuments were ... fully enmeshed in the luxury debate” and “were a target for those who believed that pursuit of unnecessary goods led inevitably to national decline ... [and] prepared the minds of the people for corruption.”<sup>48</sup> Appropriately, this symbol of ruin also takes on the connotations of decadence that increasingly came to be seen as the distinguishing feature of luxury by those who persisted in viewing it as a vice.

Horace Walpole’s complaint of the “crowds and clusters of tombs in the Abbey”<sup>49</sup> signals the monument’s elevation to a form of conspicuous consumption by mid-century, as does the protest by the Dean of St

44 For an informed discussion of the subject, see Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 145.

45 Haywood, *Female Spectator* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), 21.

46 Haywood, *Female Spectator*, 21.

47 John Richetti, *The English Novel in History, 1700–1799* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 252.

48 Bindman and Baker, 3.

49 Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting* (London, 1786), 375.

Paul, Thomas Newton, that “the gothic structure is encumbered and overloaded with ornaments.”<sup>50</sup> Truworth’s active production of a monument implicates him in the luxury debate to an even greater extent than Betsy Thoughtless, who merely consumes a different monument as a visual object in her romp through Westminster Abbey. The novel repeatedly censures the affectations of “worldly airs” on the part of young gentlemen freshly returned from the grand tour, and Truworth’s emulation would not seem to be exempt from this criticism. This, and other forms of lavish expenditure represented in the text, must belong to what Richetti so aptly terms the novel’s persistent “evocation of wasteful aristocratic habits built upon a solid bourgeois base.”<sup>51</sup> Far from subscribing to readings that install Truworth as the exemplar of virtue who effects the reformation of the “coquette” by the novel’s end, I would argue that the roles of Betsy Thoughtless and Truworth have been reversed by the conclusion. Betsy’s relation to material objects has been rendered more thoughtful, whereas ostentation and flaunting of material wealth increasingly characterize Truworth, whose final action involves the spectacle of the equipage in which he arrives to collect Betsy: no less than “a coach ... drawn by six prancing horses, and attended by two servants in rich liveries, and well mounted” (630).

Thus, although Betsy Thoughtless occupies the greater part of the novel’s reformative energies, we might argue that Mr Truworth as a work in progress equals Betsy.<sup>52</sup> When first told of Mrs Blanchfield’s interest, Truworth proclaims that he is “neither vain enough to believe ... nor ambitious enough to desire such a thing should be real” (358), and he later insists that “he scarce believed it real” that “the lady’s death was owing to a hopeless flame for him” (438). Yet, notwithstanding this profound scepticism, Truworth dutifully participates in the rites of mourning, which, in a Freudian paradigm, would ostensibly lead “to an ending of grief and a re-entry into the real.”<sup>53</sup> His transformation of his benefactress into a “very curious monument” bears witness to his attempt to make sense of the situation and to confront the “real” by representing it in the form of a tangible

50 Cited in Matthew Craske, *Art in Europe, 1700–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 33.

51 Richetti, 200.

52 Truworth’s intrigue with Flora Mellasin, also known as “Incognita,” further highlights the libertine aspect of his character.

53 Marcia Pointon, “Materializing Mourning: Hair, Jewelry and the Body,” in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, ed. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley (New York: Berg, 1999), 51.

object, ultimately completing the work of mourning through the material recognition of “his gratitude and respect” (464). Jacques Derrida has described mourning as “an attempt to ontologize remains,”<sup>54</sup> but in this novel, the monument serves to eradicate the body altogether. Truworth, in effect, reinforces the “real” with representation and divests himself of the obligation to remember, which is often seen as the end result of assigning monumental form to memory. The work of mourning thus restores the continuity that death had disrupted, bringing the individual into proximity with some equivalent form of “reality.” On the other hand, melancholia, as Agamben observes, “opens up a space for the existence of the unreal” in a fantastic relation that paradoxically demands a “faithful” as opposed to a fetishistic response to material objects.<sup>55</sup>

