

A World of Actions: Fictionality in the British Oriental Tale

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For Mom and Dad: *for teaching me to love stories and for all your support*

and

For the Lord: *whose steadfast love and faithfulness have given me
life through this process*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The British Oriental Tale and Fictionality

Upon receiving a gift of two volumes of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* from Alexander Pope in 1720, Bishop Atterbury dismissed them as “wild and absurd,” and he wrote to Pope about his displeasure with the stories:

And now, Sir, for your Arabian Tales...I have read as much of them as ever I shall read while I live. Indeed they do not please my taste; they are writ with so romantic an air, and, allowing for the difference of eastern manners, are yet, upon any supposition that can be made, of so wild and absurd a contrivance, (at least to my northern understanding), that I have not only no pleasure, but no patience, in perusing them. (68)

Though Atterbury denounced the stories, his choice of words is telling, for the wildness that repulsed his aesthetic sense appealed to a wide range of writers and thinkers throughout the eighteenth century and beyond.¹

These fantastic and marvelous stories of the *Arabian Nights* enchanted many eighteenth-century British readers so that “wildness,” rather than serve as a term of censure, became a common means for describing the rich and restless adventures in the collection of tales. The term was deployed by Joseph Addison in an essay for *The Spectator* in 1712, when he described the

¹ Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum argue that nearly everyone responded to the *Nights*’ either critically as in the cases of Lord Kames, James Beattie, and Henry Fielding or imitatively as in the instances of Joseph Addison, Eliza Haywood, Samuel Johnson, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Frances Sheridan, John Hawkesworth, Clara Reeve, William Beckford, Samuel Coleridge, Lord Byron, Maria Edgeworth, Robert Southey, Walter Savage Landor, Percy Shelley, Thomas Moore, etc. (12-13).

Arabian Nights as possessing “a wild but natural simplicity” (*The Spectator* No. 535). Horace Walpole likewise declared that the tales possessed “a wildness that captivates” when he recommended the collection to his friend, Mary Berry (*Correspondence* 11:21). By the end of the eighteenth century, wildness had become a defining characteristic of the *Arabian Nights*’ aesthetics.² In the first book devoted to studying the collection, *Remarks on the Arabian Nights Entertainments* (1797), Richard Hole admits that even though he believes the stories should be enjoyed by children, “we may be occasionally amused by their wild and diversified incidents” (8). Despite Hole’s assertion that these stories lacked the level of literary sophistication that he believed adults should read, he astutely identifies that this sense of wildness emerges from the events that occur in the stories. In his analysis of story cycles like the adventures Sinbad the Sailor, Hole connects wildness to the unexpected events that happen, noting that Sinbad rarely explains why he is making the choices he does, so the reader follows Sinbad from one adventure to the next, transfixed by the unfolding scenes. Wildness, therefore, expressed the surprise eighteenth-century readers felt upon reading stories where events seemed to occur without warning and characters acted without explanation.

The *Arabian Nights* arrived in Britain at a moment when modern notions of fictionality were beginning to develop, and its wildness had a profound and far-reaching impact on the British literary tradition. As a palimpsest of folk tales amassed from various countries and amassed over the centuries, the *Arabian Nights* entered Britain via France, where they were translated from the Arabic text, *Alf Layla wa Layla*, by Antoine Galland. Galland published these

² This sense of wildness would carry forward into the nineteenth century as well. Charles Dickens, for instance, references the “wild, grotesque, and fanciful aspects” of the “thousand and one tales” in *Household Words* (2).

stories between 1704-1717 as a set of twelve volumes that he titled, *Les Mille et Une Nuits*.³ Noting the adventure-filled nature of the stories, Galland writes in his preface to the translation, “If stories of this sort be pleasant and diverting because of the wonders they usually contain; these have certainly the Advantage...because they are full of surprising Events, which engage our Attention, and shew how much the *Arabians* surpass other Nations in Composures of this sort” (x). Though the *Arabian Nights* is ultimately a story that celebrates narrative’s ability to bring order to an otherwise chaotic world, as Galland observes, the supernatural, luxurious, violent, and sensual scenes thrust European readers into an ever-shifting narrative world. Foreign not only in content but also in form, the *Arabian Nights* tales offered European authors new methods for crafting narratives.

Shortly after the *Arabian Nights* arrived in Britain, authors began to mimic its literary style, and the wildness of the *Arabian Nights* became a narrative quality that writers pursued in their own works. Though Pope never wrote an oriental tale himself, he noted the of these tales, and he wrote that he had once “had some thought of writing a Persian fable,” and although he had never written it, “It would have been a very wild thing” (432). Pope’s comments reflect the widespread interest that the *Arabian Nights* provoked in writing oriental tales as the structural wildness provided a distinct means for creating a fictional representation of the world. By emphasizing the events and actions rather than the characters, the stories in the *Arabian Nights* highlight the causal chain in a story and foreground the external literary world rather than a particular character. This action-centric focus prompted British authors to explore the influence

³ The *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* has been a notoriously unstable text due to its lack of original source material. Yet as the first and only English translation of the text until the editions produced by Edward Lane and Richard Burton later in the nineteenth century, Galland’s translation served as the standard for the *Nights’* throughout the eighteenth century, so all references to the *Nights’* will refer to the Grub Street translation of Galland’s text.

causality on literary worlds and, therefore, provided a new approach to narrative probability. Consequently, while oriental travel narratives and heroic dramas had been popular throughout the seventeenth century in Britain, the *Arabian Nights* spurred a surge in oriental tales written by British authors.

This enthusiasm for the oriental tale occurred alongside and in tandem with the development of fictionality. Although the move towards realism became increasingly prevalent over the course of the eighteenth century, for authors to create narratives that featured common people and the happenings of everyday life required more than a change in content: it necessitated a formal change in how a narrative unfolds. The oriental tale offered a unique space, therefore, where authors could experiment with new conceptions of fiction as they explored issues of causality.

Although oriental tales are frequently discussed in terms of their content—scenes including genii, seraglios, and sultans—I begin with this discussion of wildness to show that eighteenth-century authors adopted the oriental tale not only because of its marvelous elements but also because of its formal possibilities. I use the term oriental tale to describe imaginative British fictions that were set in vaguely eastern scenes and that privileged action, or the causal chain of events, as a means for establishing the literary world. Oriental tales have proven difficult for contemporary scholars to classify because the link between various tales has at times seemed tenuous. European authors used oriental tales to serve a wide array of purposes ranging from moral instruction to political critique. Consequently, these narratives are similarly varied: some are short tales while others are novel-length, some are serious and some are parodies, etc.⁴

⁴ Martha Conant originally attempted to categorize these fictions by assigning them to one of four categories: imaginative, moralistic, philosophic, and satiric. More recently, Ros Ballaster differentiates oriental fictions into four primary forms – the frame tale, travel narratives, fictional

For instance, two of the most popular tales, Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759) and William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), present decidedly different approaches. Johnson writes a philosophical tale devoid of the supernatural, whereas Beckford creates a fantastical world filled with scenes of sensuality, sublimity, and terror. Though both titles are recognized oriental tales, they share little in common beyond references to a sultan.

Rather than see the oriental tales as developing in opposition to contemporary notions of fiction, this dissertation draws attention to the ways in which the British oriental tale participated in the development of fictionality through its emphasis on causality and narrative form. Since oriental tales privilege the actions and events in a story over the development of the subjectivity of characters, I focus on tales that use oriental tropes to explore causality. In these stories, content like caravans, genii, and hieroglyphics operates at the level of form and determine the progression of the narrative. Oriental tales do not merely offer authors an exotic veneer for their stories, but instead, they offer a way for authors to make sense of the interactions occurring between the self and the world within the boundaries of the fictional world. Consequently, eighteenth-century conceptions of fiction develop through the mediation of the fantastic and the contingent, the everyday and the singular, and the planned and the unexpected. This dissertation, therefore, shows how fictionality emerges at the intersection of the imagination and issues of causality.

letters, and the pseudo-oriental tale (texts written in imitation of the oriental tale) – in order to examine how oriental tropes move between genres. Aravamudan rejects these distinctions, however, arguing that terms like “pre-Orientalism, pseudo-Orientalism, and protonovel” arise from novelist culture and so impose literary judgments that emerge from the novel retroactively onto a fictional mode that was far more nebulous (8). Grouping all oriental fictions under the heading of Enlightenment Orientalism, Aravamudan argues that the defining characteristic of these texts are “their doubled and doubling nature” rather than their form, which enables these texts to be at once “inside and outside the nation, self-critical and also xenotropic, philosophical and also fantasmatic” (8).

1.1 Orientalism in the History of Fiction

Long the powerful neighbor of mainland Europe, the Ottoman Empire had featured as both a threat and a curiosity in the British writings.⁵ As caravans traveled from the desert into the British imaginary via the travel narratives of Sir Jean Chardin and others, they brought a repertoire of Eastern goods and texts. Though medieval and early modern romances had previously been in conversation with eastern narratives and ideas, the increase in trade between 1650 and 1750 in everything from coffee to music to manuscripts produced a dynamic interest in and emulation of cultural practices and literatures from the Ottoman, Chinese, and Moghul empires. A spike in translations of Persian and Arabic texts combined with scenes from the travel accounts Sir Jean Chardin, Jean de Thévenot, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, and Paul Rycout furnished British literary culture with a range of foreign images and ideas that authors deployed to diverse ends.⁶ Yet it was Antoine Galland's translation of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1704-1717) that forever altered the British literary tradition.

Enthralled by the wildness of the stories and intrigued by the glimpse at cultural customs of Europe's neighbors, the British authors quickly adapted the oriental tale as a means to moralize about, ridicule, and imagine the world around them. As an enthusiast for narratives from and about the "East," Joseph Addison was an early producer of the oriental tales, and he

⁵ Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum demonstrate that the Arab and Muslim world had been a figure of alternating interest and fear since the Arab conquest of Sicily and Spain during the eighth and ninth centuries. See Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum's introduction to *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West* (2008).

⁶ Aravamudan reminds us *Enlightenment Orientalism* that this narrative traffic came via France. Richard Knolles published the first English history of the Ottoman empire, *Generall History of the Turks*, in 1603, and his account of Hürrem Sultan, the first wife of Suleyman I, became the basis for the English figure of "Roxolana." Similarly, Paul Rycout's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire and General Historie of the Turks* (1687) influenced many of the fantasies surrounding the harem. In 1656, William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* appeared on the Restoration stage, the first of forty Islamicate plays staged between 1660-1714.

wrote these tales largely for moral and philosophical ends to explain his ideas about topics like hope or to describe theories such as John Locke's discussion of time. Since Addison published many of his oriental tales in *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*, he prompted further interest in the genre so that oriental tales multiplied rapidly. Samuel Johnson and John Hawkesworth followed Addison's lead and published oriental tales in *The Rambler* and in *The Adventurer*, in addition to a few stand-alone tales, and their tales similarly addressed philosophical problems or offered didactic lessons. Other oriental tales became useful vehicles for satire, so Eliza Haywood published the *Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo* (1736) as a barely disguised critique of Robert Walpole's government, while Oliver Goldsmith adapted the foreign observer in *The Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher* (1762) to mock London's manners and customs. Some collections, such as William Beckford's *Vathek* and *The Episodes of Vathek* (1786), used the oriental tale to merge factual particularity with an unrestrained imagination. Thus over the course of the century, the oriental tale was taken up by many authors for a variety of purposes.

Though these stories have frequently been overlooked in theories about the rise of the novel and the rise of fictionality, the oriental tale played a critical role in the development of modern conceptions of fiction. Parallel to the novels being written by Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding – the authors established as canonical by Ian Watt – the oriental tale negotiated issues of referentiality and imagination. As a result, Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding produced texts against the backdrop of a cosmopolitan literary sphere so that their work was constantly in dialogue with the oriental tales. For Defoe, this meant embracing the oriental tale. For Defoe, this meant embracing the oriental tale, and he published *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris* in 1718, a year prior to publishing *Robinson Crusoe* in

1719. Defoe then returned to the oriental tale in *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) with his protagonist's escapade in China. For Fielding, by contrast, this meant distancing his work from the oriental tale. In *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, Fielding rejects stories that relied on "supernatural assistance" like those by the Arabians and the Persians who wrote tales of "genii and fairies," and he argues that narrative probability can only be located in prose texts that embrace the ordinary and the everyday (195). Regardless of whether authors adopted the oriental tale or rejected it, then, their work had to grapple with the imaginative influence that the oriental tale exerted on the literary market.

Despite this influence, theories of fictionality have rarely addressed the role of the oriental tale in the development of fiction. As Nicholas Paige argues, "Fiction...was subtly paradoxical, advancing propositions about the world—and about very specific parts of that world—via the destinies of invented characters" (*Before* 20). However, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, this conceptual category did not yet exist. While the nineteenth century would see fully realized fictional worlds, the eighteenth century was just beginning to mediate between the imagination and reality in new ways. As Michael McKeon has shown, throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, authors negotiated epistemological and socio-ethical questions, in part, by creating and modifying narrative strategies that would allow them to depict their social and political circumstances. As authors moved between "questions of truth" and "questions of virtue," they began to lay claim to new expression of historicity (20-22). While McKeon thus argues for the novel's evolution from the romance and the move to more factual expressions in fiction, Lennard Davis argues that fictionality actually represents new ways of signaling fabrication in a narrative rather than truthfulness. Dismissing Watt's notion of "formal realism," Davis argues that the novel appeared as a result of the seventeenth century's "news-

novel matrix,” where the novel and the news were nearly identical. As the eighteenth century began to separate these into distinct form, the novel necessarily had to distinguish itself as not factual, so authors began to signal the creation rather than the reality of their stories. As readers began to be able to distinguish between the real and the ideal in narrative, these texts gained a new liberty for commenting precisely on reality because readers could distinguish whether stories were true.

Reconfiguring this rise of the novel as the “rise of fictionality,” Catherine Gallagher locates the novel’s ability to comment on the world in “the art of writing about nobody” (“Rise of Fictionality” 345). Since traditional poetics had assumed readers required the presence of real individuals in order to absorb the moral lessons of a text, Gallagher argues that the non-referential proper name signaled the imaginary status of an otherwise believable story. Within this framework, fictionality depends on the doubled move a reader makes, simultaneously acknowledging and denying a text’s status as an invented work, Gallagher locates this doubling in the representation of a unique and embodied individual who, nevertheless, has no referent in the existing world. Because this “nobody” closely resembled reality, readers accepted their stories as probable.

Like Gallagher, Nicholas Paige also locates the recognition of fictionality in the believable yet invented person. As Paige asserts, the contemporary world posed problems that were “foreign to the figures bequeathed by history” (*Before* 30). Heroes of the past, however legendary, were simply too far removed from the present moment to serve as effective tools for addressing current issues that ranged from slavery to marriage to an emergent nationalism. While nineteenth-century fiction would solve this dilemma by promoting fictional worlds as analogous rather than real, eighteenth-century fiction presented stories as participating in the contemporary

world. Though non-referential characters would become more common by the late eighteenth century, the fictional accounts of the early decades still clung to a particularity of reference, so authors staged reality through tropes like found manuscripts or letters.⁷ This “pseudofactual régime” of fiction offered the pretense of reality by featuring individuals who could exist, but whom no one actually knew (*Before* 12).

These accounts fail to address the ways foreign and imaginative genres like the oriental tale contribute to fictionality. Gallagher, for instance, argues that blatantly incredible stories – those with “talking animals, flying carpets, or human characters who are much better or much worse than the norm” – can only be designated as fiction anachronistically (“Rise of Fictionality” 339). For Gallagher, fictionality only occurred when a reader could believe the plausibility of that narrative world, and since marvelous and supernatural entities defied modern conceptions of the universe, their appearance in a story ruptured the illusion that a story was occurring in the known world.

However, Gallagher’s rejection of the imaginative and the fantastic runs counter to the eighteenth-century’s outlook on fiction, for she ignores the prevalence of the oriental tale in eighteenth-century literary criticism. Oriental tales were widely popular: in *Progress of Romance* (1785), Clara Reeve attests to the numerous imitations the *Arabian Nights* had inspired, while in *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (1783), James Beattie notes that the oriental tales like Samuel Johnson’s *Rasselas* and John Hawkesworth’s *Almorán and Hamet* (1761) were “celebrated performances” that displayed “that exquisite stain of sublime morality” (*Disserations* 241). As I noted earlier, these literary performances did not occur in an isolated literary corner but were

⁷ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Act of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (1994) and “The Rise of Fictionality” (2006).

produced alongside and in conversation with the novel. Hawkesworth speaks to the interactions between literary genres in *The Adventurer* No. 4, where he catalogs the different genres that authors commonly employ. Reflecting on the merits of the different literary forms available to writers, Hawkesworth divides the genres into two groups, the forms of nature – biography, history, and travel narratives – and the forms of art – the epic, the novel, the fantastic tale, and dramatic poetry. Though Hawkesworth discusses the limits and strengths each form, he elevates the oriental tale as “the most extravagant, and yet perhaps the most generally pleasing of all literary performances” because of its emphasis on narrative probability and the fictional possibilities it consequently permits (*Adventurer* No. 4). As Hawkesworth’s essay makes clear, to discuss the rise of fictionality without reference to the oriental tale ignores the way that the foreign contributed to imagined representations of reality.

Recent studies have, therefore, begun to call for a new genealogy of fiction, one that recognizes the interchange between the domestic and the foreign, the real and the marvelous in the development of fictionality. Addressing the impact that Europe’s neighbors had on its conception of fiction, Ros Ballaster examines the narrative traffic entering Britain from and being written about Turkey, China, and India. For Ballaster, these tales captivated readers because they could “move” readers to “other places, other times, other bodies, other species” through a clever education about “where they are, who they are, and what they are” (*Fabulous* 2). Through this movement, oriental tales were able to transport readers into exciting fictional worlds, which attuned readers to the social and political themes embedded in the stories and in turn, transformed readers’ perspectives on these issues. Consequently, Ballaster argues that “the East came to be understood as a (sometimes *the*) source of story” (*Fabulous* 17).

Like Ballaster, Srinivas Aravamudan envisions oriental tales as transforming reader, for he argues that these fictions offered a distinctly porous mode of subjectivity to readers. Coining the term “Enlightenment Orientalism,” Aravamudan examines the collection of secret histories, fables, scandal narratives, and translations that provided “a fictional mode for dreaming with the Orient” rather than attempting to dominate it (8). Aravamudan argues that these imaginative texts placed tropes of strangeness and familiarity in tension since they were “inside and outside of the nation, self-critical and also xenotropic, philosophical, and also fantasmatical” (8). Due to this liminal position, oriental tales encouraged readers to embrace cultural transmissions that offered new forms of knowledge.

As both Ballaster and Aravamudan demonstrate, oriental tales influenced a burgeoning British identity and introduced a wide range of literary techniques including the framed narrative, the arabesque, and forms of digression. These techniques continued to be refined over the course of the century though, and more recently, James Watt has examined the at times conflicting ways that late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century authors represent Asia in their texts. Exploring the intersection between Orientalist perspectives and the emphasis on revolution and empire, Watt demonstrates the polysemous nature of oriental tropes as authors found themselves increasingly torn in their views of elsewhere.

As Ballaster, Aravamudan, and Watt make clear, Oriental fictions provide a central mode for discovering fictionality as eighteenth-century authors explored different methods of conceptualizing truthful narratives. As British authors began to imitate the style of the *Arabian Nights*, the resulting tales were defined by their oriental settings and fantastical elements.⁸

⁸ Oriental fictions appeared in diverse forms – the epistolary fictions, the frame tale, and the travel narrative –and reflect a range of religions and customs from predominantly Arab, Persian, Indian, and Chinese cultures. Aravamudan argues that dividing these fictions through terms like

Written in conscious imitation of older foreign texts, these tales nevertheless carried the contemporary concerns of their modern authors, which created tension between the foreign and the familiar, a duality that Ballaster describes as “both ancient and contemporary, both then and now, both there and here, both fantastical and a faithful representation” (*Fabulous* 2). This duality reflects Edward Said’s contention that “Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient,” a location that includes “the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text” (20). Though this act of locating encouraged some authors to project British values onto the Orient and vice versa in order to criticize political, sexual, and religious cultural values at home, as Aravamudan argues, not all strains of Orientalism during the eighteenth century fit the Saidian model. Said’s insights nevertheless emphasize an overlooked aspect of the oriental tale. Said argues that Western authors create knowledge about the Orient by offering these few images as representative of the Orient’s deeper character. He states, “Orientalism is premised on exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient Speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for the West” (20-21). Said’s critique focuses on the exterior appearances that authors use to shape the Orient. I would argue, though, that in the oriental tale, the significance of exteriority extends past the decorative elements of setting or cultural artifacts to the structure of the stories themselves. Although oriental tales are easily identifiable by their tropes – flying carpets, transmigration, sultans, etc. – these texts feature not only the oriental settings and fantastical elements, but they also share the *Arabian Nights*’

“pre-Orientalism, pseudo-Orientalism, and protonovel” imposes literary judgments that emerged from the novel retroactively onto a fictional mode that was far more nebulous (8). Grouping all oriental fictions under the heading of Enlightenment Orientalism. Aravamudan argues for a focus on the epistemological work of these fictions, which enables these texts to be at once “inside and outside the nation, self-critical and also xenotropic, philosophical and also fantasmatic” (8).

emphasis on action over character. Oriental tales emphasize exteriority over interiority, or put another way, they emphasize action in the narrative without mediating the causes of these actions through character.

Oriental tales offered authors an opportunity to focus on the external aspects of a narrative world through the geographical removal of their settings and characters. The *Arabian Nights* held peculiar position in the British imaginary: despite being a collection of imaginative folktales, the stories were nonetheless taken to be a truthful representation of eastern customs, places, and religions. Few people ever traveled from Britain to the Ottoman Empire, so travel narratives and stories mediated the collective cultural knowledge about Ottoman life. Indeed, many people view the *Arabian Nights* as an ethnographic repository and an authoritative source on the Eastern life because they believed the stories provided diverting stories as well as an account of “the Customs and Manners of the Eastern Nations, and of the Ceremonies of their religion.”⁹ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for instance, references the *Arabian Nights*’ in her letters during her travels in the Ottoman empire when she writes, “You forget, dear sister, those very tales were writ by an author of this country and, excepting the enchantments, are a real representation of the manners here” (158). Montagu thus elevates the *Arabian Night*’ above entertainment to serve as stories as an authoritative source that will give weight to her claims about Ottoman customs. Despite their enchanted markers of unreality, these stories were attributed with a form of realism because the geographical remove between Britain and the

⁹ In the Preface of the 1706 English translation of the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*, Antoine Galland writes, that the stories will be “pleasant and diverting because of the wonders they usually contain,” but he further argues that the readers will be pleased by “the Account [these stories] give us of the Customs and Manners of the Eastern Nations, and of the Ceremonies of their religion... which are better describ’d here, than in any Author that has wrote of ‘em, or in the Relations of Travellers.”

Ottoman empire meant the empire to the east was a geopolitical reality that the vast majority of readers would only encounter via the imagination.

1.2 The Intersection of Externalism and Fictionality

Though Paige does not address oriental tales in his discussion of fiction, his emphasis on fiction as narrative practice offers a new approach to the fictional conversations in which oriental tales participated. Warning against giving fiction a conceptual focus, Paige asserts that fiction develops not because of changes in people's cognitive abilities but rather through experiments in literary techniques. Fiction, he argues, should be understood as a "nebula of writing practices and ideas about writing—techniques invented and modified, sometimes quickly and sometimes not, through a difficult-to-specify dialectical relationship with what people think literature can and should do" (*Before* 205). By approaching fiction as a set of narrative practices, the modifications that authors make to their techniques becomes more apparent, illuminating both their successes and failures in experiments with literary form. Furthermore, when we view fiction as a set of narrative practices, the narrative opportunities that different forms offer writers becomes clearer. In the case of the oriental tale, the action-centric focus of the form offered authors an opportunity to reflect on questions of mental causation and externalism.

Though the eighteenth century has long been associated with the development of interiority and subjectivity, as Jonathan Kramnick demonstrates, authors continually examined the relationship between the immaterial mind and the physical world. Classifying actions as a class of events instigated by mental causes, Kramnick argues that to focus on action in a narrative requires observing the ways that mental states are subject to plot rather than drivers of it. Externalism, which Kramnick describes as the connection between the subjective experience

and the environment, posed unsettling problems for writers as they attempted to show the mind at work. Authors recognized that “Actions extend the mind into the world,” but they recognized that implied the reverse could also be true – that the world could extend back into the mind creating a continual causal loop (Kramnick 3). Externalism thus raised questions about whether individuals possessed free will and could choose their actions or whether they were bound by necessity.

If as Paige argues, fiction results from narrative practices that attempt to make sense of the world for the authors, the oriental tale offered a useful approach to the eighteenth century’s quandry about externalism and free will. Oriental tales mimic the action-centric focus of the *Arabian Nights*. The *Arabian Nights*’ structure depends on nested narratives where Scheherazade tells a story about a fisherman who in turns tells a story about a dog who becomes a man who in turn tells a story about a woman, etc. In each instance, the focus of the narrative centers not on the subject of the tale but on the object because each new character introduced into the cycle of stories brings the potential for a new story. Observing this structure, Tzvetan Todorov argues that the *Nights*’ should be understood by what he calls predicative literature, or literature where the predicate of the story subordinates the subject. Rather than see action as the effect of a character’s interiority, therefore, Todorov describes the *Arabian Nights*’ as favoring an intransitive structure where “the action is important in itself and not as an indication of this or that character trait” (67). This intransitive form consequently dissolves the distance between character and action so that action becomes indicative of both the cause and the effect of character simultaneously through an immediate rather than a mediated causality. As a result, the emphasis in the stories falls not on the subject of the sentence but on the predicate since the

actions of one character always point forward to the recipient of that action.¹⁰ Each person introduced through a narrative can, in turn, become the subject for a new action and a new predicate, prompting a future orientation.

Todorov's theory suggests a narrative world that depends on relationality since characters engage in a causal chain of action that links them together and defines them within a larger pattern. The oriental tale inherited this attention to action directly from the *Arabian Nights*, so by emphasizing the actions in a story rather than the characters, we can begin to see the ways that eighteenth-century authors took up questions about externalism. These narratives focus in particular on the daily actions of these individuals – dressing, writing, dissembling, traveling, storytelling, etc. – but rather than offer a glimpse into the interiority of a character, authors use these acts instead to foreground the character's connection to society since the action engages the character with others participating in a similar action or as the character's actions directs attention to another character in the story.

Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759) provides an example of how this exchange works. As Rasselas leaves the Happy Valley and travels through Egypt, he joins in different social groups by participating in their various daily activities: debating law with the bashaws, engaging in frivolity with the rich, studying lectures with philosophers, etc. With each stop, Rasselas's actions connect him to a particular social group and as these groups in turn interact, a picture of Egypt begins to take shape. In this sense, oriental tales like *Rasselas* stage Benedict Anderson's imagined community, for Rasselas' journey

¹⁰ Todorov describes Sinbad as the most significant example of this model noting, “we should note it not as ‘X sees Y’ but as ‘Y is seen’” (67). Of course, as Aravamudan points out, not every story in the *Nights* offers so little psychological development as Sinbad, but Todorov's theory nevertheless reflects the general pulse within the collection.

provides readers with a sense of the multiplicity of actions occurring at the same clocked and calendrical time within Egypt. By emphasizing the exchange of actions happening within specific social groups and between them, Johnson separates the cause of an action from the character and instead explores the ways that mental states collide with and emerge from the social causal order.

1.3 Looking Ahead

I examine this process in greater depth in the three chapters of my dissertation. Each chapter focuses on an image associated with nations to the east that I argue inform that author's approach towards issues of imagination and causality in narrative. Through this intersection, I should how each author uses the oriental tale to experiment with the narrative practices that create fiction as we know it today.

In my first chapter, I turn to Joseph Addison and examine the oriental tales he includes in *The Spectator* (1711-1712). Beginning with Addison's tale about a caravan, I show how Addison uses the oriental tale to emphasize the imagination's role in ordering the world into a rhythm of movement and pause. As an early practitioner of the oriental tale, Addison was attracted to the wildness of the oriental tale, an aspect that he associates with the hidden design of a narrative. By using rhythm as a mean to examine the causality, Addison identifies the pause as a moment of imaginative association which connects disparate elements into a unified whole. Addison thus disrupts the narrative form of the fable, which traditionally had been used to structure the narrative events according to an overarching moral, and he instead shifts the narrative focus to the connections between actions. While Addison does not invent fiction, through the oriental

tale, he opens the fictional door for a new practice of narrative coherence, one that was causally linked through action and that would be reworked by many other authors for years to come.

In my second chapter, I turn to John Hawkesworth and Frances Sheridan to examine how each author deploys the genie in order to explore issues of narrative probability. Through the genie, oriental tales dramatize the process of action by tracing the connection between the external physical world, a resulting internal desire, and the external manifestation of that desire. Taking up Hawkesworth's essay on narrative probability in *The Adventurer* No. 4, I explore the ways Hawkesworth attempts to envision a new approach to representing probability through the genie. Reading Hawkesworth's essay alongside his most popular oriental tale, *Almorán and Hamet* (1761), I demonstrate how Hawkesworth uses a genie to trace how and why individuals act and to consider what the impact of those actions are in the world. Turning to Sheridan's *The History of Nourjahad* (1750), I explore how Sheridan exploits the oriental tale's supernatural elements in order to explore how stories demonstrate their probability. By using the genie to create a narrative world embedded within her story, Sheridan exposes the constructedness of all literary characters and narratives. By approaching fiction as an art form whose probability emerges from the verified chain of causality embedded in the narrative, Hawkesworth and Sheridan thus deploy the supernatural to express the reality of a lived secular experience.

In my third chapter, I examine how Horace Walpole uses the image of Egyptian hieroglyphics to create a narrative world of serendipitous happenings in my reading of the *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1785). Wildly imaginative, the *Hieroglyphic Tales* features a collection of six tales set in a pre-Adamite world, which allows Walpole to break the causal chain and create a world of narrative contingency. By tracing the evolution of Walpole's literary experiments with oriental tales, I show how he rejected the unvarying structure of the novel and the romance in

search of a form that offered serendipitous discovery. We thus discover a theory of fiction where history becomes fictional as the singular moments of Walpole's everyday life morph into fiction. By understanding the ways Walpole untethers actions in the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, I argue that we can gain new insights into the forms of contingency that Walpole also deploys in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764).

CHAPTER 2

Perceiving Rhythm: Literary Wildness in Joseph Addison's Oriental Tales

Interspersed along the commerce routes between Aleppo, Baghdad, Alexandria, and Constantinople stood a network of caravanserais. For centuries, these roadside inns marked a pause in the caravan's travel – a pause but not a cessation as these stops formed part of the rhythm of the caravan's onward journey. As a place of rest, the caravanserais offered a safe haven for convoys moving spices, carpets, and oils across the open deserts during their yearly trips.¹¹ To a European eye like that of the French Huguenot jeweler Sir Jean Chardin, the caravanserais appeared bare: the stone buildings featured large courtyards encircled by archways leading to storerooms, stables, and small, unfurnished rooms for travelers.¹² Yet this architectural design not only facilitated the movement of travelers and merchandise across the desert but also encouraged a transcultural commons. Within the courtyard, news, merchandise, and stories were exchanged as water flowed for animal and traveler alike. The movement of the day had been suspended, permitting an interchange of perspectives and ideas that travelers carried with them when they departed the following day. This rhythm, of motion punctuated by pause, structured daily life for the traveler and anchored the economic and social systems of the Persian, Ottoman, and Moghul empires.

¹¹ For further discussion of the historical context and experience of the caravan and caravanserais, see Bruce Masters, "Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire's Caravan City," *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (2005); Gary Paul Nabhan, *Cumin, Camels, and Caravans: A Spice Odyssey* (2014); Douglass Howard, *A History of the Ottoman Empire* (2017); and Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman and Mughal Empires: Social History in the Early Modern World* (2019).

¹² See R. W. Ferrier, *A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of Seventeenth-Century Empire* (1996) for more on Chardin's travels through Persia.

When Joseph Addison turned to the caravanserai in an oriental tale he wrote for *The Spectator*, he drew on its rhythmic movement as a means for envisioning the quotidian flow of British society. As a space structured by the constant movement of guests, the caravanserai operates as a pause or a break that both interrupts the movement of the day and makes the caravan's onward journey possible. This rhythm of motion and pause creates continuity, bringing the distinct experiences, interests, and goals of travelers together into harmony. Drawing on this scene, Addison pairs a tale about a caravanserai with references to a London coffeehouse in *The Spectator* No. 289, where he figures the coffeehouse as a cultural caravanserai, a space of similar comings and goings that provides an intellectual commons engaged in the production and consumption of knowledge and culture. By bringing together the conceptual spaces of the coffeehouse and the caravanserai, Addison illuminates this rhythm of movement, pause, and movement again as the means for representing the everyday within a narrative.

I begin with this image of the caravanserai because this rhythmic movement defines not only *The Spectator* No. 289 but also Addison's other oriental tales more broadly. Best known for his work as an essayist on *The Tatler* (1709-1711) and *The Spectator* (1711-1714), Addison experimented extensively with the oriental tale as a form exceptionally suited for envisioning and commenting on British society. As an enthusiast for narratives from and about the "East," Addison knew the accounts of travelers like Chardin and Paul Rycaut, as well as the story cycles translated and written by Antoine Galland, Pétis de la Croix, and Giovanni Paolo Marana. And *The Spectator* reflects the impression these texts made on Addison: the structuring persona of Mr. Spectator, for instance, reads as a British offspring of Marana's Ottoman spy Mahmut.¹³

¹³ Srinivas Aravamudan traces the influence of Marana's Mahmut on the development of spy fiction within Britain, and he classifies Mr. Spectator as a variation of this genre. See

Further, Addison incorporated the oriental tale throughout his periodicals: he included eighteen tales in *The Spectator* – some original and others that he adapted from other sources – in addition to those he wrote for *The Guardian* and *The Free-Holder*. While some of Addison’s tales stand alone, such as *The Spectator* No. 584-85, “The Story of Hilpa, Harpath, and Shalum,” Addison frequently paired his tales with philosophical musings so that the narrative offered an imaginative embodiment of larger issue.¹⁴ In *The Spectator* No. 94, for instance, Addison turns to a discussion about Muhammad and an oriental tale about a man who unexpectedly lives a second life to examine John Locke’s argument about the manner in which time unfolds. Through such pairings, Addison engages his readers in moral and philosophical concerns and increases the reader’s ability to access complex ideas.

As a forefather of British aesthetics, Addison’s use the oriental tale offers new insight into the burgeoning fictional practices changing the narrative landscape at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As Michael McKeon has shown, authors throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century negotiated epistemological and socio-ethical questions, in part, by creating and modifying narrative strategies that would allow them to depict their social and political circumstances.¹⁵ Narratives shifted from stories of heroes past to persons present so that by midcentury, the ordinary details of contemporary British life lent narratives what Samuel

Enlightenment Orientalism (2012), particularly chapter 1. See also Jane Lim, *Imaginary Translators: The Boundaries of the English Novel, 1763-1818* (2016).

¹⁴ Addison did not title his oriental tales, though a few gained titles through fame, such as with “The Vision of Mirzah” in *Spectator* No. 159. The titles I use all come from Martha Conant, who titled the individual tales in the appendix to her study. See Martha Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (1908).

¹⁵Michael McKeon extends Ian Watt’s work by examining why the romance was destabilized but not completely replaced by the novel. He argues when the crises surrounding “questions of truth” and “questions of virtue” come to be seen as analogous, they come together to contribute crucially to the form of the novel. See McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (1987).

Richardson described as an “Air of Genuineness,” as settings and plots that reflected the everyday became the vogue.¹⁶ To create narratives featuring everyday happenings required more than merely a change in content: it necessitated a structural change in how narrative unfolded. Within the literary practice of early eighteenth-century authors, fables had traditionally provided the structural basis of fiction, operating according to a vertical structure that Douglass Patey defines as the “hierarchy of signs”: morals provided the principle design element, and as a result, authors demonstrated their skill through their ability to unify narrative episodes under an overarching moral.¹⁷ These stories found unity not through a causal chain of events (as is common within contemporary fiction) but in the moral end of the story which, however unstable in content, offered formal closure. As the novel began to gain prominence though, so too did a new narrative structure, one where episodes were causally connected in a horizontal rather than vertical development. Rather than the fable imbue the episodes under it with meaning, this horizontal structure builds from episode to episode to create a coherent message.

This chapter argues that Addison’s emphasis on rhythm in the oriental tale invites new consideration about the shift from the hierarchical to the horizontal structure that pre-empted changes in fictionality. Though Catherine Gallagher excludes the oriental tale and other fanciful literary forms from the development of fiction because of their overtly non-referential and magical entities, Nicholas Paige argues that framing fiction conceptually – as Gallagher does –

¹⁶ Richardson’s comments about *Clarissa* reflect what Nicholas Paige defines as the “pseudofactual regime” of fiction, where the pretense of truth underwrites the moral exemplar of texts. See Samuel Richardson, *Selected Letters*, edited by John Carroll (1964) and Nicholas Paige, *Before Fiction: The Ancien Régime of the Novel* (2011). Although Paige is concerned primarily with French literature, his remarks apply to the range of novelistic experimentation by not only Richardson, but Fielding, Sterne, and others.

¹⁷ See Douglass Patey, *Probability and Literary Form: Philosophic Theory and Literary Practice in the Augustan Age* (1985) and Jayne Lewis, *The English Fable: Aesop and Literary Culture, 1651-1740* (1996).

assumes that the change in narrative forms occurs as a result in changes in the ways that people think. Paige, however, argues that fiction can more usefully be approached as a set of narrative practices. As Paige asserts, “Writers are of their time and place, which is to say bound by a set of practices and rationales that they do indeed transform, but in limited ways” (*Before* xiii).

Because of narrative’s perceived moral obligation, the modifications eighteenth-century authors made to narrative practices reflected their desire to present a more direct commentary on life. Rather than working against the development of fictionality, then, the oriental tale presented a new narrative possibility that authors like Addison used to redefine the relationship between the imagination and reality.

As an early practitioner of the oriental tale, Addison approached his tales as fables, capable of expounding a moral. However, Addison also modeled his tales on the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*, which he perceived as possessing a “wild but natural simplicity” that resulted from the tales’ emphasis on the actions of human life (*Spectator* No. 535). Unlike the rigid rules governing the unity of action in fables, Addison saw this wildness as the hidden design of a narrative that creates a sense of natural motion and, consequently, promotes a chain of associations through the rhythmic pattern of motion, pause, and motion again. By bringing together the morality of fables with this rhythmic wildness, Addison creates a narrative practice that will allow for the coming emergence of fictionality.

Addison identifies a rhythmic movement in the oriental tale that blends together the motion of nature with the design of art, thereby producing a “wild” aesthetic. Drawing on the imagination, he centers the pause in this rhythm as a moment of imaginative association which connects disparate elements into a unified whole. In emphasizing the rhythms that organize actions, Addison modifies the hierarchical form of the fable and creates a narrative form

connected horizontally through movement rather than under an overarching moral. If fictionality would later be seen as congruent with the development of the non-referential nobody, Addison prepares the way for these literary entities by shifting the narrative focus to the connections between actions. Addison does not, of course, invent fiction since his oriental tales operate largely as allegories or participate in the pseudofactual mode of fiction. Yet he does foreground a rhythmic exchange between motion and a pause that attempts to depict the relationship between the individual and society. Addison thus offers a nascent form of fiction that centers on the rhythm of movement as a new means for envisioning the social exchanges that embed the local within the global. To begin this chapter, therefore, I look first at how Addison envisions the oriental tale as a fable that supports the broader mission of his *Spectator* essays. By turning next to *The Spectator* No. 289, I show how Addison modifies this structure through his emphasis on the overlapping rhythm of the caravanserai and the coffeehouse. I then discuss how Addison sees this rhythm as engaging the imagination through an aesthetic of wildness, before closing by examining how Addison moves this narrative practice beyond the fable to envision experiences that drawn from everyday life and become fictional.