But this event requires none of the “overcoming of the libido’s attachment to a lost object” that Freud sees as essential to the work of mourning, for no object exists in the first place.<sup>56</sup> Mrs Blanchfield appears in the text only through the two letters she writes: in the first she expresses her desire for Mr Truworth, and in the second she conveys her resignation to death when he declares his affections to be wholly claimed by another. Not once does Mrs Blanchfield physically appear in the narrative or interact with its characters (that she is denied a first name further accentuates her lack of tangibility in the text) and it is only through the erection of the monument that she acquires any sort of palpable presence. Her monumental body should locate her within “a social and symbolic system” rather than throwing her out of “symbolic circulation,” which numerous contemporary theorists perceive as the fate of the dead in modern society.<sup>57</sup> On the contrary, the monument belongs to a material culture that paradoxically revels in impermanence, and as such is as transient in a conceptual sense as the rest of society’s manufactured products. In this respect, we can appreciate the irony of a monument to James Craggs, who (in the cultural memory of the period) epitomized the debased ephemeral world of finance and paper credit. Within the space of Haywood’s brief sentence, the focus shifts from the deceased Mrs Blanchfield, to the heir who rejects her advances, to an object, to

54 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 9.

55 Agamben, 20.

56 Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *On Metapsychology and the Theory of Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Penguin, 1984), 264.

57 For a critique of this Baudrillardian notion, see Clive Seale, *Constructing Death: The Sociology of Dying and Bereavement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 50–73.

its copied design, to the original, and finally to the admiration that it elicits.<sup>58</sup> The monument's connection to Mrs Blanchfield proves as tenuous as her connection to Mr Truworth, and mourning becomes a process of distancing, both temporally and spatially. The praxis of mourning as represented in the novel constitutes a diffuse process of extending outward the remembrance of the deceased and thus creating as much distance as possible between the living and the dead.

Whereas the novel's first funeral statue functions in the typical "triumphalist"<sup>59</sup> manner of the monument as it commemorates a historical, national figure, the second monument is erected to a private woman to personally "testify ... gratitude and respect" (464). The use of the word "testify" in this context is particularly interesting given the decidedly public resonance of this term, with its etymological import of "to witness" or "declare publicly," deriving from the same Latin word for "will" (in the sense of the document) and suggesting that Truworth's action belongs to a legal protocol that constructs mourning as a public act devoid of any concern with interiority. Truworth's monument is calculated to nullify his debt, to complete the cycle of exchange and to counteract the anomaly of the document. In fact, the narrator's mention that Truworth "thought he had already sacrificed enough of the time of his promised happiness" (465) to the mourning of Mrs Blanchfield explicitly identifies his gesture as an offering of greater or equal value to the offering of the deceased woman. Elisabeth Bronfen observes that "Like the decaying body, the feminine is unstable, liminal, disturbing. Both mourning rituals and representations of death seek strategies to stabilize the body, which entails removing it from the feminine and transforming it into a monument, an enduring stone, stable object, stable meanings: the surviving subject appropriates death's power in his monument to the dead."<sup>60</sup> Despite contemporary accounts that allude to the opportunities to "converse with the dead" afforded by monuments, in

58 The sentence in its entirety reads: "Nor was this all: —Mr Truworth, to testify his gratitude and respect, ordered a very curious monument of white marble to be erected over her remains, the model of which he drew himself, after one he had seen in Italy, and was much admired by all judges of architecture and sculpture" (464).

59 Benedict Anderson insists that "the paradoxical embrace of death in the interest of the life of the imagined community is involved in nationalist mythologies of sacrifice." Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991), 56. One might expect such a symbolics of nationalism to be inscribed on the very stones that mark the foundation of Westminster Abbey. Yet the narrative's reception of these monuments suggests an opposite response as Westminster Abbey's figuration of death as sacrifice is ultimately rejected in Haywood's text.

60 Elisabeth Bronfen, introduction to *Death and Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 8.

Haywood's text these material structures serve to preclude continued communication and to eclipse the dead altogether.

The text constructs mourning as a social practice that ensures the continued circulation of goods within the economy, even as it circumscribes the movement of people within public spaces. Although Mr Truworth and his first wife enter "into deep mourning" and delay the celebration of their marriage "till all due rites were paid to the memory" (464) of Mrs Blanchfield, their removal from society does not entail the disruption of circulation, as Truworth devotes a portion of the fortune bequeathed to him to raising the monument. In effect, he trades a monument for the document of Mrs Blanchfield's supplementary will, thus entering into a system of exchange in no way interrupted by death. The monument moves beyond the rhetorical as Haywood foregrounds its status as an object firmly situated in the material realm and caught up in the system of exchange that marks what J.G.A. Pocock has called the "transactional universe" of the eighteenth century.<sup>61</sup> As a commodity, the monument asserts a perplexing relationship to mourning, suggesting that the practice of "collective" mourning has been subsumed into the mentality of the marketplace. Unable to relinquish his role as chief benefactor in the text,<sup>62</sup> Truworth nullifies Mrs Blanchfield's gift by giving one in return. In this way he further complicates the issue of consumption in relation to the reception or acceptance of gifts. Truworth designs the monument, but then commissions its fabrication to a workshop; without expending considerable manual labour in the

61 J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 48.

62 Even the most apparently trivial of Truworth's presents achieves considerable significance in the narrative. In case anyone questioned whether the squirrel that Truworth presents to Betsy belongs to the series of frivolous expenditures implicated in the catalogue of luxury, its initial description quickly erases all doubts: the squirrel is "doubtless, the most beautiful creature of its kind, that could be purchased: the chain which fastened it to its habitation was gold, the links very thick, and curiously wrought.—Every one admired the elegance of the donor's taste" (138). The passage offers an index of attributes by which apologists for "luxury" attempted to establish a standard of taste, and unequivocally identifies the squirrel as an extravagant and wholly unnecessary expenditure. Moreover, the reference to the "curiously wrought" chain anticipates the description of yet another luxury item: the "very curious monument" that Truworth designs later in the narrative. The repeated use of this adjective invites us to view peculiar or unusual workmanship as yet another mark of the luxurious. The fate of the squirrel tragically highlights its very triviality, since, moments before dashing it to pieces against "the carved work of the marble chimney," Betsy's first husband exults "Here is one domestic, at least, that may be spared" (507). Apart from revealing to her the "splenetic and barbarous" nature of her first husband, "the bloody and inhuman deed" (509) affords a formative episode for Betsy that once again is deeply implicated with death.

monument's production, he spends the money bequeathed to him by Mrs Blanchfield and adopts thereby dual roles of consumer and producer. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau challenges the typical conception of consumption, and redefines it even as a "creative activity ... a *certain kind* of production."<sup>63</sup> According to this perspective, mourners appear as producers and consumers who belong to the same economic continuum.



Shortly after Truworth's commissioning of the monument, his first wife precipitately expires, conveniently followed to the grave shortly thereafter by Betsy's first husband. Thus, by the end of the novel, Betsy's and Truworth's mutual widowhood sanctions their resumed courtship, but the different ways in which both characters respond to the deaths of their previous spouses prove particularly telling. Both characters experience a "shock" in death, which Mr Truworth combats through "his philosophy and strength of reason" (565), whereas Betsy speaks of a "shock" that she "cannot presently get over" and which she at first does not even endeavour to "combat" (618). The repeated invocation of the word "shock" in successive paragraphs suggests a concern on the part of the narrator to establish the sincerity of Betsy's grief, given that, as a widow, Betsy's position is doubly suspect, owing to the "literary convention in mid-eighteenth-century European literature making the insincere grieving widow the butt of all jokes about feminine insincerity."<sup>64</sup> The emphasis on Betsy's grief confirms her newfound powers of reflection and dissociates her from the artificial mourning so deplored in much eighteenth-century poetry.