2.1 A Fabulous Form

Throughout his literary career, Addison developed ambitious periodical projects that sought to reform the moral values, consumer choices, and social practices of their readers. Between 1709 and 1714, Addison collaborated with Richard Steele and later Eustace Budgell and Thomas Tickell to create a series of fashionable and influential essays that were published in *The Tatler* (1709-1711) and *The Spectator* (1711-1714). While *The Tatler* had parodied newspapers by incorporating current political, financial, and military news into its essays, *The*

Spectator adapted the rhythm of the newspapers rather than their content: the first series (March 1711-December 1712) appeared six days a week, while the second series (June-December 1714) appeared three days a week. This rhythm that set *The Spectator* apart from other periodicals and prompted wonder from its readership.¹⁸ By enacting its original boast that it would be “Continued every Day,” *The Spectator* flourished and established itself as part of the routine of the London literate (*Spectator* No. 1).

Through its participation in the diurnal practices of London life, *The Spectator* invited its readers to re-envision their social customs and relationships. Focusing on matters of polite conduct, Addison and Steele penned essays attuned to all aspects of everyday life in order to argue for values of modesty, honesty, taste, and reasoned discourse. Although Addison and Steele’s stated goal was to reform the contemporary sensibility, their essays have been read as contributing to the development of the public sphere since the 1962 publication of Jürgen Habermas’ *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*.¹⁹ For Habermas, the public sphere emerged during the eighteenth century as a result of the social exchange promoted by two institutions: the coffeehouse and the periodical. As individuals read periodicals like *The*

¹⁸ Donald Newman argues that the publication schedule set *The Spectator* apart from all the periodicals that came prior, while Stuart Sherman records the surprise Addison’s contemporaries expressed at the near-daily appearance of the essays. See Donald Newman, *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses* (2005) and Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (1996). For more about the production of *The Spectator*, see Albert Furtwangler, “The Making of Mr. Spectator” (1977), Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode* (1997), and Scott Black, “Social and Literary Form in *The Spectator*” (1999).

¹⁹ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Translated by Thomas Burger, 1994). For other accounts that understand Addison as participating in this development, see Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism from the Spectator to Poststructuralism* (1984); Michael Ketcham, *Transparent Designs: Reading, Performance and Form in the Spectator Papers* (1985); Carole Fabricant, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century” (1985); Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode* (1997); and Donald Newman, *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses* (2005).

Spectator and engaged in what Habermas describes as “rational-critical debate,” they coalesced into an imaginary community which was associated with the town rather than the court, resulting in the nascent “bourgeois public sphere” (55-58). His argument has been repeated and expanded by numerous scholars, inextricably linking Addisonian taste with an urban and bourgeois virtue. Erin Mackie, for instance, argues that *The Spectator* contributed to the development of the British middle class by “championing the polite aestheticized imagination against the illusions of fancy and enthusiasm, the decency of bourgeois taste against the depravity of aristocratic taste” (*Commerce* 3). For Mackie, *The Spectator* engaged in public debates over issues ranging from fashion to credit in order to advance its ideological and cultural vision. However, this view of the public sphere can result in an overly simplistic understanding of the emergent middle class. *The Spectator* essays do reflect a changing world though, for as Scott Black demonstrates, the essays exhibit a social imaginary “informed by a modern civil society” through which the city could come to know itself (29). Yet even as Addison and Steele worked towards a new vision of society, their vision drew from familiar aristocratic ideals. William Walker, for instance, notes Addison’s political work for the Whig Ministry, so he argues that *The Spectator* essays promote the positions of a Whig agenda.²⁰ He argues that “the understanding of Addison’s aesthetics as bourgeois ideology is misguided” since Addison and Steele would have lacked the historical position from which to identify the shifting dynamics of their social sphere as the emergence of the middle class.

²⁰ See William Walker, “Ideology and Addison’s Essays on the Pleasures of the Imagination” (2000). For other discussions Addison and Whig rather than bourgeois ideology, see Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (1994) and Nick Grindle, “Virgil’s Prospects: The Gentry and the Representation of Landscape in Addison’s Theory of the Imagination” (2006).

Though *The Spectator* can thus be seen as a flag bearer for modern standards of British culture, Addison and Steele understood that local sensibility emerged in part from its confluence with the global because of the free-flowing trade that fed fashionable society.²¹ *The Spectator*'s global perspective ranged from the Middle and Far East to the Americas to Europe, reflecting the complex intercultural engagement of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as conquests, re-conquests, and shifting political alliances continually altered the geopolitical contours of the world. Addison famously acknowledges this dynamic in his homage to the Royal Exchange in *The Spectator* No. 69; he depicts the modern and reformed British individual as emerging from the blending of the self with the foreign. Placing the foreign and the familiar as complementary pieces within a larger whole, Addison envisions a British cosmopolitanism that, as Eugenia Zuroski argues, "identified the nation with the display of acquired, foreign things within English spaces" (*Taste* 18). Addison's distinctive commentary thus embeds the foreign in the familiar by weaving together philosophical ponderings and empirical thought along with references to and stories featuring diverse cultures, races, and religions. More than just a local periodical drawing boundaries around a domestic Englishness, *The Spectator* offered a reformative vision that drew on cultural difference to promote social, political, financial, and cultural virtues.

²¹ For more on the transcultural influences on *The Spectator*, see Richard Bravernman, "Spectator 495: Addison and the 'Race of People called the Jews,'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* (1994); Tony Brown, "Joseph Addison and the Pleasures of Sharawadgi," *English Literary History* (2007); Eugenia Zuroski, *A Taste for China: English Subjectivity and the Prehistory of Orientalism* (2013); Bethany Williamson, *Orienting Virtue: Morals, Markets, and Global Modernity in English Literature, 1660-1800* (2015); Eun Kyung Min, *China and the Writing of English Literary Modernity, 1690-1770* (2018); and Bridget Orr, *British Enlightenment Theatre: Dramatizing Difference* (2020).

Since the everydayness portrayed in *The Spectator* takes up questions of civility and taste in regards to the local and the global, as well as the social and domestic, the fable made an ideal narrative form through which Addison could address his readers. Addison classified the oriental tale as a fable, thereby drawing together both an Eastern fable practice as well as the English fable tradition. Like many of his contemporaries, Addison associated the popular beast fables of Aesop and Bidpai with the East, so he unsurprisingly believed the fable originated in the East, and he traced its genealogy through Aesop as well as the *Arabian Nights*, Homer, Ovid as he traveled back in time to Greece, the nation he saw as the origin of the fable.²² Fable collections like Aesop and Bidpai's operated primarily according to a nested story cycle, which provided the fables with a sense of doubleness. As Srinivas Aravamudan argues, "The fables are autotelic and heterotelic, subtracting and encapsulating, moralizing and divesting by transition to other stories that often argue the opposite point to that just expounded" (*Enlightenment* 133). This doubleness arose from the nested story framework, for these fables create an interlocking structure of stories that enable themes to travel back and forth in the narrative exchange. Despite this doubleness, British writers closely associated eastern wisdom with biblical precepts, so they adapted the fables to promote Christian morality. Addison himself likened the oriental tale to passages from the Christian Bible, declaring that the form possessed a "likeness to those beautiful metaphors in scripture" (*Spectator* No. 289).²³ Like the Biblical parables Jesus told to invite readers to discover truth through metaphors, Addison saw the oriental fable as likewise capable of

²² See Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East, 1662-1785* (2005) and Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (2012).

²³ In this respect, Addison's use of the oriental tale parallels that of eighteenth-century deists who grouped Christianity, Islam, and Judaism under the historical Abrahamic faith. Humberto Garcia defines this position as Islamic republicanism, a political discourse that appropriated Islamic ideas to interrogate and transform the British constitutionalist framework. See, Humberto Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment, 1670-1840* (2012).

instructing British readers through its unfamiliar and vivid images that hid truth from the immediate view.

While Addison drew on the strategies of these translated fable collections, his own understanding of narrative was informed by the English fable tradition.²⁴ Fables played a critical role within early eighteenth-century literary criticism and deeply influenced Addison's understanding of narrative. As traced by Annabel Patterson, Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, and Mark Loveridge, fables found extensive popularity within English literary circles between the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.²⁵ As a form associated with both political critique and didactic ends, the fable demonstrated a complex relationship to its social and political context since its unstable meaning allowed fables to be appropriated and deployed to serve a wide range of purposes. Consequently, as Lewis observes, the fable is "polyvalent. It could signify a lie, any 'feign'd or devis'd discourse,' a plot, a hieroglyph, a parable, a myth" (10). Tracing the traditions that developed around the fable during the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Loveridge identifies the fable as possessing twin functions. On the one hand, it was normative, expressing and teaching values that were part of the mainstream culture, while on the other hand, it was subversive and worked against the mainstream through veiled critique. Despite this variety, Loveridge argues for understanding the basic mode of the fable as

²⁴ See, for instance, Addison's discussion of *Paradise Lost* in *The Spectator* where he claims, "I Have now consider'd Milton's *Paradise Lost* under those four great Heads of the Fable, the Cha|racters, the Sentiments, and the Language; and have shewn that he excels, in general, under each of these Heads" (No. 291). See *The Spectator* Nos. 267, 269, 273, 279, 285, and 291.

²⁵ Annabel Patterson and Jayne Elizabeth Lewis have emphasized Aesop's legacy within the political scene of Britain. Mark Loveridge and Emrys Jones, however, see the fable as engaging in a more nuanced relationship to the political world because of its literary doubleness and its interest in sociability. See Patterson, *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History* (1991); Lewis, *The English Fable: Aesop and Literary Culture, 1651-1740* (1996); Loveridge, *A History of Augustan Fable* (1998); and Jones, *Friendship and Allegiance in Eighteenth Century Literature: The Politics of Private Virtue in the Age of Walpole* (2013).

be “transformational and metaphorical” (6). By offering compelling examples that could strike the mind in startling ways, the fable could instill precepts in the mind of its reader and change her outlook on life.

Appearing in verse, in short discrete stories, and in epics, the English fable served as the foundation of literary form. While fables could be approached as “pieces of wit” capable of ingenious commentary through discrete nonrealistic stories as Addison notes in *The Spectator* No. 183, they notably melded with the tradition of neoclassical literary criticism. Following the lead of René Le Bossu, John Dennis and John Dryden established the fable as the formal organizing scheme for structuring all narrative. In *Traité du poème épique* (1675), Le Bossu argues that morals should be clearly marked for readers; consequently, Douglass Patey demonstrates that Le Bossu created and argued for a literary structure where a moral served as the prior requirement for narrative and the fable manifests that moral. Accordingly, the fable was understood as a hierarchy where a moral determined the form, the fable determined the episodes, and the episodes determined the characters and circumstances.²⁶ Loveridge argues that through this structure, literary criticism granted the fable “all the dignity of a heroic classical form” because it “regarded Aesopian fable and Homeric epic as different aspects of the same form, a more ‘generalized’ fable” (41). Since the structuring moral provided narratives with coherence, the epic and the fable were understood as operating in similar means as they struck the mind with vivid and concrete examples of abstract precepts.

While Addison drew on both Eastern and English configurations of the fable, he turned more frequently to the fable as a hierarchy of virtue. In *Spectator* No. 183, he praises authors

²⁶ For an in-depth examination of how authors connected episodes through “unity of action” see Douglass Patey, *Probability and Literary Form: Philosophic Theory and Literary Practice in the Augustan Age* (1985).

ranging from Homer to Spencer whose fables give life to the “passions, virtues, vices, and other imaginary persons of the like nature” in order to promote a moral. Unlike Le Bossu, Addison did not see the moral as a necessary prerequisite for writing a fable, but he does declare, “I am...of the opinion, that no just heroic poem ever was, or can be made from when one great moral may not be deduced” (No. 269). Indeed, Addison sees the moral as the essence of the fable, for as he argues in his analysis of *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s “great moral...may be looked upon as the soul of the fable” (No. 369). Addison saw the moral as animating the fable, giving life in a manner akin to the relationship between the human body and soul. In this respect, the fable – when seen as a body – may possess distinct parts, but these parts still possess a unity through their common animating principle.

Since Addison saw the oriental fables as conveying universal truths, he established a tradition of adapting and writing fables for moral and philosophical ends within British literary circles. As Martha Conant has shown, Addison’s oriental fables and tales served as the model for the rest of the century. Of the four categories of tales that Conant identifies in the eighteenth century—imaginative, moralistic, philosophic, and satiric—she attributes Addison as greatly shaping the use of oriental fables for moralistic and philosophic purposes. As Conant argues, “Industry and economy, health and cleanliness, prudence and justice, kindly ‘complaisance,’ the art of giving advice and seeking instruction, serenity in the face of calamity and death – it is the Addisonian code of virtues in Oriental disguise” (84).²⁷ Conscious of the cross-cultural exchange informing British culture, Addison found a unique home for his reformation project in the oriental fable.

²⁷ Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (1908). Ros Ballaster similarly notes that Addison used oriental fables for social critique. Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East, 1662-1785* (2005).

Addison understood the pleasure of the fable as emerging not from its content, though, but rather through the ways it engaged the imagination in discovering the moral. In *The Spectator* No. 512, Addison commends the fable's ability to reveal truth to an unsuspecting reader. Observing that people are reluctant to receive advice, Addison argues, "Upon the read of a fable, we are made to believe we advise ourselves. We peruse the authors for the sake of the story, and consider the precepts rather as our own conclusions than his instructions" (No. 512). Because Addison believed readers must discover the "soul" of the story, he depicts the fable as creating familiar relationships through unfamiliar means and invites readers to rethink their perception of the world. Addison consequently presents intellectual growth as occurring not through an explicit lesson but rather, as Stephen Daniels argues, in the pursuit of a hidden lesson since the fable promotes "the natural gratification of the mind as it becomes aware of its own creative abilities" (Daniel 168). Indeed, as Addison argues, "If we look into human nature, we shall find that the mind is never so much pleased, as when she exerts her self in any action that gives her an idea of her own perfections and abilities" (No. 512). By persuading readers to discover a particular truth, the fable alerts readers to the exercise of their own minds, an exercise that delights and edifies.

To make this point, Addison borrows an illustrative oriental tale from Jacob Tonson's *Turkish Tales* (1708). In the "Story of Mahmoud and his Vizier," a crafty vizier uses a fable to open a tyrannical sultan's eyes to the ruin he has inflicted on Persia. The vizier spends the story pretending he had learned how to speak to birds, so during a trip into the country one day, the sultan orders the vizier to translate a conversation occurring between a pair of owls. Seizing the opportunity, the vizier declares that the owls are negotiating a marriage dowry, which consists of the ruins of villages that the sultan has destroyed. The vizier furthermore quotes the owls as

blessing the sultan stating, “God grant a long life to Sultan Mahmoud; whilst he reigns over us we shall never want ruined villages” (No. 512). The fable closes with the convicted sultan returning home and beginning to restore his empire. Through this fable-within-a-fable, Addison highlights the way the fable works, as he uses the nested cycle of an oriental tale to demonstrate how all aspects of a fable come together under a particular animating principle. Rather than directly explain the fable, Addison places his readers into a position akin to that of the sultan and invites them to discover knowledge. Where the sultan relies on the vizier to narrate the world, the reader listens to Mr. Spectator so that Addison leads his readers through a nested series of narrators: Mr. Spectator gives voice to the vizier who in turn gives voice to the owls. By the time Addison’s readers have finished the essay, they have been invited to consider the ways the different levels of the essay overlap and connect, and through this process, the readers discover the meaning of the fable.

By tracing the ways Addison interacted with the critical traditions surrounding the fable, we can better understand where Addison’s modifications to the form anticipate a broader fictional turn. Due to its metaphorical status, the fable was seen as divorced from the empirical world. Yet Addison frequently asserts the reality of his tales through familiar tropes like the found manuscript or true stories. Such gestures masquerade the truthfulness of their texts, even as they are an admission of the text’s invented status. As such, Addison’s tales operated within a fictional mode that Paige, following Barbara Foley, describes as the “pseudofactual régime” of fiction. Pseudofactual narratives denied their invented status and alleged their reality in order to certify their moral claims. Most pseudofactual fiction offered the pretense of reality by creating “real” people. Unlike the accounts of non-referential characters which would become more common by the late eighteenth century, the pseudofactual accounts of the early decades clung to

a particularity of reference, so authors staged reality through tropes like found manuscripts or letters.²⁸ These strategies offered the pretense of reality while maintaining a distance so that pseudofactual fiction featured individuals who could exist, but whom no one actually knew. These stories thus oscillate between moments of nearness – the character who is familiar and could be known– and distance – the character whom the reader will never know and so, in some respects, is foreign.

However, the oriental tale offered an alternative means for creating stories that could exist in the contemporary world: geographical distance. Oriental tales were staged in empires situated to the east of Europe, generally in plottable cities like Baghdad or Aleppo. The Ottoman Empire, the powerful and affluent neighbor of mainland Europe, had long featured as both a threat and a curiosity in the British imaginary.²⁹ Few people ever traveled to the Ottoman Empire from Britain, however, so the collective cultural knowledge about Ottoman life was mediated by the reports of travelers like Paul Rycout, Aaron Hill, and George Sandy as well as by the English translation of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Consequently, the Ottoman empire was a geopolitical reality that the vast majority of readers would only encounter via their imaginations. By drawing from the storehouse of images accumulated from mediating texts and their own experiences, readers could imagine a parallel though geographically removed world, one with individuals whose lives, on some level, mirrored their own. Despite the enchanted markers of unreality that oriental tales at times possessed, this geographical remove allowed oriental tales to

²⁸ See Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Act of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (1994) and "The Rise of Fictionality" (2006).

²⁹ Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum demonstrate that the Arab and Muslim world had been a figure of alternating interest and fear since the Arab conquest of Sicily and Spain during the eighth and ninth centuries. See Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum's introduction to *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West* (2008).

be seen as participating in the contemporary world and, therefore, readers attributed these stories with a form of reality. The geographical distance and associative nature of the imagination enabled oriental tales to present narrative worlds that were believed as at once real and fictional, therefore.

Since the oriental tale operated within the contemporary world though at a remove, it offered a unique means for reflecting on the social and political events at home. Addison capitalized on this ability in *The Spectator* No. 289, where he writes an essay that juxtaposes three distinct aspects of contemporary life – a coffeehouse, mortality, and a caravanserai – to expose common patterns of movement that undergird sociality. The “Story of the Dervish who Mistakes a Palace for an Inn” in *The Spectator* No. 289 demonstrates his narrative exploration of the movements, spaces, and temporalities of the everyday.³⁰ Addison opens this tale with a pseudofactual claim to reality; Mr. Spectator states, “I shall conclude this [essay] with a story which I have somewhere read in the travels of Sir John Chardin” who relates that “the inns which receive the caravans in Persia, and the eastern countries, are called by the name of *caravansaries*” (No. 289). Chardin had published his *Travels in Persia* in 1686. This account of his business travels recounts his experience living and working in Persia between 1664 and 1670, and he relates his experiences staying at a wide variety of caravanserais. Despite Addison’s attribution, though, the “Story of the Dervish” does not appear in Chardin’s travel account.³¹ The

³⁰ Addison did not title his oriental tales, though a few gained titles through fame, such as with “The Vision of Mirzah” in *Spectator* No. 159. The titles I use all come from Martha Conant, who titled the individual tales in the appendix to her study. See Martha Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (1908).

³¹ Though Addison attribute this tale to Chardin, I was unable to locate anywhere that Chardin relates this tale, and every reference I did find about the tale discusses it as appearing within *The Spectator*. I believe, therefore, that Addison wrote the tale himself and that he attributes it to Chardin in a pseudofactual gesture similar to his claim that he found the manuscript of “The Vision of Mirzah” in *Spectator* 159.

tale appears to be Addison's creation, but by naming Chardin as the tale's point of origin, Addison lends the story an air of cultural authenticity and embeds it within a chain of cultural transmission: this story tells of an event in the East, that was related to Chardin, transcribed and translated, and has now found its way to Mr. Spectator and through him, into *The Spectator*. Fictional though Addison's attribution to Chardin may be, this line thereby calls to mind the global movement of international trade, which structures the daily experience of Britishness through an individual's consumption of imported materials and ideas. This declaration thereby gives Addison's tale greater authenticity and reality.

This opening gesture introduces Addison's emphasis on the rhythms that inform lived experience and the social world. The premise of his tale then asks readers to re-see life as a series of rhythmic pauses that shapes identity and influences the distinctions between the public and private spheres. The "Story of the Dervish" tells of a dervish, a Sufi wiseman, on a journey. He comes upon the palace, and thinking it to be a caravanserai, lays out his bedding in a great gallery and prepares for sleep. Discovered by the palace guards, the dervish is presented to the king, who "smiling at the mistake of the Dervish, asked him how he could possibly be so dull as not to distinguish a palace from the caravansary?" (No. 289). Though the king mocks the dervish, his question highlights what is missing: the economic exchange and resting animals that would have characterized a caravansary are absent. For the king, it is absurd that the dervish does not recognize that he is not at a caravansary. The dervish, however, responds by questioning the king about the palace's previous occupants, which prompts the king to recount the line of descent: his ancestors had stayed in the palace when it was first built, his father had lodged there before him, and his son would occupy it in the future. To this declaration of ownership, the dervish offers a witty reframing: "Ah, Sir, said the Dervish, a house that changes its inhabitants

so often, and receives such a perpetual succession of guests, is not a palace, but a caravansary” (No. 289). Having given the dervish the final word, Addison promptly ends the tale.

On one level then, Addison’s tale can be read as a fable about the transience of life. In Addison’s tale, the king and his palace are ideal figures for demonstrating the fleeting nature of life because they manifest power and stand as seeming figures of permanence within an otherwise changing landscape. The dervish, though, exposes the king’s reign and life to be ephemeral. Though the king offers his genealogy as proof of the longevity of his claim to the palace, the dervish flips this image of familial continuity and stability on its head. The current king is only the precursor to the next, regardless of the robustness of his reign.

Additionally, the king and the dervish engage in a battle of reading as they offer opposing interpretations of the physical space of the palace. The king mocks the dervish as an incompetent reader of the physical space of the palace: the dervish interpreted the private residence of a ruler as a public inn. The dervish ought to have been able to tell the difference for a caravanserai is a site of gathering strangers, open to all, while the palace, as a private rather than public space, is open only to those who have permission to enter. The dervish, however, challenges the king’s perception of the palace by offering a reading of the space that emphasizes the rhythms of individuals passing through rather than acknowledging a hierarchy of power that imposes meaning onto the space. By noting that the current king is just one of many who have paused at the palace during their lives, the dervish can apply the rhythm of the caravanserai to the palace.

On another level, Addison manipulates the fable form and creates meaning horizontally that moves beyond the overarching moral. Addison draws together two distinct existences – the king and the dervish – by centering the pause at the palace as a moment of shared experience. As I described earlier, the caravanserai marks a pause in a traveler’s journey as the movement of the

day is suspended. Regardless of where the travelers are coming from or going to, the walls of the caravanserai brings the travelers together into a common space and shared experience. By reading the king's reign as a pause, the dervish de-individualizes the king and places him in an endless line of guests who will occupy the space. Through this pattern, the dervish can align himself with the king as a fellow guest so that the palace, as a caravanserai collapses their social distinctions, pushing at the limits of sovereignty. While the pauses at the caravanserai might differ in length from the pause at the palace, both spaces are ultimately defined by the flow of visitors, regardless of the physical space.

This emphasis on the pause and its implications for the ordering of society appears earlier in Addison's essay as well when Mr. Spectator ruminates on death. As *The Spectator* No. 289 opens, Mr. Spectator relates, "Upon taking my seat in a coffee-house I often draw the eye of the whole room upon me, when in the hottest season of news; and at a time perhaps that the Dutch mail is just come in, they hear me ask the coffee-man for his last week's bill of mortality" (No. 289). Images of temporal rhythms abound in these opening lines. Mr. Spectator refers to a cultural season of news, to the regular delivery of mail, to his own routine of frequenting coffee houses, and to a weekly bill of mortality. Mr. Spectator is further engaged in an additional weekly ritual of reading the bills of mortality, a practice that allows him to pause in the midst of the business of his week to contemplate transcendent matters.

Having introduced these regular cycles, Addison's turn to mortality seems abrupt. Death, after all, marks the end of human experience, the halt of all the rhythms in which an individual participates. Addison refigures death, though. As he reflects on how death contributes to a planetary equilibrium, Mr. Spectator dwells on moments of local grief and connects them to a perpetual pattern of life and death that is experienced across species and nations. Drawing on his

Christian faith, Addison envisions death as a pause rather than as an end, as a lull that marks the shift from “this world of sorrows, into that condition of existence, wherein I hope to be happier than it is possible for me at present to conceive” (No. 289). Death is simply a stress in the rhythm of life, and as with all stress points in a rhythm, movement will continue after it. While every death may be unique, this interpretation of death as a pause enables Mr. Spectator to designate the experience as universal. He explains, “When we see a person at the point of death, we cannot forbear being attentive to everything he says or does, because we are sure that some time or other, we shall ourselves be in the same melancholy circumstances” (No. 289). Addison’s choice of words here is telling. Under the formal fable structure I discussed earlier, circumstances provided particularity by supplying the times, places, and persons to narratives. The circumstances diversified actions or events; without them, stories would be interchangeable. Indeed, death strips away the circumstances to reveal a common experience. Mr. Spectator goes on noting, “The general, the statesman, or the philosopher are perhaps characters which we may never act in; but the dying man is one whom sooner or later, we shall certainly resemble” (No. 289). By imaging death as a pause, Addison links three distinct life situations into a common rhythm so that, just as with the dervish and the king, the pause collapses their social distinctions.

The pause is, therefore, a critical means through which Addison unites otherwise diverse movements in a common rhythm. Rhythms appear natural to the organic world: daily routines emerge from the meeting of disparate rhythms that range from the rituals of religion to the changing of the seasons to the cycle of birth and death. However, Andy Hamilton argues that rhythm actually exists within a human understanding of embodied movement. Humans experience bodily rhythms every day, whether they be intentional rhythms like a dance or unintentional ones like walking or breathing. For Hamilton, these bodily experiences provide an

interpretative framework through which individuals can make the instances of regular succession in the natural or mechanical worlds intelligible. As such, Hamilton defines rhythm as “order-in-movement,” an ordering that we perceive when “accents are imposed on a sequence of regular sounds or movements” (“Rhythm and Stasis” 27).³² As Hamilton’s definition reveals, rhythms are projected onto the world by humans. Within this view, rhythms are not fundamentally organic but rather are the product of the human imagination ordering and projecting meaning onto a set of otherwise unintelligible motions. The pause, the stress, or the silence are moments of difference in a line of successive sounds or motions, and this difference becomes the moment through which humans can create meaning in the otherwise chaotic movement of the natural world. Rhythms thus provide an imaginative coherence for the world.

If we follow Hamilton’s suggestion and see rhythm as an ordering principle created by the imagination, it becomes a useful means for understanding the literary innovation Addison implemented in the “Story of the Dervish.” As William Youngren demonstrates, by the time Addison wrote his essays on the imagination, he had moved away from the static understanding of precept and example and instead began to envision the effect of literature on the mind as a process. Rather than rely on a fable’s ability to strike the mind through its vivid examples, Addison elevated the imagination as the necessary tool for comprehending narrative since

³² Andy Hamilton presented his argument for rhythm as “order-in-movement” in “Rhythm and Stasis: A Major and Almost Entirely Neglected Philosophical Problem” (2010) in opposition to static accounts of rhythm as “order-in-time” that abstracted the rhythmic experience. Hamilton’s work touched off a conceptual debate about whether rhythm required movement or if the movement were only metaphorical and about whether rhythm was located only in the human experience or could be located within the physical and mechanical worlds as well. This debate is staged by Andy Hamilton, David Macarthur, Roger Squires, Matthew Tugby, and Rachael Wiseman in *The Philosophy of Rhythm: Aesthetics, Music, Poetics* (2019). See particularly chapter 1, “Dialogue on Rhythm: Entrainment and the Dynamic Thesis.”

reading prompted the memory and required the integration of ideas.³³ By aligning the king and the dervish through a common rhythm, for example, Addison imaginatively integrates his narrative world: the moral about the transience of life is balanced by a literary proposition about the way individuals move throughout the physical world. Though these overlap, Addison's emphasis on movement in the oriental tale re-envisioned the ways the elements of the tale come together. The "soul" or moral end still exists, but the distinct parts of the tale now have an alternative means of relating to one another. Addison does not causally link the movement of the two figures, and indeed, a true horizontal narrative form situated in character rather than the hierarchical structure determined by the moral was still several years away. Yet Addison does associate his characters through a rhythm of motion and pause, one which brings the parts of the tale together in a new way that anticipates future fictional forms.

Through this innovation, Addison can extend his story to the contemporary world. Since forms like rhythms are portable, able to travel between the socio-political and aesthetic domains, they shape what people can "think, say, or do in a given context" (Levine 5). The rhythm of the caravanserai becomes just such a form as it provided a means through which Addison can comprehend and depict the broader socio-cultural rhythms of everyday British life. One such rhythm centered on the London coffeehouse. As a result of the dynamic trade between the Levant and Europe, coffee, otherwise known as "the wine of Islam," entered Europe in 1609.³⁴ Though Europe initially objected to the bitter taste, coffee's prominence in Ottoman diplomacy and elite society endowed it with a refined status, making it a desirable commodity within the

³³ Youngren argues that the shift from example and precept to the imagination allows Addison to elevate philosophy and history to the level of poetry. "Addison and the Birth of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics," *Modern Philology* (1982).

³⁴ Markman Ellis discusses this phrasing in *Coffee House: A Cultural History* (2005). See particularly chapter 2.

European markets. As a result, when coffeehouses began to open in Europe, they quickly became an established institution. London welcomed its first coffeehouse in 1652, and the resulting popularity caused coffeehouses to proliferate so that by the turn of the century, London supported at least 500 coffeehouses.³⁵ No longer simply an exotic import from the East, English society subsumed these coffeehouses into its diurnal routines, causing London to be known as the pre-eminent city of coffeehouses in Europe.³⁶

Because of the coffeehouse's prominence in a moment of burgeoning nationalism, it has long featured as a cultural touchstone in conceptions of British sociability. Habermas linked the coffeehouse and periodicals like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* together as central institutions in the development of the "bourgeois public sphere." In Habermas' account, the coffeehouse is a public space open to all that facilitated debate and discourse across social classes and about a wide range of subjects, and these conversations were frequently instigated by the periodicals. Though Habermas championed Addison and Steele as principle contributors to the development of the "bourgeois public sphere," Brian Cowan has challenged that view, arguing that the coffeehouse was actually "the seat of a whole host of anxieties about proper behavior in that public space" for Addison and Steele ("Mr. Spectator" 347).³⁷ Rather than view the coffeehouse

³⁵ For more about the prominence of the London coffeehouse and its relationship with the Levant, see Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Translated by Thomas Burger, 1994); Markman Ellis, *Coffee House: A Cultural History* (2005); Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffee House* (2006); and Alexander Bevilacqua and Helen Pfeifer, "Turquerie: Culture in Motion, 1650-1750," *Past and Present* (2013).

³⁶ The number of coffeehouses in London at this time is not certain. Brian Cowan explains, "By the end of the seventeenth century, metropolitan London had at least several hundred coffeehouses, and perhaps more than one thousand. Estimates of the precise number are conflicting" (154).

³⁷ Challenging Habermas, Brian Cowan argues that neither Whigs nor Tories were defenders of a Habermasian public sphere since they sought to reign in and discipline practices like

as a forum for ideological debate or news, Cowan argues that Addison and Steele envisioned the coffeehouse as a space of moral reflection and sophisticated conversation that would promote a refined sociability.

The ideal image Addison and Steele crafted saw the coffeehouse as a space informed by polite conversation and free press, a site where the virtues of good taste and polite conduct might be established. This idealized image drew on the narrative of civility associated with the Ottoman coffeehouses. As Alexander Bevilacqua and Helen Pfeifer have traced, the London coffeehouse culture sought to emulate the cultural commons which Londoners attributed to their Ottoman counterparts. Those spaces reportedly functioned as “hubs of communication and the arts, offering not only a space where people of most social strata could meet and exchange information, but a broad range of activities from musical and puppet performances to storytelling and poetry recitation” (Bevilacqua and Pfeifer 97). London coffeehouses projected themselves as sites of similar intellectual exchange, so that they became colloquially known as “penny universities”: the coffee house owners supplied newspapers and periodicals, such as *The Spectator*, for its guests, and the tables there were frequently covered with manuscripts, satires, and poems as well, so that, having paid his penny at the bar, any man (though no woman) could find a seat and engage in conversation.³⁸

If rhythms impose meaning onto patterns, then reading the coffeehouse as a pause in a social and cultural rhythm provides an imaginative means for projecting coherence onto British

“unrestrained newspaper reading and political debate” (347). See Cowan, “Mr. Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2004).

³⁸ Aytoun Ellis promotes the idea of the “penny university,” but his ideas have since been challenged by Brian Cowan and Markman Ellis, who argue that this presents a romanticized notion of the coffeehouse. See Aytoun Ellis, *Penny Universities: A History of the Coffee-Houses* (1956); Markman Ellis, *Coffee House: A Cultural History* (2005); and Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffee House* (2006).

society. Addison, through the voice of Mr. Spectator, recounts the daily rhythms of the coffeehouse in *The Spectator* No. 49. Much like the courtyards of the caravansaries, the coffeehouses operated primarily in one large open space. Within this space, coffee and teas flow, as men exchanged news and read their favorite periodicals. Thus as Mr. Spectator notes, “The coffee-house is the place of rendezvous to all that live near it, who are thus turned to relish calm and ordinary life” (No. 49). Throughout the day, different populaces entered the coffee house, and their entries marked the passing time, beginning with the Mr. Beaver, who always arrived at 6:00 A.M., and ending with the “monarchs of the afternoon” (No. 49). These routines established the coffeehouse as familiar stop in the daily schedules of these men. Sustained by temporal comings and goings of an accustomed crowd, time seemed to stand still, collapsing distinctions among its clientele. Consequently, Mr. Spectator observes that “men differ rather in the time of day in which they make a figure, than in any real greatness above one another” (No. 49). Every man takes his turn, performing publicly a private fantasy of importance, even though his position within the pause in this daily rhythm delineates his experience as unique only to every man.

A site of the daily routine, the coffeehouse thus functioned as a cultural caravanserai that undergird a growing sense of British civil culture. It, along with the oriental tale, provided a moment of pause within the quotidian movement of London. As quintessentially British and yet foreign spaces, the coffeehouse and *The Spectator* located the domestic within a global rhythm so that the foreign lives at the heart of London. As such, these practices reveal a larger archaeology of cultural borrowing: the oriental tale was embedded in a British periodical, which was read, in turn, in an imported oriental space that had been adapted into everyday life in London. As these Eastern forms overlapped and integrated with domestic and local practices, the global increasingly became part of the everyday experience of what it meant to be British.

2.2 Wildness in the Addisonian Imagination

Addison's sense of rhythm manifests throughout his writing as he explores the ways a spectator moves through and pauses to see a scene, whether that it be a physical scene, as in a coffeehouse or a landscape, or a literary scene, as in a story or an essay. Regardless of where Addison traces this movement, the pause is central to understanding the rhythm. As a moment of unity and perception, it enables the very recognition of a rhythm as it offers a conceptual space to create meaning of otherwise meaningless movement. It is a moment of imagination as the mind stops and delights in what it perceives. And it is an experience that, as Hamilton argues, emerges from our own embodied movement in the world.

For Addison, the experience of an embodied rhythmic movement was rooted in his many walks. As Sean Silver demonstrates, Addison understood through the relationship between the mind and space in part through his movement within an unmediated nature as he walked around his plantation, about the river loop at Madalen College in Oxford, and along a path created by Thomas Tickell.³⁹ Tracing the relationship between the mind and space, Silver argues that Addison connected the process of thinking to the physical experience of movement of his meandering walks. Silver asserts that in Addison's writing, "Walking is the mixed metaphor that pins method to digression, intention to the unexpected pleasure of the vista" (*Mind* 142-143). As Addison walked along a path like that around the river at Magdalen College, he found himself alternating between a stroll and the halt to take in a scene, a pause that served as a moment of

³⁹ Silver offers a detailed description about these different walks and the pleasure Addison took from them. See *The Mind is a Collection: Case Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (2015), specifically pp. 145-148.

imaginative delight.⁴⁰ This rhythmic exchange of pause and motion thus became an intellectual framework through which Addison could consider the connection between the imagination and the empirical world.

Addison's conception of the imagination participates in a larger philosophical debate about the way the mind participates in and responds to the natural world. As late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century philosophers and writers attempted to account for human behavior and actions in the physical world, they wrestled with what Jonathan Kramnick defines as "externalism," or the way the external environment shapes the subjective experience (6). As Kramnick traces, the mind was understood to extend into the physical world through bodily actions, but the external world could also move into the mind and impact it. The exact nature of this impact was debated as writers from Thomas Hobbes to David Hume attempted to align the mind within a natural causal chain, while still granting agency to an individual. The influence of the external world on the mind was apparent, if uncertain. For John Locke, and Addison after him, thought was consequently understood as emerging from contact with the outside world since, in the language of Locke, "the mind is forced to receive the impressions" of the outer world (II.i.25). The sensations of the external world impinged upon the mind, marking ideas and images onto it so that the mind gains its understanding through reflection on the sensations of the natural world and its reflections on its own workings. To understand the mind at work necessitated an understanding, therefore, of how it interacted with the rest of the world.

Like Locke, Addison perceived the mind as impressionable, influenced by the sensory information that it gathered from the physical world. He therefore understood the embodied

⁴⁰ The path that winds around the river at Magdalen College is known today as Addison's walk, and it is open to the public. Special thanks to the Vanderbilt English Department for the Drake Fellowship, which enabled me to retrace Addison's steps.

experience as serving as the foundation for the imagination since he constructs the imagination as depending on the sensation it receives from sight. However, Addison approached the relationship between the mind and its environment in a new way so that as more than one reader has observed, when Addison published his essays on “The Pleasures of the Imagination,” he introduced a new concept of taste that would come to define modern aesthetics.⁴¹ Drawing on Locke’s epistemological framework, Addison re-envisioned the imagination as a creative process that actively bridges the gap between sense and understanding as it gathers, recalls, and combines images. Yet Addison reworks Locke’s framework, for as William Walker points out, Addison adapts “the terminology Locke uses to describe the mind, its operations, its contents, and the bodies that affect the organs of sensation, to describe the imagination, its operations, its products, and its pleasures” (“Mastery” 51). Walker demonstrates that Addison does not simply employ Locke’s language to speak of the aesthetic experience, for he distinguishes the imagination from understanding. Rather, while Locke foregrounds the work of understanding for ordering the sensory experience of the physical world and casts a suspicious eye on imagination, Addison renders the imagination as the primary faculty of perception.⁴²

⁴¹ Addison’s contributions to aesthetic theory have been widely discussed. See for example, Carole Fabricant, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics* (1985); Michael G. Ketchum, *Transparent Designs: Reading, Performance, and Form in the Spectator Papers* (1985); Neil Saccamano, “The Sublime Force of Words in Addison’s ‘Pleasures,’” *English Language History* (1991); Ronald Paulson, *The Beautiful, Novel, and Strange: Aesthetics and Heterodoxy* (1996); William Walker, “Ideology and Addison’s Essay on the Pleasures of Imagination,” *Literary Life* (2000); and Laura Baudot, “Joseph Addison’s Lucretian Imagination,” *English Language History* (2017).

⁴² William Walker offers a detailed analysis of the ways Addison revises Locke’s theory of the mind. Focusing primarily on *Spectator* No. 416, Walker stresses that “[Addison treats the entire visible world and all language that describes it in the same way that Locke treats the language of poetry and persuasion” (“Mastery” 51). See Walker, “Addison’s Mastery of Locke,” *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and the Early Modern Era* (2001). For other works that address Addison’s borrowings from Locke, see Michael G. Ketchum, *Transparent Designs: Reading, Performance,*

Replacing Locke's primary and secondary qualities of matter, Addison identifies two pleasures of the imagination – the primary and the secondary – that combine to reveal how the imagination is both influenced by and imposes an order back upon the natural world. The primary pleasure arises as a result of direct sight since “It is but opening the eye, and the scene enters. The colours paint themselves on the fancy with very little attention of thought or application of mind in the beholder” (No. 411). The primary pleasure is instantaneous and requires no mediation, for it is the result of an external cause. Through this description, Addison grants nature agency and acknowledges its ability to touch an individual's mind, leaving images and ideas behind as evidence of its contact with the individual. Though Neil Saccamano argues that the agency Addison ascribes to nature in this instance is only figurative since “no blow literally occurs,” Addison's work reflects an externalist perspective (87). Addison, following Locke, does not perceive the mind as possessing innate ideas, so the primary pleasure revels in the imagination's reception of images that originate in the world. These are not ideas the mind conjures itself: they are rather the effect of the natural world upon the mind.

The secondary pleasure, though, results from the activity of the imagination as it wields the images that have been stored within it and projects meaning back onto the world. Addison explains that the secondary pleasure springs from “the Ideas of visible Objects, when the Objects are not actually before the Eye, but are called up into our Memories, or formed into agreeable Visions of Things that are either Absent or Fictitious” (No. 411). Unlike the primary pleasures, which require the spectator's physical presence to appreciate a sight, the secondary pleasures occur at a removal from reality and depend on a constant act of association as the mind not only

and Form in the Spectator Papers (1985) and Ronald Paulson, *The Beautiful, Novel, and Strange: Aesthetics and Heterodoxy* (1996).

remembers but also combines and modifies the diverse images gathered during the primary experience. Though Addison restates Locke's position that the mind receives ideas through sensation and reflection, Addison describes this impinging as the experience of the imagination. Consequently, as Walker observes, "If it is too strong to say that for Addison, seeing is imagining, it must at least be said that his divergence from, if not direct revision of, Lockean usage involves the imagination seeing in a way that violates Locke's way of thinking about sensory perception" ("Mastery" 52). Under Addison's configuration, the imagination receives images and possesses the ability to reflect upon these images and combine them at will. The understanding, as a cognitive process, requires the passing of time, but the imagination responds to its environment immediately.

Addison's configuration of the imagination thus indicates a mutual relationship between the mind and the physical world. While the primary pleasure results as an effect of an external cause, the secondary pleasure occurs when the imagination begins to act upon the images it has gathered, and this process enables the mind to impress meaning onto the natural world in turn. As Silver argues, the secondary pleasure of the imagination is "embedded not in the images of things but in the basic, associative work of the mind" (*Mind* 136). Delighting in the act of comparison, the imagination may summon up the image of an original to set alongside an artwork like a painting, a statue, or description. Or it might thrill to discover a resemblance between the works of nature and of art, through which "a double principle" of pleasure arises as the mind can entertain the sight as either "copies or originals" (No. 414).⁴³ This reciprocal

⁴³ Jonathan Lamb describes this as Addison's "double principle," and Sean Silver argues that it is this double principle that causes Addison to prefer a representation to an original. See Lamb, *Sterne's Fiction and the Double Principle* (1989) and Silver, *The Mind is a Collection: Case Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (2015).

emulation between the works of nature and art draws the mind's eye into an interplay of design and chaos so that, as Jonathan Lamb asserts, "vividness is not an index of an idea's proximity of a thing but of its resemblance to another idea" (*Sterne's Fiction* 28). The pleasure arises, then, through the association, through the movement between images and the lingering over the ways these images intersect and become something new as the imagination begins to "enlarge, compound, and vary" the ideas stored within it (No. 416). When the mind combines and alters its collected images, it "activates a network of associated ideas, filling out a scene with such richness that it evades expectation even of the understanding" (*Silver Mind* 136). Perception thus depends on the active imaginative process of creating meaning in what we see.

The pleasure of the double principle becomes particularly acute when the mind interacts with a scene of motion. Turning to the camera obscura, Addison describes how the image captures the "waves and fluctuations of the water in strong and proper colours, with the ship entering at one end and sailing by degrees through the whole piece" while in another image, "there appeared the green shadows of trees, waving to and fro with the wind, and herds of deer among them in miniature, leaping about upon the wall" (No. 414). The projected images of the camera obscura represent the pinnacle of art for Addison because of "its near resemblance to nature, as it does not only, like other pictures give the colour and figure, but the motion of the things it represents" (No. 414). The spectator of these images knows that what she sees is not real – it is merely an image manipulated into being by an artist – yet the movement within the scene expresses a sense of life and, thereby, generates a sense of reality. Through the imagination, the spectator then has the ability to choose how to interpret the scene, for under the double principle, nature can be art and art can be nature.

When Addison connected his double principle with a sense of rhythm, he arrived at an idea he terms as “wild,” a term he uses to describe moments where the motion of nature can be interpreted through the pause of the imaginative turn. Addison demonstrates how wildness works through his discussion of landscapes in *The Spectator* No. 414. Turning first to Virgil’s *Georgics*, Addison explains the delight of an agricultural scene, and he includes the following quotation from the work:

.....untroubled calm,
A life that knows no falsehood, rich enow
With various treasures, yet broad-acred ease,
Grottoes and living lakes, yet Tempes cool,
Lowing of kine, and sylvan slumbers soft (No. 414) ⁴⁴

This agricultural landscape scene is serene, and yet it teems with motion: living lakes are filled with swimming fish, and fields are populated by mooing and grazing cows. Even the line’s image of sleep occurs beneath the branches of a tree, calling to mind the dancing of leaves. As Addison explains, the variety of movement in the prospect leads the spectator’s view so that the eye “wanders up and down without confinement” (No. 414). In such a scene, the eye follows the movement: it traces the ripples of the lake, lingering at the sight until the repeated motion of the water becomes a kind of stillness, enabling a different movement to draw the eye onward in a perpetual series of starts and stops. Consequently, Addison describes this peaceful view as one of those “these wild scenes that are more delightful than any artificial shows” (No. 414). Unlike the at times stilted performances of human technique, Addison sees nature as filled with scenes of

⁴⁴ Sean Silver notes that Addison misquotes Virgil. See *The Mind is a Collection: Case Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (2015), p. 148.

ungoverned harmony. What makes these scenes of nature wild is their movement. As Saccamano argues, Addison conceptualizes nature as “a hypostatization of perpetual motion” (88). Living and moving objects fill the natural world, whether it be a flying bird or waving grass, all moving separately but in an unspoken consonance with one another. Nature thus lends a liberty of motion to Addison’s concept of wildness.

Wildness, however, does not only entail motion. Rather, it joins the motion of an untamed nature together with the purposeful ordering of art. If nature bestows motion onto wildness, art grants it purpose. As Silver argues, Addison believed that art should spark “a rich chain of pleasurable associations,” but these associations are deliberately provoked unlike the accidental associations that arise as the eye travels across a natural landscape (*Mind* 140). Addison demonstrates this principle by moving to cultivated landscapes and contrasting the Chinese and European gardens. Addison rejects the precision of the European gardens: the ornate hedges and topiaries lock the eye within a geometric grid which, for Addison, calls attention to the gardener’s technique, to “the marks of scissors,” rather than to the scene (No. 414). The individual parts of the garden do not flow together into a unified whole then, for every individual plant demands attention. Consequently, as Zuroski argues, these “‘Mathematical Figures’ demand too much intellectual work on the part of the viewer simply to figure out what, exactly, he is looking at” (*Taste* 72). These European designs prohibit the instantaneous grasp of the imagination and instead require the “dint of thinking” Addison attributes to the understanding (No. 411). In contrast to the European gardens though, the Chinese gardens “conceal the art by which they direct themselves” (No. 414). Though Addison does not refer to these gardens as wild, the sharawadgi style he alludes to does express a hidden design embedded within its

wildness.⁴⁵ These gardens do not confine the imagination but rather provide an open structure: their designs seek to preserve and even accentuate the disordered grace of nature that strikes the imagination and leads the eye.⁴⁶ As the manufactured essence of nature, wildness emphasizes its design even as it denies it.

Addison's wild, then, speaks to how movement colludes with design in a way that seems natural even as it reveals its own artistry. Since the imagination takes pleasure in choosing how a scene will be understood, the landscape artist was to design a scene that created ambiguity and allowed the imagination to continually move between an idea of nature and art. The well-designed garden would, therefore, guide the eye as it moves and pauses and continues onward so that the mind creates a pleasurable chain of associations. Though these associations appear spontaneous, the hidden design of the garden provokes the imagination so that it combines the images of movement into a cohesive experience. Emerging from the associative action of the imagination, wildness is, therefore, an idea a viewer projects onto the scene to create a rhythmic wholeness encompassing the movements therein.

Though Addison uses landscape gardens to depict what he means by wildness, it is an idea that he applies to literary design as well. As with the well-designed garden, Addison views the best stories as those that emphasize movement and bring the narrative world together in a

⁴⁵ For more on the influence of the sharawadgi on Addison's thinking see Ciaran Murray, "A Japanese Source of Romanticism," *The Wordsworth Circle* (2001) and Tony Brown, "Joseph Addison and the Pleasures of Sharawadgi," *English Literary History* (2007).

⁴⁶ For more on Addison's discussion of the Chinese gardens, see Mavis Batey, "The Pleasures of the Imagination: Joseph Addison's Influence on Early Landscape Gardens," *Garden History* (2005); Tony Brown, "Joseph Addison and the Pleasures of Sharawadgi," *English Literary History* (2007); Eugenia Zuroski, *A Taste for China: English Subjectivity and the Prehistory of Orientalism* (2013); Katherine Myers, "Ways of Seeing: Joseph Addison, Enchantment and the Early Landscape Garden," *Garden History* (2013); Eun Kyung Min, *China and the Writing of English Literary Modernity, 1690–1770* (2018)

cohesive though unexpected way, so he brings his distinction between the natural landscape and the landscape of precision to bear upon his discussion of literary wildness in *The Spectator* No. 160. Like the Chinese gardens, which hide the genius of their designs within an organic movement, Addison connects literary wildness with the genius of an original author. In *The Spectator* No. 160, Addison distinguishes between the natural and the learned genius by differentiating between originals and imitations. Though Addison claims that both types of genius “may be equally great,” his comparison of these authors to different types of gardeners is telling, for he aligns the learned genius with the European gardens. Such authors’ works are “laid out in Walks and Parterres, and cut into Shape and Beauty by the Skill of the Gardener,” a style that Addison warns may cramp the writer and prevent the association between different parts of the work (No. 160). Instead, Addison celebrates the originality of the genius who was “never disciplined and broken by Rules of Art” and so produces works that are “nobly wild and extravagant” (No. 160). These wild literary texts operate as open landscapes filled with motion, for Addison goes on to describe these works as possessing “a whole Wilderness of noble Plants rising in a thousand beautiful Landskips without any certain Order or Regularity” (No. 160). As with the Chinese gardens, such texts provide a literary expanse through which the imagination can roam, pausing to delight in a lofty prospect before moving on into a more trifling moment. The design thus brings the parts of the work together into a unified whole, but the structuring of the text does not draw the attention of the reader. Rather, it elevates the literary experience so that the text can strike the imagination. From Addison’s perspective, an author’s responsibility was, therefore, not merely to mark out a scene but to create a literary expanse that prompts the mind to create a pleasurable chain of associations.

For Addison, oriental tales operate within this mode of literary wildness. Referencing Homer, Solomon, and the emperor of Persia, Addison largely locates the authors whose works reflect this textual wildness “among the Ancients, and in particular among those of the more Eastern Parts of the World” (No. 160). Just as Addison traced the fable’s origins back to Greece, he again turns eastward for examples of literary texts whose parts guide the reader and yet permit a rhythmic interplay that engages the mind. Unsurprisingly then, he describes the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* as possessing “a wild but natural simplicity” (No. 535). Rhythms weave throughout the *Arabian Nights’* as the temporal beat of the nightly tale intersects with the pattern of the nested story cycles. Within the *Arabian Nights’* the pause is a disruption, for its structure depends on what Richard van Leeuwen describes as “art of interruption” (51). These interruptions mark both the framing narratives of Scheherazade, as every night the story is interrupted with the arrival of day, and the nested stories that she tells, as each story is interrupted by the introduction of a new story. These moments of pause thus become moments of tension and meaningful dialogue as the different parts of the stories are both broken apart and held together through these interruptions.

Addison reconfigures the interruption in the *Arabian Nights’* as an intentional pause. Having described the *Arabian Nights’* as wild, he begins to relate an adapted version of one of the *Arabian Nights’* tales, “The Story of the Barber’s fifth Brother.” Abbreviating the tale for his essay, Addison embeds the story within his meditations on the ways the mind engages hope and anticipates the future. Within the *Arabian Nights’*, “The Story of the Barber’s fifth Brother” occurs as part of a much larger story cycle when a barber tells tales about the (mis)adventures of six of his brothers. Addison condenses the story of the fifth brother, Alnaschar, by only relating

the first misadventure of the lazy merchant.⁴⁷ Because Addison abbreviates the tale in his essay, the story is straightforward: a lazy merchant buys glass jars to sell and lapses into a daydream about the exploits his earnings will allow him to undertake, but while imagining, he accidentally kicks over the basket of glass, shattering it all. Though the structure of the tale is simple in itself, the daydream accelerates in an increasingly grandiose delusion. Each new action the merchant imagines himself participating in becomes more flamboyant: he will sell his glass and raise a fortune, which will enable him to purchase and then sell diamonds, which will enable him to buy the grandest house, which will enable him to marry the vizier's daughter, which will allow him to dominate his domain. At this thought, the daydream abruptly ends, because the merchant physically enacts a kick he has imagined, and in so doing, he knocks over the basket of glass. By necessity then, the storyline moves out of the dream and back into the reality of the merchant's physical moment.

Though Addison did not write this tale, its wildness captures the rhythm of motion and pause that typifies his approach to the oriental tale. The lazy merchant has been going about his day, but he pauses to dream, and this pause ends abruptly when it prompts his physical movement again. The dizzying momentum of his dream typifies the *Arabian Nights*' and reflects its formal structure of narrative embedding: the movement of the initial story is suspended by the introduction of a second story that facilitates a new action in turn. More than mere digressions, Tzvetan Todorov argues that through these embedded stories, "the first narrative achieves its fundamental theme and at the same time is reflected in this image itself" (72). What at first

⁴⁷ In the *Arabian Nights*' version of the tale, the lazy merchant's life becomes even more absurd than his daydream, but instead of it ending in luxury and power, the merchant finds himself punished for the abuse he inflicts on others. See Robert Mack, *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1995), specifically, "The Story of the Barber's fifth Brother," pp. 291-298.

glance might seem like an interruption actually represents only a lingering pause over one part of a larger narrative landscape. And this lingering prompts a change in the reader's perspective as the shift between each individual story and the frame story prompts the imagination to compare the different tales and combine them together into a coherent whole.

In *The Spectator* No. 535, for instance, the building momentum of the embedded daydream is in tension with the merchant's reality: he is leaning against a wall engaged in "a most amusing train of thought" (No. 535). As his vision becomes increasingly unbelievable, the distance between the reality of his moment and his imaginings increases, until the connection between the two stories cracks:

Alnaschar was entirely swallowed up in this chimerical vision and could not forbear acting with his foot what he had in his thoughts so that unluckily striking his basket of brittle ware, which was the foundation of all his grandeur, he kicked his glasses to a great distance from him into the street, and broke them into ten thousand pieces. (No. 535)

The merchant shatters his dream. Engrossed within the story he is weaving for himself, he physically enacts what he has imagined, and the action returns him to the framing narrative. But he returns to this initial state in a different position: he no longer has the glass he purchased at the beginning of the tale, foreclosing him from returning back into the dream. As a result, the imaginative pause completely reorients his position in life.

Addison returns to the pause throughout his oriental tales, using it as a way to establish an imagined rhythm that creates meaning in the wildness of a scene. Intriguingly then, Addison's essay on genius and literary wildness in *The Spectator* No. 160 follows his most popular oriental tale, "The Vision of Mirzah," which he publishes in *The Spectator* No. 159. Repeatedly reprinted

throughout the century, “Mirzah” at first glance seems to be a simple allegory about eternity. However, when read within this framework of rhythmic wildness, the story the tale’s fictional gestures begin to emerge.

Addison mimics the embedded story cycle of the *Arabian Nights*’ in “Mirzah”, setting the rhythm of movement, a pause, and further movement into effect. This pattern begins not with Mirzah, though, but rather with Mr. Spectator. As has been well-established, Mr. Spectator provides the voice for Addison and Steele’s social commentary.⁴⁸ As the periodical’s central figure, Mr. Spectator joins London society six days out of the week, providing a steady rhythm of contact with his readers and establishing his presence within their everyday practices. However, while Mr. Spectator participates in this daily routine, he also remains at a remove from it. Explaining his position during the opening issue of *The Spectator*, Mr. Spectator declares that he will “live in the world, rather a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the species” because he has “acted in all parts of my life as a looker-on, which is the character that I intend to preserve in this paper” (No. 1). This position as an observer allows him to embody figuratively the movement between the foreign and the familiar that, as I noted earlier, resides at the heart of the British experience. As a participant, Mr. Spectator is familiar and known, yet as an observer, he holds a position that constantly borders on the line of the Other, for even if he goes unseen, he is separated out from the rest of society in a way that marks him. This dual position allows Mr. Spectator to operate as the invisible eye that sees and understands all, for he lives both inside and

⁴⁸ Mr. Spectator’s daily routines are discussed in length by various scholars. For more about his relationship to time see Albert Furtwangler, “The Making of Mr. Spectator” (1977) and Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (1996). For more about his relationship to contemporary society, see Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode* (1997), and Scott Black, “Social and Literary Form in *The Spectator*” (1999).

outside of society, able to comment on what he sees without ever fully occupying that space himself.

Mr. Spectator's foreignness becomes more pronounced when his position is considered alongside Addison's use of the oriental tales. In some ways, Mr. Spectator is the quintessential Englishman: he enjoys reading at the coffeehouse and wandering through the Royal Exchange, he knows all about fashion, he reads the periodicals, and he dabbles in philosophy. But his way of being in the world suggests a difference as well, one that resonates with that of the foreign storyteller, specifically with the voice of Scheherazade. Within the *Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade spins her daily tales in an effort to extend her life. As she attempts to delay the threat of execution from the vindictive sultan, she offers up a nightly story that suspends the sultan within a literary pause. With every passing story, this pause alters the sultan's perspective just enough each night that he grants her one more day to live when morning arrives. As the frame tale for the entire *Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade's predicament establishes a connection between life and storytelling, a pattern that occurs repeatedly throughout the *Nights*. As Todorov observes, within the *Arabian Nights* "If all characters incessantly tell stories, it is because this action has received a supreme consecration: narrating equals living" (73). For Scheherazade to stop speaking would result in her death, and even at the end of the *Arabian Nights*, though Scheherazade succeeds in preserving her life within the literary world, since she ceases her stories, the *Arabian Nights* ends. With no more stories to tell or, consequently, pages to fill, she effectively dies.

This connection between stories, pages, and life lurks within the framework of *The Spectator* essays. Mr. Spectator does not live under the same duress that Scheherazade experiences, yet he too recognizes that to live requires him continually to narrate his experiences

and perceptions. Mr. Spectator describes this process in the introductory essay to *The Spectator* where he explains, “Since I have neither time nor inclination to communicate the fullness of my heart in speech, I am resolved to do it in writing: and to print my self out, if possible, before I die” (No. 1). Mr. Spectator gestures to a life that exists beyond the page now being read, but he recognizes that his existence in public life will only continue as he moves his interior thoughts out into the world through the printed page. As Stuart Sherman notes, “On this day, prose and the press have brought him into being; the date he last prints himself out he will die like a diarist, leaving only his book of days behind him” (137).⁴⁹ Mr. Spectator can survive only as long as he writes, so he lives under constant threat of passing from sight and existence. This position is a precarious one, though, for he even if Mr. Spectator has stories to tell, he will only continue to be published as long as his audience continues to listen to the observations he has. Considering *The Spectator*’s mission of reform, Mr. Spectator’s recognition of the way his life depends on his readers is critical, for he cannot “contribute to the diversion or improvement of the country in which I live” unless the printing out of his life persists (No. 1). And this lends an urgency to the tales he has to tell.

Once we recognize Mr. Spectator’s kinship to the eastern storyteller, the rhythm of his daily routine can be usefully juxtaposed with the rhythms in “Mirzah.” Daniel Stempel notes that at first glance, “Mirzah” appears to be a “simple allegory of pious pessimism” in which Addison renders the misery of human life and depicts the rewards or punishment of eternity (68). Yet Addison’s tale is not a straightforward allegory of Christian faith. As Conant argues, the oriental

⁴⁹ Stuart Sherman argues that Addison is participating within a cultural movement that aim to “historicize time” by offering new conceptions of the self. Mr. Spectator offers a “wholly secretive sensibility imparting itself in print, to be read by the public in the diurnal rhythm” but with full recognition of the immanence of death at the end of publication (113). See Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (1996).

aspects are critical to the fable's work, for the central figure of the fable, the bridge of life, is the Muslim bridge of Al Sirát over which all men must cross.⁵⁰ Addison's source for this bridge imagery is unknown. Although he may have simply created it in its entirety, he likely would have learned of it from his father, Lancelot Addison, who had served as the chaplain at the imperial outpost of Tangier and wrote tracts comparing the Sufi piety to that of English puritanical practices.⁵¹ Regardless of the source, though, this image offers Addison a unique means not only to bring together Muslim and Christian faiths by emphasizing the similarity in their eternal visions but also to experiment with the way narrative can move between the allegorical and the literal.

"Mirzah" tells of how the titular character encounters a genius, or a genie, on day when he pauses for a religious meditation on a mountain. After his ascent into the hills of Bagdat in order to spend his day in prayer, Mirzah finds his meditative solitude interrupted by "a variety of tunes that were inexpressibly melodious" (No. 159). This music comes from a genius, and the melody transcends any that Mirzah has ever heard. The genius leads Mirzah to a high pinnacle and instructs him to look to the east, where, upon casting down his eyes, Mirzah sees a landscape scene that represents the plight of the human condition. Over a valley filled by the "tide of eternity" spans a bridge of 100 arches that represents human life, and as Mirzah watches as the multitude of humanity advances along the bridge: many of the people fall off close to its beginning and end, some fall through trap doors that spring open along the way, and a few are pushed off by others (No. 159). Mirza is filled with despair at the sight until the genius orders

⁵⁰ See See Martha Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (1908).

⁵¹ For further information about Lancelot Addison and his relationship to Islam, see William Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment: Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and Its Empire, 1648–1715* (2015).

him to look beyond the end of the mists, where a new prospect comes into view. There, on one side is a paradise of islands, filled with flowers, fountains, singing birds, and persons richly dressed, while the other side is covered with thick, dark clouds.

As a spiritual allegory, the vision makes an argument for the misery of human existence, but a misery limited by the promise of a potentially abundant afterlife. As Conant argues, the scene reveals Addison's belief in "the vicissitudes of life, the certainty of death, the consolation of faith, and the mystery enveloping man's existence" (Conant 112-113). Beyond this spiritual reading though, Addison's tale demonstrates a poetic vision of the work of the author. As I noted earlier, Addison includes this oriental tale immediately before his essay on genius, so it is no accident that Mirzah happens upon "the haunt of a genius" as the story opens (No. 159). Mirzah relates:

...as I looked upon him like one astonished, he beckoned to me, and by the waving of his Hand directed me to approach the Place where he sat. I drew near with that Reverence which is due to a superiour Nature; and as my Heart was entirely subdued by the captivating Strains I had heard, I fell down at his Feet and wept. The Genius smiled upon me with a Look of Compassion and Affability that familiarized him to my Imagination. (No. 159)

By placing this vision within an eastern setting, Addison takes advantage of the slippage between the supernatural being and the classical idea of *genius*. As I discuss in my second chapter, the classical spiritual being that eighteenth-century writers connected with the Latin *genius* collided with visions of *jinn* when the *Arabian Nights*' entered mainstream knowledge in Britain. The resulting genie maintained pieces of both traditions, and although the name of this entity consolidated into genie, the terms *genie* and *genius* were interchangeable throughout much of the

century. Addison's genius is, therefore, at once a fictional figure whom Mirzah meets and a metaphor for the literary genius Addison seeks.

When read as an allegory about the author and artistic creation, Mirzah's vision becomes a moment of imaginative suspense. The genius leads Mirzah out of the empirical world into that of the imagination, a space of delight and terror that reveals both the pitfalls and the glorious flight of the inspired mind. As with all moments of inspiration though, Mirzah does not remain in this vision, but returns to the present when the genius departs. As he realizes the genius is gone, he turns back to see the vision once more but finds "instead of the rolling Tide, the arched Bridge, and the happy Islands, I saw nothing but the long hollow Valley of Bagdat, with Oxen, Sheep, and Camels, grazing upon the Sides of it" (No. 159).⁵² Addison leaves this image as the final line of the tale, without explanation of the effect it has on Mirzah. Yet the distinction between this closing image and the opening one reveals the way Mirzah's encounter with genius has impacted his sight. Mirzah approached the mountain at the beginning deep in thought, as he reflects on his religious devotions. Aside from a brief mention to climbing the hill, nothing he describes speaks to the physical world around him. Rather he deals in abstractions. Upon his return though, Mirzah finds his sight has been opened to the natural world. He sees the valley and the animals in it. Genius has left – at least for the moment – but in its place remains an encounter with nature that he could not see before.

⁵² Martha Conant argues that "The Vision of Mirzah" an example of Addison's poor rendering of his oriental tales. She claims that as with many of Addison's other fables, "The Vision of Mirza" shows so much restraint in its oriental language and flair that if the genius, the hills of Bagdat, and the camels were removed, Mirzah could have been looking at the pleasant valleys of oxen and sheep in England. See Martha Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (1908).

Bearing in mind the ways this oriental tale grapples with literary genius, then, Addison's use of rhythmic wildness becomes important. As Tony Brown asserts, Mirzah's vision is "virtually ekphrastic in technique," as Addison applies his principles about landscape to this tale (175). The reader's eye is led across a scene of endless movement, from the humans walking along and falling off of the bridge, to the hovering of birds, to the rushing of the waters. However, while Brown argues that Addison uses this technique to separate the protagonist out and place him away from the scene, as I showed earlier, Addison understand the sight of the prospect as participating within a larger rhythm. The pause – whether it be an imaginative vision, a literary escape into a story, or a break at a coffeehouse – actually serves to orient the spectator, changing her relationship to the world around her as she moves onward.

By framing Mirzah's experience as a vision, Addison can emphasis the rhythm of Mirzah's life and thereby move toward a fictional understanding of the tale. Addison modifies the tale's allegorical nature through the way he frames it. As the opening voice in the essay, Mr. Spectator states, "When I was at Grand Cairo I picked up several Oriental Manuscripts, which I have still by me. Among others I met with one entitled, *The Visions of Mirzah*, which I have read over with great Pleasure" (No. 159). The well-traveled Mr. Spectator has discovered a manuscript during a recent trip to Egypt. The particularity of this reference strikes the reader, for by turning to the found manuscript trope, Addison frames the story to come within a pseudofactual gesture as Mr. Spectator pretends to offer his readers an account ripped straight out of history.

This history is fake, of course, but the scene Addison creates through this gesture is complex as he overlaps the account of Mr. Spectator's trip to Egypt with the claim of the document's authenticity. As Paige argues, these sorts of claims to historicity did not intend to

deceive the reader; in fact, these sorts of ploys did the exact opposite as their elaborate claims signaled their invented status. But the reality of this document comes through the voice of a similarly fictional device, Mr. Spectator. As the voice of *The Spectator* essays, Mr. Spectator is at once an invented character and the face of Addison and Steele. Likewise, his commentary oscillates between moments of invention and the relation of actual events, which obscures the line between the real and the invented. Mr. Spectator invites his readers into a complex exchange between fact and fiction as he pretends a trip not to the coffeehouse, which readers recognize he – as Addison and Steele – would have actually frequented, but rather to Egypt. His comments on London life thus grant believability to his claim to have traveled to Egypt, for while his claim is still recognizably false, it emulates the same claim he makes about his participation in daily local life, which can be seen as credible because of its proximity to his readers' actual experience.

While the actual vision that Mirzah has does abide by the hierarchy of the fable, then, Addison alters the form by framing it with a pseudofactual claim. This is not just a fable, therefore, but a fable embedded within a claim to historicity as Addison tethers an image of transcendence to an idea of particularity and reality. Within this context when the genius instructs Mirzah, “Cast thy Eyes Eastward, said he, and tell me what thou seest,” we no longer see this instruction as just a metaphorical gesture towards hope but Addison's recognition of the very real ways Britain looks to the east on a daily basis (No. 159).

This tethering to reality extends to Mirzah himself, for the rhythm of his existence continues beyond the page of the essay. As Mr. Spectator notes, the manuscript he brought back to England is titled “The *Visions* of Mirzah” (No. 159, emphasis mine). Addison only publishes one vision in connection to Mirzah, though in 1794, the *Universal Magazine* published an

anonymous “Second Vision of Mirzah.”⁵³ Yet Addison’s opening gambit suggests that Mirzah has had multiple visions, and that he is not simply a narrative device to begin a fable but an entity existing beyond the page in the reader’s hand. Mirzah alludes to his continuance himself by describing the daily rhythm of his life:

On the fifth Day of the Moon, which according to the Custom of my Fore-fathers
I always keep holy, after having washed my self and offered up my Morning
Devotions, I ascended the high Hills of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the Day
in Meditation and Prayer. (No. 159)

Mirzah is engaged in a ritual pause associated with his religious practice. He locates himself in time, noting the tradition behind the practices in which he is engaging, and he details the ceremony of washing and prayer. These practices signal continuity. Mirzah participated in them before his vision, and he will continue in them afterwards. This is not a life that has been concocted simply to make a point about the afterlife, but a figure who has found his practices caught up in an imaginative pause. And it has not been just one pause. Rather, at some undisclosed point in the future of the Mirzah *in* the story, but in the past of the Mirzah *writing* the manuscript, there have been additional visions.

Through this narrative practice of the rhythm, then, Addison begins to tether narrative to the world in a new way. As Paige argues, when the novel appeared and recognized itself as such, it was “realist, realistic, [and] connected to the quotidian here and now” (*Before* 87). Addison’s “Mirzah” is a far remove from the novel still, but by grafting the plot devices of the pseudofactual document onto an oriental fable, he can emphasize the rhythmic wildness in order

⁵³ See, the *Universal Magazine* 95 (July 1794) 12-15.

to represent the quotidian rather than the allegorical, allowing narrative to begin to speak to the physical reality of life.

2.3 Rhythms of the Everyday

Addison's experimentation with a rhythmic wildness and the ensuing disruption of the hierarchical form pervades his oriental tale. Yet he also deploys this practice when representing historical events, extending his narrative practice to the representation of the literal world. In *The Spectator* No. 50, Addison turns from the East to the West as he relates a story about the recent visit of the four Native Americans and creates a falsified account of the kings' stay, which he embeds into the essay. In 1710, four Native American with ties to the Iroquois confederacy arrived in London as part of a strategically orchestrated visit by government official to stage diplomatic relations. Tracing the political and imperialistic ends of this visit, Eric Hinderaker argues that while these were not the first Native Americans to visit the British Isles, their cultural impact was unique since they were positioned as "kings" by the British political elite even though in reality, they did not hold such a title (488).⁵⁴ Having been styled as "kings," the Native Americans' appearance prompted an outpouring of interest in London so that crowds comprised of people from every social class followed the visitors about the city, "staking a personal claim to the visit and interpreting its significance for themselves" (Hinderaker 498). Long after the

⁵⁴ Hinderaker provides an extensive discussion of this visit, and he argues that "the visit of the four Indian kings intersected with the official ends of empire and interacted with its agents of power" because these individuals were brought to London as part of the necessary set "new experiences, images, and symbols [that] were required to define the new regime" (487). See Eric Hinderaker, "The 'Four Indian Kings' and the Imaginative Construction of the First British Empire," *William and Mary Quarterly* (1996).

departure of these Native Americans, their visit continued to propagate stories, pamphlets, and other ephemeral texts.

A few months after the visit, Addison returned to the scene in *The Spectator* No. 50, crafting an essay that employed the conceit of the foreign visitor who comments on society. In this essay, Mr. Spectator professes to have acquired the lost journal of "King Sa Ga Yean Qua Rash Tow," one of the visiting kings, which he has since had translated with the intention of sharing some of the resulting "odd observations" of this supposed writer (No. 50). Through the king's voice, Addison presents a ruthless though innocently rendered satire concerning modern London life as the king discusses the peculiarities of fashion, the ruthless divide of party politics, and a lack of religious reverence that he has observed during his stay.

As with his oriental tales, Addison turns to rhythm to bring the narrative into contact with the present reality. The tale opens with Mr. Spectator's observation on the visitor's arrival and his recognition that his own daily routine is paused by the visitors' arrival. Reflecting on the impact that four foreign guests had on the city, he writes, "I often mixed with the rabble, and followed them a whole day together, being wonderfully struck with the sight of every thing that is new or uncommon" (No. 50). Rather than moving about London in his typical fashion, Mr. Spectator finds his routine suspended in a moment of wonder. While this suspense is not the same transcendental experience that Mirzah undergoes on the mountain, the exchange between the typical movement of the day and the pause of an unexpected sight structures both narratives. Mr. Spectator is not literally still: he is participating in the movement of a larger crowd by following after these foreign guests. But his daily routine – as well as those of every other individual within the crowd – has been put on hold, and as a result, Mr. Spectator is shown the prospect of London through new eyes.

Through the pause, the infamous spectator suddenly finds himself the passive recipient of someone else's vision. Though Mr. Spectator and the fictional king's gazes are obviously distinct, the pause aligns them, for the king too has found himself in a moment suspended out of the regular routine of his day. As with the dervish and the king discussed earlier, Mr. Spectator and this king participate in a distinct and routine set of movements that have been temporarily suspended so that the pause becomes a moment of commonality that enables Mr. Spectator's perspective to alter. When he returns back into his regular movement, his understanding of his world has changed, and he moves through the spaces of London, much like Mirzah, more attentive to the particularities of his world.

Mr. Spectator elaborates on his experience of this vision by inviting his reader to now have the same experience. Rather than offer his own personal commentary on the day, Mr. Spectator instead embeds the voice of the king by including excerpts from the "found" journal into the essay for the consumption of his readers. This embedded tale will offer a parallel experience to Mr. Spectator's, only at a delay since as a written narrative, it is removed in both time and space from the actual event. Nevertheless, this fictional experience is likewise designed to suspend Addison's readers from their contemporary moment so that as they read the essay, their ways of knowing the world will also be suspended, allowing the readers to return back into the rhythm of their regular routine with new eyes for the scenes they will encounter as they pass through London.

Addison does not only use this sense of rhythm to connect the readers to Mr. Spectator, though. In contrast to the other stories we have seen, in this tale, Addison breaks the rhythm. Through the voice of the king, Addison observes the daily routines in which Londoners participate so that rhythm becomes a central means for critique. The king's innocent censure

illuminates the ways rhythms are used to create meaning of both time and space, and no where is this more apparent than in his observations surrounding British religious practices. Describing the cathedrals that he has seen about the city, the king declares that at some point during their history, the British people must have had religion, for he has visited a “temple” that was constructed where men could conduct their religious observances (No. 50). Beyond the presence of these buildings, though, he observes that the more significant indicator of religion lies in their weekly routine. The king writes, “Indeed, there are several reasons which make us think that the natives of this country had formerly among them some sort of worship; for they set apart every seventh day as sacred” (No. 50). Here, the rhythm of motion and pause has been institutionalized as the movement of six days is paused by the seventh day, a designation intended to set it apart as a holy day for worship rather than work. Regardless of the comings and goings of the individuals moving about London, the pause of this seventh day at the “temple” should function as a moment rest, of commonality, of the transmission of ideas that realign the individual’s perspective.

However, as the king’s observations make clear, even though this rhythm has been memorialized within the calendar, it no longer actually exists:

But upon my going into one of these holy houses on that day, I could not observe any circumstance of devotion in their behavior: there was indeed a man in black was mounted above the rest, and seemed to utter something with a great deal of vehemence; but as for those underneath him, instead of paying their worship to the deity of the place, they were most of them bowing and curtsying to one another, and a considerable number of them fast asleep. (No. 50)

The movement of the week has continued into the seventh day. With the exception of one individual who is placed differently from the rest, the king sees no reason to read this space as a pause, for the actions occurring within the “holy house” match those that the king has observed elsewhere in the town during his stay in London. The congregants have not paused the movement of the week, and without the pause, they cannot view their lives from an altered prospect that could change their perspectives as they return to the movement of their lives. Much as the dervish in *Spectator* No. 289 could read the palace as a caravanserai because of its place in the rhythm, this king can read a church as a public forum filled with disparate entities. Indeed, no image could suggest this disunity more than the final king’s reference to the people who are sleeping, for though they participate in a similar action (or inaction as the case may be), this act isolates them entirely from the physical space and each other. If, as I discussed earlier, rhythms are the result of imaginative ordering that emerges from the embodied movement of an individual, these sleepers cannot be seen as participating in a common pause for they have simply quit moving. Unable to project an ordering pause onto the scene and thereby create unity, the king portrays the space of the church as one of meaninglessness and chaotic movement. The holiness of the space is negated, overridden by the actions of those moving through rather than pausing in the building.

Standing at the threshold of fiction, therefore, Addison offers us new insight into how fictionality began to emerge in Britain. He did not invent fiction, yet by manipulating the fable form at his disposal in new ways, he recast the hierarchical form and opened the door for a new practice of narrative coherence, one that was causally linked through action. Drawing on the action-centric nature of the oriental tale, Addison highlights the imagination’s role in the world as part of a rhythm of movement and pause. As he implements this rhythm throughout his

stories, Addison thus approaches narrative as a form that can refer to the real world in ways that are not simply allegorical but literal. Fictionality would not appear as a narrative practice for many more years yet to come. Yet as Paige reminds us, “Fiction is not only a sum of characteristics; it is a practice, and practices are communal” (*Before* 57). As a forefather not only of British aesthetics but also, in many ways, of the British oriental tale, Addison’s influence in the fictional world is significant therefore, for he established a narrative practice that would be adapted, expanded, and reworked numerous British authors to come.

CHAPTER 3

By Way of the Genie: Probability in the Oriental Tales of John Hawkesworth and Frances Sheridan

Few entities thrill like the genie, the unpredictable being of creative and independent force whose energy disrupts the human world. The genie is an Anglicized adaptation of the Islamic *jinn*, so its characteristics draw on the *jinn*'s spiritual heritage. Unlike other beings in the Islamic cosmology, the *jinn* originate in what Henry Corbin terms the "imaginal realm," an invisible domain that bridges the terrestrial and celestial.⁵⁵ The *jinn*, consequently, blend physical and spiritual attributes: they are shapeshifters – beings of smoke and fire – who may abide in the spiritual realms or who may dwell in the earthly realm where they possess unlimited power over the natural world.⁵⁶ This fluidity also appears in the *jinn*'s nature. While angels are inherently good and demons inherently evil in Islam, the *jinn* are capricious. Like humans, *jinn* act in accord with their own will, so at times, *jinn* serve under the direction of Muhammad and act as emissaries between humans and the divine world, while at other times, they wreak havoc on humans until the Islamic Solomon imprisons them in flasks to punish the *jinn* for their nefarious behavior.⁵⁷ Since *jinn* act freely, humans meet them with alarm, uncertain of the outcome of such encounters. *Jinn* always disrupt the natural order of the physical world and change human fortunes.

⁵⁵ The imaginal realm exists beyond sensory perception, though Corbin posits that it still possess "extension and dimension, figures and colors" (5). This domain can be perceived via the imagination and operate at the axis of sense and intellect. See Henry Corbin, *Mundus imaginalis, or the Imaginal and the Imaginary* (1976).