Betsy mourns an emotionally abusive husband who cheated on her, tried to prostitute her for his own professional gain, and killed her pet squirrel. Given the circumstances, her sorrow might seem unaccountable, if not perverse, yet Betsy's internal struggle bears a striking resemblance to the conflict waged within the mind of the melancholic who, according to Freud, is racked by an ambivalence and vacillates between love and hatred for the object lost.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, the text

63 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 167. Pinton makes a similar observation in relation to the complex issues surrounding the giving and receiving of mourning rings according to which "consumption is a kind of diaspora" (128).

64 Craske, 186.

65 Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 266.

indirectly attributes the profundity of Betsy's grief to unresolved mourning for the loss of Truworth as an object of love. Melancholia, as Slavoj Žižek reminds us, always seeks to imagine a loss in order to compensate for an originary sense of lack,<sup>66</sup> and already at this point in the text Betsy's unconscious residual desire for Truworth has been sublimated into the material object of his miniature portrait that she steals from an artist's studio. Her contemplation of this commercial memento elicits that reflexivity that is seen as integral to the "work" of melancholia,<sup>67</sup> and further suggests the extent to which melancholia is "precisely the effect of unavowable loss," as Butler has stated.<sup>68</sup> Eighteenth-century codes of conduct dictate that Betsy can acknowledge neither her desire for Truworth nor her antipathy towards her husband, and this psychic conflict presumably heightens her experience of interminable grieving.<sup>69</sup>

As I have shown, the text employs a strikingly similar vocabulary to describe the mourning experience of both Betsy and Truworth, despite the radical differences in their approach to death. For Betsy continues to suffer from a "great dejection of spirit" for some time after the demise of her first husband, whom, as she confesses, "duty forbids [her] to hate while living, and whom decency requires [her] to mourn for when dead" (617). Betsy's undue prolonging of the work of mourning provokes the rebuke of her chief confidante, who affirms that "decency obliges [her] to wear black, forbids [her] to appear abroad for a whole month, and at any public place of diversion for a much longer time" but insists that "it does not restrain [her] from being easy in [herself], and cheerful with [her] friends" (618).

66 Slavoj Žižek, "Melancholy and the Act," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (Summer 2000): 659.

67 I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this connection; for an extended treatment of the "model of spectatorship" deployed by Truworth's miniature, see Alison Conway, *Private Interests: Women, Portraiture, and the Visual Culture of the English Novel, 1709–1791* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 115–35.

68 Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 170.

69 Betsy's apparent fetishizing of the miniature in this passage raises the issue of how to negotiate the relation between melancholia and the commodity, so that the relation between consciousness and material things can be fruitful and motivated. Walter Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image perhaps points the way in positing that even the hollowness of a commodity contains the promise of a redemptive fullness; the commodity, like the ruin, functions as an allegory of a completeness that once was and might be recovered again. See Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999). However, this kind of nostalgic recuperation of objects on the basis of their prior use values is of course problematic. For a critique of Benjamin's positivistic and idealistic fetishizing of the commodity, see Rebecca Comay, "Perverse History: Fetishism and Dialectic in Walter Benjamin," *Research in Phenomenology* 29 (1999): 51–62.

This succinct explication of mourning ritual affirms its instrumentality as a public performance of grieving, even while it rejects its extension into both the private and the emotional sphere, as indicated by Lady Loveit's success in reasoning Betsy "out of a melancholy, which she had in a manner forced upon herself, and was far from natural to her" (618). Lady Loveit's admonishments resemble the sort of "didactic consolations" commonly found in eighteenth-century writings, particularly in the model letters of Samuel Richardson.<sup>70</sup> Yet, in this and numerous other instances, the moral high ground appears to be undercut by sympathy for the central character, whose newfound sensibility defies the counsel of her host of mentors and spiritual guides. The tenability of this position might seem questionable, yet the tensions that numerous critics have discerned in the narrative structure and the lack of harmonization between the various narrative voices all suggest the presence of conflicting agendas in the novel. Both Karen Hollis, who identifies a "split between the novel's two figures of the female narrator," and Shea Stuart, who similarly identifies a "complex double-sighted narrator," address the novel's apparent lack of unity.<sup>71</sup> This moral ambivalence is arguably the result of the complex nature of Haywood's enterprise in its struggle to represent the filling of a vacant mind with objects of consciousness, an endeavour that must necessarily endorse the ability to adhere to lost objects if only in the form of recollection.