⁵⁶ See Marina Warner, *Stranger Magic* (2011) and Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (2009).

⁵⁷ See Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (1994).

When the *jinn* first transmigrated to Britain through *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1704-1717) and became the genie, it shifted from being a figure of the imaginal realm to a figure of imaginative potential. In British literature, the genie joined a host of other fantastic beings inherited from Irish and Celtic folklore, Christianity, and the classical tradition, which included various kinds of fairies, elves, witches, and giants. These beings, particularly the fairies, demonstrated an authorial anxiety about the human will. Supernatural beings tended to remove humans from the physical world and could manipulate a human's perception of reality. The genie, however, could participate in the human world and intercede in the happenings there because of its ability to move freely between the terrestrial, middle, and heavenly realms. The genie provided British authors with a new literary method for depicting and examining the relationship between the human, the will, and the empirical world. It began to appear in the pages of periodicals edited by Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson, in tales by Eliza Haywood and James Ridley, and in casual asides in novels by Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding. Through British print culture, the genie transfigured bodies, multiplied and depleted objects, and transported individuals across time and space. It remained a figure unbound by the limits of nature even as it became a medium for exploring the limits of and the impact of the human will in the social world. To introduce the genie into a story, therefore, was to invite wonder at the immediacy and the unrestrained possibility with which a genie could act.

More than an exotic embellishment in a story then, the genie fostered new approaches to probability in literature. Though the genie appeared in British literature during a moment of burgeoning realism, this supernatural figure became a form of shorthand for representing the chaos of a world that was no longer understood to be divinely designed. As an increasingly secular perspective took root in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, views of a

Providentially governed cosmos began to give way to views of a universe governed by natural law and the unpredictable force of chance. This shift resulted in a growing need for probabilistic thinking, an approach that Ian Hacking argues re-envisioned world events as occurring according to a set of regularities. In a study of early European notions of probability, induction, and statistical inference, Hacking asserts that no true concept of probability existed in Europe prior to the mid-1600s. The “emergence of probability,” as Hacking describes it, occurred when authoritative notions of probability and new understandings of signs merged so that “What happened to signs, in becoming evidence, is largely responsible for our concept of probability” (35).⁵⁸ Probability could be seen as occurring at the junction of frequency and belief justified through evidence, an understanding by degrees.

However, the novel both complemented and complicated this developing epistemic framework, for while Hacking argues for a philosophical probability, the novel began to explore probability through verisimilitude. As Thomas Kavanagh demonstrates, the novel obscured the role of chance in the physical world through its plots and characters since the cogency of a story coaxed readers into believing that the narrative world mirrored the order of the universe.⁵⁹ Yet the novel also reflected a fascination with the improbable or what Jesse Molesworth describes as “plot’s necessary orientation toward the exceptionality, rather than the exemplarity of events,” as

⁵⁸ Hacking’s influential account has been modified by those who trace accounts of probability back to Aristotle in order to examine how probability plays out in literature. Robert Newsom, for instance, asserts that Hacking overlooks the different manner that probability operated with in regards to literature, for what counts as probable is less set when the people and events in question are fictional rather than factual. Douglass Patey offers a similar critique (see note 5). See Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability: A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas about Probability, Induction, and Statistical Inference* (1975) and Robert Newsom, *A Likely Story: Probability and Play in Fiction* (1988).

⁵⁹ See Thomas Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance: The Novel and The Culture of Gambling in Eighteenth-century France* (1993).

authors attempted to balance between what should happen and what could happen in a narrative (102). Douglass Patey describes this balance as mediation, and he traces how authors and theorists turned to literary probability as the means to mediate between the truth of reality and the lie of fiction in a story, creating a narrative system of inference and signification.⁶⁰ This system was limited though, for Patey argues that it could not support the inclusion of marvelous or fantastical entities because such beings disrupted not only the stories but the readers' belief in the story: supernatural and marvelous beings were too absurd to bring into balance with any semblance of reality. Accordingly, Patey argues that within the eighteenth-century conceptual framework, if a literary work were to be considered probable, it could not contain any marvelous or fantastical beings.

However, I propose that precisely due to its status as a supernatural figure, the genie invited authors to innovate narrative form and experiment with how to create a probable representation of the relationship between human behaviors and their social and physical settings. Parallel to the spread of transnational commerce and the development of consumer society, the genie shifted in British literature from being a free entity to one aligned with wish fulfillment so that genies frequently appeared in stories to grant the desires of a human character.⁶¹ These human characters do not gain the genie's power over the natural world for

⁶⁰ Patey distinguishes literary probability from mathematical probability and argues that, following the work of Michael Foucault and Ian Hacking, most modern conceptions of probability have been mathematically based and linked back to a Restoration origin story. However, he contends that the literary conception of probability has a much longer history and maintains that eighteenth century authors consequently understood their literary approaches and criticism as continuous with the past. Patey describes this system as a "hierarchy of signs" and traces how this system slowly changed across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Douglass Patey, *Probability and Literary Form* (1984).

⁶¹ Anne Duggan traces this development and its implications for slavery. See Anne Duggan, "From Genie to Efreet: Fantastic Apparitions in the Tales of *The Arabian Nights*," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* (2015).

themselves, but through the genie, they do see their influence on the world magnified and extended when the genie fulfills their wishes. The genie does not grant readers access to a human character's interiority, but it does it does enact the private imaginings of an individual in the public sphere and the natural world. As a result, the astonishment that the astonishment the genie precipitates is ultimately not at the genie itself then but rather at the human self. By animating how mental states participate in the physical world, the genie thereby facilitates the blending of the imagination with a system of probability, enabling authors to create fictional worlds that reflect the agency embraced by modern secularism.

In this chapter, I turn to John Hawkesworth and Frances Sheridan to examine how each author deploys the genie in order to explore issues of narrative probability. Many eighteenth-century literary critics who commented on the genie dismissed it as a gimmick, while authors who did write oriental tales with genies did not offer criticism regarding the figure. Hawkesworth, as both a critic and an author of oriental tales, offers a unique insight into the appeal and usefulness of the genie, therefore. During his literary career, he wrote numerous oriental tales featuring genii and also penned a defense of the extravagance of the genie, which he published in the fourth issue of his periodical, *The Adventurer* (1752-1754). In this chapter, I read *The Adventurer* No. 4 alongside Hawkesworth's most popular oriental tale, *Almorán and Hamet* to examine how Hawkesworth understands and uses the genie. I show that Hawkesworth employs the genie to trace the cause-and-effect chain surrounding characters; the genie allows him to show why individuals choose certain actions and to depict what the impact of those actions are within the narrative world. Sheridan presents her own unique take on the genie and probability when she exploits the familiar expectations surrounding the figure. In her sole oriental tale, *The History of Nourjahad* (1767), Sheridan uses the genie to create an embedded

fictional world for her protagonist. Through this secondary fictional space, Sheridan demonstrates the way internal evidence promotes the credibility of a fictional world.

To begin this chapter, therefore, I turn first to eighteenth-century conceptions of literary probability and explore how Hawkesworth's essay in *The Adventurer* No. 4 reconceptualizes probability, before demonstrating how Hawkesworth uses the genie in *Almorán and Hamet* to explore the manner in which probability participates in the development of the narrative. Finally, I turn to Sheridan to demonstrate the way that she exploits common expectations about the genie and uses the figure to demonstrate probability through a system of internal narrative proofs.

3.1 Revisions of Literary Probability

As a key conceptual framework in eighteenth-century narrative form, probability undergirds the emerging notion of fiction. Within eighteenth-century literary criticism, the probable mediated between the laws of nature and those of art. Douglass Patey argues that eighteenth-century scholars required fictional work to imitate nature so that a work was probable because it correctly represented the known world and yet, as an imitation, was no more than probable since it was a product of imagination rather than history. This balance placed probability in dual and at times conflicting roles, which Patey classifies as "external probability" and "internal probability."⁶²

External probability operates as a mark of accuracy. It measures a text's fidelity to the physical world through its portrayal of "the mundane details of everyday social life" (Patey

⁶² Patey develops several terms for this divide over the course of his argument including probability and plausibility and ordinary and poetic probability. I am using his terms external and internal probability in this chapter because he traces these terms as developing mid-century, around the same period as Hawkesworth and Sheridan are writing.

144). Because of its connection to the known world, external probability aligns with modern theories of fictionality. Catherine Gallagher, for instance, refers to external probability in her influential account of the rise of fictionality when she argues that “probability itself was rediscovered as a sign of the fictional” (*Rise of Fictionality* 341). For Gallagher, fictionality depends on the doubled move a reader makes, simultaneously acknowledging and denying a text’s status as an invented work. As a result, blatantly incredible stories – those with “talking animals, flying carpets, or human characters who are much better or much worse than the norm” – defied credibility and could only be designated as fiction anachronistically (*Rise of Fictionality* 339). Marvelous and supernatural entities violated modern views on the universe, so for Gallagher, their appearance in a story ruptures the illusion that a story is occurring in the known world. Instead, Gallagher locates the doubled move of the reader in the representation of a unique and embodied individual who, nevertheless, has no referent in the existing world. This “nobody” closely resembled reality, so through this fictional figure, readers could judge the stories to be faithful to lived experience in the everyday world (*Rise of Fictionality* 340). As Gallagher’s concept of fictionality demonstrates, external probability was thus a form of judgment, an assessment of a text’s resemblance of reality.

External probability was crucial to eighteenth-century literary theories that required literature to perform a moral role in society. Early novelists saw fiction as a narrative simulation through which readers could explore ethical problems relating to contemporary society. Nicholas Paige, following Barbara Foley, refers to this period of literature as the “pseudofactual régime” of fiction, a mode that recalls Aristotle’s claim that factual characters provoked conviction in

readers.⁶³ As Paige points out, eighteenth-century aesthetic theory held that “the more [one] take[s] the spectacle for reality, the greater its effect” (11). Consequently, external probability offered an apparatus for determining how effective a literary text would be for influencing its readers. Unlike nineteenth-century fiction, which would offer a parallel literary world that could speak about reality, pseudofactual fiction claimed to be true and to depict the experiences of real people in the world. Writers would “pretend to offer their readers real documents ripped straight from history – found manuscripts, entrusted correspondence, true stories, and all the rest” (Paige x). These ploys appeared across an array of genres including the novel, oriental tales, travel narratives, scandal chronicles, and pseudobiographies, and they attempted to give moral weight to the situations and issues described in the texts.⁶⁴

Despite this pretense of reality, few readers fell for such claims. The truth claims were not intended to deceive but instead were largely understood by authors and readers alike to be performative. As Gallagher argues, the fictional status of characters, particularly of commoners, presented readers with a risk-free emotional investment. With no historical referent, readers could “appropriate” the character’s experience and imagine themselves into the situation where they could absorb the character’s knowledge (Gallagher “Rise” 351). Indeed Samuel Johnson notes fiction’s ability to transport readers in *The Rambler* when he contrasts the romance with the novel. Johnson distinguishes the hero of the romance from the protagonist of the novel by noting the impact of the latter on the reader. While the heroes of romance might generate excitement, they also alienate readers and deter them from identification. Criticizing the “wild

⁶³ For more on the pseudofactual régime of fiction, see Nicholas Paige, *Before Fiction: The Ancien Régime of the Novel* (2011).

⁶⁴ For example, Joseph Addison and Eliza Haywood posed their oriental tales as newly discovered translations, discovered spy correspondences, and recorded histories.

strain of imagination” that created the marvelous scenes of a romance, Johnson argues that romances were ineffective because “every transaction and sentiment was so remote from all that passes among men, that the reader was in very little danger of making any application to himself” (*Rambler* No. 4). Fiction, however, allowed readers to participate in the stories because “All joy or sorrow for the happiness or calamities of others is produced by an act of the imagination, that realizes the event however fictitious, or approximates it however remote, by placing us, for a time, in the condition of him whose fortunes we contemplate” (*Rambler* No. 60). When characters participate in familiar scenes and have experiences that could occur in the modern world, they operate as a prototype for readers to determine how to participate in and interpret their daily, lived experiences.⁶⁵

This potential was not without risk though. Because of the genuineness that some narratives possessed, Johnson feared that readers, particularly young and inexperienced ones, would be too easily swayed by the narrative examples. As readers imagined themselves into a narrative, they risked losing themselves and absorbing the situation of the protagonist, regardless of whether that be one that was morally upstanding or not. Johnson thus argued that contemporary fiction carried a critical moral responsibility:

But when an adventurer is leveled with the rest of the world, and acts in such scenes of universal drama, as may be the lot of any other man; young spectators fix their eyes upon him with greater attention, and hope by observing his behavior and success to regulate their own practices.

⁶⁵ Johnson is so convinced of a probable narrative’s influence that he warns authors to select appropriate examples for readers. He argues that a truthful example is so powerful that it can “take possession of the memory by a kind of violence and produce effect without the intervention of the will” (*Rambler* No. 4).

(*Rambler* No. 4)

By presenting characters and events as genuine, authors could buttress the moral aspirations of the texts and attest to the reality of moral paragons. The external probability of a story allowed exemplary characters to serve as models for the reader, so it provided the necessary means for transferring values via a fictional medium in the actual world. Evaluating a text's probability determined how effective it would be at transmitting those values.

While external probability judged fidelity to the physical world, internal probability represented the truths of the human emotional experience. Internal probability appears through the unity of the narrative structure, a system of inference and signification that Patey calls "the hierarchy of probable signs" (111). Within this hierarchy, each level of the narrative operates as the formal cause for the next level – the moral is the cause of the fable, the fable of episodic action, and action of characters and circumstances – and in turn, each level served as a sign for its formal cause. Within this system, a character's passions served as a sign, so a story was internally probable if these signs aligned within the narrative's system of formal cause. Internal probability thus expressed fidelity to the "permanent truths of the heart and its emotions" (Patey 144). By moving backwards from effect to cause, a reader could interpret a story and would arrive back at the moral, the organizing principle for the entire story.

Internal probability failed, however, when an author introduced the supernatural or the marvelous into a story. To grant probability to the marvelous, authors frequently appealed to readers' passions. Horace Walpole, for instance, famously explains in the second preface to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) that "he wished to conduct the mortal agents of his drama according to the rules of probability; in short to make them think, speak and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions" (*Otranto* 10-11). Walpole's efforts fell

short, though, when readers discovered the tale was a modern invention. Instead of suspending skepticism, the “barbarous superstitions of Gothic devilism” diverted readers, alerting them of the fantasy and disrupting any portrayal of rational humanity (*Monthly Review* 394).⁶⁶ The marvelous might excite the imagination, but once recognized and designated as somehow false, it could not provoke the desired emotional response because it was incongruous with the world. Indeed, Patey argues that for the eighteenth-century mind, “absurdity, no matter how passionately presented, still risks being seen for what it is” (150). As Johnson observes in his discussion of the romance, once absurdity is recognized, it cannot sustain a pretense of belief. As a result, Patey argues that internal probability could not support the marvelous, and external probability refused it altogether, which reduced all marvels outside of the Christian tradition to vulgar superstition. Patey, like Gallagher, thus argues that eighteenth-century stories could not sustain the “wildness” of the imagination so that truly probable fiction would not appear until the nineteenth century.

Hawkesworth, however, complicates this narrative. As a strict formalist, Hawkesworth adhered to the hierarchical form of probability even as he began to trouble it over the course of his career. Though the uproar over *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken* (1773) and his friendship with Johnson have overshadowed his literary career, Hawkesworth was a respected

⁶⁶ Following the publication of the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, the *Monthly Review* published a revised review, declaring, “We were dubious, however, concerning the antiquity of the work upon several considerations, but being willing to find some excuse for the absurd and monstrous fiction it contained, we wished to acquiesce in the declaration of the title page, that it was really a translation from an ancient writer. While we considered it as such, we could readily excuse its preposterous phenomena, and consider it them as sacrifice to a gross and unenlightened age. But when, as in this edition, the Castle of Otranto is declared to be a modern performance, that indulgence we afforded to the foibles of a supposed antiquity, we can by no means extend to the singularity of a false taste in a cultivated period of learning” (394). See *Monthly Review* 32 (May 1765).

scholar among his contemporaries, and his discussions of narrative issues in his extensive essays and reviews for the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Monthly Reviews* shaped the broader literary community.⁶⁷ In both his fictional and nonfictional work, Hawkesworth consistently examined probability within scenes of human agency, which allowed him to rework the traditional hierarchical form of probability. In his preface to his adaptation of Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko* (1759), for instance, Hawkesworth explains how he chose to eliminate the comic portions of Southerne's play and to revise moments of inconsistent dramatic action, those scenes where characters behaved in ways he found to be incongruent given choices they had made earlier in the play.⁶⁸ Through these changes, Hawkesworth both abides by the hierarchical model of probability, emphasizing the tragedy of slavery, and begins to develop a causal chain or a horizontal model of probability as he modifies character actions so that the plot would progress according to logical causes. Hawkesworth draws similar attention to human motives and actions in his edition of *An Account of the Voyages*.⁶⁹ In the preface, Hawkesworth denies the influence

⁶⁷ For more information concerning Hawkesworth's life, see G. J. Finch, "John Hawkesworth, 'The Gentleman's Magazine' and 'The Annual Register'"; John Abbott, *John Hawkesworth: Eighteenth-Century Man of Letters*; and Susan Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko: Adaption and Offshoots*.

⁶⁸ For more on Hawkesworth's rendition of *Oroonoko*, see Jane Spencer, *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* (2001); J. R. Oldfield, "The 'Ties of Soft Humanity': Slavery and Race in British Drama 1760-1800" in *Huntington Library Quarterly* (1993); and Susan Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko: Adaptations and Offshoots* (2006).

⁶⁹ Hawkesworth's discussion of providence in the *Accounts* has been discussed at length. In his preface, Hawkesworth denies special providence because he reasons that God cannot grant special favors if he operates behind all of existence. Rather than use providential logic to determine the narrative events, Hawkesworth operates from a position of Humean skepticism and points to the various probable judgments that can be drawn from a world open to human capability and chance. See Jonathan Lamb, "Minute Particulars and the Representation of South Pacific Discovery," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (1995) and "The Unfortunate Compiler: James Cook, Joseph Banks, and John Hawkesworth" in *Exploration and Exchange: A South Seas Anthology, 1680-1900* (2000); Anne Maxwell, "Fallen Queens and Phantom Diadems: Cook's Voyages and England's Social Order," *Eighteenth Century*; (1997); Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (2002); John Gascoigne, "Pacific Exploration as Religious Critique," *Parergon* (2010); Matthew Binney, "The Authority of Entertainment: John

of special providence on the voyages because he reasons that God cannot grant special favors if he operates behind all of existence. Rather than use providential logic to determine narrative events, Hawkesworth operates from a position of Humean skepticism and points to the various probable judgments that can be drawn from a world open to human capability and chance.

Though Hawkesworth explored issues of probability in a variety of genres, his modifications to probability become the clearest in his fictional work. By the time he began publishing *The Adventurer* in 1752, Hawkesworth was moving away from the pseudofactual style of literature to truly fictional literary worlds. Designed to succeed *The Rambler*, *The Adventurer* featured conversational essays that addressed a range of issues and were written in the model established by *The Spectator* by Hawkesworth, Johnson, and Joseph Warton, and these essays addressed a range of issues through genres ranging from tales and fables to philosophical musings.⁷⁰ In the 70 issues Hawkesworth penned for the periodical, he produced short fictional pieces – eleven of which are oriental tales – and essays that address issues ranging from philosophical musings to literary criticism. Through these stories and essays, Hawkesworth dissected the form of narrative probability and experimented with the development of plot.

The Adventurer Issue No. 4 presents Hawkesworth's argument for a new understanding of probability, one that traces how narrative events unfold. Hawkesworth regarded the "event" as the basis for all narratives. He declares, "No species of writing affords so general entertainment

Hawkesworth's *An Account of the Voyages*," *Modern Philology* (2016); and Anne Thell, *Minds in Motion: Imagining Empiricism in Eighteenth-Century British Travel Literature* (2017).

⁷⁰ Although Hawkesworth, Johnson, and Warton shared responsibility for the periodical, Hawkesworth took on the largest share of the writing labor. Originally, the three agreed Hawkesworth would write two essays for each that the other two contributed. Overall, Hawkesworth penned 70 of the 140 issues. For more about the origin and particulars of *The Adventurer*'s history, see Stephen Brown, "The Adventurer" in *Encyclopedia of the Essay* ed. by Tracy Chevalier; John Abbott, *John Hawkesworth: Eighteenth-Century Man of Letters*; and David Faiere "Authorship Problems in the Adventurer" in *The Review of English Studies*.

as the relation of events; but all relations of events do not entertain...It is always necessary, that facts should appear to be produced in a regular and connected series” (*Adventurer* No. 4). For Hawkesworth, events serve as junctures in a narrative: moments where timing, persons, and circumstances intersect in an intense way and anchor the momentum of a narrative. This intensity depends on a narrative’s causal chain though, for if a story does not proceed logically, the parameters of the literary world are murky. Hawkesworth accordingly argues that coherence requires events to be “delivered with discriminating circumstances” (*Adventurer* No. 4).

Hawkesworth asserts:

If [the facts] have not a necessary and apparent connection, the ideas which they excite obliterate each other, and the mind is tantalized with an imperfect glimpse of innumerable objects that just appear and vanish; if they are too minutely related, they become tiresome; and if divested of all their circumstances, insipid; for who that reads in a table of chronology or an index that a city was swallowed up by an earthquake, or a kingdom depopulated by a pestilence, finds either his attention engaged, or his curiosity gratified? (*Adventurer* No. 4)

Hawkesworth establishes two extreme measures of portraying an event: a jumble of too many disconnected occasions, overly particularized and yet underdeveloped causally, and the isolated incident, disconnected from any causal chain whatsoever. Neither extreme demonstrates the necessary economy of details that create an access point for the reader to engage in the narrative.⁷¹

⁷¹ In some respects, Hawkesworth’s description of events echoes the eighteenth-century conversation that Diedre Lynch has traced around the portrayal of character. Diedre Lynch argues that commentary on the level of particularity involved in representing character “points to the difficulty of distinguishing between what it means to refine a representation and what it means for it to be frittered away with details” (56).

To demonstrate this point, Hawkesworth offers two examples: the index and the novel. For Hawkesworth, the index isolates events, stripping them of their particulars and, therefore, of their meaning. Reduced to a manageable size in a list, these events operate only as a sign of something that exists beyond the page rather than expressing an event living in a world rendered on the page. As a result, the isolated event becomes an abstraction, and no passions are evoked. The novel, by contrast, “often stands still; the lovers complement each other in tedious letters and set speeches; trivial circumstances are enumerated with minute exactness, and the reader is wearied with languid descriptions and impertinent declamations” (*Adventurer* No. 4). The novel provides extensive and detailed circumstance, so much so that Hawkesworth sees the events as lost amidst mind-dulling minutia. In both extremes, the pacing of an event is disrupted, leaving readers alienated by either scarcity or excess. For Hawkesworth, a story cannot be entered into unless the events have been carefully situated so that the mind can consider and assess how smaller actions build together into larger events.

In accentuating the event, Hawkesworth disrupts the hierarchical method of probability and turns instead toward a horizontal and sequential model of probability. Events happen, and the circumstances, judiciously chronicled, invest events with their meanings by tracing the relationship between the individual and the physical world. Hawkesworth thus understood probability not as an issue of representation but of causation as he portrays narrative events as the results of natural causes within the narrative world rather than as happenings predetermined by a moralizing framework. This emphasis aligns Hawkesworth with the literary and philosophical tradition that Jonathan Kramnick defines as “externalism” (6). Kramnick argues that the relationship between the mind and world troubled authors because “without [mental causation] there would be no concept of agency and no description of actions, only events” (8).

The connection between the subjective experience and the environment raised questions about humanity's unique spiritual status: were humans free to act or were they simply responding to causes in the world? Externalism placed humans in a causal chain, locating choice as an effect of exterior causes. For Hawkesworth, this chain of causality determined the perimeter of a narrative world. He places the human experience squarely within a causal history that connects the characters to their social and physical worlds. In a constant exchange between what is visible and what is not, a character's mental state results from external causes, just as the character's actions cause the ensuing events in the narrative. Rather than frame narrative worlds as either physical or spiritual, Hawkesworth sees narratives as moving between the tangible physical world and the intangible mental state. Consequently, by focusing on both the seen and unseen ways the individual character interacts with the physical world, Hawkesworth brings together the credible and the marvelous and creates a cohesive literary world, a probable fiction that is distinct from the world of lived experience.

3.2 Probability and the Genie

Hawkesworth demonstrates this approach to probability and worlding through the fantastic tale, a form he sees as making visible the network of human actions, motives, and consequences that underscore probability.⁷² He introduces the fantastic tale in *The Adventurer* No. 4 by turning to the genie and to fairies: "But the most extravagant, and yet perhaps the most generally pleasing of all literary performances are those in which supernatural events are at every

⁷² Of the four artistic literary forms Hawkesworth discusses, this is the only genre for which he does not supply a name. He simply describes them as "most extravagant" and describes them as being the tales of genii and fairies. David Sandner argues Hawkesworth is describing the modern category of fantasy but simply lacks the terminology for it. See Sandner, *Critical Discourses of the Fantastic, 1712-1831* (2016).

moment produced by Genii and Fairies; such are the Arabian nights entertainments” (*Adventurer* No. 4). The genie and fairies attract Hawkesworth because they can set marvelous events into motion, and since Hawkesworth sees the event as a central element of narrative, these supernatural beings add a unique dimension to a plot.

Hawkesworth’s distinction between the two types of beings is unclear in *The Adventurer* No. 4, yet the ways the genie and the fairy participated in British literature marked a clear distinction in their literary roles. The proliferation of such beings fairies, elves, witches, and giants in English writings led Joseph Addison to remark in his essays on the imagination that the British were predisposed to believe stories about imaginary beings. He declares, “the English are naturally Fanciful, and very often disposed, by that Gloominess and Melancholly of Temper which is so frequent in our Nation, to many wild Notions and Visions” (*Spectator* No. 419). These wild visions and fanciful beings all troubled the line between the imagination and reality and alluded to another dimension. The fairies in particular – the immortal and inhuman beings frequently linked to the dead or to fallen angels – provoked anxieties about human will because of their ability to manipulate a human’s perception of reality. But whereas fairies are part of the terrestrial world – though an admittedly Other part that was distinct from the human world – the genie could move freely between the terrestrial, middle, and heavenly realms, and as a result, the genie could intercede in the happenings of the human world. Despite his allusion to the faire, Hawkesworth clearly favored the genie in his fictional work. Only one of his stories, *The Adventurer* No. 103, includes a fairy, but since this story takes place in the court of an eastern ruler, Hawkesworth may have been thinking of the Arabic fairy, or *peri*, rather than a European fairy. Instead, his several of his oriental tales in *The Adventurer* and his stand-alone tale, *Almorán and Hamet*, feature a genie.

Hawkesworth employs the genie as a figure that simultaneously acts as an agent within the plot and as a metafictional device for theorizing and producing the plot. Whereas some authors, like Joseph Addison, suggest that the world may indeed be home to other types of beings in order to justify the existence of supernatural entities in stories, Hawkesworth does not attempt to argue for the reality of the genie.⁷³ Instead, he argues, “The mind is satisfied, if every event appears to have an adequate cause; and when the agency of Genii and Fairies is once admitted, no event which is deemed possible to such agents is rejected as incredible or absurd” (*Adventurer* No. 4). Hawkesworth does not view artistic literary genres as bound to reality, so he situates the oriental tale as a genre that draws attention to how the mind participates in the world, examining why certain acts occur and how an individual’s mental state interacts with the physical world. Hawkesworth found that the oriental tale could dramatize the chain of events that generated a character’s emotional and internal state and show how that state manifested as actions in the physical world. The genie slows and magnifies the exchange between mind and matter by allowing the reader to trace the forces in the external physical world, resulting internal desire, and the external manifestation of that wish. Humans do not gain the genie’s power as their own, yet the genie allows private wishes to gain life in ways that frequently surpass the limits of human agency, resulting in a greater impact on the physical and social world than if the

⁷³ Joseph Addison references such superstitious beliefs when he discusses the “Fairie way of Writing” in *The Spectator* 419. He contends that although some may object to the supernatural as improbable, “we are sure, in general, there are many intellectual beings in the world besides ourselves, and several species of spirits, who are subject to different laws and economies from those of mankind” (*Spectator* No. 419). Moreover, Addison believes the British are predisposed to believe in such beings since they are “naturally Fanciful, and very often disposed, by that Gloominess and Melancholly of Temper which is so frequent in our Nation, to many wild Notions and Visions” (*Spectator* 419).

individual were acting alone. Uninhibited, the individual – by way of the genie – can enact what could once only have been imagined, raising the stakes of any choice that the person makes.

Hawkesworth frequently depicts this process through transmigration. The British perspective on transmigration merged Hindu and Buddhist theologies, descriptions from the *Arabian Nights*, Ovidian metamorphosis, and oriental metempsychosis together.⁷⁴ The resulting doctrine envisioned an immaterial soul capable of moving between physical bodies. Unlike metamorphosis, which transforms one physical body into a completely different one, transmigration transfers the essence of the human between bodies, both human to non-human and human to human. This shift did not alter the soul's presence by causing it to absorb characteristics from the new body, but it did change the soul's positionality and physical capabilities in the world. By using a genie to transmigrate a soul, Hawkesworth can thus portray how an individual may act on a desire when physical circumstances change, granting a freedom to act that the character previously lacked. In *The Adventurer* Nos. 72-73, for example, Hawkesworth relates "The History of Nouraddin and Amana" where he narrates the world of unfolding chaos that results from characters being able to change their physical bodies. In the tale, Nouraddin wishes for the ability to switch places with his antagonist, Osmin, so that he can rescue his fiancé, Amana from Osmin's harem. In response to this request, a genie gives Nouraddin a bracelet stating, "As often as this bracelet shall be applied to the region of thy heart, thou shalt be alternately by changed in appearance from Nouraddin to Osmin, and from Osmin to Nouraddin" (*Adventurer* No. 73). With the bracelet, Nouraddin can shift his consciousness

⁷⁴ For more information about transmigration and metempsychosis, see Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism* (2011) and Chi-Ming Yang, "Gross Metempsychosis and Eastern Soul," *Humans and Other Animals in Eighteenth-Century British Culture: Representation, Hybridity, Ethics* (2006).

between his body and that of Osmin, and this new ability enables Nouraddin to act on desires that were previously unavailable to him. However, this freedom also opens Nouraddin to new dangers, when, mistaken for Osmin, he is poisoned by his fiancé. By giving Nouraddin the bracelet, the genie lifts a restriction that normally defines human existence - a singular physical body that houses the consciousness – so that Nouraddin can enact his will in new ways. Through this fantastic new ability though, Nouraddin discovers the perils of uninhibited choice.

Hawkesworth's approach to the genie builds on the narrative tradition established around the genie even as he refines the figure for his specific literary purpose. For readers of Antoine Galland's edition of the *Arabian Nights*, the genie is not a random supernatural being that disrupts the continuity of a tale but rather a familiar entity. While the *Arabian Nights*' numerous supernatural entities range from the angel to the *peri*, the genie enchanted the British imagination. The *Arabian Nights*' portrays the genie as a powerful being intertwined with human existence. In the story of "The Merchant and the Genie," for instance, a reclusive genie engages humanity and seeks vengeance after a merchant accidentally kills the genie's son, while in the frame tale of the *Arabian Nights*, the sultan's encounter with a genie and his concubine contributes to his distrust of women when he discovers that the genie has been cuckolded by the woman due to his blind love for her. And, of course, the genie in "The Story of Aladdin; or the Wonderful Lamp" grants wishes. In each of these stories, the genie astonishes the other characters as its power delights and terrifies, but the presence of the genie itself goes unquestioned. It is as a natural a feature of the oriental tale as a caravan or a sultan because it is an accepted member of the cosmos.

When the genie began to appear in British writings, it shifted from being a natural and accept figure to a supernatural one. The genie expanded the pre-existing category of the genius,

the classical spiritual being that eighteenth-century writers connected to the Latin *genius* and the Greek *daemon*.⁷⁵ But as the genie was not a guardian, British scholarship explored its Islamic heritage and slowly began to consolidated the catalog of roles seen in the *Arabian Nights*. In the “Preliminary Discourse” to his translation of *The Koran* (1734), George Sale details the particulars of a genie’s autonomy, discussing how some genii freely chose to serve Solomon and to assist in the building of the Jerusalem temple under his direction. Through this choice, Sale parallels the human and genii existence and compares the volition granted to each and the consequences of such freedom. Nearly fifty years later, Samuel Henley drew from Sale’s *Koran* as well as from the *Bibliolothèque orientale* (1697), which was begun by Barthéley d’Herbelot and completed by Galland, as he translated and edited William Beckford’s *Vathek* (1786). Whereas Sale focuses on a genie’s freedom under Allah, Henley emphasizes the creative ability of the genii, describing them as artists who use their power to build architectural masterpieces including not only the Jerusalem temple but the pyramids as well.

Within the literary realm, Clara Reeve represents all genii as subordinate to Solomon, while James Ridley portrays the genie as circumscribed by humanity’s free will. In *Tales of the Genii* (1764), Ridley explains that a genie may not “help or distress Mankind, without their own Approbation or Concurrence” (101). Indeed, the genie grants wishes at humans’ peril: “The Genii of the Air are contented to fulfill their Promises. If we grant your wish, what more have you to require? Whether the blind wish of Mortality proceedeth from Wisdom or Folly,

⁷⁵ British writers largely regarded the genius as a tutelary diety, which acted as a guardian of a particular individual or occasionally of a specific place. For eighteenth century descriptions of the genius and its history and associations, see William King, *The Historical Account of the Heathen Gods* (1761); Voltaire, *The Philosophy of History* (1766); John Leland, *The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation* (1776); Abbé Banier, *The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients, Explain’d from History* (1739); Lord Henry Home Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man* (1778); and George Laughton, *The History of Ancient Egypt* (1774).

concerneth but little our immortal Race” (156). Just as genii may not impose on humans without their consent, neither will they rescue humans from their choices. Limited by free will, the genie could not physically harm human characters, but individuals might still come to harm as a consequence of their wishes. Such literary depictions slowly combined with the scholarly representations of the genie so that by the turn of the nineteenth century, the genie had become a figure of great power, executing wishes at the behest of a human, Allah, or Solomon. Removed of its religious position within Islamic cosmology, the genie was merely a magical being who was bound to service and whose appearance promised unexpected adventure. As British lore about the genie grew, it thus remained a creative and powerful force, but its ability to grant human wishes became its best-known feature.

As a magical entity, the genie posed difficulties for writers because it fit did not fit easily into either external or internal forms of probability and, consequently, could not participate in the moral objectives of literature. James Beattie expounds on this problem in *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (1783), where he presents the genie as a figure of unsophisticated entertainment. Beattie asserts that in oriental fables, such as the *Arabian Nights*, “Everything is carried on by enchantment and prodigy; by fairies, genii, and demons” (*Dissertations* 238). The supernatural beings in a narrative can create supernatural events, and for Beattie, this risks making the story improbable and morally confusing. In his *Essays: On Poetry and Music* (1776), Beattie argues that narrative probability requires consistency “first, with general experience; or secondly, with popular opinion; or thirdly, that it be consistent with itself, and connected with probable circumstances.” (*Essays: On Poetry and Music* 36-37). As a supernatural being, the genie was not part of general experience and could not be part of external probability nor did it come a

long-established English literary background that had created the rules and lore around the figure as with other mythical English figures.

Beattie, consequently, believed that oriental tales penned by contemporary authors should at least be internally probable and act as vehicles for a strong and overt moral message.⁷⁶ Beattie located this form of internal consistency and therefore probability in Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), which Beattie praised for its detailed descriptions and "exquisite strain of sublime morality" (*Dissertations* 238). He censures Hawkesworth, however, for creating a "contrived" and "obscure" plot in *Almorán and Hamet*, so he finds the tale guilty of the same moral deficit that he associates with the *Arabian Night*'. The *Arabian Nights*', Beattie asserts, "do not desire that [the fables] be probable or of an instructive tendency: it is enough if they be astonishing" (*Dissertations* 238). In an advance of Orientalist stereotypes, Beattie depicts oriental fables as an indulgence devoid of morality or of probability, crafted only to stupefy sultans.

For Hawkesworth, however, the oriental tale and the genie were more than simply an exotic and magical forms of entertainment. In *Adventurer* No. 4, Hawkesworth acknowledges that readers might find it peculiar that they are delighted by "a series of events that are not only impossible but ridiculous," but he argues that improbability lies not in the existence of the genie nor in its unearthly power but rather in a disruption to the sequence of events that should logically follow a human-genie interaction (*Adventurer* No. 4). He contends that once a characteristic – like unlimited power – is granted to a figure in a story, that a reader will

⁷⁶ Beattie was typical of eighteenth-century critics in believing the oriental tales should possess a moral. Reviews in *The Critical Review*, *The London Magazine*, and *The Monthly Review* assessed oriental tales like based on their perceived moral agendas. See *The Critical Review*, Jun. 1761; *The London Magazine*, 1747-1783, Jun. 1761; and *The Monthly Review*, 1752-1825, Oct. 1767.

anticipate certain possibilities: “the action of the story proceeds with regularity, the persons act upon rational principles, and such events take place as may naturally be expected from the interposition of superior intelligence and power” (*Adventurer* No. 4). Accordingly, if a character suddenly gains the ability to act out her secret desires, she will, and the impact that her secret desires will have on the social order will correlate to the intensity of the desires. If the narrative expectations of such a scene are met, the literary world remains consistent and maintains probability, but the violation to probability occurs if those expectations are broken or unfulfilled. Hawkesworth stresses this point by noting that a reader would be shocked if the hero of a story successfully fought off a dragon only to jump into a well and stay there. Such a series of events would be unreasonable – the actions of the hero unbelievable. Operating within the genre expectations of the oriental tale, the genie is not accurate to the lived world, but it is congruent within its literary world and accurately illustrates a familiar lived experience. Genii do not disrupt the probability of a fictional world, therefore, but they do make the actions, or series of causes and effects by which the world operates visible. The marvelous thus becomes the means for exploring everyday interactions between the individuals and the world.

Within this approach to probability, the genie enhances the moral precepts rather than disrupting them. The genie operates harmoniously within the narrative’s causal structure to play out the consequences of humanity’s choices. As a result, Hawkesworth argues that “though there is not a natural, there is a kind of moral probability” (*Adventurer* No. 4). Patey argues that by using the term “moral,” Hawkesworth is differentiating between “moral and demonstrative certainty,” and so he should be understood as appealing to internal probability to justify the genie’s existence (142). However, Hawkesworth is not attempting certainty. He sees these fictions as neither imitations of nature nor as pseudofactual texts pretending to a historicity they

do not possess. Instead he upholds them as distinct literary worlds that declare their inventedness and thereby can represent the human experience in probable rather than accurate ways.

Hawkesworth advocates that readers should assimilate moral precepts via immersion into a fictional world rather than through that world's ability to mimic reality. He lays out this approach in the first three issues he wrote in *The Adventurer*, where he introduces the Adventurer as a figure of courage, one who seeks virtue through his journeys in the world because reason "honours courage only when it is employed to the effect of the purpose of virtue" (*Adventurer* No. 1). Since Hawkesworth believes virtue must be sought, he compares the Adventurer to the knights of romantic lore who "as soon as Aurora with her dewy fingers unlocked the rosy portals of the East" rode out in search of new worlds where they encountered giants, dragons, castles, dwarves, and enchanters (*Adventurer* No. 1). These worlds were not sought for gain though, for that would reduce the knights to robbers; instead, these new places and experiences enlightened the knights, and they in turn shared this knowledge, for a knight "exposes life for the good of others" (*Adventurer* No. 1). Noting that the world now has no need for knights, Hawkesworth turns to the figure of the Adventurer, a figure he likely adapted from Johnson. The Adventurer first appears in *The Rambler* No. 4 when Johnson suggests that the need for an Adventurer remains even if the time of the heroic romance has passed, and Johnson depicts the Adventurer as mediating readers' understanding about the world through scenes of "universal drama" (*Rambler* No. 4). Hawkesworth's Adventurer likewise will lead readers into new knowledge, for, as he argues in *The Adventurer* No. 2, through the imagination, readers can participate in and learn from life experiences to which they otherwise would have had no access. In donning the persona of the Adventurer, Hawkesworth seeks to set forth scenes of familiar experience, some of which will look eastward, in order to instruct readers in the ways of virtue.

One such story is “The History of Nouraddin and Amana,” which spans *The Adventurer* Nos. 72-73. Hawkesworth opens this oriental tale by assigning the mantle of Adventurer to the story’s narrator: “The following narrative is by an eastern tradition attributed to one Heli ben Hamet, a moralist of Arabia...the literary Adventurer of a remote age and nation” (*Adventurer* No. 72). Heli’s character brings together two distinct roles: the Adventurer and the Arab. As the designated Adventurer, Heli ushers the reader into the narrative world as he recounts his tale of an encounter with a genie in the first-person voice. A common narrative tactic in Hawkesworth’s repertoire, Hawkesworth famously argues for the benefits of the first-person voice in the preface of his *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken*: “When I first undertook the work, it was debated, whether it should be written in the first or third person: it was readily acknowledged on all hands, that a narrative in the first person would, by bringing the Adventurer and the Reader nearer together, without the intervention of a stranger, more strongly excite an interest...” (*Account* vol. 1, iv). Hawkesworth sees the first-person voice as offering immediate rather than mediated contact so that the reader engages in a state of suspended reading. As Matthew Binney argues, Hawkesworth believes that through first-person narration, “facts derive their authenticity for the audience through delimiting the distinct experiential situation of the editor’s mind” (543). This voice provides an individuated self through whom readers can experience the causal chain of the story and make sense of the complexity of the world. The Adventurer’s experience is thus transferable, and this transference promotes readers to engage in constructive moral reflection regardless of whether that experience is personal or not.

However, Heli is also an Arab, and this foreignness sits in tension with the familiarity of the first-person voice. As Linda Colley has traced, by the seventeenth century, the Islamic

empires dwarfed Europe in population and geography.⁷⁷ As alternative cultural and military powers, they provided foreign though similar sites onto which authors projected events at home so that the political, ideological, and theological structures within Britain could be knowable. Hawkesworth wields this narrative tradition to his advantage, using the Arab world not as an allegorical space for Britain but rather as a means to create a distinct literary world.

Geographically, the Arab world is parallel to the British world: urban, commercial, and influenced by a similarly monotheistic religion. Yet it is also distant, a place most of the British will only read or hear about but never experience in person. It can only exist in their imaginations. If the first-person voice offers a virtual self whereby the reader can enter into the story, then naming this Adventurer an Arab reminds the reader of the distance between the reader and the story. By acknowledging Heli as at once foreign and familiar then, Hawkesworth can invite readers into the experience that would come to define fiction: being engrossed into a literary world which makes claims about life and which they can nevertheless recognize as distinct and separate from the real world.

Hawkesworth lays out two criteria he uses to assess the success of a literary world: curiosity and the passions. Arguing that the best narratives appeal simultaneously to the intellect and to the emotions, Hawkesworth declares, “Those narratives are most pleasing, which not only excite and gratify curiosity, but engage the passions” (*Adventurer* No. 4). These criteria, which Ann Thell describes this as Hawkesworth’s attempt to merge affect with empiricism, signal his engagement in contemporary conversations about literary probability.⁷⁸ The first of these criteria,

⁷⁷ See Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (2002), especially chapter 4, “Confronting Islam.”

⁷⁸ Thell discusses *Adventurer* No. 4 in regards to the *Voyages*. See ch. 4 of *Minds in Motion: Imagining Empiricism in Eighteenth-Century British Travel Literature*.

curiosity, alludes to external probability, for Hawkesworth believes that the mind finds pleasure in a “resemblance of truth and a closer imitation of nature” (*Adventurer* No. 4). Yet he envisions curiosity as moving beyond a simple appraisal of accuracy: it judges between what is known and familiar, between what is unknown and uncommon, and in so doing, elicits a sense of wonder.⁷⁹ It invites readers to compare and contrast their experiences and knowledge with the literary world they are perusing. For Hawkesworth, then, curiosity is a consideration of difference, particularly if that difference offers “new views of life” since he sees the mind as constantly needing the new and unique (*Adventurer* No. 4).

While curiosity expands the scope of external probability, Hawkesworth amends internal probability through his approach to the passions. He sees the passions as arising from the way a narrative event connects with the narrative’s human element. Hawkesworth argues that the passions require an individual character who serves as the focal point in the tale; through this character, the reader can examine causal relationships and determine the resulting importance of an event. Differentiating between the narrative impact of an individual and of a larger group, Hawkesworth asks, “Is [the mind] so much alarmed at the migration of barbarians, who mark their way with desolation, and fill the world with violence and rapine as at the fury of a husband, who, deceived into jealousy by false appearances, stabs a faithful and affectionate wife” (*Adventurer* No. 4). Scale matters to Hawkesworth. When violence is enacted by a mass, the

⁷⁹ In some respects, Hawkesworth’s effort to blend the curiosity and the passions evokes the concept of wonder, which Sarah Kareem and Caroline Walker Bynum have argued figures as a significant aesthetic in seventeenth and eighteenth century literature. However, as Hawkesworth refers to wonder as one of the passions that can be prompted, I have chosen not to use that term to discuss Hawkesworth’s principles and am using his terminology of curiosity and passions instead. For discussions about wonder see, Sarah Kareem, *Eighteenth-century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*; Caroline Walker Bynum, “Wonder” in *The American Historical Review*; Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*; and Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*.

faceless participants are absorbed into a singular and collective force devoid of personality. Stripped of the individual instances of mental causation and action, the horror of this force is blunted. With the husband, however, individual actions can be considered within their unique circumstances; the reader recognizes the grief of the situation not from the act of stabbing but because of the tragic relationship. The passions emerge as a sympathetic response when the reader can assess the connection between an individual character and the chain of events in which the character is situated.

Hawkesworth classifies literary genres as either art or nature through the two criteria of curiosity and the passions. Hawkesworth sees these categories – literature as nature or as art – as working in opposition to one another. Hawkesworth asserts that the genres associated with nature—history, biography, voyages, and travels—are restricted:

But Nature is now exhausted: all her wonders have been accumulated, every recess has been explored, deserts have been traversed, Alps climbed and the secrets of the deep disclosed: time has been compelled to restore the empires and the heroes of antiquity; all has passed in review; yet fancy requires new gratifications, and curiosity is still unsatisfied. (*Adventurer* No. 4)

This dismissal of nature at first seems absurd. As Hawkesworth himself would show in his edition of *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken*, the British expansion was far from finished, and each successive imperialistic venture brought reports of new cultures, new scenes, and new peoples. Yet within this statement lies a nuanced perspective on what a literary genre affords. For Hawkesworth, the genres of nature attempt to portray the natural world as it is. They endeavor to capture life rather than represent it: history chronicles real and significant events, biography records the details of a real human life, and voyages document real sights seen

throughout the world. This return to the natural world again and again may lead British readers to learn of places they did not know existed – they may textually discover new people or places or events – but these genres ultimately can only offer variations of the same content. As Hawkesworth notes of the biography, “There have been few among the whole human species whose lives would furnish a single adventure; I mean such a complication of circumstances, as hold the mind in an anxious yet pleasing suspense and gradually unfold in the production of some unforeseen and important event” (*Adventurer* No. 4). The biography cannot gratify the curiosity then, for most lives blend together. Similarly, a voyager may encounter a new mountain, but it will still be a mountain. To find something new about the mountain requires the imagination and moving into the domain of artistic literary forms.

By representing nature as limited to repetition, Hawkesworth can instead privilege literary forms that bring new insights into lived experience. Turning to the genres he classifies as art - the epic, the novel, the fantastic tale, and the dramatic poetry – Hawkesworth argues, “The resources of Art yet remain: the simple beauties of nature, if they cannot be multiplied, may be compounded, and an infinite variety produced” (*Adventurer* No. 4). These artistic genres intensify the experience of the natural world: they blend together and emphasize particular aspects of reality in order to draw attention to the real in a way that simple imitation alone cannot, and each form emphasizes a different aspect. The epic and the romance, Hawkesworth argues, elevate the emotions so that “whatever concerns the hero engages the [reader’s] passions”: we are compelled to “tremble when he is in danger, to weep when he suffers, and to burn when he is wronged” (*Adventurer* No. 4). By contrast, the novel with its “nearer resemblance to truth” turns our attention to the particulars of a familiar scene, inviting readers to notice the minutia of everyday life that might otherwise be overlooked (*Adventurer* No. 4).

Dramatic poetry traces the progression of catastrophe so that “we are present to every transaction,” able to see how humans engage in the landscape and with the suspense (*Adventurer* No. 4). Each artistic genre uses a specific technique to emphasize a particular aspect of lived reality, thereby enabling readers to re-see the natural world. Whether or not each of these genres accurately depict the natural world is not the point for Hawkesworth. Rather, each distinct form uses curiosity and the passions in a different way to draw attention to a unique aspect of what it is to be human and engaged in the world.

3.3 Tracing Action in Hawkesworth’s *Almorán and Hamet*

Nearly a decade after the appearance of *The Adventurer*, Hawkesworth continued his exploration of probability in relationship to agency through his stand-alone oriental tale, *Almorán and Hamet*. While Hawkesworth originally intended the story to be a play, the cost of production proved prohibitive, he instead reshaped the piece into prose and cast the text within the *speculum principis* tradition, dedicating it to the young king, George III.⁸⁰ Hawkesworth used the tale to delineate a moral vision of personal responsibility and interpersonal connectivity, so his tale has frequently been compared to Johnson’s *Rasselas* for what John Lawrence Abbott describes as its “philosophical investigations of the choices life offers” (*Hawkesworth* 114).⁸¹ *Almorán and Hamet* tells the story of twin brothers who find themselves the co-rulers of Persia upon their father’s death. Enraged at having to share the sultanate with his marginally younger

⁸⁰ John Lawrence Abbott discusses this choice at length in his biography of Hawkesworth, and he includes an excerpt from a letter by Mary Hawkesworth where she states her husband “thought the sentiments peculiarly adapted for the use of a young monarch” (113). For more information, see *John Hawkesworth: Eighteenth-century Man of Letters*.

⁸¹ See Robert Mack’s “Introduction” in *Oriental Tales* and Amy Witherbee’s ch. 6 in *New Conceptions of Time and the Making of a Political-Economic Public in Eighteenth-Century Britain* for discussion of Hawkesworth’s moral aims in *Almorán and Hamet*.

brother, Almorán secretly seeks a way to destroy Hamet and steal his bride, while pretending to remain amenable to the joint position. His hidden desires gain public expression when a genie appears who enables Almorán to switch bodies with whomever he chooses as he pursues his desires. This ability ultimately results in Almorán's demise.

Attentive to the aesthetic of curiosity and passions that he had set forth in *Adventurer* No. 4, Hawkesworth crafts *Almorán and Hamet* as a tale that explores the complicated system of conflicting desires and reasons for acting that shape lived experience. Hawkesworth introduces his theory of action during an argument about the existence of genii between Almorán and Omar, the main advisor to the sultanate. Almorán rejects the notion of genii, arguing that the material world is all that exists. Omar, however, points to the human mind as an example of an immaterial entity that nevertheless exists. He argues that the mind perceives its existence by “*acting without motion*” (*Almorán and Hamet* 39, italics original). The mind may not have extension, but it can perceive itself as distinct from the physicality of the body because, Omar argues, “to think, is to act, and with the idea of thinking, the idea of motion is never connected” (*Almorán and Hamet* 39). Omar does not claim to understand how the mind sets the body in motion; however, he does argue that understanding why certain actions occur is nearly impossible. Pointing to the crowds of Persia, Omar asserts that “every idea which passes over their minds, every conclusion and every purpose, with all they remember of the past and all that they imagine of the future” collides with “the pursuit of business and projects infinitely complicated and various” (*Almorán and Hamet* 39). Every mind takes in innumerable experiences that spur a variety of thoughts, for the mind holds the past, present, and future together simultaneously. Through Omar's voice, Hawkesworth argues the mind participates in a larger system of causality; he presents it as an unseen entity that nevertheless is influenced by a magnitude of external causal forces that cannot

be fully known. While the mind may be driven by external causes, understanding what those causes are and how they come together requires a divine rather than human perspective.

Hawkesworth's conception of agency and actions echoes Thomas Hobbes' stance that the human will depends its connection to the external world. Within the debate about whether individuals are susceptible to the same laws of causation as the rest of the world or have a unique status as a soul outside of that order, Hobbes argues that human behavior should be understood through what the will is tethered to externally. As Kramnick explains, Hobbes is "committed to describing the history of actions with respect to their peripheral beginnings, in contexts beyond the person" (33). For Hobbes, human actions, or events with mental causes, require a reason for acting, and these reasons are not inherent to an individual but rather are the result of a person's contact with the physical world. Hobbes argues, "That which I say necessitateth and determineth every action is the sum of all those things, which being now existent, conduce and concur to the production of that action hereafter, whereof if any one thing now ere wanting, the effect could not be produced" (*Questions* 80). The choice to act requires there to be a reason for the action, and yet, Hobbes recognizes that the external causes are endless. Seeing action as the sum requires accounting for all the events and circumstances surrounding an individual.

In adapting Hobbes' theory of action, Hawkesworth presents individuals as socially constructed, the predicates of others' actions in the world who are, nevertheless, still accountable for their behaviors. Consequently, he begins his tale by distinguishing between the two brothers. Although Almorán and Hamet are twins, the external world has formed contrasting desires in the two men. The brothers grew up in the same seraglio where they were attended to by the same servants and taught by the same teacher. Yet Almorán is a hedonist, while Hamet is a humble man. Hawkesworth portrays this difference as a result of the different ways each man was treated

as a boy. He fills his opening description of Almorán with passive verbs: Almorán “was taught,” he “was often reminded,” and he “was flattered” (*Almorán and Hamet* 4-5). Rather than suggest that Almorán is simply predisposed toward despotism, Hawkesworth depicts Almorán’s personality and desires as resulting from the behaviors of others towards him. Almorán, who has grown up as the sultan-in-waiting, embodies the infinite extension of the sultan’s power. As discussed in detail by Alain Grosrichard, the future ruler of an absolutist state represents the continuity of the current ruler so that the child is an extension and repetition, “simultaneously the same and other than his father” (131).⁸² This continuity perpetuates the sultan’s power, for the subjects perceive it as being at once something they give and something demanded of them. Hawkesworth depicts the servants and members of Sultan Solyman’s court as viewing Almorán as the extension of the sultanate, so they begin to seek Almorán’s favor early. Through the actions of these servants and subjects, “One of the first things that Almorán learnt, was the prerogative of his birth,” and so he “was often reminded, that the time was coming, when the sole possession of sovereign power would enable him to fulfill all his wishes” (*Almorán and Hamet* 4). Almorán’s sense of who he is and what he should desire has been shaped by servants and members of the court. Due to their promptings, he deeply desires the sultanate, a position he begins to imagine holds uninhibited freedom that will grant limitless pleasure. While Hawkesworth portrays character as emerging from the physical world.

⁸² Grosrichard argues that the European fantasy of oriental despotism entailed absolute power, subjects who were depersonalized but in total compliance with the ruler’s will, an arbitrary dispensation of favor and punishment, and an unceasing lust for material and sexual goods. Focusing particularly on the Ottoman Empire, he emphasizes this fantasy served as a way to understand the mechanisms of political domination and provides the logic that underpins the larger scope of Orientalism. See Grosrichard, *The Sultan’s Court: European Fantasies of the East* (1998).

Hawkesworth, nevertheless, acknowledges that individuals perceive their desires to be self-governed rather than the consequences of external causes. Hawkesworth tellingly depicts Almorán as believing his longings to be indicative of human nature at large rather than as arising from the particulars of his situation. These desires appear so innate to Almorán that he believes his brother must naturally possess the same hunger for power, luxury, and sensuality that he does. But Hamet has not been fawned over as his brother has. Instead, Hamet “soon became sensible of his subordinate station: he was not, indeed, neglected; but he was not much caressed” (*Almorán and Hamet* 5). Hawkesworth’s choice of language is telling here, for the gap between the flattery Almorán experiences and the neglect that Hamet experiences is vast. Hamet may have been physically attended to, but he is largely disregarded as neither servants nor court members attempt to ingratiate themselves with him. As a result, Hamet is cognizant of how others’ actions determine his existence: “When the gratification of Hamet came in competition with that of Almorán, he was always obliged to give it up, except when [the sultan] interposed” (*Almorán and Hamet* 5). Frequently deprived of the physical pleasures Almorán seeks, Hawkesworth instead develops desires for knowledge and spiritual pleasures. Hawkesworth thus links character to circumstances rather than to interiority, for he declares, “This difference in situation of Almorán and Hamet, produced great dissimilarity in their dispositions...Almorán was haughty, vain, and voluptuous; Hamet was gentle, courteous, and temperate” (*Almorán and Hamet* 5). Both men are the results of a web of actions that extend far beyond their persons.

By emphasizing externalism, Hawkesworth’s portrays character as being the culmination of a series of actions. This approach differs from the familiar Lockean approach, which aligns the person with the acquisition of property. As Diedre Lynch points out, the Lockean individual is “Cast as a collector...the cumulative product of his private stockpile of sensations and

reflections” (85). However, this image suggests an agency that Hawkesworth denies Almorán and Hamet over their development. While they are a collection of experiences, these experiences have not been chosen. Their characterization depends on their positions within an external chain of causes, on the objects and events of the world, rather than on anything internal. In this respect, Hawkesworth’s characters reflect the predicative model Tzvetan Todorov attributes to the *Arabian Nights*. Rather than anchor action in a character as the origin of meaning, Todorov argues that the *Arabian Nights* privileges actions so that “the emphasis will always fall on the predicate and not on the subject of the proposition” (67). This shift from subject to predicate results in an immediate rather than mediated causality, so that psychology appears as the result of action rather than the impetus for it. By envisioning Almorán and Hamet as participating within a larger network of causality, therefore, Hawkesworth renders the personalities of both characters as arising from the actions of other individuals.

Hawkesworth also recognizes that as part of the perpetual cycle of causes and effects, his characters will also initiate new actions. By tracing the ways Almorán’s hunger for power increasing, Hawkesworth encourages readerly anticipation of how Almorán will act once he becomes sultan. Much to Almorán’s shock, the sultan bequeaths his kingdom to both sons in a deliberate choice to curtail Almorán’s power. Although instantly enraged, Almorán attempts to disguise his displeasure in public. Hawkesworth gives insight into Almorán’s emotional upheaval, though, when he stages Almorán’s interiority by inviting readers into Almorán’s chamber. In this private space, Almorán expresses the emotions he has publicly hidden, and his anger takes a physical expression as he throws himself violently onto a couch. Alone, Almorán imagines himself as suddenly dispossessed and restricted. Even though he can now enact his will with even more freedom than before, he does not have sole dominion. Consequently, he can only

see his position as one of deprivation as he reflects on “all the pleasures and honours of supreme dominion which had now suddenly been snatched from him, with a degree of anguish and regret, not proportioned to their real, but their imaginary value” (*Almorán and Hamet* 10). Almorán’s disappointment is rooted in his imagination. Having been given power and wealth as a son, he compounded that image as he looked toward the future and created a fiction that now sets his expectations. This break between fantasy and reality disturbs Almorán, but it also determines how he encounters the world, for the fiction he had imagined about what his sultanate would look like becomes the controlling force for his actions once he partners with the genie.

Almorán believes himself to be a free agent, limited not through his own desires but rather through the circumstances of his situation. Hawkesworth echoes Hobbes here in that he does not dismiss humanity’s free will by placing human reason within the world’s causal chain. Hobbes locates free will in an individual’s freedom to enact the desires that have been provoked. As Kramnick notes, “If one appeal of [Hobbes’] argument was its sense that actions become intelligible only once we realize, often against our intuitions, that their sources are extensive, another is the claim that having reasons for acting takes nothing away from the accountability one incurs along the way (Kramnick 36). Hobbes argues, “From the use of the word *Free-will*, no Liberty can be inferred of the will, desire, or inclination, but the Liberty of the man; which consisteth in this, that he finds no stop in doing what he has the will, desire, or inclination to do” (*Leviathan* 146). Although the mind may have a set of determining causes influencing it, Hobbes sees the will as hindered by physical blocks to action. Having a free will does not require freedom from *causes* but rather freedom from *impediments*. Indeed, Almorán’s discontent stems from his belief that he lacks freedom because of the external impediments that prevent him from pursuing his desires. Traditionally, a despot acts as a monarch from a place of corrupted paternal

power, who controls both land and women within a system of excess.⁸³ Almorán, however, controls neither, for he shares the land with his brother, who does the actual management of the kingdom, and additionally, Hamet is the ruler who becomes engaged to a Circassian woman, Almeida, whom Almorán desires for his own pleasure. Exasperated at his inability to act in accord with his will and desires, Almorán cries out, “With dominion undivided and Almeida, I should be Almorán; but without them, I am less than nothing” (*Almorán and Hamet* 42). Deprived of the items he believes he should possess, Almorán envisions himself as not only limited but also as lacking a clear individuality. The land and the woman that he imagines will should distinguish him and mark his position as sultan belong to Hamet, which leaves Almorán undifferentiated from the other members of the court.

The genie enters the tale in the midst of Almorán’s despair. Here, Hawkesworth introduces a hypothetical that will govern the rest of the tale: what if humans were able to enact every desire that they had? What if they had freedom from physical limitations? As the genie appears, “[Almorán] felt the palace shake; he heard a rushing, like a blast in the desert; and a being of more than human appearance stood before him” (*Almorán and Hamet* 43). In an alarming expression of immense power, a being that defies spoken description appears, and Almorán waits in a moment of terrifying suspense, unable to recognize the being or imagine its purpose. The genie identifies himself stating, “Thou seest... a Genius, whom the daring purpose of thy mind has convoked from the middle region, where he was appointed to wait the signal; and who is now permitted to act in concert with thy will” (*Almorán and Hamet* 43).⁸⁴ Although

⁸³ See Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*, particularly 81-84, and Grosrichard, *The Sultan’s Court* for the etymology of despot and the history of oppression embedded in the term.

⁸⁴ As discussed by Peter Caracciolo at length in *Arabian Nights in English Literature*, the numerous translations of the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* over the past two centuries have

Almorán had previously rejected the existence of genii, the appearance of this supernatural being in his apartment leaves him no space to deliberate its veracity, and he delights in the announcement. The genie provides the solution to the impediments that prevent Almorán from acting on his desires, for as the genie explains, “To thy own powers, mine shall be superadded... my power shall be employed in thy behalf” (*Almorán and Hamet* 44). Where Almorán cannot act, the genie can and will. From Almorán’s perspective, the genie will be able to abolish all the impediments that Almorán faces. Through the genie, Hawkesworth can thus enable an experience that the physical world precludes and free Almorán from the traditional limits of human agency.

Almorán unsurprisingly delights in the genie’s appearance; however, the genie’s statement hides as much from Almorán as it reveals. Although the genie says he has come to serve, he does not explain how Almorán has the power to summon him from the imaginal realm, nor does he indicate who appointed him to wait for Almorán’s signal. Robert Mack consequently describes this moment of encounter as “ominous” and suggests that Hawkesworth intends to conjure images of the threatening genii in the *Arabian Nights*’ who bring grief to humans who happen to meet them (xxiv). However, the unease of this moment originates with Almorán rather than the genie. The reader already knows how Almorán has been shaped, so the threat in the moment lies in how his desires will now take shape. Truly uninhibited, Almorán now has opportunity to inflict great harm and damage to all around him.

resulted in inconstant spellings of familiar terms from the collection, including the spelling of genie: in English, “one meets a gamut of spellings such as genius, genie, genii, jinee, jinni, jinn, djinn, ginn, jann...” (xxviii). I have chosen to use the spelling *genie* (singular) and *genii* (plural) because the OED gives *genie* as the spelling associated with the spiritual beings in 1706, and *genii* is the consistent plural form used by 18th century authors, including Hawkesworth, although he uses *genius* in the singular instance.

However, because Almorán does not acknowledge his place within a chain of causality, he fails to recognize that the true impediments to enacting his desires lie not in the limits to his abilities but within the wills of other individuals. Due to the supernatural agency of the genie, Almorán watches his inner desires gain an external life in a way not accessible to people who lack supernatural intervention. But these desires-turned-actions must still participate in a larger network of causality that connects him to each of the other individuals in his world, and as a result, the consequences of his actions cannot be anticipated. As Hawkesworth will note in *An Account of the Voyages*, “When the command to fire has been given, no man can restrain its excess, or prescribe its effect” (2:290). An action has been set into motion, which will in turn generate new actions, but as to the particulars of what those moments will be, no one can know. As a result, even though the genie secures both the kingdom and Almeida for Almorán at his request, Almorán finds himself just as limited as he was before. A contingency of soldiers defects to the deposed Hamet, and Almeida rejects Almorán, “turn[ing] from him with a firm and haughty step, and instead of answering his professions, reproached him with her wrongs” (*Almorán and Hamet* 62). Almeida loves Hamet, and Almorán’s new powers cannot change her will. Although Almorán can participate in the world in new ways, his will clashes with those of others because he has forgotten Omar’s lesson that the world is made up of conflicting desires resulting from unique persons, situations, and events. Hawkesworth has answered his own hypothetical and shown that the freedom to act is always limited since an individual’s actions participate in a network of exchange with other people.

Hawkesworth accentuates this point by removing the physical barrier of the body through transmigration. As noted earlier, Hawkesworth had experimented with tales about transmigration throughout *The Adventurer*, and he found body swapping enabled him to depict the complex web

of causality surrounding individual characters. He experimented with the unexpected consequences of characters incur through their actions throughout his earlier tales. In issue No. 5, for instance, Hawkesworth traces the migration of a human soul from a man's body, to a dog's body, to a bird's body, to a flea's body, and finally to a woman's body. In each instance, the moving soul finds itself harmed through the intentional and unintentional actions of other individuals and animals. As a result, when the soul ends the story as a woman, she accuses the narrator of "expos[ing] me to still greater calamities than any that I have yet suffered" because, unlike as animal where she was always an incidental victim of a human's harmful ways, as a woman, she will be the focus of man's desire, exposing her to an even greater danger (*Adventurer* No. 5). Through this series of transmigrations, Hawkesworth can thus trace out the different and frequently unknown effects that actions generate in the world.

Hawkesworth extended this experiment in *The Adventurer* Nos. 20-22 to include multiple voices. In "Amurath. An Eastern Story," the protagonist, Amurath, experiences transmigration when a genie punishes him for his cruelty against others. As sultan, Amurath has inflicted misery against his subjects by humiliating his officials publicly and oppressing the people. On the night Amurath decides to rape the woman he loves, Selima, the genie causes Selima to disappear and transforms Amurath, declaring, "Thou hast now, as far as it is in thy own power, thrown off humanity and degraded thy being: thy form, therefore, shall no longer conceal thy nature" (*Adventurer* No. 21). The genie turns Amurath into a monster – part wolf and part goat – a physical form he continues to inhabit until Amurath learns how his actions effect the others in his social world. Each time Amurath acts for the good of someone else rather than for his own benefit, he becomes a new creature: first a dog, then a dove, and finally a human again.

Amurath's experiences are not the only version of this story though, for Hawkesworth tells the story a second time from the perspective of Selima. As a dove, Amurath finds Selima and overhears her recounting her version of the same events that Amurath has experienced as a dog. Having abruptly disappeared at the beginning of the tale, the readers have been left to wonder about her fate, unaware that the woman whose food Amurath eats as a dog actually belongs to Selima. As Selima recounts her story, Hawkesworth uses the overlaps between the two characters' tales to emphasize the larger social environment in which both characters are participating. As Ros Ballaster points out, transmigration is "both a spatial and a temporal experience; the soul moves through time from one body to another" (*Fabulous Orient* 21). As Amurath's consciousness moves from body to body, he is aware of the passing of time, but Hawkesworth replays this passage of time by recording Selima's experiences as well. Through the parallel storylines, he asks readers to attend to what Benedict Anderson terms the "meanwhile" whereby characters may be acting within the same narrative world and yet be unaware of each other.⁸⁵ Hawkesworth can thus accentuate the fictional aspect of the literary world and offer the reader competing versions of the same experience as the reader sees the city as both a dog and a woman. By employing a genie and transmigration, Hawkesworth not only exposes the complexity of the social causal web, but he also emphasizes how interpreting causes and effects varies depending on perspective. At the level of fiction, then, transmigration permits multiple takes on the same story, creating a chorus of voices to participate in the story.

In *Almorán and Hamet*, Hawkesworth modifies his approach to transmigration once again. Building on the parallel storylines aspect that he developed in "Amurath. An Eastern

⁸⁵ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983).

Story,” Hawkesworth alternates between the two brothers’ perspectives continually, but he complicates this switch in perspectives when the genie grants Almorán a talisman that enables him to switch bodies with whomever he chooses. Chaos ensues as Almorán exploits this power and begins to switch into any body that he believes will grant him an advantage in sexually subduing Almeida or in thwarting the coup he believes Hamet is attempting to throw. Rather than give Almorán control over of his situation though, this freedom of bodily form leaves him more uncertain and unstable. He is overwhelmed by the number of possible choices present in his social circle. Almorán cannot anticipate the effects of the actions he chooses since he is participating in several causal chains through the different bodies he assumes.

As a result of the power he gains from the genie, Almorán fails to anticipate the harm he will cause to himself. Since Almorán can move between bodies, he sees himself only an immaterial consciousness, separated from the physical world, and he believes he can participate in the social world unharmed.⁸⁶ This experience alienates Almorán from the physical ramifications of the acts that he puts out into the world through the bodies of different individuals, and since he believes himself to be outside of the causal chain of existence, he dies as a result of his own actions. In the final showdown with Hamet, Almorán takes up the body of Omar in an attempt to trick Hamet into giving him a scroll that the genie promises “shall defend thee from all mischief” (*Almorán and Hamet* 109). Ignoring the ambiguity in the genie’s statement, Almorán succeeds in claiming the scroll, and in that instant, meets his own demise. He becomes the effect of his own causes: in claiming the scroll to keep it from his brother,

⁸⁶ Witherbee examines the split between the material and immaterial aspects of Hawkesworth’s tale from its relationship to the British marketplace and the move between material possessions and immaterial identities. See Witherbee, *New Conceptions of Time and the Making of a Political-Economic Public in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2009).

Almorán unwittingly inflicts the scrolls charm on himself. At the first words of the genie, Almorán “started as at a sudden pang; his eyes became fixed, and his posture immovable; yet his senses still remained, and he perceived the Genius once more to stand before him” (*Almorán and Hamet* 112). Informing Almorán that the scroll only had the power to produce misery, Almorán indeed finds himself defenced from mischief because frozen as he is, he cannot participate in the social world around him: he can neither cause nor experience mischief any longer.

As a final act, the genie hardens Almorán into stone. While the metamorphosis of flesh into stone might suggest death, the real penalty seems to lie in Almorán’s sudden inaction and thus removal from society. As Almorán moved from body to body, his consciousness remained constant, frozen in its hedonistic desires, so this final transformation into stone appears to reveal the truth of whom he has been all along. As the text remains ambiguous about whether Almorán continues to exist, trapped within the stone figure, it is his inability to act, more than the materiality of his body, that renders him dead. Though he once caused havoc in his nation by enacting his internal desires, his body now will never act again, and any desires will remain forevermore concealed.

Hawkesworth’s turn to the genie thus offers a new approach to fiction that anticipates the fiction of the nineteenth century. Unlike the characters of Horace Walpole’s *Otranto* who react to the genuinely impossible when a helmet crashes into the world without cause, Hawkesworth’s supernatural and human characters are congruent and thus probable within their narrative worlds. Through the marvelous entity of the genie, Hawkesworth can depict the causal exchange between mind and matter and create a new horizontal and serial approach to probability. Rather than disrupt narrative probability, the genie both signals the separation between this literary

world and reality while still enabling Hawkesworth's tale to offer commentary about the social and physical world. By blending together moral precepts and imaginative worlds, Hawkesworth thus re-envisioned literary probability and presents a literary world that stands distinct from yet parallel to lived reality: the world of the "as if."

3.4 Strategies of Probability in Sheridan's *The History of Nourjahad*

If Hawkesworth wields the genie as a literary method for representing the relationship between the mind and matter in a probable and thus fictional way, Sheridan deploys the genie to reveal the ways narratives create coherence through their internal evidence.

Like Hawkesworth, Sheridan was a versatile writer who was admired among her peers. Though Sheridan's success with *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761) established her as a writer in the tradition of Samuel Richardson, her literary interests extended far beyond the conduct novel. Indeed, Anna Fitzer argues that the often overlooked but noteworthy aspect of Sheridan's writing is "her tendency to explore the boundaries and possibilities of literary form" (xiii). Sheridan's interest in literary worlds began at a young age, and so by the age of 15, she had written her first two-volume romance, *Eugenia and Adelaide* (1791). This project witnessed her early experiments with perceptions of time, a feature that would be critical in her oriental tale, *The History of Nourjahad* (1767). Sheridan did not fully embrace her literary talent until she and her husband moved to London in 1758, where she found herself welcomed into the literary and theatrical circles of Samuel Richardson, Samuel Johnson, Sarah Fielding, and David Garrick. Sheridan grew particularly close with Richardson, whose encouragement influenced her writing career tremendously. In 1761, Sheridan published *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, a series of letters written in the tradition of the conduct novel, to help with her family's financial plight,

and it met with great success, as did her first comedy, *The Discovery* (1763), which wove together multiple storylines through a common villain, and the play's humor and surprise ending propelled it to a seventeen-night showing.

However, not all of Sheridan's plays were so successful, and the failure of her comedy, *A Journey to Bath* (1767) to make it the stage gives insight into Sheridan's approach to narrative probability. As her third comedy, Sheridan had submitted *Journey* to Garrick for review, but Garrick rejected it on the grounds that it broke with the hierarchical mode of probability and that it was dull rather than funny. Angered by his critique, Sheridan set out to defend her work in a letter that responded point-by-point to Garrick, and she opens by responding to his criticism of the organizing structure of the play. Garrick accuses the play of being without an overarching fable, but Sheridan contends that she abided by the structure of the hierarchy of probable signs: "To the first charge, I plead not guilty, and will maintain that the fable is fully sufficient to build a series of events upon" (qt. in Hogan and Beasley 26). As discussed earlier, within the hierarchy of probable signs identified by Patey, the fable serves as the organizing principle of a text as it provides a reference point for all of the events in a narrative. Without a fable for the events in the play to refer back to, the play would be a jumbled and detached series of episodes. Sheridan asserts that her play does include that needed framework and declares that the events "all tend to the main purpose of the drama" (qt. in Hogan and Beasley 26). Indeed, throughout her life, Sheridan demonstrated a commitment to the moral vocation of literature as she presented herself as a virtuous writer. Indeed Janet Todd observes that Sheridan did not seek to write fiction and was not "aiming at surface realism" but rather in works like *Sidney Bidulph*, Sheridan "delivers moral generalization and tries in sentimental fashion to teach assent to its morality through an emotional appeal to the reader" (165). This moral education motivated *Nourjahad* as well, for

Sheridan intended it to be one of a series of moral tales, although her death prevented her from writing further stories.

In addition Sheridan's commitment to the moral element within narratives, her response to Garrick indicates a second method of connecting events in her play, one that does not depend solely on the fable. In her second point, Sheridan declares, "I will venture to assert that [the scenes'] succession is regular and natural" (qt. in Hogan and Beasley 26). By describing the sequences of events as natural, Sheridan indicates a narrative cohesion born from causality. As Patey argues, authors invoked the natural as a way of describing how the narrative invited the mind to recall the causes of events (86-87). Sheridan sees the episodes of the play as causally linked, so that one scene can progress in an expected manner which lends the story cohesion as well as a natural ease. Though Garrick clearly disagreed with Sheridan's assessment of her work, Sheridan's acknowledgement of a more horizontal mode of causality demonstrates a thoughtful experimentation with how narrative is constructed and the impact on the literary world.

This experimentation shapes *Nourjahad* as Sheridan exploits genre expectations to examine the manner in which literary worlds are constructed and what makes them probable. While Hawkesworth experimented extensively with the oriental tale, Sheridan wrote just one oriental tale, and she did not commonly write with oriental tropes or engage collections like the *Arabian Nights*'. However, as Sonja Lawrenson has shown, Sheridan's experience with the *Mahomet* riots left an "indelible imprint" on Sheridan so that "the socio-political topography of mid eighteenth-century Ireland...[was] a key influence on Sheridan's Oriental imaginary" (25-

26).⁸⁷ Lawrenson argues that the interactions between Nourjahad and Schemzeddin represent the larger political struggle between Ireland and England. In this respect, Sheridan's tale participates in a long tradition of oriental tales and dramas mediating European concerns.⁸⁸

While *Nourjahad* thus speaks to Sheridan's political past, the tale also takes up her interest in the ways probability intersected life. According to Sheridan's granddaughter and biographer, Alicia LeFanu, Sheridan wrote *Nourjahad* as a hypothetical proposition about what likely would happen if a person were granted immeasurable wealth. In her biography, LeFanu records that Sheridan claimed that the inspiration for the story came almost like a dream in the midst of a restless night.⁸⁹ As Sheridan reflected on the human condition, she concluded that happiness and misery depended on the mindset of individuals rather than on the particulars of their situations. Since the Sheridans were once again in a dire financial situation, Sheridan wrote a tale exploring the ways potential gifts become curses where she hypothesized that "the probable condition" of a person presented with the greatest goods – wealth and immortality – would be "a violent and perverse disposition" (LeFanu 295). Sheridan called her tale a history, drawing on the familiar pseudofactual trope, but as a literary hypothetical, her story offers a fantastical take on the simulation experience that John Bender argues shaped the turn to fictionality. Bender sees authors as constantly requiring the reader to make inductive judgments

⁸⁷ In 1754, Sheridan's husband, Thomas Sheridan, an actor and manager, found himself caught in the midst of the *Mahomet* riots after he attempted to restrain a fierce display of Irish patriotism at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin. See Lawrenson, "Frances Sheridan's 'The History of Nourjahad' and the Sultan of Smock-Alley." *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr*, vol. 26, 2011.

⁸⁸ While Islam and the Ottoman empire had long served as metaphors through which dramatists could criticize opposing ideologies, female dramatists like Mary Pix and Delarivier Manley amended these tropes and merged theology, ideology, sexuality and politics into a new feminocentric Orientalism. While Lawrenson does not associate Sheridan with this tradition, her reading of *Nourjahad* aligns Sheridan with this tradition.

⁸⁹ See LeFanu, *Memorials of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Frances Sheridan* (1824).

about their narrative worlds, as result, for “all hypotheses are fictional, but the most serviceable (those that appear to yield scientific truth) are the ones most probable given the evidence and the prevailing rules of verification” (40-41). For Sheridan, this evidence is not found beyond the boundaries of the narrative world; she does not turn to external probability to verify her world. Instead, she demonstrates how narratives stage their truthfulness within stories by offering multiple forms of evidence that make sense of the narrative’s causal structure.⁹⁰

Set in a fictional Persia, the story centers on Nourjahad, the greedy First Minister of the new sultan, Schemzeddin. Having incurred the wrath of the sultan for unwittingly admitting a desire for wealth and immortality, Nourjahad finds himself suddenly confronted by a genie, who grants Nourjahad his desires on the condition that Nourjahad will periodically fall asleep for an indefinite period of time. Delighted by his change in fortune, Nourjahad forgets to pay court to the sultan and finds himself placed under house arrest. Although he resents this limitation, Nourjahad spends his time indulging in his hedonistic fantasies and growing increasingly cruel. As promised by the genie, Nourjahad’s indulgences precipitate three extended periods of sleep: the first period lasting roughly four years, the second almost 41 years, and the last 20 years. Awaking to an altered household each time, Nourjahad eventually repents only to discover that

⁹⁰ Sheridan’s tale has frequently been discussed in terms of her approach to issues of female authorship. Examining how Sheridan experiments with narrative time, Margaret Anne Doody argues that Sheridan’s tale centers the masculine character. However, Felicity Nussbaum argues that the male characters should be understood in terms of their female modes of behavior, while Ros Ballaster argue that the sociality of the females in the narrative give them the ultimate power of transformation in the story. See Doody, “Frances Sheridan: Morality and Annihilated Time” in *Fetter’d or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815* (1986) and *The True Story of the Novel* (1996); Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (1995); and Ballaster, “Narrative Transmigrations: The Oriental Tale and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Britain” in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture* (2009).