Haywood seems to apply the dichotomy between the public and the private to the categories of mourning and melancholia as she represents a practice of mourning that is firmly entrenched in the public realm and that demands material objects such as monuments in discharging one's duty to the dead. The consistent alignment of melancholia with the private sphere might lead us to expect the condition to be gendered as female in most theoretical accounts. Freud, however, appears to find in melancholia a "privileged representation of male narcissism"<sup>72</sup> in that he presents Hamlet and the male artist, generally, as exemplars of the melancholic sensibility.<sup>73</sup>

70 Houlbrooke, 246.

71 Karen Hollis, "Eliza Haywood and the Gender of Print," *The Eighteenth Century* 38, no. 1 (1997): 51; Shea Stuart, "Subversive Didacticism in Eliza Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless*," *SEL* 42, no. 3 (2002): 573.

72 Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 5. Schiesari reads melancholia "as a gendered form of ethos based on or empowered by a sense of lack" and which "appropriates from women's subjectivities their 'real' sense of loss" (12–13).

73 Notwithstanding his pathologization of the condition, Freud attributes to the melancholic

This manoeuvre is consistent with historical accounts of the “cult of male genius,” which constructs melancholia as a discourse that sets up an inherently creative male subjectivity in opposition to a sterile and unproductive female counterpart. Although Haywood’s text establishes divisions strikingly similar to those of the Freudian model, it genders them along completely opposite lines and according to Locke’s schema, which, as we have seen, employs a maternal figure as the epitome of “incurable sorrow.” Haywood’s narrative, however, advocates a productive form of female melancholia that does not merely turn in upon itself in the kind of self-consumptive gesture that defines Locke’s maternal melancholic. This alternative form of melancholia actually shores up the ego with the remainders and reminders of loss and ultimately proves constitutive of the self.

Moreover, Haywood, unlike Locke, refuses to condemn the notion of interminable mourning and endorses it as a sign of sympathy that facilitates and fosters her heroine’s powers of reflection. Hence, Trueworth succeeds in exorcising the spectre of his deceased first wife, whom he had ostensibly loved, whereas Betsy Thoughtless continues to be “afflicted at the death of a person whose life rendered [her] so unhappy” (617) in the words Lady Loveit. Though she was once considered “too volatile for reflection,” her susceptibility to ideas now enables her to register the impact of death as a “shock” to her nervous system, but it is not necessarily the case that her sensibility has been refined, so much as her powers of reflection and reflexivity. The character who had earlier cavorted among the monuments of Westminster Abbey now expresses a consciousness that has come into being through “melancholia.”<sup>74</sup> Although Locke posits melancholy as a “wrong connexion of ideas,” Haywood sanctions it as an alternative to the “public mourning” so bound up with the image of the monument.

Despite Haywood’s recognition that genuine mourning must retain something of the melancholia that her contemporaries considered so injurious to industry, she does not recommend the indulgence of “the black and dismal thoughts” associated with this condition. The *Female Spectator* concludes with a discourse on the “unnatural crime” of suicide, which Haywood attributes explicitly to melancholia, for so long associated in humoral theory with black bile. Meanwhile, the novel also passes implicit judgment upon the atrabilious Mrs Blanchfield, whose

subject a “keener eye for truth” and “a heightened sense of morality,” as he then proceeds to diagnose the figure of Hamlet as a melancholic (“Mourning and Melancholia,” 246).

74 For an argument that melancholia can be constitutive of the “self,” see Butler, afterword to *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, 467–75.

final words frankly declare: “I have now no wish for life, nor business to transact below” (437), indicating that, in effect, she wills herself to die.<sup>75</sup> The chapter heading, “Love in death—an example rather to be wondered at than imitated,” suggests an element of the perverse and deliberate in Mrs Blanchfield’s actions. In this sense, Haywood does not altogether participate in the “recuperation” of melancholia that many theorists perceive as a prominent feature of contemporary thought,<sup>76</sup> but rather warns against its capacity to triumph over the “life instincts” if carried to an extreme.