Schemzeddin had staged the entire experience over a fourteen month period by posing Nourjahad's favorite harem maid as the genie and by drugging Nourjahad's sleep in order to alter his household and thereby convince him of the passage of time.

Sheridan's tale echoes Hawkesworth's *Almorán and Hamet* in several ways as it engages similar concerns about how individuals participate in the physical world. Sheridan intended for the tale to be one of a series of stories that were to be dedicated to the Prince of Wales. However, unlike Hawkesworth's tales, where sultans inevitably find themselves being educated, in *Nourjahad*, "The 'royal ethics' of *speculum principis* has been turned on its head, as the king has to tutor the minister" (Aravamudan *Enlightenment* 235). Like Almorán, Nourjahad is a hedonistic character as the result of how others have engaged him. Growing up in the royal court as almost a brother to Schemzeddin, Nourjahad is loved by Schemzeddin and seen "as the rising star of the Persian court," so he has long been the recipient of favors of other members of the court (Sheridan 117). Interestingly, Sheridan complicates the resulting representation of Nourjahad, for rather than represent him as unambiguously evil as a result of his circumstances, as Hawkesworth does with Almorán, Sheridan first explores the competing narratives about Nourjahad's life. As a life-long friend, Schemzeddin initially believes Nourjahad possesses the integrity to serve as his first minister, and he points to their shared history as evidence of his view. However, the court's elders, who have likewise witnessed Nourjahad's youth, arrive at the opposite conclusion and believe Nourjahad to be irreligious and avaricious. Both the sultan and his elders believe Nourjahad's inner desires are the result of his circumstances and will guide his behaviors, but the text initially remains ambiguous about which side perceives Nourjahad correctly.

Through this contrast, Sheridan raises a question of causation: how does opportunity affect action? The sultan and his elders are not the only ones uncertain about how Nourjahad would act if promoted to the position of First Minister, for Nourjahad is similarly uncertain. While Nourjahad does unwittingly admit to the sultan that he desires wealth and immortality – an admission that Aravamudan argues reflects his true desires and places him outside of the moral norms – Nourjahad also believes that he would employ the wealth to seek the benefit of others if he possessed it.⁹¹ Alone and in the privacy of his own home, Nourjahad reflects that “employing his wealth to noble and generous purposes would have constituted [the] great part of his happiness,” and he declares to himself “I [am] a stranger to my own heart, if it ever leads me to willful commission of a crime” (Sheridan 126, 124). Here in the privacy of his home, Nourjahad’s comments are not to earn the approval or trust of Schemzeddin, and they reflect a genuine belief in who he believes himself to be. Nourjahad’s declaration is only a speculation, though, for until the genie appears, he lacks the resources to accommodate any gross indulgences or any benevolent acts of generosity. However, it is the courtly elders whose hypothesis proves correct about Nourjahad. When the genie appears and urges Nourjahad to “speak boldly...and know that I have power from Mahomet to grant thy request,” Nourjahad’s greed manifests, and he demands unlimited wealth and immortality (*Nourjahad* 122). Nourjahad’s subjective experience thus depends on his external environment, and he learns who he is through the consequences of his ensuing actions.

By depicting Nourjahad as discovering his character through his actions, Sheridan fashions Nourjahad as a predicative character. As Todorov explains, in predicative literature,

⁹¹ See Aravamudan, “Adventure Chronotope and Oriental Xenotrope: Galland, Sheridan, and Joyce Domesticate *The Arabian Nights*” in *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context* (2008), p. 251.

“All character traits are immediately causal; as soon as they appear, they provoke an action” (68). This pattern plays out with Nourjahad, for as soon as the genie appears and offers wealth, Nourjahad seizes the opportunity. This choice has a cyclical effect on Nourjahad because as Todorov explains, “A character trait is not simply the cause of an action, nor simply its effect: it is both at once...X kills his wife because he is cruel; but he is cruel because he kills his wife” (Todorov 68). Nourjahad’s exposure to wealth and privilege as a child has instilled the desire for future luxury, and as soon as he is given opportunity to gain this lifestyle, he seizes it. Through this pursuit of pleasure, though, Nourjahad only incurs a deeper and increasingly insatiable desire for pleasure. Consequently, Nourjahad becomes “an absolute master enslaved to his progressively debased appetites” (Richardson 7). Engaged in this process to the point of pathological extreme, Nourjahad displays an eroding reserve and commits ever more horrific atrocities, including murder and blasphemy.

Sheridan disrupts this action-character cycle by figuratively killing Nourjahad. After granting Nourjahad’s requests, the genie warns Nourjahad that in exchange, he will succumb to “the temporary death of sleep” which may last “for months, years, nay, for a whole revolution of Saturn at a time, or perhaps a century” (Sheridan 123). As indicated by the genie, to sleep is to die narratively, for the character can no longer act or participate in the story. Nourjahad undergoes this death-through-sleep experience three times after he commits grievous acts that break the laws of Islam. The first act is drunkenness, for which Nourjahad falls asleep for a little over four years. When he awakens, he discovers that his beloved wife, Mandana, has passed away during childbirth. On the second occasion, Nourjahad commits blasphemy when he stages his home as Paradise and features himself as Mahomet. For this evil, the genie punishes him with slumber lasting almost forty-one years. This time, Nourjahad awakes and discovers his long-time

advisor and friend, Hasem, has passed away. Dejected over the losses he has suffered, Nourjahad's final sin is murder, when he stabs his loyal harem woman, Cadiga, in a fit of rage. Twenty years later, he awakes to learn that not only has Cadiga died but so too has Schemzeddin. Rather than have a life filled with pleasure, Nourjahad sees only a trail of death, and he has likewise experienced a simulated death for each monstrous deed he has committed.

These simulated deaths suspend Nourjahad outside of the causal chain of action that drives the social world, and this removal ultimately drives Nourjahad's transformation. As Mita Chowdhury argues, Nourjahad's home imprisonment removes him from conventional tie and spaced to a staged spatial and temporal experience.⁹² Nourjahad finds himself set apart even within this fictional reality, though, for each of the three sleeps removes him from the social chain of causality within his home. He is excluded from participating in the community established within his household and prevented from continuing to act, thereby breaking the action-character cycle. Because his perception of time is managed by the sultan's manipulation, Nourjahad awakens disoriented after each of his three drugged sleeps. Each time, he loses not only his companions but also part of himself as he can no longer trust his sense of the world when he awakens. This pseudo-death experience further isolates Nourjahad from the social world so that each time he awakes, he believes himself to be removed by multiple years from the action that reinforced his greed. Instead of greed reinforcing his action then, when Nourjahad awakes to find his world altered, his greed is met with loss, allowing grief rather than pleasure to effect in him.

⁹² See Chowdhury, "Fact, Fantasy, or Mimesis? Narratives of Freedom/Imperial Masquerade" in *Monstrous Dreams of Reason: Body, Self, and Other in the Enlightenment* (2002), p. 257.

Through Nourjahad's experience of these death-like sleeps, Sheridan introduces the issue of verifying the probability of a story. The believability of Nourjahad's experience is thrown into jeopardy when he sleeps, for these deep sleeps rupture Nourjahad's experience of time. Although Nourjahad's experience of time is contrived, resulting in what Margaret Anne Doody describes as "a spiral, or rather a helix, doubling back on itself," Nourjahad believes himself to be participating in real time (355). Consequently, when he wakes from his first deep sleep, he constantly questions the likelihood of his death-like sleep, for he cannot believe that he has been absent from life for four years. Demanding the truth from a servant girl whom he encounters in the hallway after he rises, Nourjahad accuses her of lying and cries out, "Audacious wretch...wouldst thou persuade me out of my senses?" (Sheridan 137). Nourjahad distrusts the servant's account of his life because he has not experienced the lapse of time, so her statement that he has slept for four years seems the wildest of claims and absurdly impossible.

Sheridan, however, establishes the probability of this fantasy through internal narrative proof. Bender argues that "novelist knowledge resides not only in the novel's expansion of experience but also in the genre's staging of the act of assessment as ongoing probabilistic judgment" (Bender 37). Sheridan quite deliberately stages this process by requiring Nourjahad to weigh four intersecting forms of evidence that speak to his experience. First, Sheridan points to the framing of a narrative world. Upon reflecting on his situation, Nourjahad "recalled the terms on which he had received the important gift from the genius; and began to suspect that he had endured one of those preternatural slumbers" (Sheridan 138). As Nourjahad remembers the terms of his wealth and immortality, Sheridan draws attention to the framing of the narrative. Much as a reader is suspended in a narrative world, Nourjahad has been absorbed into an embedded narrative through his arrangement with the genie. As a separate existence from the

real world, Nourjahad recognizes that his participation in this world hinges on the possibility of deep periods of sleep. Consequently, the initial framing of the world he now occupies serves to verify his current situation.

Second, Sheridan uses Nourjahad's inquiry into his experience to show the consistency in the behaviors of others in his household. When Nourjahad awakes, he discovers that the actions of other members of his household match the reactions he would anticipate if he had in fact been absent for a period of four years. The servant girl who first encounters him shrieks as if she has seen a ghost. To Nourjahad who believe only one night has passed, this response seems unreasonable, but given the context she describes, Nourjahad begins to see her action as the expected response to the situation. This continuity serves as further evidence for Nourjahad of the veracity of her story.

For the third form of evidence that Sheridan gives Nourjahad and the reader of the probability of his experience, Sheridan offers a seemingly reliable narrator who can give a detailed account of the situation. Nourjahad is still inclined to distrust the servant girl's tale, but when Hasem, Nourjahad's household manager, relates the same story, Nourjahad begins to believe. In addition to being male and a trusted servant, Hasem can offer Nourjahad a detailed report of the previous four years, and his report relates pieces of conversations between Nourjahad and Mandana. These embedded conversations lend authenticity to Hasem's story because Nourjahad believes Hasem would not know some of the details he relates about Nourjahad's life unless so much time had actually passed.

Sheridan's final proof that Nourjahad's experience is plausible is a child. Nourjahad believes he has only been asleep for a single night, so to convince him of the truth, Hasem, presents Nourjahad with his son, a child whom Hasem asserts has been born while Nourjahad

slept. Upon meeting the child, Nourjahad “saw that the child’s age seemed to agree exactly with the account he had received” (Sheridan 139). With this final piece of evidence, Nourjahad concludes that the stories of the servant girl and Hasem must be true, so he is convinced of the passage of time. Sheridan thus creates probability by verifying an absurd tale through carefully presented pieces of evidence, and she offers three criteria for identifying the probability of a story: the framing of the literary world, the reliability of the narrator, and the causal chain. Although the evidence is presented to Nourjahad, Sheridan uses these proofs to likewise convince the readers of the reality of Nourjahad’s experience so that Sheridan shocks the reader in the tale’s final reveal.

Parallel to her development of the criteria needed to assess a narrative’s probability, Sheridan offers a list of literary forms that fail to achieve probability. Sheridan references and interrogates several literary genres throughout *Nourjahad* by inserting them slyly into Nourjahad’s experiences as he attempts to relate his experiences to Schemzeddin. After his encounter with the genie, Nourjahad finds himself unexpectedly called into Schemzeddin’s court to explain his newfound affluence. Nourjahad declares to the sultan and his court, “I will unfold such wonders as will amaze him, and at the same time utter nothing but the strictest truth” (Sheridan 133). However, Nourjahad’s truth claim, which echoes the claims of pseudofactual narratives, suggests that his tale is false, so Schemzeddin rejects Nourjahad’s story entirely, and cries, “how darest thou presume thus to abuse my patience, and affront my understanding with the relation of so ridiculous a forgery? Go tell thy incredible tales to fools and children” (Sheridan 133). Offended that Nourjahad would pretend the truth of such a ludicrous story, Schemzeddin offers a rebuke that appears to echo the criticism Horace Walpole experienced following the publication of his second preface to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Walpole

published his novel just two years before Sheridan began writing, and his critics had renounced the work once they discovered the ruse of *Otranto*'s initial publication. These readers rejected the notion that a mature mind could enjoy or believe such a fantastical story, and Schemzeddin echoes that rebuff.⁹³ Nourjahad can offer no evidence for his story, since it juxtaposes two seeming incongruencies, his story fails.

Turning away from the pseudofactual approach, Nourjahad then turns to letter-writing as the appropriate genre for presenting his tale: "He writ to Schemzeddin a letter in terms full of humility...and conjured the sultan to take the trouble of informing himself more fully from some of his people, whom he might cause to be brought into his presence and privately examined" (Sheridan 145). However, Nourjahad's letter fares no better than his original account, and Schemzeddin again accuses Nourjahad of offering falsehoods. Here, Sheridan appears to target the epistolary novel, and although she wrote in the genre herself, the extreme griefs experienced by the protagonist of *Sidney Bidulph* had been seen as contrived and unbelievable. In the notes to his translation of *Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry*, Thomas Twining argues that *Sidney Bidulph* causes readerly indignation because "The mind of the reader is harassed and revolted throughout by the most improbable and determined perverseness of unfortunate combinations" (231). Though Twining's criticism came after Sheridan's death, Schemzeddin's response to Nourjahad voices similar criticisms of the improbable hardship Nourjahad claims to be experiencing. Though Nourjahad attempts to offer external evidence for his story this time, calling on servants in his household as witnesses, his story still fails to engage Schemzeddin as believable.

⁹³ Michael Gamer notes though, that even Walpole's friends felt the *Otranto* was so absurd that it might not even appeal to a thirteen-year-old child. See Gamer, "Introduction" in *The Castle of Otranto* (2001).

The irony of Nourjahad's failure to create a probable story is, of course, that the sultan knows the truth of Nourjahad's experience the entire time. Indeed, Schemzeddin knows the story far better than Nourjahad himself. In the master stroke of the story, Sheridan discloses the entire tale to have been painstakingly faked. Schemzeddin reveals to Nourjahad that everything he has experienced, from the servants to the drugged sleeps, has been a carefully staged fictional world with prescribed characters and scenes. Through this revelation, "The reader retroactively reconstitutes the way that the sultan and Mandana rather than Nourjahad actually had possessed the power to shape the story" (Nussbaum 132). The genie, as a ploy enacted by Mandana becomes the enabling fiction for the entire world because, once Nourjahad believes in the genie's existence, all other events are believable. For Sheridan, then, fictions become probable through the verification of their causal chains, and as people believe and act on these fictions, these probable narratives become significant - if intangible and even somewhat magical - forces in the world. Consequently, through the reveal at the end of the story, Sheridan allegorically exposes how social and political fictions influence reality, for once believed as probable, these fictions drive individual and communal actions.

By approaching fiction as an art form whose probability emerges from the verified chain of causality embedded in the narrative, Hawkesworth and Sheridan thus deploy the supernatural to express the reality of a lived secular experience. The genie forces us to consider how the pieces of a world work together through marvels that at times blind us to its intellectual labor. In moving away from the episodic and hierarchical forms of probability to a horizontal and sequential model, Hawkesworth and Sheridan move away from signs to causes in a world that is no longer providentially fated but self-determined. Fictionality thus emerges along the fault lines

of lived experience, where material culture depends on the immaterial, on what we believe, represent, and imagine.

CHAPTER 5

The Wildness of Causeless Action in Horace Walpole's *Hieroglyphic Tales*

Carved into the walls of temples and obelisks and painted onto papyrus scrolls are the Egyptian hieroglyphics. These inscriptions held the wisdom of ancient Egypt, recording rituals and hymns for pilgrims and offering up prayers to the gods. Yet as Christianity made its way from the Roman Empire down into Egypt and the Egyptian gods slowly fell silent, the ability to understand the ancient script faded away.⁹⁴ Despite being one of the earliest recorded written languages, the words could no longer be read, and so ancient Egyptian thought was lost for centuries to come. These “echoes of the pharaonic world” remained unintelligible until in 1799, near the end of the Napoleonic invasion in Egypt, French soldiers unexpectedly uncovered a stone buried in Rosetta, Egypt (Ray 18). Inscribed in Greek, hieroglyphs, and demotic script, this stone provided the long-awaited key for deciphering the mysterious pictographs and for restoring the richness of ancient Egyptian civilization to the global memory.

However, in the mid-eighteenth century, the Egyptian hieroglyphics were still an enigma that both bewildered and fascinated Europeans because of their undeciphered yet promised meanings. To the European eye, the lines and pictographs seemed randomly juxtaposed together in vertical columns of inaccessible significance. Consequently, within British writing, the Egyptian hieroglyphics became a reference point for larger linguistic questions concerning the relationship between signs and knowledge and the conventions and origins of language. In Delarivier Manley's *The New Atlantis* (1709), hieroglyphics became a metaphor for coded

⁹⁴ For more about Egypt's loss of its ancient language, see John Ray, *The Rosetta Stone and the Rebirth of Ancient Egypt* (2011).

language, while in Daniel Defoe's *An Essay Upon Literature* (1726), they offered a way to think about the complex relationship between ideas and words. Later in the century, Alexander Pope saw hieroglyphics as a means for thinking about censorship after reading William Warbuteron's account about the origins of hieroglyphics in *Divine Legation of Moses* (1741).⁹⁵ More than simply a question of translation then, the Egyptian hieroglyphics engaged British authors in questions about meaning during a moment when meaning was increasingly abstracted.⁹⁶

No author captures the mystery of the hieroglyphics with quite the same absurdity as Horace Walpole though. Between 1766 and 1772, Walpole drew from his knowledge of eastern folktales, the Bible, Shakespeare, antiquarian lore, and political intrigue to craft a collection of oriental tales that he dubbed the *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1785). Set within a world that exists prior to the creation of the contemporary world, the *Hieroglyphic Tales* blends together reflections on literary form, satire, quixotic dreams, and wild plotlines, conjuring the same secretive potential as the Egyptian hieroglyphics for which they were named. Since the Rosetta Stone would not be found until two years after Walpole's death, during his lifetime, the hieroglyphics remained a peculiar grouping of images that maintained a tension between allusion and unreadability. Taking advantage of this sense of unknowability, Walpole indicates a sense randomness in the construction of his stories in the opening footnote to the collection where he claims that "the

⁹⁵ Though not published until mid-century, William Warbuteron's argument for the hieroglyphics as a form of secret wisdom widely influenced eighteenth-century views. See Liselotte Dieckmann, *Hieroglyphics: The History of a Literary Symbol* (1970). For more eighteenth-century author's engagements with hieroglyphics, see Julie Candler Hayes, *Reading the French Enlightenment: System and Subversion* (1999); Maximillian E. Novak, *Daniel Defoe: Master of Fictions: His Life and Ideas* (2001); Elizabeth Kraft, *Women Novelists and the Ethics of Desire, 1684–1814: In the Voice of Our Biblical Mothers* (2008); and Netta Murray Goldsmith, *Alexander Pope: The Evolution of a Poet* (2017).

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Kraft takes up this issue of translation in regards to female authors, particularly Delarivier Manley, Aphra Behn, and Eliza Haywood. See Elizabeth Kraft, *Women Novelists and the Ethics of Desire, 1684–1814: In the Voice of Our Biblical Mothers* (2008).

merit of an Hieroglyphic Tale consists in its being written extempore and without any plan” (*Tales* 31).⁹⁷ From this perspective, the absurdity of the collection results from its aimlessness.⁹⁸ Reading the tales as possessing little thought or reason therefore, Kenneth Gross and Robert Mack argue against a hidden meaning in the *Hieroglyphic Tales* and instead contend that the stories avoid the sustained ridicule of texts such as Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* since Walpole arbitrarily juxtaposes contemporary events and persons together in a fashion that evades commentary.⁹⁹ With no hidden agenda, these tales are simply bizarre, with Gross going so far as to classify the collection as the first English surrealist text, one that lacks “the possibility of a concealed intellectual skeleton” (Gross 10). The cacophony of images within the collection could not possibly hold a deeper meaning: they are simply, in the words of R.W. Ketton-Cremer, “moonstruck nonsense” written in the “maddest and most inconsequent vein” (284).¹⁰⁰ Walpole’s

⁹⁷ All quotations will be taken from Kenneth Gross’s 1982 edition of Walpole’s text.

⁹⁸ It is worth noting, however, that Walpole’s comment should not be taken as just cause for dismissing the stories as sheer nonsense though since he made similar claims regarding the composition of *The Castle of Otranto*. On March 9, 1765, Walpole wrote Cole about his process in composing *Otranto*. Insisting the idea emerged from a dream he had had, Walpole writes, “In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing the least what I intended to say or relate” (*Correspondence* 1:88). However much the story may have begun as a random exercise, Walpole’s completed text reveals a purposeful creation that attempts to be a new form of literary offering, and the same can be said of Walpole’s *Hieroglyphic Tales*.

⁹⁹ Gross portrays the tales as the imaginative excesses of a creative writer that point vaguely at current events but miss satire when he contends that Walpole does “not invite us to read them as ciphers of an integrated satiric argument” (10). Mack expands on this notion suggesting that the historical and personal references in Walpole’s texts lack any explanatory apparatus so that “There is no coherent satiric ‘ethic’ at work in the tales” (xxvii).

¹⁰⁰ Kretton-Cremer is not alone in this perspective. Gillian Avery more recently contrasts the tales with other children’s fairy tales and finds Walpole’s stories lacking, for she characterizes them as “a fast-flowing stream of inconsequential nonsense, without structure or shape” (148). From her perspective, they are extravagant merely for the sake of extravagance, and their content makes them inappropriate for children despite Walpole’s dedication of the third tale, “The Dice Box. A Fairy Tale,” to Caroline Campbell, the niece of Walpole’s close friends, Henry Seymour Conway and Lady Ailesbury. Martin Kallich likewise finds the tales’ content troubling and argues that they reveal an unconscious Oedipal impulse disguised within a mixture of nonsense and crudeness.

absurd tales were simply meant to mimic the incomprehensibility that defined the Egyptian hieroglyphics for eighteenth-century scholars and enthusiasts.

Yet even if the *Hieroglyphic Tales* did begin as a set of randomly collected ideas, Walpole's tales can be deciphered. Indeed, in describing the tales as hieroglyphics, Walpole signals that his tales can be, in a sense, translated. Reading his stories for references to the individuals and situations around him, Benjamin Bird and Paul Nash argue that Walpole's absurdity is a misdirect for embedded political or social commentary. Once recognized as satire, though, the tales unlock to reveal precise critiques of monarchical succession and of a growing imperialistic trade.¹⁰¹ But, as Laura Baudot argues, unlocking this meaning requires recognizing the deliberate ways that Walpole deploys nonsense in his stories. Baudot argues that Walpole uses what she describes as a "negative mode" to craft stories around places and persons that disappear as soon as the narrator identifies them.¹⁰² Once understood, Baudot contends that Walpole's hieroglyphics reveal a sustained concern about the limitations being placed on the imagination due to the empirical knowledge of the world being collected through colonialism. Though at first glance ridiculous, Walpole's tales in fact reveal a purposeful engagement with social themes and with literary form so that as with the Egyptian hieroglyphics that intrigued

¹⁰¹ Benjamin Bird, for example, reads the *Hieroglyphic Tales* as demonstrating Walpole's increasing discomfort with the fundamental principles of the monarchy. Turning to the second tale, "The King and his three daughters," Bird argues that Walpole interrogates monarchical succession and illustrates a government in decline. More recently, Paul Nash has argued that Walpole's text voices anxiety about Britain's mercantile expansion. Taking up the oriental themes within the fifth tale, "Mi Li. A Chinese Fairy Tale," Nash argues that Walpole's text can be understood as a literary *sharawaggi* that criticizes the East India Company's pursuit of profit within the context of contemporary ideas about Chinese and British approaches to the world.

¹⁰² Laura Baudot offers two overlapping discussions of Walpole's *Hieroglyphic Tales* as her article. See "A Voyage of Undiscovery: Deciphering Horace Walpole's *Hieroglyphic Tales*" in *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* (2009) and *Looking at Nothing: Literary Vacuity in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2005).

Walpole, his stories both fascinate and bewilder others as they waver between the promise of hidden meaning and lunacy.

However inane these tales might initially appear, they represent Walpole's search for a literary form that could depict the balance between the randomness yet seeming purposefulness of the human experience. Having already broken with narrative convention in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Walpole once again pushes the limits of narrative in the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, for as Nicholas Paige points out, authors practiced fiction in particular forms because of their assumptions concerning "what literature was good for and how it worked upon us," so their modifications to common narrative practices reflected authorial attempts to improve their craft and their commentary (Paige *Before* 26). Since Walpole felt neither the romance nor the novel was capable of engaging the imagination or representing the contingency of history, he took up the oriental tale in order to explore the relationship between fiction and history through contemporary questions about action, causality, and narrative. Despite the *Hieroglyphic Tales'* absurdity, then, the jumble of actions and places that collide in the stories reveal Walpole's deliberate and sustained engagement with emerging fictional practices as he challenges the linearity and compactness of the novel through a turn to the serendipitous.

Heeding Baudot's call to take the ridiculous nature of these tales seriously then, my chapter argues that Walpole uses the action-oriented form of the oriental tale to write a narrative that refuses the totality of the novel and instead remains open, inviting further imagination and invention. To do so, Walpole uses the primordial setting he establishes in the collection's preface to disrupt notions of causality, and he creates a world of untethered action where disparate elements connect and form cohesive stories through their interactions rather than through an overarching plot. Drawing on his antiquarian obsession with "trifles," Walpole transposes people

and incidents from his everyday life into oriental tales, creating a narrative form that, in its imaginative departures, represents the contingent nature of lived experience. Walpole thus re-envisions narrative plot and offers a world of serendipity, one that I argue, pushes at the limits of fictionality and illuminates an alternative mode for imagining both literature and history. My chapter begins, therefore, by looking at the ways Walpole experimented with both narrative practices and eastern fictional forms and then turns to examine how Walpole adapts a pre-Adamite context for his stories in order to disrupt notions of causality in the stories. I then turn to Tale 1 and Tale 2 to show how Walpole rejects both the novel and the romance as useful literary forms and trace his turn to history as a way to discover fiction. My final section, then, examines how Walpole's understanding of fiction reflects to his conception of serendipity.

4.1 Walpole's Exploration of Literary Form in Scenes of the East

The stories in the *Hieroglyphic Tales* are blatantly unreal. These tales offer a fanciful frolic in a pre-Adamite world, playing with conceptions of history and experimenting with narrative form. Since Walpole had quite deliberately attempted to bring together the probability of the novel and the imagination of romance within *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the wildness of his *Hieroglyphic Tales* comes as a surprise and raises questions about his narrative vision. If, as Catherine Gallagher has argued, "Plausible stories are the real test for the progress of fictional sophistication," then Walpole's tales seem to be anything but fictional ("Rise" 339). Indeed, upon reading the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, Walpole's contemporaries responded by describing the tales as "ridiculous," "delusions or dreams," and "odd fancies."¹⁰³ When the text made its way to

¹⁰³ After reading Tale 3, "The Dice Box. A Fairy Tale," in which the Queen of Sheba visits Solomon every October, Lady Mary Coke described it as a "ridiculous fairy tale" (Sabor 152). Walpole's frequent correspondent, Madame du Deffand likewise wrote Walpole, "Les trois

the Strawberry Hill press, Walpole only produced seven copies, including the proof, and he limited its circulation to a trusted coterie of readers. Consequently, the collection remained hidden from public consumption until its appearance in his posthumous *Works* (1789). Despite their insider knowledge, Walpole's friends found the collection nonsensical. The stories presented a kaleidoscopic compendium of inside jokes, satirical comments, and literary allusions that were embedded within preposterous scenes such as a pistachio carriage being drawn by an elephant and a ladybug or the proposed wedding of an Egyptian mummy. No wonder Walpole's friend and frequent correspondent Reverend William Cole reported in a letter to Walpole that he had heard that a delirious Walpole had dictated the stories while under the influence of a muse named gout. Walpole, however, wrote back that "I have some strange things in my drawer, even wilder than *The Castle of Otranto*, and called the *Hieroglyphic Tales* - but they were not written lately nor in the gout, nor whatever they may seem, written when I was out of my senses" (*Correspondence* 2:141-2).¹⁰⁴ Though he readily admitted to the tales' unique style, Walpole nevertheless contested the rumors that he wrote them during a state of delirium. By insisting that he wrote the tales while in his right mind, he instead signals an intentional literary method embedded within the imaginative absurdity.

To understand the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, then, we must take seriously Walpole's claim that these tales are hieroglyphs. Walpole found the tension between meaning and the seeming

contes dont vous me parlez me paraissent des délires ou des rêves, et assurément je donne toute préférence à vos lettres" (*Correspondence* 5:215) (*The three tales of which you speak appear to me delusions or dreams, and assuredly I prefer your letters.*) After the collection's posthumous publication, Charles Burney described it in the *Monthly Review* stating, "It must be allowed that our author had a great deal of fancy, or a great many *odd fancies*" (Sabor 154).

¹⁰⁴ All references to Walpole's correspondence are taken from *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, edited by Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis and will be marked by volume and page number.

randomness in the Egyptian hieroglyphics compelling, and he jotted various thoughts about the language in the *Miscellany*, his third and final “Book of Materials” or literary notebook in which he collected notes for his writing. Noting the historical uncertainty about the origins of the language, Walpole writes, “Many have thought the Egyptians derived from the Chinese, and others vice versa” (*Miscellany* 48). Indeed, eighteenth-century scholarship debated about the relationship between the Egyptian hieroglyphics and Chinese characters and suggested that the Chinese script might have descended from the Egyptian by way of colonialism. The mystery of the language’s origins encouraged Walpole’s interest in its secrets, for he perceives Egypt as a “nation that loves to wrap its knowledge in mystery” (*Miscellany* 55).¹⁰⁵ For Walpole, the Egyptian hieroglyphics held a unique power since their meanings remained impenetrable, tantalizing those who might wish to translate them. It is not surprising, therefore, that Walpole styled his collection of oriental tales with the same ambiguity as the stories waver between hidden meanings and enigmatic scenes that elude straightforward readings.

Walpole, however, provides the key to his hieroglyphics in the postscript to the tales. Unlike either of the prefaces that Walpole attaches to *Otranto*, the postscript for the *Hieroglyphic Tales* is brief, yet in it, he lays out a rationale for the construction of the stories that demonstrates his intentional engagement with literary form. Walpole explains that he wrote the tales “as an attempt to vary the stale and beaten class of stories and novels, which though works of invention, are almost always devoid of imagination” (*Tales* 71). Having surveyed the contemporary narrative forms available, Walpole finds a method of true imaginative expression lacking. Despite the newness of the novel, he dismisses it as a form already trapped by a uniform

¹⁰⁵ Lars Troide notes that Walpole, like many of his period, held the mistaken idea that the hieroglyphics were allegorical rather than phonetic. See *Horace Walpole’s Miscellany, 1785-1796* (1978), p. 55 note 7.

consistency that renders it unappealing. Though an author might vary a novel by creating a new set of circumstances, Walpole nevertheless believes the novel to be too formulaic to be engaging and too predictable to interest the reader in the unfolding tale. He therefore sought a new way to pour his imaginative renderings out onto a page, one that could more truly capture the balance between the seeming randomness and purposefulness of the human experience.

As the postscript makes clear, far from being a random hodgepodge, Walpole's *Hieroglyphic Tales* explore a new practice for writing fiction, so the collection extends the work that he began when he wrote *Otranto*. In the second preface to *Otranto*, Walpole pairs the realism of the novel with the marvel of the heroic romance, which he describes as "an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (*Otranto* 9).¹⁰⁶ Rather than create balance between the two forms, though, Walpole ends up transgressing the conventions of both as he lays out a new fictional approach that sought to merge "the great resources of fancy" with those of "common life" (*Otranto* 9). As a result, Walpole created, as Paige describes, a "modern literature of the marvelous," by refusing to mythologize the marvelous and instead asserting the reality of the experience. Through this new approach, Walpole endeavored to move beyond a formulaic structure yet still to provoke an aesthetic response.

Having laid out this agenda in the second preface, Walpole seeks to unite the marvelous of the ancient romance with the attention to reality that was characteristic of the novel. Walpole signals his movement away from the classical ideas of literary probability within the first few pages of *Otranto* when a giant helmet smashes any notion of fictional propriety. The marvelous

¹⁰⁶ Warren Smith argues that the movement between Walpole's two prefaces simulates the understanding of fictionality that was emerging: "The first preface helped situate the novel as an ancient romance dealing in fantastic improbability whereas the second preface emphasized that the novel can be read realistically" (19). See Smith, "Horace Walpole's Correspondence." *The Yale University Library Gazette* (1983).

thus becomes the animating principle for what could otherwise be understood as a natural and historical scene. Despite the shock of this initial incident though, Walpole's tale falls into the very trap he wishes to avoid: *Otranto* remains somewhat mechanical and even predictable. The prophecy in the story manifests literally rather than figuratively, yet it still dictates the plot so that the shock of *Otranto*'s opening scene gives way to the predicted ending. *Otranto* opens and closes with the same scene: the heir of Otranto's marriage to Isabella. The heir changes from Conrad to Theodore, but the structure of the history remains unchanged. Consequently, although Walpole sets out to write a story where people would "think, speak, and act as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions," the narrative form remains one driven by fate (*Otranto* 9).

Whereas in *Otranto*, Walpole thrills but nevertheless adheres to a familiar structure, in the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, he attempts to free imagination from a conventional narrative structure altogether. Standing at the threshold of modern notions of fictionality, Walpole wrote *Otranto* at a time when the novel had reportedly been established. Yet while the debates between Fielding and Richardson may have indeed led to the emergence of "the novel" as a "simple abstraction," as Michael McKeon argues, the form had not fully differentiated itself from the romance, so Walpole saw the novel as still bound by a formulaic approach that had mutated but not truly changed.¹⁰⁷ Dismissing the novel and romance as "stale and beaten," Walpole states in the postscript to the *Hieroglyphic Tales* that he wishes to move away from stories that offer "so little variety, and so little novelty" despite their being "fettered by no rules and by no obligation of speaking truth" (*Tales* 71). At first glance, Walpole's declaration seems to anticipate the

¹⁰⁷ Marcie Frank argues that McKeon underestimated the influence of the romance and the impact that had on writers like Walpole. See Frank, "Walpole's Theatricality," *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* (2009).

nineteenth century's turn towards fictional worlds, placing him at odds with the fictional approach of his literary moment. Throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, authors used truth claims to legitimize the aesthetic and moral aims of their novels, and yet despite this pretense, few readers seemed to believe in such claims. Walpole, however, had already experimented almost too successfully with truth claims when the found manuscript ploy that he used in *Otranto* tricked readers into thinking the novel was literally true. Through we now see *Otranto* as a forerunner of the Gothic novel, Walpole's attempt to create a new kind of romance infuriated rather than engaged readers so that in his contemporary moment, the novel was an isolated incident rather than a revolutionary new literary form.

For Walpole to reject "speaking truth," therefore, signals his intent to experiment with literary probability again but this time by rejecting it altogether. While *Otranto* had explored the influence of the marvelous on plausibility, in the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, Walpole refuses enchantment as well as realism since both modes rely on the plausibility of their respective worlds, with the former supplying a magical gloss to create causality for the otherwise unexplainable. In this respect, Walpole's shift from *Otranto* to the *Hieroglyphic Tales* reflects an experimentation with literary technique that Nicholas Paige argues defines fiction. While Catherine Gallagher and Lennard Davis link the rise of fictionality to the development of a reader's ability to believe in and yet distinguish a narrative world as fictional, Paige argues that the fictional worlds of the nineteenth century appear not because of changes in people's cognitive abilities but rather through experiments in literary techniques. Fiction, he argues, should be understood as a "nebula of writing practices and ideas about writing—techniques invented and modified, sometimes quickly and sometimes not, through a difficult-to-specify dialectical relationship with what people think literature can and should do" (205). When seen as

a set of narrative practices, fiction – rather than being something to be believed – becomes a means for illuminating the ways authors modify their technique as they play with the possibilities of different literary forms. Though the absurdity of the *Hieroglyphic Tales* initially seems to suggest that Walpole abandoned his work in *Otranto* for something completely different, when we approach the stories as a collection of deliberate narrative practices rather than as a set of impossible situations, the continuity in Walpole’s abiding interest in the singularity and contingency of human experience appears. *Otranto* turned to magic to generate the unexpected, but, as discussed earlier, it ultimately failed to break free of a sense of fatedness. Rather than continuing to modify literary form by blending the novel and the romance together, therefore, Walpole turns to the oriental tale to experiment with a world of untethered action. By juxtaposing singular characters and events together, Walpole refuses a plot and instead allows meaning to emerge from the seemingly random interactions of the different characters. In so doing, Walpole seeks to create a literary world that reflects the human experience, one where narrative contingency allow characters to exist and to act in seemingly random ways, rather than being predetermined by their world.

In order to find a literary form that would permit Walpole’s exploration of narrative contingency, he turned to the oriental tale. When Walpole began writing his collection of stories, the oriental tale had been circulating within British literary circles for nearly sixty years. An increase in trade with nations to the east had brought an influx of travel narratives and histories of the Ottoman, Persian, Chinese, and Mughal empires to Britain, yet it was Giovanni Paolo Marana’s publication of *The Turkish Spy* (1684) and Antoine Galland’s translation of the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* (1704-1717) shortly thereafter which forever altered the British literary tradition and shaped Walpole’s own narrative endeavors. Walpole’s library reflects the

influence of these texts, for as Earle Havens argues, the Strawberry Hill library “can be usefully interpreted as a telling reflection both of Walpole’s personal interests – in history, literature, art, antiquities, etc. – as well as his particular attitude toward books” (259). This attitude meant active reading, as Walpole, pen in hand, would notate his thoughts in the margins of his books and record tidbits he found interesting in his Book of Materials – a set of three notebooks containing the musings he had collected over the years. His marginalia ranges from reflections on the histories of the world’s empires to criticism of literary texts including the *Arabian Nights*, Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* (1721), and Samuel Johnson’s *The History of Rasselas: Prince of Abissinia* (1759). When Walpole chose the oriental tale as the basis of his *Hieroglyphic Tales*, he thus turned to the *Arabian Nights*’ as a starting point (as can be seen in his choice to name his first tale “A New Arabian Night’s Entertainment”) and then added to it by drawing on the collection of notes he had compiled in his Book of Materials to piece together six distinct tales and a preface. Imitating the action-centric focus of the *Arabian Nights*’, Walpole drew these distinct elements together by creatively experimenting with the ways actions could shape narrative worlds.

Walpole’s enthusiasm for eastern forms and aesthetics began at an early age and would influence his imagination for the duration of his life, even after he began to reject the forms he had embraced as a younger man. In 1735, during Walpole’s time at Cambridge, Lord Hervey sent him a copy of Jean-Baptiste Du Halde’s four-volume *Description de la Chine*. As the primary source of knowledge about China for sinophiles during the eighteenth century, the text enthralled Walpole, so much so that he apparently began to pretend himself to be Chinese, prompting Lord Hervey to write that though “extremely glad to hear the History of China has so

strong an effect,” he nonetheless advised Walpole to “continue an Englishman” (*Correspondence* 40:18).