Betsy’s declaration “How I pity both the living and the dead” (565) might be construed as one of the milestones in her character’s development. Her ability to conceive of a sympathy that extends to both the living and the deceased and does not exclude one or the other suggests a broadening of thought and further development of her powers of reflection.<sup>77</sup> After her husband’s death, she withdraws into another room where, we are told, “life, death, and futurity were the subjects of her meditations” (616). She does not need to dismiss the dead or evacuate them from her consciousness in order to function; instead, her relations with the dead contour her ethical relations by the novel’s end, which ultimately valorizes the impossibility of mourning as one of the marks of the reflective being. Although Betsy is initially immune to the “pleasing melancholy” reportedly experienced by Addison and Ralph in their visits to Westminster Abbey, by the novel’s end she proves susceptible to a “painfully pleasing amusement” (606) upon gazing this time, not at plastic art, but at a portrait in miniature of her erstwhile lover.

75 The monuments that appear in *Betsy Thoughtless*, although radically different on the surface, are linked by suicide or at least wilful death. Historians speculate that James Craggs the younger (like his father) was driven to suicide by the scandal of the South Sea Bubble. Thus, in an unorthodox blurring of the historical and the personal, the factual and the fictional, the monuments illustrate the worst-case scenario of extreme introspection. That they conceal the final acts of the individuals they commemorate also suggests to what extent “artifacts constitute part of the process of social forgetting.” Forty, introduction to *The Art of Forgetting*, 8.

76 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. G. Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 179.

77 This notion of sympathy is related to the notion of the *sensus communis* that thinkers of the period strove to establish as the foundation of a kind of universalist ethics. The dead assume a central role in this ethos, and nowhere more distinctively than in Adam Smith’s account in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* published some seven years after *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*. Schor observes that Smith’s “example of sympathizing with the dead crucially reinscribes as self-sacrifice the self-interest on which sympathy is based” (35). A sense of embodiment deeply informs this scene, as Smith insists on a bodily displacement in a manner reminiscent of Thomas Gray’s imaginative occupation of a grave at the end of his elegy.

Locke's use of the tomb as a *memento mentis*, which reflects back to oneself the image of one's mind, is ultimately discarded in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* owing to its implication in the same continuum of conspicuous consumption that Haywood critiques consistently throughout the narrative. The work of melancholia internalizes the "psychic tomb," whereas, as we have seen, mourning labours to produce a crypt in the form of the monument that is intelligible to the outside world. The shadow of the object (to borrow Freud's expression) is in this sense cast by a phallic monument that holds little significance for a female subjectivity in the process of formation. Although far from launching an iconoclastic or puritanical attack on mid-eighteenth-century monument culture, Haywood does demonstrate the extent to which monolithic structures of mourning exclude women from discursive expressions of grief and leave melancholia as the seemingly only authentic alternative mode of mourning available to them. In the end, neither Westminster Abbey nor a serene country churchyard may afford the site for the development of a reflective sensibility that depends upon the space of the imaginary for the materials of its growth. Yet, we must nonetheless accept that, ultimately, melancholia does not represent the empowering gesture it might initially seem, since it too merely registers as an effect of power; Betsy cannot long enjoy her thoughtfulness before it is converted into "true worth."<sup>78</sup> In this respect, the text prescribes the same "cure" for Betsy's melancholia that Burton recommends for "depressed" women in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*: "the best and surest remedy of all, is to see them well placed, and married to good husbands in due time."<sup>79</sup>

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78 In this respect, I follow the cautionary note that Butler strikes at the end of *The Psychic Life of Power* (198). Although at first glance melancholia resembles a "revolt," inevitably it unfolds itself in a manner reminiscent of Hegel's "unhappy consciousness."

79 Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1:416. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* for their invaluable suggestions and constructive advice. I am also grateful for Alison Conway's insightful comments on this article in its successive drafts.