Walpole, however, persisted in his playacting, expanding from his enthusiasm with the Chinese to masquerading as an individual from other eastern ethnicities and cultures as well. In 1743, Walpole spent an evening posing as an Indian servant from the Persian court of Thamas Kouli Kan Schah Nadir.¹⁰⁸ Fully embracing the character, Walpole not only dressed the part but also wrote and delivered a letter to the newly appointed Lord of the Bedchamber, Henry Clinton. Written on a long sheet of red paper, the letter is signed as “From the Sergalio of Isphan/ The First of the Month Regeb” and clearly styled after *The Turkish Spy*. Despite Walpole’s extensive knowledge about different cultures to the east, he nevertheless collapses distinct traditions together and creates a truly Oriental document: it is a Persian letter, delivered by an Indian servant, decorated with Chinese characters.¹⁰⁹ Amused by the episode, Walpole wrote an account of the event to his friend Horace Mann and included a transcript of the Persian letter he had presented to Clinton.¹¹⁰ The short and bombastic piece foregrounds oriental stereotypes as the speaker of the letter congratulates Clinton on his new position by offering him of a harem of maidens and an army of eunuchs. Through the foreign observer motif, Walpole offers a biting mockery of Clinton’s political maneuvering, but this letter also indicates an early move by Walpole to turn a historical instance into the center of a narrative event. Transforming himself

¹⁰⁸ Ros Ballaster argues that Walpole likely found Mahmut as an appealing character because of their shared interests since Mahmut possessed an enthusiasm for travel literature, for ancient history, and antiquarianism. See Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East, 1662-1785* (2005).

¹⁰⁹ Walpole describes the incident with the Persian letter in his correspondence with Horace Mann where he reproduces the entirety of the letter and describes the response of the room. See *Correspondence* 18:167. The physical letter is archived at the Lewis-Walpole Library: LWL MSS 1 Framed, Object Storage digcoll: 2783570.

¹¹⁰ See *Correspondence* 18:66.

into a foreigner, Walpole can likewise render Clinton as a character in the narrative he is constructing, which he then transcribes in a written document. By placing the story of the evening in a letter to Mann and then embedding the letter he wrote inside of that, Walpole distances the event from reality so that it begins to take on fictional overtones.

Walpole returned to the position of the foreign observer multiple times in both his personal and public writing. In a letter to Horace Mann in 1742, he assigned himself the position of Scheherazade as he narrated current political events, and he addresses Mann throughout the letter as Scheherazade's sister, Dinarzade. A decade later, Walpole once again donned the voice of the foreign informant in *A Letter from Xo Ho, A Chinese Philosopher at London to his Friend Lien Chi at Peking* (1757). As Xo Ho, Walpole expresses disingenuous bewilderment at the political factionalism in Britain and condemns that divide for causing the undeserved execution of an admiral.¹¹¹ After observing that the killing served as security for ministers seeking re-election, Xo Ho critiques not only a corrupt government but also a gullible public, and this dual attack that attracted public attention, for the pamphlet quickly went through five editions.¹¹² By playing the innocent foreign observer, therefore, Walpole's imagined oriental personas offered a pointed cultural critique. Yet they also signal his experimentation with alternative modes of authenticating fiction. By claiming to be a letter, the *Xo Ho* pamphlet pretends to a historical document in a manner aligned with other contemporary pseudofactual narrative practices. As Ros Ballaster has observed, the phonetically transcribed name of Xo Ho alerts the reader to the

¹¹¹ After failing to provide what Parliament viewed as appropriate relief to the British army during the Battle of Minorca in 1756, Admiral Byng was court-martialed and ultimately executed.

¹¹² Peter Sabor notes that Walpole's pamphlet elicited an anonymous response, *An Answer from Lien Chi, in Peking, to Xo Ho the Chinese Philosopher in London* (1757).

invention of the text even as it comments on the present historical moment.¹¹³ Though as a satire the document has clear historical referents, Walpole also grants the tale authenticity as a narrative form as he aligns it not with reality but with other fictional forms featuring foreign observers. The pamphlet thus serves as both a social critique and as a fictional experiment. Through this dual position, *Xo Ho* can speak both as a satire and a story separate from its historical moment.

Walpole began to modify his fictional practice in 1753, when he penned his first oriental tales. Under the pseudonym Adam Fitz-Adam, Walpole drafted two consecutive, satirical essays that he intended for publication in *The World*. Though neither manuscript ever made it into *The World*, the first-person reflection in an Eastern voice captures Walpole's move towards blending absurdity with Eastern tropes.¹¹⁴ The narrator is anonymous, although in the second of the two essays, he describes his genealogy as tracing it back to the biblical Adam and to Chi Hoang Ti, Emperor of China. However, he focuses on Chi Hoang Ti, whom the narrator praises as being known for the burning of books during his reign. The narrator argues that Europe should emulate Chi Hoang Ti in order to solve a problem currently plaguing Europe: the mass production of printed material. During the first of the two essays, the narrator notes with alarm the rapid rate at which books are being printed. At this point, Walpole then introduces a second Eastern voice who asserts that it will soon be difficult to travel in Europe "by reason of vast waste tracts of land, which they call *libraries*" (No. 57 *The World* MSS Vol. 155). This second speaker had little

¹¹³ See Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East, 1662-1785* (2005).

¹¹⁴ In a note scrawled at the top of the manuscript of the tale about the library in Alexandria states, "The two following papers were not published, the plan not having been completed." The manuscript contains signs of revision, but Walpole does not indicate what further alterations he intended to make in order to publish these tales. These manuscripts are located at the Lewis-Walpole Library: *The World*, Horace Walpole, 1717-1797, MSS Vol. 155.

patience, therefore, for those who collected books as artifacts with little appreciation for the knowledge being transmitted therein. Though Walpole, as Earle Havens argues, collected a significant number of books and manuscripts over the course of his life, Walpole saw these texts as a means “to place himself into direct, imaginative connection with the distant past” (296). Rather than elevate knowledge, the proliferation of printed material reduced it to something merely to be collected but not appreciated.

As the last oriental tales that Walpole is known to have written, the *Hieroglyphic Tales* demonstrate his most creative fictional experimentation as Walpole explores the way that history can morph into fiction. Although both Paul Nash and Timothy Mowl argue that Walpole eventually rejected his infatuation with the eastern forms of literature, style, and gardening, Walpole’s extensive dabbling in stories narrated by a foreign observer and his oriental tales, in addition to the continuation of the notes he jotted about eastern narratives in his *Book of Materials* until near his death, speak to Walpole’s prolonged engagement with oriental literary forms and the ends that such forms can achieve.¹¹⁵ Though far less known than *Xo Ho*, the *Hieroglyphic Tales* moves beyond merely projecting British concerns onto a Persian or Chinese setting, then, as Walpole elevates form over traditional oriental tropes in order to explore the fictional possibilities that the oriental tale provide for representing the contingency of history.

¹¹⁵ David Porter argues that Walpole’s fascination with Chinese culture began to fade almost immediately so that by 1752, he was openly critical of Chinese style, while Timothy Mowl suggests that Walpole viewed Chinese influences as a “stylistic dead-end” so that as Walpole became more nationalistic, he turned to the Gothic style instead. See, Porter, “From Chinese to Goth: Walpole and the Gothic Repudiation of Chinoiserie.” *Eighteenth-Century Life* (1999) and Mowl, *Horace Walpole: The Great Outsider* (2014). As I hope to show through my discussion of Walpole’s eastern writings above, though, Walpole maintained an abiding fascination with Eastern cultures so that even as he began to argue against their aesthetic, he continued to return to them throughout his work.

4.2 Causality and the Imagination

Though Walpole's friends found the *Hieroglyphic Tales* absurd, this collection of stories demonstrates the culmination of decades of experiments with literary form and Walpole's persistent engagement with eastern narratives. As his literary practices evolved through his experimentation with different eastern narrative settings, so too did his approach to fiction, so he turns to the oriental tale as the form best suited for depicting the human experience. Drawing on the *Arabian Nights*' focus on action, Walpole sets his collection within a pre-Adamite world and imaginatively breaks the chain of causality in order to represent the chaotic happenstance of everyday life.

Walpole indicates the influence of the *Arabian Nights*' in his epigraph to the *Hieroglyphic Tales*. The brief inscription reads, "Schah Baham ne comprenoit jamais bien que les choses absurdes et hors de toute varaisemblance" (*The only thing Schah Baham ever really understood well were things that were absurd and beyond belief*) (*Tales* 24).¹¹⁶ As the fictional grandson of Scheherazade and Schahrir, this reference to Schah Baham links Walpole's collection to the *Arabian Nights*' as well as to Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon's oriental tale, *Le Sopha* (1742). Schah Baham features in *Le Sopha* as the sultan who is listening to tales related by a member of the court who had spent years trapped within various sofas. Unlike Scheherazade's stories, Crébillon's tales feature erotic intrigues and social conspiracies leading to a debate among the characters about what the fictional form of *contes* can do and who gets to decide. Consequently, by referencing Schah Baham, Walpole not only evokes the oriental tale and sets the tone for the absurdities to come, but he also signals his self-conscious engagement

¹¹⁶ Translated by Robert Mack in *Castle of Otranto & Hieroglyphic Tales* (1993), p.101.

with questions of narrative purpose and formation as he explores the relationship between fictionality and contingency.

Walpole's allusion to the *Arabian Nights*' bears consideration, for the frantic motion of the tales to come are modeled, in part, on Walpole's appreciation of a "wildness that captivates" which he ascribes to Scheherazade's stories (*Correspondence* 11:21). At its core, the *Arabian Nights*' is a collection of stories about the ability of narrative to make meaning within an otherwise chaotic world, so these stories emphasize the action of their characters but, for the most part, do not develop any sense of interiority for these figures. Instead, the *Arabian Nights*' structure depends on nested story cycles where Scheherazade tells a story about a fisherman who in turn tells a story about a dog who becomes a man who in turn tells a story about a woman, etc. In each instance, the focus of the narrative centers not on the subject of the tale but on the object because each new character introduced brings the potential for a new story. Observing this structure, Tzvetan Todorov argues that the *Arabian Nights*' should be understood as what he calls predicative literature, or literature where the predicate of the story subordinates the subject. Rather than see action as the effect of a character's interiority, Todorov describes the *Arabian Nights*' as favoring an intransitive structure where "the action is important in itself and not as an indication of this or that character trait" (67). This intransitive form consequently dissolves the distance between character and action so that action becomes indicative of both the cause and the effect of character simultaneously through an immediate rather than a mediated causality. As a result, Todorov argues that predicative literature must be understood as existing "outside of time" since it denies the chain of causality that would usually link action back to the moment of creation (69). While history may offer causal accounts for its events, the pure story offers none,

for in this world, characters are what they do and do what they are so that action transcends character.

Walpole's favorite set of stories among the *Arabian Nights* was the Sinbad cycle, and Sinbad's wild adventures illustrate how Walpole understood an emphasis on action as resulting in imaginative possibility. As an aged sailor recounting his seven voyages, Sinbad himself nevertheless remains obscure, leading Todorov to remark, "Only the coldest travel narrative can compete with Sinbad's tales in impersonality" (67). Sinbad is simply a traveler: he enjoys travel so he goes on trips and because he takes trips, he enjoys travel. Little else is revealed about his character for as the subject, his actions always point forward to the recipient of his actions rather than back to his character. Effaced by the predicates of his stories, Sinbad functions only as a catalyst for exploration: his actions become the means for understanding the world rather than for understanding him. Each new person introduced into the narrative can, in turn, become the subject for a new action and a new predicate, prompting a future orientation. Narrative begets narrative, for every story has another in waiting as the background becomes foreground. However, though one story leads to another, connections between the stories are frequently random. When Sinbad travels, for instance, he frequently find himself misdirected from his original course through calamity, so his life accidentally connects with individuals whom he had no intention of meeting. As these characters share their own stories, there is no causal link between the events in Sinbad's story and the events in those of the individuals he meets. The juxtaposition of these stories may reveal insight into either one, but there is no connecting material except for the frame tale. This is a world of contingency rather than fate.

This question of contingency shapes the preface to the *Hieroglyphic Tales* as Walpole presents an outlandish but insightful meditation on narrative form. Walpole opens the preface by

adapting the persona of an overeager editor, intent on making his mark on the world. Drawing on Walpole's own work in publishing at the Strawberry Hill press, the narrator describes how he will print 100,000 copies of the tales he is about to relate, but due to costs, this will happen in small batches over many years.¹¹⁷ The tension between the great number of promised texts and the small number that can actually be produced is repeated and altered throughout the rest of the preface. The narrator consistently presents contradictory information such as when he asserts that the tales have either emerged from an oral tradition of possibly 6,000 years or maybe ten years prior to this edition and, furthermore, that the tales were handed down by clergy who reportedly heard the stories from "old men long before they, the said clergymen, were born" (*Tales* 27). Such narrative maneuvers prompt Baudot to label the narrator as an impecunious hack, while Anne Stevens likewise represents him as a less-than-subtle forger who wishes to break into the market for exotic literature.¹¹⁸ Both characterizations suit the narrator, for this exaggerated persona enables Walpole to foreground his critique of the literary field of the period.

Walpole signals a departure from contemporary fiction within the first lines of the preface, slowly introducing the wildness of his tales through this ironic and self-conscious narration. Acknowledging that readers may not welcome his style, the narrator states, "As the invaluable present I am making to the world may not please all tastes, from the gravity of the matter, the solidity of the reasoning, and the deep learning contained in the ensuing sheets, it is necessary to make some apology for producing this work in so trifling an age" (*Tales* 25).

¹¹⁷ For more on Walpole's press at Strawberry Hill, see Laura Baudot, *Looking at Nothing: Literary Vacuity in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2005); Peter Sabor, *Horace Walpole: The Critical Heritage* (2013) and Timothy Mowl, *Horace Walpole: The Great Outsider* (2014).

¹¹⁸ Baudot argues that the narrator's minute discussion of the two folio volumes he intends to publish and his references to his asthmatic need for "free communication of air" aligns Walpole with the Scriberlian tradition as he satirizes the explosion of authors and booksellers (*Looking* 208).

Confident in his wit, Walpole adopts the familiar ploy of apologizing for his work, admitting his unique approach, while simultaneously mocking anyone who finds fault with it as lacking the necessary refinement to appreciate it.

While such opening apologies traditionally perform humility as a means of deflecting censure, Walpole inverts the rhetorical gesture to mock those who might disparage the text. These readers, according to the narrator, simply have not advanced enough to read it, for he explains that “Though it may be condemned at present, I can have no doubt but it will be treated with due reverence some hundred ages hence” (*Tales* 25). Though the narrator’s claim pokes fun at historical progress narratives, the statement nevertheless resonates with Walpole’s understanding of how a distance of either time or space changes the relationship between an audience and a text. His publication of *Otranto* had clearly demonstrated that acceptable indications of fictionality varied depending on the perceived origin of a text, with greater leeway given to texts that were somehow distanced from the audience. As Walpole observed to George Montagu a few years prior to *Otranto*’s publication, “The manners of the age...are always as entertaining to a person fifty miles off as to one born an hundred and fifty years after the time” (*Correspondence* 9:106). Walpole recognizes that distance changes how individuals perceive actions. A gap of either time or space strips behaviors of their motivations, leaving actions to be observed simply as they are rather than as emblems of a larger social context.

To this opening rhetorical gesture of an authorial apology, Walpole adds another: the discovered manuscript ruse. The narrator attempts to establish the tales’ legitimacy by relating the history of clergymen who reportedly had first heard the tales. This exercise in establishing credibility merely leaves uncertainty in its wake though, for it unfolds into a discussion of a treatise that involves a harpsichord and a debate about whether certain hieroglyphics should be

translated as volcanos or as cheesecake. Furthermore, amid these ridiculous images, the narrator litters the timeline he has pieced together with incidental remarks about how this history is “not certain” and “impossible to decide” so historians can “only guess” at facts which are “not precisely known” (*Tales* 28). Consequently, even as the narrator attempts to record the tales’ background, he concurrently undoes this authenticating work, leaving the tales separated from their chronology and, in many ways, placed outside of time itself. Thus displaced, these tales cannot be read as evidence of a history, fictional or otherwise, or as a guide to another place’s customs. Instead, rather than rely on an external context to invest the tales with significance, Walpole self-consciously erases the text’s connection to a social context so that the tales can only be approached on the basis of their own merit as singular and disconnected entities.

Pseudofactual authenticating gestures like the found manuscript participated in a wider literary practice of authenticating literary texts in order to attest to their ability to speak to reality. Through what Michael McKeon describes as “naïve empiricism,” these texts approached fiction by steadfastly asserting their correspondence to the real world by adapting a “strange, therefore true” mode of authentication (73). However, under Walpole’s direction, this naïve empiricism topples over into parody as Walpole’s absurd narrator becomes a means for mocking such literary practices. Despite this mockery, Walpole’s narrative ploys call attention to the construction of his text, emphasizing the importance of his form.

Having directed attention to the formal construction of his text, Walpole addresses the relationship between form and causation. He establishes the tales within a pre-Adamite setting through the collection’s preface:

The Hieroglyphic Tales were undoubtedly written a little before the creation of the world, and have ever since been preserved, by oral

tradition, in the mountains of Crampraggi, an uninhabited island, not yet discovered. (*Tales* 27)

According to Walpole's narrator, the origins of these tales exist outside the limits imposed by history and geography. As Baudot succinctly notes, "In summary, the work by this description was written in a state of nothing, nowhere, by nobody" (*Looking* 190). These tales should not exist. They cannot be accessed by modern readers because their location remains undiscovered.¹¹⁹ Their preservation proves likewise problematic since they have been handed down by an oral tradition on an island where no one actually lives, so no one should be able to remember them. These problems are insignificant though when compared to the issue that arises from the time of their origin: the tales originate before creation when no people and no islands existed at all, or outside of the totality of time altogether.

Despite the hilarity of Walpole's image, by placing his tales before the creation of the known world, he references a contemporary religious debate concerning the chronology of the world. As the origin story of humanity in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the account of Adam and Eve had long anchored European constructions of history as the notorious act of eating the forbidden fruit precipitated the chain of events that would define human history.¹²⁰ Yet as early modern Europe explored beyond its own borders, memories from cultures to the east and the west offered alternative timelines that challenged a historical narrative linking events, ideas, and

¹¹⁹ Baudot argues that "The name of this fictional provenance hints at the fate of space in the empirical narratives that voyages of discovery generate. Crag echoes the mountainous provenance of the tales, shoving together cramp and crag to form the fictional location performs the loss of space that is the subtext of the passage" ("Voyage" 338). See, Baudot, "A Voyage of Undiscovery: Deciphering Horace Walpole's Hieroglyphic Tales." *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, And Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* (2009).

¹²⁰ For a recent account of the ways the Genesis narrative impacted European society, see Stephen Greenblatt, *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve* (2017).

persons back to Eden. Records of Egyptian and Chinese dynasties presented radically different accounts from the Biblical record and posited the existence of people who lived long before Adam, while encounters with the Americas and artifacts like the Aztec calendar challenged the belief that Adam was the father of humanity.¹²¹ Because these foreign chronologies offered alternate narrative frameworks for interpreting the rise and fall of empires and rulers, they challenged the Adamic genealogy and the conventional understanding of a divinely ordered world, threatening to reveal a world of chaos in its place.

In an attempt to reconcile these new chronologies with the Biblical account, seventeenth-century Biblical scholarship began to debate the possibility of pre-Adamites, or individuals living prior to Adam and Eve. Central to these debates was Isaac La Peyrère, who in 1656, sparked controversy when he published *Men Before Adam*.¹²² Drawing on Islamic myths of earlier Adams and an alternate exegesis of Romans 5:12-14, La Peyrère asserted that innumerable humans had existed prior to Adam and Eve and contended that Adam was simply the father of the Jews, and in turn the Messiah, rather than of all humanity.¹²³ Though La Peyrère was forced to recant, his hypothesis disrupted notions of a universal humanity and held profound implications for the organization of society. As David Livingstone argues, La Peyrère's pre-

¹²¹ David Livingstone traces how encounters with pagan chronicles and the America's threatened the Adamic heredity. See Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins* (2011).

¹²² Credited with spreading the pre-Adamite theory within Europe, Isaac La Peyrère sparked a debate that would continue into the eighteenth century. For more on La Peyrère and the influence of the pre-Adamite theory, see Richard Popkins, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676): His Life, Work and Influence* (1987); David Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins* (2011); Srinivas Aravamuda, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (2012); and Stephen Greenblatt, *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve* (2017).

¹²³ Though not widespread, medieval Muslim traditions referred to *jinn* as pre-Adams, while ninth and tenth-century Sufism developed a tradition of seven Adams. See Amira El-Zein *Islam, Arabs, and Intelligent World of the Jinn* (2009) and Patricia Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness* (2016).

Adamite theory raised questions about theology as well as about the political, social, and moral foundation of European society since “claims about anatomy, cultural anthropology, natural history, climatology, and colonialism were all folded into the competing narratives about humanity’s genesis” (Livingstone 79). To acknowledge pre-Adamite times not only disrupted the linear narrative of European history, therefore, but also challenged the construction of issues ranging from marriage and gender to labor and moral responsibility.

As the debate over the status of Adam moved into the eighteenth century, the pre-Adamite worlds began to appear within oriental tales and became a way for authors to rethink history. As an early aspect of Biblical scholarship, Orientalist writing frequently addressed or parodied theological issues, so pre-Adamite settings were soon incorporated into oriental tales.¹²⁴ Pre-Adamite tales appear throughout Giovanni Paolo Marana’s *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* (1684), while Antoine Galland penned an alternative history of the world as part of the preface to the *Bibliothèque orientale* (1697), a text that included both eastern-centered chronologies and stories of pre-Adamites. Following in the tradition established by Marana and Galland, Joseph Addison published the “Story of Hilpa, Harpath, and Shalum” in *The Spectator* No. 584-85, an antideluvian romp that experiments with embedded epistles between characters and raises questions about the passage of time. Eliza Haywood likewise took advantage of the pre-Adamite scene in *Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo* (1736) to satirize Robert Walpole’s government and re-envision women’s place in society through a pretense of historicity and the running commentary of fictional translators in the footnotes. For Haywood, Addison, and others,

¹²⁴ As pointed out by Robert Irwin and Srinivas Aravamudan, Renaissance Orientalism emerged alongside biblical studies and the classics, but while Irwin is committed to defending scholarly Orientalism, Aravamudan limits his approach to fictional examples of Enlightenment Orientalism. See Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies* (2007) and Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (2012).

the pre-Adamite oriental tales playfully adapted theological concerns as a means for experimenting with fictional techniques or as thought experiments for reconceptualizing society.

While pre-Adamite tales, like the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, did not claim any place within the contemporary reality, they did destabilize a causal understanding of the world. By setting his stories before the beginning of the world then, Walpole also invoked contemporary philosophical debates concerning causation. As Jonathan Kramnick has shown, seventeenth and eighteenth-century texts explored arguments about the causal theory of behavior as authors and philosophers attempted to explain the relationship between the immaterial mind and the material world. Causation understood the external world as capable of influencing the mind and, thereby, located the causes of individual human behaviors and movement in the external world rather than internal world. But precisely how this relationship between the mind and matter played out was a mystery. Indeed as John Locke reflects in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), although the mind may be capable of directing action, it does not reveal how a decision to act transmits to the body or translates into an action. As an example of this quandary, Locke points to the writing in which he is currently engaged:

For example: my right hand writes whilst my left hand is still: what causes rest in one, and motion in the other? Nothing by my will, a thought of my mind; my thought only changing, the right hand rests and the left moves. This is a matter of fact, which cannot be denied: explain this, and make it intelligible, and then the next step will be to understand creation. (IV.X)

Although Locke knows his mind directs the action he takes, the actual connection remains obscure. He cannot explain how his will directs the writing, despite the obvious connection between the two. For this reason, Locke suggests that if mental causation can ever be truly

understood, then creation in the divine sense might likewise become apparent. Indeed, causation could be traced back to the moment of creation since, as Thomas Hobbes argued, every idea and event was connected through a causal chain leading back to creation. As Hobbes explains, “There cannot be a Motion in one part of the World, but the same must also be communicated to all the rest of the World” (“Questions” 239). The events of the world, including those prompted by humans and those in the natural world, fall all the way back on a continuous chain to the time of creation.

If Locke is correct that the notion of creation persists in questions surrounding causality, then Walpole exploits this gap between action and cause and pushes it to the extreme by setting his tales before Creation. As the moment of beginning where the divine act gives existence to all else, creation initiates every other action and thus serves as a totalizing moment. For these tales to exist before that primordial event denies individual actions from being understood as resulting from one another in a logical pattern, and as a result, anything becomes possible. Actions and events can occur without probable cause or human will.

Walpole takes this connection between causality and creation to the extreme. Setting his stories before the creation of the world, he breaks the chain of causality so that the organizing act of divine creation no longer has set life into motion. In refusing to give his world an origin, Walpole thus refuses to associate the events or actions in the tales as causally linked. They cannot be associated along a chain of meaningful events but rather are distinct moments to be understood in their singularity. The connections a reader might infer occur via serendipitous juxtaposition rather than because of an organizing narrative scheme. Within this world of untethered actions, actions begin and end, interrupt and erupt with little or no explanation, and

this discontinuity can create a whirlwind for the reader as action rather than character drives the narrative forward.

This narrative structure is readily apparent in the third tale, “The Dice Box. A Fairy Tale.” A nine-year old girl from Damascus named Pissimissi is “impatient to see the world” (*Tales* 44).¹²⁵ As soon as Walpole describes her impatience, she bolts from her father’s house “without knowing whither she was going” (*Tales* 44). Every stop only increases her impatience so that Pissimissi is caught in an unending cycle: her impatience prompts her travel but her travel immediately feeds her impatience. Consequently, Pissimissi’s story intrigues not because of her interiority but because of the narrative’s unpredictability. Her crazed travel follows no pattern and signals no cause aside from the immediate presence of opportunity as she collides randomly with the world around her. As a result, rather than give insight into her character, Pissimissi’s actions call attention to the world through which she travels. The lack of causality grants a degree of uncertainty and randomness so that the tale refuses to advance notions about the world but instead offers an image of a world that is in constant flux and in the process of being continually re-shaped.

In adapting the action-centric form of the oriental tale, therefore, Walpole can take exteriority seriously and break free of the forms, like the novel and the romance, which he accuses of being devoid of imagination. A story that constantly explains itself – like the novel which Walpole sees as constantly offering causes for its events – leaves no room for imaginative

¹²⁵ Martin Kallich argues that although Walpole labels this story as a fairy tale written for the entertainment of Caroline Campbell, it is clearly not innocent enough for children and is rather aimed at his more worldly-wise contemporaries. One such instance can be easily identified in Pissimissi’s name, which Kenneth Gross argues can be read with an “oriental yet English cadence” that offers an “infantile joke – a ‘Jordan is also a chamber pot – and, finally, its slight gesture toward the wonders of a distant world with another river called the Mississippi” (14). See Kallich, *Horace Walpole* (1976) and Gross, *Hieroglyphic Tales* (2011).

potential. The *Hieroglyphic Tales*, by contrast, operate outside of such machinations since the explanatory impulse has been curbed. Instead, Walpole's emphasis on action invites the reader to interpret how the different events connect and can be understood. Thus although Kramnick argues, "To look at the motives that lie behind the actions was for many to examine how states of mind bring about forms of politics or society," for Walpole, to eliminate motivation was to examine how action could create (27-8). By refusing to trace mental causation, Walpole declines the explanatory mechanism for the world that emerges from character interiority and instead permits his stories to present contradictory and at times confusing details. It is a world of contingent happenings and wildness rather than fated direction.

4.3 Critiquing the Novel and the Romance through Trifling Narratives

Within the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, Walpole juxtaposes singular events together to create a mad progression of movement. By framing these stories within a pre-Adamite tale and breaking the familiar modes of historical causality, Walpole creates a world of untethered actions where meaning arises through contingency. But first, he offers an allegorical critique of contemporary literary forms through his opening two tales; he uses the first tale, "A New Arabian Night's Entertainment," to ridicule the failure of the novel and the second tale, "The King and His Three Daughters," to mock the failure of the romance.

The first of Walpole's tales, "A New Arabian Night's Entertainment," explores narrative expectations. As the title suggests, the story recalls the *Arabian Nights*' well-known frame tale. Like the story of Scheherazade and Schahrir, Walpole's story features a murderous emperor outwitted by a woman, the princess Gronovia, who skillfully uses language to preserve her life. However, unlike Schahrir whose murdering streak ensued following the adultery of his first wife

and continued until he was captivated by Scheherazade's stories, Walpole's emperor demands each of his new wives spend the wedding night awake and telling stories before he executes that wife in the morning for no apparent reason. The princess Gronovia prevails where previous women met death because she substitutes history for narrative and lulls the emperor to sleep before suffocating him and ascending to the throne herself.

The story opens with a peculiar scene: Princess Gronovia hunting for goat eggs on Mt. Hirgonqúu.¹²⁶ As goats do not have eggs, this detail is peculiar, but for Walpole, eggs are a symbol of adventure to come. As I noted earlier, Walpole favorite story cycle within the *Arabian Nights* was the adventures of Sinbad, and for Sinbad, roc eggs always precipitated a harrowing escapade. For Gronovia, the eggs similarly preempt danger, for she suddenly finds herself the captured wife of the emperor. Having been presented to the emperor, he demands to know "...whence came you? Mynheer, said she, I was born in Holland – The deuce you was, said the emperor, and where is that? It was no where, replied the princess, spritely, till my countrymen gained it from the sea" (*Tales* 33). Holland becomes a mythical oddity when Gronovia describes the unfamiliar locale to the emperor. Gronovia makes the indisputable if startling observation that the country was no where before it existed, signaling both the country's physical construction through the system of dikes that retrieved the land from the sea as well as the ideological construction of the nation of Holland. This country has thus been created through the actions people took: they preceded the nation. In Walpole's hands, the non-fictional and even the

¹²⁶ In his psychoanalytic reading of the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, Kallich argues that Gronovia's search for eggs should be understood as erotic symbolism in a story that features "the same militantly aggressive egotism and infantile yearnings that appeared in *The Castle of Otranto*" (501). Baudot argues that these eggs should be understood to symbolize the potential of nothingness in what she argues is Walpole's critique of scientific authority (*Looking* 200). I would argue, however, that these eggs likely echo Sinbad's own frequent unfortunate encounters with roc eggs during his journeys.

scientific becomes sensational so that despite Holland's historical reality, the country that is "no where" becomes an idea of a place. Thus suspended between reality and the fantastic, it becomes fictional.

Within this context, Walpole addresses the way action shapes narrative:

At the foot of the great mountain Hirgonqúu was anciently situated the kingdom of Larbidel. Geographers, who are not apt to make such just comparisons, said, it resembled a football just going to be kicked away; and so it happened; for the mountain kicked the kingdom into the ocean, and it has never been heard of since. (*Tales* 31)

In this startling opening, Walpole turns language that would traditionally be read as figurative into literal images. Larbidel appears as a football, so it is treated as one. Though this term could apply to balls both round and oval, by designating this kingdom as a *football*, Walpole connects it back to the initial image of the mountain's foot and implies an inherent connection between shape and action.¹²⁷ Footballs are designed to be kicked, and their form signals their function. Consequently, as soon as the shape of Larbidel is described, the mountain kicks it.

This amusing and literal scene allows Walpole to foreground issues of action and form. Walpole includes little information about Larbidel aside from this reference to its shape: he relates nothing concerning the history, the people, or the ideologies that define the kingdom. Instead, the focus remains on its physicality, and Walpole's reference to the geographers emphasizes how the kingdom might appear to those outside of it.¹²⁸ As such, the action of the

¹²⁷ According to the OED, before the term football codified as a term meant to describe a particular game, it described any game involving a kicked ball.

¹²⁸ Baudot argues that the kingdom disappears because the geographers attempt to plot it, so the scene should be read as expressing Walpole's concern about the disappearance of fictional

scene gains prominence through its literalness, and this surprise in turn amuses and entrances. No explanation for why or how such a world operates is given and none is needed, for the surprising literalness of the action amuses and propels the reader further into this peculiar world. By collapsing the distance between shape and action, Walpole thus reimagines the *Arabian Nights*' immediate causality by applying it to form and not simply to character. In so doing, he raises questions of what literary form permits and the place of action in those forms.

Walpole pursues these questions through the rest of the tale by counterintuitively limiting action throughout much of the story. Indeed, Tale I includes the least action of all six tales, enabling Walpole to underscore action's significance from the outset of the collection. When Princess Gronovia begins her night with the emperor and he invites her to speak, she proceeds to prattle, providing him first with details of her own genealogy before moving to particulars about Europe's religious history.¹²⁹ These details refuse to coalesce into narrative, however, for Walpole divorces the people featured in Gronovia's history from any sort of action through a series of constant interruptions by the emperor:

The disciples of Loyola – Of whom? Said the emperor, yawning – Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, replied Gronovia, was – A writer of Roman history, I suppose, interrupted the emperor: what the devil were the Romans to you, that you trouble your head so much about them? The empire of Rome, and the church of Rome, are two distinct things, said the princess. (*Tales* 35)

kingdoms (*Looking* 200). Though her argument is compelling, I find it telling that Walpole's description of the form of the kingdom determines the action that occurs to it.

¹²⁹ Kallich read this tale as offering a critique of the Catholic church similar to that seen in *Otranto* and the *Mysterious Mother* (501).

Each time Gronovia mentions a place or a person, either the emperor interrupts and demands clarification or she interjects her own commentary into the dialogue. As a result, the events and individuals she mentions are stripped of their unique circumstances and isolated. Within this fragmentary rambling, Gronovia moves from one person to another or to an event or place without ever connecting the items through narrative. In this respect, Walpole fashions Gronovia as the reverse of Scheherazade. Seeking to enchant her listener and thereby delay her execution, Scheherazade suspends time by luring the sultan into story after story through a series of embedded actions. Caught up in this continuous narrative motion, the sultan loses track of time and arguably even himself. In contrast, Gronovia seeks to bore as she makes her listener painfully aware of time's duration, leading to the emperor's death as she smothers him with pillows when he dozes off.

Through this reversal of the Scheherazade story, Walpole points to the necessity of action for creating and understanding narrative. He separates historical individuals from any potential action through Gronovia and the emperor's incessant interruptions and thus reduces the referenced individual to an item on a list that seems bereft of any true significance. As in the *Arabian Nights*, a lack of story results in death, so the emperor's death emphasizes that without action, narrative simply does not exist: it dissolves into a random assortment of data that lacks a connecting schema. Walpole returns to this point several years after he published the *Hieroglyphic Tales* in a letter to his close friend Mary Berry, where he writes, "I am outrageous at the destruction of all the visions that make history delectable – without some romance it is but a register of crimes and calamities" (*Correspondence* 11:86). As Walpole shrewdly observes, history depends on narrative, for the fullness of history can only be imagined. All of the causes of historical events can never be truly known, only assumed as singular events are drawn into a

coherent timeline through connecting actions. Meaning can be made of an otherwise chaotic existence only by imagining causal relationships and their reciprocal actions. Whereas traditional literary forms depend on the logical progression of events in order to be believable, as Walpole notes, history carries no such burden due to its status as lived experience. Indeed, rather than emerge logically from an explicit cause, causality must be imposed onto the events of history and therein awaits the imaginative potential missing in other fictional forms.

By eliminating action in the first tale, Walpole can simultaneously emphasize its necessity in narrative cohesion and signal his departure from the novel and the romance for a more open literary form. Indeed, Walpole ends the tale without giving closure to the story. Before the emperor's death, Gronovia expresses to him her desire to be the heroine of a novel, either as a shepherdess or as a princess. The emperor, however, declares she will become something altogether different – an empress. When Gronovia does indeed gain this title, she takes up not only the emperor's practice of marrying a new husband every night but also his practice of murder, staying the pattern of execution if and when it suits her. Though this change earns her praise from the people, Walpole's ending leaves Gronovia's future in doubt: has she changed the system enough to endure as empress, or will her actions in turn end in a premature death? Rather than offer a tidy ending, Walpole leaves Gronovia engaged in a pattern of action similar to her predecessor and in so doing, invites readers to imagine past the end of his tale and continue the story.

Whereas the first tale considers persons without actions, in the second tale, "The King and his three daughters," Walpole explores actions without characters by placing non-living entities at the center of his tale. Walpole introduces this perplexing situation in the first scene when he presents a king who had three daughters or rather "he would have had three, if he had

one more, but some how or other the eldest was never born” (*Tales* 38). No body, no personality, no person exists as the eldest daughter except for the daughter who is designated as the second daughter. Yet everyone acts as if the eldest daughter lives, for as the narrator explains, “She was extremely handsome, had a great deal of wit, and spoke French in perfection, as all the authors of that age affirm, and yet none of them pretend that she ever existed” (*Tales* 38). The eldest daughter has been given life through the actions of others as they write, fight, and talk about her existence. Her life emerges from and is sustained by the stories people tell about her. A pamphlet war even begins over whether or not she can marry.

Because of her nonexistence, the eldest daughter plays a unique role in the narrative’s construction. For Walpole to craft a nonexistent character not only estranges the audience from the reading experience, as noted by Baudot, but through this breach, he can direct his readers to consider the construction and function of narrative.¹³⁰ Though at first glance the eldest daughter’s status makes her incredible, to reduce her to simply a nonsensical element misses how her absurd state enables Walpole’s narrative work.¹³¹ As the eldest of three daughters – the second of which is only described as possessing a strong Yorkshire accent and the third as having bad teeth and but one leg – the eldest princess should be the first to wed, but by making her a nonexistent subject, Walpole toys with this trope by setting up a debate within the kingdom about which daughter actually qualifies as the eldest. Rather than allow the eldest daughter character to determine the course of the story, Walpole eliminates her person and instead allows the narrative to unfold around the actions that others take on her behalf.

¹³⁰ Baudot argues that Walpole “literalizes the nonexistence of all fictional characters” through the unborn eldest daughter (“A Voyage” 334).

¹³¹ In his review of the collection, Burney questioned whether such a ridiculous tale could bear any meaning at all, even satiric. Kallich echoed this sentiment many years later when he describes the tale as simply an example of Walpole’s “amusing, clowning nonsense” (500).

Alongside this nonexistent eldest daughter, Walpole introduces a second character whose questionable living status induces amusement and similarly disrupts narrative expectations. As the nation debates the eldest daughter's eligibility to marry, a prince arrives whom the entire kingdom eagerly welcomes as a potential suitor for either the first or third daughter. Yet this prince is similarly lacking in life: "...there arrived the prince of Quifferiquimini, who would have been the most accomplished hero of the age, if he had not been dead, and had not spoken any language but Egyptian, and had not had three legs" (*Tales* 39). The prince is a cadaver, a lifeless body that has begun to decay. As an image of what was, the cadaver proves somewhat more substantial than the nonexistent eldest daughter, yet the person of the prince, who was once vibrant and present, now exists only as a memory attached to a body. If the eldest daughter can be read as a symbol for all fictional characters who have no being beyond the pages of a text, then the prince represents persons who have an actual existence but are removed from life when rendered as fictional characters on a written page. Such referential characters cannot experience new growth or development but remain forever the memory of a person who once existed as such. Thus though neither the eldest daughter nor the dead prince can react to their respective situations, the behaviors of others towards them drives the narrative forward as the arrival of the prince's coffin nearly provokes a civil war when different political factions begin to seek foreign alliances to strengthen their preferred princess's claim to the prince's hand.

Walpole, however, introduces the trope of the eligible prince only to disrupt it. The story abruptly ends with a revolution as the second daughter who remains inconspicuous throughout much of the tale, suddenly claims the throne by means of her marriage to a commoner. This daughter has lived under the threat of nonexistence herself since as the second daughter, she could not be the first; however, as the first living daughter, she also could not technically be

considered the second daughter, leading some individuals in the kingdom to propose she was “nobody at all” (*Tales* 39). Unlike her sister though, this princess clearly has a physical body, so the chancellor relegated her as a nobody socially through her very physicality by declaring that “no princess-royal ever had a Yorkshire accent” (*Tales* 39). Consequently, when the second daughter decides to wed, she instigates a revolution:

[The second daughter] had given her hand to a drysalter, who was a common-council-man, and the city, in consideration of the match, had proclaimed them king and queen... This revolution was so sudden and so universal, that all parties approved, or were forced to seem to approve it. The old king died the next day, as the courtiers said, for joy, the prince of Quifferiquimini was buried in spite of his appeal to the law of nations, and the youngest princess went distracted... (*Tales* 43).

Through her marriage, the second daughter disrupts the circulation of the stories that give life to the nonliving characters and simultaneously breaks with the tradition of the princess marrying a prince by emphasizing both her and her husband’s commonness. The resulting revolution not only instigates a change in ruler but also signals a break away from conventions of the chivalric romance.

Yet even as the text appears to cheer this break from tradition, Walpole calls the revolution’s perceived success into question and casts a similar doubt on the sense of a disrupted literary tradition. The revolution seems to hint more at a tragedy rather than a hopeful transformation since the narrator of the stories explains, “This revolution was so sudden and so universal, that all parties approved, or were forced to seem to approve it” (*Tales* 43). The norms of the kingdom have been undone in one act: the second daughter has married first and married a

commoner. In one respect then, this unexpected move brings a welcome change as the second daughter claims agency and control over her own life and in so doing, puts an end to the marriage furor straining the kingdom. Yet even as the second princess gains freedom from the old system, but her new rule brings its own constraints that are just as limiting as the old form. Some have been forced to adhere to a new system, and those who do not fit within this new world of everyday individuals who can act of their own accord are removed from the story. Both the eldest daughter and the prince effectively die as a result of the revolution: the eldest daughter is not mentioned again for the duration of the story, and the corpse is buried against its will. The old king likewise dies, for joy according to the official record, but the lack of specifics leaves open the possibility of murder. Within this context, Walpole's choice to designate the second daughter's husband as a drysalter seems particularly telling, for as one who both preserves and sells preserved goods, his presence signals a continued pattern of exclusion rather than a true remaking of the old order: one daughter continues to be excluded from the story even though the specific daughter has changed. This revolution may thus be better understood as an instance of revolving or as a return rather than as an overthrow of the previous order.

Read together, Tale 1 and Tale 2 offer a metaphorical critique of the novel and romance. The eighteenth century witnessed significant literary shifts with the development of realism, culminating in what Margaret Doody characterizes as a "vibrant and overt attack on all the older fictions" during the 1750s as believability became the measure of a novel's caliber (290). This emphasis displaced the idealism and archetypal hero of the romance through a focus on the everyday aspects of individual character's lives. Describing this shift as "formal realism," Ian Watt argues that this attention to verisimilitude surfaced not only in the types of lives the novel represented but also through the formal methods the novel deployed that enabled readers to

perceive fictional lives as authentic. Yet by pursuing realism, the novel stymied the imagination. As in the first tale, Gronovia relates events that are ultimately dull, reduced to particularities and emptied of the events that would make such tales interesting to read. Building on this critique, Walpole uses the second daughter in Tale 2 to represent that novel's emphasis on commonness. Though still quite fanciful, the second daughter with her Yorkshire accent represents Walpole's perception of a tradition that champions the common and the everyday to the destruction of the larger-than-life aspects of the romance. As symbolized through the second daughter's marriage, the revolution brought about by the novel resulted in burying the fascinating yet improbable characters of old. By affirming the realist, the fanciful are tragically dismissed.

Walpole does not limit his criticism to the novel though, for he takes aim at the romance as well. As he writes in the postscript to the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, "There is infinitely more invention in history, which has no merit if devoid of truth, than in romances and novelty which pretend to none" (*Tales* 71). As a form responsible for conveying an accurate account of past realities, history ought not be permeated with fabrication, and yet Walpole finds it more accommodating of imagination than fictional forms. Although the romance was characterized by a supernatural environment, its idealized way of envisioning life offered a formulaic approach to narrative, one where the eldest daughter marries first and the princess always marries a prince.¹³² These conventions restricted the romance in Walpole's view, leading him to fault it as an unnatural representation of life. He explains this perspective in the second preface to *Otranto* where he writes, "The actions, sentiments, conversations, of the heroes and heroines of ancient days were as unnatural as the machines employed to put them in motion" (9). For Walpole, the

¹³² As E. J. Clery notes, the supernatural was acceptable and even expected in ancient fictions that did not make realist claims (54).

conventions of romance proved just as limiting as the forced probability of the novel so that each fictional form suffered from a kind of imaginative poverty.

Having rejected both the novel and the romance, Walpole turns to history as a form of fictional invention. As a collector, reader, and builder, most of Walpole's work – written or otherwise – demonstrates a passionate interest in the past: he curates and displays antiquities at Strawberry Hill, he preserves his letters for posterity, and of course, he publishes *Anecdotes on Painting in England*, *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III*, as well as *Otranto*. Walpole was a dedicated collector, designing Strawberry Hill as “the first residence custom-built to house a collection of antiquities” (Silver *Mind* 175). Nevertheless, Walpole declared himself to be only an enthusiast and was quick to mock the methodical and critical scholarship of the Society of Antiquaries. Despite his dismissal of his own antiquarianism, Walpole's prolific interest in historical artifacts indicates a pervading curiosity in the ways a material object was capable of bridging the past and present. As Sean Silver argues, Walpole resisted the historiography of David Hume and others who attempted to systematize the past into a narrative of progress. He was openly critical of the contemporary handling of historical records, both those of the distant past and those of the recent past, for he saw historical accounts as distorting the facts in pursuit of a grand narrative. Walpole instead upheld what Silver defines as a “materialist” history, one that values unique objects for their incommensurability (“Visiting” 11-12). Attending to the value in the individual pieces of history, Walpole emphasized their unique attributes rather than using them to understand a larger whole. Instead of serializing items, antiquities were permitted to speak for themselves, telling their own stories rather than being reshaped into supporting evidence for carefully crafted narratives of progress. Though in some respects this antiquarian approach risked losing history, Walpole's emphasis on singularity

allowed a chorus of stories to emerge from the material evidence of the past, offering a fuller and at times contradictory representation of history.

These antiquarian pursuits informed not only his historical interests but also his imaginative work as well. As Stephen Clark argues, “Walpole was nothing if not susceptible to the associational techniques, the symbolic and historical references, that could evoke an emotional and aesthetic response in the viewer, and...he was skilled in manipulating them” (241). As fiction began to mimic the known world more faithfully, the sprawling plots and improbable experiences of the romance vanished, and as a result, the novel not only lost a way to incorporate the marvelous, but it also lacked the means for generating a serendipitous delight, the sort of association that Walpole drew from his collecting. His own literary work thus sought to provoke just these sorts of associative experiences.

Because of Walpole’s delight in associational techniques, he identifies fiction as emerging from the ways the singularities of history converge. Having rejected both the novel and the romance, he notes “History, I believe, seldom contains much truth; but should our daily lying chronicles exist and be consulted, the annals of these days will deserve as little credit as the *Arabian Nights*” (*Correspondence* 33:536). Walpole’s comparison of the daily accounts of history with the *Arabian Nights*’ at first glance appears critical: a document tasked with recording daily history is filled with lies, making it unreliable. Yet by comparing the daily chronicles to the *Arabian Nights*’, Walpole demonstrates how history, once removed from its context, is no longer a life but a fiction. The *Arabian Nights*’ held a peculiar position in the British imaginary: although a collection of imaginative folktales, they were nonetheless taken up as a truthful representation of the East as authors ranging from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to James Beattie, who recommended the *Arabian Nights*’ for their accurate portrayal of oriental

history and culture. Within this context, Walpole's choice to align history with the *Arabian Nights* does not simply signal a criticism of the fabrication implicit within history; rather by bringing the two traditions together, he can demonstrate a unique interdependence between history and fiction.¹³³ History, once recorded, has the ability to fade out of reality into the world of fiction, as it becomes removed from its original context by time or space. Since history depends on the interpretation and grouping of unique instances, Walpole saw fictionality as emerging from the association of the singular human experience.

Walpole's preoccupation with singularity spilled onto the pages of his letters and into his written texts, for he held a lifelong obsession with what he described as the "trifles" of history, or those distinctive moments in life that define each individual. Early in his life, Walpole wrote Mason declaring, "Narrations of the greatest actions of other people, are tedious in comparison of the serious trifles, that every man can call to mind of himself, while he was learning those histories" (*Correspondence* 9:2). Though the noteworthy events of history that affect the masses may be recorded and taught, Walpole viewed the particular experiences of the individual, which might appear trivial to the historian, as carrying the greater significance both for the person and for the historical record. Unsurprisingly then, his letters are filled with just these sorts of trifles, and he goes so far as to describe them as such to Lady Ossory when he writes that his letters are "filled with such trifles as occur, as [in] Arabian tales" (34:97). Considering that Walpole saw history as comparable with the *Arabian Nights*, his suggestion comes as no surprise and

¹³³ In this respect, Walpole's observation of history aligns with William Godwin's, who would write in his brief essay, "Of History and Romance" in 1797, "The conjectures of the historian must be built upon a knowledge of the characters of his personages. But we never know any man's character... The conjectures therefore respecting their motives in each particular transaction must be eternally fallacious" (371).

emphasizes his turn to the oriental tale as capable of carrying the inventive and, therefore, fictional experience that the novel and romance could not. As a composite of competing singular stories, the *Arabian Nights* ' builds around discrete characters bound together through chance interactions, which create a series of nested narratives. Individually, many of the stories span only a few pages and feature the details of one moment in a particular character's life rather than focusing on a character's full history or using that character to comment about a larger population of people.¹³⁴ Walpole's statement reveals that he views his correspondence as undertaking a similar mode of representing life. While he does detail the significant events of his contemporary moment in his correspondence, the vast majority of what he records centers on individual people and events he encounters on a day-to-day basis. The written page binds together otherwise disconnected people and events, and rather than editorialize on how or why he brings these entities together, he frequently moves from one item in his letter to the next and leaves the reader to imagine the connection between the two.

Significantly then, when Walpole searches for a literary form that resists the totality of the novel and allows for imagination, he takes up this trifling mode. In the postscript to the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, he describes the stories as "mere whimsical trifles" (*Tales* 71). Although this description at first may seem to dismiss the tales as flippant, Walpole's perpetual fascination with the trifles of his own life and those that shape stories like in the *Arabian Nights* ' signals that the fictions of *Hieroglyphic Tales* are deliberately formed around the particular aspects of everyday life that are isolated as singular events. Walpole littered the *Hieroglyphic Tales* with allusions to his personal experiences that he transformed into fictional episodes. Anecdotes from

¹³⁴ As with almost any claim one can make about the *Nights* ', there are, of course, exceptions to this statement.

his daily life as well as references to his acquaintances came together in a kaleidoscopic vision of reality. Following his introduction of the dead prince during the second tale, for instance, Walpole describes the ensuing madness for Egyptian and cadaver fashion provoked by the prince's arrival as the kingdom rushes to copy his appearance. The narrator observes, "Both men and women of fashion left off rouge to look more cadaverous; their clothes were embroidered with hieroglyphics" (*Tales* 40). Walpole's playful jab at the absurdity surrounding fashion bears a striking resemblance to an episode from his own life. Following his arrival in Paris in 1766, he wrote Thomas Gray about his reception, for much to Walpole's surprise, he found himself at the center of fashionable society. He declares to Gray that while he "did not come hither to be at the head of a fashion," he nevertheless has found himself "sent about like an African prince" (*Correspondence* 14:157). This event occurred just as Walpole reportedly began to write the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, and although he never indicates that this event (or any other from his life) had made its way into his collection of stories, its similarity to the scene with the lifeless Egyptian prince suggests Walpole's fictional worlds emerge from an interplay of fact and fiction.

In staging fiction as emerging from history, Walpole draws on a technique apparent within the Sinbad stories. Walpole particularly enjoyed the imaginative openness of the Sinbad story cycle.¹³⁵ In a letter to his frequent correspondent, Mary Berry, during the summer of 1789, Walpole extols the pleasures of the *Arabian Nights*' declaring:

If you grow tired of the *Arabian Nights*, you have no more taste than
Bishop Atterbury, who huffed Pope for sending him them or the *Persian*

¹³⁵ Walpole seems to have associated this inventive possibility with eastern forms more broadly for he notes the inventiveness of Muhammad in the Preface of his *Hieroglyphic Tales*, and he likewise notes the potential afforded by the Chinese language in a letter to Lord Ossory when he writes that "...the perfection of the Chinese consists in possessing but very few syllables, each of which admits ten thousand accents" (*Correspondence* 33:262).

Tales, and fancied he liked Virgil better, who had no more imagination than Dr. Ackenside. Read Sinbad the Sailor's voyages, and you will be sick of Aeneas's. (*Correspondence* 11:20)

This snarky dismissal of both the *Aeneid* and *The Pleasures of the Imagination* signals Walpole's disgust with literature that he found to be heavy and thus dull.¹³⁶ With Sinbad, though, Walpole enters a world of adventure where explanation heightens the fantastical elements of the story instead of diminishing them. In Sinbad's voyages, the supernatural is not unnatural but is accepted as a common experience, and this acceptance estranges the familiar and the real when it is juxtaposed with the fantastic. One such instance occurs during Sinbad's second voyage when he describes a fight he witnesses between a rhinoceros and a roc, a monstrous bird which Sinbad sizes by describing it as possessing legs as big as trees. Sinbad notes the existence of the roc in passing and with little surprise, which establishes the creature as a natural part of the landscape. However, the rhinoceros, which shortly will become the roc's dinner, Sinbad lingers over, as he describes it as "a creature less than the elephant, but greater than the buffalo" which carries "a horn upon [its] nose, about a cubit long" (Galland 150). By pausing the action of his narrative to detail the specifics of the rhinoceros, Sinbad renders the rhinoceros unfamiliar and even fantastical. Moreover, when discussed together with the roc, the fictional status of the two animals blurs as proximity encourages a transference of plausibility: the roc becomes more believable and the rhinoceros becomes more impossible. Thus Sinbad, the quintessential Benjaminian trading seaman bringing stories from afar, can trade the unbelievable as experience

¹³⁶ Walpole elsewhere reiterated this critique by describing Mark Ackenside as "another of these tame genius's" (*Correspondence* 19:28).

as he invites readers into a world that *could* exist outside the boundaries of the familiar world.¹³⁷ Recognizing the appeal of this world, Walpole writes Berry, “I do not think the Sultanness’s narrative very natural or probable, but there is a wildness that captivates” (*Correspondence* 11:21). This imaginative wildness not only causes Walpole to prefer Sinbad to Aeneas, but it also becomes a model for Walpole’s own interest in a narrative form that can accommodate and encourage inventiveness.

Walpole’s technique can be better understood by examining the way he transformed the particularities of reality into fiction in his correspondence. Walpole’s writings constantly shifted between historical references, literary allusions, and his own fictional interludes, for as Ruth Mack argues, he uses “historical material to mysteriously ahistorical ends: he begins with facts but combines them in ways that compromise their ability to tell us about the past” (371). The everyday trifles of history thus become the jumping-off point for Walpole’s imagination. Walpole gives one particularly insightful instance of this process in a letter he composed in 1773, the year after he reportedly completed writing the *Hieroglyphic Tales*. In this letter to Lady Ossory, he describes a scene that he states could potentially become the basis for a future hieroglyphic tale. Noting that Lord Ossory would only discuss the impending sweepstakes, Walpole wrote his correspondent that “If I write any more Hieroglyphic Tales, the scene will lie on Newmarket heath – I must turn Pegasus to grass and mount Alipses” (*Correspondence* 32:131).¹³⁸ Walpole’s easy shift between reality and myth typifies many of his letters and gives

¹³⁷ As Aravamudan notes, far away geographies offered aesthetics that could escape the familiarities of home (25).

¹³⁸ Walpole offers a second instance of another potential hieroglyphic tale in a letter to Mason which he composed just a few days after his epistle to Lady Ossory. This time, Walpole’s family becomes the subject of a potential tale as Walpole describes “a nephew mad and ruined” and “a niece a princess” alongside references to the “purgatory” of gout and the “poison” of the Inns of

insight into the creation of his tales. Alipses was Lord Ossory's prized mare. By substituting the real for the legend, Walpole moves from the winged to the wing-footed, as noted by Wilmarth Lewis, and through the process, he transforms the familiar into a fictional and even fanciful creation.¹³⁹ Though Alipses retains an earthly referent, by juxtaposing the known animal with a Greek mythological animal, the horse gains a presence that while limited to the page, can nevertheless move beyond its historical counterpart. Untethered from the chain of history, Alipses will be free to act in accordance with its singularity rather than according to any earthly cause. Walpole thus distances the familiar in order to emphasize its singularity so that the particularities of people, events, or in this case, animals can shine forth and render the real as fantastic.

In this respect, history informs and even creates narrative, for Walpole's stories exploit the wildness of an isolated everyday experience. Walpole thus asks us to rethink Watt's assertion that the particular individual experience was becoming "the ultimate arbiter of reality" (14). In Walpole's hands, the individual experience functions as the ultimate instance of absurdity and imaginative potential.

4.4 Walpole's Serendipitous Fiction

By tracing Walpole's narrative practices throughout the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, we thus discover a theory of fiction where history becomes the fictional and the linearity and compactness of the novel are overturned by associations that occur within a tale. Such fictions

Courts. He concludes this miscellany of images with the statement, "Here is a Hieroglyphic Tale with a witness" (*Correspondence* 28:93).

¹³⁹ In a footnote to the letter, Lewis explains that Alipses had won the Jockey Club Plate in 1761 and was kept as a brood mare in the later years of the decade (*Correspondence* 32:131 n.3).

can be thought of, in Walpole's language, as emerging at the confluence of "accident and sagacity" (*Correspondence* 20:407–8). It is a moment where the reader suddenly discovers the fiction that is embedded within the history happening around them.

Walpole's term for this associative discovery is serendipity. In 1754, Walpole wrote to Horace Mann regarding the arrival of the portrait of the Grand Duchess Bianca Capello, which Mann had had sent to him, and he relates a discovery that he has made regarding the Capello coat of arms in the painting:

This discovery I made by a talisman, which Mr. Chute calls the sortes Walpolianae, by which I find everything I want, a` pointe nommée [at the very moment], wherever I dip for it. This discovery, indeed, is almost of that kind which I call Serendipity, a very expressive word, which, as I have nothing better to tell you, I shall endeavour to explain to you: you will understand it better by the derivation than by the definition. I once read a silly fairy tale, called the three Princes of Serendip: as their Highnesses travelled, they were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of: for instance, one of them discovered that a mule blind of the right eye had travelled the same road lately, because the grass was eaten only on the left side, where it was worse than on the right—now do you understand Serendipity?
(*Correspondence* 20:407-408)

In this letter, Walpole delightedly reports to Mann that he has stumbled upon a new experience, and the term he has coined for this new awareness is *serendipity*.¹⁴⁰ While Walpole seems

¹⁴⁰ For more Walpole's term, "serendipity," see Robert K. Merton and Elinor Barber, *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity* (2004). For a discussion of how serendipity plays into

pleased with his “very expressive word,” his exact meaning is unclear, for rather than fully define his new idea, he explains the term through a set of three stories so that Mann can arrive at the meaning for himself through the fortuitous association of ideas Walpole believes will emerge from reading the different stories together.

Walpole has arrived at his idea of serendipity through the confluence of three separate experiences. The first that he shares with Mann describes the moment in his own studies when he stumbles upon information about the coat of arms in “an old book of Venetian arms” (*Correspondence* 20:408). Because of his antiquarian emphasis on singularity, Walpole believes that, as Silver describes, “The historian who allows countervailing evidentiary materials to turn up serendipitously, without looking for them, is capable of producing a history that is materially true precisely because of this disinterestedness” (“Visit” 549). Rejecting the grand narratives of history, Walpole engaged in research for the sake of research, so that he could allow history to speak for itself rather than imposing his own interpretation upon it. In the case of the portrait of the Grand Duchess, this method pays off. Though Walpole does not appear to have been searching for information regarding the coat of arms, he has by happy accident discovered information he did not know about the painting, and this information allows the unique materiality of the painting to be even more precise for him.

Juxtaposed to this scene, Walpole shares a second experience that has helped him arrive at the idea of serendipity. Walpole claims to have developed the word from *The Travels and Adventures of Three Princes of Sarendip*, a tale he believed to have been imported from Persia.

Walpole’s approach to Strawberry Hill, see Sean Silver, “Visiting Strawberry Hill: Horace Walpole’s Gothic Historiography” *Eighteenth Century Fiction* (2009).

¹⁴¹ Walpole either misremembers the story or alters it for his own purposes, for the version of the story he relates in his letter alters the original. In the original set of stories, the three princes of Sarendip have been sent out by their father, the king of Sarendip, to travel the world as part of their education. These travels are meant to supplement what has already been an excellent education, for the nested story cycle in the *Three Princes* demonstrates the princes navigating numerous incidents successfully because of their keen skills in observation and inference. Repeatedly, the princes' must call upon the knowledge they have acquired to deduce the best course for a situation.

The story Walpole relates occurs at the very beginning of the *Three Princes* when the princes pause during their travels to assist a camel driver who had lost a camel (not a mule as Walpole reports). Within the original version of the story, the brothers realize after questioning the camel driver that they passed the missing camel earlier in the day while they were walking on the road. Within the original version of the story, the discoveries are not of the accidental sort to which Walpole seems to be alluding, therefore.¹⁴² Walpole ignores the intellectual aspect of the princes' realization that they have passed the camel, and he instead interprets the scene as the princes discovering "things that they were not in quest of" (*Correspondence* 20:408). This idea of the accidental discovery connects closely to Walpole's love of the trifling. For Walpole, trifling instances, or the happenstances of life, are the unforeseen incidents that occur within everyday experience. For the brothers to have passed by the very camel being searched for is just

¹⁴¹ In the appendix to the Yale edition of Walpole's correspondence, Lewis states that Walpole's copy was the 1721 translation from Persian into French by Chevalier de Mailly. Although the collection has a complicated translation history, Lewis believed Walpole saw these tales as Persian.

¹⁴² For the publication history of *The Three Princes of Serendip*, see Theodore G. Remer, "History of the *Peregrinaggio*," in *Serendipity and the Three Princes* (1965).

such a happening, making it a moment of happy accident. Though the princes make their discovery through inference, the necessary experience for drawing their conclusions has come through happenstance.

To these two stories, Walpole adds one more from his personal life. He relates that during a recent dinner, Lord Shaftsbury accidentally discovered the recent marriage of the “Duke of York and Mrs. Hyde, by the respect with which her mother treated her at the table” (*Correspondence* 20:408). As Robert Merton and Elinor Barber observe, in this instance, Lord Shaftsbury did “make a useful discovery that he had not anticipated, one that he could not have made without considerable ‘sagacity’ about the minutiae of the symbols of respect and deference” (2). Lord Shaftsbury did not arrive at the dinner that evening with the intention of discovering a secret marriage, and yet happenstance brings him into a situation where he acquires this new information through careful discernment.

As Walpole’s juxtaposition of these three stories demonstrates, serendipity happens when an open and engaged mind pays careful attention to the everyday happenings with which a person encounters. The charm of this “accidental sagacity” emerges from the application of discernment to these incidental experiences. As the unique experiences of the day come together, an individual is able to find connections and gain unanticipated knowledge that might otherwise have gone unnoticed and, therein, make a happy if accidental discovery. This prospect of the fortuitous though unexpected discovery delighted Walpole.

Walpole makes the connection between serendipity and his approach to fiction clear in the supplementary tale of the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, “The Bird’s Nest.” This manuscript appears within the original *Hieroglyphic Tales* manuscript and is written in Walpole’s hand. However, Walpole never published the tale, and no note remains explaining this decision. “The Bird’s

Nest” tells the story of Guzalme, the Queen of Serendip. As with most of the other tales within Walpole’s collection, the story is filled with excessive and satirical images. Walpole’s opening scene mocks the global consumerism that so enthralls British society. Guzalme sees a tree growing “vast bunches of white China cups and saucers” which contained a bird’s nest “composed of shreds of mignonette, trolly, and Brussels lace” under which is a flageolet that, when she touched it, “immediately sung an Italian air” (*Tales* 73). This compendium of material images from around the globe transfixes the queen, but it is the flageolet that leads her into her adventure, for she intends to climb the tree to discover what was inside the nest. The queen never achieves this goal, though, for “happening to touch a flageolet,” the music begins, signaling the start of her adventure. At the sound of the music, Guzalme finds her attention distracted by a mirror, and she preens before it Narcissus-like until the sudden appearance of a “Vermilion Baboon,” who is revealed to be a cursed version of Abraham (*Tales* 75). Abraham announces Guzalme is the woman he has been told will lift the curse trapping him in the body of a baboon, but the queen objects until the “Bird of Solomon” appears and grants her two opal eggs, one of which is inscribed in Hebrew and the other in “strange Characters” (*Tales* 76). Just as the queen thinks she is about to embark into a new life with Abraham, her foot slips so that she falls and suddenly awakes back in her room once more.

The Queen of Serendip does not appear to have any serendipitous experiences. Indeed, the entire tale appears rather to be a warning against the interested sort of historical exploration that Walpole rejects in his own antiquarian practice. Initially, the queen’s initial encounter with Abraham might appear to be an accident, for distracted by the music, her attention is diverted away from the bird’s nest, which she had intended to collect and instead sets her on a journey to meeting Abraham. However, Walpole reveals that Abraham is a too interested participant in the

outcome of the story who has attempted to force a meaning onto a situation. Abraham has been told his cursed state as a baboon will not lift until he finds a particular woman who “shall come a-Bird’s-nesting in the forest,” and he reports that he has gone 5,000 years without discovering this woman (*Tales* 76). Unlike the three princes of Serendip, Abraham has had no happy accidents, so arriving in Serendip, he takes matters into his own hands as he reveals when he admits to Guzalme, “When I saw you sleeping in the Pavilion of Odours...It was I who whispered to you to look at the tree, and the event has answered my expectation” (*Tales* 76). Abraham has not stumbled upon the woman he seeks to break his curse. Rather, he arranges the pieces on the board to fit a version of history that he wants. The curse becomes in his mind a prophecy of what will happen in history, and taking that narrative, he contrives to make a tree, a bird’s nest, and a beautiful woman he discovers fit that image.

Abraham knows he is forcing a reading where it should not exist. He recounts that his curse will hold until he finds, “a more beautiful woman than you with the finest shape, the blackest eyes, and the reddest lips in the world” (*Tales* 76). The queen is not the woman he is actually seeking, but he believes she is close enough, so he contrives to make her fit into the version of history he wants to unfold. Even before the story is revealed to have been a dream, then, Walpole signals a problem that reveals a conflict of fictional forms. If this story, wild though it may be, is read as a novel would be, it should follow a linear and causally probable structure; conversely, if it were read as a heroic romance, it should be probable based on a hierarchical model of fable. Either way, the story should unfold in a recognizably probable manner based on contemporary conventions of literary probability, as I discuss in my second chapter. However, Walpole rejects both of these approaches. Though Abraham believes that since he must have a particular woman to break his curse that he will find her, his actual

existence suggests otherwise for he has spent the last 5,000 years searching. Neither can the tale be read in terms of a moral, for while it clearly satirizes contemporary material culture, Walpole does not offer an intended principle for the reader to take away. The reader's experience of the story may, therefore, be serendipitous, but the queen's experience is not.

With this understanding of Walpole's approach to a serendipitous fiction, we can see how the contingency of the world in Walpole's stories begin to take on a less absurd but still meaningful role. Walpole wrote "The Bird's Nest" as part of his original draft of five stories, which most commentators agree were written between 1766-1772.¹⁴³ However, when he published the collection, "The Bird's Nest" was replaced with Tale V, "Mi Li. A Chinese Fairy Tale." Out of all the stories that Walpole penned for the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, this tale is the least absurd and the most traditional in terms of plot, so it is the most easily read. As Paul Nash argues, this tale offers a satiric insight into the relationship between the Americas and Britain, and it plays on the relationships in Walpole's life as the story features Caroline Campbell, the daughter of William Campell.¹⁴⁴ However, as with "The Bird's Nest," Walpole once again returns to the issue of prophecy in "Mi Li" so that he can contrast a sense of fatedness with a contingent reality.

Mi Li believes he is destined to marry a princess, so Tale V presents the series of misadventures that Mi Li participates in while in search of his wife. However, Mi Li has embarked on this search under false pretenses, for although he thinks that the oracle has said he would marry a princess, his godmother actually foretells that "he would be the most unhappy

¹⁴³ For more on the history of "The Bird's Nest," see Kenneth Gross, *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1785); Ketton-Cremer, *Horace Walpole: A Biography* (1946); and Martin Kallich, *Horace Walpole* (1971).

¹⁴⁴ See Nash, "'Mi Li' Revisited: Horace Walpole and the Idea of China," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2009).

man alive unless he married a princess whose name was the same with her father's dominions" (*Hieroglyphic Tales* 55). This declaration is more a warning than a predication: if Mi Li does not marry a princess, he will be miserable. While Mi Li's unhappiness is dependent on his future, the godmother makes no guarantee that the opposite – that Mi Li would be happy – will occur if he actually marries this woman, whomever she might be. Mi Li twists the oracle's meaning, though, and he sets off in search of the princess he believes himself destined to find and marry. Consequently, every action that he takes over the course of the story is based on a cause that does not actually exist. Though Mi Li believes his life to have purpose, his actions are thus untethered. He operates under the mistaken notion of a prophecy which he uses as a governing framework to make sense of his world. As a result, as his name suggests, Mi Li is living a lie, one that he is daily telling himself.

Walpole illustrates the contingency of Mi Li's experience poignantly in the final scene of the story as Mi Li discovers a Chinese garden. As Mi Li's search comes to an end and he arrives at the Conway home, he discovers a Chinese garden.¹⁴⁵ As Mi Li walks through the garden, his experience offers a parody on the walks that Joseph Addison took. As I discussed in my first chapter, Addison saw a prospect as a moment of imaginative delight, and his walks alternated between a stroll and a halt to view a scene. When Mi Li first enters the garden, "He was led through a venerable wood of beeches, to a menagerie commanding a more glorious prospect than any in his father's dominions" (61). Though his stroll through the woods opens upon a scene, the prospect is not a sublime view, for Walpole once more disrupts expectations and instead grants

¹⁴⁵ Nash argues that the Sharawaggi gardens serve as the key to the Mi Li hieroglyphic, and he points out that Park Place did indeed have a garden similar to the one described in the story. See Nash, "Mi Li' Revisited: Horace Walpole and the Idea of China," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2009).

Mi Li an unexpected view of pheasants, a scene which nevertheless sparks delight in Mi Li. Through this disruption of expectation, Walpole draws on the Sharawaggi style for his narrative. For Walpole, Sharawaggi or the “want of symmetry” defined the Chinese aesthetic: through this style, the “greatest reach of imagination is employed in contriving figures where the beauty shall be great and strike the eye, but without any order or disposition of parts that shall be commonly or easily observed” (*Works* 532). As Walpole notes, such gardens entice the imagination because rather than confine plants and thus the mind to a rigid structure, the lack of symmetry and the disordered grace of nature encourages the eye to wander across the scene. While Addison would emphasize the design embedded within this wildness, Walpole emphasizes the wildness that transcends the design. To Walpole’s mind, the Sharawaggi garden offers the ultimate artistic example of contingency through the seeming randomness of its design, and so it serves as the perfect metaphor for his literary approach.

By tracing the evolution of Walpole’s narrative practice, we can see how Walpole rejected the unvarying structure of the novel and the romance in search of a form that offered serendipitous discovery. Although Walpole’s narrative worlds are not plausible, by disrupting the causal chains, Walpole advances fiction’s ability to represent the contingency of live experience. While the influence of the *Hieroglyphic Tales* on the development of fictionality remains insignificant since the tales were not read widely, they nevertheless grant insight into the narrative practices with which Walpole was experimenting. As the culmination of Walpole’s experiments with literary form, the *Hieroglyphic Tales* demonstrate Walpole’s concerns about the development of narrative world. Consequently, by understanding the ways Walpole untethers actions in the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, we gain new insights for returning to *Otranto* and discover the narrative contingency that plays a role in the first Gothic novel.

CHAPTER 5

Coda: Clara Reeve's Vision of the Oriental Tale as a New Fiction

In *The Progress of Romance* (1785), Clara Reeve applies two different conceptions of wildness to the oriental tale through the voices of Euphrasia and Hortensius. On evening eleven of her conversation with Hortensius and Sophronia, Euphrasia, who functions as the mouthpiece for Reeves, introduces the oriental tale as a literary “class of no small extent” that signals an evolution within British narrative (58). Hortensius sees the wildness of the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainment* and other oriental tales as threatening. He declares, “They are certainly dangerous books for youth,—they create and encourage the wildest excursions of imagination, which it is, or ought to be, the care of parents and preceptors to restrain, and to give them a just and true representation of human nature, and of the duties and practice of common life” (*Progress* 59). These stories move beyond the prescribed boundaries of the physical and known world, so Hortensius perceives the oriental tale as encouraging a gross imaginativeness that abandons the everyday. Such fantastic and extravagant stories fail to provide moral exemplars for readers, particularly for young readers.

For Euphrasia though, wildness refers to the narrative rules by which such tales operate. She explains, “The stories of this kind are all wild and extravagant to the highest degree; they are indeed so far out of the bounds of Nature and probability, that it is difficult to judge of them by rules drawn from these sources” (*Progress* 58). Though Euphrasia places these tales within the larger romance tradition that she has been tracing, she recognizes that the oriental tales offer a unique approach to crafting narrative, one that refuses the authenticating moves of an empirically known truth or of an external validating authority. Euphrasia argues that the oriental tale does not

abide by the rules of probability that govern the romance nor does it attempt to remain consistent with the everyday in the fashion of the novel. Instead, the oriental tale “catch[es] hold of the readers’s attention” and transports the reader beyond the prescribed bounds of the known world into one that delights. The oriental tale might not imitate nature or operate according to earlier forms of literary probability, but it is nevertheless compelling as this narrative approach celebrates narrative for its own sake rather than for its moral ends.

Reeve’s discussion of wildness offers an appropriate end to this dissertation, therefore, as she upholds the oriental tale as a literary form offering a new approach to fiction. Tracing the development of the romance from the Greeks, Romans, and Arabs into the contemporary moment in *The Progress*, Reeve offers what Srinivas Aravamudan and Nicole Horejsi describe as a feminist and global conceptualization of the history of literary forms.¹⁴⁶ Arguing for the evolution of the novel from the romance, Reeve describes narrative techniques as shifting in tandem with the development of cultures, and she represents the oriental tale as participating in this progression. Rather than position the oriental tale as operating outside of the mainstream development of fiction, Reeve recognizes it as presenting a syncretic narrative form that draws together enjoyment, authenticity, originality – a narrative practice that moves away from the pseudo-factual claims to reality of earlier fictions. Unbound by the rules of probability or the need to imitate nature, the oriental tale enchants and entrances readers because it unites the imagined with a believable world. Through the oriental tale, Reeve recognizes the beginning of fiction in its modern conception.

¹⁴⁶ Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism* (2012) and Nicole Horejsi, *Romance Historiography and the Dido Tradition in English Fiction, 1688–1785* (2019).

Unsurprisingly then, Reeve marks the end of her argument in *The Progress* by turning to the oriental tale with *The History of Charoba* (1785). The story of Charoba, originally included in Murtagh ibn al-Khafif's record of Egyptian history, made its way into British literature through John Davies' translation of ibn al-Khafif's work, *The Egyptian History* (1672). Reworking the tale, Reeve's presents *Charoba* as a story that pulls together classical, Biblical, and oriental allusions to offer a narrative vision that speaks to the contemporary moment.¹⁴⁷ While Davies' text presents a dominating Charoba who erases the voices of stories that compete with her version of history, Reeve's Charoba incorporates multiple perspectives into the history of Egypt. *Charoba* tells the story of a young woman who inherits the throne of Egypt and successfully thwarts the attempt of a tribe of giants to seize her throne by poisoning their leader, Gebirus. As Gebirus dies, he demands that "the words I shall utter may be engraved on one of the pillars of this palace which I have builded" (*Charoba* 209). Remarkably, though Gebirus' words boast of his own might and curse the "wiles of a woman" who deprived him of throne and life, Charoba chooses to engrave "her own name and that of Gebirus and an history of all that she had done unto him and also those his last words" onto the high tower of the city (*Charoba* 210). By embedding Gebirus' story within her own, Charoba gives voice to a different interpretation while still celebrating her own account. Though Gebirus attempts to force his own version of history, Charoba's choice demonstrates a move to create an encompassing historical cannon that includes different types and even competing narratives.

This scene offers the culmination of a process that Reeve has pursued throughout the tale. Rather than focus on Charoba throughout her tale, Reeve traces transitive actions to loop the

¹⁴⁷ Nicole Horejsi argues that Reeve uses Charoba to rewrite the stories of Dido and Cleopatra in particular. Horejsi, *Romance Historiography and the Dido Tradition in English Fiction, 1688–1785* (2019).

characters together in a world of competing perspectives so that the reader moves between the distinct views of different characters. For instance, Reeve opens her story with the image of Charoba giving gifts to Abraham, and the narrative - following the transitive nature of the action - shifts focus to Abraham as he and Sarah leave Egypt until Abraham offers a benediction over Charoba, at which point the focus of the tale transitions back to Charoba. Over the duration of the tale, the reader thus moves in a loop between perspectives as it begins with Charoba and then moves to her nurse, to Gebirus, to a shepherd, before it loops back to Gebirus, the nurse, and finally Charoba again. By tracing the actions between the characters, Reeve uses the multiple perspectives of the characters to delineate the boundary of the literary world, and she emphasizes the relationship between the external circumstance and the choices the characters make. The actions of the characters are understood and interpreted with their narrative world, for as Jonathan Kramnick argues, to focus on causality in a novel raises questions about who gets to define the meaning of actions and “how actions ought to be described and individuated” (201). Tracing this loop of actions thus isolates who gets to define the actions and precludes the story from participating in the contemporary moment. Instead, it operates as its own distinct though analogous world.

By marking the boundaries of the narrative world through actions, Reeve can emphasize the fictionality of the tale and use it to argue for alternative ways of conceiving literature. Despite being described as a “history,” *Charoba* does not pretend to operate within the known world in the manner of other pseudofactual narratives but operates outside of the boundaries of contemporary history. This shift signals the move toward fictionality, for as Nicholas Paige argues, fiction is identified not by its content “but [by] the oblique manner in which it makes propositions about the world (17). While readers may reject the story, this rebuff is not because

of the truthfulness of the story but rather a disagreement with the proposition that the story advances about the world. Rather than present *Charoba* as a real story then, Reeve uses the tale to comment on the current literary world and reiterates her argument in *The Progress* for a national literary canon that brings together multiple perspectives, both through the authors represented and the literary genres present. The oriental tale, as a form that holds space for the “translational and transcultural aspects of the multitudinous outside,” captures the wildness of this new fictional approach that Reeve seeks to promote (Aravamudan *Enlightenment* 34).

Despite Reeve’s grand vision, the oriental tale would largely disappear from use by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century authors would continue to describe the oriental tale as wild in their brief asides in novels or periodicals, yet these references echoed Hortensius depiction of wildness, focusing on the exotic content associated with discourses of colonialism and Orientalism rather than on the innovative literary practices. Indeed, even as Reeve published *The Progress* and *Charoba*, the contemporary conceptions of Asian and Middle Eastern cultures had begun to shift to a more methodized and instrumental collection of knowledge, following the founding of the Asiatic Society by Sir William Jones in 1784. Yet even though the oriental tale was soon pushed from sight, its contributions to the development of fictionality remained. The exploration of issues of causality and probability that these tales engendered encouraged Joseph Addison, John Hawkesworth, Frances Sheridan, Horace Walpole, and Clara Reeve to represent and speak about their contemporary world in new and exciting ways that would lead to the formation of modern fictionality.

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